

arm without reprieve, he adds the grievous offence of being "disposed" to call Tennyson's May-Queen "trumpery." Now, Tennyson and Thackeray were men of masterly power, capaciousness, and penetration of brain, but the deepest root of genius in both was in the tender well-spring of their hearts. Respecting them, therefore, Mr. Saintsbury doth greatly err.

Except, however, in respect of their tenderness, Mr. Saintsbury does a reasonable amount of justice both to Thackeray and Tennyson. He attaches due importance to Tennyson's marvellous power of combining the charm of melodious sound with the charm of landscape beauty. "There have been poets," he says, "though not many, who could manage sound with equal skill; and there have been those, though not many, who could bring, with a few modulated words, a visual picture before the mind's eye, and almost the eye of the body itself, with equal sureness and success. But there have hardly been any, outside the very greatest three or four, who could do both these things at the same time in so consummate a fashion." That is well said.

Of Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Saintsbury writes with ardent admiration, but regrets that his powers of self-control and self-discipline were insufficient to rule the storm and torrent of his words. "He has always wanted discipline who never wanted music or eloquence; and the complaint that his readers sometimes find themselves floating on and almost struggling with a cataract of mere musical and verbal foam-water is not without foundation." The "impressions" on Browning strike us as faintly, yet discernibly, prophetic of a reaction from the half-honest, half-affected raptures with which it had become at one time the fashion to greet his name. "Even in his heyday," says the audacious Mr. Saintsbury, "the man (it is surely permissible to use slang of one who used so much) 'jawed' at times." Bold also is the reference to "the volume where Mr. Browning thought to make up for a not wholly perfect knowledge of Greek by calling a nymph a 'numph.'" But Mr. Saintsbury only partially negatives Browning's claims, admitting his works to be "full of a generous and indomitable spirit, free from the whining and cavilling to which poetical philosophy so often inclines." He judges Dickens severely. We have no doubt that a large proportion of what he condemns in the most popular of Victorian writers is justly describable as "strained melodramatic rant"; but there is more of the stuff of immortality in Dickens than he takes account of, and we are simply amazed at his having nothing to say of *Oliver Twist*. His courage, but not his judgment, receives fresh illustration from his remark, "I never remember having read a single book of George Eliot's with genuine and whole-hearted admiration"; and he will not be thanked by the many who retain an enthusiasm for Charlotte Brontë and her little "Jane." There is much in what he says of Macaulay to which we determindly object; but the following passage is good:—

The merit which has been allowed to his essays, that of extraordinarily vivid presentation of the subject, must be allowed here to a still greater degree, inasmuch as it is shown on a far greater scale and in much more difficult manner. With part of the period which Macaulay's history covers I happen, as has been said, to have acquainted myself in considerable detail and by going to the original authorities. Nobody can possibly be more opposed to Macaulay's general views on the politics of that period than I am; and yet I am disposed to think and say, without the least conscious intention of paradox and with much deliberate guarding against it, that of no other period of English history does an idea so clear, vivid, and, on the whole, accurate exist in so large a number of people, and that this is due to Macaulay. The fact is that the power of making historical periods and transactions real and living is an exceedingly rare

power, and that Macaulay had it. Since his day, we have had a numerously attended school of historians who have gone beyond even Macaulay in book-devouring, who have, as a rule, confined themselves more than he did to single periods, and who have sometimes exhausted their power of picturesque writing and their reader's patience in severely accurate detail. Not one of them, to my thinking, has achieved the success of making his period living and actual as Macaulay has. The picturesque people hide the truth with their flashes and their flourishes. The Dry-as-dust dole it out in such cut-and-dried morsels, with such a lack of art, such a tedious tyranny of document and detail, that the wood almost literally becomes invisible because of the trees.

Of Carlyle's genius for word-portraiture Mr. Saintsbury has unlimited admiration. He delineates men "with a fidelity and a vigour of biographical art beside which even Boswell, even Lockhart, are tame and shadowy." And of Carlyle's works in general Mr. Saintsbury says that "no one who ever goes to them will miss the splendours of pure literature which illuminate their rugged heights and plateaus, and that some at least will recognize and rejoice in the high air of love for noble things, and contempt for things base which sweeps over and through them." But Mr. Saintsbury makes what we consider the fatal mistake of regarding the *Latter Day Pamphlets* as exhibiting the strength instead of the decadence of Carlyle, and we have no words to express the vehemence of our disagreement with him when he discards the Carlylian version of Cromwell's character, and describes Oliver as the "man who canted against despotism his way to the headship of the Commonwealth of England, and then continued to cant as a despot to the day of his death." If Cromwell's religion was cant, what religion, we would ask Mr. Saintsbury, ever was sincere? Mr. Saintsbury startles us by the incidental application to Gibbon of the phrase "obstinate superficiality"; but on turning to another volume, to which he contributes a carefully appreciative estimate of that great historian, we are able to "correct" the impression derived from this astounding characterization by Mr. Saintsbury's own sentence:—"In the union of accuracy and grasp, Gibbon has absolutely no rival in literature, ancient and modern." This is, perhaps, extreme, but it is far nearer the truth than the extreme in the other direction.

Having been thus as frank and straightforward in our censures as Mr. Saintsbury himself, we have only to add that, having read the book from cover to cover (pp. 218), almost without laying it down, our only regret was that there was no more of it.

ON SOME TALES OF MR. KIPLING'S.

In a lonely Sussex house a number of men sat together, says Mr. S. R. Crockett in the *Bookman*. The cheerful dinner was done, the ingle flamed, and whenever one, rising, chanced to open the cottage door, the freshness of the still and breathing spring night stole in. There were among these men editors, critics, dons, and writers—modest men all, who yet had tried, each within his possible, to do something. There was talk and turmoil—the incidence of liking, the extreme dissidence of dissent. From argument they went to criticism, and, in the forecasting of the future, reputations suffered. All the while the great editor sat above them (in a smoking-jacket), as the gods sit, dividing good and evil. Finally they fell upon a new play.

They resolved to write out, each for himself, a list of the best half dozen of Mr. Kipling's short stories. The papers were folded. They were put into the hat, and the editor, well-accustomed, made out the final result. "The Man Who Would Be King" stood proudly at the head of every list,