in the drawing-room when we come back. Wargrave knew the whole. He doesn't want to see it again." And with a rapidity surprising in one of his infirm appearance, he left the room, taking Countess Shinna with him.

"My dear," said Lady Taplow to the Duchess the moment Countess Shinna had disappeared, "she has a charming manner, this girl has; but nothing would induce me to take her out in London. She'd have too many men—married and unmarried—at her feet."

"Humph!" muttered Lord Wargrave, addressing his glass of sherry, but at the same time by an aside jerk of his elbow inviting Pole to share his muttered wisdom, "she'd have them, if it depended on them, not at her feet only, but at her lips."

At this moment a door was partially opened, and a deep voice through the aperture ejaculated the word "Reginald." The voice was the Duke's. "Come," it continued. "Come with me. I want to have a little talk with you."

Pole rose and went. He had seen the house before, and had heard from the Duke the history of every relic and picture; but he now heard it all again with a totally new interest. The Duke was renowned for his sensiveness to youthful beauty; so there was nothing surprising to Pole in his gallantry to Countess Shinna as a specimen of it. But what did surprise him was the extent of Countess Shinna's information as to most of the battles, the generals, and the political events, to which the Duke had occasion to allude in explaining the memorials of his father. She understood him in a moment, questioning him with a charming animation; and Pole watched curiously how the manner of the old man changed from what at first was a mere servile tribute to a toy of the other sex, and brightened into the manner of a keen man of the world, conversing with a woman who was almost his equal in intelligence.

"Now," said the Duke to her, when at last he had brought her to the drawing-room, "there's the Duchess. She will give you some coffee before you go. I've got a little business to talk about with Mr. Pole."

The business, as Pole had anticipated, was connected with his political prospects. The Duke, who, though he was often amused by Lord Wargrave's company, could rarely speak of him without some sly sarcastic allusion that in Pole's case his judgment had been singularly sound, "and for the first time in his life," said the Duke, "his whole conduct has been judicious. I've nothing to say in addition to what he has probably told you—except," he added, "and this is an important point—except that you will be justified in believing it. My dear Reginald, I congratulate you. I congratulate you on your political prospects, but still more upon something else."

"And what is that?" Pole asked.

"Your prospect," said the Duke, "of driving home alone with this very charming young lady."

(To be continued.)

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STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ.

"A humble person, whom an eternal logic enslaves." That is how Stéphane Mallarmé has described himself.

Born in 1842, in Paris, in a family devoted for many generations to the service of the State, Mallarmé, when he arrived at manhood, refused to become a functionary, and drifted into the profession of tuition—a profession which seemed to him to offer a congenial method of earning a sufficient income to permit him to indulge in the luxury of literary liberty. Now, after having spent a few years of his early youth in England, he is settled in Paris in the quiet exercise of his vocation.

Living a domestic life he has preferred to write for an élite, rather than to court the popularity of the greater public, by suititing his creations to their understanding, and he spends his vacations either in brief visits to England or in long trips upon the least-frequented portions of the Seine. Enjoying life with the multitude of sense perceptions of a poetic nature, he leads a calm existence. According to Verlaine, he is engaged upon a monumental work in many volumes, which will be the "Orphic Explanation of the Earth" in verse, but as he prefers that his unpublished labours should not be discussed, I respect his wishes.

