

RANDOM
STUDIES
in the
ROMANTIC
CHAOS

E. A.
WATERHOUSE

RANDOM STUDIES
IN THE
ROMANTIC CHAOS

DRPS
FA
1242



MS BRIDE

RANDOM
STUDIES
in the
ROMANTIC
CHAOS

F. A.
WATERHOUSE

RANDOM STUDIES
IN THE
ROMANTIC CHAOS

Mc BRIDE

Biblioteca de
RUSSELL P. SEBOLD

\$3.⁰⁰/₁₀₀

FL DRPS FA/1242

0500775 251

RANDOM STUDIES
IN THE
ROMANTIC CHAOS

*Random Studies in the
Romantic Chaos*

By
F. A. Waterhouse



New York
Robert M. McBride & Company
1923

COPYRIGHT, 1923, BY
ROBERT M. MCBRIDE & CO.

Printed in the United States of America

Published, 1923

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	vii
CHAPTER	
✓ I. A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PHILISTINE	3
✓ II. PARADOX ON BONAPARTE	47
✓ III. AN INTERVIEW WITH ROUSSEAU	75
IV. VICTOR HUGO'S OPERAS	97
✓ V. REALISTIC 'OBJECTIVITY' VERSUS CLASSICAL 'OBJECTIVITY'	119
VI. RUDYARD KIPLING—PRIMITIVIST	139
VII. O. HENRY—JONGLEUR	165
VIII. MOZART, CHOPIN AND DEBUSSY	197

PREFACE

AS my title suggests, the grouping of these essays is more or less arbitrary. They express the result of desultory labors in the field of Romanticism, and in consequence, are offered as individual studies rather than as links in a continuous argument. Indeed it has been my endeavor to avoid, as much as possible, the partisan attitude. Despite its evident inadequacies, its sins and its follies, the fact remains that we owe something to Romanticism. Any critic, therefore, who overlooks, whether wittingly or not, that debt, who persists in directing our attention to the seamy side only of the movement, is as fallible in his way as the descendants of Rousseau are in theirs.

Impartiality is, of course, far from easy to achieve, and I make no claim to have attained it in this book; I have simply done my best in each case to give the Romanticist his due. If I have been too severe in some instances, the fault is one of judgment rather than of spleen. I believe that the classicists evolved, in matters of art, certain principles whose observance is the *sine qua non* of high achievement. I may be mistaken in this (I know that all devotees of Romanticism will think so), but at least I can claim that my application of these standards to Romanticism has been free from acrimony. I do not find the Rousseauist a monster of moral obliquity for his failure to observe the classicists' formula. I do not even find him "ex-

asperating." He cannot be held to account for the nature of his gifts.

On the other hand, I see no reason for condoning his shortcomings, any more than I do for deliberately neglecting his excellencies. The especial quality of his originality, a fascinating mixture of sincerity and sophistry, is a problem, incidentally, that deserves more study than has yet been devoted to it. I have touched upon it, as the occasion demanded, in each of the essays contained in this book, and that is perhaps the most evident factor which they possess in common. I hope at some future date to investigate the subject with a thoroughness more in proportion to its significance.

I am aware that to make this a well rounded collection, painting should be represented along with the arts of literature and music, and, as a matter of fact, I had intended to include a study of Corolla. The inaccessibility of art galleries, which to one located in Texas, is well nigh perfect, forced me, however, to give up the project; no criticism can be of value that is not the result of "*Étude sur le vif.*"

I wish, in conclusion, to express my indebtedness to Professor C. H. Grandgent of Harvard, to Professor Carleton Brown of Bryn Mawr, and to Professor B. M. Woodbridge of the University of Texas for valuable suggestions as well as generous encouragement during the preparation of these essays.

F. A. WATERHOUSE,

October 6, 1921.

I. A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PHILISTINE

A Comedy In Casuistry

IT has become the fashion among latter day critics in America to enjoy the part of Cassandra, to swagger the rôle of the prophet *clamantis in deserto*, to bewail in accents shrill, deep, or stinging, the dearth of anything representative of the higher civilization in these our United States. Indeed so noisy have the protests grown of late that, even discounting the poor acoustics of a desert, the uproar is well-nigh deafening. To the outsider, the harmonic scheme appears ultra-modern in the prevalence of discord, in the clashings, *fortissimo con fuoco*, of conflicting diagnoses, explanations, suggestions, prophecies, cures. And in this the outsider is not wholly wrong. Scarcely two of our self appointed critics appear to agree on either the reason for all absence of higher interests this side the Atlantic, or upon the proposed remedies for this grand lacuna. Mr. Mencken wants a civilized aristocracy, Mr. Hergesheimer blames the influence of our women, Mr. Sherman insists that we revert to Puritanism, Mr. Cabell discreetly suggests the frank paganism of the Latins, Mr. Sinclair Lewis gloomily inveighs against our crass materialism, Harcourt Brace & Co.'s Thirty Intellectuals offer their respective prescriptions, etc., etc. We think at once of the old adage, "where doctors disagree—." In fine, the case, though interesting, seems hopeless. That we should give it up for that reason, however, would not

be creditable; the energy which our critics display in their search for the cause and its remedy is wholly admirable and deserves the hearty support of everyone who enjoys a good fight, and the fight before us is of the best, for it is a fight against organized obscurantism. We should all of us, it is my conviction, do our best to second them; if we believe that we have a suggestion worth offering we should submit it, however modest its scope, for consideration. For it sometimes occurs that an outsider will hit upon an idea that has escaped those in the thick of the debate, just as an onlooker of indifferent ability will often see the winning move that has eluded the opposing masters at the chess-table. It is with this in mind that I propose the following explanations for the admitted absence of the higher civilization in America today.

To combat successfully any disease, the first step is the discovery of the organism that is responsible for the disease. In medicine this has become an accepted platitude, but in other domains it has not yet forced the recognition it deserves. Now the critics of our country, who make literature their specialty, have failed to achieve their splendid purpose precisely because they have neglected the preliminary step, the discovery of the organism that is at the basis of our artistic anemia, that is killing off the creative life in the higher domains of human activity. In every case, their diagnosis, though close to the mark, has, I believe, missed the truth sufficiently to invalidate the efficacy of the remedies which they propose. The fault with our national literature or national art lies not in the absence of a

civilized aristocracy, nor in the predominance of women's influence, nor in the worship of the marketplace idols, but simply in our Philistine. It is he, I insist, who is responsible for the present drought; it is he who is quietly but irresistably choking off every manifestation of the higher life, every attempt to produce anything in any domain that is noble, searching, or beautiful.

This diagnosis, it will be objected, is not original; in fact, all of our best critics imply something of this sort everytime they attack the subject, even though they may not state it in so many words. There is, I will admit, some truth in this objection. I make no claim to originality for my diagnosis. Like the egg of Columbus, anyone could have done it. The point, however, is that no one thought of doing it. Mr. Mencken dismisses the Philistine with the genial epithet: "human blank," Mr. Babbitt polishes him off with a quotation from Carlyle: "patent digester," Mr. Cabell is mildly ironic, Mr. Sherman ignores him, etc., but not one of these brilliant critics seems to have realized the significance of the rôle which the fellow plays in our life. It is he who is the bulk of the audience; it is he who has the money, collectively as well as individually; it is from his ranks that are recruited the pit, the boxes, and the gallery. That such has always been the case, a moment's reflection will make clear. The ancient literatures, particularly the literature of Rome, did, it is true, find their main support in the aristocracy, but if we exclude the early Italian Renaissance, the importance of the aristocracy as the support of letters, has

dwindled with each succeeding generation. Indeed, if we except Dante, Petrarch, and Montaigne who possessed a comfortable fortune, all the great artists of the modern literatures were forced to appeal to the Philistine. The stern necessity of obtaining a livelihood thrust upon them, as upon all mankind, the relentless obligation to compromise between the ideal and the real. The skill with which this compromise was affected is one of the hall marks of the superior genius. It was not the Intelligentsia nor the Aristocracy that supported Shakespeare, but the *tiers état*, and the same was true even in France. Neither Corneille, Molière, nor Racine could have done without the favor of the third estate. In both countries, those of the wealthy who were also intelligent were too few in number to have supported the producing members of the mental élite. To pension an author or a playwright is not sufficient; you must also pension his publisher, his printer, his impresario, his theatre, and his actors.

It is precisely this uncomfortable truth that Mr. Mencken in his dazzling article on our National Literature, seems to have overlooked. Literature, to exist, will always depend upon the Philistine for its financial support; however much its finer qualities may be due to the demands of the civilized Aristocracy, the broad outline of any work of art must reach the third estate if the artist wishes to prosper. Never was this brutal fact more unmistakably proven than by the career of Molière. The failure of his great trilogy, *Tartuffe*, *Don Juan*, and the *Misanthrope*, had placed him and his company in a difficult situation. The

objection to the three plays had come exclusively from the Philistine. The church as well as the social élite were offended by *Don Juan*, all three groups were shocked by *Tartuffe*, and all three found the *Misanthrope* dull. The King's pension, though generous, was totally inadequate to defray the enormous expenses of the company and the theatre. The moment was critical. Molière, as was to be expected, faced the dilemma with courage. Pocketing his pride and his ideals, he wrote *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, whose instantaneous success saved him and his company from failure. The incident deserves all the more emphasis in that France of the 17th century has generally been thought to have supported the arts exclusively through its Maecenases. But even here, indeed we may say especially here, is it interesting to note the fundamental divergence between the popular conception of a situation and the truth.

It is evident, therefore, that the importance of the Philistine is a factor which no historian of the arts can afford to overlook. He has played, and continues to play, a part in determining the nature of a literature, analogous to that played in architecture by the site upon which a structure is to be erected. In other words, just as the architect of the Massimi Palace, for instance, or in our own country, of the Woolworth Building, was compelled to meet the exigencies of certain highly restrictive conditions, so the man of letters, whether novelist or playwright, finds himself bound to start building within the limits of the contemporary Philistine. And just as those archi-

pects achieved a triumphant compromise between the hampering conditions that beset them and their sense of the beautiful, so Shakespeare, Corneille, or Molière attained a similar compromise between the narrow demands of the Philistine and their own fine ideal. It was not merely the Intelligentsia, but everybody, that enjoyed *Lear*, just as "tout Paris" went wild over the *Cid*. That both *Lear* and the *Cid* are masterpieces is not due primarily to the Philistine, it is by no means my intention to suggest so extravagant an inference. On the other hand, we should not forget that *Lear* or the *Cid* would have been impossible without the approbation or tolerance of the Man in the Street. It was he who paid for them, which means that in the final analysis they could not have come into being without him. His rôle, therefore, in the history of art, is one that deserves some consideration. With all due regard for the noble qualities of a Shakespeare, a Corneille, or a Lope da Vega, it will not be amiss, I think, to spend a few moments on the humble Philistine who made possible by his support the masterpieces that have given their names immortality.

That the influence of the Man in the Street upon art should have been practically ignored for so many centuries, is one of those vagaries that have made of criticism so fascinating a calling. And never was this attitude of the professional critics more obstinate than it is today. To even the dullest, it is patent that we have no literature, no music, no art, that if we want these things, we have to import them, but what no one seems to realize is that the root of the trouble resides in

our Philistine. It is he who will not tolerate a *Lear*, a *Last Supper*, or a *Jupiter Symphony*. To understand him is to understand why our civilization is summed up, not in a *Hamlet*, a *Divine Comedy*, or a *Don Giovanni*, but in the sky-scraper, the movie, and the Ford car.

The analysis of any manifestation of life, even of so simple a one as the Philistine, is no easy matter. Indeed, if we wish to appraise with any degree of exactitude the nature of our contemporary Stultitia, it will be necessary to trace its evolution from the days of Augustus to the present time. Like all other fauna, the Philistine has existed for countless centuries, and in all certainty will exist for many more. That the genre, however, should evolve, if ever so slightly, with the lapse of time is but natural. Nothing is really unchangeable; the "Intellectual" even of today is not quite the same creature as his ancestor of the Athens of Pericles. A comparative study, therefore, of the Philistine of the past will enable us to formulate with a greater degree of accuracy the essential traits of his descendants whom we have with us today.

One of the phrases common to our twentieth century rhetoric is that much beloved one: the "acid test." Like many first rate platitudes, it has been seriously overworked, but it remains valuable for all that. Its convenience, indeed, is so genuine that I propose to make use of it here regardless of the shrugs of the originality mongers. The simplest as well as the quickest way to determine the exact nature of the Philistine, is to apply to him the "acid test" of pleasure. No surer

index to his individuality can be found, for every man confesses himself with abandon only through his personal conception of the thing we call pleasure. As long as it remains a question of the alleged necessities, the comforts of life, the difference between Philistine and "Intellectual" is slight, in fact, so slight as to be almost non-existent. To be well dressed, well fed, well housed, well motored,—we all of us like that, and no especial elevation of mind or soul is requisite to the desiring of such things. Opinion, in short, is practically unanimous upon what constitutes the essentials of agreeable living. On the other hand, immediately you mention the subject of pleasure, *Intelligentia* and *Stultitia* will part company. However much they may agree in the matter of the best motor car, an impassable cleft opens up the minute the discussion turns on the best picture, the best book, or the best play. That such has always been the case, we may consider certain. It is a reasonably safe assumption that Horace could appreciate a fine Arab as keenly as the smartest stable-boy in Rome, that he was as sensitive to all the comforts as the most insolent of *nouveaux riches*, but that he had anything further in common with them is untenable. In fact we have his own deposition: "*Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.*"

Now the *profanum vulgus* of Horace's day found its sincerest pleasure in the arena. Books were a luxury for the wealthy, the drama was little more than an importation from Greece, art, whether sculpture or painting, but a *tour de force* in imitation of the Hellenic masterpieces. The one indigenous form of enter-

tainment appears to have been the gladiatorial combats in the Coliseum. The enormous popularity, as well as the stupendous munificence of these shows is a matter of history; their exact position in the evolution of popular amusement deserves, however, a moment's consideration.

At first hand they appear to be little more than a development in degradation of the Olympic games of Greece. Superficially, at least, such a diagnosis is undoubtedly plausible; its one weakness consists in the fact that it leaves out of account a delicate but essential distinction. The Olympic games were primarily an athletic meet in which chosen representatives competed in the name of their native cities; the interest of the spectators sprang chiefly from the feeling of local patriotism, and was in consequence biased. The gladiatorial contests, on the other hand were essentially theatrical performances in which professional athletes competed for their lives; the interest of the spectators was therefore closely akin to the interest excited by a play on the stage, and was in consequence unbiased. The enthusiasm of the Olympic spectators arose from the victory of their own representatives; the enthusiasm of the Coliseum spectators from the witnessing of a good performance.

But this is not all. The gladiator differed from the conventional actor in that his work was the real thing and not an imitation. Furthermore, he approached the status of the athlete in that he took part in a physical contest the outcome of which was not prearranged by a playwright. In other words, the gladiatorial shows

were unique in that they held a middle ground (and a very gruesome one) between the theatre and the Olympic games; they combined the fiction of the former with the actuality of the latter. The gladiatorial combats were of the theatre in that they were an imitation of an actuality of life,—war; they belonged also within the domain of the athletic contest in that the struggle was not simulated but real, and the result uncertain. Where they differed from both, was in the nature of the *dénouement*, and it was this feature of the gladiatorial contests which gave them their peculiar and unpleasant originality. The Roman Philistine as a matter of fact, presented a combination unique in the history of popular amusement; he had no imagination, he was a barbarian, and, what is most important, he was shackled by no moral repressions. The result of this especial situation was inevitable. The habitué of the Coliseum, like all Philistines, delighted in cruelty, in tragedy, but unlike the Stultitia of every other period of history, he felt free to demand complete satisfaction. In consequence, he insisted upon a new type of tragedy, a tragedy that was a fact as well as a fiction, a tragedy, in which nothing was left to the imagination.

The gladiatorial shows are therefore of extreme significance to the historian of public amusement, for they present the first instance of the Philistine's influence upon the genre. The theatre in Greece had appealed only to the aristocracy; the populace derived its pleasure from the Olympic games. Not until the great days of the Roman Empire do we find the Philistine in overwhelming numbers in the theatre: that

he should modify its nature, that he should degrade it to meet the desires of his stupid and brutal instincts was but natural. The gladiatorial shows offer in point of fact a piquant example, in the domain of fiction, of the "government of the people, for the people, and by the people."

