

cause still: the cheapness with which foreign agricultural products can be transported to home markets, to say nothing of the conditions of production. The low prices for grain, meat and wool all render it difficult for a small agriculturist to exist, while, in addition, he has to compete with neighbouring large owners whose farm-steads are truly factories. To meet this crisis it has been proposed by M. Baudrillart and other economists to extend the *métayage* system in France. This would imply adequate capital to work an extensive holding, while inducing the rural population to remain in the locality. The *métayage* is nothing else but the system of association applied to land—to the relations between the landlord or employer and a working tenant as partner. If the arrangements be left free, and that they be mutually advantageous, they will not only suit but endure, because adopted to circumstances. There are about one hundred millions of acres of cultivated land in France; of this twenty-one per cent. is farmed by tenants; *métayage*, eighteen, and the rest directly by their owners. Fact singular, the *métayage* plan of working holdings has less suffered by the crisis than rented farms; it has reappeared in districts where it had next to ceased, and extended where it is practised. The peasant has little or no capital: in associating with a proprietor, giving his labour in exchange for a dividend in the produce, he has no anxiety about rent or taxes; he and his family execute their daily tasks, certain of food and shelter; he cultivates the soil with an interest, and the well-being of himself and family is secured. The landlord in return has his dividend for his capital, for the use of the land, the live and dead stock, as well as interest on any moneys advanced. But for the well-working of the system of *métayage*, the proprietor ought to be resident and display an active interest in the association. It is when he delegates his duty to a middleman—when he becomes, in a word, an absentee—that the union fails. Another innovation to uphold and encourage is the dividing the profits, not in kind but in cash. The latter is the true measure of all profits, whether from the farm or the counting-house.

GENERAL TCHENG-KI-TONG, first Secretary of the Chinese Legation here, is contributing a series of articles of a most remarkable character to dissipate many of the prejudices and legends connected with China. His official position, his authoritative experience, his broad and cultivated mind, his wonderful command of French, and his knowledge of western institutions, manners and customs, make his writings of immense value at the present time, when the Celestial Empire is about taking a new departure. His style is agreeable, full of sly sarcasm, and while not ignorant of the notes in the eyes of his countrymen, points out several very ugly beams in those of the Westerners.

THERE is a school of novelists who have created a special form of writing about the moral maladies of modern man. The brothers Edmond and Jules de Goncourt are types of this new departure. Since Balzac none has surpassed them in modifying the art of writing romances. Zola and Daudet are more or less related to their special line of treatment. The Goncourts laboured for twenty years in obscurity before their talent, so original and profound, was recognized by the public. Goethe, in his "Wilhelm Meister," has illustrated the idea that our divers experiences of life profit our personal ability or genius. It is a wide and prolific hypothesis.

Take Balzac for example. He commenced life as an attorney's clerk; next as a printer, and then was ruined. He experienced all the agonies of an unofficial bankrupt merchant. Now, in his romances what is found beneath his philosophical perspicacity, his magic creations and fantasies? Exactly himself, the business man, who at twenty-five years of age was ruined by trade liabilities. His "Biotteau," "Grandet" and "Gobseck," are only the recitals of a man struggling to obtain money to live. Stendhal in his salad days was an officer and a courtier; hence we find in his novels the soldier and the diplomatist. In "Madame Bovary," by Flaubert, there is an hospital odour: the rigid brutality of analysis and a concision of phrases that cut like surgical instruments. Flaubert was the son of a doctor and walked hospitals.

Theophile Gautier on leaving college became a painter; hence, all his poetry and prose reveal the artist. The Goncourts did not commence life as novelists; they started as sketchers, on foot, throughout France, haversack on back. Their note-books then revealed nothing save the number of miles travelled and the nature of their repasts; their reflections came later. It was only in the autumn of 1850, in their lonely lodgings in the Rue St. George, when twilight permitted no longer to paint, they set to and sketched a Chinese Vaudeville. Hence we can trace in their novels not literary but artistic criticism. There is nothing in them of the philosophy of Taine, or the splendid prose of Gautier. Their home became a museum, full of objects of art and designs, rare and suggestive. It is by a kindred taste that the young Greeks were led to love the statues of their gods, light and strong as themselves, and of that serenity which was the exact image of their person. "To comprehend is to equal."

The Goncourts were men of museums, creatures of bibelots and bric à brac; take away these and modern literature becomes in great part unintelligible. Is not the horizon of Racine's poetry limited from the standpoint of the Château of Versailles? But the Goncourts had no touch with the outer world, like Balzac, Goethe, or Hugo; they shut themselves up during four days at a time to develop the "hallucination fever," the better to evoke tears for pain and extract love by associating it with torture. This is the disease of ideal novels; it is playing with language as the Hungarian gipsies play their violins—sadly and passionately.

