

ROUGE ET NOIR.

Vol. V.

TRINITY COLLEGE, DECEMBER, 1883.

No. 2.

NIGHT AND EARTH.

I.

O Night, star-crowned,
Ineffably sweet,
Sitting enthroned,
With silence at thy feet—
Brow-girt with light,
Dim, silent Night,
So love I thee.

II.

O Earth, night-kissed
With deep shadows brown
And veiled in mist
Softer than the down
Of a swan's breast,
Tired Earth at rest,
So love I thee.

—J. A. Ritchie.

ON CONDUCT AND MANNER.

This subject is one which concerns us, English people and Canadians, very nearly. It is said that, as a nation, the English are not particularly well-mannered. The Prussians are probably worse; but the French are better. These differences undoubtedly exist. The Irish, as a rule, have pleasanter manners than the Scotch, the Italians better than the Germans, the French than the English; and, we may add, the Americans than the Canadians. There must be something in the manners of these people to account for such impressions. A recent writer in the *Revue des deux Mondes* says:—"Les Anglais sont justes, mais ils ne sont pas bons." The English are just, he allows, but they are not nice.

It is said, in reply, that certain classes of French people are worse mannered than the same class of English; but this will serve only to confirm the general principle. The ill-mannered portion of well-mannered people are sure to be the worst; just as an unmannerly woman is worse than an unmannerly man, because it comes more natural to a woman to be courteous than to a man.

We have a way of evading this accusation. We say that, with the French, it is all outward show. We call it French polish and the like. And there is some truth in this; but it is not the whole truth. Where a whole people have a certain tone and style of manner, good or bad, there must be some mental and moral qualities underneath to account for it.

It will be clear then that manner is not merely a matter of personal taste and preference; it is also a duty. A good man has no right to make goodness repulsive. A good man will not do this unless there is something wrong about him. Some people have a kind of ferocity of goodness; they carry in their faces an universal sentence of excommunication. They imagine that they are thereby giving evidence of fidelity, consistency, and the like. For the most part they are displaying their selfishness, coarseness, bad temper. A man may be quite convinced of the truth of his principles, but he has no business to assume that others are not as honest as himself. Nay, more; he has no business (however good he may be, or may think himself) to assume that he alone has a right to decide as to the nature of truth and goodness, or to forget that other people possess exactly the same rights as himself. We naturally and rightly desire that others should adopt principles which we believe to be true, and have found to be good, and for that very reason we should be careful not to oppose needless obstacles in the way of their conversion to the principles that we wish to commend to them.

What then—for we must come to this question—what do we mean when we speak of good manners, good conduct, or good behaviour? Here a double caution is necessary. In the first place, it is by no means necessary that every man should be formed after the same pattern. To require or to expect that every man should possess the same vivacity on the one hand, or the same solidity of manner on the other, would be absurd. If there is anything which is absolutely certain on this subject, it is that the Creator has made His creatures so diverse in temperament and natural disposition that they may each contribute something, and something different to the general fund of human life, character, enjoyment. The man who is naturally lively, cheerful, vivacious, does well to be so. The man who is naturally ponderous and solemn does equally well to be what he is evidently made to be. Could anything be more ludicrous than to see the one of these classes endeavoring to adopt the manner and deportment which is natural to the other?

But there is a caution on the other side which is no less needed. It is true that a man need not, should not sink his own individuality. But this gives no sanction for the indulgence of personal eccentricity. There are people who imagine that eccentricity is a sign of genius. It is indeed sometimes a misfortune of genius; and in