The fall of the Empire and the resultant chaos known as the Dark Ages put an end for several centuries to organized pleasure.¹ With the invention of the window and the fireplace, civilization gradually moved north. Cities grew up around the châteaux forts, and with the increasing leisure afforded by security against the elements as well as against enemies, people began to feel again the need for artificial amusement. The eternal human craving for fiction was supplied in the Middle Ages from three sources: the tournaments, the mystery and morality plays, and the "Chansons de Geste." Like the shows given in the Coliseum, these fictions were concocted to meet the demands of the Philistine, but the mediaeval Philistine had evolved, if ever so slightly, from his ancestor of the jolly days of Nero. The spread of Christianity had introduced and developed a new conception of the value of human life. To the pagan, death was, in principle, a serious thing only among the members of his own nation. The life of the slave, who was a captured enemy, was intrinsically a matter of no consequence; all depended on the worth of the individual slave. The total absence of any sense of sin among

¹ Exception might be made of the Alexandrine Period; the Philistine did patronise the pantomime shows.

the spectators in the Coliseum was due chiefly to the fact that the gladiators were in the main captured enemies; to find amusement in their death was, therefore, not incompatible with the pagan acceptance of virtue.

With the rise of Christianity, on the other hand, we can trace an interesting extension of the sense of sin as applied to human life. At first, indeed, it might appear that Christianity had actually opened up new vistas to the bellicose by adding to the pagan concept that war was a matter of patriotism, a new concept that war could also be a matter of faith. This greater freedom allowed the bloodthirsty was, however, more apparent than real. By extending the sense of sin in regard to homicide, from the members of the nation to all human life, the natural ferocity of mankind was greatly curtailed. The pagan concept that the enemy's life was the property of the victor after, as well as before, surrender was restricted by Christian teaching to the period before surrender. If the political enemy surrendered, or the Infidel surrendered and accepted baptism, his life was immediately considered sacred, only his personal freedom remained at the disposal of the victor; but even then he was not a slave nor could he be sold into slavery. Infringements of this convention naturally occurred, but the horror in which they were universally held is ample testimony to the ever increasing strength of the new belief. The result of such an attitude on the part of the civilized world is obvious. The actual killing of man by man ceased to be viewed as matter suitable for public recreation. Brutal

as he was, it is quite evident that the Philistine of the Middle Ages was a distinct improvement over the *délicat* who had patronized the Coliseum. That he was, however, essentially different at heart is open to question.

The savage struggle for existence that had been a concomitant of the *Völkerwanderungen*, was not likely to soften the ferocity innate in man. Although the new religion forbade the enjoyment, save in the so-called "holy wars," of actual tragedy, it had been unable to stifle the craving for such delights. The situation before the Philistine, from the Middle Ages down to modern times, resolved itself, therefore, into the problem of discovering some method whereby this craving could be satisfied without offending the teachings of Christianity. It is the introduction, with this end in view, of the element of casuistry into the business, that divides as with a knife, the Christian Philistine's conception of tragedy in fiction from the pagan.

The essence of this casuistry consists simply in the art of arousing all the emotions that the killing of man by man occasions, the while abstaining from that sinful actuality. In Northern Europe the fighting between man and man was preserved but the factor of intentional death was abolished. Victory in the Tournaments was decided by such technicalia as the unhorsing of one's opponent, making him lose a stirrup, etc., and not by killing him. In Southern Europe the factor of intentional death was preserved, but the fighting between man and man was replaced by the fighting

between man and animal. Victory in the bull-fight was determined, not by technicalia, but by the actual death of the bull. In both types of entertainment the death of man sometimes occurred, but it was always accidental and always deeply deplored. In this way all sense of sin was prevented, for the death of animals was not looked upon as incompatible with the precepts of Christianity. The ingenuity of the casuistry deserves admiration. By substituting for the certainty of death, the danger of death, the purveyors of public entertainment contrived to minister to the popular craving for tragedy without, at the same time transgressing the ethics laid down by the new belief.

There remain two very important forms of popular entertainment which exhibit the new casuistry in a slightly different shape. The rise of the "Chansons de Geste" made possible a third solution of the problem. These epics as recited by the wandering minstrels were concerned, in the beginning, almost exclusively with warfare, and they preserved not only the factor of conflict between man and man, but the factor of intentional death as well. Inasmuch as this conflict was related, the utmost realism could prevail without offense to the teachings of the church. The rude audience, whether baron or churl, accompanied the narrative with primitive eagerness; every deed, every emotion they shared with the hero, his killings they revelled in, and his death they witnessed with a savage intensity but once removed from the ferocity of the Roman audience. It is the trick of enjoying the death of man by man in the imagination instead of in

the real, that enabled the mediaeval Philistine to taste a pagan delight without prejudice to his recently acquired Christian conscience. Indeed, the new faculty heartily approved, for, in the beginning at least, the hero of the epic was presented, not merely as the defender of the Nation, but also as the defender of the Faith. By investing his protagonist with this dual rôle, the minstrel cleverly purged his audience of all scruples, and thus prepared the way for a complete indulgence in the fiercest of primitive instincts.

As regards the mystery and morality plays, the ancestors of the modern theatre, they began in the church and offered originally little more than a very free version of certain portions of the Bible. Little by little the sacred character gave way before the encroachments of the secular, until finally all resemblance to the primitive genre had disappeared. The fact, however, that the contest was simulated and not real, was the dividing line which separated this type of diversion from the shows given in the Coliseum. All along the line, the progress in sophistication is evident. The mediaeval Philistine differed but little at heart from the brutal exquisite of Augustus, who drew an aesthetic delight from watching the faces of the dying; but the mediaeval Philistine was, on the surface more of a *délicat*. He too derived an aesthetic pleasure from the death of man by man, but, unlike the Roman, he did not take his pleasure "straight."

With the gradual increase in physical security and the inevitable growth in refinement, we can note the rise of the courtly epics. The poems of Chrestien de

Troyes mark a distinct advance in the evolution of entertainment. For the first time we find fiction on a large scale doffing the mask of history. The hero is no longer the huge national figure, no longer the stark defender of the faith. On the contrary, he is the polished courtier, the suave gentleman, the epicure of knightly adventure and amorous conquest. The defender of the 'Virgin' has retired in favor of the defender of the 'lady;' fighting as the serious business of race and faith preservation has been superseded by fighting as an elegant sport; King Arthur has ousted Charlemagne.

The influence of woman is plain. Not only were the poems of Chrestien known by their author to be fiction, but what is more important, they were accepted as such by the audiences. Furthermore, they dealt almost exclusively with love and romantic adventure. Now woman has always cared more for fiction, as opposed to fact, than man. We should never forget that the Greek writers were men who wrote for men, and that is one explanation for the unmatched excellence of their achievement. The same is to a large extent true of the oldest French epics. The "Chanson de Roland" was composed by a man (or men) about men and for men. The primitive struggle which it sets forth has, in consequence, a little of the Homeric grandeur, simplicity, and truth. That women, especially women delicately nurtured, living in idleness and suffering from elegant ennui should find much pleasure in the story of men fighting for a cause in which their sex does not figure, was naturally impossible. The

Aristotelian doctrine of probability and necessity will always be repellant to women. For them fiction, to be attractive, must show the lowest possible percentage of these elements. That, by the way, is exactly what Chrestien has done, and that is precisely wherein lies his weakness as well as his strength. Clever poet, shrewd master of the story-teller's tricks, subtle connoisseur in feminine psychology that he is, he nevertheless falls below the huge simplicity of the unknown author of Roland.

At the same time, we must admit in Chrestien's work a ruthlessness, a ready acceptance of the brutalities of life, that would horrify the nice readers of the Ladies' Home Journal. The fact is, that despite their real advance in delicacy, the ladies of Chrestien's day were nevertheless of far sterner stuff than are the 'emancipated' women of 20th century America. However exquisite Chrestien's audience may have been, there was certainly nothing squeamish about it. Fiction, to please it, had to have a stick in it, treacle wouldn't do. And so we find in Chrestien virtue and sin, comedy and tragedy, very much as in life. In short, the mediaeval Philistine, despite the softening influences of religion and luxury was at heart blood brother to the habitués of the Coliseum. What progress he had achieved, was, in the final analysis, chiefly external; it consisted almost entirely in a casuistical circumvention of the new inhibitions introduced by Christianity or by woman. By enjoying the ferocious delights of paganism in the imagination, instead of in the real, he observed the dictates of the church; by making the murderous hero

an elegant gentleman, a polished and submissive lover, he catered adroitly to the restrictions imposed by the fair sex. That the mediaeval Philistine in doing this was, in the innermost depths of his heart, a very different person from his ancestor who revelled in the death of gladiators, is frankly open to question; personally, I must admit that I prefer him, but in the same breath, I will own to an aesthetic admiration for casuistry.

The degree of refinement achieved during the Middle Ages changed but little before the 17th century. Fiction before the first quarter of the *Grand Siècle* in France showed little signs of progress. Indeed, if we are to judge by the work of those writers who lived on the Philistine, the latter continued to demand what his ancestors had demanded. European fiction, whether written or acted, testifies to the permanence of the Philistine's delight in the primitive, the savage, the brutal. The great poets such as Lope da Vega, Calderon, Shakespeare contrived, of course, as the great artist always does, to slip in the fine things unobserved, and thus satisfy *Intelligentsia* as well as *Stultitia*; but the foundation of their work remains none the less brutal, for in that way only could it be sure to reach the Man in the Street.

Where it differed in France from the fiction that preceded it everywhere in Europe was in the conception of decorum. The mediaeval Frenchman or the 17th century Englishman still enjoyed the histrionic presentation of death. The fact that the murder was simulated by the performers, absolved his conscience of the sin of deriving pleasure from killing. This casuistical

advance in refinement over the brutal connoisseur of the Coliseum was proportionately exceeded by the Parisian of the 17th and 18th centuries. The latter's contribution toward delicacy of appreciation consisted in restricting the death that may be presented on the stage to suicide. By relegating homicide to the *coulisses*, he added the casuistry of social decorum to the casuistry of religious decorum. Whereas the actual killing of man by man had been tabooed by the Christian Philistine as wicked, the simulated killing which he had substituted, was now tabooed by the social Philistine as vulgar. The progress in sophistication has obviously taken a new turn; the current of advancing nicety has overflowed from morality into propriety.

Once more must the influence of woman be admitted. Moral advance is the work of man. "The ideas of today," says Anatole France, "make the morals of tomorrow." Now women do not originate abstract ideas. In consequence, they find themselves in the predicament of getting their morals from men, and, being women, they naturally choose the morals of the men whom they personally admire. Where women excel, is in what we call society. It is they who set the standard of manners, of propriety, of social decorum. The invention of the "salon" would never have occurred to man. Nevertheless, exquisite though she was, and great as her service was to the world, we should not forget that Mme de Rambouillet was a Philistine. Indeed, her salon was the *foyer* of one of the most complicated manifestations of Philistinism that the world has known. Preciosity, that studied, strained

quest for verbal nicety, for the far-fetched euphuism, did no more than conceal what the lout in the street made no attempt to conceal, the inability to comprehend the essential things of life. The insistence of the *Précieux*, in restricting death on the stage to suicide, is a neat illustration of my point. The reason that he tabooed homicide was due to the fact that homicide, involving the violent struggle between two or more men, cannot be simulated gracefully; even the most exquisite of actors fail to make it elegant; try as they may, the act, always coarse, savors often of the grotesque, whereas the motions of suicide may be gone through with perfect propriety. By his insistence upon such non-essentials as the indulgence in verbal niceties at tragic moments, or upon a graceful presentation of the final agony, the *Précieux* gave evidence of frivolity. The burden placed upon the author was obviously a severe one, and this severity increased in proportion to the nobility of the author's ideals. That Corneille or Racine could effect any workable compromise at all, sprang from the demand on all sides, even from the Philistine, for something of those ideals. If the followers of Mme de Rambouillet found the death struggle between man and man vulgar to the eye, they did not consider the idea itself objectionable; Provided the process could be arranged to comply with their sense of decorum, they were glad to accept it. The possibility, therefore, of writing a real tragedy still remained. Indeed, these restrictions imposed by the *Précieux* (of which the English dramatists knew nothing) actually incited Racine to the

attainment in *Britannicus* of a tragic shock unsurpassed on the modern stage, very much as the severe conditions, the weight of the cupola, drove Giacomo della Porta to the conception of that curve which has made the dome of Saint Peter's of a beauty unrivalled on earth.

In short, we cannot escape the fact that the French Philistine of the *Grand Siècle* still possessed, despite his very evident frivolity, sufficient sincerity to permit the creation of works of art. He might prefer a *Timocrate* of Thomas Corneille, the most popular play of the century, but, on the other hand, he could enjoy a *Cid*, an *Andromaque* or a *Femmes Savantes*. The Great Artist found it possible, in consequence, to make a living without the complete sacrifice of his ideals, and this was true of other countries besides France.

The romantic revolt inaugurated by Rousseau in the middle of the 18th century, brought to the surface certain traits of human nature which hitherto had lain dormant or had been sternly repressed. Now Rousseau was a new kind of sophist, a sophist of feeling; he made his début, furthermore, at a time coincident with the rise of sentimentalism. Writers like Richardson and Sterne in England, Gessner in Switzerland, La Chaussé in France, had already fostered in the public the taste for a rediscovered pleasure, the pleasure of pathos. Epicureanism of this sort is, of course, as old as civilization; Euripides speaks of the *Xáρις γόου* the delight of tears. The Greeks, indeed, present the first stage of the sophistry, the transvaluation of a negative pleasure, relief from pain, into a positive

pleasure. The 18th century sentimentalists before Rousseau differ from the Greeks mainly in the quality of the pathetic situation which occasions the tears, for whereas in Euripides the pathetic situation is noble, in Richardson or La Chaussée it is vulgar. The contribution which Rousseau brings to this especial kind of Epicureanism is characteristic, for what he does is to remove the pathetic situation. That is, he contrives to get the pleasure of tears without any reason for the shedding of them save the pleasure which the shedding occasions. He tells in the *Confessions* of his delight in sitting by the shore of the Lac Léman and weeping, for no reason whatever. In short, he perfects the process inaugurated by Euripides by transvaluing the result into the cause.

The sophistry is obvious and will be found to penetrate every domain of feeling in which he revelled. The basis is clearly a new type of cowardice, the morbid fear of the external, the actual event. All his life Rousseau devoted the finest of his energies to getting the enjoyments that reality confers, the while dodging the dangers or discomforts that go hand in hand with those enjoyments.

The risk of one's life, for instance, imparts to the man who takes it, a tremendous thrill, a thrill that the adventurous soul finds highly attractive. In his *Confessions*, Rousseau tells how he managed to get this thrill without the concomitant danger. By ensconcing himself safely on a crag overlooking a deep ravine and allowing his head to hang over into space, he tasted to the full the delight of a whirling flight through

space, the while conscious of perfect actual security. Again, he poses continually as the lover—par excellence—of mankind, but this tremendous affection he exercises as a delectable, aesthetic emotion, in solitude. How he behaved when a practical call was made upon him is well illustrated by the famous incident in Lyons. When out on the street with his friend M. Le Maître, the latter was seized with an epileptic fit and fell unconscious upon the pavement. Here was a splendid chance for Rousseau to give tangible evidence of that warmth of heart about which he is forever boasting; the "most loving of men," however, sneaked expeditiously around a corner and left his friend to the mercy of strangers. But the most scandalous instance of this especial sophistry is offered by the *Emile*. This masterly treatise on the education of children, written in the form of a novel and portraying the careful bringing up of the fictitious child *Emile*, is the work of a man who, to avoid the discomforts of actuality, sent his own children to the foundling hospital.