To treat of a foreign stylist has never been an easy task. One feels at a loss to find expressions capable of conveying idiosyncrasies of thought and language, which are generally unintelligible to the uninitiated, or to those who are not complete masters of the stylist's tongue. In the case of Mallarmé the task is especially difficult, for this delicate and subtle poet, whose every line contains the quintessence of a refined thought, whose every phrase is elaborated with grace and skill, and whose conceptions open vistas of the rarest and most exotic order, belongs to a class of writers who are seldom thoroughly appreciated, save by those who, having once tasted the exquisite intellectual food they offer, have become admirers and students. The writings of Mallarmé are not assimilated fully at first sight. Unlike the poems of Coppée, which please by their simple human sentiments, they have another kind of merit. They are pervaded by a subdued and modified classical spirit, and by a large proportion of modern symbolism and impressionism. They are suggestive rather than expressive. The precise word conveying an idea is seldom used, but, by a perfect mastery of the language and its capabilities, and a free, almost illicit use of adjectives, they raise a picture in the reader's mind more vivid and more graceful. To a great extent Mallarmé is a poet for dilettanti. He does not please the lover of broad effects or forcible developments. His mission is neither to excite nor to amuse in the ordinary sense of the words, but rather to seduce the fancy by rare and unexpected subtleties which strike the imagination irresistibly, as a sparkling gem, held suddenly before the eyes, dazzles and produces admiration. His imagery is concentrated, full of variations of light and shade, of notes of strange suggestion, of epithets which render more ideally concrete notions than hundreds of explanatory terms of ordinary usage. Often, by a single word placed in the exact position it should occupy amid the phrases of a composition, he summons to existence an ornate presentiment. The literary power thus displayed is one of no mean order: it is a form of art which, when exercised by so exquisite an artist as Mallarmé, is capable of affording intense esthetic pleasure, provided that the reader be possessed of sense-fineness and the feelings of a virtuoso. The graceful pliancy of the French language is admirably suited for this method. There is a directness and a neatness in the language of Molière which render it suitable for the concentration of ideas which the style demands. There has always been a class of persons whose literary tastes have become so intensified from long acquaintance with every mode of writing which has been conceived, that they crave for a new dish—for a new enthusiasm. For these Mallarmé is divinely sent. Like most artists whose greatest solicitude is to produce the choicest work, Mallarmé has written comparatively little. He has to his credit a prose translation of the Rêves of Edgar Allan Poe (a poem for which he has always expressed the greatest admiration), a curious little work on English orthography written in his characteristic style, a short series of biographical essays entitled Les Mieux, a volume of prose-poems, and a small anthology of verse. It is in the prose-poems and in the verse that his vein appears to the greatest advantage. As the best example of the poetic prose we have Le Prisonnier Blanc, which is a combination of carefully chosen words designed to give all the beauty of poetry with the greater freedom of prose. Let us trace the idea which runs through this chiselled piece of writing.

The poet had been rowing in a skiff upon a silent river, his eyes "fixed inwardly upon the complete forgetfulness of going." He had lapsed into a dreamy state, and was only "recalled to his mundane identity by the glittering of initials on the naked oars."

Suddenly he inquires of himself what is happening? Where is he? He had come on a "flaming" July day to seek for water-growths, and to reconnoitre a site occupied by a lady whose friend he knew, and for whom he was to "improvise a good day." After

(1) Mallarmé has also written several admirable prefaces, notably to the Fauch de Nodford.
noting in his mind the features of the spot, he concludes that "the nature of a person who had chosen a retreat so humbly impermeable" could only be in accordance with his taste; and he proceeds to soliloquise, after evoking her "all astral", that "certainly she had made this crystal her inner mirror," that she knew "sheltered from the brood indiscipline of the afternoons," and that the "willow-foam of icing silver was but the limpidity of her gaze accustomed to each leaf." He smiles at the "commencement of slavery given off by her feminine possibility," and is about to conclude that a "no-matter-who" would do as well, when he fancies that he hears a footstep.

"Subtle secret," he exclaims, "of that grey, come, lead the mind whether the dear shade wishes..." "Does she herself know," he asks, "may her features be adjusted?" "To what type," he inquires, "may her features be adjusted?" He feels their precision vaguely, and he allows his imagination to form a concept which "suffices to itself," and does not transgress the "delight impregnated with generality, which permits and commands all faces to be excluded." And once he has appealed to his imagination to provide him with an image he grows less and less inclined to meet the lady in the flesh, and he plays deliciously and whimsically with her shadow, which is but a creature of his brain.

"Separated," he says, while meditating "one is together," and he mixes himself "with her confused intimacy in this suspense upon the water," in which his dream "lingers undecided, better than a visit followed by others would authorize it to do." Then he asks his dream to counsel him, and eventually determines to row off, by degrees, without a shock to break the illusion. After reasoning, with a look, the "virgin scattered absence" and one of the "magical, closed water-lilies," he consoles himself with the following reflection:

"If, attracted by a sentiment of uncommonness she, the Meditative, the Naïve, the Timid, or the Gay one has appeared, so much the worse for this inscrutable visage which I ignore for ever..." And he glides away, carrying with him his "imaginative trophy, which does not swell itself with anything except the exquisite vacancy of self that loves in the summer-time to pursue, in the avenues of her park, a lady stopped at times and for long, as on the banks of a stream to be fished, or of some piece of water."

