

forth into an unreasoning abuse of anyone who was so unfortunate as to criticise his work. His friends cannot but regret the undignified and often ridiculous position into which he put himself by this habit.

In the story of *Griffith Gaunt* many people find the highest effort of Reade's genius. The power and effect of jealousy is its theme, and no one since the time Shakespeare drew his "Iago" has depicted with more skill the height and depth of that greatest of all human passions. With superb skill and triumphant concealment of highest art concealing art, the reader is carried along with the rush of an irresistible force, as he follows, step by step, the story of Griffith Gaunt's jealous madness. Mr. Swinbourne thinks the forty-third chapter is one of the most beautiful things in the English language, and no one who has read it attentively will think he is saying too much.

Notwithstanding, however, the great success of *Griffith Gaunt* it is not by any means Reade's masterpiece. His genius takes wing and flies to a higher, and I think its highest, flight in *The Cloister and the Hearth*, and gives us one of the finest stories that any novelist ever produced. There is in this great masterpiece of fiction such a wealth of creative genius, such a completeness of detail, such a mastery of the *minutiae* of mediæval customs and manners, such a tender simplicity and sweet pathos, relieved by the brightest touches of humor, such an ever varying and thrilling variety of incident; such a noble purity and almost idyllic simplicity of language, that the reader, however dull he be, cannot but feel that it is the work of genius of the highest order.

Of Reade's other books, *Put Yourself in His Place* is the most important. This interesting and clever story has for its object the exposure of the evils of Trades' Unions; one of the most striking things in the book is the description of the flood, which shows to magnificent advantage, its author's unrivaled powers of description.

Foul Play and *A Terrible Temptation* have both much merit, but cannot be considered among his highest creations. *Christie Inlstone* would be a charming book but for the superlative silliness of some of its incidents, which mar fatally its artistic beauty.

Much discussion has of course arisen as to what place Reade should take in the literary world. A few have denied him the right altogether to rank among the great novelists. Others have given him a second-rate place. But the earnest and unprejudiced students of his works have never hesitated a moment, and have pronounced him equal to, and in some respects greater than the most skillful of his brother craftsmen. It is a more difficult and delicate question, however, to decide his position in relation to any particular novelist. Such comparisons should be dealt with in a very careful and

guarded manner, and in some cases cannot be made at all. For instance, the favorite comparison between George Eliot and Reade is absurd in that the genius of the two novelists lies in totally opposite directions. Reade could never have analysed human motive and dissected spiritual and moral decay like the female novelist. A magnificent psychological study like "Tito" was an impossibility to him. But on the other hand, he had brilliant counter balancing talents, which Eliot was totally devoid of. His relation to the other great English novelists might, I think, be safely defined as being below Thackeray and Scott and above Dickens, Bulwer and Trollope.

The question has often been raised as to the enduring qualities of Reade's works. One writer, as I said before, asserted that not one of his characters will ever remain. Whether this will be the case or not, however, proves nothing in regard to his genius. Many of the noblest works of English Literature lie forgotten and unread in the accumulated dust of centuries. No one can dogmatically assert whether Reade's works will share this fate or not. If they do, and the caprice of new generations passes them by, it is not a matter of the highest importance. An empty posthumous fame was a thing he himself least desired. His noble genius was devoted to the reformation of the evils of his own day, and, that accomplished, he was content. What greater eulogy of any man can be said than this?

BALLADE OF A MAIDE OF TWENTIE.

She hath much tumbled and tawny hair,
With soft gray eyes and a look demure,
But under their lashes silken hair
Lies hidden a shaft for you, beware,—
Vainlie you fancie your heart secure,—
For should one fail, she hath more in plentie.
Less favored maidens can scarce endure
The wiles of this fair maide of twentie.

But I trow for them she hath little care,
Seeing her swains no whit the fewer;
Knowing none other hath form more fair,
She sweetlier smiles at a spite so poor,
And casts her about for some quarrie newer;—
Who scorneth the glances she hath sent, he
Hath found to his cost the way to lure
The wiles of this fair maide of twentie.

From out the depths of a lounging chair—
That cannot her lithe light form immure,—
She weaveth her spells, who would rashlie dare
By this lovelie witch for a space to moor,
And bask in the light of her eyes so pure,
May yet have cause enough to rep at: I
Fear me that time alone will cure
The wiles of this fair maide of twentie.

ENVOI.

So bachelors, ye who deem secure
Your freedom's *dolce far niente*
Beware! lest it may not endure
The wiles of this fair maide of twentie.

J. ALMON RITCHIE.