Cowardice is, of course, as old as the world, but before Rousseau it had been considered a liability rather than an asset. By his perfecting, however, of the art of emotional transvaluation, he succeeded in effecting in the domain of feeling, metamorphoses as worthy of admiration as those recorded by Ovid. The delicious sensation of a dizzy flight through space without the actual discomforts is akin to the shedding of tears without the actual pain of the external pathetic situation. The especial casuistry of the trick must be emphasized, for it is, as we shall see, one of the

most salient characteristics, in a very vulgar form, of the American Philistine today.

That this contribution of Rousseau's to the advancement of epicureanism should have been eagerly accepted by the Stultitia of every race was but natural. It is only the superior soul who finds no objection to the stern law of nature that you must pay for what you get. The history of public amusement since the rise of Christianity has been, as we have noted, little more than the chronicle of the Philistine's attempt to dodge this uncomfortable law. And it must be admitted that by the middle of the 17th century he had perfected an avenue of escape from the crudest, the most external form of sin. He had arranged his fictions so that he could derive from them all the savage emotions without, at the same time, incurring the displeasure of his church. How serious the problem had been is proved by the fact that as late as the Grand Siècle, actors, the people who made a business of serving up those pagan delights, were still considered outside the church although the audience was not, and were refused burial in so-called holy ground.

The eternal principle of human nature, that once you have gratified a long felt want, another rises to the surface, is aptly proven in the present instance. The bogey of damnation for enjoyment of the idea of bloodshed removed, the Philistine became more keenly aware of other impedimenta to his pleasure. There was danger and there was discomfort. Energies that formerly had been absorbed by the difficulty of escape from discomfort in the next world, were gradually

freed to be applied to the new obstacle, the problem of discomfort in this. The 19th century especially is remarkable for the enormous advance in the practical technique of making this life comfortable, as well as in the science of retarding the inevitable conclusion. The man of average means today has at his command household conveniences that the wildest imagination of one hundred years ago could not have visualized. The telephone and the motor car, together with the achievements of modern medicine, assure him intelligent attention the moment he is unwell. All this has naturally had its effect upon him. The man of the twentieth century is frankly softer than the man of the eighteenth; the very things that would seem to contradict this are in reality but inverted proofs of its truth. Gymnasiums, 'health classes,' sleeping porches, etc., are simply devices for assuring him a longer enjoyment of the delights of this world. In short, he has transvalued the fear of death as the prelude to eternal torment, into the fear of death as the dénouement of pleasant sensual living.

Nowhere is concentration upon the comforts of this life as an end in itself more flagrant than in America. The necessity of coping with the physical obstacle which the pioneers encountered in its most acute form, left an indelible mark upon the mental characteristics of the Philistine in America that differentiates him from his European brother. The American's energies focus instinctively upon the practical consideration, a fact that accounts for the stupendous number of ingenious devices invented by him for the furtherance of

physical comfort. It is an odd, but perfectly logical paradox that the most recently settled of the civilized countries should be noteworthy chiefly for the luxurious ease of its living conditions. The bitter physical hardships encountered by the pioneer caused him to conceive of physical comfort as the summum bonum of existence, a conception that his descendants have accepted as their rightful inheritance. In this way can we understand the American Philistine's piquant incapacity to understand the distinction between comfort and pleasure, a distinction which to the European is axiomatic.

How serious such a confusion can be, is pertinently illustrated by the absurd nature of the American Philistine's delights. Especially ludicrous is his conception of the beautiful, a conception that appears most poignantly in his leisure activities. The best of our critics are, I believe, all agreed that the salient contribution of American art to the world's delight is a new type of the grotesque. All the popular brands, the play, the movie, the novel, down to the comic supplement of the Sunday paper, display the same fundamental combination: infantile mentality and physical maturity. It is to this curious compound that we may safely attribute the raw ugliness that characterizes the American Philistine's efforts in the domain of aesthetics. Now the explanation of this combination is to be found in the inheritance of the pioneer; the American Philistine has matured on the physical side only. He exhibits, on the mental plane, a relationship to the European somewhat similar to the relationship that exists between

the feeble-minded and the normal human being. In other words, just as the feeble-minded are mature physically, but immature in even the lowest regions of the mind, so the American Philistine has matured, beyond the physical, only through the baser regions of the intellect. He exhibits, in consequence, a repellent grotesqueness when he attempts to enter the higher regions of thought or emotion, that bears a striking similarity to the unpalatable ugliness of the feeble-minded when he attempts the simplest of social intercourse. Defects of articulation or comic misuses of words, that are attractive, even touching, in children, impart a feeling of horror when uttered by a hulking lout. In a similar fashion, the raw architecture that does not offend in a toy house, or toy village, produces upon the artistically mature a feeling of distaste when it appears in an actual house or city. Now that is precisely what one finds, to take a simple example, throughout the length and breadth of our land. The "Boobus Americanus" may have every comfort,—steam heat, electric appliances, hot and cold water, etc., in his house, but the house itself is architecturally no more than the enlargement of the toy house with which his children are playing. It is as though one were looking at the same structure through the right and the wrong end of the spy-glass. The meaning of such a condition of things is obvious. The average American, perfectly competent on the physical and lower mental planes, is incompetent on the higher planes. The rawness of his house or his town he can no more realize than he can the rawness of his amusements, his novels,

his plays, his music. They produce upon the aesthetically mature an impression exceedingly painful; he is not moved to laughter; on the contrary, he is filled with pity and discomfort, and his dominant impulse is to get away.

There is, however, another point that must be given attention if we are to understand the difference between the American and the European Philistine. Messrs Nathan and Mencken, in the admirable preface to their *American Credo*, have laid a steely finger upon a social factor that is of the utmost significance. American society (and they are the first to point it out) is not divided into water-tight compartments, as is still true of Western European; we have no fixed casts comparable to the Aristocracy, the Bourgeoisie, the Clergy, and the Fourth Estate. Everything in our land is in continual social flux, moving up or moving down; no family, no individual is sure of his position for even one generation, any more than he is sure of his fortune. Indeed, the American, whether Intellectual or Philistine, is harassed incessantly between the fellow above who is striving to push him down, and the fellow below who is trying to pull him down. This well-nigh total absence of social or financial stability is today the keenest of his discomforts, and is naturally exerting a powerful influence upon his psychic machine. To this we must add the tyranny of his clergy, which though different in method, is similar in aim to the tyranny exercised by the mediaeval church. The modern preacher can no longer frighten by religious pressure, by pictures of Hell-fire; as Gamaliel Brad-

ford neatly puts it: "Hell has wholly boiled away." But the contemporary fanatic can attain his ends by other means: by social pressure, by massing the Grundies, the Comstocks, the prigs, the hypocrites, into a concerted attack of public opinion that will force the individual out of his position, out of his livelihood, out of his town, yes, even out of his life. The whippings by masked defenders of "virtue and righteousness" have resulted in more than one fatality. This fact the Philistine knows well, and it adds materially to his feeling of uncertainty, to his painful realization of the dangers that beset him on all sides. It is thus that we may account for what has occurred: viz, that he has seized upon the Rousseauistic sophistry and frenziedly swallowed it. How curious has been the result of this psychic metabolism we may realize if we bear in mind these two facts, that the Boobus Americanus is in the higher regions incompetent, and that he is in the concrete world socially insecure.

The casuistry of Rousseau differs, as I have said, from all previous casuistry in that it is primarily a casuistry of feeling. This in itself was a potent attraction to a person endowed with the psychic arrangement peculiar to the American. The weakness of his intellect precluded a diagnosis of the trickery in the casuistry, while the uncertainty of his actual status exasperated his need for precisely the sort of refuge which the casuistry seemed to offer. If to the socially secure European, an emotional Utopia presented an alluring contrast to the sordidness of reality, to the socially insecure American, such a Utopia appeared doubly invit-

ing. Fear is, in every domain, the result of insecurity, and it was only natural that the American's terror of losing what he had won should intensify his share of that very human emotion. In consequence, it is small wonder that he clutched greedily at the Rousseauistic sophistry which promised the novel feature of transvaluing his dominant torment, fear, into a delicious intoxication. Nowhere, indeed, has the Rousseauistic trick of using fiction as a squeamish refuge from fact been more comprehensively applied than in America.

At the same time, the painful reality that the American Philistine is on the higher plane incompetent, has materially affected his assimilation of the new sophistry. Rousseau, we should never forget, was a man of genuine intellectual power as well as the possessor of an extremely delicate sensibility. His use, therefore, of the casuistry which he discovered is notable for its exquisite elusiveness, for its poetic, indeed almost hypnotic, charm. The Elysium to which he fled from reality is portrayed in the *Rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire*, especially the Vth) with a quiet beauty that only the greatest poets can surpass.

Now it is precisely because this haunting sophistry of Rousseau's is located in the domain of the aesthetic emotions that the American Philistine's attempt to put it in practice was doomed to the most mawkishly ludicrous of failures. The imbecility of the popular novel, the movie, or the popular song, music even more than words, is akin to the crass rawness of the town or the home. It is the enlargement—*en grotesque*—of the

infantile. There is a custom still practiced on the New England farms which may assist the driving home of my point. The trick consists in scratching a caricature on a pumpkin while that legumen is still small. As the pumpkin increases the caricature expands until, with the attainment of full growth, the result is splendidly "futuristic." In a somewhat similar fashion, the American Philistine goes through a parallel process in the assimilation of the Rousseauistic sophistry. Of that delicate, elusive compound of the spirit and the flesh he can grasp only that much that a child can grasp. That little, which in a child would be at the worst, merely amusing, becomes highly unpalatable when swollen to grotesque proportions by the full grown lusts of the physical adult. For we must not forget that the American Philistine is, in his inmost heart, a blood relation of the Philistine who patronized the Coliseum, the Tournaments, or the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Where he differs from his European kin is in his unfortunate mental and social limitations. Inferior on the one hand to the average Continental in intellectual and aesthetic development, he is without the latter's ability to eliminate the mawkish from his practice of the Rousseauistic sophistry. On the other hand, the American's social insecurity exasperates his craving for precisely that thing, the mawkish, the sickly extreme of sentimental unreality which alone, in his eyes, can impart to Elysium that semblance of security that his tormented soul craves. Terrified on one side by the Bible thumping tyrants who forbid him all natural delights, hounded on the

other by his commercial and social competitors who are after his money and his position, he flings himself recklessly, in his moments of leisure, into his one refuge, his exaggeration *en grotesque* of the Romantic casuistry.

Like the Roman of Augustus, the mediaeval Continental, or the modern European, he wants the ferocious pleasures. But whereas the Boobus Romanus knew no inhibitions, or the modern European has got around those introduced by his religion or his women, the American, who, for geographical reasons, has retrogressed, finds himself shackled by new and sterner repressions. The sadistic Puritanism of his clergy's teachings forbids his enjoyment, not merely in the real, but even in fiction of attractive villany, while the torment of his actual insecurity makes him dread the tragic outcome even in his novels or his plays. That he should cower before these two menaces, is due primarily to the pitiable insufficiency of his intellect. He lacks the mentality that would enable him to perceive the quackery of the one or the dignity of the other. The outcome of his psychic compound is that, while he wants villany and tragedy, he does not want to pay the price, in terms of suffering, upon which those titillating pleasures insist. It was natural therefore, that in this painful dilemma he should find the Rousseauistic sophistry—that is, what he could grasp of it—a Godsend. The Great Obscurantist's casuistry whereby he demonstrated the possibility of rehabilitating the erring woman through 'sympathy,' of making her early sin an aesthetic background to set off her eventual

virtue, or the possibility of transvaluing an uncomfortable conscience into that delectable intoxication, the "indignation of virtue," or the possibility of transforming that shameful, if natural, torment, cowardice, into a delectable thrill to be enjoyed in security, such feats of emotional prestidigitation were exactly what the American Philistine craved. He fell greedily upon these new themes and proceeded to embroider variations upon them in accordance with the promptings of his fancy. Unfortunately his fancy, in the higher regions of the intellect or emotion, was the fancy of the incompetent. Just what it could do in the way of vulgarizing a delicate sophistry is pertinently illustrated by those amusements which the Man in the Street finds especially gratifying. The fiction that meets his approval, is the fiction in which a mawkish dénouement is engineered, to the defiance of logic, by the God from the machine. However roguish or lewd the characters may have been, they are invariably transformed at the end into saints by means of the sentimental casuistry of marriage, or repentance, or both, and inasmuch as sainthood, as Mr. Cabell says, is retroactive, the final redemption may be enticingly delayed without the slightest danger to the reader's conscience. The Boobus Americanus enjoys the 'wicked' doings of the puppets in his novel or his play with perfect abandon, secure in his consciousness of the ultimate purification which will react not only on them but on him. In a similar fashion does he follow the detective story, the tale of adventure, or the thrilling movie, experiencing the hectic delights of cowardice,

mental as well as physical, the while absolutely safe in his knowledge that the hero will be saved at the last minute from death, or financial ruin, or both. In both instances we have obviously nothing but the vulgarization of the sophistry first elaborated by Rousseau. The crudely licentious novel or movie with the sentimental redemption, is simply the feeble-minded cliché of Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse*; the difference between the original masterpiece and the crass imitation is clearly akin to the difference between the picturesque manor or farm-house of Europe and the raw bungalow of the American town. In a similar fashion, the frenzied movie with the safe conclusion, is evidently but the elaboration *en grotesque* of the Rousseauistic trick of turning fear into an epicurean delight. The Boobus Americanus sits through the silly horrors of his cinema in perfect security of the final rescue, much as Rousseau enjoyed the dangers of a dizzy flight through space the while pleasantly aware of his actual safety.

Nowhere, however, is the difference between model and copy more appalling than in the amorous or sentimental moments. The poetic mingling of the spirit and the flesh which the continental disciples of Rousseau have practiced with a constantly increasing perfection, is debased to the sickening vulgarity of the American hero or heroine's love-making. It would seem that the honeydew of the poets of *amour* had been gathered in by a new kind of magician and transformed in his crucible into stale molasses. Indeed, the great artistic discovery of the American Philistine would appear to be the reversing of the process of alchemy,

for whereas the devotees of that art attempted the transformation of the baser metals into gold, the new alchemist strives, and alas, succeeds in transforming gold into the baser metals, or into mud, to be exact. The love-making, whether gesture or word, in American fiction bears a relation to the love-making in continental fiction very similar to the relation that exists between the leering advances of a half-witted lout, and the charming courtship of a gentleman. Even clearer does the distinction stand forth if we compare the love music of our country and Europe. For the passionate beauty of *Tristan* in Germany, of *Faust*, of *Louise* in France, of *Aida* in Italy, or the lovely Folk Songs of all Europe, we have, *For She's My Jazzland Cutie*, *Oh, You Great Big Beautiful Doll*, etc., etc.

You observe that I mention the popular operas of Europe, not the best. There is no German youth who doesn't know *Tristan*; there is no Italian youngster who does not love *Celeste Aida*; no Parisian rapin who hasn't heard Mephistopheles' serenade. Is there anything in American "popular" music, in "jazz" that can approximate these masterpieces?

What is the upshot of all this? That, as matters stand, it is obviously impossible for us to bring forth a literature or an art. Mr. Mencken is of the opinion that our one hope is in the development of a civilized aristocracy. The suggestion is undeniably ingenious but, I fear, not practical. The problem reduces, therefore, to the Philistine. Our one hope for a literature or an art depends on him.

