

## WALTER PATER.

The recent death of Mr. Pater will be deplored by all lovers of good literature. Whatever vagaries the young Oxford student may have been guilty of, in the first stages of æsthetic exuberance, have long since been forgiven. The Mr. Pater whom the world knows has won a unique position for himself in English literature and his reputation rests quite as much on strong, sane thinking as upon his love of all that appeals to the sense of beauty.

Mr. Pater's growing popularity, amply attested by the number of editions through which his works have passed, is well deserved. His place in literature is due to the unusual combination of the philosophic with the æsthetic temper, and his power as a writer to the skill with which he clothes ideas with form and colour. His writing has not the incisive force of Newman's prose, but this is due quite as much to the subject matter as to the temperament of the writer; his style lacks that rapidity which is so characteristic of some of our best writers, but it gains in stateliness; he has more ideas than Matthew Arnold and less self-consciousness, though the care which he bestows upon his work has left its mark; his words, chosen with exquisite care, and a certain nicety of phrase and felicity of thought, go to make up a style which has a charm in itself.

The comparison with M. Arnold is irresistible. Both these writers believed themselves called upon to lead a crusade, both were critics of a high order, both were lovers of the best that had been said and thought in the world, both strove to see and make others see things as in themselves they really are; both were prophets of sweetness and light. The comparison is equally fruitful in their points of unlikeness. M. Arnold must inaugurate educational reform, political reform, religious reform; W. Pater deals with none of these things. M. Arnold is forever talking about letting "right reason and the will of God prevail," i.e., the eternal not-ourselves which makes for righteousness, and which neither loves nor thinks; W. Pater is busy as a literary and artistic critic should be in marking the periods which have been fruitful in works of truth and beauty, in noting the personalities and works in which these periods have found expression and in striving to set forth why and wherein these ages are fruitful, these persons and works capable of impressing us with the sense of beauty.

In pursuance of this object, his work is sometimes historical, sometimes imaginative, sometimes purely critical. In his work on the *Renaissance* we feel the enthusiasm of the writer for the fifteenth century. "The Renaissance is the name of a many-sided but yet nnited movement, in which the love of the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, the desire for a more liberal and comely way of conceiving of life, make themselves felt, urging those who experience this desire to search out first one and then another means of intellectual or imaginative enjoyment, and directing them not merely to old and forgotten sources of their enjoyment, but to the divination of fresh sources thereof—new experiences, new subjects of poetry, new forms of art."

If we attempt to analyze the charm of Mr. Pater's work, apart from style, it would appear that he is almost unapproachable in catching and portraying the spirit of ages which are diverse from our own. Many

men seem able to depict the manners and customs of a past age, Mr. Pater can conjure up its spirit and make his readers live and move and breathe the very atmosphere of a departed time. It is conceivable that another might have written *The Renaissance* or *Plato and Platonism* or *Appreciations*, but those who wish to read Mr. Pater's typical work will procure *Imaginary Portraits*, or, above all, *Marius the Epicurean*.

In *Marius the Epicurean*, unquestionably his masterpiece, Mr. Pater attempts to portray the sensations and ideas of a cultivated pagan of the second century of our era as he passes through the school of life and seeks satisfaction in one school of philosophy after another. The picture of paganism is highly idealized, all that is forbidding being pushed into the background, while its brighter side is brought out and coloured with a wealth of philosophical and historical insight, a witchery of style and a poetic imagination of no mean order.

The title of the book is carefully chosen for the aim of *Marius* is to let nothing in life that is true or beautiful or good escape him. The work is a noble endeavour to instruct in the art of life by picturing the aspirations, ideals and endeavours of one who tries to suck life's meaning dry and lose nothing of all it holds out to those who try to live purely, nobly and beautifully. Indeed *Marius*, the noblest creation of Mr. Pater's imagination, is an incarnation of his ideal, and as such becomes the vehicle of those ideas which Mr. Pater strove to impress upon his generation. It is an ideal which paganism certainly never realized, which no pagan ever even conceived. It is the ideal of Paganism, touched with the feeling, the restraint, the purity of that which supplanted paganism. And we may add it is an ideal which the English race, having passed through the Puritan discipline, may contemplate with equal profit and pleasure.

