Thesis for the Degree of

presented by

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I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed entirely by myself.
Representative Victorian Women

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Foreword.

There were many new things in Victorian literature. One was the position held in its ranks by the woman of letters. Whereas the Romantic Movement had revived old subjects and suggested the possibility of creating new ones, the women of the Victorian era approached every subject—old or new—from a fresh standpoint. Technically they were not creators; they originated no new "form" of literature, they preached no novel theory. They climbed to certain points— not necessarily high ones, but peaks so far untried by man; and from thence they looked down & told what they saw into life with the intent of making a personal record. At that period it became the fashion for women to clamber about the rocks of experience, to state their impressions: the fashion is even more pronounced at the present day. Some of the impressions were— are— not worth recording: but some of them we can never afford to forget.

Among these Victorian women I have chosen those who, it seems to me, best justified their preoccupation with literature. I have attempted to set forth the work of each woman as an artistic whole, with her personality as the unifying element in her series of poems or novels. In her first book there may be something which helps to interpret her last; in her last book we may trace the same foundations as were laid for her first.

I have chosen the women who were strictly speaking Victorians. Jane Austen is excluded for this reason, and also because she looked backwards rather than forwards. The Victorians constantly broke away from her; if they returned to follow her, it was only at intervals, for a few steps at a time.
Beyond all question Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, and George Eliot were the most powerful women novelists of the period. I have spoken a little about Anne Brontë, partly out of courtesy to her sisters' memory, and in appreciation of their comradeship with her; and also because she helps to interpret their achievement—without her they cannot be made perfect.

I have dealt with Mrs Browning simply as a figure in Christina Rossetti's background. To be quite truthful, Mrs Browning was neither as great a woman nor as great an artist as were Charlotte or Emily Brontë, George Eliot, and Christina Rossetti: she was not grand enough to stand in their company. So place her there would be to humiliate her by inevitable comparisons. There are good things in Mrs Browning, and possibly we do not recognize them quite as we ought; but it is hardly gracious to place her beside women who achieved some flawless poems, and wrote, if not flawless novels at least some flawless chapters. As for Mrs Browning—some pages have their scattered lines of beauty, but every page has its cluster of defects.

Christina Rossetti is probably the most perfect artist of the group— as supreme in her own sphere as Jane Austen had been in hers. She has never been given her due; never, that is to say, by the multitude. Many people of quite moderate reading capacity have scarcely heard her name; yet she has surpassed all other Englishwomen in verse and noble poetry. Emily Brontë before her, and Mrs Meynell today, are almost the only women who are fit to be mentioned beside her; and they, also, are left aside by the currents of popular opinion.

I have attempted to draw no generalized conclusion. These women did not write because of their sex. They were not pure feminists, any more than this is a feminist treatise. Having independent personalities, they received
distinct and differing impressions of life. To contain in contrast these impressions would be to obscure the effect. We may approach a place from different directions. From the banks of a river we may glance upwards to the spires and contours of a famous city; or we may stand on the hills above the same city, and look down on the blurred pattern of its streets and gardens. We cannot combine these impressions; we cannot stand in both places at once. We must visit one place, and then the other; in no other way can we visualize the town as a whole. It is only by regarding the separate impressions of authors that we can apprehend the life which they have attempted to delineate from different points of view.

I. Environment, Tradition, and Escape.

There are some things in the Bronte story which fall into the memory, and quietly, firmly, take root. We do not learn them; we hear them once; then we always remember. One of these unforgettable things is the picture of a simple room, its bareness softened by the flickering shadows of a firelight; in it we see three girls pacing the floor, 

"talking with the strange zest of absorption of those who discern a momentous future. We cannot imagine the sisters sitting by the fire, speaking out the thoughts which stirred within them. They had to keep moving, as it were in sympathy with their restless dreams and yearnings. They cling to this habit as to most things, with a wonderful persistence. Even when Emily and Anne were dead, Charlotte could not shake off the old custom, but paced the floor alone. There is something in the spirit of that room which draws us into sympathy with the Bronte achievements; it was there, in the dusk, that their hopes were most fully and frankly declared; it was there that they felt a secret exhilaration, harmonising in mood with the red glow of firelight, or the street's cry of the winds, yet leaning far beyond them, it was there that they found the joy, almost bitter in its intensity, of those who are called to be pioneers."

In their own restricted sphere they experienced something of the eagerness felt by Milton as he wrote the opening lines of Paradise Lost. They were doing or about to do, "things unattempted yet." Almost every day of the year they must have realized that they were unlike other people, nobody in Haworth, nobody whom they had ever met, seemed to
speak,- not as they spoke, for words often failed them; nobody seemed to speak in the same way as they thought; yet they were struck dumb before their friend’s parishioners, a Curate, meant to risk setting down their thoughts in writing for all the world to read them, but as the same time they cherished their incognito until the overwhelming shyness of those who can never forget their own singularity.

For one thing they could never shake off the sense that they were handicapped by sex. Other women had written before them, but never in their way. They did not scrutinise the difference, they did not attempt to bring themselves into line with womanly tradition. It is remarkable that Charlotte published Jane Eyre before she had read a line of Jane Austen; when she read her books, she did not like them. How could she? There could have been no more incompatible fellowship. Jane Austen would have sat with ease in a drawing-room full of her own characters, and would have seen, but liten out of countenance, who can imagine Charlotte Bronte,- or worse still, Emily,- Talking to Mr. Bingley, Mr. Darcy, or even Mr. Bennet? How can we be sure that under these circumstances Mr. Locksley could have found a word to say. Still they would have felt like the speaker in the well-known poem-

"I would that my Tongue could utter
The thoughts that are in me!"

Such thoughts uttered in such a place would have produced a very definite sensation. It would have been something more real than a case of simple misunderstanding. Everybody in that room would not have understood Jane Austen, but they would have been happy in their dullness, happy because she did not disturb them. We know how she established between
herself and her readers a sort of dramatic irony. She says things of which only we, who are outside the room, can catch the point. As Professor Raleigh has put it, "The kingdom of Gulliver has its meaning only when it is seen through the eyes of Gulliver," and Jane Austen would be the only Gulliver in that room. But such a dramatic irony requires no close friendship before it can be established; it may spring up between casual acquaintances. Jane Austen commands the interest of her readers without giving herself away in personal confidences. With the Brontës it was different. They had to speak intimately, with a frank daring and open terms could they bring words to their lips. In a modern anthology there is a little poem which might be applied, with slight reservations, to the manners of Jane Austen:

"O why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
Missing so much - so much?"

"O fat white woman whom nobody loves,
Why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
When the grass is soft as the breast of doves,
And shivering sweet to the Touch?"

"O why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
Missing so much - so much?"

Assuredly Jane Austen was not a fat, white, unloved woman; but she touched life daintily with gloved fingers. Straining to make no part of their heritage the Brontës gripped it with bare, vigorous hands.

Mackay has spoken somewhere of the absurdity of putting "a tempest in a teapoy basin." Jane Austen would have loved a slop basin if only it had been made of rare and delicate china. The Brontës disregarded slop basins because they preferred a tempest. In those days the arrival of such articles..."
demanded considerable courage; for it shattered any
claims to ladylike decorum. As great winds blew in
Jane Austen's quiet retreats; like Mr. Worldly Wiseman
in Bunyan, she had no forbearance for "desperate ventures,"
this is what distinguishes her satire from much
akin to it in Thackeray; in her neat miniature
world there are hardly any risks. Contrast Elizabeth
Bennet to Ethel Newcome disentangling themselves from
the conventions of their society. We never feel that
Elizabeth is in any danger, but we are afraid for
Ethel. It is this element of peril that makes Thackeray's
presentation of life so much more alluring. The
Brontës felt the magnetism of dangers. It will be
remembered how Robert Moote met the rioters
with a deep dancing ray of scorn" in his eye.
Still more remarkable is the place where Rochester
describes to Jane the menace of his destiny—
"During the moment I was silent, Miss Eyre, I was
arranging a point with my destiny. She stood
there, by that beech-trunk— a head like one of
those who appear to Macbeth on the heath of forces.
'You like Thornfield?' she said, lifting her finger;
then she wrote in the air a moment, which ran
in bared hieroglyphics all along the house, from
between the upper - lower rows of windows, 'Like
it if you can! Like it if you dare!" — The Brontës
all liked the sensation of holding their heads
high when destiny defied them.

It is customary to eulogize Jane Austen at the
expense of the Brontës. Everybody must admit that
the former never attempted anything which she
could not achieve whereas the latter were for
ever reaching after ideals beyond their grasp. Yet
are we to say nothing of the courage which pursues
an elusive ambition? Can we not praise the stand-by
even while we admit defects in its achievement. After all it is with books as with people: we have most fellow feeling with those which exhibit slight flaws. We are much heretics by nature that we rarely give our hearts to the unimpeachable person or the unimpeachable book. Jane Austen is an excellent acquaintance: she flatters us with the sense that we are clever in appreciating her delicate subtleties. Few can hold out against her delegate charm of manner. Still we could not bear to live with her always. She could not be a companion. Her books lack the solace of a more impassioned thinking. They cannot bestow on us what Matthew Arnold fought to be the highest gift of literature—"something on which our spirits can rest." Jane Austen & the Brontës were alike in the fact of limitations: this, in itself, is possibly one of the conditions of equality, for it implies repletion. Jane Austen's stories have the fascinating appearance of a dead texture shot with silver: she describes a grey life softly coloured with humour. The Brontës lifted the naive dull texture, but they dyed it with the glowing colours of passion. Each material is excellent for its own purpose; without doubt there are some flaws in the deeply toned texture. Yet we should not be so early elsewhere as to turn aside from the high colonies of passion. Ruskin has told us that it is a sign of artistic health to like such passionate colour. Apart from what is artistic, we have to consider what is human—i.e., indeed, there is any distinction between the terms. Give a class of normal young people a contrast between Burns & Herrick; ask them which they will choose—"The Sow Thistles," living creatures without beauty, or "The Daffodils," exquisite still flowers; and however much they may love
flowers, they will discard them in favour of the dogs. It is a pity, of course, if they cannot keep both. Still we are to make it that we must love one thing more than another. In one of Austin Dobson's essays he tells us that there are two ways of approaching beauty. One is to love the flower for its grace; the other is to love a flower because it is rooted in the good ground of our earth. When we read Jane Austen we admire the color, form and loveliness of an exquisite cut flower. When we read the Brontës, we find the flower, it may be, splashed after storm, but growing in the soil until the winds are clouds above it. It is remarkable that among all the flower poems in the language so few are about cut flowers. Something of the inherent beauty of a flower evaporates when we see it gracefully but artificially isolated in a vase. It has lost its contact with the plain brown earth which nourished its loveliness. After all the true lovers of flowers are also lovers of earth,—lovers of the very path gleaming after rain, or the curves of the sloping hills; lovers of the road of lying fires under the rhythm of measured footsteps. The genuine lovers of beauty, not those who admire flippantly, but those who feel its message to souls, —they are also the lovers of life, with its hardships, its headaches,—its health.

2. The Medium of Personal Experience.

The Brontës were pioneers in the sense of being outspoken women, in a world which tolerated direct speech from the lips of men alone. They were also pioneers in another and more intimate manner. They spoke of life in a relative fashion, not as scientific facts stated impersonally once and for ever, but as truths brought into relation with their own lives, coloured with their own emotions. However interesting any truth may be in its
abstract, it gains a new impetus, grace when we see it through the eyes of another. The Brontës described reality, reflected on them their own fervour. Their conceptions of self cannot be exactly our conceptions. But the object described remains permanently, and the mind reflected on the object is also a reality. "The true poet," said Emerson, "is the poet's mind." This is what Hazlitt meant when he made his plea for the imagination which deepens and intensifies the value of common experiences. "Poetry, too," he said, "is an imitation of nature but the imagination - passion are a part of man's nature." In other words, there is something non-human - incomplete in a delineation which does not contain in it some elements of the humanity of the delineator. That theory had been consciously applied to poetry by Wordsworth & Coleridge. It was Coleridge who compared the "modifying colours of imagination" to "the sudden charm which accidents of light, shade, which moonlight or sunshine, diffused over a known or familiar landscape." It was Wordsworth who carried the theory into practice, endeavoured to enrich with his own spirit & sympathy the bareness of trivial incidents. By the time the Brontës wrote, these things were becoming re-discovered in the domain of poetry; but they had not been applied to novels. The Brontës were not entirely original. They found an idea confined to one side of literature; they discovered that the idea was big enough to cover all sides of literature; they brought it into their special corner.

Charlotte, who was the most conscious artist among the three sisters, avowed her preference for books expressing an author's personality; she acknowledged in Emily; love of nature, the presence of an inborn sympathy which made things seem more than they seemed. She said plainly that only those who carried within them a latent beauty could find any beauty in the Yorkshire moors. The passage is long to quote, yet wonderfully significant:- "If
the [illegible]...demand beauty to inspire her, she must bring it as-born; these moors are too stern to yield any product or delicate. The eye of the gazer must itself shine with a purplish light intense enough to perpetuate the brief flower. Flush of August on the heather, or the sunsets smile of June; but if his heart must well the freshness that in late spring early summer brightens the heather, nurture the mosses. - Cherishes the starry flowers that sparkle for a few weeks the pastures of the moor-sheep. Unless that light and freshness are innate and self-sustained, the dream prospect of a Yorkshire moor will be found as barren of poetic as of agricultural interest, where the love of wild nature is strong, the locality will perhaps be clinging to with the more passionate constancy, because from the hill-tops self-comes half its charm. - My sister loved the moors. Flowers brighter than the rose bloomed in the bleakness of the heath for her; out of a walled hollow in a livid hillside her mind could make an Eden. - What was true of Emily's attitude to nature was also true of both Charlotte and Emily in their outlook upon human life; in them they carried something which transformed the common experience. It is remarkable that Anne, who never attained to genius, had least of this transforming quality. Her representation of life so more average, normal than anything in the work of her sisters. Huntington in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall is admittedly nearer to the actual Branwell Brontë than Emily's Heathcliff or Charlotte's Rochester. Anne was content to copy nature, but she could not create. She told a story clearly, simply but her personality was too faint to colour the ordinary record. She did not stir other life, like Charlotte or Emily, through the medium of passion, for she had no passion. Nevertheless we feel that it is this passionate medium which stamps the work of Charlotte and Emily with the mark of genius. Christina Rossetti's
figure dreaming the dream of death had a veil before his eye—

"Through sleep, as through a veil
The veil the skies took pale."

Charlotte, Emily Bronte had a veil of emotion lying between
them and the external reality; but it was by no means uniform
色素, it glowed with iridescent lights

"Innumerable stains—splendid dyes
Are the tiger moth's deep damask'd wings."

Although this veil lends new shades to the external
facts, it does not keep out the air. The spirit of the outside
world passes through its fragile texture. It is not like
looking at a scene through the hard mediumship of
glass. Newton, it has been said, saw nature through
glass. A pane of glass is a stronger barrier than a
veil; it satisfies the eye, but checkers all other senses.
If there is any twist or unevenness in its surface, it
gives a distorted picture; there is no escape from the
distortion unless by shattering the glass. A veil may give
colours which are not in the actual objects under
observation; it may fall into thick, blurred folds; but
the least movement smooths out its creases, or blows
it entirely away. Often while reading, Charlotte, Emily
Bronte, we feel that we are seeing life as a traveller
through a wild country sees its hills veiled in mist.
He passes through a world of shifting outlines—
shadows, till at once the sun breaks out—a gale
hears a fleeting glimpse of the naked, permanent element.
Rock, tree, road, valley. Then, as likely as not, the mist
comes down again, wearing an enchantment over the
scene, till all things seem filled with a weird yet
foxy mystery. Nobody can say he knows the hills if he has
seen them only in their bare outlines, flecked with ro
shadows and the cloud softened with its traces of
mist. Nobody knows life accurately, if he studies it
simply as a collection of hard, unchanging facts, with
It is customary to dismiss Anne Brontë in a few sentences, as they pass on to the more instructive work of her sisters Charlotte and Emily. Possibly it is right to do so, because Anne lacked their genius but it is not right to leave her without a few crumbs of praise. Her books are not great books, yet in both of them there are scattered passages and phrases which strike a note of quiet charm. It is probable that these instances could be counted on the fingers of one hand; yet no matter how few they may be, their presence should be noted. For instance, in the first chapter of Agnes Grey the simple home life...
were not attending to their prayer books, were attending to
the strange lady." It is a picture which would have
been itself to the imagination of Mr. Hugh Thomson or Mr.
C.S. Brook. Again, it always seems to me that while the
poet's story, the central conception of the book is worth
less, there is a freshness of spirit cast over the scenes tell in
the open air. It may be that hill-livers have a kindly
feeling towards any book, across the deck of rocky
streets, even for a moment, the cool, strong breath of high
open places. In reading of the solitary hill, we
always seem to feel the companionship of brown
hills lying up before us; sometimes we feel the wind
in our faces, but feel it when we stand in the undeviled
garden, with the 'goldfinch appearance' of its clipped
trees, green and of shape; we feel it even more keenly
on the evening when Gilbert comes up the hill, sees
the sun crimsoning the windows while his own heart
is shadowed by disillusion. The phrases rise to a
sudden distinction: "That spot, seeming with a
thousand recollections - glorious dreams - all
darkened now, by one disastrous truth." All the
Huntingdon episodes are futile. As Charlotte has told
us, Anne's heart was not in them. They are not described
with the sharpness which alone might make such
episodes tolerable. It is only on that bleak lonely
hillside, away from Huntingdon's less orderly scene,
that we feel any artistic exhilaration. It was in the
atmosphere of that wild pure country that Anne
wrote her finest passage - a paragraph beautiful in
its imagery, its music, its poetry, of conception - "I have
a confused remembrance," says Gilbert, "of... long hours
spent in bitter tears - lamentations - melancholy
musings in the lonely valley, with the eternal music
in my ears of the west wind rushing through the
overshadowing trees - the brook babbling - gurgling
along its stony bed—my eyes for the most part, vacantly
fixed on the deep shadowed shades restlessly
playing over the bright ruddy face at my feet. There
now and then a withered leaf or two would come
dancing to where the revelry, but my heart was
away up the hill in that dark room where she
was weeping alone—the whom I was not to comfort
not to see again till years of suffering had overcome
us both. I fear our spirits from their perishing abode
of clay. That freshness of nature adds poignancy
edge to the intensity of human sorrow. As rule
Charlotte is early fond of nature not this contrast of
mood, but an affinity and sympathy with their own
emotions. Nevertheless in this passage Anne shows the
family resemblance more strongly than in any other
place; particularly in the last phrases we catch
echoes of the music which flows through Burton
Heights.

This is probably all that can be said in praise of
Anne Bronte's work. We are forced to admit that the
foundations of her structures were weak. Their only
beauty is in some fragments of building material,
or few lines of delicate carving. She lacked the
genius which fuses details into an organic harmony.
Yet we should not withhold our gratitude for even a
few strokes of beauty.

Chapter II. Charlotte Bronte

In studying Charlotte Bronte's achievement, it is best to
work as Carlyle would say, "from the skin inwards," Considering
her, first as a reader, a student of other minds, then as a
literary artist; lastly, as the essential personality
whose opinions, tastes, and passions determined the
external qualities of her work.
The Reader - Student

(1) Though the Brontës were all great readers, it can hardly be said that they were deep or accurate scholars; certainly they were not book-worms. Like many women, Charlotte had no "contraband appetite for unfeminine knowledge." As she later acknowledged, she was the type who "grew up on the stuff of dreams." She admired the "sublime" of the romantic poets, the "god-like" of the sublime. Her love of learning was fueled by her own curiosity. "I knew I had no such appetite. What I loved it was poetry, by any effort to content; but the noble hunger for knowledge was a means to an end; it would enable them to think more deeply of experience. When Charlotte wrote so fervently of the projected visit to Brussels, she was not instilling, as George Eliot might have done in her case, - for me, that is not in her nature, "I so longed," she said, "to increase my attainments - to become something better than I am. A fire was kindled in my heart which I could not quench." George Eliot would have thought in that way of what she would become. As a writer, she would have sought to escape from herself and books. Charlotte sought to realize herself more fully through her own experience. To her, the intellectual woman was the one whose interests were quickened by knowledge; she liked thoughtful, book-loving women, because she expected to find in them a greater vitality. She could not muster up great enthusiasm for women without intellectual interests; we find, for instance, Jane Austen surveying Miss Rosamond Rollis's fascination with an "extremely temperate admiration." "She was very charming in short, even to a cool observer of her own sex like me; but she was not profoundly interesting or thoroughly impressive. A very different sort of mind was hers from that of, for instance, the sisters of St. Hilaire." Charlotte went naturally to books of a certain class. Anything outside that, for instance, Jane Austen's novels...
she read from a sense of duty. Her whole being turned to romance, as a flower seeks the sunlight. She loved the mystery and power of German romances. She told Ellen Nussey that all novels after Scott were worthless.

[It should be noted, however, that this was said before she had fallen under the spell of Thackeray.] The verses of Marmion comforted Jane Eyre as she sat reading by the fire with "the muffled fury of the tempest" beating at her doors. "I soon forgot storm in music," she heard much of her own love for the Bible. Even a small child, she told her father that it was the best book in the world; M. Héger of Brussels reported on her, "Elle était nourrie de la Bible." One always feels that it was the romance of the Bible that fed her affection. The conversation between Mr. Brocklehurst and Jane is wonderfully filled with meaning:—

"Do you say your prayers night and morning?" continued my interlocutor.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you read your Bible?"

"Sometimes."

"With pleasure? Are you fond of it?"

"I like Revelation, the book of Daniel, Genesis, Samuel, a little bit of Exodus, some parts of Kings, Chronicles, i Job, i Jonah."

"And the Psalms? I hope you like them?"

"No, sir."

"No? Oh, shocking! I have a little boy younger than you, who knows six psalms by heart; i when you ask him which he would rather have, a gingerbread nut to eat or a verse of a psalm to learn, he says: "Oh! the verse of a psalm! Angels sing psalms," says he; "I want to be a little angel here below," he then gets two nuts in recompense for his infant piety."

"Psalms are not interesting," I remarked.
They were not interesting to little Jane because she was thirsting for stories. Emotional as Charlotte Brontë might be, she was like Jane in that she was never quite at home with even the most impersonal psychology or reflection. If psychology or reflection were to touch the core of her sympathy, they had to be limited to some concrete narrative. This is one case where she was the direct antithesis of George Eliot. Her admiration of Borrow fell in with the same romantic tendency. So does her description of Jane Eyre's childish reading:

'It was the pictures which she loved—' the words in these introductory pages connected themselves with the succeeding vignettes, gave significance to the rock standing up alone in a sea of billows and spray; to the broken boat stranded on a desolate coast; to the cold, ghastly moon glancing through bars of cloud as a wreck just sinking.' Later in the book there is an episode where Jane shows her pictures to Rochester: something in their gloaming eeriness and power to remind one of Blake. However, it is difficult to say whether Charlotte had ever heard of that strange wild poet's dreamer.

It is true that romance was not the single element of her nature. There was in her a piquancy which brought her at times into the atmosphere of Dickens. She read David Copperfield after the publication of Jane Eyre. She acknowledged the affinity which had been pointed out to her. The two novelists are brought together by their appreciation of a child's standpoint. Mr. Rochester is remembered by the little girl as 'that black, wattle clergyman.' We remember the first impression he made... "Curtsying low, I looked upon a black pillar!—such at least appeared to me at first sight, the straight, narrow, black, sail-clad shape standing erect on the rug; the grim face above the shap—"
by way of Capital.” When Dickens wrote David Copperfield a few years later, he seemed to look at objects from the same angle. To quote Mr. Chesterton he gives us an impression of the little Copperfield living in a land of giants. It is at once Gargantuan in its fancy, grotesquely vivid in its facts; like Gulliver in the land of Brobdingnag when he describes mountaneous hands and faces filling the sky, bristles as big as hedges, or moles as big as molehills. 

We feel the sombre Muckstone coming upon the horses like a tall storm striding through the sky.” Nevertheless, the which is the prevailing mood in the early chapters of David Copperfield occurs in Jane Eyre only in flashes, it is impossible to believe that Dickens caught her sustained manner from a few sentences in a previously published book. Of David Copperfield (published in 1849) owed practically nothing to Jane Eyre (published in 1847); it is equally probable that Jane Eyre owed as little to Martin Chuzzlewit (published in 1844). Sometimes we seem that Mr. Rochester’s voice in the utterances of Mr. Brocklehurst:

“Th, madam,” he cried, “when you put bread and cheese instead of burnt porridge into these children’s mouths, you may indeed feed their piled bodies, but you little think how you starve their immortal souls!” Still then parody I cant is not altogether in the Dickensian manner. There is more naivety in his moreover it is less cheeky insinuating; and as in the case of the childlike standpoint, Charlotte Bronte touched this manner only casually, whereas Dickens used it as a habitual weapon. In yet another point Charlotte had some affinity to Dickens – this was her love of oddness and variety. But her taste was not so much grotesque as grim: it has no note of austerity quite different from the revelling jest of Dickens. It was Rochester’s hardness of manner that appealed to Jane as bizarre, therefore attractive. “The eccentricity of the proceeding was poignant. I felt
interested to see how he would go on.”

(16) There was still another note — in literature as well as in life — which appealed to Charlotte Brontë. That was the note of sincerity. It was this quality which she found most admirable in Carlyle. (Ruskin, whom she praised in the same breath, probably attracted her through his poetic beauty of style — an element of romance.) The most striking instance of her emphasis on sincerity was her regard for Thackeray. He seems to have been the only contemporary writer whom she placed on a pedestal. She does not appear to have admired the brilliance or keenness of his satire. She suspected anything that a habit of deploying, but was possible, for the reason that she disliked Jane Austen. It was not Thackeray’s satire, but its nature that won her reverence. She called him a “regenerator,” a leader on his work as a sharp purge & tonic. She admired his direct way of stating truths, however unpleasant they might be. It is very remarkable that he found in her the characteristic honesty which she most admired in him. “I remember,” he said, “the trembling little frame, the little hand, the great honest eyes. An impetuous honesty seemed to me the characteristic of the woman.” — It is also noteworthy that Charlotte did not care for Mr. Browning, because her style was not straightforward. Charlotte absolutely refused to express any sentiments over “a certain wordy, intricate, obscure style of poetry, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning writes.” It was an essential part of her nature to desist from anything — whether in life or in style — which did not go directly and simply to the point. Herein lies much of the steady charm of her character in writing.

2. The Deliberate Artist: (16) Theory, Self-Knowledge & Theory.

(2) When we come to consider Charlotte Brontë as an artist, we are bound to discover her facts in books leaving its impress on her writing. A devoutly religious, she continued
plot, partaking of the same nature. It has often been
complained that they are too rambling. They curve in,
out, sometimes running, sometimes sauntering. In an
early school report it was set down that Charlotte was
altogether clever, but knew nothing ‘systematically.’ It
is, of course, always better to have a good plot than a
bad one; still it is possible, as Shakespeare has proved, to
cover a multitude of sins in this direction, if only by the
presence of strong, or more inspiring virtues. It is always
pleasant to remember anything about Sainty among the
matrices his worries over a projected play, particularly
with regard to the plot, he believed would have
‘omitted it altogether.’ Sometimes Charlotte Bronte comes
gnarlly close to the daring expedient of altogether omitting
a plot; nobody can say the results are entirely satisfactory.
Still there is always the to be said: she was endeavoring
to describe life, not a conventional pattern; to the deep belief
of most people, life is not a desperately systematic business.
This weakness of plot shows itself very plainly in her love of
depression. It is strange that Charlotte, who loves the
direct phrase, did not love the direct plot. She longs by
the way to describe each member of the Bronte family with
the detailed attention found in biographical notices. It has
been complained of ‘Wuthering Heights’ that in it she described
daily life as if she were writing a diary. The writing of
Vashti, for instance, has no connection with the actual story:
it made absolutely no difference to the big things
in the lives of the chief characters. In ‘Hegei,’ it will be
remembered, praises Emily’s logical power. He could not
have paid the same compliment to Charlotte. It is the
logical faculty which makes Wuthering Heights, in spite
of all defects, a more compact story than Jane Eyre or
Shirley or Villette. Charlotte had not sufficient logic to
omit the incidental.

Although she was a desultory reader, Charlotte had
an instinctive perception of the spirit of a book, as she 
estimated the relative value of her own writings with a 
tolerably correct insight. She seems to have had more 
measuring about her later novels than about Jane 
Eyre. In one place she compared Shirley with its predecessor, 
est and its 'drier' matter, might meet the dryer minds of 
er critics. However, we should never allow ourselves to 
forget her own justification. 'I did not hurry,' she wrote; 
'I tried to do my best; my own impression was that it 
was not inferior to the former work; indeed I had bestowed 
on it more time, thought, anxiety, but great part of it was 
written under the shadow of impending calamity,' in its 
last volume I cannot deny, was composed in the eager, 
restless endeavours to combat mental sufferings that were 
scarcely tolerable. He knew the love which death had 
made in her life, how we feel the blame after carping at 
Shirley, as we should do after criticizing the fair 
Maid of Athens or other novels written in the period of Scott's 
declining power. She felt the same want of confidence 
when she looked at Villette. 'I can hardly tell you,' she 
writes to a friend, 'how I hunger to hear some opinion 
besides my own, or how I have sometimes despaired - 
amost despaired - because there was no one to whom to 
read a line, or to whom to ask a council. Jane Eyre was 
not written under such circumstances, not even two-
thirds of Shirley. We find her answering with a touch of 
weariness to criticisms of Lucy's character, of the disjointed 
plot, or speaking with apprehension of her doubtful success 
in the steady of Paulina. Every reader has experienced a 
sense of depression, a languid weight settling over some 
passages of Shirley or Villette; but others ought to be some 
consolation in the fact that Charlotte felt the same 
oppression. By her self-knowledge she commands our 
respect. She did not quite put inferior work believing it was 
superior. The same cannot be said necessarily of George Eliot.
In yet another aspect she stood apart from George
Hill. She recurred to doctrine as Miss Mary Taylor writ-
ten *Jane Eyre.* "It is impossible to squeeze a moral out of your
production," Charlotte fully recognized her position. "To
speech," she said, "is not my vocation. What I saw, it is
useless to say, was when it concerned me... will find it out.
In other words, she realized that by the very nature of
things, her appeal being emotional had also to be
intuitive. It was not that she despised the novel into a
purposive. She said quite honestly that for her it was," I no
like trying," to handle topics of the day. "Nor can I write
a book," she said, "for its moral. Nor can I take up a
philanthropic scheme, though I know philanthropy; I
voluntarily sincerely, with my face before such a
mighty subject as that handled in Mr. Beecher's novel's
work, Uncle Tom's Cabin ... I doubt not, Mr. Beecher had felt
the iron of slavery enter into her heart, from childhood
upwards, long before she ever thought of writing books.
So feeling throughout her work is sincere, one got up."
Charlotte knew her own resources, accepted her own
limitations. Jane Austen showed the same self-knowledge
when she refused to write a court novel. "This voluntary
restriction, although in such different directions, is
perhaps the only mistake where the two women stand
in common ground.