Unfortunately our Philistine of the 20th century

is of so preposterous a nature that, as we have seen, no genuine artist can by any chance gain a living from him. Incompetent in all save the lowest regions of the intellect, those dealing with the practical consideration, he will not tolerate anything that is honest, searching, brilliant, or beautiful. His mawkish interpretation of the Rousseauistic sophistry and his bullying insistence that this interpretation be erected into standards whose finality shall not be questioned, has brought about, in the domain of art, a prohibition far more severe than the prohibition which is paralyzing the devotees of John Barleycorn. Mr. Hergesheimer maintains that woman's influence is mainly responsible for the prohibition in literature, as it undeniably is for the other. In so far as our women exhibit something of the drug-addict's characteristics in their fondness for Rousseauism, Mr. Hergesheimer is obviously correct. The truth, however, forces the sad admission that those magazines which appeal especially to men, are, in *essentia*, no better than the quaint organs that cater to lovely woman. The hero of the athletic yarn, for instance, invariably makes the winning touchdown or home-run, (or prevents them), and the highly ingenious narrative closes with the surprising tableau of the brawny superman, covered with mud and laurels (the proportion between mud and laurels varying with the taste of the writer) in humble obeisance before the lovely creature who has been following his exploits with throbbing heart, etc, etc, *a piacere*. The detective story is no better. If the hero is the sleuth, he invariably 'nabs' the criminal; on the contrary, if the "crook"

is the protagonist, he never fails to show up the asses from 'Scotland Yard.' Those examples of the *reductio ad absurdum* of the Rousseauistic sophistry that claim to present the gilded wickedness of the over or under-worlds are careful to ring down the curtain upon a sentimental repentance (wherein the influence of woman figures), which sheds the necessary retroactive glow of purification over the antecedent exhibition of salacious roguery. And, what is most amusing of all, these sophisticatedly decent indecencies meet with the acquiescence, if not approval, of Comstockery. When an artist of honest perceptions and sincere purpose attempts a genuine picture of American life, he encounters the fate of Mr. Dreiser in *The Genius*. All the virtuous humbugs the country over howl him down as a monster of immorality in their breathing spells between the enjoyment of the last indecent comic opera and the next sensual or vulgar movie.

Mr. Hergesheimer certainly lanced one of the most noxious sores in our Great American Art when he knifed the feminine nuisance, but brilliant as was that operation, it did not, in my opinion, quite reach the root of the cancer. The poltroonery, physical and metaphysical, of the American Philistine, backed up by his mental weakness in the higher regions of thought, have resulted in a distorted enlargement of the Rousseauistic casuistry that precludes a popular success for any manifestation in the domain of art that is profound, brilliant, or beautiful. The American Stultitia wants something, something that exacts a price, but it is too timid to pay that price. It insists that its fiction present

the opposite of its actual status, that it portray against a background of security all the ferocious, nerve-racking, wicked delights which in the actual world postulate insecurity. The fiction, whether novel or play, that serves up such delights, with the stick removed, can obviously find no place within the domain of the beautiful. Like Non-Euclidian Geometry, it violates, *n'en déplaît à Einstein*, the dictates of that logic which enlightened minds have come to accept as the foundation for the especial type of creation we call art.

The hypocritical assumption that marriage will convert man from polygamy to monogamy, or that it will metamorphose an acidulous vestal into a sweet-tempered spouse, is so palpably nonsensical that it ought not to need statement. But the American Stultitia loves to be soothed by just such drugs; it has an innocent trust in the efficacy of marriage, in fiction, that is equalled only by its belief in the supernatural powers of repentance. Long indulgence in a given sin brings about, as all intelligent people know, a distortion of the soul, just as protracted repetition of the same physical task occasions a distortion of the body. In neither case can the distortion be rectified at a moment's notice by a gush of sentiment. A fiction that is founded on such get-rich-quick, get-happy-quick, get-moral-quick recipes is one that no mature person can tolerate; it offends his sense of proportion just as a big half-wit offends the normal man's sense of proportion. And yet that is the only type of fiction produced in these United States that can be rightly called indigenous. It has sprung forth in response to the demand of the dwellers

upon our soil, it is the only kind that satisfies them and is, in consequence, the only kind they will pay for. The pitiable monotony of the stuff is, I firmly believe, one of the most potent causes of its attraction. Like a child, the American Philistine wants the recurrence of the expected, the repetition of the old story with but minor variations, and that is exactly what the producers offer. What difference there is between one production and another is merely one of setting, the theme is always the same, the thread-bare romantic hypocrisy in a new, a more *outré*, a more ridiculous disguise. Therein lies precisely the secret of its appeal, a superficial external variety set against a background of fundamental sameness, an outward semblance of reality enclosing a core of mawkish sentimentality.

Such, in fine, is our situation. We possess no art—no art of our own creation—because our Philistine won't allow it. The outlook is admittedly gloomy, as all agree. Whatever their personal opinions as to its causes, the keenest of our critics, Mr. Frank, Mr. Mencken, Mr. Hergesheimer are unanimous on this point. When, however, we take up a consideration of the future, the experts are all at variance. Indeed, this is perhaps the most unhappy feature of the tragic-comedy, the discord among the ranks of the Intelligentsia, in striking contrast to the harmony that prevails in the Stultitia. The situation is, of course, similar in Europe, though by no means so serious. Whatever his faults, the Continental Philistine is still man enough to enjoy sincerity in art, to welcome it, and to be willing to pay for it. Only thus can we account for

a Sudermann, a Couperus, a Dostoevsky, an Anatole France. Cheap writers of cheap stuff swarm over there as here, but the point is that the great writer also is read; although far from being as popular as the vulgar panderers, he is nevertheless sure of sufficient a public to enable him to make a decent living. Why such is not the case in America, the foregoing analysis should have made clear. Conditions in our land have given to Philistinism a final twist that has brought about a prohibition in art severer than any martial law the world has known. That a change will come, that individual liberty and freedom of expression will sometime be granted the artist over here, of that, however, I feel sure. In point of fact, I do not share the pessimism of my illustrious contemporaries in criticism, nor do I fully concur in the remedies which they propose. Clever as their suggestions are, I do not believe that any cure applied from the outside will be efficacious. If we are ever to have an art, a literature, and a music of our own, they will come only after the physical resources of our country have been fully exploited and social conditions thereby stabilized. When the fear of losing the position he has painfully acquired is removed, the American Philistine will find at his command a surplus of courage which the terror of social competition is now absorbing. This surplus of bravery he will be free to utilize in two ways: to combat, on the one hand, the bullying attitude of his clergy that forbids him all sincerity, and, on the other, to face the beauty of sorrow. When such a condition prevails, then we may perhaps have poets, tragedians, artists, musicians,

but certainly not before. It is only in fertile soil that fine seed can grow, and our soil is not yet fertile. That it will eventually become so, I firmly believe, and then we may perchance produce a harvest worthy to compete with the fine products of the civilizations that have preceded us. Until then we must be satisfied with the sky-scraper, the movie, and the Ford car, as the distinct contribution of our culture to humanity. That is at present all that our Philistine will permit; there is no hope for us until he is changed, until he is brought to renounce his grotesque elaboration of the Rousseauistic sophistry, until he is willing to drop the mawkish desire to taste the pleasures of danger, moral and physical, in safety, until he will admit that he cannot have the delights of vice and the rewards of virtue, until he realizes that salvation does not consist in sitting in Heaven with your back turned, greedily watching what's going on below in Hell.

but certainly not before. It is only in a sense that the
has and the good, and not yet the
That it will eventually become a firmly held
and that we may perhaps prefer a more
to compare with the few words of the
that have preceded us. Until then we must be satis-
fied with the sky, the earth, the water, and the land;
as the distant contribution of our culture to humanity.
That is at present all that our Philistine will permit;
there is no hope for us until a change will be
brought to remove the grotesque elaboration of the
Kosmopolitan spirit, and he will be willing to let the
man's desire to take the pleasure of doing, and
and physical, in which, until he will admit that he can-
not have the delight of the and the beauty of things,
until he realizes that salvation does not consist in sitting
in Heaven with your back turned, greedily waiting
who's going on below in Hell.

II. PARADOX on BONAPARTE

A Defence of the Cloister Life

“I HAVE no taste,” said the late Colonel Roosevelt upon a famous occasion, “for the cloister life.” This remark, uttered incidentally as an expression of personal inclination, achieved by virtue of its author’s prominence such celebrity with the naive that misinterpretation became inevitable. The great man, when he said it, had no intention of casting aspersion upon the worth of those activities which may be conveniently grouped under the appellation of cloister life. No one was more keenly aware than Colonel Roosevelt of the value of such pursuits. But the former president’s ebullient spirits, effervescing by preference into practical matters, had so dazzled the vulgar that his person, his words, and his deeds had become in the popular imagination the embodiment of those qualities that Americans most fervently admire. Indeed religion in these United States had so thoroughly identified itself with tumultuous material activity that the creed of the average hundred-per-center could best find rendering in paraphrase of the Koran: There is no God but Hustle, and Roosevelt is his Prophet.

Under such conditions it was inevitable that expression from so outstanding a person of preference for the hurly-burly over the cloister life should be translated by the vulgar into disparagement of every manifestation of energy outside the manly domains of politics and business. The phenomenon common to all the

so-called civilized nations has, however, been especially conspicuous in America. Nowhere, in fact, has the fanciful notion that intellectuality is woman's province received such universal and hearty acceptance from both sexes as it has in our Great Republic. As the disparaging terms 'high-brow,' 'high-brow stuff' would indicate, all the nobler faculties of the mind,—intelligence, imagination, and insight—are contemptuously relegated by the 'he-man' to the effeminate poseurs of the parlor, the tea-table, or the woman's club. Virility, to the ingenuous worshipper of Big Stick, consists in the rough and tumble fight for material acquisition, a fight that postulates the red-blooded virtues of brutality, greed, and cunning. That the tools which the 'he-man' employs and often misuses in this fight have been designed in the quiet cloisters of reflection by persons far his superiors, rarely enters his head, and when it does, he comforts himself with the thought that in turning these tools to 'some use' he is above their inventors, that the highest manifestation of human activity consists in the exalted knack of 'making ideas practical.'

How general the acceptance of this fatuous myth has become, we need not repeat. It is, as a matter of fact, an excellent instance of the value of 'collective thinking' and will go far towards accounting for the appalling poverty of the finer things in our American life. The point that concerns us, however, is that if you take this puerile belief of the 'man in the street' and stand it on its head, it turns out to be right side up. In other words, we are confronted today by the charming paradox that what the 'he-man' and his creed of

'red-blood' really stand for are the feminine activities, that in his cult of the scramble for material acquisition, in his worship of the practical achievement, it is he who is more of a woman than his women.

To anyone of even mediocre intelligence such a statement will not appear overstartling. All students of human nature have been aware for centuries of the psychic distinction between the sexes. It is an old story to them that woman's fundamental urge is to possess, whereas man's is to do. What this divergence amounts to is obvious. The only things in this world that can be possessed are tangible things, and in consequence the stronger the desire to own, the more closely is the attention centered on the material aspects of life. The impulse to do, on the other hand, leads naturally in the opposite direction. Every act, even the simplest, is the result of mental calculation, and in consequence the more complex the act, the more subtle the calculation. Little by little, as the race progressed, man became aware of the dual nature of action, and as his faculties developed under practice, he came to find an ever increasing pleasure in the mental factor, inasmuch as it is the mental portion of an action that is the creative portion. The higher a man's intelligence, the greater became his interest in abstract ideas, whereas the lower a man's intelligence, the more did he remain centered on the practical achievement. Of course no human being, whether man or woman, is endowed with one faculty to the complete exclusion of the other; everybody is a compound in some degree of both urges, the urge to do as well as the urge to possess. Where both

sexes meet is clearly in the domain of the practical. The feminine side of a man's nature leads him to understand a woman's desire to own things, while this very desire in woman enables her to appreciate in a measure the man's activity which produces the things. Intelligence varies naturally in both sexes, but on the whole woman is less able to comprehend the delights of abstract thought than man is able to appreciate the pleasures of concrete possessions. In other words, this means that the feminine element is, in the aggregate, stronger than the masculine in both sexes. That we Americans are possibly aware of how uncomfortably this fits our present civilization may be one reason for our bullying insistence upon the nobility of hustle, upon the glory of practical achievement, upon the holiness of salesmanship. We try instinctively to conceal from ourselves as from the world our lamentable weaknesses and so we noisily transvalue them into virtues. Our huge fortunes are pointed to with pride, our alleged 'great men' are daily referred to as 'Napol-eons,' whether of breakfast food, underwear, or finance. Now, "Napoleon," said Anatole France, "had he been as intelligent as Spinoza, would not have conquered the world, but would have written four volumes in a garret."

So paradoxical a statement will, I know, strike the unthinking as preposterous. To the typical booster, the fanatical devotee of Pull and Push, Napoleon stands for all that is dazzling in life, the supreme exponent in modern times of the man who 'does things.' That these very qualities which the Boobery so admires

constitute in reality the essential weakness of the illustrious Corsican, is a consideration which naturally has never occurred to the naive believers in the romance of greed. As a matter of fact, however, there is much in Anatole France's ingenious *mot*. The great disparager of conventional reputations has touched here upon a truth that deserves respectful consideration if we ever hope to reach a better understanding of the dominant psychic malady of today.

It has been the custom in the past to divide Bonaparte's career into three phases: (1) From birth to 1796 when he took command of the Army of Italy, (2) 1796 to his defeat at Waterloo, and (3) his elimination from active life in 1815 until his death in 1821. A better division, as I hope to prove, would draw the line at the date of his assumption of the command of the Army of Italy, separating his life more appropriately into two portions rather than three: (1) Obscurity (birth to 1796), and (2) Fame (1796 to 1821). In other words, Bonaparte's career falls readily into two distinct sections, his cloister years previous to 1796, and his public years subsequent to that date until his death at St. Helena. The importance of this division deserves more attention than it has hitherto attracted because it will go far, I believe, to explain those causes which lead to his amazing rise as well as those causes which brought about his no less stupendous collapse. That the two are intimately connected is a fact of common realization, but whether either one has been accurately diagnosed is still debatable.

Mr. H. G. Wells, in his *Outline of History*, would

have us believe that Napoleon III was in reality a greater man than Napoleon I. This is a paradox to which I cannot subscribe and for which I see very little foundation. That Napoleon I was imitative in those things in which Napoleon III was original I admit, but on the other hand, I insist that Napoleon I was original in those things which his descendant was imitative. That in certain matters pertaining to government, the idea of the plebiscite, for instance, Napoleon III was far superior to his ancestor is beyond question, but on the other side, it is equally true that in matters pertaining to war, Napoleon I is surpassed only by the great commanders of antiquity. Indeed, the realization becomes gradually unavoidable, when we consider the Corsican's activities in toto, that his creative work is confined exclusively to the domain of the military art. This, narrow enough in itself, becomes even further restricted upon close examination of his purely military achievements. His originality even here will be found to be limited to but one period of his career, the period preceding his assumption of the command of the Army of Italy. In other words, Napoleon's creative work—in the art of war—was done during his cloister years, the years that antedate his emergence into the arena of public attention.

What happened during these years is a matter of history, but history as we have come to realize, is not always understood. It has been apparent to the dullest that when Napoleon burst into prominence, the sudden emergence was due to his possession of a new formula in the art of war. Just what this formula was, how-

ever, is still a matter of controversy. It has been defined by some as the 'six weeks' campaign,' by others as the art of 'creating numbers,' or by those who consider Emerson an oracle, as the knack of 'marching on the enemy at an angle and destroying him in detail.' The superficiality in psychic matters characteristic of the nineteenth century shows to real advantage in such definitions. Napoleon's formula, it appears necessary to point out, was no single one of these things, it was all of these things and more. Like all great inventions, Napoleon's formula was not an isolated idea, but a complex. It included the 'six weeks' campaign,' the art of 'creating numbers,' and the trick of 'marching on the enemy at an angle.' These portions were to be sure of great importance, but their place is not at the center of the formula; rather it is on the periphery, the spot where the psychic impinges on the physical.

Napoleon, we must remember, was a Romanticist, a megalomaniac like Rousseau, but a megalomaniac of a coarser type than the master. Less intelligent than Jean Jacques, his whole nature converged by preference upon the physical aspects of life. He was devoured from earliest youth by the desire to possess and manipulate men and things, and he despised as 'ideologists' those who chose to dally with abstractions. Inasmuch, furthermore, as his education had been a strictly military one, he came to realize, after unsuccessful ventures in other fields, that among the practical activities, his best chance for celebrity was through war, the business in which he had been trained and in which he was in consequence, an expert. Having settled this,

the next step was to make war. Fortunately for him, this was for a time impossible. High army appointments were, as they always have been, matters of influence, and young Bonaparte had no influence. Forced by the situation to abstain, much against his will, from external activity, he turned his attention to internal activities and, unable to apply his faculties to the practice of war, he resigned himself to applying them to the principles of war.