It will be seen that throughout this little idyll the lady with a delightful reticence is kept out of the picture, although at every moment she seems about to step into it. She is a heroine _masquée_, but how much more eloquently she appeals to the imagination than if she had had a being, and had added one more to the eternal tales of man and woman! With her appearance would have vanished all the quaint and captivating grace which shows itself in this rare note of intangibility.

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Let us now consider the strange eloquence in verse, _L’Après-midi d’un Faune_, a poetic fancy in Alexandrines, which cannot be adequately compared with any other flight of the imagination in either ancient or modern literature. In conception and in form it is unique. Of course, the sensuous element is introduced, and it is for this reason, perhaps, that the beauties of this poem have not been generally recognised.

A dreamily libidinous Faun is reposing in some sweet Sicilian wood, indulging in the pleasures of meditation. He sees some nymphs whose "incarnation" is so clear that it floats in the air overcome with _soumis à tout fin_. To see is to love for such a fawn. But has he really seen these nymphs? "Have I loved a dream?" he asks. His doubt, "a mass of ancient night," ends itself in many a noble reed which, "remaining the woods themselves," prove, alas! that he was alone, and that he was offering himself "the ideal six of roses for a triumph."

Having ascertained that he really is alone, he exclaims, _réfléchissant:_ "Perhaps, Faun," he soliloquises, "the women of whom you speak represent a wish of your fabulous senses."

Then, in a delightfully involved passage in which the words are arranged like the pieces of a mosaic, the Faun continues to tell himself that the illusion of the "most chased" of the two nymphs "escapes from blue and cold eyes." But the other? he asks, does she seem like the hot breeze of the day in his fleece? "No, no," it is—

_Le visible et sain confidential_  
_De l’inspiration qui reçoit le ciel._

Then follows a hiatus—one of the interludes which occur frequently. The nymphs not being present, he consoles himself with recollections of a former meeting with them, and he asks the "Sicilian borders of a calm meadow" to relate that he was once in that spot cutting the empty reeds "vanquished by talent," when he sees "an animal whiteness undulating at rest," and that, warned by a prelude of his flute, the naiads who compose it escape or plunge. Still he remains inert, his reflections ended, without observing how they vanished—

_"Sans marquer par quel art ensemble détails,  
Trop d’hymne souhaité de qui chérche le leu."_

Were he to awake again to the fervour of his first vision, he would be alone amid a "flood of ancient light, with a lily for ingenuousness."—

_"Lys! et l’un de vous tous pour l’ingénuité."_

Another interlude occurs. Suddenly his breast, "vierge de preuve," attests a mysterious bite...
due to some august tooth; but again it is only an illusion, and after
a few lines, excessively involved, there is another pause.
At length he determines to speak long of the goddesses—

"... et par d'idolâtries peintures,
\ A leur ombre sur le cause des désaintes."

Then he exclaims, addressing the nymphs that haunt his memory—

"O nymphes regénérés des sources diverses,"
and he begins to relate what happened to him one day, when his
eye, "perforating the reeds," pierced each immortal breast which
"drowned its burn in the water with a cry of rage to the sky of the
fairest." The splendid "bath of hair" disappears

"Dans les clartés et les frissons, ô pierreuses!"

He runs to the spot, when at his feet the maidens are enamel "mœurs
très de la langue goûtée à neul d'être deux."

He carries off a pair of them, running his prize to a clump of
trees, "hated by frivolous shade," and apostrophes the anger of
virgins in a few lines, which are as sensuous as any of Catullus'
without his coarseness. But his crime is only to have divided this
couple "which the gods had so well mingled," for the prey escapes
from his arms, "défauts de vagues trêvées."