This recognition of her own weaknesses and limitations gives
nothing new to our estimate; we could have easily
deduced these things for ourselves, in other points. Charlotte's
self-knowledge throws a valuable light on our appreciation
of her work. One thing we could not have guessed
without a clue from her own confessions: this is her deliberate
surrender to an overmastering creative impulse. It was
that purely, when under the sway of this power, was un-
conscious of the effect she had produced. However, from
her own experience that she spoke most clearly. Her
it should be pardonable to collect a few of her utterances because nothing she can carry the same weight as her own words; describing a curious & habitual psychological experience. She told Mr. Gaskell, that although she described her plot with her sisters as they placed the floor of their room, she hardly ever altered anything she had written, "so possessed was she with the feeling that she had described reality." To Mr. Lewis she spoke more fully; "Then authors write best," she said, "or at least when they write most fluently, an influence seems to worken in them which becomes their master — which will have its own way — putting out of view all select but its own, declaring certain words & inventing on their being used whether convenient or measured in their nature, new moulding characters, giving unthought of turns to incidents, reporting carefully elaborated old ideas, and suddenly creating & adopting new ones. — Is it not so? And should we try to counteract this influence? Can we indeed counteract it?" — When the mood departed, she put away her work, like the Scholar Gipsy, waiting for the spark from heaven to fall. Perhaps it is the patient waiting for the mood which casts its weight over portions of her later books. This is how she described its passage in the composition of Villette. "When the mood leaves me (it has left me now without touching so much as a word or a sentence when it will return) I put by the manuscript, I wait till it comes back again. God knows I sometimes have to wait long — very long it seems to me." It is in Villette that we find some most striking instances of this faculty in operation. One is the death of M. Paul. Now, Charlotte was convinced that M. Paul would have to be drowned; her father wished him to live. "But," says Mr. Gaskell, "the idea of M. Paul Emanuel's death at sea was Stamned in her imagination till it assumed its distinct form of reality; she could no more alter her
fictions ending then if they had been facts which she was
relating." To please her father she compromised to its extent
I veiled her fate" in placid words." Sometimes she
erected the creative impulse, decreed it, won it. When she
wished, in a certain portion of \( \text{Villletti}, \) to describe the effect
I opium, she had no experience to guide her; or, as in
other cases — unfortunately, we do not know which ones — she
thought over the matter intently many nights before
falling to sleep; till suddenly one morning she woke
up, with all clear before her, as if she had in reality
gone through the experience, and could describe it
word for word as it had happened." Most significant of
all is her emphatic defense of \( \text{Emily}, \) on the grounds that
it was not she who spoke, but some compelling
spirit within her. The quotation is long, but it is of such
very great importance that it cannot be omitted.

"Whether it is right or advisable to create beings like
Heathcliff I do not know; I scarcely think it is. But this
I know: the writer, who possesses the creative gift owns
something in which he is not always master — something
that, at times, strangely wills a worker for itself. He may
lay down rules or device principle, or will, or principle
it will perhaps for years lie in subjection; then, happily
without any warning, it revolts. Thus comes a time when
it will no longer consent to "harrow the valleys" or be
bound with a band in the furrow — when it "laughs
at the multitude of its city," regards not the crying of
the drivers, — when refusing absolutely to make ropes
out of sea sand any longer, it sets to work on statute-
leving, if you have a Pluto or a Jove, a Telephane or a
Psyche, a Mermaid or a Madonna, as fate or inspiration
direct. Be the work grim or glorious, dream or doing, you
have little choice left but quiescent adoption. As for
you, the nominal artist — your share in it has been to
work passively under dictates you neither delivered
not could question, that would not be uttered at your
pray, nor suppressed nor changed at your caprice. If
the result be attractive, the world will praise you, who
latter deserve praise; if it be repulsive, the same world
will blame you, who almost as little deserve blame.”

From this it would seem that the Creative
artist is an irresponsible tool held rent by a passion,
it may be for good, it may be for evil. It is possible that
Charlotte Bronte believed this to be literally the case. It
is, however, undeniable that she also believed it possible
to guard against the temptations of its creative impulse.
She sought the safeguard, practiced the discipline of a
habitual unswerving truthfulness. She allowed herself
no brilliant finish incompatible with reality. It was
for this reason that she transferred the interest in
Hilbert from one set of characters to another. She knew
that she was weakening the construction of her plot; she knew
that her action would be unwelcome to readers who
liked the flowery course of romance; but she feared
that the choice made was “Compulsory on the writer,”
so in no other way could she have been consistent with
truth. Between the lines we can read her admiration of
Anne deliberately pursuing an unpleasant task,
because she would not flinch from candour. “She hated
her work [i.e., in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall], but would
truest it. When reasoned with on this subject, she
regarded such reasonings as a temptation to self-
indulgence. She must be honest, she must not variant,
then, or conceal.” Charlotte admitted that Anne was
the last person to tackle such a subject as Huntington’s
career; but since Anne had taken up the subject Charlotte
could not help respecting the courage which faced
intolerable facts. She studied The Eseber as “with
reverence” because it appeared to her “as the first
of modern masters, as the legitimate High Priest of
Truth. She felt that her weakness had access to its sphere, a image of Truth:—an access denied her by reason of her limited experience. She accepted this limitation, resolved to keep within its boundaries. "Not one feeling on any subject, public or private, will I ever confess that I do not really experience." It was to Mrs. Gaskell that she opened her heart, telling her of the temptation to follow the line of least resistance, and take the average standpoint, to write smoothly and pleasantly when Truth demanded a severe, solitary coward. "A thought strikes me," she wrote, "Do you, who have so many friends—so large a circle of acquaintances, find it easy, when you sit down to write, to isolate yourself from all these ties, and their sweet associations, so as to be your own true, unenfluenced, unswayed by the consciousness of how your work may affect other minds; what blame or what sympathy it may call forth? Does no luminous cloud ever come between you, the severe Truth, as you know it in your own secret, clean seeing soul? In a word, are you never tempted to make your characters more amiable than the life, by the inclination to assimilate your thoughts to the thoughts of those who always feel kindly, but sometimes fail to see justly?" In this, at least, she and George Eliot had something in common; they both set before them, as the ultimate principle, an unshrinking fidelity to fact.


What then was the artistic result of this deliberate artistry? Of Charlotte's plot we have had much to say by the way. The course of Emily's single novel is like a great fire set alight, burning its way along till there is nothing left to consume. The fire is in Charlotte's novels also, but it dies down, smoulders, till some new wind of passion rouse to fan it again.
ith quickly falling flames. The wiser than Jane Eyre than the later novels, though, and even then the narrative does not speed from beginning to end like the running of a race; we cannot help feeling that Charlotte was not quite at ease. The pauses are not what they would be in a Shakespearean play, a cool retreat from known heat of episodes, but a symptom of flagging energy. It never fits into the plan of Charlotte Brontë’s novels that the pigeon should go to sleep in the arbour half way up the hill Difficulty; yet it always happens. Again, particularly in the case of Villette, she weakened her construction not only by deviations of tempo, but by a still more radical fault. She used melodrama to lay on her plot. Often we feel, as in the episodes of the Grey man, that these fantastic things are simply pieces of clumsy mechanism brought into action to further the dénouement. They are not allowed to the living, breathing fragments of narrative, but connecting links of an extremely garish type.

But apart from plot, there is the Technical question of prose style: where Charlotte stands on somewhat firmer ground. We know from Mrs. Gaskell that she never wrote down a sentence till she had completely rehearsed it in her own mind. And the result of this deliberate care, it must be admitted, that many of her paragraphs will not bear a close scrutiny; they do not run smoothly, but (like Jane Eyre’s desperation) have a “hitch” about them. It is true also that even her single sentences have flaws in their texture. We find her ending a beautiful description of sunset, with words falling like a flight on its delicacy—“at eight o’clock, P.M.” Yet Charlotte Brontë has been compared to Thackeray; and even in Thackeray we can find similar descent into the matter-of-fact. We must acknowledge that on every side of her art, Charlotte
Touch is not absolutely continuous; but when her fingers are controlled to firmness, she achieves something exquisite - unique. One may get a metaphor sustained through half a paragraph - as in the comparison of Jane's disillusion to the glories of a shattered summer. Sometimes it comes with a queerly pervasive imagery that the "gentle heart pierced" surrounding the "pure fine flame" of Paulina's nature. At other times, she teeters perilously near to sentimentality, escapes by sheer virtue of simplicity. "I was full of faults," said Lucy, speaking of her crowning interview with Mr. Paul; "he took them - me all home."

Frequently we find a probing sharpness in her phrases. In one of her fragments, we find these sentences: "Here I am! More! I was one of those nester pumpers which are very troublesome, clogging if touched slightly, but which squeeze tame as dook-leaves under an undaunted finger or thumb." Surely no other writer - most positively no other woman - ever used such ferocious imagery in describing the bitterness of mental agony. Consider how she describes a young lady's sufferings - unusual sufferings, no doubt; but it is easy to understand that any denizen recipients of Jane Austen's apparent meanness would be startled at the strength of this language - the homeliness they would be shaken out of any realization of Lucy's exceptional plight. "Somewhat bare, flat, and treeless was the route along which our journey lay; slimy canals crept, like half subterranean snakes beside the road; a formal pollard willows edged level fields, tilled like kitchen garden beds. The sky too, was monstrously gray; the atmosphere was stagnant and humid; yet amidst all these deadening influences, my fancy budged fresh - my heart back to
sunshine. These feelings, however, were well kept in check by the secret but ceaseless consciousness of anxiety lying in wait on enjoyment like a tiger crouched in a jungle. The breathing of that beast of prey was in my ear always; his fierce heart thumped close against mine, he never stirred in his place, but I felt him. I knew he waited only for sundown to bound ravacious from his ambush.

Bottom, who was not given to many compensations, felt appalled by the idea of bringing in "a lion among ladies." But here we have a snake or tiger, brought into the company of our thoughts by a lady. It recalls Lockhart's surfeit comment on Jane Eyre: "rather a brazen Miss."

It is unsatisfactory to pull selections from Charlotte Bronte's writings. Perhaps it is because they are so much alive that they cannot be cut to pieces. It is like pulling petals of a flower, exhibiting them as representatives of its beauty; while the charm has evaporated, even the very fragrance has vanished. Charlotte's best phrases are not exquisite when sequenced. To appreciate them we must light upon them in the midst of a printed page. She was a home-lying person, never truly herself unless in familiar places; her phrases are like their creator: we have to find them in their own element before we can love them.

3. The Woman: (a) Her Experience.

So much has been written about Charlotte Bronte, the woman, that it is a matter of extreme difficulty to avoid a vain repetition of other men's words or ideas. When we speak here of Charlotte's experience, it is with no intention of tabulating in parallel columns the episodes of her life and the episodes of her novels. Nor is it necessary to give a list of all her characters with the names of the originals.
added to them. These things are valuable, but they have been done more than once, and for all time. They are not like matters of critical judgment which are liable to modification; they are established facts.

From Charlotte Brontë's experience it is advisable to take a few broad characteristics, tendencies and principles rather than episodes; these throw light not so much on the details of her novels as on their general spirit and tone. In one point particularly, Charlotte seems to have represented the family feelings rather than expression, instead of expressing an original standpoint. All the books written by the Brontës have hard notes running through their melodies. They all liked bluntness. They could tolerate some consolation out of parent scenes or forbidding people, but insipidly held out no solace. Charlotte must have agreed even with the object of the Brontës. Ingrain, when she made her speak in this way: — "A fig for Reginald!" cried she.... It is in my opinion the fiddler David must have been an insipid kind of fellow; I like black Bothwell better." — She meant something of the same kind when she wrote to Villette the following words: — "As well might you look for good fruit on a worthless sapless tree, as for charm that will endure in a feeble and relaxed nature. A girl was hurt when Mr. Paul considered her as inoffensive as a shadow; she was hurt, because she knew she could be formidable. She held her head higher after writing Miss Ginevra Sanditson, — with what sharpness! — in language of which the fidelity sometimes might challenge comparison with the compliments of a John Knox to a Reuben Mary." — Charlotte was set at ease by roughness. When St. John left Mrs. Ayre with a few cold words of reconciliation, she had only one thought in her mind: — I would never hurt, he had knocked me down." Jane's antipathy to St. John's
immobility was intensified by her memories of Rochester's Tempest. It was, indeed, his violence which had at first made her feel at home with him. "The gnawing the roughness of the Traveller, set me at my ease."

Now, some of this harshness of tone might be accounted for by the fact that Charlotte lived a bare, almost Spartan life, in a bleak district, with at least some hot-tempered companions; but if all this could hardly explain the Brontës' obsession by the brutal element of human nature, Jane Eyre, "weary of an existence all passion," welcomed the rough entry of Rochester into her life. Yet we can hardly say that it was mere stagnation, monotony of their lives pushed the Brontë sisters into reactionary brutality. It cannot account for Emily: Heathcliff, or Anne's Huntingdon. It cannot account for the bullies in Charlotte's novel—Edward Crimsworth, John Reed: masterful men like Rochester, St. John, Mr. Helstone, and Robert Moore, (a combination of "a hard dog" + "a dreamer") even where Charlotte wished to paint an attractive portrait she placed hard, dominating lines on the features. nor Paul she compared to "an intelligent Tiger," she loved him, not in spite of his sharpness but because of it. She wrote no book which did not lay emphasis on some masterful character; often behind this mastery there is a latent suggestion of something savage. How she reached this idea of rightful authority + mastery, it is difficult to say; but there can be no doubt but that the savage side of human nature was revealed to her by her own brother Branwell. The experience of living in the same house with such a man could not fail to change the outlook of any woman. It was because she knew Branwell that she wrote to Mr. Williams with such a vehement denial: "Is there a human being, you ask, so depraved that an act of kindness
weil not touch—may, a word meet him? There are hundreds of human beings who trample on acts of kindness—mock at words of affection. I know this though I have seen but little of the world. I suppose I have something rather in my nature than you have, something which every now and then tells me dreary secrets about my race. I cannot believe the voice of the Optimist charm he never so wisely.

This reference to Branwell Bronte leads to another more delicate question—the "purity" of her sister's novels. She can compare the judgment passed on this matter by two gentlemen—both clergymen—both men of letters. Charles Kingsley wrote to Mr. Gaskell in warm admiration of her Life of Charlotte Bronte, "As sure," he said, "that the book will do good.... It will shame the frivolity of a not over cleanly thought carefully whitewashed age, into believing that purity is now (as in all ages) still now) quite compatible with the knowledge of evil." On the other side we have Sir Robertson Nicoll declaring that although Charlotte's knowledge of evil left no stain on her character it tainted her books. As Sir Roger de Coverley would have suggested, there is "much to be said on both sides." Purity, as Kingsley reminds us is not worthy of the name if it is stupidly ignorant of evil, or so dishonest as to turn into black upon facts. On the other hand Sir Robertson Nicoll blames Charlotte for facing unpleasant facts, but for becoming accustomcd to them. One had as right to condone Rochester's evil as to take it as a matter of course. She should have been horrified by it. Rochester was accurate in describing her "peculiar" or "unique" mind as "one not liable to take infection." He was right also when he admired her self-control—"this young girl who stands so grave and quiet at the
mouth of hell." That which was true of Jane Eyre was also true of her creator. It is not good for anybody to stand too long looking into the mouth of hell; but Charlotte had to do it; her sisters also. They could scarcely help losing their capacity for being shocked. Mr. Chesterton has distinguished finely between the standpoint of the pessimist and the optimist. "The pessimist," says he, "can be enraged at evil. But only the optimist can be surprised at it." He goes on to expound the theory that the surprise of the optimist does more than the rage of the pessimist to alter the face of the world. But it does little harm to evil by meeting it with the desperate resignation of one who expects nothing better. The belief in evil is always something negative; it is the negation of goodness; it must be reinforced with a positive belief in goodness. With Charlotte Bronte this was also the case.

(152) There is another fact which leaves a deep impression on the character of Charlotte's writings. This is the fact of her sex. In its most obvious and superficial sense she felt her sex to be a handicap because it cut her off from self-knowledge of her masculine character. Yet this apparent handicap probably deepened her faculty of observation. The Rev. Charles Merivale soon perceived couplet Bell to be a woman because the words described men's faces "so intensely." This in itself is a superficial matter. But the fact of sex went deeper. All through life Charlotte felt it as a check. She realized that a woman always had to be making excuses for writing books. In early life she wrote to Snutley, received a reply, kindly given, no doubt, but containing sentences that must have rankled - "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, or it might not be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties the less leisure she has for it,"
even as an accomplishment, or recreation." Years later, when she married Mr. Nellon, she found to her cost, that her husband held the same opinion. When she went to Sydney & Bell to the unselfishness of the truly great man, she must have been thinking of her own self-sacrifice, the impediments placed in the way of his genius, primarily because she was a woman. "Do we not all know that true greatness is simple, self-oblivious, prone to unambitious, unselfish attachment? The truly great man is too sincere in his affections to grudge a sacrifice; too much absorbed in his work to talk loudly about it; too intent on finding the best way to accomplish what he undertakes, to think great things of himself, the instrument. And if God places seeming impediments in his way, if his duties sometimes seem to hamper his powers—" he feels keenly, perhaps rages under the slow torture of hindrance, delay; but if there be a true man’s heart in his breast, he can bear, submit, wait patiently." Change the gender of the pronoun from masculine to feminine, and the passage seems to tell us story of Charlotte’s life.

It was not that she excelled domestically. She had much external evidence in support of her efficient housekeeping. Probably the most convincing evidence is that in her own books. A great deal fewer lies on many of her pages. It was her womanly insight which led her to recognize so quickly the spirit in a room. No man could have described it in her way. The room where Lady found shelter & solace. Even although there are few, if any, references to things distinctly womanly, we feel that the comfort of the room is the result of a woman’s handiwork. Indeed in a previous passage the references are more specific. We feel that Charlotte also could have made a room like that.
Tender and soothing to the spirit. It was hard to escape from quotation: "My calm little room seemed somehow like a cave in the sea. There was no colour about it, except that white pale green suggestive of foam on deep blue; the flamed candles were adorned with shell-shaped ornaments; there were white mouldings like dolphins in the ceiling angles. Even that one touch of colour resisted in the red satin pincushion bore affinity to coral; even that dark shining glass might have been mirrored a mermaid. Then I closed my eyes, I heard a gale, rolling at last beating upon the house, how like a settling swell upon a rock face. I heard it drawn in, withdrawn far, far off, like a tide receding from a shore of the deeper world, a world so high above that the reach of its largest waves, the dash of its fiercest breakers could sound down in this calm, marine home only like merriments of a bell-like." 

We know that Charlotte appreciated womanly refinement, but she desired other things as well. "Women have so few things to think about," said Caroline Helstone, "men so many." Like Rose Yorke, Charlotte had no objection to the making of stockings or the darning of sheets; but she would have exclaimed with Rose, "I don't do nothing but that, I will do that, then I will do more." St. John told Jane that she was a woman "formed for labor, not for love." This was an alternative constantly present in Charlotte's scheme of thinking. With regard to the second alternative, it is rather significant that she did not marry till late in life, also that most of the husbands portrayed in her novels have a touch of arrogance. Sometimes this appears quite naively, as in the reflections of William Crimsworth: "Frances was then a good and dear wife to me, because I was to her a good and faithful husband." At the other extreme is the arrogance which is another word for brutality. "Mr. Moore took away his wife's letter," scoffed
at her accusation of robbery. "Robbed?" he said, "a man
and his wife? What's yours is mine." This idea found its
way to Emily Brontë's mind when she described a young
Edgar Linton assuming the airs of the married man, who
possesses his wife's house, her books, her birds, and her pony.
"I told her she had nothing to give, they were all all
mine." Somewhere in the minds of both Charlotte and Emily
there seemed to lurk a suspicion of matrimony.
This may partly due to the fact that they had come
across men who despised women. It is remarkable that
Charlotte should have placed in a single book two
such confirmed misogynists as Mr. Helstone & Joe Scott.
This tendency led her to constant reflection on the
relative status of men & women. These things are
backwards to us now, but they were new then. Caroline
Hellstone & Shirley Keeldar debated on this topic. In fact
the keynote of Shirley is this question of woman's rights.
The heroine -- "Captain Shirley Keeldar" -- is a woman
successfully performing a man's functions. She bitterly
resented her uncle's attempts to deprive her, as a
woman, of free speech. Charlotte's whole attitude to
the question finds expression in a sharply-turned
sentence taken from her letter: describing the dis-

tinction made between a brother & a sister: "He is ex-
pected to act a part in life; to do, while they are only to
be." This leads us to the second of St. John's alternative
labours. Charlotte Bronte felt that a woman could not
keep her soul alive without one of these alternatives
labours or love. In Shirley she had many things to say
about old maids; most emphatically she believed that
no old maid could afford to be idle... George Eliot
records Mr. Lewes' impressions of Charlotte: "Ewes," she
writes, was describing Eleanor Bell to me yesterday,
as a little, plain, provincial, sickly, looking old maid,
yet what passion, what fire is hers! That passion, fire would have died if she had been a wealthy old maid without a vocation; but Charlotte had her art. She championed the cause of the woman worker. As she wrote to Miss Williams, 'The great curse of a single female life is its dependency.' In the same letter she revealed more fully the索ve which had come from her book in the place it held in her life: 'Lonely as I am, how should I of Providence have never given me courage to adopt a career—perseverance to plead through two long weary years with publishers till they admitted me? How should I fit with youth past, sisters lost, a resident in a moorland parish where there is not a single educated family? In that case I should have no world at all; the nearer, weary of surveying the deluge, without an ark to return to, would be my type. As it is, something like a hope and motive sustains me still. I wish all your daughters—I wish every woman in England, had also a hope and motive. Also! there are many old maids who have neither.' All her arguments may seem trite to us who have travelled so much further; but they serve to prove that Charlotte was characteristically a pioneer—a pioneer, among other things, of the 'feminist' movement.

(17) Only one more reference can be made to the nature of Charlotte Bronte's experience; this is not so much her experience as the way in which she faced it. It does not take many words to say that Charlotte was courageous: yet this fact left no slight trace on her life or her books. In her Biographical Notice of Ellen Nettleton Bell she wrote: 'If success failed to enrich us, the mere effort to succeed had given a wonderful zest to existence; it must be pursued.' Fortitude like Charlotte's lends a moral dignity to anything it touches. Everybody remembers how she started to write her
Greatest book. With her first book repeated & still
flying the rounds of the publishers, with her father
suffering from cataract & herself as his only Com-
ppanion in a strange Town — "In those grey, weary,
uniform streets," wrote Mrs Gaskell "where all faces
saw that of her kind doctor were strange & untouched
with sunlight to her — there is then did the brute genius
begin Jane Eyre." In some ways it seems incomprehensible
that she could have written anything fine under such
a weight of depression. In other ways it would seem im-
comprehensible, unjust that she running so bravely,
should fail to win a prize.

Her Opinions.

Charlotte Bronte was not a woman of many "opinions."
when she had experience or emotion, she did not process
much in the half-way houses between them. Sometimes her
opinions travelled a further — become emotions. This is
seen in her attitude to certain wholesome traditions.
Charlotte was not a conventionalist like her own
Hortense Moore who ever disapproved what was un-
intelligible. She believed rather that a belief might
grow quietly in the heart, without any stern of criticism
to hinder its development. In the course of years it would
take the form of a tradition always accepted without
resistance till suddenly, at a moment of crisis, the
folded colourless band would break into flashing
colour. It was so in Jane Eyre's case. "Who in the world cares
for you?" asked the Templer. "Or who will be injured by what
you do?" Every reader must remember Jane's indomitable
reply, as she feels her traditions closing round her like a
wall of defense. I quote a few sentences: "I will hold
to the principles received by me when I was sane & not
mad — as I am now. Laws & principles are not for the
Times when there is no temptation; they are for such moments
as this when body & soul rise in mutiny against their
require: stringent are they; intangible they shall be....
They have a worth — so have always believed; or I cannot believe it now, it is because I am insane — quite insane; with my veins running fire, my heart beating faster than I can count its throbs.
Preconceived opinions, foregone determinations, are all I have at this hour to stand by; there I plant my foot.

In other cases, her opinion remained unwarmed by passion. This is true of her attitude to democracy. She gets the impression that Charlotte had never made up her mind on this subject. She had a few ideas, but they did not cling well together. In general, her tendency was not strongly democratic. She recognized the necessity for philanthropy, but she had a lurking respect for men like Mr. Helstone or Mr. Moore, who opposed the people. Doubtless, in the end, she made Moore a beneficent employer, but she was quite as sympathetic to him before her conversion as after it. She admired the sterling qualities of a working man like Farley. She remarked also on the natural politeness of Caroline's Sunday School scholars, with their instinctive feeling for her shyness. Yet she never seemed to mention these things out of a full heart. Jane was attracted to the Rivers secters because they were "ladies in every way." They received her more generously than did their servant, Hannah. "Prejudice," commented Jane, "it is well known, are most difficult to eradicate from the hearts whose soil has never been loosened or fertilized by education; they grow there firm as weeds among stones." It is well known that Charlotte was a Tory, the Duke of Wellington her hero. It is one case in which she was not a pioneer of new ideas.

There was one other direction in which Charlotte's opinions lacked fire. She was a sincerely devout,
woman. In the days of her greatest solitude she rested quietly and firmly upon faith. Yet her faith was deficient in passion. It did not possess that piercing quality of all vital truth, penetrating the heart like swords. It was a consolation and a support, but not an exaltation. As a clergyman's daughter she could not fail to draw some clerical portraits: in the combination of many she laughed at her father's curate. Definite manifestation of the religious spirit awakened in her mind no corresponding note of sympathy. "Consider," she wrote, "Methodism, Quakerism, the extremes of High and Low Churchism foolish, but Roman Catholicism beats them all." She believed in dogmas and forms of religion, holding that they are a support to the finite human intellect. These opinions of hers seemed to count for very little. She who could write so fluently on other matters expressed religious ideas with a surprising coarseness. It is true that throughout her letters we find references to religious consolation; there can be no doubt about their sincerity, but they do not carry with them an intensity of infectious conviction.

Her portrait of St. John is her nearest approach to the study of religious psychology; two feel that he repelled her. Jane found no healing in his preaching. His prayers elevated, but did not change his nature. In short, his religion had about it no transfiguring quality; it did not alter his natural hardness of temperament. While George Eliot would have understood his love of great causes, she would not have exaggerated the potency of such influences; she would have made him less single-minded, more human. However, Charlotte loved individuals. She was like Lamb, "never dealing systematically with things, but fastening on to particulars." She had the same affection for Jane Austen, a far less estimable person than St. John. In her she
found the same tendancy to public charity, the same incapacity for private compassion. To return to St. John: we always catch in Charlotte's delineation the hint that he was not so noble as he seemed. His devotion to a great cause was a form of selfish abstraction. In renouncing Miss Oliver, he sought a higher reward—"he would not give one chance of heaven nor relinquish for the asylum of her lost, one hope of the true, eternal Paradise." While Charlotte repeatedly admitted his cause to be right, she hotly insisted that his motives were wrong. Her first appeal made to Charlotte by St. John's cause is perhaps the most significant instance of her limitations in religious sympathy."

(ii). Her Emotions.

"Charlotte Bronte is great in clouds," writes Mrs. Frederic Harrison, "like a prose Shelley." It was not only in her lot of stormy skies that she resembled Shelley; she was like him in the dominant passion of her nature, its craving for liberty. Sometimes she wrote of the free spirit struggling under oppression. As little Anne Eyre said of herself, "The mood of the revolted slave was tracing me with its bitter sorrows." Later in her story we find Jane wrestling to preserve her own identity of soul. Rochester had never claimed what St. John took for granted—the mastery of her spirit. Rochester so loved her individuality that he never sought to merge it in his. Jane felt that she was fighting St. John with her own soul at stake. She rejected his offers of marriage because she realized what such a marriage would involve; "As his wife—at his side always, always restrained, always checked—forced to keep the fire of my mind continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly, to never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flames consumed vital after vital—this would be unendurable."

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Nevertheless this was not the most constant aspect of her yearnings after liberty, she was not a woman ground down by oppression, but a woman confined in a narrow place. As Dr. Robertson recall his remark with a wise sympathy, she gave to her heroines the freedom from which she had been debarred. "She liberated her heroines that they might win their way to that world of perfect happiness whose doors were closed to her." Jane Eyre looked out fully across fields and hills to the dim sky line, after much stress her cravings found satisfaction. It was never so with her creator. Charlotte's school friend Mary Taylor one told her that she and her sisters were "like potatoes growing in a cellar."— "She said sadly, 'Yes! I know we are!' When Mary wrote to her from Belgium, her news was more than Charlotte could bear. 'I hardly know,' she confided to Ellen Mcessey, what revolved in my breast as I read her letter; such a vehement impatience of restraint & steady work; such a strong wish for wings— wings such as wealth can furnish; such an urgent thirst to rise, to know to learn; something internal seemed to expand bodily, for a minute, I was tantalised by its consciousness, of faculties unexercised, then all collapsed, & I despair.' My dear, I would hardly make that confession to any one but yourself, to you I never in a letter than write..." These rebellions of absurd emotions were only momentary; I quelled them in five minutes. I hope they will not revive, for they were acutely painful."— Rochester's entry renewed the stagnant atmosphere of Thornfield Hall. "a chill from the outer world was flowing through it." Charlotte also felt her life flowing outwards to the world beyond the confining Yorkshire hills. Like her own Lucy, she escaped. She felt what she made them feel...
on first seeing the dome of St. Paul's. " While I looked
my inner self more; my spirit shook its always-
feathered wings half closed; I had a sudden feeling
as if I, who never yet truly lived, were at last about
to taste life. In that morning my soul grew as fast
as Jonah's gourd." Like Lucy she went to Brussels; but
unlike Lucy she had to return. This is, what she felt.
"Something is as which need to be enthusiastic,
is snared down; broken. I have fewer illusions; what
I wish for now is active exertion—a stake in life.
Howarth seems such a lonely quiet spot, buried
away from the world." By her own account, Mary
Taylor again stepped on and made Charlotte restless,
by urging her not to stay at home. "Such a dark
shadow came over her face when I said, 'Think of what
you'll be five years hence!' that I stopped." said
'Don't cry, Charlotte!' She did not cry, but went on
walking up and down the room. Said in a little
while: 'But I intend to stay. Folly.'" This was said
in 1845, before the five years were out, Charlotte
had so mastered fate as to publish Jane Eyre,
Shelley. "But she never escaped from her prison.
When Jane took up her obscure duties in the
village school she lead aside her highest faculties.
"What," asked St. John, "will you do with your ac-
complishments? What with the largest portion of your
mind—sentiments, tastes?" Jane's reply was
significantly: "Save them till they are wanted. They
will keep." Charlotte also saved her gifts for the
days of fuller opportunity; and they never came.
"It is better," she wrote, "to be worn out with work
in a thronged community, than to perish of inaction
in a stagnant solitude." What that solitude must
have been we can best imagine from a sentence
in one of her letters: describing the dead silence.
A village parsonage—in which the tick of the clock is heard all day long. He should also quote the last sentence of the same letter: "The presence in solitary confinement, the tread in the block of marble, all in time shape theirselv; their lot." She shaped herself to her lot. She brought her windows out to the Treasury of literature. She cannot help aspiring to George Eliot in this respect. George Eliot travelled, not many people. She had all the experience which would have counted for so much to Charlotte, which seemed in some ways wasted upon herself. Charlotte's receptive, sensitive nature was toned under new impressions; how few she received! George Eliot, who was constantly receiving new impressions, had not the same experiencing nature; she could not make of her experiences what Charlotte Bronte would have done.