E. C. CAYLEY.

## BRUTUS.

Brutus is a character often misunderstood. He has been called the most noble character Shakespeare ever drew, while by many he is considered the type of an ungrateful villain. It seems almost impossible that views so opposite could be held about the one man, but both seem to be common. Let us then study each side of his nature as the poet has presented it to us, bearing in mind, lest we should come to a too hasty conclusion, that he has long proved a puzzle to the critics.

Of his personal appearance Shakespeare tells us little directly. Certainly he cannot be a young man: his opinions are too definite, his philosophy too deep, his relation to Cæsar too intimate, his position in the State too exalted. Yet he is not enfeebled with age, but, on the contrary, seems to be in the prime of life, probably about forty years old—history tells us he was forty-three at the time of his death. As a stoic philosopher we would not expect to find him one of those

that are fat,  
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights. (1)

The historian again confirms our conjecture by describing him as "lean and whitely-faced." But as a Roman General we picture him tall, wiry, and dignified in his carriage. And when we look more closely do we not see a troubled and worried

expression on that firm face? Yes, indeed, but when he smiles a gentle softness shines from those deep sunken eyes, that drives away the harshness only to reveal the more clearly and tenderly the sad melancholy. Such is the picture Shakespeare's character suggests to me.

Brutus is thoroughly noble; his idea of honor is most exalted, and he expects to find the same spirit in others. This nobleness is shown in his dislike for flattery: the fact that he is not flattered is sufficient proof that he did not wish it; the fact that he does not flatter, that he could not.

I kiss thy hand, but not in flattery, Cæsar,  
Desiring that Publius Cimber may  
Have an immediate freedom of repeal. (2)

While Cassius can "beg enfranchisement for Publius Cimber," (3) the nobleness of Brutus' nature forbids him to do more than desire. So, too, he needs no oath to keep him to his word, and he does not understand Cassius' proposal to "swear our resolution":

What need we any spur, but our own cause  
To prick us to redress? What other bond  
Than secret Romans that have spoke the  
word,

And will not palter? and what other oath  
Than honesty to honesty engaged  
That this shall be, or we will fall for it! (4)

Although he killed Cæsar for his faults, although he bathed his hands in his life's blood, still he never for a moment loses sight of his true worth, but always recognizes and proclaims his greatness: he speaks of the conspirators as they

That struck the foremost man of all this  
world. (5)

And we cannot attribute this to lack of confidence or energy in the cause: we see him meditating in his orchard in the dead of night; (6) we hear him promise to win new men to their party; (7) we see him lead an army to the field of battle in behalf of his actions, (8) and it is to his overworked brain that the spirit of Cæsar appears. Yet, energy is not one of his normal characteristics, but it is when he sets his whole heart and will to the accomplishment of some purpose that he becomes enthusiastic, and casts aside his calm, serious, thoughtful and phlegmatic nature. All his actions show him to be strictly conservative: never rashly committing himself, but always giving the subject due consideration, at the same time avoiding all extremes. While Cassius is urging him against Cæsar and using language that would more than "fire the blood of ordinary men," he gives him no encouragement, and we can see that he is calmly pursuing his own thoughts. When Cassius asks that Cicero be admitted to the conspiracy, while all are hastily expressing their approval, Brutus is weighing the pros and cons; at last he comes to his decision:

O, name him not; let us not break with  
him. (9)

So, too, when Dacius urges that they should make "Antony and Cæsar fall together," he first considers the question; but in this instance his hatred for extreme measures brings him to a too hasty conclusion:

Our course will seem too bloody, Caius  
Cassius. (10)

And there is another characteristic shown here: he is not a man of bloodshed,

(2) III., i., 52-54. (3) III., i., 57. (4) II., i., 123-128. (5) IV., iii., 22. (6) II., i. (7) II., i., 218-220. (8) V., iii., 51-53. (9) II., i., 150. (10) II., i., 162.