

of what he actually wrote. He was always writing, and always leaving deposits of his manuscripts in the various lodgings where it was his habit to bestow himself. The greater part of De Quincey's writing was of a kind almost as easily written by so full a reader and so logical a thinker as an ordinary newspaper article by an ordinary man; and, except when he was sleeping, wandering about, or reading, he was always writing. It is, of course, true that he spent a great deal of time, especially in his last years of all, in re-writing and re-fashioning previously executed work; and also that illness and opium made considerable inroads on his leisure. But I should imagine that if we had all that he actually wrote during these nearly forty years, forty or sixty printed volumes would more nearly express its amount than fourteen or sixteen.

Few English writers have touched so large a number of subjects with such competence both in information and in power of handling. Still fewer have exhibited such remarkable logical faculty. One main reason why one is sometimes tempted to quarrel with him is that his play of fence is so excellent that one longs to cross swords. For this and for other reasons no writer has a more stimulating effect, or is more likely to lead his readers on to explore and to think for themselves. In none is that incurable curiosity, that infinite variety of desire for knowledge and for argument which age cannot quench, more observable. Few if any have the indefinable quality of freshness in so large a measure. You never quite know, though you may have a shrewd suspicion, what De Quincey will say on any subject; his gift of sighting and approaching new facets of it is so immense. Whether he was in truth as accomplished a classical scholar as he claimed to be I do not know; he has left few positive documents to tell us. But I should think that he was, for he has all the characteristics of a scholar of the best and rarest kind—the scholar who is exact as to language without failing to comprehend literature, and competent in literature without being slipshod as to language. He was not exactly as Southey was, "omnilegent;" but in his own departments, and they were numerous, he went further below the surface and connected his readings together better than Southey did. Of the two classes of severer study to which he specially addicted himself, his political economy suffered perhaps a little, acute as his views in it often are, from the fact that in his time it was practically a new study, and that he had neither sufficient facts nor sufficient literature to go upon. In metaphysics, to which he gave himself up for years and in which he seems really to have known whatever there was to know, I fear that the opium fiend cheated the world of something like masterpieces. Only three men during De Quincey's lifetime had anything like his powers in this department. Now De Quincey could write English, and Sir William Hamilton either could not or would not. Ferrer could and did write English; but he could not, as De Quincey could, throw upon philosophy the play of literary and miscellaneous illustration which of all the sciences it most requires, and which all its really supreme exponents have been able to give it. Mansel could do both these things; but he was somewhat indolent, and had many avocations. De Quincey could write perfect English, he had every resource of illustration and relief at command, he was in his way as "brazen-bowelled" at work as he was "golden-mouthed" at expression, and he had ample leisure. But the inability to undertake sustained labour, which he himself recognizes as the one unquestionable curse of opium, deprived us of an English philosopher who would have stood as far above Kant in exoteric graces as he would have stood above Bacon in esoteric value. It was not entirely De Quincey's fault. It seems to be generally recognized now that whatever occasional excesses he may have committed, opium was really required in his case, and gave us what we have as much as it took away what we have not. But if any one chose to write in the antique style a debate between Philosophy, Tar-water and Laudanum, it would be almost enough to put in the mouth of Philosophy, "This gave me Berkeley and that deprived me of De Quincey."

De Quincey is, however, first of all a writer of ornate English, which for once was never a mere cover to bare thought. Overpraise and mispraise him as anybody may, he cannot be overpraised for this. Mistake as he chose to do and as others have chosen to do, the relative value of his gift, the absolute value of it is unmistakable. What other Englishman, from Sir Thomas Browne downwards, has written a sentence surpassing in melody that in "Our Lady of Sighs": "And her eyes, if they were ever seen, would be neither sweet nor subtle; no man could read their story; they would be found filled with perishing dreams and with wrecks of forgotten delirium"? Compare that with the masterpieces of some later practitioners. There are no out-of-the-way words; there is no needless expense of adjectives; the sense is quite adequate to the sound; the sound is only what is required as accompaniment to the sense. And though I do not know that in a single instance of equal length—even in the still more famous, and as a whole justly more famous, *tour de force* on "Our Lady of Darkness"—De Quincey ever quite equalled the combined simplicity and majesty of this phrase, he has constantly come close to it. The "Suspiria" are full of such passages—there are even some who prefer "Savannah la Mar" to the "Ladies of Sorrow." Beautiful as it is I do not, because the accursed superfluous adjective appears there. The famous passages of the "Confessions" are in every one's memory; and so I suppose is the "Vision of Sudden Death." Many passages in "The Cæsars," though somewhat less florid, are hardly less good; and the close of