Such an isolation of outlook could not fail to cast a shade of remoteness on her art. She often described things as if she were looking at them from a distance. When Jane Eyre was a little girl, she looked up to Miss Temple through the idealizing mists of childhood. Even when she was a grown woman, she surveyed human beings of a certain type with a curious, uncomprehending detachment. She described the fashionable ladies who visited Thornfield as if they had been nothing more than beautiful and interesting specimens. Take, for example, this sentence: "All talked in a low, but clear tone, which seemed habitual to them." Rochester was right when he told her that she had no eyes to see Thornfield in its true light. "The glamour of inexperience is over your eye," he answered, "you see it through a charmed medium." Charlotte had the same medium between her and reality. Even when the medium was dispersed,
she retained the habitual pose of its spectators. She liked watching excitement. Most of its figures

of Voltaire is contained in Tracy's quiet scrutiny of
McClure's hurricane moods. "I liked," she said, "the
McEwan's jealous; it let up its nature; took his
spirits; and threw all sorts of queer lights and shadows
over his deep face, into his violet-azure eyes."

This limitation of experience also led Charlotte
to a constant questioning of the imagination. Like her
own Jane, she could have said, "All sorts of fancy
fright v dark tenanted my mind." How far was she
to make use of them? She debated this problem in a
letter to Mr. Lecce, who had told her that experience
was not fancy is of permanent human interest. "I
feel," she replied, "that this also is true; but, dear
Sir, is not the real experience of each individual
very limited? And of a writer dwells upon that
suddenly or principally, is he not in danger of repeating
himself, or also of becoming an echo? Then, too,
imagination is a strong, restless faculty, which claims
it to be heard and exercised; are we to be
quite deaf to her cry, v immense v her struggle?
When do shows us bright pictures are we never to
look at them, v try to reproduce them? And when she
is eloquent, v speaks rapidly v urgently in our
ear, are we not v write v her dedication? 

Years afterwards, she tried the experiment of drawing
a character entirely from the imagination. This was
Paulina, "old v unearthly" as a child; playing
in a sickroom v as noiselessly v as cheerfully v
slight," carrying with her always a delicate fragrance
of personality. 

"It was the perfume which gave the
white violet destination, v made it superior to the
broader camellia, the fullest Dahlia that ever
bloomed." Very characteristic was her child-like
attitude to Graham’s love of marmalade. She ceased all out of his mother, carried it to him, put on her breakfast, sharing everything with him except the marmalade; for she did not wish it to appear that she had procured it for herself. "He constantly coined," added her narrator, "their near perceptions and delicate instincts." Charlotte set out to make the character the most beautiful in the book, and to a certain extent she succeeded. Pauline’s character is beautiful; yet we had known nothing else of her creator, we could have been sure of this, that her nature also was beautiful, to have formed such a conception. But this beauty is not convincing or moving. Charlotte herself was not satisfied. She suspected that the defect of the conception lay in its purely fanciful origin; it lacked "the germ of the real." "I felt," she wrote, "that this character lacked substance. I fear that the reader will feel the same union with it resembles too much the fate of Ixion, who was mated with a cloud."

Again another outcome of Charlotte Bronte’s restricted experience was her dependence upon her own intuition. It will be remembered how Jane Eyre’s anticipations of marriage were marred by haunted with vague, foreboding dreams; at another moment a bluster she heard ringing in her ears a supernatural summons. George Eliot praised the “preternatural” quality of Charlotte’s novels, frequently indeed we get the impression of something almost clairvoyante in her perception of character when she seemed to walk by faith, not by sight. Thus, for instance, she had an instinctive fondness for Mrs Bellingham, a woman instinctively resolute of Mrs. Bellingham. She knew to understand the inscrutable directions, but could not explain the process. "Deep into some of Madame’s secrets I had entered. I knew not how — by an intuition, or an inspiration, which came to
me, I know not whence." Throughout we feel that Charlotte's psychology was not acquired, but instinctive. She realised the mystery of mental processes, she lived in that most interesting fragment the Motion to give not an explanation, but a report of a certain psychological experience. She vividly describes Wilkie Moore's intuitive judgment of Eleanor: "He had at times a second sight which showed him his acquaintance at once in the spirit and in the flesh... He saw the false forms of the two lades in his presence. He saw something else—a nameless entity accompanying each material shape. This abstraction was honest and healthy, if vulgar in Sarah Julia's case; in Alicia's it was tormented, grief-stricken. Her young figure cast in the wals for him an old and ghostly shadow. Better, if you ever read this, do not misunderstand me, do not say I am writing about spirits, or giving you a hero possessed of the Highland second sight. That is not what I mean. Perhaps some of you have the power yourselves, if so, you will seize my intent at once; otherwise I had better not force it on you." She does not force this on her readers, as it is not a matter for demonstration. It is deeply characteristic of her that she should have repeated logical, scientific inferences in favour of her premonition, human instincts.

1. All this goes to prove that Charlotte possessed an intensely emotional temperament. We have yet to consider the extraordinary vitality which flowed from her persons into her books. They glowed with life. Nature, the furniture of houses, the expressions on faces, everything seemed to beat to the rhythm of the story. In nature she felt the thrill of storm, darkness, the physical sensation of rain and cold. She can take a few scattered instances from Jane Eyre. At Gateshead we have brought before us the chilly depressing walks in the rain swept garden, the storm beating outside the red room, or the wet drizzle of Jane's departure. We see her on her right journey with "the wild wind rushing amongst trees." Her first sleep at Lowood was broken by the
day of the wind raving "in furious gusts," on a night of windy moonlight she saw Miss Temple approaching her. She arrived at Thornfield by night—saw the narrow galaxy of lights in the village, the outline of the Church Tower, heard the chime of its clock. When Rochester saw her picture he asked her how she had learnt "to paint wind." The scene of confusion after Mason's injury took place in glimmering moonlight.

Jane's presentsiments of catastrophe were intensified by the restless winds which whirled about the house on the eve of her marriage. Again, as in the best chapters in Shirley, is that describing the still night suddenly broken with tumult as the resters attacked the mill. In Villette, we see Lucy watching by Miss Marchmont's sick bed, listening to the "strange accents in the storm." In the next chapter we find her treading a dim path, with no light save that of the stars, in the "moving mystery" of the Aurora. Later, on she was lowered down the flames in the night until the resters "black "as a torrent of ink." When she arrived at the spooking, glimmering lights faced her "like unnumbered threatening eyes." On her first night in Villette she had to find her way through a dark, wet, deserted boulevard. She escaped from the classroom to watch a thunderstorm, to stay with "the wild hour, black as full of thunder, pealing out such an ode as language never delivered to man—" terrify glistening the spectacle of clouds, split and pierced by white-blinding bolts." Later on there comes a description of a still Continental night—"Heaven was cloudless and vast with the quiver of its living风气." Then they fell ill, she was haunted by the voices of Tempest: "Sleep went quite away. I used to rise in the night, look round for her, beseech her earnestly to return. A rattle of the window, a cry of the blast, only replied. Sleep never came." The gray rain swept past her. M. Paul with the wind and rain in his company. "She looked tall in fierce gesture. As she went, the wind rote sobbing, the rain poured wild..."
cold; the whole night seemed to fill her. Most impressive of all is the final chapter, with its description of the passionate storm centering its mysterious shadows over the fate of Mr. Paul.

This note of joy or darkness is constantly repeated in the music of Charlotte Bronte's words; but there were other tones in her Chords. She was not "all unhappy." In Wuthering Heights she described the "sweet, soft, alluring sounds" of praying chance. In Shirley she said Caroline in love with the beauty of the woods. But it is chiefly in Jane Eyre that we feel around us the exquisite, tender companionship of nature. It does not appear so much in the earlier chapters as in the later. Breaks at dawn, spring deepens into that beautiful, yet dreary, summer, tainted with disease. It is as though still we find nature taking on warmth, depth, and sympathy. She feels it first in the "wet, solemn, leafless" trees on the wind-lane where Jane lingered through winter into the dusky moonlight and into this dress - then in the scene where the red-laden clatter of Rochester's harkness was left to the railroad. She watches the "sudden March" of the moon, through the sky - "and for three trembling stars that followed her course, they made my heart tremble, my veins growl when I viewed them." Here she again sees Mason going away in the freshness of dawn, but on sound before turning to birds, no stronger colors than the flush of flowers. The sun rises, bringing a deepening fragrance from the flowers, a radiant light, flashing on the "quiet walks." Jane Rochester talks in the garden with Jane, she is aware of the sweet, most exquisitely toned of birds, singing in the trees, high above the human cries. Through the tension of his words she feels wonder that the birds should sing, the leaves should whisper, while her own heart is hushed "to catch the suspended revelation." The murmurs, the movement, in the garden, the
silence - tension of Jane's heart - these things seem to cling together, to grow, to melt, to fade, like mist. Thehuman passion lends a new dignity to the garden; the garden sheds its own "tender grace" over the minds of the human actors. It was in the same garden that Jane talked to Rochester in the warm, sunny twilight, till the storm crashed upon them, in their new-found bliss. A few moments before the catastrophe Jane looked up at the "cloudy morning sky," at a rook wheeling round the grey church tower; then she passed out of the fresh sunlight into the shadows of the church, on her way to disaster. After their next words, all was still, and its lonely road led through the deep, wild heather. She felt the appeal of the solitude, its touch upon that elemental passion for the god, for the Earth that tore at us; we seem to live with Jane through the kindly summer day, into the mystery of the grave, star-lit night, till the dawn gives her a golden or the declamation of her spirit.

It is not always nature which lends its mood to the story. Very often it is something chancey which casts a shadow over the episode or some chance human sound awakens wild echoes falling strangely, weirdly through the ordinary music. Again we must go to Jane Eyre for the best illustrations. We do not read far in the story before we find the weirdness of mood reflected back from the dark mirror in the red room. Jane looked fearfully at "the strange little figure staring gazing at her," with a white face, "not speaking its name, glittering eyes." After moving where all else was still, the swift darting light on the wall came from an ordinary lantern, but in her nervous frenzy she took it to be the "herald of some coming vision from another world." Then Jane was left alone to tend the wounded Master, her terror was intensified by the flickering shadows cast by a evening candle on the ancient tapestries, the hangings of the bed, its panels of the cabiner grime cast with the heads of the...
apologies, above all the dark, stern, crucifix. The stormy 
extent had the power of piercing her emotions; still more so 
the weird human noises in that uncanny house. She 
could not shake off the repulsion of that strange, mirthless 
laugh, hardly echoing through the still, empty rooms. 
On the night when Rochester's bed was not alight, Jane heard 
strange murmurs through the house, the sound of fingers 
propping at her door, then a low, grim laugh. Even the 
faces of people—particularly their eyes—are deepen with a 
peculiar intensity. Mr. Reed had a "Carrington eye," St. 
John fired his "blue perspectival-looking eyes" on Jane. Even the 
Tea-looking Mr. Mason had in his eyes a hint of something 
fatal. - "His eye wandered, had no meaning in its 
wandering; this gave him an odd look, such as I never 
remembered to have seen... There was... no command in the 
blank, brown eye." In Shirley, also, there is a casual 
reference to "a pair of blue eyes that were unusually 
sluggish, secretly on the alert." - "I knew by their expression," 
continues the writer, "an expression which chilled my 
blood. It was in that quarter so thoroughly unexpected 
that for years I had been accustomed to silent and 
reading. These things may seem details which can be 
mentioned in a few words, but they have the wonderful potency 
of creating an atmosphere which pervades the story. They 
are like a slight touch, setting an electric current in motion. 
(45) Nevertheless, these things are not over-wrapped round 
the story—lying on its surface. Further down there are 
residue, central fires of passion. The fire is at different 
temperatures in Charlotte's three chief novels. In Jane 
Eyre it is hottest, in Shirley it smoulders; in Villette it 
sits like a flicker.

In Jane Eyre we watch the gradual awakening of an 
unquenched fire. "You are cold," says Rochester to Jane, 
because you are alone; no contact strikes the fire from 
you that is in you." He tells her that happiness is close
beside her; all she has to do is to stretch out her hand and take it. But she is of the kind to reject external opportunities; the flame within her is something isolated, secret, self-dependent. In her face Rochester sees the witness of her thoughts: "I need not call my soul to buy these. I have an inward treasure born within me which can keep me alive if all extraneous delights should be withheld, or offered only at a price I cannot afford to give." It is this "itch" in Jane's character which ticks Rochester to persistency. He finds her face till her heart trembles and blazes in the exaltation of dawn in the garden: the red glow breaks later into flaming words, terse, searching, incisive: "I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionality, nor even of mortal flesh; it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave - we stood at God's feet equal - as we are!" The fervent glowing flames died down to the mellow burning of disillusion. This is one of the exceptional places in Charlotte Bronte, where the thought of solitude, consolation comes - but only for a moment, with the simplicity, the exaltation, of a fresh, vital passion. "The idea only still thrills my life like a remembrance of God. I - I forgot an unuttered prayer; these words went wandering up and down in my restless mind as something that should be whispered, but no energy was found to express them. 'Be not far from me; for trouble is near; there is none to help.'" - The trouble came: "In fully heavy, swung the torrent power round me." And Jane found where she deemed a far reason for this suffering; she had been overwhelmed just because she had been incapable of articulate prayer. This is literally the meaning of the last paragraph of the twenty-sixth chapter. There is something astounding in this heroines - nay, the brutality - of the motives so unaccountably imputed to God. It is after such words as these that we
begin to understand more clearly the inadequacy of
Charlotte's religious utterances. The passion then fades
into a great quietness as Jane Egles, Rochester—"yet not
in words, not outwardly; only at (the) heart's core." She
goes out to face the "awful blank" of the future—"something
like the world when the deluge was gone by." After that
the savage flames die down to a more temperate warm.
Next for me moment in the story cold; but we pass out of
the story gone.

With Shirley, the case is different. It is not a great work
of art. Its greatest fault is the want of that invigorating
passion which kept Jane Egles on the high grounds of poetry.
Much of the emotion in Shirley is weak or overstrained,
but there is an occasional delicate beauty of fancy as when
Caroline saw Shirley & Moore standing together in the moonlight
like two great happy spirits: "Yonder shrubbery pavement
reminds me of that white stone we believe to be beyond
the death floor; they have reached it, they walk there
united." However, no fair-minded person stops to cast
a cold flame on Shirley, for it was written under a strain of
calamities that subdue hostile criticism.

The emotional temperature of Villette varies from page to
page. As a story it is more diffuse, less concentrated than
Jane Egles. The fire burns over a larger area, involves
more people; but the extension of its proportions tends to the
dissipation of its energy. The emotion here is not so zealous
as in Jane Egles, but it is more delicate. While in Jane Egles
we find a magnificent sweep, zest & daring, many pages of
Villette are written with a cool, clear grace. It is hard to
understand Prof. Bhab when he finds no solace in this
novel. It is true of course that the book is unequal; yet
how good it is at its best! It is more lovely, more refined
than Jane Egles. Most of the story is very quiet. Paulina's
light gestures & her elfin patter for the first quiet melodies.
So the very end her presence seems to bring with it a kind
of truth is simplicity, when Dr. John's letter lay unopened in her hand, the storm at the entry of womanhood her mind was as clear & direct as a child's. "Yes," she said, "I remembered all at once that I had not said my prayers that morning... I put the letter down, said my prayers, LUCY's leftist & yet generous appreciation of Dr. John's temperament had elements of the same placid charm. We like her best, I think, when she is out of close with him, her emotions sink to the lower, sure, more tranquil levels of friendship. The frail froth of reserve has felt the dissolving breath of anger; she develops her instinctive, heart-felt comprehension of his character. It may be that many of the conversations between her & Dr. John are dull or unnatural, but this does not take away from the happy, kindly grace of his nature; for it is through Lucy's eyes that we see these qualities. After all, it is not Paulina, but Lucy, who provides the key note of all the music; whatever the other tones of the melody may be, the keynote is always quietly sounded. "Villette is a long book, full of words; but hardly a quarter of these words found their way into open speech. Most of them form Lucy's unspoken reflections. From her silence the story gains in atmosphere & suggestion. "As gold & silver are mingled in pure water," says Masterhiel, "so does the soul best its weight in silence; it is the words that we let fall have no meaning apart from the silence that wraps them round." It is in this way that Lucy's silence gives point & meaning to the episodes. Charlotte reasoned felt she could not use words to express her heroine's psychology; it had to be felt. "If, however," she wrote, "the book does not express all this [i.e. Lucy's mixture of strengths & weaknesses], there must be a fault somewhere. I might explain away a few other points, but it would be too much like drawing a picture or them writing underneath. The name of the object intended to be
represented. We know what sort of a pencil that is which needs an ally in the pen." Nevertheless, the story is not faint for all its quiet note; for Mr. Paul is in it. His presence obliterated all traces of languor; yet the life which he brings into the story is not of the same order as that passionate life which beats through Jane Eyre. The emotion in the heart of Jane is Rochester is something hot and intense; Mr. Paul's emotions may be hot, but that is not their specific quality. They are superlatively swift. His feelings are elusive, like quicksilver; they seem to have acquired the secret of perpetual motion. He is as Lucy said, an odd "mixture of the touching and the absurd." The impression made by him is not so much a permanent mixture of the two qualities as a constant zagging between them; we are never quite sure with which point - humour or passion - he is going to proceed. He comes on the scene at the very times when the story is steadily and heavily over precipices into deep gulfs of sentiment or dullness; in a moment, "in the twinkling of an eye," the narrative is rescued - it is hard to say how. It is set on its feet again, goes forward, treading the firm, wholesome ground. His crowning triumph is the occasion of the fall of the fourth chapter of Utley, equal, if it does not surpass, the gloomy heights of Jane Eyre. The garden scenes there seem almost commonplace in comparison with this rapid, dashling originality. He sees the dark little man, "pungent and austere," his irritability covering his human visage, with the mask of an intelligent tiger; he sees his sudden descent upon Lucy, his insincerity, that she shall not a part upon a few hours' notice. He stays with her in the attic, as with uplifted skirts, she rehearses her part to the beetle. He hears the sounds of the bustling household below, we feel the gathering shadow - almost share the bars of hunger. Tell Mr. Paul arrived, we go down...
down, down to the very kitchen." Then comes the final preparation for public exhibition under the vibrating strain. Mr. Paul recommends each performer to "penetrate herself with a sense of her personal insignificance." He whispers a last word of encouragement to them: "Be not afraid at the crowd, nor think of it. Imagine yourself in the garret, acting to the rate." Here there is no attempt at symbolism or allegory; but as a picture, a memory, a joy for ever, the whole scene could stand beside the recollection telling with the roundness.

The consideration of Villette brings home to any reader the pervading essence of Charlotte Bronte's emotions; they were tinged with irony. In certain scenes, she is not humorous; decidedly the writer is not witty. Her humour emerges only in moments of stress; then it usually plays the part of a saving common sense, preserving the story in a perilous land of passionate excitement. Here drops her cool sedative of irony into the heart of Rochester's love-making. She keeps her head sufficiently to know that he is quite wrong in praising her "radiant, hazel eyes." "I had green eyes, reader," she explains by way of aside; "but you must excuse the mistake: for here they were new-dyed, I suppose." She resolves to keep him from the gulf of sentiment with a needle of repartee; this method becomes an established habit of their intercourse. Then she has nothing purer or to say, she falls back upon the scheme of an almost naked plainness of speech, containing a suggestion of unrepressed satire. On her return to Rochester, she restores his neutral equilibrium by such means interrupting his fanatics with droll or

Miracle sense:

"Have you a pocket? Home about you, sir?"

"What for, Jane?"

"Just to comb out this shaggy black mane. I find you
rather alarming when I examine you close at hand. You talk of my being a fairy, but I am sure you are not like a brownie.

'Am I hideous, Jane?'

'Very, sir; you always were, you know.'

By such devices she resolves to free him out of his melancholy; she cannot fail & succeed.

The piquancy is constantly peeping out from the pages of Villette. Even Pernette has the preserving “self” of honesty. In this book indeed, the saving sense is not so much ironic as piquant. It always seems to be lurking somewhere in Lucy’s mind, revengefully out with the pen whenever she describes M. Paul. We see him, for instance, closely resembling “a black i. sallow tiger” as he gives a strong lesson in arithmetical arithmetic, a subject which “invariably disagreed with him,” & we stand by Lucy as she lies in wait for the “brownie” who rattles her desk, corrects her exercises, & leaves refreshing books between the “sallow dictionary” & "workout grammar." In some ways it seems strange that Lucy should be conceived to write like this, laughing at M. Paul long after he was dead; yet it is entirely wholesome. It was the loving laughter which roused intimacies. They could recall M. Paul’s spirit through the medium more vividly than by any other means.

This piquant laughter has been the very breath of their intercourse. In no other way could she have kept her memories healthy, Jane, or true. It is a great mastery to remember the dead as if they were still vividly alive; & those who have attained to this power usually display no false shows in the matter of humour. The unforgotten laughter counts for them far more than the unforgotten tears. Often, indeed, the tears are forgotten, while the laughter is remembered.

So was it with Lucy in her memories of M. Paul. So fresh
are they so lifelike, that as we read them, the possibility of his death never crosses our minds. Or almost appears as if Cromwell had forgotten that he was dead. For death has made no difference to her reminiscences. She writes just as she would have done if Cromwell had stood looking over her shoulders.

When we think of this achievement, it seems important to add any comment on this whole is the most subtle, the most perfect, the most unaided of all Charlotte's triumphs. "If I were good," said Cromwell, "I'd know what he is going on." Like Abraham, Charlotte sat out with no certain destination before her. Perhaps she never realized where she led, nor what she had done. We ourselves do not always understand how far, how bravely, how high she travelled.

Charlotte and Emily Compared

Emily Bronte was a woman singular: in the midst of a singular family. Her women can have resembled her, her writings are as unique as her personality. Charlotte said of her that "an impression might always to have stood between her & the world." Perhaps it was with something of this object that she painted the portrait of Shirley. She tries to dazzle us with Shirley's brilliancy, she hears that she was watchful & carefree, fond of animals, like a Childlike & greedy, with "red points & grand points" about her. We know that her charms were able to soften even the Rebbel. Augustus Malone, "we are told that she had dreaming & fascination of a unique quality," "indolent, she is, reckless she is, most ignorant, for she does not know her dreams are rare — her feelings peculiar; & she does not know has ever known, will die without knowing, the full value of that spring whose bright fresh bubbling in her heart keeps it green." Still...
with the possible exception of her dreams, this brighter Shirley Keeler does not seem to be the forbidden Emily Bronte whose personality stands apart behind her writings. Shirley Keeler represents Emily as she was, but as she might have been. In fact, there is something else which has never been fully told. Attempts have been made, but competent critics, scholars have condemned these as exaggerated or fantastic. W. S. Clements (who, I am sure, knows more about Emily than any living man, has called her "the Sphinx of our modern literature") there is nothing for it but to resign ourselves to the certainty that we shall never know the whole Truth concerning Emily Bronte.

We know this much: she was an entirely different being from her sister Charlotte. As children they played their game of "the Islanders," each choosing a real island, real inhabitants, then setting their imaginations loose to work at the unconceived future. Charlotte went South, selected her Isle of Wight, but Emily chose the rugged Island of Arran. The choice was characteristic. Emily was always "steep water"; in fact, Charlotte admitted that she was hard. The same destination came out in their love of animals. "The helplessness of an animal," says Mr. Gaskell, "was its passport to Emily's heart; the fierce, wild irritability of its nature was what often recommended it to Emily." From their books, too, we feel that they were attracted or obsessed by different aspects of Nature; they looked at it from different angles. An idea constantly recurring to Charlotte's mind was the whirlwind, the howling of winds against the solid walls of houses. It was not often but in these storms, but usually she watched or he and then from a place of shelter. On the other hand, Emily walked through tempests. Lockwood came in "snumbened to the very heart." we feel that Emily
had tasted this experience. It is significant also that there is much reference to snow in Emily’s description, whereas Charlotte spoke more of rain. Emily’s world was in all points sharper and more bleak than Charlotte’s. She did not describe anything like the gardens at Thornfield. She struck the book to obtain the living water of beauty; from the rugged moor she extracted a solace which she could not find — it would not seek — in any gentler place.

2. “Wuthering Heights”

Wuthering Heights is what attracts most readers & the personal problem of Emily Bronte. Most people read the poem for the sake of the novel; yet, after reading the poem, it would not be at all strange to go back and reread the novel, too. The poems for the sake of the poem Novel + poem make a novel appear with marked differences. It is difficult to say which things are closer to the actual woman. Prof. Jack places his finger on the novel, yet tells us that there we shall find her — the girl, the all her life, except when she was writing Wuthering Heights, controlled the utterances of her heart. Still, the poems were not all written with the same definite prospect of publication as Wuthering Heights; we find in them some private revelations which never escaped Emily in her impersonal narrative. We can hardly understand Charlotte’s devotion to Emily until we have read the poems; then it is not so incomprehensible.

This does not mean that in Wuthering Heights we find no traces of a personality which could inspire affection. People watched the living woman uncarnally, their book is uncomfortable reading. Yet we know that her sister loved her; as we read the weird, passionate story, we feel stirring in us something wistful & pitiful, mortally & lost. It is a book which has to be taken, like Emily herself, with apologies. The plot is a dishhevelled tangle of episodes, each in its turn so overpowering that it
seems to blot out all that came before. The reader is incapable of 'looking before i after.' It is as much as he can do to take one thing at a time, or maintain his mental poise under the tremendous pressure of single, isolated incidents. Everywhere there is the terror of a dreamy nightmare. If it be true that life is incoherent, this story expresses its incoherence. Though the plot is shapely - tangled, it is not loosely painted. When we read the story constantly, we find it does confuse. It is in the darkness of the story that these are its weaknesses; the incidents themselves are quite clearly defined, but our eyes have to get accustomed to the unfamiliar gloom. There may be no unity in the episodes; there is unity, however, in the spirit of the book. So Swinburne has said of it, "There is no monstrosity, but there is no discord." Everything there is in its proper element, in keeping with the darkness of tonality.

Notwithstanding, many people either can endure a much starker plot or cannot tolerate undue wuthering heights. They do not dislike the arrangement of the episodes, but the episodes themselves. The book repels them as a meaningless exhibition of brutality. "The action is laid in hell," said Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "only if it seems places; people have English names here." Many tranquil people read Paradise Lost without any compensation. They knew from the beginning where they would have to go in Milton's company. It is the same also with Dante's Inferno. But Emily raced no fingerposts along her way. She takes her readers, if not to hell, at least under night's portico; she has said nothing by way of warning. The surprise shocks many readers far more than the actual revelation. As has been said, hundreds of people read the scenes in Milton's Paradise Lost in Dante's Inferno without any repulsion: Wuthering Heights repels them chiefly because they did not know what they were being led in for. - In fact, Emily did not realize that she was
doing anything unusual. She was so accustomed to her own singularity, that in all probability she never considered the singular impression which her book was bound to make. "To Charlotte," wrote, after Emily's death, "the power fills me with renewed admiration; but yet I am depressed: the reader is scarcely ever permitted a taste of unalloyed pleasure; every beam of sunshine is poured down through thick bars of threatening cloud; every page is surcharged with a sort of moral electricity; the writer was unconscious of all this—nothing but I make her conscious of it." What matters now for us is the question whether Emily was trying to tell the truth, or to make a sensation. A person speaking faithfully cannot be neglected; yet, should be remembered, it is often easier to make a sensation. If Emily had been studying effects, surely she would have tried to display more artifice in her plot. She would hardly have left us to discover after many readings that there is some method in her madness. The very artlessness of the story impels conviction. It does not seem "made up;" Emily Bronte was a strange woman, but sincere; in her strange book there is the mark of sincerity. In a bleak, unkept atmosphere of the story there is something which, as it were, smells of reality. We can discern its truthfulness, though we cannot prove it; it is "felt in the blood, felt along the heart."

Emily wrote of life as she saw it, and there were defects in her eyesight; she was ever a stranger in the world. She lived at a great distance from life. In her outlook there was a curious twist, a much that recalls the nameless terror of a child on a dark passage. She was afraid of life because she knew it so slightly. But she had the amazing intensity which brings with it flickerings of vision. Her future revelation was far from the sort of "sweetness and light."
She made no attempt to smooth out the shapeless chaos of human thinking, but she pierced it through with fire. Nobody has understood better the passionate contrast at the root of bull-driven, sensitive natures. Shakespeare has shown us Macbeth, crying at the height of his temptation, "I dare do all that may become a man."

Who dares do more, is none.

In him we can perceive the extremes to which human nature may stretch—the nobility which transcends all brutalities which fall below average manhood. In something of the same way Heathcliff touched the outer limits of human possibility. Usually less than men—"pitch Physicians,"—he also approached a level more gigantic than that of common men. In one direction alone his nature shone upwards; even there a savage taint clung to him in the wilderness of superstition. As the Pantheist beholds God in all creation, so Heathcliff saw everywhere the reflection of Catherine's face—"I cannot look down to the floor," he cried, "but her features are shaped in the flags. In every cloud, in every tree—filling the air at night—Caught by glimpses in every object by day—"I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary face of men or women—my own features mock me with a resemblance. The entire world is a dreadful collection of memorials that she did exist, or that I have lost her!"— inferior writers have transformed evil men into morons. Emily saw more deeply when she declared in Heathcliff's mind, both the monster and the poet.

It would be unfair to her if we thought that she understood only one abnormal type of character. When she tells us of Heathcliff's greatness under suffering, she adds:—"He endures, yet gentleness, made him give little trouble." Such words make us feel that Emily searched so pricked to the core of his nature. But this
penetrating revelations do not surprise us; somehow we expect her to understand Heathcliff. She never under-  
stood any other character in her books to the same degree,  
had she could feel for others wonderful qualities of  
compassion— which implies no mean comprehen- 
sion. She did not exhibit an entire sympathy with Catherina  
in the full tide of her living; but when death came  
over her, her persistent, deepening shadow Emily’s  
whole nature went out to her with an instinctive,  
passionate compassion. As she wrote she almost  
learned to be herself. Everything else was swallowed  
up; she forgot all things save Catherina dying. From her  
own inner life she must have constructed Heathcliff’s  
temperamental defiance; but there she looked back to  
the past. Can it be that in her comprehension of Catherina’s  
dying emotions, she looked forward to her own future?  
It is possible not to feel that she wrote with some  
premonition, some profound anticipation of her own destiny.  
How characteristic it is that Catherine’s mind  
should have groped outwards to objects filled with  
suggestion of the wild, fresh moorland. In her delirium  
she plucked the feathers from her pillow, pitifully  
she folded them, the mere touch of them seemed to  
open her mind to the “Cold Blowing airs” outside her  
sick-room. Then the reflection in the mirror seemed to  
close her mind to with a snap. Stepped of confined,  
she pled, then struggled for the breath of the air  
sweeping down from the heights. She looked out through  
the dense, cold, darkness, and saw what nobody else  
could see— the glowing lights of home. Emily wrote the  
passage with her whole heart illumined.  