Now the results of this period of compulsory meditation were startling. In the seclusion of his enforced obscurity, young Bonaparte passed in critical review the history of the military art, and his piercing eye spotted instantly the gist of the whole business. This gist he discovered, or rather rediscovered (it was a platitude to the great soldiers of antiquity), this gist he divined to be of quite gorgeous simplicity. A man with a weapon, young Bonaparte realized, is harmless if he is *unwilling* to use that weapon. The axiomatic quality of this innocent looking premise had, he next perceived, eluded the military mind since the death of Oliver Cromwell. What this meant, to him who had rediscovered it, was so obvious that it made him wild with impatience. The whole secret of the art of war consisted in preventing your enemy from using his weapon. Now there were two ways of doing this: (1) to kill him before he could use it, a difficult business because it involved risk, or (2) convince him firmly, by smart manoeuvring that it was unwise to use it, a difficult business because it involved brain work. It was by virtue of the nice balance which they observed in

the application of these two methods that Alexander, Hannibal, and Caesar had attained their astounding success, and young Bonaparte saw no reason why this balance could not be achieved again. He felt all the more convinced in that further meditation brought him to the paradoxical discovery that, of all men who carry weapons, the least dangerous is the professional soldier. Why this should be so is no insoluble mystery. To the professional soldier killing is a business, which means that in his case the act of homicide is not spontaneous, but on the contrary is enmeshed in a maze of rules and regulations. In other words the professional soldier does not kill on his own authority, but on the authority of another, the commander-in-chief, whose authority filters down to him through a channel of intermediaries known as officers. This fact is of essential importance for, young Bonaparte realized, it simplified tremendously the second method of circumventing the enemy. To kill all your opponents is manifestly impossible. Victory will, as always, depend upon your success in convincing the remainder of the folly of continuing the contest, and if authority for keeping up the fight is confined to the commander-in-chief, the difficulty reduces to the problem of convincing him of the futility of further efforts.

Now the professional commander-in-chief is, Bonaparte saw, even more of a believer in the military regulations than the professional rank-and-file, for it is vastly more entertaining to give orders than to receive them. Indeed the delights of manipulating human automata by tweaking red tape are so insidious that they

soon usurp all of the professional officer's attention until, in perfect innocence, he comes to believe that the rules concomitant to the art of war constitute the art itself. What effect such an attitude has upon his mentality deserves insistence, for it was upon this that young Bonaparte based his formula. Love for the rules implies knowledge of the rules, and knowledge of the rules results in two things that may be counted upon: If the professional military man knows when he is victorious he also knows when he is defeated. Worshipping the rules of the game, insisting passionately upon their observance, he is readier than an outsider to abide by them himself, even when this means that he must acknowledge defeat.

That this had always been true, young Bonaparte's studies made clear, but that it was truer in 1796 than ever before was established to his intimate satisfaction by what he saw about him. To understand why the art of war had degenerated in the concluding decades of the eighteenth century into the most arid formalism that its history can boast, we must bear in mind the fact that all human activities are interrelated. The eighteenth century was a century of transition. It marked the decadence of neo-classicism and the rise of the romantic revolt. Now neo-classicism in its most degenerate form appears in the dessication of all human values, the precipitation of every manifestation of creative energy into arid formulae. In every field of human interest was this true, literature, art, music, government, social life, religion. Things were done mechanically, according to rule and precedent, and so

universal was the acceptance of this conception of life that its invasion of the domain of the military art became inevitable. Indeed the natural inclination of that profession to the cult of routine made it fertile soil for the growth of neo-classical formalism. The result was that by 1796 the game of war had become as mechanical a pursuit as the art of poetry or the practice of social intercourse.

The reaction against this prevailing degeneracy had, however, begun to ferment as early as 1750, and by 1796, thanks chiefly to the eloquence of the sophist Rousseau, it had overrun all domains of human activity save war. That it had failed to effect an entrance here should occasion no surprise. The military mind is, of all minds, the most immune to originality, and never was this more true than in 1796. Romantic ideas were triumphant everywhere, indeed so firmly established in some cases that they in danger of becoming platitudes, while the military fellows were strutting the old routine, serenely unaware of the changes that were taking place about them. One thing, however, and one of extreme importance, must be noted.

The upheaval of the Revolution had evolved a new kind of private soldier in France. With the exile of the aristocracy and the execution of the royal family, the professional army as an institution had vanished from Gaul. And then a wonderful thing occurred. On all sides appeared as if by magic young idealists, fired with the spirit of Rousseau, who, transforming his ego into a collective ego, were bursting with patriotic ardor. These raw levies knew nothing about the

military regulations, but they knew what they were fighting for. The significance of this distinction is vital, for it is the basis of the revolution effected by Bonaparte in the art of war. In contradistinction to the professional soldier of the rest of Europe, who fought mechanically and killed on the authority of another, the young soldier of the new France fought spontaneously and killed on his own authority. So powerful indeed was the effect of his psychic difference that, notwithstanding the handicaps of poor material and military ignorance, the amateur armies of the Republic had by 1792 driven the professional invaders back on every front. The lesson contained in these astonishing happenings was not lost on young Bonaparte. With the insight of genius he perceived that an army of Romanticists, well trained and led by a bold, unscrupulous adventurer would absolutely overwhelm an army of Neo-classicists led by a cautious, niggling pedant.

Indeed, the more he considered the situation, the more did young Bonaparte visualize the glittering ramifications of his discovery. The facts before him were, as the facts always are, common property, but it was his distinction that he alone could glimpse the truth beneath the welter of confusing externals. Fanaticism was, of course, no new phenomenon but until the French Revolution, it had always donned the garb of religion. The idealists of the new France, however, were not "godly" idealists and, in consequence, their psychic kinship to the fanatics of the past went unnoticed. It is the mark of Bonaparte's super-

iority that he could both see this kinship and appreciate its dazzling possibilities.

That each French soldier was by virtue of his romantic enthusiasm the equal of two professionals, was not lost on the Corsican prodigy. How this could be utilized in practice, his technical knowledge of the military art enabled him to realize at once. Give him a French army equal in numbers to any professional force and he could hold off with a thin screen of fiery enthusiasts twice the number of mechanical opponents. The main body of his own forces would thus be available for rapid concentration at the point most difficult for the enemy to support. His superiority in numbers here would be furthermore increased by the greater combative power of his men; the chances of a lightning break through would, in consequence, be excellent, and once their line was smashed the professionals, he well knew, would be ready to acknowledge defeat. This swift grouping of forces which is partly original with him, has since been dubbed the art of 'creating numbers,' and it was, from beginning to end, Bonaparte's trump card on the field.

To the campaign as a whole he applied his formula in a slightly different fashion. Inasmuch as the romantic Frenchman possessed not only twice the combative power, but also twice the physical energy of the neo-classical opponent, Bonaparte realized that movements of whole armies could, as a result, be effected in half the usual time. This meant, from the technical standpoint, that the attack '*en échelon*,' invented by Epaminondas and applied by him to the

battle, could be extended to cover the campaign; in other words, that one French army, because of its greater inherent swiftness, could by marching on the enemy at an angle, destroy several opposing armies before they were able to unite. Both manoeuvres, the art of 'creating numbers' and the attack '*en échelon*,' were, you observe, the invention of Epaminondas. Bonaparte's contribution is limited to the extension of these ideas by the injection of *speed* into their application. That the romantic idealism of the French made this element of speed possible is his discovery, and no amount of hostile criticism can deny its importance. His place among the great strategists of the world is obviously a just one, for he was the first to notice what no one had ever noticed before, that the art of war exists in two domains instead of one, the domain of *time* as well as of *space*; that if the combinations had been well-nigh exhausted in the domain of space, practically nothing had as yet been done in the domain of time; and that, in consequence, an entirely new value could be given the attack '*en échelon*' or the trick of 'creating numbers' by the correct adjustment of the successive to the coexistent. In fine, he was the first to perceive that if the possibilities of outmanoeuvring one's opponent in space had become few, the possibilities of outmanoeuvring him in time were still untapped. The battle of Austerlitz itself is a splendid example of the new 'art of creating numbers,' the Austerlitz campaign as a whole a dazzling illustration of the new attack '*en échelon*.' The statement, however, that either of these manoeuvres constitutes

the essence of his formula is too patently absurd to deserve further consideration and may now, I think, be dismissed. Both were, like the 'six weeks' campaign,' no more than an external manifestation of his fundamental idea, the use of one psychic complex to defeat another, the utilization of the spontaneous Romanticist to rout the mechanical Neo-classicist.

It is this flash of creative insight, this swift perception that the essence of war is psychic, and that, in consequence, the way to win is by using one type of mind to beat another, it is the brilliant rediscovery of this simple truth, that places Bonaparte above all the military men of his time. That he arrived at these startling deductions by hard thinking in the seclusion of obscurity is of the utmost significance. Compelled by external circumstances to crush the feminine urge within him, he had reluctantly concentrated all his energies upon the masculine. For the only time in his career was he, in consequence, original, for the only time in his life was his extremely active imagination creative, for the only time in his tumultuous existence did he think. That he felt a profound distaste, however, for these fruitful cloister years, that the feminine element of his complex was by far the stronger, that he hated the labor demanded by abstract ideas, that creative speculation was torture to him, his subsequent actions make only too evident.

How he obtained the command of the Army of Italy, half by intrigue, half by luck, does not concern us. The important thing is that the moment the chance appeared, the feminine instinct within him

surged up irresistibly and strangled the masculine for ever. Dropping instantly all interest in creative thought, Bonaparte proceeded to bend all his energies to the practical application of his formula; he was wild with feminine curiosity to see if his idea would work, for he was frantic to possess the things that victory implied. The results exceeded his fondest hopes. The neo-classical pedants who opposed him were ignominiously routed by the merciless ferocity of his onset, the incredible speed of his movements. From the day of his first advance in 1796 to the smashing victory at Friedland in 1807 the ascendancy of his star was continuous. Indeed this famous triumph is generally conceded to mark the zenith of his amazing career, after which the descent begins, increasing in swiftness to the final collapse at Waterloo. That this conventional division of Bonaparte's achievements is singularly shortsighted, the foregoing argument will establish. The Great Divide, it should now be clear, occurs not on the field of Friedland in 1807, but eleven years earlier, at the assumption of the command of the Army of Italy. In other words Bonaparte had attained the summit of his efficiency at the moment of emergence from obscurity. From then on, in proportion as he continued to mount in popular admiration, did his decline in actual merit progress.

No clearer evidence in support of this paradox is necessary than the fact, admitted by Napoleon himself, that his first campaign was his best. At no other period was the element of surprise in his formula so sharp, at no other period was the psychic distinction

between his soldiers and those of the enemy more pronounced, at no other period was he more able to outfight, outmarch, outmanoeuvre his opponents. As time went on, however, this difference in his favor began to dwindle; the burning idealism which he was so lavishly using commenced little by little to give out. A psychic commodity, like a physical commodity, is not inexhaustible. Intoxicated with his success, up to the ears in pleasant material activities, Bonaparte forgot this simple fact and drew recklessly upon the limited store of romantic vitality that chance had placed in his power. And as he became more and more prodigal of his capital a curious thing happened. The sacred fire which at the start was all on his side, began little by little to kindle on the other. The immense reservoir of psychic energy which the opposing leaders had at their disposal, but were too stupid to tap themselves, Bonaparte proceeded even more stupidly to break open for them. In proportion as the tyrant in him became harsher, so did the fire of idealistic revolt pass from his side to his opponents', until by 1813 he saw himself menaced from every quarter by a gigantic conflagration of romantic enthusiasm.

The first signs appeared in Spain in 1808. Enraged by his high-handed methods, the Spaniards revolted en masse. Bonaparte invaded their country, routed their armies, and expected that according to the best canons of military precedent, they would sue for peace. But at this juncture something entirely unlooked for occurred. Inflamed with passionate hatred, the Spaniards did nothing of the sort. On the contrary, wild

with fury, they actually ignored the sacred rules and refused categorically to admit defeat. Their formal armies were routed but, nothing daunted, they attacked the French on all sides with amateur methods. Swarms of infuriated idealists sniped and murdered from ambush, Frenchmen were stabbed in dark alleyways by frenzied patriots, isolated groups of the detested foreigners were constantly being trapped and slaughtered, supplies vanished mysteriously, in short, a new and exceedingly baffling kind of pressure closed in upon the invaders from every quarter. For the first time in his career, Bonaparte was non-plused. His formula had been designed to meet the psychic arrangement of the professional, the man who was ready, when outmanoeuvred according to the rules, to accept defeat and sue for peace, but here were fools who defied all rules and would not admit that they were beaten. It should have been obvious to Bonaparte that such opponents called for different treatment, that inasmuch as formal manoeuvring will not work against guerilla tactics, it devolved upon him to think up a new way to persuade these idiots of the unwisdom of resisting him. His own formula, he should have seen, was actually being applied to him, he was being hoisted with his own petard, and he should have set himself to the task of discovering some method of neutralizing this surprising energy. Now the discovery of such an antidote demanded the hardest kind of thinking, and the tyrant's success had bereft him of the power of thinking. The pleasant tumult of the last twelve years, insidiously deluding him into

the belief that he was working, had corrupted him so completely that he was no longer capable of real labor. He had grown fat and lazy; he had become garrulous, impatient, scolding; instead of doing things himself, he delegated the jobs to subordinates and swore furiously at them when they bungled them; in short, the feminine element of his nature had usurped his personality completely until, as Anatole France says, he had deteriorated into a regular old fishwife, *une vraie commère*, incompetent and bad-tempered. Fame, power, and wealth had corroded his vitality to the point where hard work (and thinking is the hardest work known to man) terrified him. He fled ignominiously before the difficulty, leaving it to the faithful Soult to settle the business as best that stupid hero could devise.

This serious moral defeat Bonaparte hoped to conceal from the world and from himself by brilliant application of his old formula to other and more conventional opponents. For a time he succeeded, but in 1812 the Russians repeated the psychic manoeuvre of the Spaniards on a much more serious scale. The collapse of Napoleon's prestige was complete and the end followed as a matter of course.

It should by now be clear that the fundamental cause of Bonaparte's débacle is the fact that he ceased to think after 1796; in other words, that if he owed his stupendous rise to the masculine side of his nature, he owed his equally gigantic catastrophe to the feminine urge within him. Had he continued to use his mind, to speculate upon the data at hand, he would

have forseen the inevitable result of the application of his formula, that idealism on one side begets idealism on the other, that energy calls forth energy, that the mailed fist of the assailant develops a breast of steel in the opponent. In short, had he continued the cloister life a bit longer he would have prophesied his own ruin, and either devised some way out, or come to the more sensible conclusion that the game wasn't worth the candle. Indeed, it is even conceivable that he might have penned a philosophic inquiry into the psychology of war and demonstrated in masterly fashion the futility of the whole business. But the feminine craving to possess, and of all possessions, human beings are the most enjoyable, the desire to own and handle men and things was the stronger and stifled within him the masculine urge to creative speculation. From this angle we can appreciate the singular wisdom of Anatole France's irreverent appraisal, although a more piquant statement of the case would read: "Had Napoleon been as much of a man as Spinoza, he would not have conquered the world but would have written four volumes in a garret."

Now even if we admit this paradox, what connection, it may be asked, have its conclusions with the opening paragraphs of my essay? Simply that we Americans of today, singly and collectively, are repeating *in parvo* the experience of the Corsican Monster. Where Bonaparte's life differs from that of the average hundred-per-center is in degree, not in kind. As a matter of fact, the career of the typical American fauna is no more than a microscopic cliché of the

Napoleonic *geste*. Take, for example, the so-called successful physician. In the cloister years of his youth he discovers a principle, a trick in operating. The moment he gets the chance to capitalize his find, he drops all further creative investigation, and rushes from patient to patient, from consultation office to operating room, very much as Bonaparte hustled from battlefield to battlefield, until by night he staggers home exhausted, hugging the pleasant delusion that he has done a 'hard day's work.'

Or consider the conventional inventor. In the seclusion of obscurity, he creates a new automobile accessory. The instant his patents are secured he shifts all his energies to 'quantity production' of his invention, and spends the rest of his life investing his royalties, puttering about among 'directors' meetings,' or watching with growing apprehension the encroaching competition of some young and active rival.

