

moreover is one which no broken-down literary adventurer is fit to undertake. The original creators in the world of letters and of art occupy, no doubt, a supreme position, and deserve the homage of mankind; but the well-equipped critic, the man of wide reading, of cultivated taste, of well-balanced mind and complete intellectual disinterestedness is a man whom society may well honour. The balance of faculties which we require in the critic is something in which the greatest geniuses are sometimes sadly lacking. In fact the business of a genius would seem to be simply *to be a genius*, and give the world his one special gift; and, that done, we find him even as other men. On one side there is preponderant development, on another there is possibly deficiency. It is ungracious perhaps to look such noble gift-horses in the mouth; but their surpassing merits should not lead us to disparage men who, if less brilliantly endowed, possess, nevertheless, special faculties of no common order. The accomplished critic, with his calm penetrative glance and infinite tact, is a man whom those who know and love literature best know how to value.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that the critic finds all the materials for his criticism in the work before him. Far from it: he has materials in his own mind, derived from his wide experience of human thought; he knows the ways of men, and has grasped so many relations that nothing can touch his mind that does not waken countless associations and vibrate along a thousand lives. So that in interpreting an author he takes of his own and weaves it in with his presentation of the author's thoughts. To know what critics have done and can do for the illustration of great texts, and the cultiva-

tion of the minds of the educated classes, let any one run through a number of volumes of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and try to do justice to a few of the numberless essays that will there be found under such names as De Rémusat, Schérer, Janet, St. René-Taillandier, Renan, Réville, to mention only a few of the more prominent ones. The work of these men is immense, and executed with a faithfulness that is an honour to them and to French letters. Our own Review literature will show the same thing, but in a less striking form. It is not the work of broken-down literary men that we see in such periodicals, but work, in many cases, vastly better than any that the brilliant phrase-maker to whom the sneer to which we allude is due ever put off his hands.

Criticism should be the voice of impartial and enlightened reason. Too often what passes for criticism is the voice of hireling adulation or hireling enmity. Illustrations of this will occur to everyone, but there is no use in blaming criticism, which, as has been said, is an intellectual necessity of the age. The foregoing remarks have been made in the hope that they may help to clear away some prevalent misconceptions by showing the organic connection, so to speak, that exists between criticism as a function, or as a mode of intellectual activity, and the very simplest intellectual processes. Such a mode of regarding it should do away with the odium that in so many minds attaches to the idea of criticism. Let us all try to be critics according to the measure of our abilities and opportunities. Let us aim at seeing all we can, at gaining as many points of view as possible. Let us compare carefully and judge impartially; and we may depend upon it we shall be the better for the very effort.