THE FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW.

EDITED BY W. L. COURTNEY.

VOL. LXII. NEW SERIES.
JULY TO DECEMBER, 1897

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, LIMITED,
11, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C.

NEW YORK:
LEONARD SCOTT PUBLICATION COMPANY,
49, BROADWAY.
1897.

[The Right of Translation is reserved]
THE
FORTNIGHTLY
REVIEW.

Edited by W. L. Courtney

November, 1897.

I. OUR MILITARY REQUIREMENTS
   by Lieut.-Col. Sir G. S. Clarke, K.C.M.G., R.E.
   page 97

III. THE SPIRIT OF TORYISM
    by Walter Siebel
    page 666

IV. A NOTE ON GEORGE MERRIDITH
    by Arthur Symons
    page 773

V. THE BERING SEA DISPUTE (With Map)
    by H. W. Wilson
    page 174

VI. THE MODERN FRENCH DRAMA (IV)
    by A. Piron
    page 817

VII. THE CASE FOR "THE BECHUANA REBELLS"
    by H. R. Fox Bourne
    page 705

VIII. A NEW STUDY OF NATURAL RELIGION
    by W. H. Mallock
    page 718

IX. THE FUTURE OF BRITISH TRADE
    by J. B. C. Korshaw, F.R.C.
    page 731

X. LORD ROBERTS AND INDIAN FRONTIER POLICY
    by Lieut.-Gen. J. M'Leod Imrie, R.E.
    page 789

XI. THE CHOICE FOR THE SUGAR CONSUMER
    by Hugh Chisholm
    page 796

XII. TENNYSON: A STUDY IN POETIC WORKMANSHIP
    by H. E. Spender
    page 778

XIII. LORD SALISBURY'S DEALINGS WITH FRANCE
    by Diplomates.

XIV. CORRESPONDENCE:
    Sporting Literature and its Critics
    by H. E. Peck
    page 797

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, LIMITED,
11, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C.
New York: The International News Co.
Leipzig: Brockhaus.
Melbourne: Geo. Robertson & Co.
Paris: Libraire Gallimard.
Berlin: Amschel & Co.

[All Rights Reserved]
Price 2s.
SOME NOTES ON RECENT POETRY IN FRANCE.

"No, you will never convince me. I tell you there are no more poets in France; or rather, there are too many. I repeat it—I have the courage of my opinions—there are too many. It is just the same with the painters. There are, unfortunately, still more of them than of the poets. The incomprehensible, irritating thing is that they all have talent or something of the sort, some more, some less. But a painter, or a poet, a true poet—that is a very rare bird indeed; you may say the species is extinct."

"You are simply unjust," I replied in mild, almost deprecatory tones. "You are quite unjust. Why, you have only to look at the poetic movement going on in France at this hour to be of a totally opposite opinion. You have taken up a preconceived idea and you are determined to stick to it; that's what it is. You are passing sweeping condemnation on a whole generation of poets merely because the form of their works chafes you, the idea seems to you obscure. In doing so you condemn everyone who can find comfort and pleasure in these works; and what is your defence? Your temperament, your private preferences, your personal taste?"

"Are these not a sufficient criterion, then?"

"In practice, perhaps, nobody can contradict you if, for instance, your palate relishes the more or less curious cookery which some gourmets delight in. But though I am far from wishing to subject criticism to strict scientific laws, I am sorry to think that in questions of art it so often happens that even cultivated people cannot consent to forego their personality, and to give a more rational account of their sympathies and antipathies."

My interlocutor became excited again. "I don't believe in criticism," he exclaimed; "it is nearly always wrong, and in the rare cases in which it is right it is only half right. I believe in nothing but enthusiasm, admiration, love. All the reasoning in the world will never enable me to feel an emotion against which everything in my nature revolt. I say there is a state of exaltation into which I require to be wrought by the sight of painting or sculpture, the hearing of music, or by the reading of a poem. And you know as well as I do that this state of exaltation depends on something very different from any analysis however close and precise it may be!"