"Tant pis," he says, others will lead him to happiness, "their looks
knotted to the horns of his forehead." For the blood of fans
"flows for the whole eternal swarm of desire." "Eh !" he exclaims
suddenly, and we must suppose that the volcano is in the back-
ground—

... c'est rare de vous voir, Venus,
Sur la pleine ses belles ingénues,
Quand tonne un sommeil triste ou s'épuise la flamme
Je tious la roine !"

Finally his soul, "empty of words," and his heavy body "succumb
to the proud mid-day silence"—

"Sans plus il faut dormir en l'oubli du blasphème;"
and he concludes by a last salutation to his vision—

"Couple adieu ; je vais voir l'ombre que tu devrais."

I have endeavoured to convey an idea of this singularly inter-
esting composition, which requires careful perusal before its full
significance is grasped. Almost every line affords a theme—I was
almost tempted to say a problem—which needs to be thought out;
and it is this peculiar characteristic of Mallarmé's writings which
causes the select band of his admirers to experience a feeling of
superiority over ordinary lovers of poetry. There are some among
them who claim to comprehend Mallarmé's verse at first sight, and
they are to be congratulated.

From his shorter poems I cannot refrain from quoting the last
verse of Les Fleurs, because it exhibits, in a remarkable degree, the
fineness of Mallarmé's notes. It is a little poem of six verses, addressed
to the flowers, for whose existence nature is exulting:—

"O Miro qui créas en son sein juste et fort,
Celles balancant la future fois,
Des grandes fleurs avec la balsamique mort
Pour le poète las que la vie étouffe."

The graceful melancholy of the last two lines is beyond praise. Read
aloud they caress the ear deliciously.

Wherever, however, he places his pen, the same mastery of style
and language shows itself. He was once asked to write a fore-word
for a little treatise, entitled, Traité du Verbe. Nothing, of course,
could be more apposite, and he wrote one of his choice impressions
on the process by which a writer's thoughts assume a literary
form. "Speech," which is after all, he says, "dream and
song, regains with the poet by the constitutive necessity of an art
dedicated to fiction, its virtuosity. The verse of several vocabular
makes a total word, new, strange to the tongue, and as if incon-
unatory: denying, with a sovereign trait, the chance residing in the
words of asking of the art of their alternate retaught, in sense
and sonority, and causes you that surprise of never having heard
such an ordinary fragment of eloquence, at the same time as the
reminiscence of the object, bathed in a chaîne atmosphère."

I will not dispute that this style is open to accusations of artifici-
ality, and that it not masterfully executed it would fail signally
to attract; but a rare plant grown in the hot-house is not less
beautiful than the spontaneous product of the garden. For many
tastes it is far more to. If we stamp the manner as affected, as some
have done, because it departs from natural methods, we must not
deny that the natural in art, as a motive, may sometimes pall upon
the taste from too constant use, and that a poet like Mallarmé, who
is able to treat its opposite so well, has a place in the literature of
his times. And after all there is nothing really artificial in a style
which conveys by a rare choice of words a greater subtlety of impres-
sion than ordinary methods give.

It was not, however, without much opposition on the part of
literary criticism in France that Mallarmé gained the place he now
occupies. Clearness had always been considered the distinctive
mark of the French genius, and a poet who dared to think differently
excited a great deal of animosity and drew upon himself no little
abuse. He was called extravagant and obscure by nearly the whole
Parnassus at the time when his writings first began to become
known. He offended, it was said, against every law of good sense;
his style was exotic—anti-French. Some of the most brilliant pens
were employed in satirising him and in turning him into ridicule;
but, as Paul Verlaine has said, what did it matter to Mallarmé?—
he must be “loved or detested immensely.” This criticism of the
Parnassus, however, though unjust and blind, was not, as usual,
entirely without truth, and I must confess that for my part, after
a careful study of every line the poet has written, I could have
wished that he had thought fit to combine a little more lucidity with
his marvellous talent for “dressing” his impressions, to use his
own term in a letter he once wrote me. The strain on the atten-
tion would be less, and the pleasure, it seems to me, would be
greater.

