

be fought to the death! If we were to seek for a modern realization of Tennyson's "Sir Galahad," a moral Chevalier Bayard, *sans peur et sans reproche*, we could find none more fitting than John Greenleaf Whittier!

The allusion to Burns was a fortunate one, for it brought out, not only the expression of his admiration for the Scottish poet, but also an interesting bit of autobiography. "I have never been in Scotland," he said, "but if I were to go there, I should recognize every spot that Burns has immortalized." And then he told with evident pleasure in the reminiscence, how he had found his own first inspiration to poetic production in the poems of Burns—the first real poetry, outside the Bible, which had found its way into the Quaker household, whose little library of some twenty volumes contained but one book of verse, a rhymed history of King David, by the well-known Friend, Ellwood, whose Quakerism, as the poet remarked, did not prevent his describing with evident satisfaction the exploits of the warrior king. But it was an evening never to be forgotten, when the young school-master,

"Brisk wielder of the birch and rule,"

commemorated in "Snow-bound," brought in to read at the family fireside the volume of Burns, which afterwards gave him, on an early summer day, the delight to which he has given expression in one of his sweetest poems, his lyric on Burns, which, for lightness of touch and charm of diction, deserves to be set side by side with Wordsworth's "Yarrow Unvisited." And those rigid censors of the Scottish bard, who sit in judgment on his errors without taking into account the circumstances which induced them, would do well to take a lesson from one of the purest of poets, in life and writings, who has but compassionate regret for the failings of his unhappy brother. Doubtless his own sharp struggle with selfish tyranny, too often aided and abetted by those whose sacred profession should have promised better things, had led him to understand, better than most of us do, how the iron of hypocrisy and cant had entered into the soul of the Scottish poet, turning what should have been influence for good into influence for evil!

Like Burns, Whittier was a most spontaneous poet. His was certainly a case of "*poeta nascitur*." Had it not been so, how could the training and traditions of a Quaker household and the influences of a New-England farm have evolved a poet? The village school at Haverhill had been his only intellectual discipline, till William Lloyd Garrison—his future comrade in the battle against slavery—interested in the unknown contributor to his poets' corner in the Newburyport *Free Press*, came out to see him, and, finding him at the plough, persuaded him to take two sessions of six months each at the Haverhill Academy. He was, therefore, not overburdened with college lore, and doubtless his freedom from the tyranny of *crum* made one point in his favour. Still, this slender intellectual outfit made itself felt in his after life. Only by hard work did he acquire the power to mould his verse into conformity with artistic requirements, and to the last he suffered more or less from a restricted vocabulary. Though his "swiftly running verse," as it has been happily styled, suggests no difficulty of expression, he told the writer, in course of conversation, that this was his greatest trouble. "I often feel that I cannot express my conceptions as I would," he said. "Like the prophet, I feel something before me to which I would fain give expression, but the words fail me." Even his own lines, after they were once written, he did not always recognize as his own, and was less ready in quoting his own poetry than others who had stored it up in their memory. He certainly did not over-value his own work, and remarked that if he could begin again, with his maturer taste and experience, he would leave out of his published works a good many poems now included in them. Probably his judgment was right, but yet those who love him and his poetry would not willingly lose anything he has written.

Although in his later years the enfeebled health, doubtless originating from early overstrain,—for he had originally a fine physique,—obliged him to keep out of all excitement and active life, his interest in all passing events was fresh and vigorous. He had a warm feeling towards Canada, expressing the natural desire, for him, that the continent should be politically one, and saying that he would rather seek alliance for the United States farther north than south. One who had sacrificed favour, interest and the best years of his life in one humanitarian struggle, was not likely to be indifferent to those now going on, and the problem of "capital and labour" interested him profoundly, as the question of the age. For the selfishness of those who amass colossal fortunes out of the necessities and toil of their fellows, he had unsparing condemnation, declaring that to see "so many very, very rich men was sadder far than to see so many very, very poor." And he did not wonder, he said, that the perplexing inequalities and injustice of life as we see it to-day, and the failure of modern Christianity adequately to cope with the problems which its influence ought to settle, should have driven many, especially young people, into the darkness of agnosticism. But for himself he clung with unshaken tenacity to the faith he had expressed in his undying words:—

"Yet mid the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed stake my spirit clings,
I know that God is good."