"We will admit all that, if you like, and come back to our poets. You are not at all satisfied with them any more than with contemporary poetry. They have lost, you say, the great traditions of the masters. You cannot pardon them their anxiety for subtlety, their refinements of feeling and idea, their complexities of technique. No doubt you regard the epoch of romanticism as the final epoch in poetry, and agree with the Academicians who think that an age of declamations dates from the publication of Les Fleurs du Mal. Baudelaire is nothing better than a sophisticateur. You need not look for the author of the phrase; it is M. Ferdinand Brunetière. Hugo, Lamartine, Musset, Alfred de Vigny—these are the men with whom, according to you, the glory of French poetry has perished. Would you include Leconte de Lisle? I doubt it. Confess that you regard Sully Prudhomme as an ultra-sentimentalist, and that his mild pessimism engrosses you. And what do you say to Hichcqin and Heredia? I'll be bound that you put them in the same category. You will forgive my mentioning in your presence the name of Paul Verlaine. Come, be frank; where does your era of decline begin? With what author? With what work? Do you not know that in sociology as in art there is no such thing as an isolated fact? Make as many categories as you please, label them as chemists do their bottles, draw up systematic catalogues—it is all labour lost."

As a matter of fact we have the romanticists, the neo-romanticists, the formalists, the symbolists, to say nothing of many other sects, einosten, schools big and little; we have the Incomprehensible, the sentimentals; but what does all this prove? That poetry lives and always will live in the heart of man. What matter schools and theories? Temperament, sensibility is the only real fact. The rest is nothing but the squabbling of eager, yes. Yet many men of genius have been sacrificed in their lifetime by having been made the head of some school, even against their will, or by enrolling themselves under some banner. Once the label of incomprehensible, ignoring, was attached to the work of Leconte de Lisle, it was all up with him; and for years none, none save the chosen few whom you ridiculed just now, have so much as heard the sound of that torrent of suffering, of disenchantment, of lofty doubt which sweeps across the Poèmes Tempestes, the Poèmes Anonymes, the Poèmes浏览器.

Was it an impossible who uttered this cry of anguish: Les Oiseaux de proie?

"Je m'absais ais sur la mer antique,
Et la vigne noire en face des Dieux.
Je voyais monter dans l'air purifique
La procession des mots glorieux.
La terre exhalait le divin enthousiasme
Que m'écrivait plus le siècle célébres
Et la clarté d'or du Zeus homérique
D'immenses en sensas flottait aux cieux.
Mais, ô passions, n'estes absolus de proie.
Vos esprits s'amusent aux noms divins vives
Esofent l'angoisse avec le désir
Et vous n'aviez dit: Il faut que tu vives!"
SOME NOTES ON RECENT POETRY IN FRANCE.

In Baudelaire, too, the world has been unwilling to see anything beyond an attitude. How many people to this day persist in suspecting his sincerity? Mystique! What more could he do than offer himself all pitiating to the gaze of the crowd, tear open his heart in its presence, a true human heart, consumed with love and the anguish of life, and the most intense longing for the Beyond with which a human breast ever heaved? What could he do more to touch the imbecile crowd with pity, admiration, and respect?

No, let us not be too exacting with the poets of to-day. They give us all that they can give. Is the age so favourable to their efforts? And as regards themselves, do you not think that we owe them gratitude for still practising the religion of the Muses? After all, in any art, is it such an easy thing to fix one's ideal?

"Pour inarmir son âme il faut être un Dieu."

has been very truly said by Louis Ménard, the poet of the Rêveries d'un poète mystique; and you are well aware that the gods are no longer with us.

And yet no effect is ever wholly lost; for what is all effect but the manifestation of a force? After the unbridled lyricism of the romantics; after that storm of inspiration which shakes the world of Hugo, it seems as though there were nothing left to say. But in the calm after the hurricane of romanticism the Parnassians were born. Out of the imperial purple of Victor Hugo they cut themselves a flag, this glorious phalanx, Leconte de Lisle, Léon Dierx, Sully Prudhomme, Théodore de Banville, José Maria de Heredia, Albert Ghitigny, Albert Mérat, Léon Valade, Catulle Mendès, to cite only a few. Catulle Mendès, in his Légende du Parnasse Contemporain, has drawn with a lively pen the history of the little group which was destined to fill so great and noble a place in French literature. In what state was French poetry at the moment when this group was formed? M. Henri Lauzé will tell us. (M. Lauzé is no other than M. Henry Boujon, who has since been made Directeur des Beaux Arts, without on that account ceasing to be faithful to literature.) The passage is cited by Catulle Mendès.