She had fancies in vision. Occasionally it  
broke not, flame of pure, clear radiance, but actually  
it is a vision of terror. There is a terror which cleanses  
and a terror which shatters. It is the destructive power
which dominates the entire book. The very imagery suggests forces palpitating beneath the surface. Of Catherine’s temper we read: “In the space of half a year the gunpowder lay as harmless as sand. Because no fire came near to explode it.” Yet the storyetto spreads the tension of approaching catastrophe. In the same way we hear of the subdued “black fires” in Heathcliff’s eyes; we wait in the poignantly certain, that some day later it will break out of bounds. Before long anything placid paves on the nerves until a sense of unreality. The mere sight of Linton’s tranquilly altered Catherine is reckless—“your cold blood,” the child—cannot be worked into a fever; your veins are full of ice water; but mine are boiling. This sight of such chilliness makes them dance.” In the dancing of her blood there is something hot and strained. The whole story is tuned up almost to the breaking point. It is like a person, times irritable, with nerves set on edge.

This brings us to the standpoint of another class of conscientious objects & weathering heights. The first class we have already mentioned; after a few pages they are repelled by the sudden & unexpected plunge into ferocity. There are often readers who endure the story to the bitter end, waiting to see what it all means & whether the book can produce something to justify its existence. They are on the lookout for a noble philosophy arising from terror, yet first sight it does not seem forthcoming. Throughout the book the capacity of brute force seems magnified beyond all endurance. There is there any respect or escape. There is neither moral triumph nor moral retribution. Heathcliff is not vanquished by anything nobler than himself. He dies of exhaustion. Even after death his memory cannot be entirely obliterated, for his spirit
haunts the moors. There is in the story little of this classical antagonism of goodness and evil. In Heathcliff’s mind we discover goodness and evil contracted, but not conflicting. Everywhere else the antagonism stands between evil and mediocrity. All the fighting is done by the forces of evil. The “good” people are too harmless to inspire evil, or indeed to leave the faintest impression upon it. Their part is protest, disapproval, suffering. They are hardly worth fighting. We seek the exhilaration of a clear, honest conflict, and find only an outrage to the moral sense in the record of Heathcliff’s easy triumph. His death makes no difference. It simply means that evil has unexpectedly worn itself out. It may be better consoling to know that the “good” people are happy in the end; but they have done little enough to make us proud of them or of goodness. And yet I am not sure that this is the last word about the matter. We shall not find anything better in the first, or even the third, reading of this book. We must dig deep, patiently before we find any encouragement. Only in Emily’s mind we may discern a faint glimmer of hope. Heathcliff, it is true, was not defeated by goodness, he died of extinction. Yet — is here in the stimulus he did not need to be defeated by goodness. Ultimately, it did not matter if the champions of goodness were feeble or non-existent; for the evil within him was self- doomed and self-destructive. Its extinction required no blow from an external antagonist. He realized at the end that he had been beaten. His powers of resistance were broken not by opposition, but by its new affection rising in the hearts of Heathcliff and young Catherine. “It is a poor conclusion,” he observed, as he watched love springing where he had sown the seeds of hatred.
In speaking thus of the moral effect of the story, surely little need be added with regard to its purity. It may be fierce, but it is never unclean; how easily it might have become so! Emily passes through the cheering rivers of passion until no stain upon her reigned. She goes across a land of apostles, where ten thousand,—including, possibly, her sister Charlotte,—would have fallen by her side; but the plague does not come near her. Unlike Charlotte, her sense of duty never became blunted; and tempered her to the end. If we need anything to quicken our sense of wonder and reverence, we have it in our power to take to our hearts some matchless words of praise. We can go to Stonbourne, as I learn from him, of this purity and sweetness set at the very core of 'living storm.'

When all is said, this is a wonderful book, full of untaught beauty. If the people are moral, their environment is fresh. The moors are as rose as rose and blue is the heart’s strain of human actions. Around this turmoil there is set a world another, full of sharp moment and shadow yet touched with a delicate sweetness. These men and women live surrounded by snow and sunlight and restless clouds; by brightness and solitary flowers: the sound of trees and wails, the invisible life of the winds. In the moors there is no permanence of peace or gloom. They know the weaknesses of a black tempest, the living joy of summer, the stillness of twilight, and all these things are health. The wild, clean air seems to blow through every page of the book, disinfecting the mind of the reader.

Throughout the story, in the hearts of the people, in the breath from open country, there is the pulsation of life. It appears in the figure of Zilah with “fire-flushed cheeks,” brandishing a flying pan over the turbulent
dogs till the storm subsides. He remains "heaving a
sea after a high wind." The same energy clings about
her as the "large" flakes of flame up the chimney with
a Colossal bellows."— It will be remembered how the
younger Catherine described to Anton her idea of
heaven's happiness: "There was nothing in a rustling
green tree, with a west wind blowing, bright clouds
fluttering rapidly above; not only larks but throstles,
blackbirds, nightingales, cuckoos; pouring out music
on every side; the moon seen at a distance, broken
into cool, dusky dells; but close by Great Swells of
inglorious billow, the whole world awakens, will
with joy. He wanted all to lie in an ecstasy of peace;
I wanted all to sparkle and dance in a glorious Jubilee.
I said he Heaven would be only half alive; The said
mine would be drunk."— The sense of verse is in
vitro. Excitation penetrates to the very rooms, furniture,
houses. From the moment that the door opens to
show us the glowing, uneasy kitchen at Wellbeck
Height, we are swept into the rush of tension of the
narrative. Often we shudder, are left out of breath;
and then it may be that we find a moment's rest in
the beautiful, unexpected tenderness which seeps
into the groomest place of the story. It brings a
simple grace to Catherine's reconciliation with
Harston. We find it perhaps in a casual reference to
the weather: "The snow is quite down here," said Edgar,
"I only see two white spots on the whole range of
the moors; the sky is blue, the larks are singing,
the heaks and brooks are all triumphant." The moors are
unlike the human figures, for their tranquillity
never frets us; there is nothing unsiped in their grace
sweetness: "I turned away," said Lockwood, "and
my face, rambling leisurely along with the gloom.
a sinking sun behind, & the mild glory of a rising moon in front - one fading, & the other brightening - as I quitted the park, I climbed the stony by road, branching off to Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling. Before I arrived in sight of it, all that remained of day was a blanched amber light along the west, but I could see every pebble on the path, every blade of grass by that splendid moon.' - Even though Mrs. Dean's unmetrical words we can catch tones of the same quiet charm. -

We deferred our excursion till the afternoon, a golden afternoon of August, every breath from the hill so full of life that it seemed whoever respired it, though dying, might revive. Catherine's face was just like the landscape - she saw a sunshine fleeting across it in rapid succession; but the shadows receded longer, & the sunshine was more than evident.' - Even when Heathcliff was severely dying, we heard the music of Gimmerton tinkling over its pebbles; Catherine also had been spotted by its "full, mellow flow", as she caught above its murmur, the ringing of Gimmerton bells. - Sometimes the passion is pulled up with a rough jerk as a sudden pathos breaks its way into words. Almost by accident Emily seems to stumble upon beauty, to release, from within her a reticent sweetness, a grandeur. The thought of death sweeps away that hardness which tears disguise her narrative. Her heart seems to flow out & Catherine in her poignant hunger for death. - "And," adds she meaningly, "the thing that takes me most to this shattered prison after all. I'm tired of being isolated here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, to be always there, not dimly seeing it through tears. yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart, but really with it, in it."

This yearning has buried all the heart of the wild
story. Joy—earthly, human joy—entered very slightly into the compass of Emily's thinking. In all her vitality there was a gasp and a struggle. It is an exhausting process to enter into her book. Still more exhausting must it have been for such a woman to live among her thoughts. To her life was a delirium. In one of her poems she declared it an agony for

"The soul to feel the flesh; the flesh to feel the chain.

In her own way Christina Rossetti felt the same constraint, welcomed death for its very negations, as

'Silence more musical than any song.'

It appealed to both women as an escape from hell into the freedom of perfect stillness. When Emily Bronte came to the end of her book, she peered back from the faithful deities of the living to stand by the graves of the dead. — ‘I lingered round them, under that benigh sky; watched the moths fluttering among the heath and heather, listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; pondered how any one could ever imagine aught cleaner for the sleepers in that quiet earth.’ Into these words she closed her story; we, who are so glad to live, feel curiously apart from a woman so glad to die. Again we half before the enigma of her temperament. We remember that she never desired death with the feeble longing of those more dead than alive. In Emily there was no faintness of spirit. She was not overwhelmed with thoughts of death or nothing else. She lived close by the frontiers of Eternity, written right round of its mystery; looking west fully across she felt its solace and fleeting visions:

"Yet even a trumpet sounds from the head battlements of Eternity; Those shaken meant a space unsettled, then
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly work again."
The reader of Emily Bronte's poems should not lay himself out for a period of uninterrupted enjoyment. If he reads straight ahead he will often feel dulled and blunted. If, however, he perseveres he will find the reward of a few rare and beautiful treasures. She looked not for her cgurcues ring for "a wilderness of monkeys." The happy discovery of Emily's great lines would not give them up for a wilderness of ordinary poems; more than that, he would search a wilderness of bad poems if there should be any hope of finding in it a few more priceless lines of Emily's quality, to add to his collection.

Emily's poems are best studied, not for their style, but simply as an illumination of her personality. In those few passages or phrases where we see her face to face, the style comes right out of her own accord. It is best also, to begin the study from the standpoint of those external objects which had the firmest touch on her inner life; in other words, from the standpoint of nature. This passion for external nature awakes in her mind an intense spiritual yearning. She escapes from herself into the glimmering visions of the imagination, but has to return again to her own identity, with its inner struggles. Finally, she stayed herself upon the expectation of early death. Emily Bronte lived in the same century as Wordsworth. Unlike him she had never beheld the 'bleak visionary side' of mountains; but she had extracted visions from the slopes of moors quite as bleak, as never as majestic. She was, however, far removed from the Wordsworth who made theories about nature. She was nearer Wordsworth as a young man in his youth; she also had felt the tall rocks of Calcutta haunting her "like a passion." She could have appreciated all that was marvellous in him.

"Thoughts that do often rise too steep for ears" her own feeling for nature for largely marvellous. She could find words to describe hell, clouds, running water, give the scantiest explanation of her own psychology under
these impressions. Her passion for these things was almost as
dumb as the homing instinct of some wild creature. For
this reason it will be found that the descriptions of nature
in Wuthering Heights are usually more beautiful than her
nature poems with a personal note. She tells us, for instance, that
she found in nature an escape from self; it recalled the past
and dimmed the anxious future.

"Is it not that the sunshine & the wind
Dare from itself the new-born mind,
And all the joyous music breathing by,
And all the splendour of that cloudless sky,
Besiege him hopeless gleams of infancy,
And draw his tired gaze from future."

But this is not mere poetry, especially & any one who has
read Wordsworth. She speaks in another place of the human
spirit touched by the grace of summer,—

"With heart as summer sunshine light,
And warm as summer sky."

Again we say, paradoxically, that there is better poetry to
be found in the prose of Wuthering Heights. She tells us what
we could have quarrelled from the novel,—that wind had an
extraordinary stimulus for her imagination:

"All hushed — still within the house;
Without, all wind — driving rain,
But something whispers to my mind,
"Wrought up in rain — swirling wind."

Elsewhere she explains clearly what the wind does to a
sensitive mind:

"Yes. I could swear that glorious sound
That except the world accedes,
Has dashed its memory from they mind,
Like from bells from the Tide."

In another place she says still more definitely that the wind
are the home & meting a spirit speaks thus:

"This is my home, where whatever flows.
Where snowdrifts round my path are swelling,
after selecting many similar fragments, an inevitable question
confronts us. These things have an element of interest for us
who have read *Wuthering Heights*; but is this all that Emily
Bronte has to give us in the way of poetry? Would we have ever
given these lines a second thought, if not for the sake of her
novel? The only answer is that we must have patience. We
are as yet treading but the blurred circumference of
Emily’s magic circle. Her alchemy was the mysterious
 solitaire of darkness. Something went in the air communica-
ted itself to her spirit, as she looked out over the cold moors,
heard the solemn sound of moving water.

"Streams, o’er water-falls, o’er fountains,
Down the darkness stole away."

In one of her early poems she laments the passing of light;
cool radiance, in the approach of scorching sunlight; the
stars have

"Departed, every one,
And left a desert sky;"

the sight for the inspiration which has faded with the dawning
for the glamorous stimulus of the dark hours; when

"Thought followed thought, star followed star,
Through boundless regions on."

The call of night until its dreams for salvation from the
rending keen" 4 days;—

"O, stars, o’er dreaming gentle night,
Oh, night o’star, return!"

It was under such influences that Emily wrote
in the infinite mystery of life. It might be the mystery of her
own spirit;

"The hidden ghost that has its home in me;"

as she felt, like Blake, the uncanny contrasts of beauty
and terror in the world without her;

"All nature’s million mysteries,
Are fearful in thy face."
She could not yield a happy admiration to the "god-like faculty" of the human mind. She could have understood Milton's belief when he spoke of thoughts which "wander through Eternity," but with the glory of his conception she mingled some elements of terror. She was afraid to release her grieving imagination:

"So closed I, in Heaven's glorious sun,
And in the glare of Hell;
My spirit drank a mingled tone
Of Enoch's song and demon's moan;
What my soul felt, my soul felt alone
Within itself may tell!"

Yet, she was so made that she could not resist the lure of the imagination. She had to go out in spirit, a follower of her leading. More than that, she had to purge her soul till it was fit to receive the glory of passing visions. If we wish to appreciate the vitality of Emily's spiritual experience, we must place her poem The Visionary beside Tennyson's "Galahad. Tennyson's Knight is for ever pursuing an elusive echo or gleam; we see him reading through an enchanted region, his eyes dim with dreams. How bare in comparison seems the narrow room where Emily's visionary awakes the coming vision. Here there are no dark forests stretching out to dim, mystical waters. In bearing the frequent unearthly melody, we catch no gleams of supernatural light. We are in a plain room, with walled floor and little, well-trimmed Jaup, at the right of a table. Standing without, but the small bare room is vibrating with expectancy. If we could see the eyes of the visionary, what glow, what passion would we find! The visionary waiting for Ossian's thresholds into the rapture of a lover keeping his tryst?"

"He for whom I wait, thine ever comes to me."

She knows that though the vision may pass, assuredly it will not fail. As it has always come in the past, so it will come again. For Galahad's precees on in hope."
"And so I ride, wherever I ride,
Until I find the Holy Grail."

So far he had never found it; he had not tasted its cup of bliss. Besides Emily's visionary, he is merely a twistful novice in the spiritual life.

Place even Christina Rossetti's visionary poem side by side with this one, and we find Emily Bronte no whit behind her in intensity. In Christina we are always conscious of a certain cultivation of atmosphere. She seems to move about in an air, religiously bright, as the vision strikes upon a prepared surface. With Emily Bronte there is a naked, Puritan simplicity; she moves with her no suggestion of stained glass, ecclesiastical symbolism, or the Raphaelite art. Her only preparation is the trembling of the lamp, and the discipline of the expectant heart. The vision is never described as one that is not from ignorance; so the vision was a familiar experience to the solitary observer. We can find no words to describe her experience, it stops short with an infinitely suggestive silence. She stands within the bare room, confidently awaiting its coming illumination. This is:

"All (we) know + all (we) need to know."

We must be careful not to interpret the word "vision" in a specifically religious sense. To Emily, the word was synonymous with imagination. Her visions were loopholes, through which her spirit could escape from solitude and depression. Actually, she bowed before the mystery of her imagination, yet sought to rule it. In one of her greatest poems she invokes the "God of visions," beseeching Him to plead for her, to justify her in quitting the worldly paths of common sense, pleasure to follow the beckoning of the imagination:

"I'll give my spirit to adore
Thee, ever-present, phantom thing.
My slave, my companion, my king.

A slave, because I rule thee still;
Incline thee to my changeful will,
And make thy influence sound well;
A comrade, fit by day or night.
Thou art my intimate delight.

My darling pain that wounds, I see,
And whips, a blessing sent from thee.
My deadening me to earthly care,
And yet, a king, though prudence well
Have taught thy subject to rebel.

Why, it may be asked, should it be imprudent to follow the
beckoning Imagination? Emily knew the reason. She said,—
"I’m happiest now when most away.
I can hear my soul from its mould of clay.
She escapes through the “maize casements” of which heath
sang, into a sort of Nirvana — a No Man’s Land where all
identity — all matter fades like mist.—

“Where I am not, I love beside.
Nor earth, nor sea, so cloudless sky,
But only spirit wandering wide
Through infinite immensity.”

And then, like heat, she had to come back to her “sole say”
that was the peril of the imagination. Like the enchanted
knight she had to awake from dreams
on the cold hill-side.”

[5] Emily Bronte was afraid of her soul, with all its
capacity for visionary escape, its certainty of capture in
the web of material things. She was afraid of the Con-
suming passion within her. In one of her poems she makes
an exilic cry aloud to her oppressors that her soul is free
of their bonds:

"My mortal flesh you might derate,
But not the eternal fire within.

If the “eternal fire” is an exaltation, it is also an agony.
Emily probed down to the essence of her soul, tried to
understand its fiery mystery. She seemed in touch with
no power to whom she could appeal,—"Then knewest my
own heart; when I rose up in the morning, then knewest my
thoughts after me."
She does not seem to have wondered whether God un-
derstood her; nobody else did; she could not understand herself.
A few things about herself she did know. She expressed her
solitude in words of bitter desolation:

"I am the only being whose doom
No tongue would ask, no tongue would mourn;
I've never caused a thought of gloom,
A smile of joy, since I was born.

In secret pleasure, secret tears,
This changeful life has slipped away,
As friends after eighteen years,
As love as on my natal day."

She looked into her heart, I found there the most cruel
string of desolate despair. Finding falsehood in the outside
world she turned inwards:

"But works to trust to my own mind,
And find the same Corruption there."

This discovery is, indeed, the Supreme Vanity of vanities.
Under the pain of her own shortcoming, she cried aloud,—
"Shall my young son, my son alone,
Be everlasting here?"

Though she struggled to shake off her weakness she could
not escape from self. She described herself as one

"often rebuked, yet always back returning
To those first feelings that were born in me."

She had to follow her own nature. There was no other clue to
the problem. But even that clue was defective. How was she
understand to understand her temperament? Thus we find her puzzling
over her own identity. In the Philosopher she speaks of the
Constant warfare within her Spirit:

"Three gods within this little frame
Are warring, night and day;"
Heaven could not hold them all, yet
They all are held in me,
And must be mine till I forget
My present entity!

The dreams of a unifying Spirit blending all these conflicting elements into harmony. If she could have believed in this dream, she would never have

"Raised this coward cry
To cease to think, to cease to be,"

So it is, she can find no relief. The longs for death to end with its oblivion the strife of

"Conquered good i conquering ill."

All other times she cannot bear to die. Knowing that life is still unconquered. How can she go out with her task unfinished, her lesson in endurance unlearned? In self-interrogation she gropes towards satisfaction. Not till the moment of death can she learn this, her ultimate lesson. The highest fortune is that which can bear even humiliation with a tranquil spirit. Death will call upon her for the supreme test of courage—the courage which renounces conflict at the very moment of defeat, when the year for struggle grips the heart most tightly:

"The long was closing in defeat—
Defeat serene, serene,
By midnight rest may still be sweet.
And break in glorious noon!"

(II) Emily Bronte looked inward. I found a desperate moral conflict. She found something else, which though no less poignant was much less complex. In remorse and love hope she found her "Eremit's Store of Sorrows." It is very important to remember that Emily was not constitutionally gloomy. She could not have been capable of deep sorrow unless she had also possessed the high faculty of joy. It is impossible to explain the facts which called forth all her regret. These things were her
secret, so she never told it fully. But only know that from her lips there fell a dim story, echoing in tones of woe and music. Nobody could wish for anything better than silence in the presence of the wonderful lines from Death:

"Death, that struck when I was most confiding,
In my certain faith and joy to be—

Strike again, Time's withered branch dividing
From the fresh root of Eternity!"

The reader sangers unbidden over the beautiful poem Remembrance. There is no weakness in the Tenderness, its fibres are tough, although they look so slender:

"Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened I fed without the aid of joy."

These lines strike the furthest chord of Emily's music. The result of her introspection was a resolution to endure to the end:

"I saw my fate without its mask,
And met it too without a tear."

The springs of her life were withered. She walked forward grimly, perhaps, but always bravely, through the parched valley of stones. By the time she wrote the Red Stone, she had learned to despise many things, but she never disclaimed the hunger for liberty that kept her soul alive; it nourished the self-respect which was content with a single tomm—

"In life I death a stainless soul
With courage to endure."

She always endured with reference to the end. As we have seen, life had in some way been robbed of its splendour; all that remained was a bleak, songless waste. Occasionally she felt some reluctance at quitting the conflict, but she could experience no pangs on relinquishing earthly joys. She had no joys to lose. Because life held so little for her, any claim to a final virtue had to extend beyond the frame for satisfaction. With this hope burning in her heart, she was strong to anticipate "rewarding destiny." As we look.
from The Prisoner, she had passed through a phase when the very terror of life held fascination.

"Then joy grew mad until awe at counting future tears."

But that stage was soon over. That youthful. She was transmuted into something more solemn and austere, the expectation of death as the strong liberator of the soul—

"Its wings are almost free, its home, its haven found:

Measuring the gulf, it stops; it dares its final bound."

In her last poem she was prepared to admit even the comfortless doctrine of personal extinction. Life seemed to have drained her of that passion which died so hard—

the clinging to personal identity—

"Though earth and man were gone,

And time and universes cease to be,

And Thine are left alone,

Every existence would exist in Thee.

Whether this was a habitual attitude, it is difficult to say.

Wished she who sought death as the entrance into liberty, had been content at the very moment of her release to lose the personal consciousness of joy? We know at all events, that she believed passionately in some form of immortality. There is a positive conception of death, as a liberating force; this conception formed the basis of her life. There is also a negative conception of death, as the extinguisher of life; but of this negative Death, she had no fears, but he was planted against its ultimate Source of life—

"There is not room for death,

Not atom that his might could render void,

Thou, Thou art Being it Breath,

And what Thou art may never be destroyed."

- Shakeray, recognized in Charlotte Bronte's writings an indefinable quality which almost impelled a conviction of her immortality. This does not mean the immortality of her art—nor that the time is no question. It means the personal.
immortality of the artist. He felt that she was not used up; somewhere she must be still going on:

"On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a perfect round."

It seems fitting to close any consideration of the Poetry with that quotation. Much of it, of course, can apply to nobody but Charlotte. It was written, solely with reference to her, in regret for the unfinished fragments she left behind. Yet, as Charlotte would have joyfully admitted, her poetry's climax touches a point common to both artists. Of course we feel, even more than Charlotte, that however much her life may have been untimbered, her art was not finished. The actual achievement is like a tentative experiment; we have never seen the matured perfected result. Thus we read into the lines of the quotation a new extended meaning—"As one thinks of that life so noble, so lonely, so passionate for truth—of those nights and nights of eager study, of swarming fancies, of teaching, of depression, of imagination, of prayer; as one reads the necessarily incomplete, though most touching, admirable history of the heart that is throtted in this little frame—of this one among the myriads of souls that have lived and died in the great earth—this great earth?—this little speaks in the infinite universe of God, with what wonder do we think of today, with what awe we wait for tomorrow when that which is now but darkly seen shall be clear. And read this little fragmentary sketch, I think of the rest, of it. And where is it? Will not the leaf be turned one day, the story be told?—Surely this is the supreme victory of supreme art; that in the very moment when it leaves us with the immensity of the universe, it does not burden us with the impression of humanity, shrunk into insignificance; it convinces us of the eternal life—this myriads alone which we call human souls.
There are several ways of approaching the work of George Eliot. One would be to regard her as "heir of all the ages," accumulating within her mind the traditions, wisdom, experience of the race from Aristotle to Jane Austen; then we would have to consider how far the day passes under her, wealth, how much she borrowed or created, or what extent she turned it to active initiative, to purpose. The chief objection to this method is its unreasonableness. All her life she was busy looking for a part of her life she wrote them beyond that she did little else. There is something oppressive in the figure of the lonely student caught in a dense crowd of the immortals. We watch it, wishing it could bear its way out of the stormy sea of more exhilarating solitude; or else we lose sight of the single figure as we surrender ourselves to the magnetic appeal of greater personalities.

Again, we might adopt the usual method of chronology. But there is no occasion to repeat what has been done, as done fully by Sir Leslie Stephen. As well there is something in the chronological method, which, in this case certainly, does not yield complete satisfaction. It would be to put ourselves in the position of a man studying contemporary life from the daily papers. Every day, unless for some unexampled crisis, there are headlines of the same type: the normal reader is, if necessity, unprepared for that crisis. Possibly weeks ago, he passed rapidly over some apparent trifle - the cause of this great effect. How was he to know that it was going to be a cause? If at the end of a certain period he wants to know what has been happening, why it has happened he has to go back over the old ground, adapting his vision to a larger frame, supplying missing connections, discovering all the time that he has forgotten the things he had most need of remembering. It is true that every student must follow chronology, but
he does not require to articulate his entire process. The chronology is a means to an end, the apprehension of an author, not as the originator of a series, but as something living rounded and complete. For anyone who wishes to follow out George Eliot's achievement from step to step in a sequence, Sir Leslie Stephen's book is invaluable. It ensures for the student a personally conducted tour, safeguarded from risks of missing significant details. And at the end of every journey there is a retrospect, balancing pleasure and discomfort, recapturing the mood of a time of swift impressing, living in memory the hours of delight. I shall try to emphasize the retrospect rather than the sequence. It is the retrospect which gives meaning and value to the sequence; the passing emotion finds its fullest justification when I endeavor to be "recollected in tranquility."

The journey, therefore, is to be taken for granted. We need simply to define the stage, or review the broad outline of its source. For Martha Evans, or "George Eliot, was born in 1819; by 1842 she had lost belief in Christian doctrine; between 1844 and 1846 she was translating Strauss's Life of Jesus; in 1851 she became assistant editor of the Westminster Review; in 1854 is the date of her union with George Henry Lewes. This stage of her career was the predominating achievement. Her work did not rise above the level of higher journalism, but her experiences of life was laying the bases of all future development.

Between 1857 and 1879, prompted and encouraged by Mr. Lewes, she found her place in literature, though she did not always keep it with an absolute security. After writing Adam Bede she felt that she had achieved power perhaps for the last time. "I have arrived," she said, "at last in the past, but not at faith in the future." Her faith in her is best assured when we remember the four books written between 1867 and 1869: Scenes of Clerical Life, Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss, and Silas Marner. We feel that she...
was treading safely in this atmosphere of the English country, until its transforming reminiscences of childhood. In 1843 came Romola, that laborious yet wonderful experiment which "plunged into her more than any of her other books." From this time onwards her mind moved (in a zigzag course) from one theme to another, with an uncertainty which betrayed her latent misgivings. Felix Holt published in 1866 was a return to the English Midlands, stripped this time of ghost and glamour. In The Spanish Gypsy (1868) she not only handled a remote topic, but abandoned prose for verse. Then she slipped back to the familiar, lonely atmosphere of the English provincial town, as captured in Middlemarch (1871), something of her old power. In 1874 she published a collection of poems. Then came Daniel Deronda (1876), with its extraordinary blending of melodrama and sincerity. Last of all she wrote Theophrastus Such, showing a certain pungency in the first essays, and then sinking into desolate apathy.

Mr. Lewes died in 1878, but he had read Theophrastus in manuscript. After his death George Eliot wrote to his mother, "The world's winter is going," he wrote on February 1879, "but my everlasting winter has set in." In May 1880 she married Mr. John Walter Cross, and died in the following December.

This is the bare record of her life, even if it were filled out with intimate details drawn from her letters and journals, nobody could call it inspiring. There is something disheartening in the story of this quest after greatness—the later, laborious start, the straining to reach the summit, the uncertain foothold, the weary descent to the plain. Yet she did rise above the plain and "the little hills on every side." She reached the mountain level, saw the great peaks lifting themselves above, below her. As knew what it was
& brunt the high altitudes. We remember her who toiled so long in the "windless valley" because of her moment on the heights.

Looking back over the difficult struggling course pursued by this persistent woman, we can follow out two lines of thinking which may help to interpret her achievement. Much of her work is personal, reflecting her own experiences, beliefs; yet judging from her letters, her personality was lacking in magic. There is another side of her work, which is not a reflection of self, but an escape from it. It was in the combination of the personal, the impersonal, that she attained distinction. She had to lose her life to find it. She can best understand her work by studying it first as the expression of an individual temperament; then as the contribution of an impersonal artist.

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Ch. II. The Expression of Temperament.

If we wish to understand George Eliot, the woman, we must take into account four things. She was a woman, she was a student, she stood apart from dogmatic Christianity; she formed an "Irregular" connection with Mr. Evans.