Or there is the 'matinee idol.' He has his cloister years in which he elaborates his first 'part.' The moment he makes his 'hit' he drops all further pretence at imaginative labor and proceeds to capitalize his rôle. When the public wearies of the play in which it first appears, he has others written around the same character—vehicles for the display of his personality, and thus he goes through life playing the same part over and over again until he is ousted from his popularity by some youthful competitor who has just made his 'hit.'

These instances, however, are drawn from the better class, and are in reality too flattering to impersonate

the average. The majority of our people, it should scarcely need statement, have no cloister years at all. Indeed, the most characteristic emotion of the representative hundred-per-center is horror of solitude. Terrified at the idea of doing any brain work, and brain work is possible only in solitude, he dives into the public turmoil at the earliest opportunity, ready to apply any idea, no matter how obsolete, provided the applying of it will save him the agony of thinking. Now the only ideas which he can grasp are those which have crystallized into some tangible form. Such processes of crystallization, however, require years, which means that by the time the yokelry gets hold of them they are out of date, they no longer fit actual conditions. To the realization of this fact, to the instinctive appreciation that their lives are somehow empty from within, to the discovery that happiness has in some unaccountable way eluded them, we may ascribe the gnawing discontent, the feverish restlessness, the abject terror of final dissolution that is the common denominator of our people. In their frantic horror of the malady within them, they have had recourse to the opiates of tangible possessions rather than to the sound cure of healthy mental activity. Now the essence of the opiate is that it leaves you worse than before, that it produces what the experts call a 'condition of tolerance' and must in consequence be taken in ever increasing doses. How snugly this diagnosis fits our people the most cursory survey will establish. On all sides is the mad scramble for material possessions in evidence, is the frenzied attempt to satisfy the craving for ownership the

dominant pursuit. And in proportion as this feminine urge is deified, so are its exponents envied, admired, and rewarded. Just as the feminine side of Bonaparte's nature reaped the harvest of glory, wealth, and power, so it is the fashionable physician, the practical inventor, the captain of industry who wins the admiration, the money, and the prestige. Nothing is given the original thinker, the subtle author, the genius of the bacteriological laboratory, the gifted composer. It is for the swaggering virtuoso who interprets Chopin, for the modish practitioner who applies the ideas of Pasteur, for the practical men who are capitalizing the discoveries of Faraday that we reserve our worship. Henry Ford is our idol and not Orville Wright. Indeed, a more piquant contrast could with difficulty be found, for Henry Ford, the successor to Roosevelt in popular admiration, created nothing. He simply applied an ancient idea of salesmanship to a new commodity,† whereas Orville and Wilbur Wright achieved one of the greatest imaginative discoveries of which mankind can boast.

That this feminine instinct which is strangling our life is not confined to our women, but on the contrary, is if possible even stronger in our men, will always be one of the most paradoxical features of the situation. The balance between the masculine and the feminine urge will be found, in point of fact, very much in favor of our women, especially if one goes west. Interest in things of the mind, in theory and speculation, is notoriously woman's domain there, while men, the self-

† A commodity which he did not invent.

styled 'he men' are busy with the practical consideration. It is a commonplace that in western universities the women take the speculative, the philosophy, the arts courses, while the men take the "vocational" courses. And they do not take these practical courses with any idea of mastering and developing the theory; on the contrary, they go to the technical schools to get recipes for making money, just as their sisters go to the cooking schools to get recipes for making pies.

How unfortunate this is needs no further insistence. The salvation of the race is in creative thought, and our boys will never grow up to respect thought if their fathers and the he-idols don't think. Boys are emulative, but they do not care to emulate women, and if the domains of theory and speculation are confined to women, boys will turn to the practical, too young when they make their choice to perceive their mistake. They have unfortunately the example of Napoleon, the supreme instance in modern times of the feminine urge, to dazzle and mislead them. His awful directness is, they fail to appreciate, the piercing directness of woman raised to the nth power, the single minded directness that knows exactly what it wants, is totally ignorant of scruples, and drives roughshod over all idealism toward the goal. And seeing his example followed by the less gifted megalomaniacs of today, hearing their achievements lauded to the skies, they quite naturally take this naive viewpoint for granted, never give the matter a moment's doubt, but bend all their energies to the noble task of becoming super-women themselves.

It should be obvious from the above that what is most needed in our country today is a keener appreciation of the dignity of thought. It is not enough that we slave to leave our children a material competence, we should see to it also that we leave them an equally adequate psychic competence. We should bequeath them not only material possessions wherewith to start life well, but also spiritual possessions that they may have some degree of comfort, mental as well as physical, while they are engaged in performing a similar service for the next generation. We will find our only real solace in this: the knowledge that we are leaving our children not merely a sufficient supply of worldly goods, but also an adequate store of ideals without which they can have no happiness. Now morality is no more than the practical application of ideals to conduct, and ideals represent the first stage in the crystallization of abstract ideas. Wherefore it behooves us to acquire more of the masculine viewpoint, it devolves upon us to attain a readier appreciation of the dignity of the cloister life, a keener feeling for the value of abstract ideas, if we as a nation, if we as individuals harbor any desire for a finer, a nobler future, for, as the Dean of French letters observes: "It is the ideas of today that make the morals of tomorrow."

It should be chosen from the above that what is
 now needed in our country is a better system
 than of the present one. It is not enough that
 we have to leave our children in the hands of
 we should see that they have been an equally
 adequate system. We should be aware
 that not only physical but also mental is their
 life well, but also spiritual possession that they have
 how some degree of the same as well as play
 and, while they are engaged in performing a similar
 service for the next generation. We will not see
 any real effect in that the knowledge that we are
 leaving our children and society a sufficient supply of
 worldly goods, but that in addition to their
 without whom they can live in the world. Now
 another is to see that the physical education of
 these is conducted, and health is preserved, the best way
 in the organization of their lives. Therefore, it
 is better to see that the best of the material view
 point, it depends upon us to retain a better approach
 than of the dignity of the child, his teacher, and
 for the sake of what should be a better world. We
 shall not be able to see that the world is a better
 place, but a better one of things, things observed
 to be the best of what we have the means of
 improving.

III. AN INTERVIEW WITH ROUSSEAU

THE offer of a contribution, however slight, to the vast outpour of writings on Rousseau is a venture which, all will agree, should be undertaken with diffidence. The character, achievements, and influence of the Great Romanticist have been studied, discussed, and debated by so many eminent minds that, unless he has something new to propose, the careful critic will consider any attempt to reopen the complex subject as tedious as it is presumptuous. In the present instance, however, the writer feels that he has been fortunate enough to discover some material which, though of modest scope, will nevertheless prove of real interest to lovers of Rousseauiana.

In his *Selbstbiographie*,¹ published in 1806, a copy of which is to be found in the Harvard library, the minor poet Christian Felix Weisse gives an account of his meeting with Rousseau at Montmorency.² Weisse, who was a graduate of the University of Leipsig, occupied at that time the position of Hofmeister to Count von Geyerberg, and in company with his patron had made the trip to Paris in the fall of 1759. They arrived there, to be precise, on November 21 of that year. In the following spring (1760) Weisse, together with a mutual friend, the protestant minister Payon, went out to Montmorency where Rousseau was then living, in the hope of seeing the world-famed re-

¹ Published: 1806, by Georg Voss; Leipsig

² Pages: 70 (line 11) to 75 (line 2).

cluse. The interview which the two lion-hunters were lucky enough to obtain, runs as follows. I translate the German, but leave untouched the French, which naturally is of more especial interest. Indeed, the spelling of the latter is often at variance with the French usage, although which is at fault, Weisse or his printers, would be hard to say:

"During his stay in Paris, Weisse became personally acquainted with D'Alembert, Père Barre, Nollet, Count Caylus, Abbé Arnaud, and others. The greatest pleasure, however, was given him by the acquaintance with the celebrated Jean Jacques Rousseau with whom he was fortunate enough to spend a few hours in Montmorency, during which time he, Rousseau, showed himself in his most characteristic vein. As a matter of fact, Weisse could consider himself fortunate in getting the chance to speak to him inasmuch as many attempted unavailingly to make his acquaintance, and as he avoided friends and Parisians in proportion as they sought his society. At the very moment when Weisse and M. Payon, whom Rousseau already knew, appeared at the Pavillion where Rousseau was living, a number of carriages filled with officers, abbés, and ladies drove up from Paris. Rousseau said to them, with his cane in his hand, 'that they could see that he was on the point of going out for a walk; that he must even excuse himself to these foreigners who came from Germany' (he pointed at us). In the meantime, as the carriages were driving away, he invited us *sotto voce* to meet him at noon in the gar-

den of Montmorency. He appeared, indeed, at the appointed hour, and was very affable.

"When Weisse expressed wonder at the beauty of the surroundings and congratulated him upon the locality, he said:

"*'Et pourtant elle ne me convient pas. Mon goût est si blasé que j'aimerois mieux être dans un désert.'*

"Weisse thereupon gave him Mendelssohn's translation of his essay: *Sur l'inégalité des hommes*, and the *Phaedon* of this philosopher. He (Weisse) had to tell him everything that he knew about this excellent man (Mendelssohn), upon which Rousseau said: 'He wanted to have Mendelssohn's observations translated, so that he might read them, because they came from a Jew; for otherwise there was not a book in the world he would read.'

"Rousseau seemed to be no great admirer of the King of Prussia. He reviled the French poets who celebrated him, inveighed against fame and conquerors, and expressed himself about Frederick in the harshest terms. At this opportunity he began to declaim against the general depravity and *méchanceté* of men, who went so far that they were '*méchants pour le seul plaisir d'être méchants.*' Weisse and his friend maintained rather the contrary, and said that when they were *méchants*, they were generally so in the interest of some passion. He refuted us with his dog, who accompanied him, and who was so fat he could hardly walk:

"*'Regardez ce pauvre chien, à peine peut-il se trainer; c'est que les polissons de Paris l'on chartré.*

Est-ce par passion ou par méchanceté qu'ils ont exercé cette barbarie?

"It happened that during this conversation they were walking around a large basin upon which there were swans. One of them sailed up to the shore and hissed at his dog. Rousseau raised his stick and ran along the edge of the basin to punish the swan. He remained finally standing with outstretched arm and said:

"'You see, evil has even penetrated animals; what had the poor dog done to those swans?'

"Of his *Devin du Village* that Weisse had seen a couple of days before at the theatre, he said:

"'C'est une bagatelle; je ne l'ai faite que pour voir quelles bêtes sont ces François-là, pour pouvoir goûter une telle misère.'

"He asked Weisse what news he had heard in Paris and the latter answered:

"'The most interesting so far as he was concerned had been that people were expecting a new book from him (Rousseau).' It was the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. Rousseau showed them some proofs which he had received that very morning from Holland, and asked Weisse 'what people in Paris thought the novel would be?' Weisse answered, as he had heard: 'Que c'étoit une satire contre les femmes.'

"'Ce ne sont,' he answered, 'que des bons conseils, mais elles ne les suivront pas.'

"He accompanied them into the church of Montmorancy, where they saw the 'Grabmaeler' of the Dukes. His remarks about each and all were tinged with Rousseauistic *esprit*, but Weisse has forgotten them. The

ecclesiastics who were in the church came to meet him with much obsequiousness, which he returned with friendliness. M. Payon happened to mention the Gospels and Rousseau spoke reverently of them.

"'When I read them,' he continued, 'I believe *tout ce qu'elle débite, tant je suis touché de sa simplicité*. As soon, however, as I reflect and consult my reason, I begin to doubt and find inconsistencies. *Bienheureux celui qui n'y en trouve pas.*'

"He invited Weisse at their leavetaking, after they had walked about with him for two or three hours, to visit him once more before his departure, and write to him in advance as to the day of his visit in order that he might not be away. He then accompanied them for a bit of the way beside their *cabriolet*, and finally disappeared in a foot-path that led into a park."

Of the authenticity of this interview there can be, it seems to me, little question. That Weisse should have deliberately invented it for the purpose of magnifying his own importance, is not to be thought of. Indeed, the autobiography was actually not his work at all. It was pieced together after his death by his son and son-in-law, from notes, letters, and miscellanea found in their father's papers. The charge, therefore, that Weisse consciously posed as the acquaintance of famous men with intent to dazzle the reader must be dismissed. Corroborative evidence of Weisse's honesty is, furthermore, to be found in the account itself of the interview. Especially is this true of the sayings attributed therein to Rousseau. A careful investigation of them will

make this yet clearer, for we shall find that each and every one bears the unmistakable stamp of the latter's singular genius.

Nothing could be more characteristic than the preliminary incident with which the interview opens. As a matter of fact, we have right at the start a splendid illustration of the Rousseau formula in operation. Much has been written for and against the sincerity of the famous "conversion" which the success of the first *Discours* appears to have inspired. Whether it was a bit of cool calculation, whether Rousseau's head was turned by his sudden celebrity, or whether, as Gerhard Gran would have it, the "Renunciation" was the result of a great psychological crisis, this much at least is certain: no moral conversion ever achieved a greater social success. As Weisse's account would corroborate, no *solitaire* ever lived who was more unmistakably the rage, no hermit was ever the object of more fashionable curiosity than was Rousseau.³ Favor of this sort with the frivolous is obviously the reverse of complimentary to the recipient, for the interest of society is more apt to be stimulated by the novel than by the noble; eccentricity of gesture is more certain to sting the blasé taste of fashion than is rectitude of conduct.

That Rousseau was keenly aware of this, that he knew the secret of his success, and that he played his part with gusto is amusingly demonstrated by the little incident recorded by Weisse. For all his surface naïveté, the *Citoyen de Genève* was not without a certain kind of craft. Incapable of conventional wit or

³ Confessions: Book IX: p. 305 (Hachette ed., vol. 8)

compliment,⁴ he had reconciled himself with much shrewdness to the only promising part left, the part of surly virtue. He found it remarkably congenial for it combined easily and naturally the attractive elements of sincerity and paradox. It satisfied his plebeian pride, while at the same time it proved a striking contrast to the artificial monotony of contemporary social routine. He also found it a source of convenience in that it enabled him to refuse his society without giving undue offense. The application of the principle as here recorded by Weisse may be considered an eminently characteristic instance of the Rousseauistic shrewdness. Openly and brutally to prefer the unassuming gentlemen to the arrogant social idlers was of a *bravura* which, in the eighteenth century, must have appeared especially piquant. It whetted public curiosity by setting up a new standard of exclusiveness, and it did it in such a manner that the excluded could not complain. All things considered, therefore, the little incident offers a fair sample of Rousseau's peculiar originality. In the conventional sense, Mme D'Epinay's "bear" may have been deficient in *esprit*, but that he was not without a certain readiness is here amply demonstrated.

The first actual quotation that Weisse sets down in French, the profession of distaste for the Montmorency gardens, we must receive as a typical specimen of the Rousseauistic virtuosity. Uttered with malice aforethought, it was essentially a remark *à effet*, and from that angle only can it be considered sincere. That Rousseau's taste in landscape was really blasé, nobody

⁴ Confessions: Book III: p. 79 (Hachette ed., vol. 8)

today would believe. As the descriptive passages which abound in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, the *Confessions*, and the *Rêveries* testify, his aesthetic feeling for nature was fresh and virgin. The fierce colors of the tropics, the barren stretches of the desert, or the gloom of the harsh northern coasts that can alone tingle the jaded senses of a Pierre Loti would have been too strong stuff for the unspoiled Rousseau. Nowhere in his writing do we find any artistic treatment of the sea, or the desert of the dunes; indeed, his silence here is more eloquent than words, and affords a striking contrast to the many and gorgeous pages of the later romanticists. If, therefore, we bear these facts in mind, especially the beautiful picture in the *Confessions* of the Montmorency gardens,⁵ the remark quoted by Weisse assumes a very narrow significance. That it contained any inherent truth is absurd. On the contrary, it is frankly an unblushing sophism, and is of interest only insofar as it shows to what extremes Rousseau was willing to push his paradoxes in order to live up to his reputation.