To this mainstay he clung, too, in his deepening sense of the mystery of life and death. He quoted with warm sympathy Tennyson's lovely poem, "Crossing the Bar," which so fully expressed his own feeling in the prospect of the change for which he was calmly "waiting." This feeling he expressed in a letter to the writer, of last November: "I wait quietly in order of nature and Providence and—

Treading a path I cannot see
That God is good—sufficeth me."

These lines are from one of his latest poems, the latest except the touching lines to his old friend, Oliver Wendell Holmes, on his birthday, penned only a few days before his death, and read by many almost simultaneously with the intelligence that he had passed into "the great silence" from whence we can hear his voice no more. In July he had left his residence of Oak Knoll for Hampton Falls, from whence he wrote to the writer, on the last day of July, kindly and genially acknowledging the dedication of a recently-published book, and referring to its pictures of Canadian life and scenery with much interest. But he had to write by the hand of another, on account of failing eyesight. "I have come to this quiet place," he wrote, "for the rest I so greatly need." One brief month more, and—while the early autumn, whose charms he had so loved to sing, lay golden on the land,—his pure and gentle soul had indeed entered into the rest which the "good and faithful servant" had so truly earned, and—we may well believe—into the joy of that fuller vision which awaits the "pure in heart."

FIDELIS.

THE CRITIC.

"AND upon what shall The Critic lay his hand, this week?" I said to a friend,—he had been battling for the necessities of life, and in the strife had had uncomfortable contact with, if not the great unwashed, at least with the great uncultured.

"Take smugness," he said, in cynical mood, and I took it.

It is not a nice word, the word "smug." It is so self-satisfied on such slender grounds for satisfaction; so proud, with so little to pride itself on; so boastful, with nothing to boast of. It is onomatopoeic of the thing it signifies. Short, sleek, stiff-necked and snub-nosed. And the thing it signifies is an ugly thing; smugness always vaunteth itself, and is puffed up, behaveth itself unseemly.

The word "smug" has a history not uninteresting. Dictionaries say it comes from the Danish *smuk*, meaning dressy, neat, tidy, spruce. A kindred word is the German *schmücken*, to adorn; and so perhaps also is our "smock." It is easy to trace its changes of meaning from dress to manners, and from manners to morals. A curiously parallel history attaches to the word "quaint." This has been derived from the Latin *comptus*, handsomely adorned. To-day, according to Professor Earle, "quaint" means "after the fashion of the seventeenth century," and already it is used of intellectual, if not of moral, traits. "Smug" has gone through similar transmutations, but it has gone farther and fared worse, for it has acquired a contemptuous signification foreign to quaint.

Smugness is the especial and contradistinguishing characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon. The Celt is not smug: your Irishman is far too keen-witted, and your Scot far too frank. It is the Anglo-Saxon who is smug, and it is his smugness that is railed at when his neighbours call him "insular" and a "shop-keeper." The archetypal form of modern smugness is perhaps Mr. Punch's "Arry." But we must not think that smugness is confined to Arry. It may be a hard saying, but it is probably a true one, that smugness is as rife amongst the "Barbarians" and the "Philistines" as it is amongst the "Populace"—to use Matthew Arnold's tripartite classifications of Anglo-Saxons. The Populace pride themselves on their eminent respectability; Barbarians on, shall we say, their impassivity. As if impassivity or respectability or brute force were the one thing needful. Perhaps if Matthew Arnold had used so unrefined a word, he might have found in smugness just that opposite of sweetness and light against which he so sweetly and delightfully raised his voice. He did not inveigh against lack of culture so much as against deliberate and complacent acquiescence in lack of culture, and this is the essence of smugness. Smugness respires and exhales a thick atmosphere of self-satisfied complacency through which no ray of culture can penetrate, and it thanks God it is not as other men are. Yet it is quite possible to imagine a smugness born even of culture, which also thanks God it is not as other men are. Can we not, indeed, trace signs of such even in the great Anglo-Saxon apostle of culture?

Yet smugness, like most human foibles, has its good points as well as its bad. If it is peculiar to the Anglo-Saxon race, is not also that sturdy self reliance which excites the envy of continental nations? And perhaps the one has a very intimate connection with the other. It is a complicated sentiment is smugness, and well worthy the attention of the psychologist. Some analytical metaphysician might find in it many things hitherto otherwise named. Pride of birth—patriotism—justifiable egoism—independence of opinion—belief in one's self and in one's motives and actions—private judgment—the sense of fair play—all these may enter into its composition. Indeed smugness may at bottom be nothing more than an excess

of such attributes, or rather perhaps a too great a laying of stress upon the worthiness of such attributes. However, even if so, smugness is not wholly commendable; it is apt to irritate, like virtue in the fanatic, or theology in the dogmatic, or boredom in the enthusiast.