"At that period," writes the future author of Miscaronds, "it was considered the correct thing for a 'bard' to weep without the slightest fatigue through at least two hundred pages, at the same time dispensing largely with any explanation as to why he wept. The number of pocket-handkerchiefs which must have been drenched by that generation is incalculable. Poor things, how unutterably sad they were! But, on the other hand, think how many heirs ascended voluptuously away at the recital of Le Poète veuf, or Les Jeunes filles mocundes, which one used to hear in the evening in those seapodal salons, where une sourire was poured out like the tears...."
achievements), the love for imagery and colour—all this has never
been discredited with us. But it was left for the Parmassians
to create what may be called "artistic poetry." The formal precision
of these little old-world poems proved seductive to this young
generation. The lai, the virelai, the rondel, the ballade, the triolet,
the sextine flourished once more. In their desire for perfection they
bound themselves by the strictest rules of their art; and it was with
good reason that one of their seniors, Théodore de Banville, inscribed
on the forehead of his treatise on versification, over the chapter "On
Poetic Licenses," the categorical phrase, "There is none."

And, in fact, there was no more of it. Rhyme, so rich in
Hugo's work, became still richer. Certain poems of de Banville and
of M. Catulle Mendès strike us as being test pieces. It is impossible
to imagine more accomplished art, more exquisite virtuosity. The
instrument of verse becomes under their fingers magnificent in
enchantments. They draw from it harmonies the deepest, sweetest,
strongest, most exquisite, most somber, most eloquent, most rich in
colouring that have ever been expressed in verse.

They were prodigious colourists, almost invariably faultless workers
in words and rhythm. Loving Beauty as they loved it, and judging
it as they judged it justly, they were outlaws, alas! from our modern
world: they were magic evokers of dead epochs, of the heroic ages, of
all the religious and legendary past; they gave finity to the colours
and the splendid forms of dreams in poems of a most finished purity
of execution; verse vibrates under their breath in a tumult of vic-
torious trumpet blasts; words—they were learned connoisseurs of
all the resources of language—gained in their hands a value perhaps
hitherto unknown. In their poems they were, by turns and often at
all once, painters, sculptors, jewellers, gravers of precious stones.
They have chiselled charming jewels of verse; they have cast the
ideal forms of their dreams into the rarest metals. In order to repre-
sent them fairly in the anthologies of the future it would be necessary
to include countless poems with their signature.

Do you remember those admirable verses of Léon Diers, the author
of Les Amants and Les Larmes claires, whom someone has finely called
"that spirit magnificent and sweet?"

"Au Jardin.

"Le soir fait palper plus mollement les plantes
Antre d'un groupe assex de femmes indolentes
Donc les roses, ainsi que d'amples linneas,
D'une blanche harmonie argentin les gazon.
Une ombre par degrés baigne ces formes vagues;
Et sur les broujolées, les colliers et les bagues
Qui chargent les poignets, les poitrines, les doigts,
Avec le luxe lourd des femmes d'autrefois,

SOME NOTES ON RECENT POETRY IN FRANCE.
Du haut d'un ciel profond d'air pâle et sans voiles,
L'étoile qui s'allume, allume mille étoiles.
Le jet d'eau dans la vasque au miroir, déscart
Retombe en brouillard fin sur les londs ; Pon dirait
Qu'arrêtant les rumeurs de la ville au passage
Les arbres agrandis rapplent leur feuillage,
Pour recueillir l'écho d'une mer qui s'échoue.
Très loin, au fond d'un golfe on jadis fut un port.
Elles ont abattu leurs regards et leurs poses
Au silence divin qui les unit aux choses,
Et qui fait, sur leur sein qu'il goute, par moments
Passer un fraternel et doux frissonnement.
Chacune dans son cœur laisse en un rêve tendre
La candeur et la nuit par souffles lents descendre,
Et toutes respirant ensemble dans l'air libre
La jeune âme des fleurs dont il leur reste un peu,
Exhalent en retour leurs amours confondus
Dans des parfums où vit l'âme des fleurs perdues."

And Sully Prudhomme, that irresistible enchanter with the wine
and ardent heart of a poet, the profound and generous brain of a
philosopher, and the nerves of a woman, so delicate, so tremulous that
they seem ever on the point of breaking in their straining towards the
Beyond!

"La Prière.

"Je voudrais bien prier, je suis plein de soupirs !
Ma cruelle raison veut que je les censure.
Ni les yeux suppliants d'une mère chrétienne,
Ni l'exemple des saints, ni le sang des martyrs,
Ni mon désir sain, ni mes grands repentirs,
Ni mes pleurs, n'obtiendraient que la foi me revienne.
C'est une angoisse impie et sauvage que la malne:
Mes doux insulaires en moi le Dieu de mes désirs.