It is not by visions or day-dreams that the manners of any age can be written; they must be caught "living as they fly." There is no want of human documents; the only difficulty is to select them. It is not by bibelots from China and Japan that we can describe the manners of a street or a boulevard. At best it is only history as it might be. It was

not thus that Sir Walter Scott and George Sand wrote. Take Balzac, Stendhal, George Eliot, the Comte Tolstoi; they observe characters, while the Goncourts only paint them. The reader will not find in the latter volumes types of souls, curious and varied, but descriptions of life's daily habits, the singularities of trades; how we amuse, dress, work, and spend our money. These are the manners, not the passions of our century, and the latter include all vulgar as well as all superior men.

The Goncourts have little intrigue, little of drama in their novels; they replace such by descriptions. Drama means action, and the latter is not a very good sign of manners; their descriptions are so many pieces of mosaic work. They claim to paint the nervous maladies of their epoch, and exhibit themselves as victims of such in their work "Charles Demailly," the history of an unfortunate man of letters. De Coriolis, in "Manette," is clearly the brother of Demailly. Zola, like the Goncourts, rests his literary work on the diseased will; so does Alphonse Daudet, but with a finer sense of penetration. It would be a great error, not the less, to accept the Goncourts as painters of their epoch; their style is in direct contradiction with the intellectual habits of the French. They have no touch with contemporary life; they live in an ideal atmosphere of their own creation.

M. HECTOR MALOT'S "Lieutenant Bonnet" is a novel with a purpose, and a good one into the bargain. It is an axiom in the French army that a sub-lieutenant cannot live on his pay of one hundred and eighty-nine francs per month. It is this circumstance which explains why French officers have no mess: they board and lodge themselves; a café in the garrison town serves as a kind of club. After paying all obligatory expenses the sub-lieutenant has only thirteen francs per month for pocket-money. This is absolute misery for officers without private means, and it is the sad romance of such lives that M. Malot depicts. "Lieutenant Bonnet" is the type sub-lieutenant without fortune; he is a bachelor for economy's sake; he does not go to the regimental café; hence, he is "suspected" by his comrades. His uniform is dowdy and rusty; this appearance makes the rich colonel his enemy, for his regiment is a "crack" one. Lieutenant Drapier is, again, the type of the married officer without fortune. His situation is more frightful than Bonnet's. He has wed a strong farmer's daughter, who promised her a fortune, but has broken his word. If one hundred and eighty-nine francs a month be inadequate for a bachelor-lieutenant, what must two hundred francs only be for an officer with a wife and child? Drapier's home is chronic, horrible misery. The volume is very sensational, rendered still more painful because true—and new, because the central incidents are exposed for the first time to the world in a dramatic form.

"LES FRÈRES COLOMBE," by Madame Peyrebrune, is a simple history that will cause tears to well up in many eyes. It is full of human emotion, and that hard illustration, which nature daily forces on us, that we do not live solely for ourselves. The brothers Colombe are two old bachelors, who, employed in Paris, have, by dint of parsimony rather than frugality, saved up a little money to enable them to retire to their natal home in the Provinces to end their days in peace. Solitary though they be, they are good. They secure "pets": first a dog, then a little girl, and lastly a sparrow. The dog dies; the little girl, whom they loved and almost ruined themselves to humour and cherish, weds, leaves and goes to a foreign land; the sparrow flies away one spring morning and forgets to come back. Three times affection deceives them, and they thus learn what are the causes of the great joys and sorrows of this life.

ZERO.

### THE BREAKAGES OF CIVILIZATION.

SPEAKING at Edinburgh, and arguing that the *Saturnia regna* will not return even at Mr. Chamberlain's call, Mr. Goschen alluded to the Breakages of Civilization. The workhouses are a gathering of that chipped human ware, and there is porcelain as well as earthen pottery in the collection. "Men with broken hearts and broken fortunes come in from all classes of society." All societies must have, and will have, their Broken Men, as they were called of old in Scotland and Ireland. All of us know them. They frequently call: "and the person won't send up his name, sir; but he says he knows you very well." Then, at the giving of this message you are certain that one of the Breakages of Civilization is waiting for you downstairs; and probably you wonder how much he will take to go away, and whether he will carry off any of the spoons with him or the great-coats from the hall. Generally, poor fellow! he has not yet descended to such arts as these. See him you must: and you commonly find a quite unfamiliar face, and an unknown voice greets you—a voice husky with liquor and exposure. The closely buttoned-up acquaintance declares that he was with you at your private school; or don't you remember him? he was senior to you at St. Gaten's. You may perhaps remember his name. He rarely turns out to have been a friend in youth. His friends he exhausted and wearied out long ago; now he has come to the *Triarii*, to the last rank and forlorn hope of distant acquaintances. It is most pitiful to see for how little, after all, this poor Breakage will take himself off. His ideas of "ransom" are much more humble than those proclaimed by Mr. Chamberlain. After a discourse (how hard he tries to keep up the old Oxford tone!) on old days and old memories, he incidentally mentions that he has left his purse in a cab and would be glad to borrow half-a-crown. He goes away, apparently happy: and perhaps you never see him or hear of him again; or perhaps, on the other hand, he becomes a frequent visitor.

What is it that brings men to this pass?—to the broken hat, the sad broken shoes through which the wet must percolate; to the petition for