As a woman of very marked opinions, she could not avoid having theories of womanhood. We know that she approved of the higher education of women, was one of the first subscribers to Girton College, but she also realized that rapid emancipation might endanger the cleanness of family ties. We are told that she was not a "masculine" woman, certainly her best female characters have the domestic impulse. Whereas Charlotte Bronte had laid stress on the woman as a home-maker, George Eliot felt more keenly a woman's protective, maternal impulse. Charlotte Bronte had an insatiable love of home, with its quietness, shelter. George Eliot lacked this soothing
touched. Her mind was too strenuous to appreciate the full the savoury of a well-ordered home where all things go smoothly without struggle or apparent effort. The tranquility of woman's duties appealed to Charlotte Bronte. George Eliot felt more strongly the rigorous claims of her woman's service for companionship. After the death of her father, she expressed her desire for the life of service: "the only ardent hope I have for my future life is to be given to me some woman's duty, some possibility of devoting myself where I may see a daily result of pure calm blessedness in the life of another." To Mrs. Beecher Stowe she wrote with a touch of indulgence: "You have had longer experience than I have a writer and fuller experience as a woman, since you have borne children, known the mother's history from the beginning." Writing to Mr. Frederic Harrison in later life, she quoted Wordsworth's "Bionaparte's sonnet in admiration of its precepts" lines: "She underlined the following words: "Wisdom doth live with children round her knees." The woman's chief glory lay for her in the human relationship of the wife and mother. When Romola's marriage proved a failure, she was said to have "lost her crown." Yet she recognised the fact that many women have to bear out a passage to their true vocation. "A woman must choose mean things," said Carton Lyon, "because only mean things are offered to her." Many women, like Magge Tulliver, have to wrestle for their souls, in the midst of drily sorrows. Other women, like Romola, have a man's nobility of soul, yet cannot fill a man's place effectively. They could exclaim with Petrarch's Roma—

"Have a man's mind, but a woman's might." In other, is laid, not the burden of a narrow lot, but the conflicting pressure of genius. When she described Daniel Deronda's mother, George Eliot must have been feeling the intensity of her own experiences: "You may try, but you can never imagine what it is to have a man's fires of
Genius is yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl. To have a pattern cut out—'this is what you must be; this is what you are destined for; a woman's heart must be of such a size as not to carry a large, else it must be pressed small like Chinese feet, her happiness is to be made as cakes are by a fixed receipt.' In Aрагарт she expresses the same difficulty—the problem of the artistic life. Aragart claims that genius does not rob a woman of her womanhood:

"Yes, I know

The oft-sought Gospel: 'Woman, thy desire
Shall be that all superlatives on earth
Belong to men save the one highest kind—
To be a mother, then shall not desire
To do what's best save pure subservience;
Nature has willed it so! O blessed Nature!
Let her be artless; she gave me voice.
Such as she only gives a woman child,
Best of its kind, gave me ambition too,
The sense transcendent where I can taste the joy
Of swaying multitudes, of being adored
For such achievement, needed excellence,
As man's best art must wait for, or be dumb.
Then did not say, when I had sung last night,
'Twas good, nay, wonderful, considering
She is a woman'—in then turn I add,
Tenor or baritone had sung her songs.
Better, of course; she's but a woman spoiled.'"

In her own heart George Eliot seems to have regarded genius
as yoke rather than diadem. For her it was like the heavy cape
pressed on the breasts of the hypocrites in Dante's vision, gold
('the door of gold is closed') without, "but deaden all within." In the case of Charlotte
Bronte the metaphor had been reversed. Her genius was
lead without a gold within—an obstacle from the oldfoul
of the world with its round of conventional duties, a glory,
place in the privacy of her own heart."

George Eliot:

"There is the question how far her sex reflected itself in her books. We know that Dickens immediately acclaimed the writer of Adam Bede as a woman, while Thackeray was equally certain that only a man could have produced such a book. Mr. Carlyle thought the author must be a middle-aged man with a loft, from whom he had got obtained his 'beautiful feminine touch.' Sir Leslie Stephen asserts that George Eliot gives away her sex in her essay on feminine handicaps: "The is...a little too contemptuous when the Samson yields to the Delilah." He also claims that she fails to portray men successfully unless they are effeminate, "women in disguise." He points to some of her most pleasing men, Tito Grandcourt, for instance, as evidence of his theory. No woman can be flattered to hear that the most objectionable features of these characters are essentially feminine, yet one must agree with Sir Leslie Stephen that even her 'manly' men are described from the woman's point of view. In addition to this feminine approach to character, study, we should notice her handling of emotional situations. We feel the difference of sex immediately when we put beside Scott's description in The Antiquary of Stennet's Mucklebackett's funeral, and George Eliot's account of Elisabeth Bede mourning for her husband. In Scott's picture there is a massive, hearty, healthful grandeur; it is stern, weird, and deeply moving like the scenes painted by Joseph Sturges. All the time it is a picture, we are the observers. It is different with Elisabeth Bede. We hear her voice, as the words open out into verses of unexpressed grief: "But now," says she to Dorothea, "do ye make the Day as ye like it, for I'm got no Taste in my mouth this day—it's all one what I swallow—it's all got the Taste o' sorrow in't." In studying Scott's picture we feel the strange exaltation brought by death.
"A corpse," says Emerson, "is a solemn ornament in a house." Elizabeth in her narrow way felt the same exaltation; the importance of the "burial," the special service, the funeral pitch, acted as "counter-exaltation to her sorrow." The difference is, that in the case of Scott it is not the reader who feels the exaltation; in George Eliot's account, the feeling is pitched within the heart of her character. The man stands outside and takes emotion into him; the woman paces towards to live in its fellowship. Shakespeare made a woman say,

"Here I sit, sorrowing still."

Eliot, the Student.

George Eliot was not only a woman. She was a student, to such an extent, that she quite lost all sense of life without study. Her learning shone as a drooping flame. It is rarely, if ever, a guiding beacon or a comforting fire. After her father's death she wrote from Geneva, "I take a howl over mathematics every day to keep my brain from becoming quite soft." She hungered for knowledge, as others hungered for bread. "There is so much to read; the days are so short! I get more hungry for knowledge every day; I can't be satisfied by my hunger." Later, she said, "I could enjoy everything, from mathematics to antiquarianism of the large spaces of life before me."

When she was studying Spanish grammar in preparation for writing The Spanish Gypsy, she declared, "I find it so much harder to learn anything than to feel I have anything worth teaching." Her learning comes upon her with the most sense of child in a passage from one of her letters. She had been describing her household anxieties, and proceeded to tell with her compensation,

"But then I have by my side, a dear companion, who is a perpetual fountain of courage and cheerfulness, and considerate tenderness for my lack of these virtues."

And besides that, I have woman history! Perhaps I've
sounds a bitter joke to you, who are looking at sea; I
myself not thinking of Roman history at all. But the two
read ariht, has its gospel revelation. I read it much
as I used to read a chapter in the Acts of Apostles. "Per
life, it was meant as a bitter joke; there is no doubt, at all
events, about the bitterness of placing human love
Roman history in the glory of the sky, in the same category
Somewhere Lamb has eagerly described the completely
satisfactory appearance of a man who has never
learnt his multiplication table. He remembers, also that
schoolmaster left him (Lamb) in "comfortable possess
of (his) own ignorance"; when we read George Eliot we
often feel that a so-called ignorance can be more
educative than scholarship. Perhaps this is what she was
thinking when she wrote these words in Middlemarsh:
"If we had a keen vision & feeling of all ordinary
human life, it would be like hearing the grass
grow, the squirrels heart beat; we should die of
that roar which lies in the other side of silence. As
it is the quickest & the swiftest about well wounded
with stupidity." At times she seemed to feel that there
was something wrong with her. We can hear her now
heard crying through her quotation from Margaret
Fell's Journal: "I shall always reign through the
intellectuals but the life! the life! O my God! shall that
ever be sweet?" - she knew how she studied, her books. the
list of authorities read in preparation for Romola in
positively astounding. Before writing Felix Hott she
read through the Times for 1832 & 1833. And yet, what
came of it all? We know that the passages in Romola
which bear most trace of study are the very places
where all normally, construced readers take the
forbidden fruit of "skipping." She wanted to contrast
the frivolity of the Florentine ottoges with the "high
seriousness" of her central figures; she laboured to
demonstrate that frivolity. Shakespeare had the same problem before him in Julius Caesar. He had to mark the distinction between the irresponsible rabble and the deeply conscientious rulers of Roman society; but he did not do this by taking great simplifying streams of Roman history. It may be that his crowd was not Roman at all, but frankly Elizabethan. That is not the point. He wanted to mark all the national characters of the crowd, but its levity, he knew better than to look for that in books of solid learning.

George Eliot had a theory about study, as about most other things. Daniel Deronda’s words may have had a personal reference: “Receptiveness is a rare and power, like fortitude.” She would ill exercise her forbearance without a reason; I think we shall find it in her doctrine of the escape from self. In her mind the highest escape was that of religious feeling; but she recognized other methods of getting from the restrictions of self love. When Daniel Deronda urged on Gwendolen the shelter of religion he spoke mucce as a “small example,” which “answers for all larger things.” His words are significant: “The refuge you are seeking from personal trouble is the higher, the religious, life, which holds an enthusiasm for something more than our appetites and vanities. The few may find themselves in it simply by an elevation of feeling; but for us who have a struggle for our wisdom the higher life must be a region in which the affections are clad with knowledge.” It is of course true that the fullest escape is that which leads us to the thought of God; but George Eliot recognized the value in a lesser degree of any worthy object—human science, art, knowledge—which distinguishes us from ourselves. She sought books that she might free herself. She went there to get rid of her own defects. “ewan taking a deep bath,” she wrote,
"Of other people's thoughts."

It must never be forgotten that although she loved learning, she never wished to place her life apart from those who were unlearned. Doubtless, she had a small patience with the stupidity which so often unconsciously cruel. This is a fact which, to quote Sir Leslie Stephen, "diminished her appreciation of fools." Among her short notes we find a sentence ending with a sudden snap: -

"Though a certain mixture of silliness may lighten existence, we have at present more than enough." Once in a moment of depression, she exclaimed at Genoa that she was with people "so little worth talking to." But the habitual tendency of her mind was all in the opposite direction. Nothing delighted her more than to be trusted with a confidence. In Th Euripides she spoke scornfully of the person who yearned for superior society: - "There usually found know that it is the greatest duel person who appears to be disgusted with his contemporaries because they are not strikingly original. To satisfy whom the party at a country house should have included the prophet Isaiah, Plato, Francois Bacon, and Voltaire." Comparisons with Charlotte Bronte are usually to the disadvantage of George Eliot; but here it is all the other way. Charlotte Bronte never abandoned, like George Eliot, all traces of intellectual sloppiness.

The most essential thing about George Eliot's book, besides her feeling for the tragedy of the book woman. Difficult though it may appear, she worked up to be sympathetic towards S. C. C. H. B. When we read, was "sensitive without being enthusiastic; it was too languid to thrill out of self-consciousness with passionate delight; it went on fluttering in the swampy ground where it was hatched, thinking of its wings never flying."

As we read, we feel that she was diagnosing her
true case. It is of course possible, as Mellon's example would prove, to combine scholarship and genius. But
Johnson remarked of him: "The heat sublates his learning;" for though that fervent learning cannot be outline;
George Eliot was often very cold, indeed. Phelps wrote
to Maggie that he yearned for a faculty to raise him
above the dead level of provincial life; but he added:
"A passion answers as well as a faculty." The petrific
fact about George Eliot was this: she had the faculty, but
she sometimes lost the passion. We remember Newman's
verdict on her: "A high - but may we not add? -
reatten dry lady."

3. Her Religious Standpoint.

1. There is a passive suggestion in the phrase "a learned
lady." George Eliot was something more, an active
rebel. She refused to acquiesce in a creed which she
no longer believed. Her rejection of Christianity may
have been in the first place a matter of contra-suggestion.
She may have revolted, first against a certain credulity,
with which great ideas were presented to her. In
Vance's Repentance she refers to this coarsening of high
things: "Religious ideas have the same melody, which,
once set afloat in the world, are taken up by
all sorts of instruments, some of them woefully coarse,
feebly, or out of tune, until people are in danger of crying
out that the melody itself is delectable." She may
have felt, not only crudely, but earnestly, in the
form of Christianity around her. Probably at one time
she had been, like Daniel Deronda's mother, confided
by tradition: "I knew," said she, "what was in the
chest - things that had been dimmed in my ears
since I had any understanding. things that were
thrust on my mind that I might feel them like a
wall round my life - my life that was growing like
a tree." - Nevertheless there was in George Eliot;
rejection of Christianity, something more than reaction against environment. It seems a startling thing, that according to her own account, the reading of Scott's novels did more than anything else to unsettle her faith. Yet we must call to mind what Walter Bagehot said of Scott—"He strikes the delineation of the soul". In a certain sense Scott's characters are remorseless; they are same truly honourable, yet singularly lovable; they seem to achieve all these qualities without any articulated religion. This strengthened George Eliot's connection that dogmatic beliefs have no necessary connection with practical living. In other words, the virtue can be acquired apart from Christianity. 

From this standpoint, though it may weaken faith in a creed, it hardly a justification for its absolute rejection. In the best resort it was not so much a matter of reason as of emotion: the inspiration faded. She wanted to believe in Christianity, but could not measure up to the old fervour; she was not the kind to go on "pretending that things are better than they really are." When translating Strauss's Life of Jesus, she worked with an almost overpowering reluctance. She wrote un the *Torah* and Hopkins's figure of theexus Christ before her; we have an authentic report of her depression. "She is Strauss sick — it makes her ill dissecting the beautiful story of the Crucifixion, and no the sight of the Christ-image a picture makes her endure it." Before all things she was honest. She rejected the view that optimism which "pleasing picture to the exclusion of all disagreeable truths." Again she said, "I think the highest good thing is, rather, to suffer with real suffering than to be happy in the imaginings of an unreal good." She refused to close her eyes to unpleasant consequences; it will be remembered how she imagined Rome's, not "shutting eyes easy."
but watching the removal of her father’s library. Perhaps the most characteristic of all her utterances occurred in a letter: "The highest calling, election, is to do without prayer, to live through all our pain with conscience, clear-eyed endurance."

This is not a place for Christian apologists. George Eliot lost her faith; she never ceased to reject it. She sees it everywhere, most of all in the extraordinary, wistfulness with which she handled all cases of deep religious emotion. This affords me of the most surprising contrast between her and Charlotte Brontë. Charlotte was possessing a certain measure of religious belief, was curiously, dead to the mysterious friction, conflict of the spiritual life. George Eliot, who stood apart from formal creeds, felt to the end of her days the magnetic and dominance of the religious impulse. In later years she came to regard Christianity as the highest of actual revelations; but she did not accept it as a final revelation. Her soul broke from her when often under her rocklore: "What pitiable people are those who feel no poetry in Christianity!" When agony enters her stories, the Christian consolation comes unbidden. Maggie found The Littluness of Christ; there is a pregnant comment on Welty’s revelation: "No wonder man’s religion has so much sorrow in it, no wonder he needs a suffering God." Passion and poignancy are never lacking when George Eliot writes of spiritual loss or disillusion. Pamela felt herself driven to recall Salvation’s standpoint; yet, in the act of rebelling she was breaching her own reverence. Belin’s dream of going to see Felix in prison is described with a significance comparable: "It was what the dread of the pilgrim might be, who has it whispered to him that the holy places are a delusion, so that he will see them with a
soul undisturbed or unbelieving." There is the same
poetry and intensity in her delineation of Rufus Lyon,
writhing to obtain his old supremacy; for he
played the role of some great despot who might be routed
and fall slain by hearing as if old, the supreme fact
again become supreme in his soul."

She never lost this conviction of the soul's infinite
hunger. This represented the crudest form of pagan
selfishness; he had no place in his heart for the
whole religion which lies in the renunciation of all
that makes life precious. But it was not only to the
man who fell under her condemnation; even Bardo was convicted
of moral guilt. "My father," said Sir Luca, "has lived
amidst human sin and misery without believing in them;
his heart has been like one busy picking shining stones in
a mine while there was a world dying of plague above
him." To George Eliot's mind paganism was ineffective
because it lacked spiritual hunger. She laughed
kinldly at the people who sought moderation in all
things, for instance, Mr. Linnet, when she said: "It's
right enough to be spiritual - I'm no enemy to
that, but I like my potatoes mealy. I don't see
anybody will go to heaven for not digesting
their dinner: providin' they don't die sooner, as mayhap
Mr. Tynan will, poor dear man!" She could smile with
these apostles of common sense, but her natural bent
was towards ascetism. Though she appreciated "the
daylight" of Celia Borchers's understanding, she was more
at home "among the strange coloured lights by which
Doro habitually saw" whether it were the coloured
lamps of quixotic impulses or self-denying passions. George
Eliot preferred them to the "clear, cold, midsummer's
prudence. She admitted that in the whole light one
was more clearly what it avoids - Tom Selleck, was
self-denying; his character was strong by its very
He had a definite goal; he reached it.

Yet we feel all the time that it is better

to be like Maggie, struggling along with others, ready

“to extend for the sake of a word, a thing not seen

with the eyes.”

George Eliot abandoned Christian dogma, but she
could not carry on without some theory. As has been
suggested, her religion came to be a matter of self.

forgetfulness. It would be possible to multiply instances

of this tendency. Self-absorption and irreligion were for her,

almost synonymous terms. As Adam Bede said, “The

best of working is, it gives you a grip hold of things

outside your own lot.” Hetty had no curiosity to
distract her from self. She took no interest in Adam’s
conversation unless it were personal; he bored her
when he embarked in “the difficulties of anti-life.”

These things are not trifles; they are meant to carry

the same doctrine through Zara’s words to

Evelina:

“In a vile life that looks like a garden pool

Life stagnant in the round of personal love;

That has no ear save for the ticking clock

For small measures—deep to all the beats

Of that large music rolling o’er the world;

A miserable petty, low-roofed life,

That knows the mighty orbits of the stars

Through nought save light or dark in its own cabin.”

At the critical point of Godden Harleth’s career, we
find a note I comment. It is in moments of stress we
are told that religion is manifested: “Even in the
eyes of privation life looks out from the scene of
human struggle with the awful face of duty, as a
religion shows itself which is something else than a
private consolation.” George Eliot denounced the
poet’s Young’s religion because it was nothing better
than “equivocally turned heavenward.” We have already
referred to her conception of the intellectual life as a refuge from ekpyrosis; but this quotation deserves to be noted: "It is perhaps to see the helplessness of somesweet women when their affections are disappointed—because all their teaching has been, that they can only delight in study of any kind, for its sake, or a personal love. They have never contemplated independent delight in ideas as an experience which they could enjoy without being laughed at. Yet surely women need this sort of defense against passionate affliction even more than men." The more terse quotation, that we are done—"Is it not possible," asked Thespaster, "for me to enjoy the scenery of the earth without saying to myself, I have a cabbage garden in it?" This conception of religion, however arduous, has at least the advantage of being extremely practical. A man may be thinking of anything—his neighbour, or a novel, a symphony, or (presumably), mathematics; so long as he is not thinking of himself at the same time, his mood is religious. Stated baldly, like this, the conception seems rather made quiet. It embraces a truth, though it does not express the Truth, absolute and complete.

In connection with religioso-philosophic outlook we must consider the question of George Eliot's "pessimism." She herself denied the charge: "I need not tell you," she said, "that my book [Middlemarch] will not present my own feeling about human life of it produces on readers whose minds are really receptive the impression of blank melancholy & despond." She called herself a "realist," that is, one believing most firmly that the world could afford to be made better—cherishing somewhat uncertain hope of ultimate improvement. At times she was afflicted with personal despair, —"self-distraught
"I despair of ever being equal to the demands of life."

"Everything I do," she wrote, "seems poor & trivial in the doing; & when it is quite gone from me, it seems no longer my own. Then I reproach myself for it, & think it fife that is the history of my life." Towards the close of her days she was able to say, "I have entirely lost my personal melancholy." Yet, whatever she may have said, we cannot lose the impression that she was a woman unable to cast off sadness. Part of the reason may have been due to ill health. She got a sudden glimpse into her daily life in a stray sentence from a letter to Mr. John Blackwood: "Having no grand children to get up a Christmas tree for, we had nothing to divert our attention from our headaches." She had moreover, a critical tendency, which does not conduct to gaiety. A prize of her garden she remarked, "Some people are born to make life pretty, others & grumble that it is not pretty enough." As a matter of fact she could never settle down to the belief that life is a good business, but we must make the best of it; to which philosophy she said, "Amen." Adam Bede confessed he was not "the only man that's got to do without much happiness in this life." Always George Eliot gives the impression of expecting disappointment rather than joy.

It has been much discussed whether such pessimism was the result of temperament or creed. Personally, I think that a gloomy disposition is an evil which causes as much pain & requires as drastic treatment as a violent temper; George Eliot was far too conscientious a woman to indulge herself in groundless or capricious melancholy. If she was gloomy, she must have had a reason for it. I think the reason is to be found in her
reverence from the Christian tradition. To her, above all people, the does must have been incalculable. At least she was a Conservative, loving old associations with the utmost force of her nature. It will be remembered how insignificant a stripe brought home to Maggie Tullian the cleft made in her life. It was after the sale when she looked in vain for the treasured books of childhood. "Her dear old Pilgrim Progress that you coloured with your little paints; or that picture of Pilgrim with a mantle on, looking just like a turtle—O dear!" Maggie went on half sobbing as she turned over the few books. "I thought we should never part with that while we lived—everything is going away from us—the end of our lives will have nothing in it like the beginning!"

In parting with Christianity, George Eliot made the end of her life unlike its beginning. Her action put her adrift from the old belief, the old loyalty, the old affections. She was so made that she could not help looking backward rather than forward; she looked with the eyes of a stranger.

**Her Attitude to Convention.**

She only after personal experiences which cut deeply into her life was her keenest with Mr. Lewes. Long before she had any personal scars—before she had ever met Mr. Lewes—she dropped some hot words on the marriage problem as it is set forth in Jane Eyre: "All self-sacrifice is good, but one would like it to be in a somewhat nobler cause than that of a diabolical law which chains a man soul's body to a purifying carcase." This is certainly not the place to defend or criticize the marriage laws. When her time came, George Eliot decided that the existing marriage law was wrong; so she broke it.
She lived with Mr. Lewes for nearly twenty-five years, called him her "husband," received his children, dedicated all her books to him. Speaking after his death, she said, "I had thought that my life was ended; so, to speak, my coffin was ready for me in the next room." The full and private facts are not sufficiently known for any adequate enquiry into the morality of her action; so in any case, this is not the place for such investigations. The chief point to be noted is this: — George Eliot's single defiance of the natural tradition set up in her mind a permanent antithesis to conventions. This is that in her writings she insisted, with an almost unexampled emphasis, on the sanctity of marriage and the binding character of obligations. While she was in full accord with the tradition that marriage was a permanent relation, she attacked the prudential tradition that it which turns marriage into a farce. When Catherina Arrowpoint wished to marry Herr Klein, a man below her in social station, she exclaimed, "I will not give up the happiness of my life to ideas that I don't believe in, customs I have no respect for." But an irony gleams sharp-edged through the bland worldly-wisdom of her matter: — "It will never do to argue about marriage, Catherina," said Mr. Arrowpoint, "as we are getting up the subject like a parliamentary question. We must do as other people do." George Eliot refused to do things simply because other people did them. Comparatively early in life she had called England "a land of gloom, I ennui, platitudes," and she could never throw off her aversion to platitudes. She felt that there is nothing so narrow or so unjust as an unintelligent tradition. Mrs. Lewes was "overawed" by her warm-hearted
husband's unyielding condemnation of Henry, but the
written supplies an explanation:—"We are often
startled by the severity of mild people on exceptiona
occasions; the reason is, that mild people are
most liable to be under the yoke of traditional
impressions." Tradition may limit the sympathy of
a kindly man like Mr. Payton, but it may do worse. It
can overlay sympathy with worldly prudence. Then
Tom repeated Maggie’s words, pitifully; and her guilt, he
saw, was what he considered a satisfactory reason:
"The world shall know that I feel the difference
between right and wrong." It came to this,—that she
ought the praise of men rather than the praise of
God.

If we wish to study George Eliot’s nature I concur.
If we wish to study George Eliot’s nature I concur.
 oportunely, we shall find it nowhere more
penetrating than in The Mill on the Floss. This seems to
be the underlying conception of the entire book. If
Trollope was another Vanity Fair where Maggie was
an alien, from through from the better groups of
childhood to her final acts of isolation. Tom re-
presented the principalities and powers against which
she waged a blind, unceasing warfare. He had
his moral code, as far as it went, it was a good
One; but it was in a clear-cut pattern which could
not admit of variation. When Maggie expected his
early house, he "turned white with anger, but said
nothing; he would have struck her only he knew it
was cowardly to strike a girl," Tom believe, we
quite determined he would never do anything
cowardly." The external floss could not have bent
Maggie more than his parental feeling toward
her; but he was entirely satisfied to have kept
his surface smooth and flawless. His serene concent
ence kept him safe from the lure of romance.
Unlike Maggie, he saw nothing enticing in opium; they were "thieves, and hardly got anything to eat. I had nothing to dress but a donkey." The mixture of morality + materialism in his verdict was highly significant. He liked things to be normal, and had "a sort of superstitious repugnance to everything exceptional." Thus his radius of sympathy could not extend to Philip Wakem, the hunchback. This affection for the commonplace was shared by every person of any weight in the neighbourhood. Mr. Trelawny had not wasted his time in acquiring "abnormal" culture, and Stephen was attracted by Lucy just because she was not "a remarkable rarity." It should be remembered how Wakem's respectable gentleman, Mr. Magnus, saw in Charmer in Sense, Ibelis's originality. — "Ah," said the red-haired man, "that, you see, is a matter of Taste. I am not fond of anything original; I don't like it; don't see the necessity for it." St. Evons the sooty of St. Evons saw no necessity for miscellaneous people like Maggie Tulliver; so it cast her out.

5. The Doctrine of Retribution.

Before leaving this study of George Eliot's individual temperament we must take into account the doctrine which lay at the core of her thinking. All her novels seemed to become an embodiment of her personal outlook. There is nothing in her life to account for the tremendous insistence on the law of retribution. Why she felt it so mightily, we cannot tell. It may have been the natural outcome of an intensely logical mind. To her retribution was as certain as the successive stages in a mathematical argument. She made the effort from which it is impossible to escape. It is not the retribution of Greek Drama or King Lear: there is hardly any reference to avenging gods. It is rather a mechanical,
impersonal process which cannot be arrested. It is not malignant or cruel; it is simply inevitable.

In Gwendolen's dread this shadow of fate took upon it a certain semblance of personality: "All this infiltrated influence I disregarded religious teaching, as well as the deeper impressions of something awful and inevitable enveloping her seemed to concentrate themselves in the vague conception of avenging power."

More often the conception takes the form of a process or growth. "I'll face the progeny of all my deeds," cried Swift. In Ronda we find the same metaphor most fully expounded: "Our deeds are like children that are born to us; they live fast apart from our own will. Nay, children may be strangled, but deeds never: they have an indestructible life both in and out of our consciences; that dreadful vitality of deeds was pressing hard on Tito." The heading of a chapter in the same book expresses this truth by another metaphor: "Fruit is Seed."

Though the retribution may be a process acting like a scientific law, it selects instruments to perform its functions. The penalty is something sharper, more revolutionary than mere pangs of conscience. In the story of Arthur Donnethorne we find the sentence: "Someday she will seldom forswear a sword for herself out of her conscience. Out of the suffering we feel in the suffering we have caused; there is hardly metal enough there to make an effective weapon." Sometimes the sword moves in the hands of a person like Tom Tulliver, obsessed with zeal for "punishment" till he becomes a representative of vengeance. Sometimes the instrument of retribution is as reluctant as the victim. It was Caleb Garth who was compelled to throw the first stone at Bulstrode. All other times the blow falls from the hands of the callous and indifferent, as when Maggie paused an instant through the streets of St. Ives.

"Retribution," says the writer, "may come from any source; the
hardest, cruellest, most inhuman within us, and to what is willing to inflict it. "Looking at the face of life it seems that almost anything can be turned into a channel for punishment.

With the dread of retribution there may arise a struggle to avert it. Mr. Bulstrode believed that if he spontaneously did something right, God would save him from the consequences of his wrong-doing. The struggle is never protracted. Most scenes subside without question. Some, like Caleb, stand erect to meet the blow:

"If I must sink at least to hell, I will not take my stand among the coward crews which could not bear the harm themselves had done which others bore. My young life still may feel a breach, and I will take no pardon, not my own, not God's - no pardon idly or my knees. But it shall come to me upon my feet, and in the thick of action, to each dead that carried shame and wrong shall be the sting that drives me higher up the steps of honour."

This redemptive sting is not always a part of the penalty. There was no torpor, no degeneration of deeds, for Mr. Bulstrode. "A man may do wrong," said Caleb, "this will may rise clear out of it, though he can't get his face clear. That's a bad punishment." Often, as in the case of Geoffrey Cello, the doom is beyond all remedy, rotting in its bitter irony. "I wanted to pen for childless one, Nancy," he said, "I shall pen for childless now against my wish." The penalty is terrible because it is so appropriate. It is like Dante's conception of the wrathful, tormenting by their own permanence of mood:

"Sad once were we, in the sweet air made gladness by the sun, carrying a foul and heavy mist within."
Now in these murky settlements we are sad" (Curry's translation).

It should be remarked, however, that in her last study of
retribution, George took the view of a chord of alliteration.
It was a chord with two notes—the poet of one friend—the
possibility of an ultimate broodiness. When Generallo con-
formed to Verona, she told him of her sleepless nights
at sea: "It was not my own knowledge, it was God's,
that had returned into me, even the stillness—
everything held a punishment for me—everything brought
you. Verona, as he listened, had but one thought in his
mind: "If he had opened his lips to speak, he could only
have echoed, 'It can never be altered—it remains
unaltered—to alter other things.'" Elsewhere George
felt that a firm heavy pressure on the weight of
fruitless remorse. Here she leaves us with the hope
of a purifying, impersonal repentance.

Chapter IV. The Impersonal Artist.

1. Dedication.

A somewhat awkward line from the legend of Judea
might serve as motto for this chapter:

"Hearing myself," he said, "home in my life."

There is also a passage in The Spanish Gypsy where George
felt that a suggestion with regard to the impersonal
character of the artist. Juan, the poetical, had been
singing to Pepita. So he told her, he loved her "in the song,"
but not "out of it," and he explained his position:

"Listen, little one.

Juan is not a living man all by himself;
His life is breathed in him by other men,
And they speak out of him. He is their voice.
Juan's own life he gave once quite away.
It was Pepita's lover singing then—not Juan.
We old, old poets, if we kept our hearts,
Should scarcely know them from another man's.
They shrink to make room for the many more
we keep within us."

George Eliot sought the impersonal life of art as a fundamental reliquin. It was an extra channel of escape from self—a privilege of genius, superadded to normal human experience. Genius opens another door through which the few may pass on their voyage out of themselves. Hazlitt's Dauber thought of his art in relation to other men—

"He was a door to new worlds in the brain,
A window opening, let in the Sun."

George Eliot saw the vocation as an illumination of the artist; Bömmart partially expressed her own theory—

"My song
Was consecrated, lifted me apart
From the crowd chiselled like me, after forms
But empty of divinities."

It was only a partial expression of her theory, for she condemned Blomart's sense of aloofness. She discarded the isolation of art, and accepted its divinity as the burden of a great responsibility:

"The gift to give was theirs of men alone.
I was but in going that they could sit alone
For too much wealth amid their poverty." [Legend I, L. 1546]

If then, art were a divine calling, it demanded rigorous training. "In authorship," she said, "I hold carelessness to be a mortal sin." In all departments of life she sought thoroughness as something which brings its own reward. Many of her characters laboured under that impulse—for instance, Verina, the lady's maid. —

"There's pleasure!" she said, "in knowing one's not a fool like half the people one sees about. And managing one's husband is some pleasure;— doing all one's business well,"—Stradivarius could not bear to turn out second-rate violins.
"I was purgatory here to make them ill."

To come back to the professional artist, Aragon swept from her mind the very suggestion of doing round-rate achievements.

"I will not feed on doing great tasks at all,

Build the world's stage with mediocrity,

And live by trash that smothers excellence."  

