

first of these classes Macaulay belongs. Each time we read him we recognize the charm of his style,—we admire the detail and coloring of his pictures and the representative genius that makes the dry bones of the past again instinct with life; but for the lesson it has to teach us, one reading suffices. In the sense in which the Bible, Herodotus and Carlyle are teachers, it is doubtful whether Macaulay is a teacher at all. Every student of history, almost every reader, has felt in his life towards Macaulay the historian as he has felt towards Scott as a poet. But though to some extent the influence of these writers remains into later years, the unbounded admiration that we felt for the one is as short-lived as for the other. When we read them again, we do so rapidly, more for pleasure than instruction; we do not try to mark, learn, and inwardly digest, nor do we use them as the younger Mill and Professor Tyndall used Wordsworth and Carlyle, for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls.

This absence of a deep undertone has been universally felt, and in this has originated the charge of superficiality so untiringly brought against Macaulay. To what extent this is true has already been hinted, and will be stated at greater length. The form that the charge usually takes may be seen from the passage already quoted from Miss Martineau, but will appear better in an extract I shall read from Maddyn's "Chiefs of Parties," a pleasantly written book and very useful for the present purpose, because, being itself intensely superficial, it sets forth only current views: "Lord Macaulay regards society and thinks upon the world's sublime and mysterious history, not as an investigator or an archæologist, but with the sentiments of a picturesque essayist. Effect, effect, effect is the perpetual and almost the sole object of his aim. For his originality we must look to his style, not his spirit; to his

utterance and not to his meditation. He is unrivalled in literature in placing in a striking way what has been known before. . . . Faded commonplaces he retouches with exquisite art, and the haggard wrinkles of senile whiggery he rejuvenizes with his literary pearl-powder and rhetorician's rouge."

The writer goes on to speak of Macaulay's "enigmatical ambiguities" to find out which must surely puzzle those who know him best. There is, however, a mixture of truth with much falsity in this passage. The best answer to the latter comes from Macaulay's own words in a letter (Life I., 407*): "I like Schiller's style exceedingly. His history contains a great deal of very just and deep thought, conveyed in language so popular and agreeable that dunces would think him superficial." A truer statement of the case against Macaulay would be that, while he is not wanting in thorough knowledge of his subject as far as it goes, he never looks beyond it; that, if the distinction be possible, what he wants is rather width than depth of view. His originality is in fact by no means limited to his style. Upon many points (*e. g.* clerical status and the state of the Highlands at the time of the Stuarts) he is an original investigator, and his book breaks new ground. Certainly as far as the political history of his period is concerned he goes deep enough, but he has done little for the religious side except to ridicule it; and yet the reign of William III. was a time of paramount importance in the life of many Protestant sects, especially of the Congregationalists, the Quakers and Unitarians. It may, perhaps, be said that his history is but a fragment, but the impression conveyed by his History and Essays alike is one of want of width of interest. He seems to have never thought like Carlyle of the mystery of life, to have felt no interest in philosophy, to have cared

*The edition throughout referred to is the 8vo. edition published in 1876, by Harper Bros.