Mallarmé’s prose is equal to his verse. I have already analysed
his 

*Néviter*, but there are other gems of fancy which are truly
prose-poems in every sense of that somewhat unsatisfactory term
to which Théodore de Banville has objectted. I will select a few at
random in the hope that I may induce those who are unacquainted
with them to remain so no longer. Let us take 

*La Pénultième*. The poet leaves his apartment, bearing, in his mind, one of those
fragments of things heard or read which issue from the store-house
of the memory sometimes with no apparent analogy to evoke them.
The words are the ending of a line of poetry and the commencement
of another:—

“.......

La Pénultième

Est morte.”

From this departure he begins to dream aloud, repeating the words
in every tone as a prose, and as a poetic phrase, sounding, circum-
tventing their meaning. But the word penultimate is nothing more
than one of those lexicographic terms by which his poetic faculty is
daily interrupted in his professorial duties. Worried, he resolves to
let the words roam about his mouth and he continues repeating
“La pénultième est morte, La pénultième est morte,” until he finds
himself in a street of antiquaries, before the window of a vendor of
old instruments. He flies, calling himself a “bizarre personne,
condamnée à porter probablement le doux de l’inexplicable Pénul-
tième.” I can only give the idea, the form must be appreciated in
the piece itself; but in this, as in all others, the art of Mallarmé is
to stimulate the imagination of his readers, and to offer them the
additional images which detach themselves from nearly all his
writings.

But the author of *L’Après-midi d’un Faune* can be as simple and
as touching as Coppée’s. His little idyll, *Pauvre Enfant Païn*, is an

instance of this. He meets a poor little pale child singing for money
in the street—singing a song which loses itself among the cats—
“lois of the roof.” He is singing so indolently that he does not
heed the children playing on the pavements. And his song is so
high, so high that his bare head, which rises in the air with his
voice, seems to wish to depart from his little shoulders:—

“Petit boumbe, qui sais si elle ne s’en ira pas un jour qu’aint, après avoir crié
longtemps dans les villes, tu auras fait un crime?”

Not a soul falls into his basket. Some day he will be made wicked—
some day he will commit a crime! His head rises, always, and
wants to leave him; he sings with an air which is becoming menac-
ning; the head seems to know what is awaiting it. Some day it will
bid him adieu when he pays for the poet—for those who are worth
less than he:—

“To vins probablement au monde vers cela et tu joines dès maintenant,
dans te verres dans les journaux. Oh! pauvre petite tête!”

Coppée never wrote anything more pathetic, but Mallarmé has pro-
duced little in this vein.

It is well known among his friends that one of his greatest plea-
sures is to witness ballet dancing, and that to visit places of amuse-
ment where good dancing is to be seen is one of his favourite
enjoyments. His poetic nature, in sympathy with every mani-
festation of the artistic spirit, finds a delight in choreographic
rhythms, in the complete harmony between the motion of the human
body on the stage and the sound echoes proceeding from the
orchestra. No doubt it stimulates his imagination, counteracts the
depressing effects of long scholastic hours, and gives birth to brilli-
ant fancies. There is nothing to excite surprise in this. If the
dance were better cultivated than it is, and if ballets were danced by
a few good artists, instead of by one skilful performer and a crowd of
ungenerous subordinates, the poetic value of dancing would be better
recognised. In his *Poèmes*, Mallarmé has devoted a chapter to
dancing, analysing the pleasure which it procures and its aesthetic
qualities. “The librettist of a ballet,” he says, “generally ignores
that the dancer, who expresses herself by her steps, understands no
other eloquence, not even that of gesture.” Again, he says that the
“imaginative enticement” in witnessing dancing consists in asking
“What may this mean?” or, better still, in reading it “by inspira-
tion.” “One operates,” he says, “in a dream which an illiterate
dancer will envelop in her circuits, and if the spectator deposes at her
feet the flower of his poetic instinct, then she will deliver to him,
through the last veil which always remains, the nudity of his con-
cepte, et silencieusement elle viendra fixer son regard avec le mouvement de la Sirène elle-même."

But this is pure impressionism, and can only be freely appraised in the text.