Whence did it arise? If we could trace its parentage we should probably find its cradle in the Commonwealth; when the *bourgeois* seized the throne, then arose smugness. For it is a characteristic of the middle more than of the upper or the lower class, and it was the Commonwealth that inaugurated the reign of the Philistine; before it we had the Barbarian; now we have the Populace. Perhaps this is why so strong a puritanical flavour is to be detected in the meaning of the word—smugness is but secular cant. However, no doubt insularity and shop-keeping have abundantly fostered what the Rebellion and levelling bred. We pay for the tightness of our little isle in the inelasticity of our ideas. Long continued material prosperity and unquestioned national supremacy have induced a plethoric humour, a sort of fatty degeneration; and what we take to be healthy *embonpoint* may in reality be amyloid hypertrophy. Is it the error in the diagnosis that is the source of smugness? However, if a nation like a man is either a physician or a fool at forty, we may be thankful England is not yet middle-aged—a fool she is not.

If it is true that smugness characterizes the Anglo-Saxon, there is a composite nation over the sea which should give signs of its possession. And it is indisputable that our American consins do inherit the family taint. Their smugness is conterminous with their country, and this, we all know, is the biggest in creation. In fact it is interminous; have they not disclaimed the three-mile limit? But with new conditions the disease develops new symptoms. There, brute-force gives way to cuteness; doing as one darn pleases ousts respectability; impassivity is outdone by goaheaditiveness. On all these points they are smug, and on one other—that they are *not* the sons of their mother. To call them chips of the old block would, in their opinion, be to insult the chips—and in ours to insult the block. If anything else were needed to prove our kinship and coincidentally to prove the Anglo-Saxon birthright of smugness, it would be that in America, too, Puritanism was its parent.

But this wholesale taking-to-task will tread upon corns, and may provoke the retort that it is only to the smug that all things are smug. It is time then to acknowledge the corn.

TENNYSON AGAIN.

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to plague us.

THIS is a truth which is constantly being impressed on us in various ways. The facility with which the ministers of our pleasure become the "engines of our pain" is one of the most disappointing facts in daily life. In many cases we accept the change with comparative equanimity, or at any rate, with that fatalistic acceptance of the inevitable which often does duty for resignation. But this, strange to say, is generally the case in matters of grave importance, which are naturally more apt to be referred to the will of a higher power. In circumstances of less moment, there is something peculiarly irritating when that which has always been a special source of enjoyment, is transformed by purely human instrumentality into a cause of weariness and perhaps dislike. This is particularly the case with literature, still more particularly so with poetry. Is there anything, for example, more exasperating to the lover of a poet, than to see the favourite passages continually held up before the eyes of the gazing public in every variety of travesty and parody, till the latter become so closely connected with the original words that it is impossible thereafter to separate them? A centenary or a death is sufficient to bring this about. It is not enough that all the details of the poet's life should be brought to light, and his character dissected for the public benefit, but the best and truest of his words must be brought forth to be staled and withered by the inexorable manipulations of his admirers till their subtlest charm has fled forever. We have felt this, unwillingly enough, about Shelley several times during the past year of his centenary, but it is seen, far more oppressively, now in the sudden burst of enthusiasm awakened by Tennyson's death. Is there no better way of expressing love and admiration for the dead poet than by alloying his fine gold with the baser metal of his admirers? And it seems a particularly unhappy chance which made "Crossing the Bar" the first and chief sacrifice. The pleasure and delight with which we first greeted it are still too fresh in our minds, and we see its magic broken with a sigh of regret. Are we never to read those lines over again by the fireside, or to repeat them in our solitary walk, without being dogged by the monotonous platitudes of Sir Edwin Arnold's ode, or still worse, by the detestable parody of another English admirer, who repeats almost every line of the poem alternately with one of original commentary, somewhat in the style of those preachers who can never read a psalm or chapter from the Bible without accompanying each inspired utterance with an observation of their own? And what shall we say to the production of a well-known hymn-writer who has heaped together *pilots* and *bars* with *vanished hands* and *moaning winds* in inextricable confusion! What would