"Joan of Arc" is as famous as the most ambitious attempts of the "Confessions" and the "Mail Coach." Moreover in all the sixteen volumes specimens of the same kind may be found here and there, alternating with very different matter; so much so that it has no doubt often occurred to readers that the author's occasional divergence into questionable quips and cranks is a deliberate attempt to set off his rhetoric, as dramatists of the noblest school have always set off their tragedy, with comedy, if not with farce. That such a principle would imply confusion of the study and the stage is arguable enough, but it does not follow that it was not present. At any rate the contrast, deliberate or not, is very strong indeed in De Quincey—stronger than in any other prose author except his friend, and pupil rather than master, Wilson.

The great advantage that De Quincey has, not only over this friend of his, but over all practitioners of the ornate style in this century, lies in his sureness of hand in the first place, and secondly in the comparative frugality of means which perhaps is an inseparable accompaniment of sureness of hand. To mention living persons would be invidious; but Wilson and Landor are within the most scrupulous critic's right of comparison. All three were contemporaries; all three were Oxford men—Landor about ten years senior to the other two—and all three in their different ways set themselves deliberately to reverse the practice of English prose for nearly a century and a half. They did great things, but De Quincey did, I think, the greatest and certainly the most classical in the proper sense, for all Landor's superior air of Hellenism. Voluble as De Quincey often is, he seems always to have felt that when you are in your altitudes it is well not to stay there too long. And his flights, while they are far more uniformly high than Wilson's, which alternately soar and drag, are much more merciful in regard of length than Landor's, as well as for the most part much more closely connected with the sense of his subjects. There is scarcely one of the "Imaginary Conversations" which would not be the better for very considerable thinning, while with the exception perhaps of "The English Mail Coach," De Quincey's surplusage, obvious enough in many cases, is scarcely ever found in his most elaborate and ornate passages. The total amount of such passages in the "Confessions" is by no means large, and the more ambitious parts of the "Suspiria" do not much exceed a dozen pages. De Quincey was certainly justified by his own practice in adopting and urging as he did the distinction, due, he says, to Wordsworth, between the common and erroneous idea of style as the *dress* of thought, and the true definition of it as the *incarnation* of thought. The most wizen'd of coxcombs may spend days and years in dressing up his meagre and ugly carcass; but few are the sons of men who have sufficient thought to provide the soul of any considerable series of avatars. De Quincey had; and therefore, though the manner (with certain exceptions heretofore taken) in him is always worth attention, it never need or should divert attention from the matter. And thus he was not driven to make a little thought do tyrannous duty as lay-figure for an infinite amount of dress, or to hang out frippery on a clothes-line with not so much as a lay-figure inside it. Even when he is most conspicuously "fighting a prize," as he sometimes is, there is always solid stuff in him.

Few indeed are the writers of whom so much can be said, and fewer still the miscellaneous writers, among whom De Quincey must be classed. On almost any subject that interested him—and the number of such subjects was astonishing, curious as are the gaps between the different groups of them—what he has to say is pretty sure, even if it be the wildest paradox in appearance, to be worth attending to. And in regard to most things that he has to say the reader may be pretty sure also that he will not find them better said elsewhere. It has sometimes been complained by students, both of De Quincey the man and of De Quincey the writer, that there is something not exactly human in him. There is certainly much in him of the demonic, to use a word which was a very good word and really required in the language and which ought not to be exiled because it has been foolishly abused. Sometimes, as has also been complained, the demon is a mere familiar with the tricksiness of Puck rather than the lightness of Ariel. But far oftener he is a more potent spirit than any Robin Goodfellow, and as powerful as Ariel and Ariel's master. Trust him wholly you may not; a characteristic often noted in intelligences that are neither exactly human, nor exactly diabolic, nor exactly divine. But he will do great things for you, and a little wit and courage on your part will prevent his doing anything serious against you. To him, with much greater justice than to Hogg, might Wilson have applied the nickname of Brownie, which he was so fond of bestowing upon the author of "Kilmeny." He will do solid work, conjure up a concert of aerial music, play a shrewd trick now and then, and all this with a curious air of irresponsibility and of remoteness of nature. In ancient days when kings played experiments to ascertain the universal or original language, some monarch might have been tempted to take a very clever child, interest him so far as possible in nothing but books and opium, and see whether he would turn out anything like De Quincey. But it is in the highest degree improbable that he would. Therefore let us rejoice, though according to the precepts of wisdom and not too indiscriminately, in our De Quincey as we once, and probably once for all, received him.—George Saintsbury in *Macmillan*.