Somewhere, speaking of Columbus, George Eliot remarked on the passionate patience of genius." She meant every word of Kleist's adoration of Brandelben, "Genius at first is little more than a great capacity for receiving discipline."

There, urging on Fedalma the glories of a high destiny, told her,

"You must take swung pleasure, winged pains."

If George Eliot felt the pain of a great labour, she experienced something of its joy. "She told me," wrote her Croz, that, in all that she considered her best writing, there was a "not herself" which took possession of her, that she felt her own personality, to be merely the instrument through which this spirit, as it were, was acting.

So much for the method or spirit of the artist, what is his goal? George Eliot very clearly conceived it as an extension of deepening of human sympathy. After reading Adam Bede, Mr Carlyle felt "in charity with the whole human race," a result after the writer's own heart. She wished her appeal to be with an unconscious moral value. "My function," she said, "is that of the aesthetic, not the doctrinal teacher — the rousing of the nobler emotions which make mankind decent the social right, not the prescribing of special measures, concerning which the artist's mind, however strongly moved by social sympathy, is not often the best judge."

At another time she wrote: "I think aesthetic teaching
is the highest of all teaching, because it deals with
life in its highest complexity. But if it ceases to be
purely aesthetic — if it lapses anywhere from the
picture to the dream — it becomes the most offensive
of all teaching.” Matthew Arnold defined religion as
“morality touched with emotion.” George Eliot would have
accepted the same phrase as definition of the artistic
goal. Her writings required the warmth and colour of
emotion before they could achieve their purposes. The
peril besetting all authors is this — that they should
recall faded emotions to do duty for fresh and present
opportunities. What she said of Savonarola’s preaching
had its implication for her own task: — “His faith
laboured, but not his speech; it is the lot of every
man who has to speak for the satisfaction of the
world, that he must often speak in virtue of
yesterday’s faith, hoping it will come back to morrow.”
However, she never lost her faith in the value of artistic
achievement. She had nothing but scorn for the
shabby, fawning type of the author without conscience.
“He really cares,” she said, “for nothing but his name.
He carries on authorship on the principle of the gin-palace.
And bad authorship of the sort called amusing, is
spiritual gin.”

Possibly it was a part of her altruism that she
did not seem to spend much thought on her own reward.
She wrote very little of fame or immortality. In 1868
she wrote rather sadly, “I am not yet engaged in any
work that makes a higher life for me — a life that
is young and growing, though in my other life I am getting
old and decaying.” She did not nurse herself with the
courageous hopes of a poet like Keats. Her experiences
were different, for she had tasted fame, and found it
insipid. Who can say whether she was thinking of
herself at all when she wrote of Jubal’s final
"Thy limbs shall lie dark, trembling on this sod,
Because thou shinnest in man's soul, a god
Who found a great new passion and new joy
That nought but Earth's destruction can destroy."

6. Irony

When we come to consider the quality of George Borrow's art, we are instantly conscious of its ironic flavour. The command of sharp piercing words came to her early, so appears in her essay on 'Young' in its zigzag antithetical style, the survival of a past literary tradition. "He is equally impressed with the momentousness of death of chivalric feats. He languishes at once for immortal life for living." Thus on this ironic manner developed into a faculty, inherited from Jane Austen, of giving portrait in a single sentence. The Scenes of Clerical Life are full of sentences or phrases with a shiningly edge of satiric. In the first chapter of The Parish, we hear of Mr. Hackett, "In her utmost enjoyment of spoiling a friend's self-satisfaction she was never known to spoil a stocking." As we see Mr. Bartle: "Eulogies on an easy chair under the sense of compound interest, perpetually accumulating, has long been an ample function to her," we are let into her motives for respecting Mr. Hackett, who was "too well off to want to borrow money;" and, what Jane Austen would have remitted, the state of her soul. "If I'm not to be saved," the declarer, "I know a many as are in a bad way." A few pages ahead we meet Mr. Brooke, with his scenes of portly conversation, a subject dear to the heart of Jane Austen. In Mr. Gilfill's love story we get Jane Austen's type of irony applied to a subject rather out of her compass: "Mr. Hackett expressed herself greatly edified by the sermon on honesty, the allusion to the unjust weight a deceitful balance having a
peculiar lucidity for her, giving to a recent dispute with her grocer; but I am not aware that she ever appeared to be much struck with the sermon on anger." To take only one sentence from 'Lettice Repeal', we have Mr. Pelham, the doctor, who "looked with great Tolerance on all shades of religious opinion that did not include a belief in cures by miracle." The ironic humor of the scene is infinitely fresher in theme than the pattern which we find there; it has the charm of Jane Austen's letters, with a slight classicism stretching it over themes beyond her range.

The humor, which consists in the portrayal of ordinary figures tending afterwards to pass into the more dramatic faculty which creates humorous characters, leaves them to maintain the stock of wit. When we hear Mrs. Popyer talking we can do quite well without many humorous by--comments. We want nothing more, so long as we can listen to her. George Eliot never repeated anything so good in its own kind as Mrs. Popyer. Mrs. [redacted] for instance, does not come within miles of her charm; Bob Jakin is of a different race, he is not, like Mrs. Popyer, more of a humorous than anything else; he is also a disguised knight errant. The creation of Mrs. Popyer was something unique, which calls for an unceasing gratitude; to also was the glorious idea of giving her such an entirely suitable husband. "Ay, ay," said Batsby, 'A Terrific Woman!'

However, it is not possible that she has led us away from the question of Jane Austin. There is not much more to be said about it, except that her type of humor appears most completely in Silas
Marner: The Mill on the Floss. Some phrases from Persuasion seem to be re-echoing through its reference to the "timeless origin" of theDickards. "The Ravelin imagination having never ventured back to that fearful blank when there were no D'quods." By we come across the Doreen family, with its "painful inability to approve the sentiments or the conduct of families governed by the Doreen tradition." We have explained to us the love made by Mr. Glegg to her from her parlour: "She led two points of view from which she could observe the weakness of her fellow-men, reinforce her thankfulness for her own exceptional strength of mind." Lastly, we have the two uncles with their remarkable faculty for keeping clear of philanthropic adventures. Mr. Glegg, fond of petting animals, which required no appreciable keep; or Uncle Bullock, who "after silent meditation for a period of several logeages, came distinctly to the conclusion that when a young man was likely to do well, it was best not to meddle with him." It is like Jane Austen, yet with a difference; for we get the impression of something savage lurking behind the satire, darting stinger.

In later books this lightly falling satire becomes less marked; though it never passes away completely. We have it, for instance, in Felix Holt, when election feeling ran high: "Some regarded it as the most neighbourly thing to hold a little with both sides... It seemed an insidious thing to vote for the gentleman rather than another." But the general tendency is for the irony to acquire a graver tone—either in with a suggestion of pathos, as in the description of Mr. Casaubon's mind, "weighty with unpublished matter," or with a fierce stab of anger, as in the rumour's about
Grand Court: "It is well known in gambling... a man who has strength of mind to leave off when he has only ruined others, is a reformed character."

All this consideration has been restricted to the wise phrase. George Eliot never reached Jane Austen's unsurpassing control of the concise paragraph. She never did anything so perfect in its kind as the description of Catherine Morland in *Persuasion*. The eight or one of George Eliot's pages with long paragraphs unbroken by conversation give the reader a premonition of dullness. She was, however, a master of the concise situation. This power reaches its height in the description of Peter Featherstone's illness and its effect upon his relations. Dickens treated a similar topic when he pictured Martin Chuzzlewit dying "in a state of siege." But there the whole atmosphere is different. We seem to see relations heaped upon relations in a grotesque medley; there is a glamour of voices with the falsetto note rising above them all. It is like some gigantic nightmare; if it is not irrelevant to quote here in such a connection—we feel, after reading the passage, something like the last line of the ode to a nightingale,

"...do I wake or dream?"

No such doubts assail us when we read George Eliot. We are quite sure of being in a world very much awake. We have not the same accumulation of relations; they make less noise. Unlike the Chuzzlewit family, they do not revel in words, but they have no deficiency in the quality of writing special:

"Brother Peter," he [Edmond] said, in a wheeling yet gravely official tone,..."the Almighty knows what I've got on my mind...."

"Then He knows more than I want to know," said Peter.

Dickens regarded the business as an exuberant...
joke, with a dash of malice in it to give it savour, the three realms of George Eliot arouses no laughter, for it reveals the grim fires smouldering in human hearts.

George Eliot’s humour is Janus-faced, looking two ways. One is the direction of fierce scorn, �thers her human heart like a conscience. The other is the way of fellow feeling and compassion. There is very little humour, for instance, in the description of the nurse contributed by David ivory Keith at the Poyser’s Harvest supper. There is nothing but sweetness in the laughter which touches little children. Stepperton Church, so full of childhood memories, is described with touches of even some grace like this: in the first chapter of David Copperfield:—

"[There were] tall dark panels under whose shadows I sank with a sense of retirement through the litany, only to feel with more intensity my thrust into the consciousness of public life when I was made to stand upon the seat during the psalms or the singing."

When humour is tinged with fellow feeling, its dark little stakes love their hardness and outline. We feel our severity as we come near & "the God witting in holding up the mirror of his country for our own partness." We are no longer judges, but prisoners at its bar; we feel the great comradery of human faili. "Take a large enough area of human life," says Theophrastus, "& all comedy melts into tragedy, like the Fool’s part by the side of Lear."

9 Pathos

Although George Eliot sounded real and deep notes, the faculty did not come to her quite so naturally as her humour; it took more out of her. The summoned compassion, yielded herself up to it, but it rarely came unbidden. We have the feeling that the ironic word often slipped out in
spite of herself; but she always knew when she was approaching deep emotion.

It would probably be admitted that her command of pathos matured later than her humour. It found very little place in her early journalizing or the scenes from Clerical Life; possess it only in a limited degree, while the emotion there is wistful and delicate; it never becomes heart-searching or impassioned. In writing these records, she rounded the deep, stern waters of pain. Lynnym placed Hetty's friendless guest beside Thackeray's description of Colonel Newcome's grief, accounting them "the two most pathetic things in modern fiction," but saw Hetty walking heavily towards the pool, black, motionless, poundless, with the star darkening sky above her; "I watched her setting, for we watched her as she lies down among the sleep, till we seem to cast ourselves behind up yew tree into the "deep heart's core" of her emotion." "The very consciousness of her own limbs was a delight to her; she turned up her sleeves and pressed her arms with the passionate love of life." Or we hear her confession in prison with its haunting monody of refrain: "I went back because I cried... I've crying went through me... It was the baby's crying made me go... Deah, do you think God will take away that crying?"

In Selas Manners, George Eliot returned to the gentler tones of the earlier Scenes—"the part of a barren, purposeless life, the love of gold rooting itself therein, growing quietly like a weed; the love of the hard, gold coin, as in its place the finding of another gold on the floor in the front of the heart." "The heap of gold seemed to grow and get larger beneath his agitated gaze;" Selas leaned forward to handle it, touched "the soft, warm curls" of a
child.

Of Maggie in The Mill on the Floss we have already spoken much. The compassion aroused by her story is something unique in literature. Nowhere, not even in Shakespeare — perhaps not even there — do we find a character which inspires affection like Maggie. She is as near to her readers, as if she had lived and suffered beside them.

Don paffo, heightened with an element of majesty current
the personality of Bardo. It comes to us, through the words of
teller, as Romola reads to her blind father of the blind
Trenica: "He tells Trenica's happy, wise, without dying, is
with the loss of his eyesight merely, he had beheld Minerva
unveiled, i. e., though blind, could forever carry his
image in his soul." — George Eliot was a voluminous writer,
but she could restrain her words under the sweet, subtle
pressure of death. "Still Bardo was silent; his silence
was never again broken." — In the same book we meet Baldassarre
fiercely hungry for vengeance, i. e., dead to everything else. We
feel the spell cast over him by Sanmardola's preaching: —
"In that great sea of the multitude Baldassarre's had
mingled. Among all the human beings present, there
was perhaps not one whose frame vibrated more strongly
than his to the tones and words of the preacher; but it had
vibrated like a harp, of which all the strings had been
mended away except one." — Long afterwards his
words cut Romola like short, sharp stabs from a dagger:
"My mind goes — everything goes sometimes — all but
the
fire. The fire is of God; it is justice; it will not die." — The
thrill to his exaltation as memory of faculty returned
fell on the printed page "the black mark became
magical," i.e., everything fades like mist. — He tells Romola
of his yearning — "I find all my thoughts again," for he was
locked away outside them all. — "And," he proceeds, "i.e.,
outside now. I feel nothing but a wall of darkness.

Even in Felix Holt, so fault, I laboured, i. e., sometimes
feel the release of a great compassion, coming through the tragedy of a life apparently faded. Mr. Tranmere had "a woman's sensibility; her heart which lay screened behind all her petty habits and narrow notions at some quivering thing with eyes that throbbed as she gathered up the gathered rubbish." It will be remembered how Mr. Arnold Bennett in his Old Wives' Tale has pictured Sophia Baines, standing in old age the degraded features of her dead husband; in that pitiful moment she felt crushing around her the futility which tells us that if old is to have outlived misery, in like manner Mr. Tranmere turned to Better but felt life shaking under her feel: "I am old, I expect no little now; a very little thing may seem great. Why should I be punished any more?"

There was much sadness in the neighbourhood of Middlemarch. It bordered over the furry sly Walk that day when Lydgate placed before Mr. Casaubon the possibility of sudden death. We feel sorrow multiplying through Lydgate's career in the town; even after he leaves it to stay we are hurt by hearing casual references to his wine, dissatisfaction, failure: he deserved something better. Possibly George Eliot never wrote anything more poignant or stirring than her study of Mr. Bulstrode's humiliation. This plain, dull woman felt within her the solemn emotion of a great fidelity: "This imperfectly-taught woman whose phrases and habits were an odd patchwork, had a loyal spirit within her. The man whose prosperity she had shared throughout nearly half a life, who had unwaveringly cherished her—now that punishment had befallen him, it was not possible to her on any sense to forsake him. There is a forsaking which still sets at the same board and lies on the same couch with the forsaken soul, withering it the more by unloving proximity. She knew, when she locked her door, that she should unlock it ready to go down to her unhappy husband."

expose her sorrow, say of her guilt, I will mourn not reproach. But she needed time to gather up her strength, she needed to sob out her farewell to all the gladness and pride of her life. When she had resolved to go down, she prepared herself by some little acts which might seem mere folly to a hard relooker; they were her way of expressing to all spectating, sensible or imbecile, that she had begun a new life in which she embraced humiliation. She took off all her ornaments, put on a plain black gown, instead of wearing her much adorned cap, large bows of hair, she brushed her hair down, put on a plain bonnet cap which made her look suddenly like an early Methodist. At the sight of her husband's movement of new compassion, old tenderness went through her like a great wave. His compassion was silent, her promise of faithfulness was silent. Open minded as she was, she nevertheless shrank from the words which would have expressed their mutual consciousness as she would have shrank from flake of snow. She could not say, "How much is only slander a false accusation?" he did not say, "I am innocent."

However, Mlle. Berindeo comes before us with more elaboration than the earlier women—than Hélène, for instance, or Margot; in Daniel Defoe's there is a still wider distance from spontaneous simplicity. The characters, whose are more intricate. The generation: "dying Mordecai," are crowding on my narrow life as a bridge; what has been, what is to be are meeting here; "this bridge is breaking." When Berindeo's matter, speaks to him of her physical suffering, we cannot help feeling that there is something pathological in her case:

"Sometimes I am in an agony of pain,—I dare say I shall be to-night. Then it is as if all the life I have chosen to live, all thoughts, all will, forsake me. I left me in spots of memory, I can't get away; my pain seems to
keep me there." She feels not the pain but its uncanny effect on her mind, like a presentiment of approaching retribution, making "ghosts upon the daylight."

**Atmosphere.**

Humour and pathos are like threads woven into the texture of an atmosphere wrapped as a garment round each character. Sometimes we are conscious of the atmosphere but can hardly analyse it. A few words seem to create it; for instance, the picture of Baldassarre "reared on the stairs with something that shone like a white star in his hand;" or another sentence a few pages further on: "Baldassarre was still setting on the stairs when the shadow of Tito passed by." At other times we are moved by a sympathetic element in the setting of the figure. - We see Romola young, dreamy in a room full of lifeless objects - "the parchment backs, the unchanging mezzotint, the bits of absolute bronze clay;" when she goes to see her brother for the last time, she looks on a pale eunuch from seeing high pale on the breastled wall, a pale face of sorrow looking out from it below." Or we have the wonderful passages where the very surroundings become symbolical of her lot. - The white, gold wedding robe lay in the same chest with a dark coarse bundle - the habit of a nun; the garments represented to her mind the joyful life which was over, the new hard life which was beginning; the tape, died out, like her early hopes, she sat in total darkness. When she passed out into the bare wretched dawn its austerity refreshed the sternness of her resolution, but with increased claus, the awakening of shadow and its subtle reminders that however much she might try to escape from her past, she could never escape from herself: "For the last few moments she had been looking at nothing but the brightness on the path and her own shadow, tall and shrouded like a dread spectre."
George Eliot sometimes placed Nature in the background of her human stories, but hardly ever in the manner of Wordsworth. She denied most positively the claims made for the beneficent influences of Nature: "The selfish instinct are not subdued by the sight of buttercups, nor is integrity in the least established by that classic rural occupation, sheep-washing. To make men moral something more is requisite than to turn them out to grass." Yet she felt very strongly the fascination of water, and even more deeply, the power appeal and mystery of the sky. Janet was ashamed to look up through the rain clouds to the "dim light of stars," that seemed to her, "like an cruel finger pointing her out in her wretchedness and humiliation." Hettie shuddered, when the moon looked out on her guilt, "it never looked so before." When Romola drifted out on the boat, "the gold was shrinking a getting darker in sea and sky," she rowed out till the stars disclosed themselves, "like a perpetuating life over the wide heavens," as the boat glided over the waves, she said, "I watched the deepening quiet of the sky." But, "there lies the power—

the tranquility of Nature held no message for her—

Romola felt orphaned in those wide spaces of sea and sky, she read no message of love for her in that far-off symbolic extremity of the heavens... She... covered her face, choosing darkness rather than the light of the stars, which seemed to her like the hard light of eyes that looked at her without seeing her." This brings to mind a close comparison with Charlotte Bronte. It will be remembered how they learned, and how their souls were filled with the solemn beauty of the starry gloria of lights flashing across the horizon of a Continental port: but these lights were man-made. Nowhere in Charlotte Bronte do we find any suggestion of bareness in the light of God's stars. She would have compared the nature of earth, the stars of heaven, in the same manner as tea, in contrast, the glances of his daughter's eyes.
"Her eyes were fierce; but theirs
so calm, so restful in their
force, so tender, so restful in their
fear, so calm, so restful in their
strength, so tender, so restful in their
strength.

Charlotte Bronte found for a moment in the light of man forever,
in the light of God, comfort. She should remember, however,
that George Eliot did not always fail to find sympathy in
the heavens. Maggie Tulliver read in the skies, judgment
resolved. She slept not deep, until Stephen, when the
sun was setting, stirred, but awakened to behold
an "awful starlit sky." Dawn came, a "the reddening
eastern light," with its summons to decision; as she
looked at "the slowly, sounding sea," she made her
resolution; she strengthened herself for the opening
day of resistance. In the later books the background
became less vital, as the emphasis moves more
firmly on the inner life. Yet in the latest novel of all,
Mordecai went out to watch the lights in sky and
river, - a life "that can show no mourning, comfort, no
rejoicing."

We have said that the Tenderness in the later novels is
a sense from external settings into psychology. It is in
an early book that we see it fully with her black lace,
scarf and coloured glass earrings, gazing into the dim
mirror till the shadowy room seems alive, throb, and
breathe. But in Middlemarch we have three strange
night-time conversations between Dorothea and the
Parson, light of a candles, the
dying fire, two faint, unexcited figures. The
power of such an atmosphere lies in its negative
quality; Dorothea felt her words to be all the more
forcible, "falling clear, or the dark silence."
- As
George Eliot became older, her art passed into
psychology apart from picture. She approached the
standpoint of the Cappo, Lippi's adversary;
"Paint the soul;
Never mind the legs or arms!"
6. Character Study.

George Eliot did not always "paint the soul." She was sometimes content to paint a portrait suggesting more or less of the soul. In the case of children she often attempted nothing more than some quaintness or delicacy of manner. For instance we have Totty, as Arthur called her, "a funny little fatty." She only appears in pictures, but who wants anything more? It gives the reader a thrill of expectant delight to look down the pages and find Totty's name appearing. Or we see Pipps, happily settled on the muddy margin of a pool: "She, however, sat Pipps, deliberating cheerfully to her own small boot, which she was using as a bucket to convey the water into a deep hoof mark, while her little naked foot was planted comfortably on a cushion of whitish mud. A red-headed calf was observing her with alarmed doubt through the opposite hedge." The mere fact that she painted the optical leg "trump" is no argument for believing that George Eliot found the soul in childhood. She told us all about Maggie Sullivan; after that, there is nothing more to be said.

The minor characters are sometimes sketched from the children, from the outside. We are spared an intimate acquaintance with such people as Mr. Brokes. George Eliot invites us to look at him like a delightfully curious; but we have no desire to understand him. Yet he is not a caricature. Dickens would have painted him wrapped about with ridicule. The theme of the election speech would have filled him with ecstasy. But his Mr. Brokes would have borne to George Eliot's personage the relationship of a forty-second cousin. To the reader Mr. Brokes cannot be like Mr. Micawber, purely a source of recreation. We have to take him more seriously; he is linked on to responsible people. To their decided inconvenience. In a museum of humanity, he would do well to be placed in the
same corner as Mr. Woodhouse from Emma.

(6) Nevertheless, such characters, glanced at in passing, do not express George Eliot's deeper conviction about human nature. Wherever she pierces below the surface, she reveals a conflict. She seems to have known many people like Gwendolen, with natures "liable to difficulty and struggle." Sometimes as in the case of Mr. Bullersey, the obstruction takes the form of a "puzzling" world; but more often the contest is a matter of spirit rather than intellect. It may be waged between spirit and spirit. - Romola, II, Rosamond and Lydgate. There is something wonderful in the psychology of these battles - the defiance of assault, the pressure of soul upon soul. Perhaps the most subtle contest of all takes place during the interviews where Gwendolen accepts Grandcourt. We are put into the position of intelligent spectators. As each cut delivered by Grandcourt the writer delivers a comment like a physician's statement of injuries received by his patient; yet, with all our alertness we can hardly foretell the result. The interview has the unfeigned quality of all George Eliot's writing. It appears constantly in her plot; we cannot guess the last page from the opening chapters. In this at least she possessed what is assumed to be a masculine characteristic - she knew how to keep a secret.

Very often the battle takes place in the privacies of the individual soul. The ultimate issues then become the degradation or elevation of the soul, the survival of the fittest. In other words, of its stronger elements. The evil in Tito's nature was stronger than the good. At one time he may have appeared more good than bad; but any deficiency in the quantity of his evil was made up by its quality. His few really bad actions had far deeper consequences than his everyday good actions. It was an instance of cause and effect. Each step from integrity cleared a path to the next dishonour; each
lapse because steadily worse than the one before. In this story it was scarcely a matter of conflict between good & evil. His goodness found itself in occasional stints, gradually disappearing in favour of his evil. With this character the degradation was not always so steady or so final. Some men start life as equals, then repeat, but not in dust & ashes; they remain modified equals to the end. Though Arthur Dorethwine was genuinely sorry for the men he had caused, he never lost sight of himself as a persistent figure. "You can't think what an old fellow I feel," he wrote to Mr. Irwin: "I make no schemes now, I'm the best when I've a good day's march or fighting before me." Possibly it was all quite true, but it would have been better if he had never mentioned himself. Again, Rosamond's better nature asserted itself for a few hours of her life. She cleared Bill Ladislaw of blame and she would never say a word against Dorothy. But her goodness could not extend to mere protracted struggling; the evil came back into power & killed her husband's career: "He once called her his basil plant; when she asked for an explanation, said that basil was a plant which had flowered wonderfully on a murdered man's brains."

It is good to remember that the conflict does not always end in the defeat of goodness. Mean men like Harold Tressam sometimes show themselves capable - it may be only once - of behaving honourably, without certainty of reward. Father's splendid charm was superseded by the rare courage of her arrival at Felix, trials: "Half a year before Father's death a ridiculous spread over the surface of her life; but the depth below was sleeping." The same process of "conversion" worked through Gwendolen. It may be that neither Father nor Gwendolen is particularly vivid to us; still they have the value of representing George Eliot's philosophy. So
know that for Gwendoan’s redemption, some external influence was needed; and it came to her in the person of Behonda. She had a “capability of rectitude,” as acknowledged her error. She was not “narrow trained” as to be without a sense of justice. “She had a root of constancy in her.” It must be confessed, however, that it is impossible to muster up an excessive love for any of the people in Daniel Deronda; they are often the vehicles of a philosophy, nothing else. Before leaving this subject, we should go back to one of the earlier books to find somebody a little more human. Well, there is Mrs. Gulliver. Her small, dull mind was enlightened by no philosophies. She seemed incapable of understanding anything apart from her China. She preserved the main mass furniture of her house, but the family who lived there had no home—no shelter, unless for their bodies. Nevertheless, when all had turned against Maggie, Mrs. Gulliver stood by her, risking even the displeasure of her idol Tom: “But the poor frightened mother! love leaped out now stronger than all dread. ‘My child! I’ll go into the house. You’ve got a mother.’” Not only did she do this, she did something far more difficult—than the sudden impulse of courage. In the old days, when both her children were independent, Mrs. Gulliver had burdened them with incessant querulous complaints. But now that Maggie was broken, she learnt to repress the grumbling habits of a lifetime. Only once did she let slip a lamentation in Maggie’s presence; and for this, she heard the abundant excuses that she had just come from seeing Mr. Glegg.

5. The Poem.

It is customary to dismiss George Eliot’s poetry with the scantiest respect. It does not seem reasonable to expect anything noteworthy in the line from a woman who started writing it as an experiment after she was
forty. A learned lady attempting such a feat is
sure to rubbish the world & her verse; no often happens
their opinion is not altogether wrong. Neither is it altogether
right. George Eliot plodded too much to be a great
poet. Still it is hardly just to call her a small poet.

One thing that "marks down" her poetry is its want
of continuous excellence. She gets a spark; & then it is
quenched with grey ashes. The Prior warns Selma
that he will carry about with him a double self—

"A self that will be hungry while you feast,

Will blest with shame when you are glorified;

Will feel the ache a child of desolation

Even in the very bosom of your love."

It is a facetious delusion—hardened possibly by the
awkward redundancy in the third line, but rippling
in any case before it received this impetus. There is
very often some technical error to account for the
flagging linens for stature, in the appeal for friends &
support fed along—

Hearts such as want in beggarly royalty,

To silent watch by sinners who despair;

The flaw in the second line is its ugly & excessive
alliteration. Sometimes the flaw comes abruptly, & dies
away from pure exhaustion. Selma cries—

"O God, we know not yet

If this itself is not young misery

With fangs sweet growing."

For this reason George Eliot's poetry does not stand
continuous quotation. Very often the fault lies in
arrangement of the pauses giving the rhythm not a rest,
but a gasp. Too frequently feel that she was glad to
reach the haven of a full stop.

Yet if we choose we can find poisons, placed in a
shaky setting. George Eliot claimed kinship of spirit
with the Elizabethan poet, & sometimes a phrase sparkles.
as if it had come from an old play-book. We should not be surprised to find in \textit{Tis Prettier \& Prettier} the line where Fedalma compares herself to a caged bird,

"Like me, who have no wings, but only desires."

At least one of the following lines bears the same distinction:

\textit{If I have fire within,}

But on my soul there falls the chilling snow
Of thoughts that come as softly as soft flakes
Yet press at last with hard icy weight."

It is not like Webster at his best, the alliteration is undone; there is a want of suppleness in the rhythm, especially in the last line. Still, the resemblance is there. Again we catch the Elizabethan echoes in Fedalma's words to Juan:

"Oh, you will never hide your soul from me;
I've seen the jewels flash, I know 'er there,
Ruffle it as you will."

To the voice of Juan speaking:

"No matter whether I am here or there,
I still catch your beams."

When Junco felt impatience of pity he said,

"I need must bear this womanhood in my heart,
Bearing my daughter there."

If any of these quotations were slipped among the lines of an Elizabethan dramatic, they would seem at home in their surroundings.

There was another side of George Eliot's poetry in which she seemed to catch a reflection from Browning. She tried to render it in metre, but lacked the verse which transforms metre into poetry. For instance, she said:

"Earth and heaven seem one,
Like a glad trembling on the outer edge
Of unknown rapture;"

At full length is the well-known lines from \textit{Aft Vogler}:

"And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach its earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion to scale its sky, novel splendours burst forth, grees familiar dwell within, but a point no peak but found a fixed its wandering stars, Melanion's balls of clay; they did not pale no pinge, for earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near nor far."

She as poet spoke smoothly, I am unsatiated rapture; the other struggled to find words for an experience that "bars through the quagmire escaped." Again we hear Browning speaking through Fedalma's fragment of conjecture:

"If the earth
Barke off with flower-furred edge, weighty cheer
Leaving no footing for my forward step
But empty blackness..."

Browning sometimes assumed a casual pose to cloak dramatic emotions; for instance, in the concluding words of Count D'Orsmond, in the last line of Porphyria's Lover:

"And yet God has not said a word!"
George Eliot tried to capture the same names in Armgart, where the singer speaks of her dead joy in song, the madal taking her place:

"O, it is hard
To take the little corpse a lay it long
And say, 'None misses it but me.'"
She sings,
I mean, Paulina sings Adelaide,
And they will welcome her tonight."

She tried to assume the indifference which tears down a turbulent passion; but the turbulence was lacking.

There is also a reminiscence of Tennyson's Mort\nWarble in the last paragraph of The Spanish Gypsy, where Silva watches Fedalma vanishing ship, recites
"The waters wind slowly."
It is true that one could find a few beautiful lines which call up no reminiscences; for example, the description of Silvia entering the dark chamber, and finding it poor without Fedalma:

"It was the lute, the game, the pictured heads he longed to crush, because they made no sign but in response that she was not there, she, who had filled his sight, hid them."

Nevertheless, it is the general rule that, when we find anything of value, it invariably reminds us of some other poet's treasures, a sure evidence that George Eliot cannot claim the rank of an original poet.

Most of these illustrations have been drawn from The Spanish Gypsy, but the same conclusions apply to The Legend of Jubal. This, which was to have been a defence of George Eliot's poetry, seems to have assumed the poetry of Balaam. It was intended to flatter; but the blessing has turned to a curse. It looked as if it would be easy to praise; in reality, it is difficult not to blame. However, it sounds ungraceful to close on a note of blame. When all is said, George Eliot's poetry was mainly tentative; one does not judge experiments with rigour.

