

little for science and art. His mind was narrow but powerful, powerful perhaps in consequence of its narrow range, refusing to turn aside and busy itself upon those fields of conjecture and uncertainty to which most people feel such strong attraction. It may be that Macaulay would have called one who cared about such things, a "miserable ghost-seer, surrounded by phantoms in the noon-day, trembling under a breeze when the leaves were still, without appetite for the common objects of human desire, but pining after moonbeams."* But in these matters a certain mean is to be observed; it is an unhealthy frame of mind whose interest lies solely in the shades and nooks of life; but one who feels not an interest in what interests most of his fellow-creatures, who stands above their superstitions and weaknesses, their fears and hopes, is but half-human, for a man is strong through his weakness as well as his strength. Though fanatics may be morally worse for their fanaticism, it gives them transcendent energy that makes them in action a Cromwell or Napoleon, in thought an Isaiah or Johnson. In illustration of this let me quote a suggestive passage from Dowden's "Mind and Art of Shakespeare:"

"However we may account for it, the fact is unquestionable that some of the richest creative natures of the world have all their lives been believers, if not with their intellect, at least with their instinctive feelings and their imagination, in much of the old-wives' lore of the nursery. Scott does not as a skeptic make use in his novels of ghostly and supernatural machinery merely for the sake of producing certain artistic effects. He retained at least a half-faith in the Gothic mythology of the north. Goethe for a time devoted himself to the pursuit of alchemy. We slighter and smaller natures can deprive ourselves altogether of the sense for such phenomena; we can elevate ourselves into a rare atmosphere of intellectuality and credulity. The wider and richer natures of creative artists have received too large an inheritance from the race, and have too fully absorbed all the influences of their environment for this to be possible in their case. While dim recollections and forefeelings

haunt their blood they cannot enclose themselves in a little pinfold of demonstrable knowledge, and call it the universe."

This wider and richer nature Macaulay certainly had not. He might boast himself clear of superstition and prejudice, and we must all agree he had an eminently rational mind, and yet, says Carlyle, "If the man who has no strength of affection, strength of belief, have no strength of prejudice, let him thank Heaven for it, but to himself take small thanks."

It is the absence of this element in Macaulay's mind that makes it impossible for him to rank above mere ballad writers. No part of Trevelyan's work is weaker than that part of the 13th chapter in which he struggles laboriously to *prove* that the "poetic nature was there." There is much in the diction and rough mechanism of the *Lays* that reminds us of the poetical work of Scott, and yet who would think of setting the two writers as poets on a par? The richer nature was present in Scott, carrying him at times to heights that Macaulay never attempts. Yet Macaulay was much more of an artist than Scott; his work is perfectly finished, and what we may call his low level much higher. Both again had a strong love for historical associations, and a fine piece of scenery affected them more deeply if it brought with it an historical reminiscence. But Macaulay's love of Nature was merely skin-deep. Here, as in so many other points, he was of the eighteenth century, but Scott was too much of a Scotchman not to feel the love of wild nature for its own sake.

Macaulay was all his life a precocious genius, and the sayings of his childhood recorded by Trevelyan are a proof of this; perhaps none is more significant than the following: It was his practice to read from the time he was three years old, lying on a rug before the fire, munching bread and butter. When his mother told him he must do without

* George Eliot's "Lifted Veil."