

at the hands of his critics. A writer in the *Monthly Review* for 1817, commenting on his "Carmen Nuptiale," a "lay of the laureates" declares that had Mr. Southey been capable of expressing his real feelings in Latin, he would have exclaimed:—

"O, fortunatum natum Me Vate Regentem," and that, whilst other conceited laureates have had moments of self-abasement, such laudable feelings are entirely foreign to Mr. Southey; and the critique closes with the following sentence: "For ourselves, we have not enjoyed such a laugh before, even at the merry season just passed, and as we cannot withhold the like enjoyment from our readers, we shall leave them to the undisturbed perusal of the concluding unrivalled specimen of infantine childishness, combined and seasoned with the happiest full-grown vanity."

And yet, in spite of all their faults, Southey, Wordsworth and the rest had a more lasting and a better influence than Byron and Shelley. They gave the public what was wanted at the time. The stirring events of the time had solemnized men's minds and turned them from the frivolities of the eighteenth century to the consideration of those deeper questions which have taken such a firm hold of the men of this age. People wanted to be preached at, and Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge came with their sermons just at the right moment. They are not much read now (life is too short to read everything), but their influence still remains. They are the founders of the modern school of poetry; they are the men who taught us that the interest of an epic lies not so much in the stirring events it records, nor in the supernatural machinery which is introduced into it to facilitate its action, as in the purely human sympathies and interests which gather round the heroes, in Hector smiling upon Astyanax and laying aside his helmet so as not to frighten him, in Helen fascinating, even in the hour of her greatest weakness, in Priam kneeling as a suppliant before Achilles, in the recognition of the returning Ulysses by his faithful dog. In "Joan of Arc" and "The Excursion," we have the precursors of that which may be called the perfection of the purely human epic—"The Idylls of the King."

Whilst both the romantic school and the "Lakers" were thus riding their hobby-horses to the death, a new writer arose who united in him the excellencies of both. It is wonderful how little Sir Walter Scott seems to have been affected by the movements in which he lived. That he was interested, and deeply interested, in contemporaneous events, we know from other sources. But he had the great power of so completely throwing himself into the background when writing that his personality scarcely once appears in his writings. It was here that he had the great advantage over all his contemporaries. Byron's poems are poems about himself. The hero may be called Childe Harold, or Don Juan, or Manfred. There is no doubt that whatever name he may bear, the hero is the writer himself. Hence to have read one of Byron's greater poems is, in a sense, to have read them all. But the "Lady of the Lake," "Marmion" and the "Lord of the Isles" are not thus connected. The author is distinctly not describing himself, but a real hero, different from himself, when he relates the adventures of Fitz James or Lord Ronald. "Mr. Scott" (we are quoting from a review published in 1808)\* "is probably the most popular poet living in this country, even in an age distinguished for poets of various and eminent talents. Without presuming to depreciate him in comparison with any of his less fortunate contemporaries, we may attribute a portion of his fame to the felicitous circumstance of his style and subjects being peculiarly calculated to fascinate two classes of readers, the one very select and the other very numerous, who are not generally attached to the Muses; we mean the "Black Letter Men" and the "Novel Readers" of the age; the admirers of Border antiquities and the lovers of romantic adventures." Byron's scenes were laid at Corinth and Abydos, on the sunny shores of the Mediterranean. Southey's were occasionally in France, but generally in some very unknown country. Wordsworth's heroes were shepherds and waggoners. Scott's were noble knights and ladies, indeed, but they were British, and patriotism at home ranged itself on the side of Scott. In the "Frogs" of Aristophanes, Aeschylus pleads that he inculcated bravery into the Athenians by his *Septem contra Thebas*. No, says Dionysus, who is acting as judge, you made out that the Thebans were braver than the Athenians. Aeschylus was unpatriotic. Byron was cosmopolitan. Scott was a Briton.