1. Comparison with Charlotte Bronte.

This is probably the best place to draw a few conclusions and 1 up a few contrasts between George Eliot, the only other Victorian woman writer who competed with her in fame or influence. As a technical artist, the distinction between them is so marked as to render comment almost superfluous. George Eliot began writing novels when Charlotte Bronte had left off; looking at the matter superficially, it would appear that she had the benefit of the late start. The ground had been broken before her; the pioneering experiments had been tested as a
matter. In fact she had to set to work as if no one had been there before her. Technique has its devices which are commonly transmitted from one artist to another; but Charlotte's technique, such as it was, could hardly be transmitted; it was fragile, without a trace of self-consciousness. Moreover, the spirit can be communicated from author to author; but in spirit Charlotte Bronte & George Eliot were almost antipathetic. Their achievements were distinctly independent. Each writer approached life from different aspects, left records which stir different tones of appreciation. Only a few of these contrasts can be noted.

In the first place, Charlotte Bronte sought concrete stories, definite adventure; George Eliot considered a story with the additional weight of its after-impressions. She studied, not so much the story, as its psychological implications; she endeavoured to give both record & interpretation. Each method fostered a distinctive treatment of character. Charlotte Bronte took men & women simply. She quickly made up her mind as to their leading characteristics. In contrast, she had an instinctive contempt for the frivolous type of women—Miss Rosamond Fairer, Miss Pomona Fairclough; having once decided that these women were timid, she felt there was nothing more to be done, unless to tolerate them. Then George Eliot had to deal with a shallow girl like Hetty Sorrel; she laboured to do her justice. Instead of putting her aside as a trifling subject, she made her very smallness the occasion of overwhelming tragedy. The same tendency is apparent in the handling of certain masculine types. While Charlotte Bronte wished to depict the flaws in a man's character, she made them hard to the verge of brutality; George
Eliot made him an egotist. The brutal type is simple; he figures constantly in any child's romantic tale; with a character fired from the very beginning, but there is nothing childish in the egotistic type. His character evolves—like Prue—from charm to repulsion. It requires a certain optimism of mind to comprehend such nature.

Secondly, where Charlotte Bronte was apt to censure, George Eliot was prone to question. Jane Eyre trusted her tradition, recognizing there in a moment of crisis as her only defence; but as we have seen, George Eliot disapproved of her attitude. It was her way to scrutinize authority before yielding respect; she was staunch; however, to any principle which satisfied her reason. Charlotte Bronte put aside the rational aspects of a matter, she trusted to the health of her own impulses. She never felt, like George Eliot, the clogging hardness of Conventions. Maggie Tulliver's life was broken—because it was out of tune with a stupidly worldly convention; Jane Eyre also was "a discord" at Gateshead, but her unconventionalism had nothing to do with the matter. It was her diffidence—her reserve, that—towards Mrs. Reed—jangled the sweet bells of her nature out of tune. In the same way Charlotte Bronte treated Nature, while George Eliot stopped short with an awed admiration. We have seen Romola drifting seawards under "the hard light" of Callowia stars; when Jane Eyre lay solitary and friendless on the moor, she looked up to "a kindly star." Twinkling in the "pure" sky, Romola hid her face, because she could not bear to look at that cold beauty; as Jane watched the soft glory of the nebby sky, she felt the "might and strength of God." — "Night was come, and her planets were seen; a raft, still night, too serene for the companionship of fear."
In one sense George Eliot was more Tractful than Charlotte Brontë—her temperament was more religious. If George Eliot had believed what Charlotte Brontë believed, it would have filled her life, as it never filled Charlotte's. It is not that Charlotte was irreverent; she was genuinely devout. But her natural intensity never carried her into the glowing heart of religious experience; she halted on the outer surface. If she, with her swift instinct, had let herself go, she would have travelled much further than George Eliot, with her patient, laborious gait and scanty, impoverished Creed. Charlotte would not or could not realize the tremendous sweep of spiritual forces; she would not have comprehended the subtle cases of conscience. George Eliot would have recognized a deep spiritual emergency; she might not have been adequate to the relation, but she would have tried to do her best. It is more likely that Charlotte would have passed by on the other side. She was not altogether Sair & St John: George Eliot would at least have tried to do him justice.

It all comes back to the single conclusion: these two women were of entirely different types. In the one case we have George Eliot, with poor vitality, varied experience, seeking escape from self by the pathway of knowledge, striving to a remarkable efficiency without the magnetic touch; in the other, we have Charlotte Brontë, with rich vitality, poor experience, seeking self-realization through knowledge, attaining to a flattering beauty flushed with glamour. It is like placing an eager little girl beside a sad, experienced woman. Both writers were poor—she in finish, the other in charm; both were rich—one in naiveté, the other in instruction.
General Consideration of her Position & Influence.

George Eliot held that no author had a claim to be heard unless he had something unique to give. "I shall never write anything," she said, "to which my whole heart, mind & conscience don't consent, so that I may feel it was something - however small - which wanted to be done in this world, that I am just the vessel for that small bit of work." By her novels she justified her calling; they expressed something which she alone could offer; this was her attitude of mind. Scott and Charlotte Bronte had felt the romance & poetry of the human story; Dickens his fresh & irresistible oddity; Jane Austen's & Hardy's peculiarity; something of its sadness. George Eliot felt its complexity. Modern life has become an enigma, but she did not write much of contemporary problems. Rather, she felt that uneasy current which flows beneath articulate questions. It was Dickens who dealt with specific problems - in Oliver Twist, for instance - or Nicholas Nickleby. The modern problem novel has inherited something from both writers. To take an illustration, Joan & Peter is descended from Nicholas Nickleby, The Mill on the Floss. Dickens told an story, but drew no obvious conclusions; George Eliot studied Tom Taylor's education; I hinted plainly at her own conclusions; Mr. Wells has told an educational story, expounded his conclusions. It must be remembered that George Eliot did not hint at her conclusions when the problem was one of permanent human interest. She suggested her views on the current education of her time; but she openly expressed her opinions on human life & destiny. The modern problem novel is a dogmatising of parable & comment, from George Eliot it has acquired the interpreting habit.

As we have seen, George Eliot did not openly express her opinions except on questions of perennial human
value; these questions are usually matters of psychology. 
Before her time there had been many great delineators 
of human character; in a certain sense they were all 
psychologists. But their method was spontaneous 
rather than scientific. Prof. Elton has accounted it an 
honour to Shakespeare that he was not "an amiable 
psychologist." The scientist must be dispassionate; he 
must examine, classify, judge, without emotion; 
so, as Prof. Elton suggests, without morality. He adopts, 
not an immoral, but a non-moral standpoint. Though 
he sees the "soul of goodness in things evil," goodness 
and evil as such, are irrelevant to his purpose. His sense 
of justice is repressed by the want of emotional insight; he fabulates deeds and motives. A certain type of 
modern realist handles unpleasant facts without 
any moral repugnance, simply because they are facts. 
He represents one of the tendencies of scientific psychology 
applied to literature. The scientific bias was only a 
part of George Eliot's outlook. She walked by faith as 
well as by sight; sometimes she trusted her instinct, 
in her judgments of character we often feel a 
conscientious straining after accuracy. She is very 
particular to exhibit "the best in the best of us, the 
good in the worst of us." Undoubtedly this is a scientific 
inclination. There was no such effort in Shakespeare, when 
he made his dying villain say, "Yet Edmund was beloved," 
and it seems to have come from his heart with a flash 
of sympathy; he sprang naturally to the highest, purest, 
truest justice. In a lesser degree George Eliot had these flashes 
of intuition. In a passage already quoted from Daniel 
Deronda, she spoke of the affection being clad with 
knowledge. Though her knowledge may be like a 
heavy garment, her affection carries the burden with 
a vivid, satirical presence.
Chapter I. The Personal Experience Reflected in her Poetry

Christina Rossetti was born in 1830 and died in 1894. Between these dates there lies a very slight quantity of biographical episode; yet the quality of these episodes is deeply significant. A few facts of her own experience lay the basis of all the colour, pregnancy, and intensity of her art.

One is the fact of death, casting its shadow upon her from her fifteenth to her sixty-fourth year. From the year 1848 Christina never walked in the clear sunlight of perfect health for many years of her life the prospect of death was a daily and hourly consolation. Like milestones upon her road she marked the coming of death to members of her own immediate circle—her father in 1854, her mother in 1876, her sister Maria in 1882, her brother Dante in 1886. Every funeral must have sounded a summons to her own soul. Unlike most of us it might be said of her that in the midst of death she was in life. She had felt something magnetic in the dark shadow which moves through the world of men. She had touched the shadow, which had taken shape in her gaze; sometimes in hours of pain she had looked in the eyes of death and the figure had passed away, but rarely out of her sight; she witnessed its dealings with others close by her, and awaited her hour. Yet she showed no signs of fear.

"Fear death? To feel the footsteps in my throat, the mist in my face,"
she never mentioned such things. She never formed herself up to meet
"the Arch. fear in a terrible form."
Her visualization of death must have resembled the fall, dim figures of Watts' painting "Love & Death." - a figure powerful and yet tender; chronicled; built all in hues of darkness; standing with a finger, head fixed, bordering on protection. However, the idea of death as personality finds little definite expression in her writings; hers is rather the conception of death as a region - the shadowy land - to be crossed, while
"bem beyond itloomsthe land of day."
Watts' Death is conceived as a personality, as a person. Her attitude remaining unchanging. She always seemed absorbed in her long vigil, more conscious of death than of life.

The second great fact is renunciation. The long years of waiting might have been filled with the joy of human love; but Christina chose, deliberately, the empty life of a nun. These were, as we know, two love episcopes in her story. One came when she was a young girl in her teens. The years 1848-49 stand out as the period of intimacy with James Collinson, the artist. In its broad outline the story is well known. Collinson had been converted to Roman Catholicism before meeting Christina. In her having this as an inerparable barrier, she reverted to her original fold, the Church of England. Then came her repentance for vacillation, her return to the Church of Rome, with inevitable results, so far as Christina was concerned. This brought her the first ting of disillusionment, turned her fresh dreams to bitterness:

"I must pull down my palace that I build,
Bury up the pleasure gardens of my soul;"
Must change my laughter & sad tears for grief,
My freedom & control.

Now all the cherished secrets of my heart,
Now all my hidden hopes are turned to dust.
Part of my life is dead, part rack, a part
Is all on fire within.

The fearless thought of what I might have been,
Haunting me ever shall not let me rest.
A cold North wind has withered all my green,
My sun is in the West."— [Three Tragedies]

The second love episode which came in later life,
Left deeper wounds. Charles Babbage Cayley, a distant
man of letters met Christina constantly after the year
1860. Mr. William Rossetti has noted the years 1862
& 1867 as the period of their closest intercourse.
After that date there was neither question nor hope
of marriage, for Christina had made the central &
most inflexible resolution of her life. The rest of its
story is most fittingly told in the words of her
brother, William:—"Years passed; she became an
elderly, an old woman, who loved the scholarly,
reclusive to the last day of his life, 5 December 1882,
& to the last day of her own, her memory." They
not mere physical suffering, strikes the single
prevading note of tragedy in Christina Rossetti's
life story. The tragedy was self-calculated self-
inflicted; the root of it lay deep within her own
nature. Mr. Cayley was reverent & unworldly, but to
Christina he lacked the one thing needful. Even Mr.
William Rossetti cannot tell us the precise grounds
of disagreement between her sister & her lover, but
he to suppose that, whereas Mr. Cayley Cayley's form
of Christianity was partial, Christina's was absolute.
He did not regard it as the single ultimate Creed, while for Christina it was everything or nothing. These facts presented themselves to her in the form of a
sharp and definite choice; she made her resolution, kept it. The world knows her secret today, but it is not for the world to discuss it, either with con-
denration or approval.

It is remarkable that Christina did not "unpack her heart with words" about this matter. She did write about renunciation after the year 1867, but rarely, if ever, in "words that breathe, words that burn."

The great poems of renunciation were written before her own testing. Introspective, perhaps the greatest of all was written in 1867, three years before the commencement of her intimacy with Mr. Cayley. She seems to have written, not from actual experience, but under a premonition of impending trial. This adds to her literature poetry a unique and almost prophetic poignancy. She felt herself repeating happiness before it had been offered her. She tasted in advance the pangs of martyrdom. This is hardly too strong a word for one who wrote with such an instinctive passion on the theme of self-renunciation. Her heart burned within her whenever she touched the subject. Even then when she approached it impersonally, as in "The Covent Threshold," the hidden fire stirred. An inexplicable presentiment seems to have burned its weaking across her heart; the fire told — using the poet Tennyson, like an Old Testament prophet — the release which would fall on her after its failure and had come to pass: —

"Dumb I was when the riven fell,
Dumb I remain, I will never tell;
To my soul, I talk with thee,"
But not another the right must see. I [Interposition]
This dulness of spirit did fall upon her. She spoke
after 1867, in the sense that she produced many more,
but her voice lacked the old vital ringing quality.
It approached her own description of the many ""ruhe
""subtle things,"" which praised on daily walks:
""A voice which sang, but never sings."
This blankness, dulness of heart is best measured
by the quality, quality of her poetry after 1867. For
a time it fell off, even in quantity; then her
voice came back with a lasting, uncertain
muse. It seemed almost as if in renouncing
earthly love she had sacrificed her art. Like
Rupert Brooke, going out to wage an earthly
warfare, she in her spiritual content, ranked poetic
vision:
""Our song we gave,
Our immortality.

Mr. A.C. Benson has declared the "Descent into Hell"
a requisite for the highest artistic development.
But, as we have seen, most of Christina's supreme
poetry was written as if in anticipation of that
ordain. There must have been a new quality in the
music of Orpheus after he returned from Hades to
the upper world. Though he lost Eurydice, he
returned with her his instrument unscathed.
Christina made the descent into Hell, but her
lyre suffered in the fierce flames of testing.

Indeed, if Christina Rossetti's immortality
depended solely on work done after 1867, it would
have a slender basis. If all the earlier poems
were swept away, it would still be impossible
absolutely to forget the author of Monna Innamorata,
Marvel of Marvels, a Heaven Herakles Earth & Sea.
But we would have no conception of the real,
bare irreverent beauty of the earlier day, but would have to search for gold among silver, or meaner metals. The gold would be there for the finding, but rarely, if ever, would we light upon the warm colour and radiance of jewels. Christina had to pay the price of her sacrifice, and add it to the ruin of increasing physical weakness. This uncertainty of her art testifies to the weariness which fell upon her spirit. It is certain, however, that she never regretted the cost never wished to go back over her past, taking the other alternative. Possibly we never hear her absolute verdict on her decision—seven in words that rang clear from the heart, till we get a poem roughly dated, "Before 1846," most probably written some time after the death of Mr. Cayley in 1833. It is well known, but surely, it can never be quoted too often:

"My love, whose heart is tender, said to me,
"A moon lacks light, except her sun befriended her,
"Let us keep tryer in heaven; dear friend;" said she,
"My love, whose heart was tender."

From such a loveliness as words could lend her, yet still she spoke of 'us,' repose as 'we,'
Her hope substantial, while my hope grew slender.

Now keeps she truth beyond earth's utmost sea,
Wholly at rest, though storms should toss and rend her,
And still she keeps my heart, and keeps its key.
"My love, whose heart is tender."

Literally, this is not the story of her life; for in her case, it was the man who died first. In every other respect it fits closely to her own experience, in one line her own conclusion is unmistakably implied,
"Her hope substantial, while my hope was slender,
That substantial hope aon'd to Christina for any
measure of earthly sorrow. The ruin whom she
described as a girl of nineteen, used words which
she could have applied to herself at the age of
sixty;—

"For whom prayers & facts Turn pain
Around the flesh & Paradise."

It reminds us of Browning's statement of the
consolation fit to be given to a poet who falls
short of attainment. God, he says,

"Just saves your gold to spend."

Christina Rossetti believed in the same truth. Her
gold was being saved for her. Though some of it
was spent in this world of human turmoil, the
great treasure was laid up in heaven. In an
early poem she had referred to the function which
follows pain:

"Tomorrow I shall put forth hands again,
And clothe myself with flesh."

[From "Home & Home."

"Tomorrow" came to stand before her as a symbol of
Eternity, dawning after the night of earthly
ruin. It was on this chord that she closed one
of the last poems she ever wrote:—

"Heaven overarches earth & sea,
Earth sadness & sea's bitterness.
Heaven overarches you & me.
A little while it we shall be—
Please God—there there is no more sea
Nor barren wilderesses.

Heaven overarches you & me,
And all earth's gardens & her graves.
Look up with me, until we see
Chapter II. Sources.

The chief source of all poetry is the poet's life. This is the finest base for the study of literary biography — not as an end in itself, but as the means which produced an end. The cause is the poet's experiences; the effect is his art. The experiences is a transitory thing for the poet. He is like all other men; but the art remains as survival of his fittest achievement. Literary biography should always be regarded in the light — as the record of passing hours — never, which brought forth an imperishable beauty.

This is particularly true of Christina Rossetti. She was one of the most secluded and detached of all English writers. It is almost impossible to take up any of her poems, or say — "Because such — such an English poet lived before her, she wrote in this style." Besides, we may catch lines or phrases from other writers, but they are so faint and rare as to be lost in her own muse. In the same way historical movements, great intellectual impulses except by ruffling the waters of her pool. The Oxford Movement with its bearing upon Anglicanism, perhaps came nearer to her than any other influence of her age; still all she had to say about it in definitive language was contained in one phrase, calm serene to the memory of Cardinal Newman. Christina Rossetti was not a product of her age. We can imagine her living through successive periods of the Christian era, achieving the same result.
In each case, she could project her mind back through the ages, and feel quite at ease, more at home with Augustine, Dante, or Thomas à Kempis than with Jeremy, Browning or Carlyle. Her ideal was for her the atmosphere of the sixteenth century. Yet it is impossible to determine whether she would have been different if born into the middle ages instead of the nineteenth century. A sympathetic environment could not have developed more interest in her than that which she acquired in solitude. The most essential fact about her nature was her singular independence of environment. It is hardly too much to say that her art would not have been materially altered if she had lived in the England of either Elizabeth or Charles II. This can be said of hardly any other English poet, not even of Milton. It may be true, I think, that his soul was like a star in a world apart;

but it is also undeniable that he represented Puritanism. Christina Rossetti represented nothing apart from her own personality. Here was the solitude, not of the mountain-summit, but of the locked, darkened room. "In thy chamber," said a writer much loved by her, "In thy chamber thou shalt find what abroad thou shalt ... often lose." In Christina's chamber we find something which eludes us elsewhere. This shy, unobtrusive woman, passing self-contained through the midst of intellectual feet, turmoil, in the world yet not of it, was more unusual, more truly unique than any of the great figures overshadowing her. In the course of English literature she stood unparented—like Melchizedek set apart, "without father, without mother, *Especially I without descent.*

[1] The literary influence which stirred her most...
closely was that of Dante. Yet here, as always, she transformed what she received. She had something of the Dantean—
temperament, intemperance, flamboyancy, exaltation. But
there were in Dante whole worlds which escaped her. Her
outlook, embracing sun, moon, stars, connecting through the
"veins of the earth" to the fairest, dark underworld, was
concentrated by her into the processes of her own soul.
She looked upward and outward; she looked inward. She then
enlarged his stretchy vision as constant symbols of inspiration.
It is characteristic of Christina that she sought escape
even from starlight, in the close, secret part, where she might
forget all things.

"forget my body, forget my soul."

Dante walked, a living poet, through the world of the dead;
his path haunted with echoing voices. Christina's dreams
were full of dim voices, questioning and replying. She strove
who traversed round Dante yearned after knowledge of the
world they had quitted, wastefully sought to remember.
They asked the poet to speak to them when he returned to
the dwellings of men, the radiant light of the stars:

"la che di noi alla gente favella."

For that I wo them speak among mankind. (Cari' se l'andarono.)

The same thought pervaded much of Christina's writing,
found place in one of her most perfect poems. She then
read, my dearest, with its recurring phrases;

"And if thou wilt remember,
And if thou wilt forget."

It found more impassioned consciousness in the poem, at Home, so highly praised by her brother,
Dante Gabriel; where the spirit returns to the earth,
seeking recognition, finding instead the blankness of
Alcmena:

"To-morrow is to-day, they cried;
I was or yesterday."

Another point in which Christina resembled Dante was
in the beautiful grave Tenderness which reawakened the 
glooms of Torment. With what an instinctive sympathy must 
she have read the famous passage where Paolo's 
Tenderness are ashamed to read of Dante's guilty 
passion in Christina's mind there would be something 
skin to Dante's wonderful reticence:—
"Quei giorni più non vi legghemo avanti."
("In its leaves that day we read no more.")
In the same way she could have appreciated Dante's 
Courtly to his old master Brunelto Latini, even in 
the pupil great his mouth, pleased him with 
the pupil's "Quanto vorria il poeta con 
lume volto verso la vista."
"as one who walks in reverent guise."
Still it was not in the Inferno, but in the Paradiso, that 
she entered most fully into his spirit. In one of her poems 
she speaks of the Christian life as a race run 
"In darkness for the city luminous."
It was the luminous quality of Dante's imagination that 
left the deepest impression upon her temperament. His 
shifting splendour of colour, of light, flower, and music, 
spread in her brain flashing visions, like light; her dreams of 
Paradise were radiantly ethereal, translucent. It is 
easy to understand how Christina could not enter 
into the substantial mass of imagination of Melton; in 
Dante she could find the kindred touch of fragility. 
Her visions melted, wavered, interlaced with elusive 
harmonies, flushed, glimmered, with changing light. 
There was nothing opaque in his structures, but an 
almost transparent clearness of colour, and in the 
limen of outlines. The spirits were amazed to see 
Dante's shadow cast upon the flames. (Par. Canto 26); it is 
remarkable also, that the angels in the flight cast no 
shadow upon the petals of the mystic rose. (Par. Canto 31). 
Christina once wrote of the "shadowless hair" of a ghost 
but this in itself is a trifling resemblance. The absence 
of shadow is simply a token of the peculiar, almost
inmaterial quality of colour in both poets. Sir Sidney Colvin has selected from Keats' description of Madeline paying the one word which suggests the coming and going of colour:

"A checkered centaean flower'd with blood of Queens hemp".

There is the same vitality in the colours of Dante Alighieri & Christina Rossetti. They are not permanently painted on a canvas; they flush and fade as if they were alive. It is impossible to enumerate detailed places of contact, such as "the bunching stair" of The Ancient Threshold, so like the glowing ladder set up in Dante's seventh heaven, "sinking high up beyond sight.

Only one more point of resemblance can be noted. This is suggested by the crowning symbol of Dante's heaven—the clustered petals of the snow-white rose. Christina never attaches any conception so magical, so overwhelming, "as this; but to her, as to Dante, the rose was an emblem of ultimate beauty. Possibly no literature can have so lifted the wings of her spirit as that passage where Beatrice leads Dante into the yellow heart of the living flower; Christina's soul would follow him into the fragrance and subduing purity of unattainable visions.

111-117 from The Imitation of Christ, Christina Rossetti acquired much of her outlook upon Christianity. We have already noticed that her group of Christianity was absolute; that is to say, in the sense that it completely absorbed her life. In another sense she possessed only a partial Christianity—not the Christianity of the Gospels, not the complete Christianity of Christ, but one intense and intimate aspect of the Christian life. This aspect was most fully expressed by the author of this imitation. It is hardly the creed which uplifts all civilizations; it is a faith which warms all manner of the inner life of the individual spirit. To take a submission—"O Lord, learn to be obedient."
It consists upon self-renunciation! Both reward as offer
Communion with Christ. In Christina's poems we find a
ringing echo to the dialogue of The Imitation. Speech
between Christ and the Disciple, intimate, searching, urgent.
Such disciplined clarity of mood was something into
which Christina could enter heart, soul: "Then
afflicted not to be departed nor to despair; but at God's
will to stand steadily, whatsoever comes upon thee &
endure it for the glory of Jesus Christ; for after winter
followeth summer, after night the day returneth, &
after a Tempest a great Calm." In this book she found
Testimony to her own sources of consolation: "Then
are the three peace of the heart, Then it's only rest; of
thee all things are head, not restless." She never took
it to abandon joy to the start, radiant delight of the
chapter. In the wonderful effect of Divine love: "He that
lovest, flyeth, runneth, repenteth, he is free; cannot
be held in. He giveth all for all; bath all in all...
love... is able to undertake all things, it completes
many things, it warranteth them to take effect, where he
who does not love, would faint & lie down." She
could not reach this clarity, buoyancy of faith, but she held very firmly to the secret which
dies at the core of all religious vitality, the fact
of close, personal relations with unseen forces:
"for who is there, that approaching humbly unto
the fountain of sweetness doth not carry away from
itself at least some little sweetness? Or who
standing near a large fire, releaseth not some small
heat therefrom? And then art a fountain always,
full & overflowing; a fire ever burning & never going
out." This fire lighted the embers in Christina's own
heart; we standing without, can feel the warmth
of the flame. A fire indeed, is not invariably comforting;
it warns, but it can burn. At Times there maybe
something in the intense isolated flame which makes us shrink back from it. We say that this flame of religion is dangerous — a good servant, but a bad master. Those who wish to master their religion are repelled by Christina Rossetti, whose religion manifested her, but whatever we may feel there is one positive fact — her religion never leaves us cold.

In Mr. William Rossetti has told us that his sister delighted in The Pilgrim's Progress; this is in some ways astonishing. The homeliness of Bunyan seems far apart from her ordered reverence; her freshness and frankness of speech, very different from the concentrated passion of her published writings. Still he is not so far away from the unstudied piety sometimes apparent in her letters; beyond the superficial manner she would appreciate a meaning where she and Bunyan could meet on common ground. In both Dante and Bunyan she must have noted the comparison which so often took form in her own writing, the likening of earthly life to a pilgrimage, a sojourn, a "progress." It is true that in Dante there was not the same definite metaphor of the journey, as applied to man's life upon earth, but to the foundation of his poem — the ideas of Bunyan's allegory were alike: they were both recorders of a pilgrimage.

Christina has often been compared to the English mystics of the seventeenth century — Herbert, Carew, Crashaw, Vaughan. There again the comparison is more prominent than the resemblance — the distinction between familiarity and intimacy. These men approached God in the spirit of children, and played with their fancies at his feet: and in their moments of sincere devotion they took pleasure in their phrases: truth, clearness, the childlike heart, the learned secrets hidden from the wise and prudent, Christina
lacked this youthful innocence. Then she was nineteen, she described herself as one —

"Young old before my time."

We can imagine that the fantastic exuberance of these poets would have oppressed her with her own solemnity, and the sudden change of an alien atmosphere. For instance, she might have started on a passage from Carus:

"All thy old loves shall now smile on thee;
And thy pains not bring upon thee;
All thy sorrows wise shall shine,
And thy sufferings be divine.

Tears shall take comfort, a turn gains
And wrongs repeat its deadness."

She would have halted at the last two lines, not because of their defects in style, but because they are fantastical. She took her religion too seriously to indulge in many fancies about it.

It is again we are told that she admired Coleridge, Shelley; but she took very little from them. She would find in them the absence of outline, the shifting evanescent colour which characterized the visions of Dante's Paradise. The "endless rows" of her dreamland is remarkably like a phrase in Coleridge's Kubla Khan. There was in these poets something ethereal, an unearthliness to which she could respond. But behind the fact that they were dreamers, caught up into worlds beyond the tangible actualities of earth, she had little kinship with them. In Coleridge personally, there was a slackness of fibre which made its way into his writings, thus setting them apart from hers. The direct antithesis of Shelley, "tender, tumultuous"; she never seemed to experience his hunger, thirst after freedom, his hot, hopeless struggles against the base of necessity or convention. Sis. Penwad
Grose has found in both Christina Rossetti and Shelley "that desiderium, that insatiate longing for something lost out of life."

"Out of the day a night
A joy has taken flight."

Perhaps it would be true to say that Christina's habitual attitude was that of one who has lost a sense of delight, whereas Shelley went on constant pursuit of an unknown joy, subtly eluding his grasp.

Keats stands forth next as one in the great procession of poetical 'Coloursists,' the question arises: and he transmit anything to Christina Rossetti? One is inclined to think that Christina felt colour as she did, chiefly because this was an inborn faculty, rather than because she lived in the society of artists. I think her colour-sense would have been as perfect if she had never read a line of Keats. In the same way, she recollected Keats in her recollection handling of growing things - grass, plants, flowers. She does not show us landscapes; she takes us into a place full of movement and change - a world which seems to play a physical touch upon our senses. But this again is an attitude, a mood, which cannot be learned from books. It is impossible to believe that she was like this, just because Keats, who lived before her, had felt Nature while others took observation. This is even more than the sense of colour; it is an instinct, not an acquired habit. The phrase falling from Keats' dying lips constantly takes shape anew in her poetry. "I feel," he said, "the flowers growing over me." In looking forward this idea finds expression in the dying farewell of a girl. Her friends:

'Have patience, friends, a little while;
For soon, where you shall dance, sing, and smile..."
My quickened dust may blossom at your feet," yet the idea in itself is not at all singular, what was unique in Keats was his personal and intimate relation to the idea. Christina also was capable of feeling in the same way without any external suggestion.

She was always conscious, however, of living in the same world as Mrs Browning. Sometimes she caught a faint reflection from her; in Afterthought, she displays a slight debt to a few phrases in A Drama of Fulness. Christina humbly believed that, but for one lack, Mrs Browning could have written something better than her own Mona Innocensia; that lack was an impassioned sorrow, "had the great poets of our own day written only been unhappy instead of happy," she would have given the world something finer than the Sonnets from the Portuguese; in that case, it is implied, Christina would not have written her Mona Innocensia, for since we can be thankful to have missed the might have been.

As Christina felt this respect for Mrs Browning, we must examine her position more closely. Although she was conscious of Mrs Browning, it is not so certain that she was influenced by her. We would think less of Christina if she had allowed her firmness to be shaken by the weight of Mrs Browning's words; it would have lowered her to become the disciple of such a teacher. So when Allan said, Mrs Browning was not, like Christina, a supreme poet. Her genius was weak, intermittent, pushed out of her in short spasmodic bursts of words. "The lady protests too much," said Gertrude of Hamlet's tragic queen. We feel this the whole way through Mrs Browning. She kept nothing back. The Seraphim go in talking through the agony of the Crucifixion, as their words go on its mystery like an unnamed sacrifice. Christina Rossetti was
never garrulous like this; she could hold her lips firmly closed. It is not that Mrs. Browning is ever the case of an empty sounding vessel for she was not empty. She had many things to say, but they were not worth saying, and by her own action she depreciated their value. She poured the liquid out of her vessel so that it drenched the recipient instead of satisfying his thirst. Still, there was nourishment in that fluid so carelessly wasted. Christina seems to have recognized this fact. For our part we should try to find out how much she tasted of this offered nourishment, how much she laid aside.

In the first place she passed over anything which approached character study. She has no counterpart to Mrs. Browning's somewhat feminine Lucifer; she never scrutinized types like Romney Leigh or Lord Horace. She had nothing of Mrs. Browning's interest in men's external inconsistencies.

"What creature else"

On earth, is then, walks the equal?

