

of gravest philosophical problems—whatever our views as to his solution of them—than in the *Grammar of Assent*, the *Essay on Development*, the *Lectures on the Ideal of a University*? Where sweeter and more delicate flowers of poesy than in such verses as "Lead, Kindly Light," or the "Dream of Gerontius"? Who has displayed greater descriptive force, or more consummate power of word-painting, than he who has made ancient Athens live before us? Whose holy enchantment has called up in the midst of the nineteenth century, with its feverish strivings and incessant movement and restless endeavor, the venerable shades of St. Benedict and his companions, in the unbroken calm and untroubled peace of the early monastic institute? Who has "sorted and numbered the weapons of controversy" with such scientific precision, and employed them with such consummate skill, as the author of the *Treatise on the Prophetic Office*, the *Tract on Creed and Canon*, the *Lectures on Anglican Difficulties*, and the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*? While, still higher glory, in a life full of polemical strife, he has never taken an unfair advantage, or won a dishonest victory.

These are some of the titles upon which Cardinal Newman's claim rests to a high place in the literature of his country. It is not, however, my present purpose to consider him from a merely literary stand-point. Cardinal Newman has played a notable part in a most important, perhaps the most important, department of the annals of our century. He is the especial representative of a great spiritual and intellectual movement, and a conspicuous leader of religious thought. It is in this character that I propose now to regard him. My object is to sketch the main outlines of his life, and in such rough way as may be possible to form an estimate of his work. And in executing this task, my chief materials will be derived from his books, one special note of which is their strong individuality. They are instinct with that egotism which, to use a happy expression of his own, is, in some provinces, the truest modesty. Each in its different way and its varying degree, has, for us, its revelation about the writer. Thus the *Grammar of Assent* does for us objectively what the *Apologia* does subjectively. The *Essay on Development* is confessedly a chapter—the last—in the workings of the author's mind which issued in his submission to Rome. There is perhaps not one of his *Oxford Sermons*, which, as he told us of the famous discourse on Wisdom and Innocence, was not written with a secret reference to himself. His verses are the expressions of personal feelings, the greater part of them, to give his own account, growing out of that religious movement which he followed so faithfully from first to last. And further, we have his present criticism upon his former self, his ultimate judgments upon his early views in the prefaces and notes with which he has enriched the new editions of his old works. Then we possess in his volumes not only the story of his life, but, in some degree, his comment thereon.

Cardinal Newman's life runs with the century. It is to the age of Pitt and Fox, of Napoleon and Pius VII., of Scott and Byron, of Coleridge and Kant, that we must go back to survey the moral, political and religious surroundings of his early years—surroundings which largely influence every man, and the more largely in proportion to the receptivity and retentiveness of his intellectual constitution. To form some element in which Cardinal Newman lived and moved during the time when his character was matured and his first principles were formed, is a necessary condition precedent to any true understanding of what he is and what he has wrought. Let us therefore glance at the condition of English religious thought at that period.

Perhaps it is not too much to say that never during its course of well nigh two thousand years in the world, has Christianity presented less of the character of a spiritual religion than during the last half of the eighteenth century. Not in England only, but throughout Europe, the general aim of its accredited teachers seems to have been to explain away its mysteries, to extenuate its supernatural character, to reduce it to a system of morality, little differing from that of Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius. The dogmas of Christianity were almost openly admitted to be

nonsense. Religious emotion was stigmatized as enthusiasm. Theology, from being "the science of things divine," had sunk into apologies, opposing weak answers to strong objections, and into evidences, endeavouring with the smallest result to establish the existence of a vague possible deity. The prevailing religion of the day may be accurately judged of from the most widely popular of its homiletic works, those thrice-famous sermons of Blair's, which were at one time to be found in well-nigh every family of the upper and middle classes of this country, and which probably may still be discovered in the remoter shelves of the libraries in most country houses. No one can look into these discourses without admitting the truth of Mr. Stephen's trenchant criticism that "they represent the last stage of theological decay." For unction there is mere mouthing, for the solid common sense of earlier writers, an infinite capacity for repeating the feeblest platitudes; the morality can scarcely be dignified by the name of prudential, unless all prudence be summed up in the command, "Be respectable;" the pages are full of solemn trifling—prosings about adversity and prosperity, eulogies upon the most excellent of virtues, moderation, and proofs that religion is upon the whole productive of pleasure. As Mr. Mill accurately sums the matter up,—

"The age seemed smitten with an incapacity of producing deep or strong feeling, such at least as could ally itself with meditative habits. There were few poets, and none of a high order; and philosophy had fallen into the hands of men of a dry prosaic nature, who had not enough of the materials of human feeling in them to imagine any of its more complex and mysterious manifestations."

Such was the dominant tone of English thought about the time when Cardinal Newman was born. But besides it there was another school which exercised a strong influence over a not inconsiderable number of adherents, and which potently affected the growth of his character and the formation of his opinions. Among the figures conspicuous in the history of England in the last century, there is perhaps none more worthy of careful study than that of John Wesley. Make all deductions you please for his narrowness, his self-conceit, his extravagance, and still it remains that no one so nearly approaches the fulness of stature of the great heroes of Christian spiritualism in the early and middle ages. He had more in common with St. Boniface and St. Bernardine, of Sienna, with St. Vincent Ferrer and Savonarola, than any religious teachers whom Protestantism has ever produced. Nor is the rise of the sect which has adopted his name—the "people called Methodists" was his way of designating his followers—by any means the most important of the results of his life and labours. It is not too much to say that he and those whom he formed and influenced, chiefly kept alive in England the idea of supernatural order during the dull materialism and selfish coldness of the eighteenth century. To him is undoubtedly due the Evangelical party. It is as easy now as it ever was to ridicule the grotesque phraseology of the Evangelical school, to make merry over their sour superstitions, their ignorant fanaticism; to detect and pillory their intellectual littleness. It is not easy to estimate adequately the work which they did by reviving the idea of grace in the Established Church. They were not theologians, they were not philosophers, they were not scholars. Possibly only two of them, Cecil and Scott, can be said to rise above a very low level of mental mediocrity. But they were men who felt the powers of the world to come in an age when that world had become to most, little more than an unmeaning phrase; who spoke of a God to pray to, in a generation which knew chiefly of one to swear by; who made full proof of their ministry by signs and wonders parallel to those of the prophetic vision. It was in truth a valley of dry bones in which the Evangelical clergyman of the opening nineteenth century was set; and as he prophesied there was a noise, and behold, a shaking, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

In this army John Henry Newman was led to enrol himself in early youth.—W. S. LULLY in the *Fortnightly Review*.

(To be continued.)