Pourquoi je veux prier, je suis trop solitaire.
Voici que j'ai posé mes deux genoux à terre :
Je veux attendre, Seigneur; Seigneur, écoutez-moi !

J'ai beau joindre les mains, et le front sur la Bible,
Redige le Credo que ma bouche éprou,
Je ne sens rien du tout devant moi. C'est horrible !"

Again, what melancholy and what infinite sweetness in this short
poem, Corps et Ames. How intensely it expresses all the anguish of
the ideal entangled in the cross of matter:

"Heureuses les lueurs de chair !
Laura baisers so peuvent répondre . . . . "

and so on. Happy the hearts, happy the arms, the fingers; they can
touch each other.

X X X
SOME NOTES ON RECENT POETRY IN FRANCE.

"... Heureux les corps!
Ils ont la paix quand ils se couchent,
Et le néant quand ils sont morts!"

But souls, unhappy souls, they can never mingle with each other.

"On dit qu’elles sont immortelles:
Ah! mieux leur cendre vivre un jour
Même s’elles enflent . . .
S’étouffant en épanchant l’amour!"

But with none of these poets has the splendor of form flowered so perfectly as with José-Maria de Heredia. Like his master, Léon de Lisle, M. de Heredia inherits a certain exotic strain. It is a strange coincidence, is it not? The author of the *Poèmes bachiques* was born at St. Paul, Ile de La Réunion, M. Léon Dierx was also born in the same latitudes, and M. de Heredia is a Cuban. In his veins flows the blood of those Conquistadors whom he has sung so magnificently. A sparkling as of jewels is in the strophes of those admirable sonnets which will wait long before they find their equal both in purity and richness of form. From an artist of his peculiar range, who finds an intoxicating joy in perpetually resolving new difficulties, technical *tonus de force*, each more incomprehensible than the last, we must not expect any of those eris which go up from Les *Fléaux du matin*: any of those deep thoughts which breathe like heavy and languid perfumes from the poems of a Sully Prudhomme, any of those sustained lyrical flights characteristic of Leconte de Lisle. If ever an armagnac poet deserved the epithet of *magique* it is José-Maria de Heredia. But what a painter, what a chiseler, what a marvellous worker in enamel! Whether he evokes *Une Ville morte* (Cartagena de Indias)—

"Entre le ciel qui brûle et la mer qui montonne,
Au sommet soleil d’un mardi mornonson..."

or whether, in a Sicilian landscape, he pours out with the daily dawn, on the tomb of a grasshopper—

"Une libation de gouttes de rose . . . ."

whether he paraphrases in his three sonnets, *Antoine et Cléopâtre*, the sublime and tragic fate of those heroes of the "Inimitable Life," by whom stand—

"... effaillant sur l’eau sombre des rosées,
Les deux enfants divins, le Désir et la Mort . . . ."

or whether, inspired by Joachim du Bellay’s exquisite song of "Un Vainqueur de blé aux vents," he revives before our charmed eyes this pure picture of the French Renaissance:

```

"La Belle Viole.
Accoudée au balcon d’où l'on voit le chemin
Qui va des bords de Loire aux rives d’Italie,
Sous un pale rayon d’olive son front plie,
La Violette en fleur se fanez derrière.

La viole que frêle encore son frêle main
Charme sa solitude et sa mélancolie,
Et son rêve s’envole à celui qui l’oublie
En fendant la poussière où gît l’orgueil Romain.

De celle qu’il nommait sa douceur Angéline,
Sur la corde vibrante crée l’âme divine,
Quand l’angoisse d’amour étendait son cœur troublé ;
Et sa voix livre aux vents qui l’emportent loin d’elle,
Et le carreau peut-être, l’infidèle,
Cette chanson qu’il fit pour un vanneur de blé.
```

Whether he sings the *Romancero* or the *Conquérant de l’or*, it is always the same power of vivid presentation, the same suavity of rhythm and rhyme. Such is the poet of *Les Trophées*.