She could not see life through another's eyes. In this respect Mrs. Browning was undoubtedly greater. There were grave defects in her rendering of Marianne Erle's story; Marianne herself is so swathed about with words, with sentiment, with theories, that we can hardly find the woman underneath all these layers; but at certain moments everything seems to fade except her face a horrid; often we see her baby, not wrapped about with words, but simply as Marianne saw it. Christina could not have felt like Mrs. Browning, the "anguish" or the "ecstasy" of Marianne's motherlove. So do that she would have required to look out from herself; this she could not do. She was not a proud woman. She fainted from the revelation of her own spiritual weakness, and she could not
sleep to put deeper degradation deeper than her own. She could not have voiced the cry of Mrs. Browning's runaway slave:

"But we who are dark we are dark!

Oh God, we have no stars!"

Christina could not have imagined what it was to exist without the starlight of faith; neither could she have realized the utter misery of the slave's hopeless cry:

"I look on the sky - the sea -
We were two to love, two to pray -
Yes, two! O God, who heard to Thee,
Though nothing didst Thou say."

Christina had known the misery of forsaking God, as near the agony of feeling God forsaken. It is doubtful whether, for all her intense religious experiences, she could have given spiritual consolation to that slave, or to anybody else who differed from herself.

In her world there was not much of physical humanity with its caprices and outward gestures. Her figures were too often disembodied spirits to have been fitted into a drawing-room or a slum. Mrs. Browning believed that poetry must be modern in tone; she distrusted the poet who

"Trumpets back his soul five hundred years," that is pretty much what Christina did. So too the sense of space, were a mere wrapping on the surface, allowed her soul to wander wherever it could find a home. She had nothing to say about the spirit of modern London political upheavals in Florence, the slave trade, or factory acts. She hardly knew that these things existed. The solitary exception is her reference to the Franco-Prussian War. There can be no doubt but that she was the poorest of the warse of these winter
impulses. Having no compassion for the multitude, she would not have detected, like Mrs. Browning, the emotion of a crowd;—

"A holiday of miserable men

As sad as a burial-day of kings."

Thus the never felt what was a constant problem to Mrs. Browning,—the uplifting + Temptation of a Great Cause. The ideal which exacts us with its spacious vistas may lead us to individual compassion. Mrs. Browning knew that; so did Charlotte Bronte; so did George Eliot;—but as for Cristina Rossetti,—it is doubtful whether the mere idea ever entered her head.

For this reason she took no interest in certain topics discussed by every other woman writer of her time. She had nothing to say about the woman's question. Mrs. Browning was constantly fretting against the world's estimate of literary women. Possibly Christina Rossetti knew that it was considered unmaidenly—perhaps even unseemly—for a woman to be a writer. Even if she had known, it would not have given her a moment's misgiving. As for Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot,—Mrs. Browning,—these women tried to make believe that they did not care for the world's opinion: Cristina Rossetti simply accepted it.

In the same way she had no conscious theories of art. Mrs. Browning felt the responsibility of her vocation. Art as a witness to the possible demanded conscientious discipline—

"Better far

Succeed a frivolous trade by serious means

Than a sublime art frivolously."

If Christina hated frivolity, it was not for her art's sake; she was afraid of cheapening her soul. Mrs. Browning felt the solitude of the artistic life; the vine stoops with its fruit, but...
"The palm stands upright in a realm of sand."

Christina never blamed her art for her loneliness; she took it for granted, as a part of her own nature. Even if she attained, like Mrs. Browning, to hear the nations praising (her) for it, she would not have felt the vices of her aloofness. Rather did she find a contrast between her life and her writing. "Books succeed," said Mrs. Browning, "but not cars fail." Christina was not considering the success of her books; she had to make of her life a spiritual triumph. Besides that, nothing else mattered. "He who would write a heroic poem," said Melito, "must first live a heroic life." Christina tried to live a heroic life. "without taking thought," she produced heroic poems. She was as careless of her task as faultless as the lilies.

There were certain places where the two women could stand in sympathy. To all her sociology, Mrs. Browning was a dreamer. She closed her eyes more firmly than Christina, whose colour crept in among her fancies. She was more sound asleep, but her dreams stilledness came to her.

"And between each word you might have heard the silent forest grow."

These lines from The Romanant of Margaret have the dem-haunting quality which was the background of Christmas's glowing poetry.

Both women had taken up their lives; they felt them meager. "There is nothing to see in me," wrote Mrs. Barrett to Robert Browning. "If my poetry is worth anything to any eye, it is the flower of me. I have lived most; I been most happy in it, so it has all my colour. The rest of me is nothing but a root, fit for the ground and dark." The only difference was that religion, not poetry, gave the colouring to her life; her religion grew within her till it sprang a blossomed
into poetry. Both women were sufficiently religious to feel the sharp edges of their souls. Mrs. Browning was more afraid of the soul's contact with the external world; Aurora Leigh carries her into

"Through all the silent salt-pates of the world," Christina, on the contrary, felt her soul grazing against her own flesh. She had to make a different choice from Aurora's, but in

"Preferring dreary heathen to desert soul"

their motives were the same. For sheer intensity there is no comparison between the two women. Christina's soul was like a radiant texturing its Colours flashing shimmering as if some hidden life were rippling through its folds. Mrs. Browning's soul was of the same colour, but in a paler shade; woven of plainer threads. Her wedding garment was so much clumsier that she sat ill at ease in the midst of the festival—

"With God so near me, could I sing of God?"

Christina never felt it as embarrassment. When she felt God near her, she sang like a child, for sheer gladness of heart; even when God seemed more distant, she still sang, like the same Child, holding on to his courage as he presses through dark places.

(2) With the exception of Mrs. Browning, Jennyson was the only other writer of her generation who could have left any trace upon her art. Browning would hardly write her, realm of thought; Rossetti she regarded as any Victorian writer, chiefly in the light of an art critic; but there was no possible vision of Jennyson. Here it be he cast his shadow on her; yet in almost every case she escaped out of the shadow into the light of her own individuality. For example she started Repining—a very unequal poem—after the style of Marianna in the Moated Grange;
but before she had written many lines, she felt a touch of that almost uncanny simplicity, which belonged peculiarly to herself.

"She bound her hair up from the floor,
And paused in silence from the door."

Again, the tone of The Royal Prince has been found to resemble that of Tennyson's narratives; but it may also, in the close to a compassionate direction, which she never learned from the Poet Laureate:

"O, if I perish, perish; in the name of God I go."

The most striking comparison is to be found in The Prince's Progress, which undoubtedly falls in an allegoric framework of the kind handled by Tennyson. The lights, touching the nature of the "social Prince," are almost identical in spirit with much of The Princesse. Nevertheless, the ultimate, essential beauty of the poem are entirely original. The allegory, so like much in Tennyson, was an after thought; it was written, as it were, to herald and introduce the lovely song placed at its close. It may be true that Tennyson apprehended more things in heaven and earth than those which entered Christina's dreams; yet it must also be admitted that the third certain parallel path where he could not have followed her. He could not have achieved this prophecy:

"Then you had known her living face
Which now you cannot know;"

neither could he have attained to the tenderness of Compassion which describes the bride's face with "the wont carved lines." Certainly he could not have written these lines:

"Her heart was silent through the noise
And converse of the street.
There was no hurry in her hands,
No hurry in her feet;
There was no close dress nigh to her.
That she might mean to greet.

Christina wrote it as well of her own heart: Tennyson could not have done likewise, because her heart was different.

And finally, there is the question of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. There can be no doubt that all contemporary influences thus forever her most effectually. She was the sister of a dominating artist, who studied her face, sketched it, painted it: she sat to him for the figure of the Virgin in two of his pictures. Her other brother was an artist critic; his first verse was an artist; she drew designs and illustrations for some of her own poems. It came naturally to her to regard everything as the possible foundation for a picture. Still the pictures suggested by her words are not precisely of the type which her brother Dante Gabriel painted on his canvases. They are less vivid, less virile, less near at hand: they stand aloof, glow, fade, and vanish, like forms seen in a dream. There was in her outlook some affinity to the paintings of G. F. Watts. Like him, she sat out on a quest for symbols. As we have seen, her figure of death was of the kind to satisfy her imagination. At the foot of his St. Francis, St. Clare, St. Agnes, St. Clare, St. Agnes, he placed words which could have summarized her philosophy: "What I spent I had: What I saved I lost: What I gave I have." Finally, we see her in his conception of life patiently fusing her broken note, drawing from its single string fragments of melody. It may be true that she did not see while she was painting his picture; she was visualizing the spirit of the age; Christina stood apart from that age. Still she was like his mystical figure: not in the position on the topmost curve of the earth, for she was one of those she ever reek "The Lowest Room": not in the self-bandaged eyes, for one who doubtless the
heaven, misses the light of a solitary star; but in the steadfast purpose which belongs to the fragile survivals of ruin it keeps alive a song.

Ch. X. Symbol Allegory; the Dream.

[1] From Mr. William Rossetti we learn that Christina read the Dialogues of Plato with the same eager zest as Dante's Divina Commedia. Undoubtedly this exercised a formative influence upon her personality, and, in particular, on her art; it intensified and established her habitual cast of thought. For this reason we have not placed Plato among the "sources" of her work, as a source is a starting point which may be left behind; whereas Plato's philosophy of beauty was formed the basis of her structures. Her love of Plato helps to explain the fact that she did not become a mere ascetic, purging her soul of beauty. The antagonism of materialism, she had to make a clear decision as to the claims of earthly beauty—whether to accept it as a means of elevation, or as a symbol. If it had not been for Plato, she might have rejected things transient for things that are eternal. She came instead to love them as steps towards an everlasting beauty, "not growing, decaying, or waxing waning; pure, clear, unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality, all the colours of variety of human life." Through this majestic Symbolism the realisations of common experience were transformed into wine. She recaptured "the visionary gleam of the glory which passes away from the earth, for she beheld all things as manifestations of God. In passing it may be noted that her love of elaborate church ritual was the natural outcome of her inherent symbolism.

[2] Sometimes this feeling for what is emblematic found
expression in brief metaphors of lying, much as in Pote-
plant's jerobo of Conide, lie the lie of the field, with its
concluding touch:

"Thou who gatherest lilies, gather us, too, we say."

Every metaphor is a symbol, and metaphors came swiftly to
her mind. This figurative style, which represents
the undeveloped symbolism of her mind, is to be found
in every page of her writings. What is more significant
in the book, full-grown symbolism which took shape in
her allegories. These fall into a few clear groups:

1) Allegories of journeying and destination: (a) allegory
of ships at sea; (b) allegory in which personal
figures are the central core of attraction. It will be
observed that at the allegory of the journey often
merges into the quest for a personality.

2) Allegories of journeying are perhaps the most
habitual and constant. They were among the first which
she wrote. The dead city, cause early, was remarkable
chiefly for its sudden flashes of translucent
colour; for instance, the birds "with bodies like a
flame," or

"Pure and colourless as dew."

It was remarkable also for the sudden mood which
falls upon the reader, its silences, strangely
remimice of phrases from Heine's "Heide in a Russian
Town."

"There were none to buy or sell,

None to listen or to tell,

In this silent emptiness.

Then came Rebinning, with its subtle, delicate shifting
of atmosphere and windless, wordless Tenison. As a whole
it was a defective poem, but it had its promise. Later,
she wrote that strange somnolent Coleruan, "the destination
this time, a kind of journey; a land of utter negations,
with

"No beat of wings to stir the stagnant space."
The allegories where the journey merges into a quest for an actual figure are most perfectly represented by fata Morgana and The Prince's Progress. The latter, as has been said, is not entirely original in its allegoric portion; its glory is its song. Yet there is something peculiar to Christina Rossetti in the "white room" where the bride waited, or in the delicate pendulum's rhythm:

"The long hours go on; come on, come on; the bride she sleepeth, watcheth, sleepeth." Few words can be found to express the loveliness of fata Morgana; its simple touch of colours in the "blue-eyed phantom," its rhythm, stirring, leaping, sinking in pulses of movements; its sense of something wild, sky, celestial? there is only one thing to be done with such poems; to say they are beautiful, to turn the book to enjoy them once again.

12) There are two important allegories of ships at sea—Sleep at Sea, The Ballad of Bonging. Of these the latter is far more elaborate, I think, less perfect. It is rich in music and suggestion, but it lacks the terse magic of the earlier poem, its arresting, throbbing music, its wonderful austerity, of contrast:

"To dream the sleepers,
Each man in his place;
The lightning shows the smile
Upon each face.

The lightning glares and reddens
Across the sky;
It seems fair sunset
To those sleeping eyes..."

13) There is something overpowering in the desolation of such beauty, how shall one be equal to these things? We must pass rapidly on. The allegoric personality: The Tread, with its contracted singer,
Of love; the figure of the steadfast woman in From House to Home, the dream from The Ancient Threshold of a spirit "with transfixed face." Interesting, beautiful though they may be, they are eclipsed by Goblin Market. This seems the poem of poems which Christina was predestined to write; for here she did something which nobody else could do. In the English language there are a few solitary poems, placed apart by their amazing singularity. Fair Juni Shanto is one; Goblin Market is another. It is an allegory, of course, but this soon becomes "an unconsidered trifle." It is more like an adventure across the foam of perilous seas into "faery lands forlorn." There we find movement, flurry, precision, grotesque detail, a clash of incident and dream, stir and silence, sudden blood anger laughter, there seems to be no end to our discoveries as we keep turning the pages; it is like Browning's description of mountain journeys:

"Ledge by ledge outbroke new marvels."

When we reach the last line we do not feel that the story has come to an end: it still seems "young in deed." Here Christina gives us no impression of resources completely used; we can picture her going on,

"so ever singing songs for ever new."

She did this only once; but we need not be like Plato, twist crying out for more. We can press rejoicing from this festival of beauty.

All this seems a far cry from Plato. We have been revelling in allegories, deliberately neglecting their meaning; it does not accord with "the philosophic muse." Still the matter is not as incongruous as it appears. We have seen that Christina loved symbols for their significance. She never intended to exalt the story above its purpose; most certainly she would have been displeased with us for so doing. We linger over her colour, music, phantasy, till we forget there is a moral;
but she never forgot it. She would have discarded this rich beauty if it had not led to a moral; it was the moral that saved it for the world.

Christina's symbolism was a means of approach to invisible realities; her dreams were an escape from the bitterness of actuality. All her poetry is suffused with this dream quality. She said of the guest sleeper in Dreamland:

"Through sleep as through a veil
She sees the sky look pale."

Very often Christina dropped a veil between her and the harshness of external things. In poems like Death's Chell Between, A Chilly Night, she dreamed of haunting spirits, the low voice, the footfall, the "demure" feeling at the door, the tossing of "Shadowless hair." In Echo she appealed for dreams of true delight, the shadowy presence, the touch of vanished memories. This is, indeed, a very beautiful poem; but as a general rule, poems of this type where the reader feels ghosts of the past are usually surpassed by the more poignant conception (expressed in At Home) of her own sweet spirit's return to earth. Here, instead of the dream picture there is a tense emotion, which blurs the illusion of dreams and gives the sting of reality.

Dream. Love stands in uncompanioned beauty. The Again is one of the achievements so wonderful that it can hardly bear words of admiration. It brings us to the standpoint of Browning:

"(I) cannot praise because I love so much!"

It is impossible to praise such frail, exquisite beauty; its magical suggestion of white lambs, white doves, white gauze trousers in its first stanza, the sunlight on "rustling forest tips," the moonlit waterfalls, the weaving of silent dances, or the blending of light and shade.
"Cool shadows deepen
Across the sleeping face.

The fitter tribute to much loneness is
"Silence more musical than any song."

Like her own dreamer we halt between the pauses
Of her melody, while

"The perfect silence calms."

Her thoughts often tended towards the still dream-world of death, or leaped beyond the shadowy land
To the rapture of Paradise. The conception of death as a
dream, a retreat, an oblivion, found consummate expression in such poems as When I am dead, my Dearest,
Rest in Dream-land. Here she sought release from the
burden of identity; the rest of an absolute negation;
with eyes closed to the grey of Twilight skies, ears
dead to the nightingale's song, limbs no longer
sensitive to the touch of the silent rain. Her eye-weary'd spirit strained forward to the refuge of
an absolute oblivion, a passionless state of nonentity;

"Not so much as a grain of dust
to drop a well, from pole to pole."

Yet her dreams did not always tarry in this land
Of dead negations. They hastened forward to the
ascents of spiritual transport. Sometimes, as in
Advent, she heard echoing the voices of expectation,
the speech of the virgins trembling their lamps,
the cry of the watchman as he searched the trees
for speaking signs. At other times, as in Birds of
Paradise, the flash & rustle of wings came to her as
symbol, promise & flair. Then she rose to the top-
most peaks of vision, bore witness to a glory
beyond human utterance. It was with an almost
breathless tension that she hastened to set down the
evanescent splendour of her imaginings:

"Marvel & marvels, if I myself shall behold
With mine own eyes my King on His city of gold.
The vision burns a flacker across our eyes; the
rhymes and vowel tones accumulate, roll back
on me note like the tolling of a bell; then the
glory passes:

"Cold it is, my beloved, since your funeral bell was tolled,
Cold it is, O my King, how cold alone on the world!"
This the most radiant, noble of her dreams, was
recorded towards the close of life, shortly before she
passed on to the fulfillment of visions.


Edmund Gosse has singled out for notice the
"penetrating accent" of Christina Rossetti's poetry, as
the quintessence of her art, it demands attention;
yet there is nothing so elusive, so evanescent as the
breath of emotion, slipping away from any scheme
or classification. Nevertheless we cannot talk vaguely
of emotions without some attempt at a definite
direction. Otherwise the sole result of our reflections
will be an "insubstantial pageant faded." The
classification which I shall attempt is based on
degree of intensity, - the pitch or tone of emotion. In the
first place, there is in Christena's poetry a constantly
recurring strain of sweetness and patient serenity.
There is also a less frequent escape into passion,
tension, ecstasy, or the agony of a great weakness.
In addition there is a single group of poems, written
in an intermediate state between yearning and
intensity, - dealing, moreover, with something
slightly apart from Christiana's ordinary subject-
matter; this is the great series of sonnets, Mona
Inominata.

[1] It is not satisfactory to take all these groups
in a strictly chronological sequence. For, as is the case
with people who live a restricted life, Christina's moods
repeated themselves. They did not evolve, or work up
to a climax, but recurred like phrases in a piece
of music. She struck her note of quiet-parted very
early, in a few lines from The Dying Man to His Betrothed
she rejected, dying love gives a word of counsel with
regard to her fortunate rival:—

"And, if he chides thee wrongfully,
The little moment think of me,
And then wilt bear it patiently."

This note, as of a muted violin, echoed through the
whole course of her poems. It reoccurred in connection
with a Dr. Raphaellee's Tenderness to concentrate on solitary
details:

"Led by a Single Star,
She came from very far,
To seek where shadows are
Her pleasant lot."

The note of selfless tenderness rings quietly through
the concluding lines of After Death:—

"Very sweet it is
To know he still is warm, though I am cold;"
or through the resignation in Remember of all claim
and remembrance:

"Better by far you should forget & smile
Than that you should remember & be sad."

A subdued yearning finds utterance in the wonderful
repeated simplicity of A Pause:

"Only my soul kept watch from day to day,
My thirsty soul kept watch for me away."

In Season's Mirage, separated by seven years of
experience, she tells the same story & re-echoes events
in the First Spring Day of Home by different ways, she
catches, in different keys, a melody of hope. This last
book strikes an impersonal note of the Laurence rever-

the infinitely pitiful sense of waifs:
"Heaven lit with stars is more like her
Than is this empty crust.
Deaf, dumb, and blind, it cannot stir,
But crumbles back to dust."

In Twice, she surveys a human tragedy with a singular
almost astounding pose of detachment:
"I took my heart in my hand."

There is a wonderful poignancy in the repeated exclamation
"that heart," to man and to God. Everywhere the poetic
result is beautiful, but it is in the first part, where
the heart is exposed to man — that she sounds an
unusual note of short but bitter irony:
"You took my heart in your hand
both with a friendly smile,
both with a critical eye you scanned,
then set it down,
And said: It is still unripe.
Better wait awhile;
Wait till the skylarks peep,
Till the corn grows brown.

As you set it down it broke —
Broke but I did not wince;
I smiled at the speech you spoke,
As your judgment that I heard;
But I have not often smiled
Since then, nor questioned since,
Nor cared for cornflowers wild,
Nor sung with singing birds."

There are many poems where she paints in dim colours
her own quiet story. It appears with an exquisite
simplicity in May or the latter love said 'Ray.' Autumn
is a longer, richer reproduction of the same theme.
She displays the intangible temper of her mind in
A wish, with its expressed desires to be an invincible
bird, the "song once heard," the wind-chilled shadows
of a day, the echo of a loving word, or memory of the
defeated hope. There is a more deliberate restraint, a
smouldering passion, in poems like Memory. But
Somewhere or other, she sings softly what she once
sharply in The Heart Knoweth its Own. But there's no
expression of the human spirit, no yearning for
kindred sympathy.

In Uphill she escapes from a purely private outlook
into the articulation of a more universal weariness:
aspiration, there is the same kinship with common
humanity, in the powerful serene, of a later poem—
"O Lord, grant us calm, if calm can rest with Thee;
Or tempest, if a tempest rest Thee forth."

This characteristic firmness can never be forgotten.
However low her music may be, it is never feeble—
"But of the strong cause for the sweetness."

Detailed examination of Mona Incommodata
is impossible in this place. It is, I think, the only
instance of her yielding to imagination of the might have
been—love rendered without any pang of renunciation.
She achieves here not the affectation of simplicity, but
simplicity itself—a frankness, an intimacy, a closeness
of touch which seems to bridge the chasm
isolating spirit from spirit. In the structure of the
sonnet there appears to be some element which
retains echoes of former harmonies, a vibrato with
the promise of music still unborn. As we read,
our minds are sometimes lifted back to the world
of Shakespeare's sonnets: at another moment they
rush forward to the newer music of Mrs. Alice Meynell;
everywhere we are reminded of Mrs. Browning. Even
while she bears these other voices blending with
Christmas, it is only as an accompaniment of choirs,
here is the sole part. For a few lines in the centre of the
seventh sonnet, Christina's muse is silent; we seem to hear Shakespeare's words in telling his great lines:

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments;"

but it is Christina's voice which begins and ends the poem, all else is a parenthesis. The second sonnet is very
like Mrs. Meynell's Unmarked Festival, but in looser,
richer chords. The third sonnet again is like her
Rencounter, though hardly so beautiful; but there is a note of self-revelation in Christina's poem which
gives it a distinctive touch:

"I think again, who waiting look so wan."

Indeed the most perfect of her sonnets are those where
she speaks alone, when the other voices are still; sonnet
like the eleventh, where she appeals to the final verdict
of Eternity; or the peerless Twelfth, so serene that it
hushes excited words of admiration. It is a richly
consummate version of the earlier, "Remember." Possibly she
never wrote anything more gracious or penetrating than
its concluding lines:

"Your honourable freedom makes me free,
And you companioned, I am not alone."

Christina's elated intensity pressed forward
at odd moments in single lines or phrases; it broke
out, for instance, in the sudden cry of her heart,
"My life is breaking like a cloud."

Nevertheless, it is remarkable that at certain periods
of her life she seemed to write more clearly, more
serenely than others. It may be that there was some
external crisis, unknown to us, which accounted for
these moods. With the biographical materials at our
disposal it is hard to assign an exact psychological
reason for the fact that between the ages of twenty and
thirty the passionate quality - the quantity - of her work
exceeds that of any other period. There is a certain interest in
tracing the lines of her life with special reference to
a few high, sharp summits of emotion.

In 1849 we see, I think for the first time, the prospect
of strong emotion. Certain deep, solemn tones of her
music, a solemn crescendo that rises then faded
away into stillness. As yet the music was neither loud
nor rigorous; but it came like the opening chords of
a venture, with the suggestion of something greater to
follow.

In 1851 the 'Divine Enrages' gave a token of religious duty
intensely conceived and accepted. There is something which
rattles in the simple, searching words of 'Temptation,'
'Sweet, then art pale; thou drunkest deep. A latent
power works beneath the outward calm of the answer
repelling the flesh, the world, the Devil.

In 1854 came the firm portraiture of 'A Soul,'
'Indomitable in her selflessness.'

Here again we approach still closer to the shores of deep
passionate waters.

In 1856 the utterance became more definite. The
rang the "Shut Up" from pop. Behind the curbed
words we can feel the throbbing of fierce pain.

In the following year she wrote on the same day,
the 30th of June, two poems of remarkable scorching
intensity. One was introspective with its short stabbing
sentences, its imagery of desolation; the other was
'A Better Resurrection,' written with the same Curtis-
que style, while the soul, stung with its own emptiness,
pleads with an ever-increasing fervour, each petition
rising higher in Compass:—'O Jesus, quicken me ...
O Jesus, rise in me... O Jesus, drink of me...' In August
of the same year she wrote 'A Birthday,' the single
instanese in her works of a great poem completely
happy, filled with a fire into sight So Edmund Gosse has
described the reader's reaction from such an overpowering joy: "the expression which its cumulative ecstasy leaves on the nerves is almost pathetic."

The Convent Threshold, certainly the most highly-strung of all her long poems, was written in July 1858. In October came the most appealing and potent version of an often-repeated conception: Christ pleading with the human soul. The Love of Christ which Rossetti knew, so impassioned, so true, so tender, seemed too sacred for discussion. It may be observed that six years later, she returned in Requiem Repeated to the same appeal, made poignant by rejection. But in the later poem great though it may be, there is not the same smiting intensity.

In 1860, on the last day of the year, Christina wrote what her brother William considered her supreme poem, Passing Away. Faith the World. The conscious immensity and majesty, the sweep of her music, rises slowly to the culminating speech of God. Most expressive of all is the almost inarticulate voice, the dumbness of response which falls like a bust on the concluding lines of each stanza,

"Then I answered: Yea."

About twenty two years later, Christina returned in An Old World Troubled to the forces prolonging her own grief. Nowhere else has she, or perhaps any other writer, expressed more poignantly the ultimate bitterness of defeat, devaluing the soul:

"Each sore defeat of my defeated life
Faced me in that bitter hour,
And turned to yearning palsy all my powers,
And all my peace to strife,
Self-stabbing self with keen lack-pity knife.
The indifference of external nature — its "jubilee" of "mere Content," slings the soul to hot and fruitless
anger. After that comes a pause in the intensity, a stage of helpless questioning. In this succeeds a passion for extinction, an overwhelming desire to be done with things for ever.

"That which ends not who shall have of me?"

It was characteristic of Christina that she did not try to argue herself out of misery. She believed in something which transcends argument. The dark mood passed, and she attempted no explanation. A dim muse stirred within her, till like Saul, she was "refreshed," and the evil spirit departed. The warm beauty of sunshine stillled the tempest. Her spirit filled and soothed her heart. Sometimes it appears as if the conclusion of the poem does not ring with the same earnestness or truth as the expression of her despair. If we wish to understand Christina Rossetti's utmost capacity for suffering, we must go to An Old World Thicket; we do not find in it the sources of her strength. To the sympathetic reader, they are an open secret.

Chapter IV. Conclusion. Protective Influence. Propitiation. The Appeal

We have touched on a few outstanding features of Christina Rossetti's temperament; and have grouped together a few representative poems, which the rest unsaid. It speaks better for itself, we are too near in time to these poems to estimate their probable influence. It is unlikely that anybody with such an exceptional life and outlook as Christina could exercise a dominating influence over any other poet of normal experience. Still it may be said that no poet receives experience in the normal fashion of men. The exceptional thing about Christina Rossetti was not her experience; it was herself. We cannot yet discern the extent of her influence upon more recent poets of the inner life.
Francis Thompson & Mr. Meynell. Certain it is that the
former did not learn her simplicity, if she passed
anything on to Francis Thompson it was the almost
frivolous heat of emotion which overran his art. He
lacked the severity with which Christina restrained
her fire. Superficial resemblances to Mr. Meynell
may be misleading, as we have her own testimony
that an Unmarked Festival was written absolutely
without knowledge of Christina's poem almost
identical in conception - the second sonnet of Mona,
Incommenata. Mr. Meynell had a certain affinity with
Christina's
quiet precision & delicate simplicity; yet we do not
feel with her as with Christina that something
furnitures is being held back. While for her the
stillness of mood seems a natural self-expression,
with Christina it was an achievement & discipline.
The resemblances of both these writers to Christina
Rosetti are in inherent qualities of mind & soul,
things which cannot be transmitted. What they
might have learned from one another was a mode
of blending or developing their own points of
resemblance; but this they did not do. In original
temperament, or in choice of subject they are sometimes
alike; but not in manner of self-expression. We
are too close in time to form absolute judgments, but it
seems probable that the future verdict on Christina
Rosetti will assert her extraordinary aloofness
from currents of literary progress; she will be
remembered as a solitary, exquisite flower blooming
for a season, fading, casting no seed.

In conclusion we should consider some structure
passed on her achievement. She is not now, I believe,
seen as widely popular. She has been seen
as truly, a limitation. From her, far more than
from Wordsworth, who received the same criticism,
"one half the world escapes." - Readers complain because it is their half of the world which is neglected; any person who goes to Christina Rossetti, expect hoping to find a reflection of his own attitude, will meet with swift disappointment. If we are all like the common run of people, we cannot expect her to represent us. First, surely, poetry is something more than a reader's looking-glass. It is a poor sort of occupation to sit studying ourselves in the mirror of a poet's mind. We might be watching, not our own, but another, "human face divine." We go to Christina seeking an escape from ourselves. We cross our limiting frontiers, pass into her province. But if we travel sympathetically, we are amazed at the familiarity of a common humanity; we do not love ourselves so following her; we come back to ourselves, enriched by absence. In our own minds we repeat the experience of discovery on the high seas:

"leaving their home behind them,
By a road of splendour, thunder,
They came to their home in amazement,
Simply by sailing on."

It may be objected that it is not a long journey, this must be that much gathered on the way. of the same type. This must be admitted. Still, if the type is excellent, it seems rather querulous to demand more variety; or is beyond all controversy that Christina's Treasure is unsurpassed in its own kind. If we do not like the type, its charge of limitation can be levelled against ourselves.

"Still," exclaim some, "it is all the limitation which we criticise. We are prepared to admit that in short measure life may perfect it; what we condemn is the isolation of outlook in
these poems, the supreme poets are closest to common things; they praise the daisy as well as the rose."

There is only one answer to this Censure: - Christina was not isolated from all common things, from love, or the "undying fire" of religion. It is true, for instance, that she seemed to stand far away; she wrote from a far corner of Nature, in London, looking out from a back bedroom to "the tall dingy walls of adjacent houses;" yet she described the distant country roundly, without appearing conscious of the streets beneath her window. To Christina Rossetti distance implied no inevitable estrangement. She was sometimes most near when she seemed most remote. She may have been far from the restless surface of life, so

"pull with dnie of what - where - why;"

she reached below storm to the calm, untroubled depth.

"depth no storm can pierce, pierced with a shaft of the sun."