In the society of ladies want of sense is not so unpardonable as want of manners.—*Lavater*.

ART NOTES.

DURING the first week of the "Salon" the number of visitors was 65,500, and \$10,000 dollars were paid in for fees and catalogues. The daily receipts amount now to over \$1,200 dollars.

MR. BURNE JONES' series of four pictures of the well-known story of the Sleeping Beauty, on which he has been engaged for seven years, is at last completed and on exhibition in London, Eng. The artist received \$60,000 for them, and they have been immediately resold at an advance of \$20,000, the original purchaser, Mr. Agnew, retaining the copyright.

THE hanging committee of the Royal English Academy had to select this year from 11,659 submitted to their judgment. It is no wonder that some mistakes were made as it is impossible to do justice to this mass of work in the time at disposal. Until the limitation of the number of pictures which may be submitted is reduced, mistakes, heartburnings, and injustice will always accompany every exhibition, and the quality of the collection will be lowered.

WE have received the report of the Ontario Society of Artists for the year ending May, 1890, the balance sheet of which shows a satisfactory state of progress, and there seems to be no reason why the Society, with its revised constitution, should not enter on a permanently prosperous career, outdoing its past efforts and making the Art Union more of a national institution. Especially praiseworthy is the attempt to attain a permanent residence in a building of its own in Toronto and the donation of some of their best pictures by the members, to be sold for this purpose, has promise of success.

AT the coming Industrial Exhibition in Toronto, we learn that the Art Exhibit has been placed in charge of the Ontario Society of Artists and that some large and important picture is to be imported for exhibition, such as Munkacsy's "Christ before Pilate," a small additional charge being made for admission to the Art Gallery this year. This we believe to be a move in the right direction, as in this way very large numbers of our rural population will have the opportunity of seeing some at least of the best and most important work of modern times, and if, in addition, our own artists send good representations of their best productions, the results will be a successful exhibition.

THE Paris "Salon" this year has acquired additional interest from the fact that its new rival, the "Société Nationale des Beaux Arts," had withdrawn some prominent and rising men from its ranks, but it appears that the abstention of M. Meissonier and his following from the exhibition has not made so vast a difference as the thirty-seven rooms are as full as usual, and contain much the same collection of portraits, studies from the nude, domestic scenes, landscapes, marines, shipwrecks, etc., etc., with perhaps fewer distinctive features and fewer fine pictures than usual. The selection for the medal of honour seems to lie between Munkacsy, whose subject is a great ceiling painted for the museum of History of Art at Vienna, and Benjamin Constant, with a picture of "Beethoven, a Sonata by Moonlight," this latter being described as a painted poem radically different from the brilliant *tours de force* we are accustomed to from his brush. The English exhibitors include Alma Tadema, George Clausen, Mr. Guthrie and J. E. Christie. Our own Canadian contingent we have before noticed. TEMPLAR.

MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.

MISS FANNY DAVENPORT will produce Sardou's "Cleopatra" on an elaborate scale next season.

A NEW opera entitled "Raggio di luna," by a young composer named Leone, has just been produced in Milan. The scene is said to be very fine.

AT Teresa Carreno's third recital in St. James Hall, London, the enthusiasm of the vast audience is said to have been something unprecedented in the annals of like entertainments.

ON account of going early to press, we are obliged to defer our notice of the Liberati concerts till next week. The great virtuoso and his combination fully sustained their continental reputation, which will doubtless be enhanced by the present successful tour.

DEL PUENTE is delighting Philadelphia audiences with his "Don Carlos," in the revived opera of "Ernani." The Philadelphia *Times* in speaking of him says: "He sings his part with extraordinary dramatic intelligence, varying not alone his manner, but almost the quality of his voice with the different situations of the opera." Louise Natali divides the honours with the great baritone, and is cordially greeted upon every appearance.

JOAN OF ARC will be given as a "spectacular equestrian opera," in the Paris Hippodrome. A thousand persons, including a number of harpists, dressed as angels, up in the gallery, whence Michael the archangel descends in a cloud of red fire to the sound of a brass band in the final act are numbered among the attractions. This seems to be carrying burlesque a little too far. Joan of Arc, in this super-sensational production, is an Italian equestrienne, who rides astride a horse costing four thousand dollars.

AMERICA thus holds forth concerning the Kendals: "Mr. and Mrs. Kendal begin their second American tour at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York, in October. They will have two new plays and will also revive 'The Squire.' Now that one American tour has worn off the novelty