M. Jean Labor, who is less known to the great reading public, though he just as much deserves to be, has more sensibility and emotion, greater nervous vibration, and a wider range of philosophic ideas. The titles of the different parts of *L’Illusion suffrée* to show what religious M. Jean Labor is the priest; *Chants de l’Amour et de la Mort*, *Chants panthétiques*, *La gloire du Néant*, and so on. He has sung songs that are sweet and touching, intense, sorrowful, voluptuously intoxicating, and that remain in the memory like certain stanzas of *L’Intervalle*:

```

"Les Regards des Amants.
Les regards des amants ressemblent aux abeilles,
Qui se peuvent quitter le visage des fleurs;
Et leurs yeux, en goûtant ces douces nectarines,
En sont ivres parfois jusqu’à resser des pleurs.

Mais leur volage amour est tout à la surface;
De votre corps, plus doux que la lune qui huit,
O femmes, si l’œil se tair et s’efface,
Vous voyez de leurs yeux la censure qui fuit.

Et j’ai pitié de vous, les pauvres bien-aimées;
A l’appel du désir que vous croyez divin,
Que ne garderez-vous pas vos lèvres mieux fermées,
Puisque ce grand amour des hommes est si vain?"
```

Listen again to these three stanzas, and tell me if they are not the verses of a poet, and of a true poet.
SOME NOTES ON RECENT POETRY IN FRANCE.

"Air Tzigane.

"Pour me gazer d'un aine sonage,
O Tzigane, jouez un air,
Sombre et lourde, o se noie et plonge
Mon âme, comme dans la mer !

"Faites viber, comme une corde,
Mon âme triste, à la basse ;
Je veux une chanson qui mords
Avec la douceur d'un baiser ;

"Et ne rapelant ses paroles,
Et les caresses de sa voix,
Qui m’arrache des larmes folles,
Comme nos serments d’autrefois !"

M. François Coppée, the poet of Les Initiées and Le Reliqueur, has for some time abandoned poetry; and judging by the few poems which he has recently published this must be a matter for unmitigated rejoicing to those of us who remember the delicate pleasure his earlier inspirations gave us.

Perussion or not, no matter the label, M. Jean Richepin is a poet as certainly as any of those singers of whom I have just spoken, but in another way; if there is a way of being a poet, I should say it was enough to be it, and no more. Who would dare to deny the wealth of imagination, the lyric power of the author of La Chanson des Gueux, Les Carousses, Les Blasphèmes, La Mer, Mes Paroles ? He has breath in him at least, a vigorous breath; and if, without seeming to pause over trifling details of technique, he frequently, not to say invariably, produces the impression of a striking technical virtuosity, this in itself is a most valuable gift, and something altogether personal.

He is sometimes violent, sometimes almost brutal; he runs of his own accord into extremes, but with a passion, with an almost savage fury. On the appearance of La Chanson des Gueux, Barbery d'Auricville, that great sincere soul, exclaimed: "The man who can sing like this is a poet. He has the passion, the utterance, the beating heart of a poet!" and after the publication of Les Blasphèmes: "The age of Schoenauer and Nihlism has at last found its poet. Hitherto it has had none." The author of Les Guerres et les bannières was right. La Chanson des Gueux and Les Blasphèmes will without doubt remain works characteristic of an epoch in poetry. They were a return to pure poetry, if I may say so, to poetry more living, more full of sap and blood. Certain poems of Les Carousses, Le Mer, Les Blasphèmes, the shorter ones especially, are shaken as by a deep human breath, and this is true also of the longer poems which often attain a breadth of inspiration that literally carries you away. Above all, in spite of the occasional grossness which disfigures them, it is impossible not to love those songs written in popular form, those refrains of beggars and sailors, those ballads in swift rhythm which the poet uses as the vehicle of some fantastic or sorrowful story.

"Chantons aussi la vieille terre !
Elle a de bon,
De son ventre noir en charbon
Sort le cri qui déchire.
Elle a de bon,
Chantons la terre !

"Chantons aussi la vieille terre :
Nous avons petits
Après de l’autre y sont blébites,
Quand ils pleurent, on les fait faire
Nous avons petits,
Chantons la terre !

"Chantons aussi la vieille terre :
C’est le grand lit
Ou mort, ou vous ensorcel.
Qui dort il n’est pas soustrait,
C’est le grand lit
Chantons la terre !

The work of Jean Richepin is too diverse, too varied; it stirs too many ideas, rhythms, transports, feelings, and passions, for me to give any impression of it in so short a notice. But having spoken of the lyric poet, I cannot refrain from mentioning the dramatic poet in him who, in Le Folletier, Neveu-Sekh, Le Chameau, Vies de Jour, has given to the poetic drama such solidity and life, and who has so much imagination and passionate force.