The most numerous readers of Scott's poems were, as we have just seen, the novel-readers. It was possibly this circumstance that induced him to forsake poetry and take to writing prose romances. He seems to have done so with considerable diffidence; it was long before he ventured to put his name to those novels which came out under the collective title of the "Tales of My Landlord"; or, to own paternity to "Waverley." Yet there can be no manner of doubt that he did right. He could not see what others saw at the time; but had he foreseen that "Waverley" was a new departure in the history of novel-writing, and that after "Waverley" the English novel, to be worthy of its name, must be a much higher and more careful production, he would have had no diffidence about adopting the career of a novel-writer. The success of "Waverley" was phenomenal. "It is wonderful," says the *Edinburgh Reviewer*,† speaking of the third edition, "what

genius and adherence to nature will do in spite of all disadvantages. Here is a thing obviously very hastily, and in many places very unskillfully, written—composed, one half of it, in a dialect unintelligible to four-fifths of the reading population of the country—relating to a period too recent to be romantic and too far gone to be familiar—and published moreover in a quarter of the island where materials and talents for novel-writing have been supposed to be equally wanting; and yet by the mere force and truth and vivacity of its colouring, already casting the whole tribe of ordinary novels into the shade, and taking its place rather with the most popular of our modern poems than with the rubbish of provincial romances.

"The secret of this success, we take it, is merely that the author is a man of genius, and that he has notwithstanding had virtue enough to be true to nature throughout, and to content himself even in the marvellous part of his story with copying from actual existences rather than from the phantoms of his own imagination."

We have hitherto considered only the literary phenomena of this period. But the religious phenomena are far more striking than even the literary ones, though in some senses analogous to them. The atheistic and immoral spirit embodied in Byron and Shelley took another shape in the fierce attacks upon religion which characterized the end of the last and the beginning of the present century. The Christian sentiment was alarmed, and the religious portion of the community roused itself to fresh activity in combating the evil. Not that Christianity had ever lacked defenders in England. The divines of the eighteenth century were all of them great apologists of Christianity. But they had satisfied themselves with proving that Christianity was true; what to do with it when proved to be true did not lie within their province. After the French Revolution the social dangers of the age became prominent and Christian apology took more practical forms. This was the great age of societies—Bible societies—societies for educating the poor—societies for evangelizing the heathen. The Church (we use the word in its widest sense) seemed determined that henceforth it would defend the faith by deeds rather than by words. And if amongst English-speaking nations to-day Christianity is more securely settled than it was a century ago; this is due very largely under God, to the determination then taken.

But practical though English Christianity became in the beginning of the nineteenth century, we must not forget its intellectual phenomena. The tendencies were various yet well defined. One tendency found its expression in the Lake School. To their honour, Coleridge and Wordsworth had striven to be comprehensive, and their views, boldly expressed though they were, were based on wider conceptions of life. The evangelical societies were formed on somewhat similar principles. They aimed at embracing men of various views and denominations and of uniting them in common work. The Bible Society, the Religious Tract Society, the London Missionary Society all started with this idea. On the other hand, the antiquarian interest evoked by Sir Walter Scott's novels turned men's minds to the glories of the mediæval Church, and with that British feeling, which was so strong in both Scott and his readers, to the glories of the mediæval English or British Church. The historical position of the Church of England began to be examined in such a way as it had never been examined before.

In the meantime a third section—more spiritual, but not so practical as the rest—were turned by the course of events to the study of prophetic writing. In the wars and rumours of war which were all around them, they thought they saw the signs of the coming end, and they searched diligently to see if these things were so or not.

In the first twenty years of this century these tendencies were not yet developed. In the next two decades they had reached their maturity. One and the same year saw three events take place which, unimportant from a worldly point of view, are full of significance to the religious thinker. In 1833 the Evangelical Alliance was founded; in the same year was commenced the publication of the "Tracts for the Times." The same year (the reader will perhaps smile) saw the calling of the Irvingite Apostles. All of these movements have had honourable histories, but how different have been their issues and influences!

The Evangelical Alliance has been essentially popular. It is of the kind to commend itself to the mind of the ordinary Protestant layman. It is above suspicion of Popery or Sacerdotalism, and at the same time it gives to the *disjecta membra* of Protestantism "that thing which by nature they cannot have," a common platform for associated enterprise in the fields of philanthropy and evangelization. As a means to an end it has done much to lessen asperity and harmonize divergent views. It has certainly been an important factor in our religious life as a whole people.

We look back upon the Tractarian movement and we find that in its origin it was as unpopular as the Evangelical Alliance was popular. It was the work of scholars and recluses; it was not understood by the common people, the masses hated it. It has been characterized by patience and perseverance (I might almost say obstinacy) in the maintaining of its positions. Bitterly condemned wherever it has been not known or half known, it has nevertheless succeeded very largely in popularizing itself, and when fearlessly worked out to its legitimate conclusions has always succeeded in obtaining a respectful hearing, if not in procuring conviction. It has changed the face of the Church of England, and at the present moment there are thousands of priests, men of

average ability and average honesty, men of more than average zeal and self devotion to whom the principles advocated by the Fathers of the English Counter Reformation are the very vital principles of all spiritual life.

