

the machine made poetry so exquisite in its musical flow that the lack of originality is not perceived. In reality, he did not write because he thought, but thought in order to write. To descriptive talent Pope unites oratorical talent. The old proverbs and axioms, religious, philosophical and metaphysical problems that had been collecting for ages Pope throws into rhyme, and in "The Essay on Man," "Essay on Criticism," and "The Universal Prayer," we recognize a tiara of brilliant gems each enhancing the beauty of the other, a storehouse of truths though old yet ever new. Reading Pope's works for the first time, we are amazed to find so many familiar passages, lines that we have heard hundreds of times without knowing whom to thank for them, such ones as "Order is heaven's first law," "A little learning is a dangerous thing," "Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw." It is astonishing to find how many of this man's sayings have gone to swell the ranks of English proverbs.

"The Universal Prayer" appeals alike to the hearts of men of whatsoever creed. The most perfect saint, or the most wretched sinner can approach Deity with that self-same petition—

"Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the fault I see;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me."

That beautiful *ars poetica* in English tongue, "The Essay on Criticism," is a superb poem, embracing as much knowledge as most men only acquire during a lifetime spent in close application, while Pope, when writing it, was but twenty-one. It is dainty, but not insipid; it has fervor without any sacrifice of dignity; it is not, however, lacking in excellence of judgment. Taine says in regard to it, "We may, or even ought, to weigh all the words, and verify all the connections; the question concerns exact precepts and close arguments. In this Pope is incomparable. I do not think that there is in the world a versified prose like his. The art of expressing the ideas is truly marvellous—marvellous is the word." Yet the measured tramp of the pentameter is wearisome; monotony gains the better of pleasure and consequently Pope should only be read in fragments. Johnson ranks the epistle from Eloisa to Abelard among "the happiest productions of the human mind,"

while Taine cries out at its stiffness and inquires if it is not labeled "For Press." It consist of cold commonplaces, plainly showing that Pope could not be natural. That pretty poem, "The Rape of the Lock," in which we are introduced to our fairy brothers and sisters, purposed to conciliate Lord Petre and Miss Arabella Firmor, from whose fair head the tress had been severed causing the coolness between them. The trifling offense is described with so much more seriousness, that the best method to get rid of the trouble that appears, is to laugh it off. If Pope, when bitterly satirizing his fellow authors, had paused and but read his own couplet:—

"Tis with our judgments as our watches. None
Go just alike, yet each believes his own,"

and applied it in regard to them and their works, the criticism would not have been so severe. He also might have remembered his own dictum, "To err is human, to forgive—divine." Take the couplet—

"And binding Nature fast in fate,
Left free the human will,"

and compare with a passage of Milton's,—
"I made him just and right, sufficient to have stood, though free to fall. Not free, what proof could they have given, sincere of true allegiance, constant faith, or love." Is it not the very kernel of truth, for which numbers of philosophers are now searching?—the golden chain that when followed leads from bewildering darkness out into the eternal sunlight beyond? The first poet, staggering in his blindness; the second, hardened by his infirmities;—one the most illustrious epic poet, the other the most perfect classical one—the former out of the deep waters of affliction, the latter from the gay drawing rooms of Lord Oxford—both grasped the cords of truth and on the sweet wings of poetry wafted the tidings to man.

In the "Essay on Man," metaphysical subjects are discussed, subtle questions settled, rules prescribed for human life and conduct; in fact it is acknowledged by all to be the most perfect poetical reasoning extant. Think for one moment of the well-known lines—

"Know then, thyself presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is man."