I should not be justified in overlooking the two who stand beside him, forming with him a faithful trio whose friendship is founded on mutual esteem and generous community of aspirations—M. Maurice Bouchet and M. Raoul Pouchon. Maurice Bouchet is a poet who has vigour in his sweetness, sanity in his thrilling tenderness; his grave and thoughtful soul is raised to passion by the beauty of life; he sets himself to understand the meaning of it in his large-hearted efforts to reach a higher ideal of humanity. In L’Amour and Les Symboles many verses are stamped with a noble poetic individuality. But this virile yet delicate lyrical poetry is only one side of his talent; the other is apparent in those dramatic poems written for the Théâtre des Marigny, where they were played and acted with great success: Neveu, Talon, Les Mystères d’Elathe. Charming in idea, and exquisite in their setting, these little plays were genuine poems; they had the large human touch that conjures up the splendid or sordid forms of legend or of myth. Poets themselves gave voice from the side-scenes to these puppets of wood and canvas. These, too, were
delightful, the delicate little figures, solemn or jovial, which the fancy of these artists had created; no one who saw this original spectacle can forget the impression it gave. Since then M. Maurice Bouchor has devoted himself to a still more noble task. He has sacrificed his personal ambition as an artist, and given his services to the schools of France, where, by means of his own attractive adaptations, he has spread the knowledge of those old popular songs and narine legends that convey so many fruitful lessons and wholesome morals.

As for M. Raoul Poucbon, many people know his poems by heart, without suspecting that under their light-hearted exterior those verses are those of a poet of pure French nationality, dear to men of letters and artists and admired by his literary peers. M. Raoul Poucbon has never collected his poems together in a book; and nothing will induce him to do so. For upwards of twenty years, during which time he has lavished the products of his inexhaustible imagination on the journals, or rather on one journal, Le Courrier français, his verse has remained as spontaneous and alert as ever. A propos of anything or nothing he breaks forth into all sorts of unforeseen fancies, delicate combinations of ideas and words, seductive or ridiculous; and under all his irony and fantasy he is a man of subtle and tender emotions, loving nature in her simplicity, believing in a thousand things that so many people despise as out of date. Poucbon is a mighty drinker before the Lord, a drinker of wine after the French fashion; Le vino coetlon might be his motto. "Fouch, a mere Bouchanial poet," you will say contemptuously? Not at all—a poet pure and simple, whose language has a beautiful purity, who knows how to conjure with the gold of rhyme, who tips every verse with a shimmering plume of light and wit, and who loves life and sings it—a thing which requires some moral courage in these days of funereal pessimism. He has in him a little of that joie de vivre which made him say to Baudelaire in speaking of De Bonville: "Théodore de Bonville is not precisely a materialist; he is luminous. His poems reflect the happy hours of life." A charming phrase which characterises far better than long pages of criticism the art of the great enchanter who wrote the Odes intérieures, and scattered the jewels of his fancy over so many delicate and transparent works. In his style Raoul Poucbon is akin to those French or rather galois masters who hide under a certain frankness of manner, by which some are justly shocked, a refined sensibility and a philosophy which, for all its tinge of arbitrariness, is none the less generous and profound.

And Edmond Hanoncourt, the author of these fine verses L'Ame ancien and Saint, is he not a poet too? And Auguste Dorehain in Le Jeunesse pensée? And these are only a few among many.

And what of Paul Bourget? With him the novelist has stifled the poet, but only in the mind of the public; for the poet in him is never dead. La Vie Inquiète, Les Aecus, Ete—these are the rarer essays in the longer poem which has been attempted within the last twenty-five years—the melancholy music has cradled the dreams of a generation. And because works which are the genuine expression of feeling will always find an echo in the human heart, to this day it is impossible to read again without emotion those pages which give utterance in so exquisite a form to the suffering of the intellect, the torment of introspective thought, the sadness of a heart in quest of happiness. Who can doubt the depth and sincerity of this cry? Who has not felt its truth?

"SPELEN.

"Les livres que j'ai lu quand j'étais tout enfant
M'ont trop fait espérer. Ils m'ont doit la vie.
Et ma pensée en eux exaltée et ravie
En vain d'un grand dégoût du réel se defend.