Love of rural scenery was not, it is well known, a fad of eighteenth century society; the cult of nature had in 1760 not yet become fashionable. To prefer the year 'round the woods of Montmorency to the salons of Paris was, therefore, distinctly paradoxical, and it is an established fact that this preference on Rousseau's part was looked upon by the social as one of the oddest traits of his character.⁶ In Weisse, however, he found a

⁵ *Confessions*: Book X: p. 374 (Hachette ed., vol. 8)

⁶ *Confessions*: Book IX: p. 286 (Hachette ed., vol. 8)

visitor of an unexpected caliber. Here was a man who actually liked what he himself liked, who instead of considering Montmorency depressing, found it beautiful. The rôle of eccentricity was by no means so comfortable in this case, but Rousseau was equal to the emergency. The seeming inconsistency of his remark is obviously superficial; its real purport no thoughtful reader can mistake, for it offers indubitable evidence of Rousseau's readiness, when necessary, to sacrifice the genuine nature lover that was in him to the *poseur*.

As regards the passage dealing with Mendelssohn, little comment is necessary. It tallies perfectly with what we know of Rousseau's attitude toward the Jews. The conventional dislike for the persecuted sect found little favor in his eyes, for reasons emotional as well as intellectual, and in the *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar*,⁷ he makes no attempt to disguise his sympathy for the victims of the popular prejudice. The point that concerns us, however, is that in the present instance, he has succeeded in combining with much deftness one paradox, his friendliness towards the Jews, with another, his hatred of books;⁸ in short, a new enlightenment with a new obscurantism. To except in his general condemnation of books, those written by a Jew because they were written by a Jew was, in the eighteenth century, a little masterpiece of inversion. Indeed, a better example could with difficulty be found of one feature of Rousseau's peculiar genius, his amazing competence in the technique of the paradox.

⁷ *Emile*: Book IV: p. 276 (Hachette ed., vol. 2)

⁸ *First Discourse*: p. 18 (Hachette ed., vol. 1): *Emile*: Book III: p. 155 (Hachette ed., vol. 2)

Of Weisse's next statement, that Rousseau appeared to be no great admirer of Frederick of Prussia, we find corroboration in a passage from the *Confessions*.⁹ When about to take refuge at Motiers, in the Val de Travers, Rousseau admits that he hesitated. The little village was within the domains of the King of Prussia and Rousseau felt, he says, a certain discomfort in the thought of casting himself upon the mercy of a monarch toward whom he had in the past been severe. The basis of this severity we may feel sure to have been emotional as well as intellectual. The spectacle of an eminent criminal gambling in human life and human folly could not have been pleasing to a believer in the innate goodness of man. At the same time, creditable to Rousseau's heart and intellect as was such an estimate of Frederick, we should not forget that it possessed also the attractive element of paradox. It was distinctly unconventional in mid-eighteenth century to attack from the humanitarian standpoint the military and political hero of Europe. That Rousseau was aware of this, and that he knew its value is a reasonably safe assumption. To a German like Weisse such an attitude could not fail to seem little short of sacrilege and, in consequence, arouse that delighted awe which it is at once pleasant to occasion and to experience.

The passage dealing with the diatribe against the *méchanceté* of men and the pursuit of the swan that had attacked his dog, is thoroughly consistent with what we know of Rousseau's mental condition at this period of his life. The disastrous consequences of his

⁹ *Confessions*: Book XII: p. 35 (Hachette ed., vol. 9)

passion for Mme d'Houdetot, the rupture with Mme d'Épinay, and the *Philosophes* were still recent in his mind, as well as in the mind of the public.¹⁰ It is easy to understand how, cherishing the mirage of the primitive goodness of man, Rousseau should have been harshly disillusioned by this experience, as well as by eighteenth century society in general, whose callous indifference to almost every form of virtue has become proverbial. The manner in which he reacted is amusingly depicted by the passage from Weisse; we see Rousseau in the resultant, and for his day, unorthodox posture, the posture of fanatic. Even here, however, he contrives to assume a pose that is original as well as paradoxical. The novelty of Rousseau's fanaticism resides in a technicality rather than in a principle, for in spirit it bears a striking resemblance to the religious fanaticism of the past. This technicality is the ingenious substitution of virtue for faith.¹¹ In other words, just as the religious enthusiasts of the Dark Ages had been intolerant in the matter of faith, so Rousseau is now intolerant in the matter of virtue. We have not yet exhausted, however, the subtleties of this distinction. The displacement of faith by virtue testifies to remarkable shrewdness, for by this simple trick the domain of the fanatic's activities becomes greatly enlarged. Whereas faith had been applicable only to men, virtue could be extended to animals. Rousseau's pursuit of the swan for attacking his dog was an eminently

¹⁰ *Confessions*: Book X: p. 356 (Hachette ed., vol. 8)

¹¹ *Confessions*: Book X: p. 355 (Hachette ed., vol. 8)

characteristic gesture. The desire to inflict physical punishment which is the mainspring of fanaticism, was becoming every day more difficult of satisfaction in the eighteenth century. Thanks to the efforts of the Intelligentsia led by Voltaire, religious persecution was going out of style. By shifting from faith to virtue, however, Rousseau made possible the gratification of the fanatic's passion, while at the same time conforming to the new ideas. If physical persecution of men was becoming *démodé*, the same was not true of animals. To punish one animal for molesting another was, in the eighteenth century, not merely permissible, it was actually extremely piquant. That Rousseau often indulged this paradoxical emotion we know from the *Confessions*.¹² He found it very attractive for it enabled him to gratify the instinctive cruelty that was in him as in every man, the while posing as a champion of the weak and oppressed. How typical of the Rousseauistic casuistry the whole incident is, need not be insisted upon. That Weisse was impressed by its unconventionality we may feel assured; that he fully appreciated the sophistry of which it was the outward expression we may venture to doubt.

As regards the sentence that concludes the episode: "You see, evil has even penetrated animals," we have one of the most characteristic sentences of the entire interview. The ingenious explanation of the origin of evil by the fall from nature, rather than from God, Rousseau applies here to the animal kingdom, and would have us take it for granted that animals, like

¹² *Confessions*: Book I: p. 12 (Hachette ed., vol. 8)

men, were born good, but had subsequently yielded to the corrosive influences of civilization. It is a pity that Weisse or Payon did not ask him to explain the process of this interesting decadence, for the Great Obscurantist was never more entertaining than when dogmatizing upon data drawn from sentimental assumptions.

The disparaging terms in which Rousseau speaks of his operetta, the *Devin du Village* are akin to his professed distaste for the Montmorency gardens in that they should not be taken seriously. If there was one faculty upon which Rousseau prided himself as upon no other, it was his faculty for writing music.¹³ All his life he had labored over the mysteries of the art, but for the most part with indifferent success. His early efforts at composition were grotesque; his new scheme for musical notation was, despite its real ingenuity, found to be impractical; his score for the opera, the *Muses Galantes*, was deemed unsatisfactory. When, therefore, he succeeded in completing by dint of incredible effort his *Devin du Village*, and getting the little intermezzo before the public, his self-sufficiency knew no bounds.¹⁴ As a composer, the operetta is his one real achievement, and in the *Confessions* he does his utmost to magnify its importance. That he should dubb it, as Weisse records, a *bagatelle*, which he had written only to expose the execrable taste of the stupid Parisians, need not surprise us. On the contrary, the remark is typical. In essence it amounts to praise of

¹³ *Confessions*: Book VII: pp. 236-237 (Hachette ed., vol. 8)

¹⁴ *Confessions*: Book VIII: p. 269 (Hachette ed., vol. 8)

the operetta by inversion, a paradox illustrating very aptly the homage paid by Pagan pride to Christian humility. We should remember, also, in this connection, that Rousseau's part in the quarrel over the relative merits of French versus Italian music, known as the *Guerre des Bouffons*, may have had something to do with the moroseness of the sentence quoted by Weisse. Rousseau, it is well known, entered the lists as a champion of Italian art, and in his truculent *Letter on French Music*, had attempted to prove that French music was a contradiction in terms. This theory expounded with Rousseauistic consistency right after the success of the *Devin* had grown to be a veritable hobby and, in consequence, it is entirely natural to find him at this period speaking contemptuously of French appreciation, even at the expense of his own work. Indeed, it is entirely probable that Rousseau condensed into this cynical appraisal of the *Devin du Village* two independent emotions: pride in his achievement, and contempt for French taste. The spontaneity with which this complicated paradox leaped forth is eloquent proof of Rousseau's mastery of his chosen part, the part of surly virtue.

The passage touching on the *Nouvelle Héloïse* is significant, aside from its Rousseauistic flavor, in that it substantiates in a measure the authenticity of the interview. Rousseau, says Weisse, showed them some of the proof which had arrived that very morning from Holland. Now Rousseau himself states in the *Confessions*¹⁵ that he gave the MS. of his novel to the

¹⁵ *Confessions*: Book X: p. 360 (Hachette ed., vol. 8)

publisher, Marc-Michel Rey of Amsterdam, who printed it in 1760, although it was not issued until 1761, at about the same time that the Paris publisher Duchesne got out his edition. It is wholly possible, therefore, that the proofs of the first volumes, at least, might have been struck off as early as March, 1760; indeed, Weisse's statement that he saw them would seem to justify such an assumption. That both the *Confessions* and Weisse's account should agree upon the time of the printing of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* must be viewed as something more than a mere coincidence.

As for Weisse's remark that Paris expected the forthcoming novel to be a satire on women, we are given here a glimpse of the popular attitude toward Rousseau at this stage of his singular career. His bitterness, his unsociability, and especially the débacle of his courtship of Mme d'Houdetot were so well known, that when it was rumored that he was at work on a novel, the supposition that it would be little favorable to women seemed logical. However amusing this supposition may appear to us who have read the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, the statement of its contents as summed up here by Rousseau is even more diverting. The modern reader, at least, could find little in the first part that he would consider "*de bons conseils*." The originality of Rousseau's novel consists, as a matter of fact, in the voluptuous mingling of the spirit and the flesh on the one hand, and in the sincere idealization of duty and renunciation on the other. To the eighteenth century reader, accustomed to cold intellect or cynical license, both parts of the novel must have appeared

startlingly paradoxical. From the eighteenth century point of view, therefore, Rousseau is somewhat justified in calling his work an epitome of "*bons conseils*" which women will not follow. It might be pointed out, however, that these words apply only to the second part. Indeed, the first part might well be dubbed the *raison d'être* of the "*bons conseils*" of the second part, or, to put it briefly, we might consider Part I the poison, and Part II the antidote. The ingenuity of Rousseau's aphorism, whatever one's opinion of his novel, is none the less eminently characteristic.

The final passage from the interview describing their visit to the church of Montmorency is perhaps the most important of all. The evident friendliness of the relations between Rousseau and the officiating Catholic clergy is in itself, sufficiently interesting. What the Great Man had to say of the Gospels, however, deserves a more detailed examination.

"When I read it," he said, "I believe *tout ce qu'elle débite, tant je suis touché de sa simplicité*, but as soon as I consult my reason, I begin to doubt and find inconsistencies. *Bienheureux celui qui n'y en trouve pas.*"

Nothing, it seems to me, could emphasize more pointedly than do these words, the inherent duality of Rousseau's nature. The conflict between the head and the heart from which, by his own admission, he suffered all his life,¹⁶ is here found in its acute form. The situation is more poignant than usual, for we know

¹⁶ Confessions: Book III: p. 79 (Hachette ed., vol. 8)

that Rousseau was, as a rule, able to force his intellect to serve up paradoxes in support of his emotions. The problem of the truth of the Gospels, however, was not so easy of solution. The conventional source of information for his attitude in this matter, the *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar*, pictures the struggle at great length. His final position as summed up there is described as one of "involuntary skepticism," based on "humility."¹⁷ Rousseau's words as recorded by Weisse tally, therefore, surprisingly well with what he had already written in the Fourth Book of the *Emile*. His heart is "touched" by the "simplicity" of the Gospels, but as soon as he consults his reason, he doubts and finds "inconsistencies." The last sentence, in my opinion, sums up his conclusions with even greater frankness than does the *Profession of Faith*. The position of "involuntary skepticism" appears here in the stronger guise of "regretful skepticism." A clearer statement of the relations between Rousseau's intellect and his emotions could scarcely be found. The question of the truth of the Gospels brought the conflict between his head and his heart to the supreme test of strength. The struggle was long and bitter, and in the end, as this quotation from Weisse shows, his heart won but a Pyrrhic victory.

At the same time, painful as his condition was, Rousseau contrived to extract some comfort from it. To the eighteenth century mind the position of regretful skepticism was a paradox of incredible complexity. It was equally shocking to believer and atheist, and it is

¹⁷ *Emile*: Book IV: p. 281 (Hachette ed., vol. 2)

hard to say which party was the more deeply offended by it, the Clergy or the *Philosophes*. To Rousseau, as we, know, the publication of the *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar* brought a startling notoriety, a notoriety which, although it made him a man without a country, was at the same time extremely flattering to his pride. In the present instance the effect upon Weisse was equally satisfactory, for he set down the sentence with evident delight as a typical example of Rousseau's genius and *Sonderbahrkeit*. How deep was the impression which the author of the *Confessions* made upon contemporaries, the account of this interview would substantiate. Of all the eminent men whose acquaintance Weisse made, and they were many, including Lessing, Rousseau is the only one whose actual words he found worthy to remember and record. However one may feel toward him, the compliment to the *Citoyen de Genève* is unequivocal.

Brief as it is, it will be admitted, I think, that this little interview possesses a certain completeness. The eight distinct sections into which it may be divided epitomize, each in its way, one feature of Rousseau's variegated genius. In the majority of cases,—the curt dismissal of the elegant visitors, the expressed contempt for books, the reviling of conquerors, the diatribe against the *méchanceté* of men, the remarks anent the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, or the truth of the Gospels,—in all these instances, the agreement with the published utterances of Rousseau is surprisingly close. The two quotations which are in seeming disaccord with his written word may, as we have seen, be accounted for.

The profession of distaste for the Montmorency gardens, or the cynical estimate of the *Devin du Village* appear certainly to contradict flatly the passages touching on those subjects in the *Confessions*. This conflict, however, is superficial. The opposing opinions, whether spoken (interview) or written (*Confessions*), spring obviously from one and the same source, the fondness of Rousseau for the paradox. The apparent inconsistency in these two cases vanishes as soon as we have recourse to the fundamental principle upon which the Great Obscurantist erected his amazing structure.

On the whole, therefore, Rousseau's books are well represented. In fact, the *Contrat Social*, the *Lettre à d'Alembert*, and the first three books of the *Emile* present the only subjects upon which the capricious celebrity did not express himself to Weisse, either directly or *à rebours*. That one, at least, of his major activities should not be included here was to be expected. No man, and especially as complex a one as the author of the *Confessions*, mentions all his interests on a first meeting with a stranger. As it is, the range of topics upon which Weisse drew from Rousseau a characteristic sentence is pretty wide. We should be grateful that the visitor got as much as he did, for his account, though brief, gives us an unbiased glimpse of Rousseau's behaviour when on parade. How consistent with his written word this behaviour was, is here amusingly corroborated. Indeed, the little interview presents, all things considered, an excellent portrait *en miniature* of that bizarre and baffling genius who "preferred paradoxes to prejudices."

Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.

IV. VICTOR HUGO'S OPERAS

IT has become a matter of convention among historians of French Literature to accept the fate of Victor Hugo's plays as a perfectly obvious phenomenon. The rapid decrease in popularity of these tragedies, once the standard bearers of Romanticism, is in fact considered symbolic of the débacle of the entire school. And it must be confessed that in assuming this view point, the historians have some right on their side. The hold of Victor Hugo's plays upon the public was at best insecure; the victory of *Hernani* was never so complete as to remain unchallenged, while the decline in popularity of the succeeding tragedies only served to emphasize the Pyrrhic nature of that alleged triumph. The classicists of 1830 would seem, therefore, to have been vindicated, although the alchemy of time has distilled out of their violent hostility the more elegant attitude of easy disdain. The quintessence of this modern pose, now pretty generally assumed, finds perhaps its best illustration in the words of the eminent critic Gustave Lanson:

"*Ces Malheureux drames,*" he says, "*ne se tiennent pas sur leurs pieds.*"

In the plot of *Ruy Blas* he discovers a "*Scénario d'opéra-comique,*" etc. Other experts take equal delight in refusing Hugo all claim to serious distinction as dramatist; indeed, the opinion seems about unanimous today that it would have been better for his reputation had he abstained from writing for the stage.