The Irvingite \* movement on the contrary has been to outward appearance a failure. It has been purely spiritual in its aims and methods, whilst, to the Evangelical, religion has been to a great deal mixed up with emotions and with those practical works of piety which spring from them, whilst the High Church man has sought to find an intellectual basis for his belief in carefully searching the records of Christian and especially of Catholic antiquity; while the Evangelical Alliance has appealed to the Englishman's horror of foreign sacerdotalism, and the High Churchman to the Englishman's love for the English inheritance of Churchmen, the Irvingite has appealed to nothing of the sort.

As a body they have taken no part in philanthropical movements (however active some of them may have been as individuals); they have never been consumed with a desire to evangelize the heathen, deeming perhaps that their fellow countrymen, and especially their religious fellow countrymen, stood in greater need of spiritual enlightenment; they have never written any books of merit; they have been too Apostolical and too sacerdotal to associate with Protestants; they have been too little historical to be admitted by any historic Church into communion. And yet a careful study of the growth and development of this particular body will well repay the student of spiritual phenomena. Commencing with the confused utterings of excitable ladies, appearing first as a body of disordered fanatics without order, regulations, ministries or even doctrines, they have developed into one of the most orderly communities in Christendom. They have furnished themselves with a very beautiful Liturgy, with reverent services, with singularly full orders of ministry and a most systematic provision for the support of the sanctuary. Their members are noted for quietness, sobriety, and a veneration for properly constituted authorities. They do not proselytise from other bodies to any very serious extent, and they know nothing of the Gospel of noise. It is difficult to obtain any certain information about them. They publish few books except for private circulation and their church documents, collections of prophecies, etc., are religiously guarded. But to the man who takes interest in these things the study of Irvingism (not from the testimony of its foes only, but from the combined testimony of friend and foe) will be found to be most instructive and interesting.

We have come so far, too far, perhaps, for our readers' patience, but not nearly far enough for the comprehensiveness of our subject. We have said nothing of modern research and philosophical enquiry, nothing of our modern essayists, nor of that practical science which has so completely revolutionized our modes and views of life. To do justice to these and to show how in most cases the impetus which first set them in motion or which gave to them new life came from the upheaval of the French Revolution is a work that would fill a folio or at the very least a ponderous quarto.

NON OMNIA POSSUMUS OMNES.

#### THE RAMBLER.

A PLEASANTER surprise than a dark-brown paper package well tied and sealed—my friend was not stingy of her red, red wax—and bearing two magic London stamps—could not have awaited me the other day at the little room near the Post Office. The sender wrote that the volume had seen a hundred years of London fog—and I think it must have—it wears such a delightfully musty and mellowed air. "Picked up at a Brompton book-stall"—the "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson, LL.D. By James Boswell, Esq." Printed by Henry Baldwin, for Charles Dilly, in "The Poultry," 1785. I am glad to renew my acquaintance with big Samuel and little James, for it is some years since I read the work, and how could one enjoy it better than in this old and battered cover, with the antique lettering and the wide margins! True it is that books manufactured a hundred years ago were intended to last. This book hath vitality enough left in its thick firm sheets and its noble cover for twenty modern publications. 'Tis a book to say a grace over, following dear Charles Lamb's well-known advice.

Frederick Greenwood, one of the cleverest—in the true sense of the word *clever*—of London journalists, has started a new periodical, the *Anti-Jacobin*. His admirers, who are presumably his intimate friends, conspire to call him a second Labouchère. He certainly has wit, readiness and power of expression, but is not likely to grow so notorious as Labby. Does the *New Review* go on, and does it prosper? How is the *Review of Reviews*, likewise the *Universal Review*? The suspension of the *Philadelphia American* was, I suppose, a surprise to many, and it is to be regretted in some ways, for the critical matter was very good. Of the publishing of many journals there is no end. We should therefore stand very fast indeed by those which survive. The cultivation of literature upon a little oatmeal (*vide* Sydney Smith) and the founding of the

\* F. D. Maurice, Kingdom of Christ. Vol. i., p. 211. *segr.*: has some very judicious remarks on the character and work of Mr. Irving.

\* *Eclectic Review*, 1808, p. 407.

† *Edinburgh Review*, Nov., 1814.