"Le plaisir n'est pour moi qu'un charme décevant.
Je ne me sens ainsi que l'âme insensible.
Au bein festin où la jeunesse nous convie
Et je m'en suis levé plus affamé qu'avant.

"Je ne sens inutile aux extrémes comme à moi,
Je travaille, je lis, et, sans savoir pourquoi,
Pensais comme en savant des vers que je ne prie.

"Je sais pourtant qu'il est de beaux yeux ici-bas,
Qui rendraient de la force à ce cœur qui se lise;
Mais ces yeux, ces beaux yeux ne me regardent pas."

Is not that a marvellous translation of the anguish of studious twenty, of youth grown pale through much reading, frightened and betrayed by the first contact with life? Its timidity, its delicacy are rubbed off little by little under the friction of passion; it desires passion and yet fears it, draws back even in holding out its arms; all moral problems, and the eternal problems of life and of death, are attractive to this young intelligence, but the day will come when it will throw far from it all these dearful hopes.

"Tu ne trouves pas, pauvre chair hanteé;
Ni toi, cœur lamentable un plus terrible mal,
Plus laissant et plus cruel que la Faisee."

But Verlaine had come. A Parnassian to begin with in his Polées Satiriques and in Jos et Ippérie, with his excessive sensibility, his need of utterance, he soon felt himself ill at ease in the close and iron bonds of French poetry. A temperament like his required more freedom of manner; as he became more and more conscious of his personality he soon felt that the things he had to say could never be said in that somewhat dry and hard, cold, and it must be confessed a little too faultless form which the symplomatic poems of a Locutte de Lisle had made binding on French poetry. Most certainly
the aim of the Pararnassians was worthy of all praise, and the future will owe much to them; but in literature there is ever renewal and transformation. Each age, if not each generation, very naturally desires to express itself differently from its predecessors, and that age of which Verlaine with his Sagesse, Amour; and Reine, will remain the undisputed master, had the desire, most noble in itself, to find a new form, for a way of thinking, which rightly or wrongly—rightly, I believe—it judged to be equally now. No doubt it kept its respect for form (that was home, a thing assured), but it introduced more independence into the technique of verse. It required that rhythm, hitherto anwedly the slave of idea and feeling, should, on the contrary, be ruled by the poet’s inspiration, should become supple, elastic, should be more subtly plastic to all the shades of expression. Their poems may perhaps appear careless, less deliberately, less obviously studious of formal perfection; but it would be a mistake to judge them by appearances, worse still according to a preconceived idea.

No doubt the ear must be accustomed to this new music, these unforeseen combinations of rhythm, in order to perceive and feel their charm. The long use of the alexandrine in French poetry has made hereditary the habit against which we must strive if we would understand and sympathise with these new poets as they would be understood.

One of their theorists and masters, M. Stéphane Mallarmé, who was elected Prince des Poètes by a majority of a sort of ideal congress of lyricists, speaks of “the wise dissonances” which the poet can introduce into his verse. As for the use of the alexandrine, that “national cadence,” as he happily calls it, ought to be “an exceptional thing that of the national standard.” What then, will be the rules of the new poetry? It will have none. Baudrill had said: “There is no such thing as poetic license.” The new school proclaims: “There shall be nothing but poetic license.” “Polyphonic” verse—that is the adjective they give to it—rests, according to M. Mallarmé, “on the dissolution of official rhythms, to be carried according to individual taste and fancy ad infinitum, provided that the effect be that of reiterated pleasure.” As to traditional versifications many poets still persist in using it, but it is becoming modified every day. It is losing its solemnity, its regularity; it is broken up, sondered by interruptions of rhythm, by unforeseen pauses of thought. “Those who are still faithful to the alexandrine,” says the same writer, “are relaxing within the limits of the measure its rigid and puerile mechanism; the ear, released from an artificial rhythm, finds pleasure in discerning singly all the possible combinations which can be made from twelve notes. I regard this taste as essentially modern.”

Other theorists have discoursed lengthily and learnedly on the

subtleties of this kind of poetic technique. But we will not go into that; we will consider only the works that have been produced according to these new canons. Among the numerous, perhaps too numerous, poets who have accepted them there are some who certainly, both by the nobility of their aim and by their talent, deserve to be cited, and, better still, to be admired.

