

## Literature and Science.

### MEMORY'S URN.

[A POEM commemorative of college days, and dedicated to the Professors and students of St. Michael's College, Toronto.]

O hallow'd scene of boyhood's morn  
When hope held high her lamp above,  
And dreams of manhood flushed the days  
Bright-ringed like sun-lit skies of love ;  
Through vistas clad with purple toil  
I view the honied hours once more,  
And clasp the hand of comrades fond  
And greet each heart at Memory's door.

Come in, come in, dear boys of old,  
I know each bird though changed in plume :  
Within my heart—a cage unbarred—  
You've nestled long 'mid sun and gloom—  
Within my heart your cherished forms  
Have graced the hours of long ago,  
When flowers of spring in fragrance bloom'd  
Nor dreamt of winter's cruel snow.

Across the years that bind my brow  
Fall glints of sunshine from the past,  
As sailing swiftly thro' life's sea,  
Morn's crimson streak lights up the mast.  
The songsters in the grove I hear—  
A tuneful choir of other days,  
Whose notes of rapture stir my heart  
Like chords of old mediæval lays.

Ah ! morn so bright of long ago,  
When first I sought that classic hall  
Where Faith and Science shed their light,  
And duty hearken'd to each call—  
Where hearts are taught a love of truth,  
Nor filled with anxious gain nor care,  
Where toil is but the seal of heaven—  
A psalm of love—a rounded prayer !

O sweet lipped hours, O golden days,  
That light with joy my darkling noon,  
O roses set with petals bright  
That dream in amber light of June.  
Fill up my heart with star-clad thought,  
With kindly flames which gleam and burn,  
That in the eventide of life  
May glow anew from fragrant urn !

PEMBROKE, *May 1st.* THOMAS O'HAGAN.

### RUSKIN'S JUDGMENT OF GIBBON AND DARWIN.

PROBABLY the reading public has long ceased to expect anything but fresh outbursts of whim and caprice from Ruskin. Carlyle said of him, in 1872, that if he could hold out for another fifteen years or so, he might produce, even in this way, a great effect. But the prophecy has not turned out a true one. "A weak man," as the sage of Chelsea felt compelled to call him in the same breath in which he ventured the above prediction, will never produce a great effect, give him any length of time. And Ruskin seems fast weakening any impression his earlier works may have made. He has degenerated into a common scold. The public laughs at him, and when the public laughs at a man's rage, his day is about over. He

affects one, in his later utterances, as a tipsy Carlyle. He provokes our mirth and pity instead of convicting us in our own hearts of sin and folly, as Carlyle did. Never a man of such genius with so little common-sense. If ever a writer could be likened to a "dim comet wagging its useless tail of phosphorescent nothing across the steadfast stars," the description may be applied to Ruskin in his late verdict upon Gibbon and Darwin. He objects to Gibbon, because, "primarily, none but the malignant and the weak study the Decline and Fall either of State or organism," etc. As if Gibbon's great work was not just as much a history of the origin and rise of the modern nations, as it is a history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. If you want to know where the world was, and how it fared with it during the first ten centuries of our era, read Gibbon. No other writer can do for you just what he does. No one else has had the courage to attempt his task over again. The laborious student of history may go to the many and obscure sources from which Gibbon drew the materials for his great work, and correct or supplement him here and there, as Milman has done ; but the general reader wants the completed structure, and not the mountain quarries from which the blocks came ; and the complete structure you get in Gibbon. To omit him is to leave a gap in your knowledge of the history of the world which nothing else can fill. As Carlyle said to Emerson, he "is the splendid bridge which connects the old world with the new ;" very artificial, but very real for all that, and very helpful to any who have business that way.

The case may be even more strongly stated than that. To read Gibbon is to be present at the creation of the world—the modern world. We see the chaos out of which it came ; we see the breaking up of the old races, institutions, conditions, and the slow formation of the new. The period which his work covers was the great thaw and dissolution of history—the springtime which preceded the summer of modern civilizations. What anarchy, what confusion, what a giving away of foundations, what a tottering and tumbling of the superb Roman masonry ; and yet what budding of new life, what inundations of new fresh humanity, from the North and from the East ! A new light was in the world—the light of Christianity ; new races also, and the game of life and of nationality was to be played under new conditions and in new fields. What a picture is that which we get in Gibbon of those swarms upon swarms of barbarians, from northern Europe, and central Asia, and finally from southern Arabia, breaking in and overrunning the old Empire ! One comes to think of the Roman dominion as a circle more or less filled with light ;

around it on all sides is darkness, and out of this darkness come fiercely riding these savage hordes, as soon as they cross the line made visible to us. Out of this seething lava of humanity, the modern races and states have arisen. The main push always came from the plains of central Asia ; here seems to have been the well-head of mankind. What we see in Roman history is doubtless but a continuation of a process which had been going on for long ages. The westward movement of our Aryan ancestors was an earlier chapter in the same great series of events.

Ruskin objects to Gibbon's style as the "worst English ever written by an educated Englishman." It was the style of his age and country brought to perfection, the stately curvilinear or orbicular style ; every sentence makes a complete circle ; but it is always a real thought, a real distinction that sweeps through the circle. Modern style is more linear, more direct and picturesque ; and in the case of such a writer as Ruskin, much more loose, discursive and audacious. The highly artificial buckram style of the age of Gibbon has doubtless had its day, but it gave us some noble literature, and is no more to be treated with contempt than the age which produced it is to be treated with contempt.

From Ruskin's abhorrence of the scientific method and spirit—an abhorrence that amounts to a kind of childish petulance and contrariness—one would not expect him to look with any degree of patience upon much of the details of Darwin's work, but one does expect him and all other men to recognize the great spirit of the man, his deep and helpful sincerity, and the light he has thrown upon one of the great problems to which men's minds have always turned. Aside from their scientific value, the works of Darwin have a broad human interest, and are therefore not to be overlooked by the literary man. They add to our knowledge of nature, not after the manner of the closet naturalist, but after the manner of the great explorers and discoverers. It is mainly vital knowledge which he gives us. What a peculiar human interest attaches to the results of his observations upon the earth-worm and the formation of vegetable mould ; to his work upon the power of movement in plants ; to his discovery of the value of cross-fertilization in the vegetable kingdom, to say nothing of the light which he has thrown upon the origin of species and the descent of man. Of course, all kinds of knowledge are not equally valuable ; all knowledge does not alike warm and enlighten us ; but there is much endowment that warms and enlightens us. Contact with such a broad, sane, sincere spirit, is of itself of the highest value. Indeed, to ignore Darwin is not only to ignore modern sci-