

others contain no single biographical fact, while in length, the lives vary from one page to nearly eighty! Many are palpably imperfect. We are told of Victor Hugo's exile to Jersey, but not a word of the cause of it. George Sand might be living yet, for aught that could be learnt from these pages. But it is in the minor points that the absence of intelligent (or indeed of any kind of) editing is most apparent. Our old friend Prosper Mérimée is introduced to us as two individuals, MM. 'Prosper, Mérimée,' &c. No clue is given when the French author leaves off, and the hack translator tags on his few words at the end. De Mirecourt is telling us about Houssaye at the top of the page, but at the bottom we detect the nasal twang of the Yankee discoursing about 'this country' and 'the New York Tribune.' The patchwork thus produced is most laughable. The French critics are often made to tell us that so-and-so's verses are 'untranslatable,' and occasionally are so obliging, nevertheless, as to translate them!

As to the translation itself, Mark Twain's attempt to render back his *Jumping Frog* from the French version into mining vernacular is scarcely more literally absurd than are the blunders that appear here on every page. 'Mme. Swetchine, *evenings* noted down her thoughts,' Mme. de Girardin was addicted to a similar habit. '*Mornings*, she wrote . . . *evenings*, her favourite dress was,' and so on. A thin woman is 'a *meagre* woman.' A horsewoman remains 'an *equestrienne*,' as in the original, a 'manoir' is made to stultify itself by becoming a manor instead of a manor-house, and a '*raconteur*' is petrified into a 'recounter.' There are wilder eccentricities even than these, as for instance, where we are told about the taking down of 'the iron-barred gate Louis XIII.' admired by Victor Hugo! Examples such as this, which describes a Review as the 'ark more or less sacred, of the literary mind so compromised in our day,' are frequent, but we have said enough. It may be urged that these errors are beneath criticism, that the work may be solid and correct at bottom in spite of all this. Our own opinion is

otherwise. Were it worth while to bestow the necessary amount of trouble upon such a wretched performance, we make no doubt but that as plentiful a harvest of errors in facts and dates would reward us as we have already reaped of mistakes in diction and translation.

Had the work been conscientiously done, it would have proved decidedly interesting. The life of Balzac, for instance, affords scope for much vivid writing. We see him in the pure white cashmere dressing-gown in which he always worked, the athletic neck, the full lips and the square-cut nose of which he was so proud that he instructed the sculptor who was modelling his bust,—'Be careful of my nose; my nose is a world.' We are let into the secret mysteries of his mode of working. His first sketch of a book, only a few pages long, was printed 'a rivulet of text, meandering down a meadow of margin.' This he attacked pen in hand, 'adding lines issuing from beginning, middle and end, directed towards the margins . . . At the end of some hours of work, one would have called his proof-sheet a bouquet of fireworks designed by a child. From the primitive text shot forth rockets of style which blazed on all sides . . . Strips of paper were fastened on with pins or wafers, and these were striped with lines in fine characters, and full themselves of erasures.' No wonder that the compositors stipulated not to be put to the work on Balzac's copy for more than an hour at a time. This process continued at very considerable expense, each night's work being reprinted during the day, to be cut up, amplified, and realtered next night, until the book was completed.

We will conclude with a characteristic aphorism of Mme. Swetchine given in these pages. 'It is only in heaven that angels have as much ability as demons.' This is a remarkable consolation to the stupid in spirit, and we should think that the man who is responsible for the appearance of this book in its present condition must thank Mme. Swetchine for giving him so much pleasure, and causing him to feel the wings of the Seraph so very palpably budding within him.