M. Georges Rodenbachi, who for his part has remained faithful to tradition, has published several collections of his poems, which are admirable because of their rare refinement of thought and imagery, together with emotional qualities which are very exquisite. Born at Bruges, he has preserved his love for chimes, for belfries, for religious things, for misty skies, and for those dead waters in which realities are best reflected. He often lets himself forget these realities in his exclusive care for the reflection. He has the soul and the nerves of a poet, apt to seize the vague shades, the blurred music, the indefinite outlines of feelings and of things. The titles of some of his books suffice to show what subjects he prefers: La Jeunesse blanche, Le Rêve du Silence, Les Vieilles chutes, Le Voyage dans les prés. Listen to this short poem, chosen from among many others no less delicate and expressive.

“Les miroirs par les jours ablégis de décembre
Songent—telles des esprits captives—dans les chambres,
Et leur malaise sensible paise en ondes lointaines
Tant de vies et de tristes images dans ce flot imaginaire.
Qui s’y voyaient mager, embalis du sourire !
Et c’est maintenant, quand voici même on s’y pie,
Qu’on croit y retrouver l’amour après l’autre et en vanes
Ces figures de tours définies et divines,
Et qu’on croit, se penchant sur sa claire surface,
Y laisser leurs fronts morts, demeurés dans la glace !”

Compare these verses to those of a Pararnassian pure and simple like M. Jean Lahor for instance, and you will feel the difference which divides these two schools of poetry.

With M. Henri de Regnier and M. Francis Violette-Grieffin, who are justly considered by everybody most entitled to the admiration of the younger generation, this difference is still more striking. Les Poèmes aux eaux et royaume, Tel qu’un Songe, and the Jour minuit et divins witness to an incontestable literary and poetic personality in M. Henri de Regnier. A little of the brilliant colouring of Pararnass seems to survive in his style, but it becomes gradually softer and thinner. Like his master, José-Maria de Heredia, he has preserved the cult of legend and antiquity; like him he loves to evoke the fabulous lands of glory and of victory, but it is all veiled in mist, and lives with a sort of twilight life, projected, so to speak, by the magic of a pale vague dream.

The following poem is taken from La Cérulée des Hérons in the
SOME NOTES ON RECENT POETRY IN FRANCE.

An exquisite image, with the most delicate colouring, the subtlest form. Is not that something surely not less valuable though different from the sonorous and stately alexandrines of yesterday—something more penetrating even regarded as pure rhythm? The music is more fugitive, the idea, perhaps, less definite, but what a delightful rocking movement in its harmony.

I would like to have shown also the plasticity, the charming versatility with which M. de Regnier can handle the hexameter. In Les Roueux de la Fuite and Atrophy there are some little poems which are perfect gems of wizard grace, in which the soul of antiquity lives again.

As for M. Francis Vié勒-Griffin, he is nearer to nature and to life. His emotions, his ideas, are projected less in decorative images, but he is just as penetrating. He loves the refrains of the ballads of the people; of those songs which the reapers sing in the clear dusk, of those rhythms in which the very soul of nature seems to be hidden.

I have taken from Junce this delicate and fresh little poem:

"Des oiseaux sont venus te dire
Que je te guiderai sous les lilas mauves,
Car ta rage en un sourire
Et cachas tes yeux en tes boucles fauves
Et te prês à rire."

I have only cited a few among many which deserved as much, after these few.

Yes. There is still some poetry and there are still some poets in France, and there always will be. Whatever people may say, and whatever they may think, science has not yet killed poetry. Poetry will live as long as there is suffering in the world—and there is no sign of its speedy abolition—as long as love, as long as life is there. The heart of man will always feel the need of detached itself by a dream from the pressure of realities; the more painful, the more hideous, the more brutal these realities become—thanks to that science which builds the iron, smoke-grimed cities of the future—the more pleasure there will be in flying from them. And is not poetry the refuge to which we come for rest and shelter? The oasis where the waters murmur under the shadow of the great palms, and where it is good to lie drowsily for a while, forgetful alike of the anguish and adventure under the burning sun of reality? Is it not the cloister, cool and fresh, where everyone who has a lofty mind and soul can come to serve the religion of thought, the religion of the Ideal? In a democratic age like ours, does it not remain the one sanctuary where we can take refuge? And the poet has some right to be proud if it has been given to him alone to build for his brothers in weakness and distress this magnificent and hospitable asylum, if he alone has the right to say with Shelley—

"And I have fitted up some chambers there
Looking towards the golden Eastern air,"

and if he has known how to teach others to turn always towards the Light and towards Hope.

Gabriel Mourey.