By an effect which, at first sight, might be considered contradictory, Mallarmé not only loves to listen to performances on the grand organ, and to derive impressions from the potent waves of sound which that instrument emits, but he is also an admirer of Wagner's music, which, if we reflect upon it, stands in the same relation towards simple melody as Mallarmé's condemnations towards ordinary literature, although, of course, it is possible to admire the writings of Mallarmé and to have no taste for the compositions of Wagner.

He has devoted several morceaux (to give them the name which he prefers to use) to Richard Wagner and the influence of his style. He considers that this composer has "assumed the duty of poets in supplanting them." "The feeling," he says, "becomes complicated towards this stranger—wonder, enthusiasm, veneration, as well as naiveté at the notion that all is done otherwise than by irradiating a direct action—by the literary principle itself." And he has celebrated in admirable phraseology the advent of the new theatre introduced by Wagner. "Necessity," he says, "the théâtre d'autrefois le musenque a started from a naive and authoritative conception when it did not possess this new resource of evocation. A simple orchestral adjunct changes everything—annulling the principle of the old theatre. "Lui fit ceci. His presence, nothing more, is a triumph for music." Then he examines the motives which led Wagner to form his style. He reconciled, he says, "a whole tradition intact in its approaching disuse with what he divined spring virgin and occult in his scores." After a fine passage on the nature, the essence of musical feeling, full of subtlety and charm, he concludes by an ode in prose to Richard Wagner, which I translate:

"That is why, Genius! I, the humble person enshrouded by an eternal logon, suffer; O Wagner, and reproach myself in moments marked by lassitude that I am not of the number of those who, tired of everything in order to find the definitive salvation, go straight to the edifice of thy art which is for them the goal. . . . At last, willing to my share of the delicacy, thou wilt permit me to taste its essence in thy temple, half-way up the sacred mountain, whose most comprehensive truth-dawn triumphs still the somnolent, and invites, endlessly, from the court, the grasses which the steps of thy elect trample: it is much like an intuition for the spirit of our moderns which crosses it, as well as a shelter from the twilight haunting of that mounting peak of absoluteness, dived in the depths of the clouds up yonder, falchion, naked, alone, beyond, and which no one seems destined to reach. Nobody! this word does not begreat with the passion by in the act of drinking at thy convivial fountain."

Balinda has devoted a few prose chapters to Wagner's music, of which he wrote in eulogistic but simpler terms, and a certain resemblance is sometimes to be traced between the modes of thought of the author of 'Pierres du Mal' and those of Mallarmé.

The decadent poets, as they have been called, and amongst whom Mallarmé must perhaps be classed, although he is superior in dignity to the majority of his school, drew their inspiration chiefly from Balindaire, the originator of the neutral moral attitude. In style and language, however, the decadents have widely diverged from the Balindairean models, and no one more artistically than Mallarmé has broken with the traditions of French literature in the matter of diction: no one has more feliciter blended the essential grace and elegance of the French genius with the new method of expression.

It is difficult to say what place posterity will give to his writings (one can imagine that it, in the course of centuries the French language were to die out and become archaic, such a poem as the 'Psyche' would only be comprehended by skilled interpreters), but it is certain that he cannot be given an inferior rank. Probably he will retain a special place with the less complex Paul Verlaine, who certainly does not surpass him, although his writings are more widely known.

It is well that there should be a classification of literary taste, and that a writer's style should be judged, not according to some accepted model, but according to its intrinsic merit in the particular form which he has invented to clothe his thoughts. Unfortunately, this principle is too often neglected, and criticism is too apt to form incongruous comparisons. Mallarmé is too delicate an artist to seek for popularity. It is impossible to imagine him forcing his way to the public gaze by the ordinary methods. His time also is not his own, for the duties of his profession claim the best hours of his days. But that profession, irksome as it sometimes becomes, secures him the inestimable benefit of literary freedom. Only ten years ago he was defended against his critics by Verlaine, in a little volume entitled 'Les Fêtes Maudites.' Since then his fame has continued to increase. Some day, perhaps, the Academy will consider the appropriateness of electing Mallarmé to its fellowship, although it is doubtful if he would be disposed to offer himself for that much-coveted honour. No one has ever loved writing—"cette ancienne et très jalouse chose," as he has termed it—more disinterestedly than he.

Frederic Carrel.