The soundness of this judgment rests, of course, upon the assumption that Hugo's dramatic works are plays, and it must be admitted that if we accept this premise no very favorable deduction can be drawn from it. Hugo's tragedies offend, and offend roundly, almost every law that convention demands in the spoken drama. It would appear, therefore, that unless we deny, at the outset, the validity of this generally accepted premise, small hope will be left us of reaching a more favorable judgment. Paradoxical as such a course may appear, a careful examination of Hugo's dramatic works will reveal facts that will give it much plausibility.

One of the fundamental features of Romanticism has been the deviation of creative energy into new channels. The importance of this curious phenomenon cannot be over-emphasized, for to it is due the displacement of the conception of essentials which of all romantic traits is the most irritating to the humanists. The fact that a man's gifts focused instinctively, without any volition on his part, on the borderland between two genres, or between two arts, led him to take for granted the correctness of this new position and to erect upon it a new philosophy. It is thus that we have the doctrine of the "*mélange des genres*," the comic and the tragic, the grotesque and the beautiful, but especially the doctrine of the "*mélange des arts*." The latter confusion being the subtler of the two, has not received from the critics the attention, either in quantity or quality, which it deserves. It has been too

often the custom to dismiss it as a freak corollary of romanticism, a desire on the part of a few extremists like Tieck or Gautier, to shock the philistine, whereas, in point of fact, it is one of the most significant symptoms of the romantic malady.

The attempt of so many writers, painters, musicians, to make their art encroach upon the domain of another, or indeed of several others, is not, as some determined classicists maintain, a deliberate "*parti pris*," but simply the working out of the inevitable. The artist is not, in the beginning at least, a self-conscious poseur, although that may come later. He is in reality doing his best according to the nature of his gifts, which happen, through no fault of his own, to center on the borderland between two or more arts. The hybrid product that results must, in consequence, be estimated from a different angle than is taken by certain champions of humanism, who would deny artistic predestination, and have you believe that a man can decide upon his endowment. It is to this fallacy in criticism that is due a large measure of the impatience exhibited by the devotees of classicism toward the plays of Victor Hugo.

The disfavor which these unfortunate dramas have encountered from the experts is a striking illustration of the power of convention. Hugo's critics have found fault with him for failing to do a certain thing, where, as a matter of fact, he was doing something else. For if we drop the traditional conception and examine his theatre without bias, we shall find that Hugo's endowment for the stage was a peculiar one.

Its essence consists, not so much in the "*mélange des genres*," as he and everybody else thought, as it does in the "*mélange des arts*;" that is, his gift is located, not at the center of one art,—tragedy, but on the borderland between two arts,—tragedy and opera. Appreciation of this singular fact will, it is obvious, alter materially the critical point of view; many of Hugo's seemingly wanton violations of custom will assume a more favorable complexion; while the more serious defects of his work, if they cannot be entirely condoned, will escape the conventional verdict of voluntary eccentricity.

From the outset Hugo has been severely dealt with by the connoisseurs for the melodramatic quality of his plots. Critics, both in France and out, never cease to berate the enormous antitheses upon which all of his plays are built. The violent juxtaposition of incompatibles, expressed either by two characters (king versus bandit: *Hernani*), or by one character (mother versus murderess: *Lucrece Borgia*), they find, not only highly improbable but, what is far worse, utterly ridiculous. This estimate, correct enough if we hold to the traditional view that his tragedies belong to the spoken drama, will appear less severe the moment we view them as transposed music drama. Indeed, the very enormity of the Hugo antithesis, an admittedly serious blemish in tragedy, becomes not merely excusable but actually a virtue in opera. The reason for this paradox is to be found, as will presently appear, in the different nature of the two arts.

Save for pantomime, the drama reaches our con-

sciousness through two channels, the eye and the ear. To impart its full significance it needs both, for the action which it portrays is a double one, physical as well as psychological. This fact demands of the playwright two media of expression, the gesture and the word. The gesture, it is clear, will account for, say, ninety per cent of the physical, the word for ninety per cent of the psychological action. Where these two media overlap is, of course, on the boundary, where the psychological action begins to overflow into the physical.

Now the fundamental difference between the spoken drama and the music drama is this, that in the music drama the word, being sung, becomes less explicit than in the spoken drama. It is a matter of common knowledge, though perhaps not of common admission, that few in the audience actually understand what is being sung on the stage. Particularly true is this in the case of concerted pieces, duets, trios, quartets, where several voices are singing simultaneously. Tacit admission of this fact is evinced in the printing on the program of the plot of the opera. The point that concerns us, however, is that the weakening in precision of one medium of expression, the word, puts an additional burden upon the other, the gesture. The result is obvious. Unless some change is made, much of the action that would be perfectly intelligible in the spoken drama, will become unintelligible in the music drama. It is this change which is the essence of opera.

The necessity of emphasizing the gesture, in order to keep the plot intelligible, obliged the writers of opera,

first, to reduce the psychological action to its lowest terms, and second, to express this simplified action wherever possible in terms of the physical; in short, to translate the word into the gesture. The violent antitheses which swarm in opera are simply instances of this attempt on the librettists' part to render a psychological contrast, in terms of the physical. The enormity of these antitheses is to be explained by the fact that the gesture, being less articulate than the word, must be proportionately more copious to express the same amount. The melodramatic climax, the harsh juxtaposition of incompatibles becomes, therefore, not merely permissible, but actually necessary in the music drama, for the narration of the story must reach the audience to a large extent through the eye. If we bear these facts in mind much of the tumultuously physical that predominates in Hugo's theatre will find its explanation.

The melodramatic contrasts of plot upon which his critics harp are, as we can now realize, due in a measure to the unconsciously operatic nature of Hugo's gift. The violent antithesis contained in the basic idea, (Buffoon versus King: *Roi s'amuse*, lackey versus queen: *Ruy Blas*, bandit versus emperor: *Hernani*, etc.,) are really nothing more than the attempt, not deliberate in his case, to render physically visible a psychological conflict.

The clap-trap climax, which the classicists deplore as one of his favorite devices, is merely the application of the same principle within the compass of the scene. The intrusion of the black domino amid the brilliant

masqueraders (*Hernani*: Act V, sc. I), the funeral procession (*Marie Tudor*: Second Day, Second part, sc. I), the huge scarlet litter of Richelieu (*Marion Delorme*: Act V, sc. VII), etc., are all characteristic instances of Hugo's use of the stunning gesture to relieve the word of the burden of narration. The sudden opening of secret doors (*Angelo*: Second Day, sc. I; *Ruy Blas*: Act IV, sc. VI), the stealthy entrance of mysterious slaves (*Ruy Blas*: Act IV, sc. III), the sounds of sword fighting around the corner (*Marion Delorme*: Act I, sc. II), the tumbling down the chimney of Don Caesar (*Ruy Blas*: Act IV, sc. II), are further evidence of Hugo's reliance upon the dazzling gesture as a means of communication with his audience.

This unconscious preference for the gesture in the matter of dramatic narration is highly significant and cannot be over-emphasized. It implies a weakening in precision of the word which, as we shall see later, is one of the most curious features of Hugo's gift. Before passing to that, however, it might be well to complete our examination of Hugo's faculty for expressing action in terms of external antitheses. The instances of this practice quoted above are, with a single exception, all of the same kind. The gesture in every case save one is visual, and although this variety is an essential part of opera it is by no means the most essential.

The chief attraction of the music drama is, after all, the music; indispensable as are the other things they remain, nevertheless, of secondary importance, for they are insufficient of themselves to confer immortal-

ity. Now, although we have come to accept music without questioning as the language of opera, it is manifestly logical that the best operas will always be those in which the music has some *raison d'être*, some excuse for its presence besides that of convention. In other words, the skillful writer of opera will endeavor, wherever possible, to weave the music into the texture of the plot until the two become inseparable, until the presence of one is imperative to a complete understanding of the other. The application of this difficult principle calls obviously for imagination, and imagination of a very especial quality, if it is to be a success. Indeed, the thing presents exceptional obstacles, for music, as Boileau shrewdly pointed out, cannot narrate. Its primary function is the presentation of emotion, and of emotion in its most abstract form, the mood. In other words, music is lyric, rather than dramatic. If we grant this premise it becomes at once evident that music can hope to portray action in one way only, through antithesis; and since the domain of music is the lyric (mood), it follows that the strictly musical antithesis can be achieved only by the juxtaposition of contrasting lyrics, the striking rapprochement of sharply divergent moods. In practice this means that the writer of opera, instead of addressing the mind of his audience directly, is obliged by the exigencies of his art to address it obliquely. He can narrate, but only suggestively, through the mood, in contradistinction to the playwright who can create a mood, but only suggestively, through narration. Now it is in the possession of precisely this faculty, the

ability to express his action in terms of musical antithesis that we shall find striking evidence of the operatic nature of Hugo's gift.

The clearest instances of this peculiar *tour de force* occur in *Hernani*, *Le Roi s'amuse*, and *Lucrèce Borgia*. As a matter of fact the dénouement in all three plays is done not merely to music but actually through music. In *Hernani* the love duet, (*Hernani* and *Dona Sol*: Act V, sc. III), an exquisite lyric mood is shattered by the long-drawn note of the horn, the symbol of death. *Hernani*, the audience instantly remembers, had given Ruy Gomez the horn with the promise that should the latter wish him to die, he need but sound it, and all would be done. The dramatic shock which this strictly musical antithesis imparts has not been denied by even the most bilious of humanists, but while they grudgingly admit its power, they refuse to appreciate its significance. This sharp juxtaposition of the moods of love and death unties the dramatic knot, and this untying, it should be noted, is done by music. The point is that what we have here is not tragedy, but opera. The dénouement of the *Roi s'amuse* exhibits an even greater ingenuity in the use of this essentially operatic principle. The revelation of the tragic situation is even more startling than in *Hernani*, for in the *Roi s'amuse* it is ironic. The jester Triboulet (Act V, sc. III), wild with triumphant hate, is about to cast into the river the sack supposed to contain the body of the king who had seduced his daughter, when he hears in the distance the king's voice, singing gaily, "Souvent femme varie." The tragic force at this moment of

the brilliant song is intensified by the contrast between the flippancy of the song itself and the mood of frantic despair which it occasions in the breast of the wretched Triboulet. The antithesis here is certainly enormous, but inasmuch as music is the least explicit of the arts, the strictly musical antithesis will need to be enormous if it is to be intelligible. Hugo's arrangement is, therefore, eminently laudable if we remember that his work is not spoken drama, but transposed music drama.

The most striking example, however, of the presentation of the catastrophe in terms of music occurs in *Lucrece Borgia*, (Act. III, sc. I). The mood of impious gaiety created by the drinking song is set off in harsh relief against the sombre chorus of the monks. The contrast between pagan revelry and the gloom of mediaeval Christianity offered by this scene is of a power that would be difficult to surpass, but what concerns us especially is the fact that the effect is gained by means of music. The words serve merely as the skeleton design which the music fills in. Particularly is this true of the monk's chant, the text of which is Latin and therefore incomprehensible to the audience. Indeed, this scene is a most felicitous illustration of the operatic principle, for it combines, with much skill, the two types of antithesis, the visual and the musical. By itself it would almost suffice to demonstrate the essentially borderland nature of Hugo's gift, for it evidently straddles the boundary separating the spoken drama from the music drama.

This kind of antithesis is, however, not confined in

Hugo's theatre to the presentation of the dénouement, but is frequently used to impart color to the exposition. The charming lyric *À quoi bon entendre les oiseaux des bois* (Ruy Blas: Act II, sc. I), is inserted with the definite purpose of portraying by contrast of mood, the wretchedness of royalty. The happy voices of the washerwomen singing in the heather, emphasize in poignant fashion the tragic loneliness of the Queen of Spain imprisoned in her grandeur. Other instances of this trick may be found in *Angelo* (Second Day, sc. IV), for instance, or *Les Burgraves* (Act I, sc. I; sc. V).

All of these examples have, it should be noted, one important factor in common; they need the actual presence of music to gain their effect. This might certainly be taken as the basis for argument that the scenes are not genuine transpositions d'art, but careful consideration will reveal them to be simply the counterpart of modern program music which needs the written word, in the title at least, to make its purpose intelligible. That is, Hugo's words must have, in these scenes, the assistance of music to achieve their end, just as Debussy's music, for example, must have the help of words to create its illusion. In both cases there is overlapping, a not infrequent occurrence in these borderland genres and one which gives them a very definite flavor. The main-body of Hugo's theatre, however, remains just on literature's side of the boundary, and justifies, as we shall presently see, the term of transposition d'art.

I have said above that Hugo's insistence upon the

gesture, visual as well as musical, is operatic in that it implies a weakening in precision of the word. This, as we know, is one of the fundamental characteristics of opera, for music by itself is incapable of direct narration. A psychological conflict such as we find in seventeenth century French tragedy cannot, therefore, be presented by music, for tones are inarticulate; they cannot render with precision delicate nuance, whether of thought or emotion. Now the stock criticism of his foes is that Hugo's dramas contain little or no psychological action; the reason for this absence of internal conflict, however, seems to have eluded them. Had they examined his work without spleen, they would undoubtedly have discovered that Hugo, wherever possible, uses words precisely as the musician uses tones. That is, instead of emphasizing presentation of action, he emphasizes creation of mood. The movement of his plays is, in consequence, essentially operatic, in that it is intermittent rather than continuous. Where the action in a tragedy by Racine, for instance, maintains an unbroken flow from the first line to the last, in Hugo's tragedies it proceeds by fits and starts, a rapid bit of exposition and then a pause, a smashing antithesis and then another pause, etc. Now, this curious principle which so irritates the experts, we shall discover to be characteristic of opera, for, inasmuch as music cannot narrate, but can only create a mood, it is evident that a good opera will contain as little actual narration and as much mood as possible. In other words, the operatic poet will endeavor to present his story through a series of mood pictures connected one to the other by sum-

mary bits of narration. This, in point of fact, is exactly Hugo's method, with one significant difference, that he creates his mood pictures by words instead of by tones. The parallel here is extremely curious. In both cases, in actual opera as in transposed opera, the ultimate effect is much the same; the difference consists in the means used to obtain that effect. In both cases there is a weakening in precision of the word, but in opera this is due to a physical cause, in transposed opera to a psychic cause. In opera the world is swallowed up by the music and becomes, in consequence, unintelligible; in transposed opera the situation is more subtle, for here the word itself lacks narrative precision. Instead of concentrating upon action, it concentrates upon the emotional and aesthetic by-products of action of which the most important, for operatic purposes, is the mood. In other words, in transposed opera the poet's own nature interferes with direct presentation, whereas in actual opera, it is the music that interferes.

Just how this works out in practice is curious. Hugo's poetic gift has usually been considered to incline rather towards painting than towards music and, as a matter of fact, this is true. Ideas as well as emotions appear to him almost always in the form of pictures, but inasmuch as these pictures are expressed by words, which are sounds, instead of by colors, they lack the precision of colors and, in consequence, incline to the vagueness of musical suggestion. The ultimate effect of them is, therefore, the creation of a mood that is sufficiently inarticulate to border on the type of mood peculiar to music. As words, however, are less vague

than tones, Hugo is forced to create his indeterminate mood obliquely, in opposition to the musician who can do it directly. Indeed Hugo's method is the exact counterpart of the method practiced by such an artist as Debussy, for Hugo creates a mood at second hand through a picture, whereas Debussy creates a picture at second hand through a mood.

Now a fair majority, if not all of the scenes which have made Hugo's tragedies famous, illustrate this phenomenon with singular clarity. The gallery of the portraits (*Hernani*: Act III, sc. VI), the love duet (*Hernani*: Act V, sc. III), the great monologue of Don Carlos (*Hernani*: Act IV, sc. II), are nothing if not primarily mood pictures. Of themselves, they do not advance the story a jot; like the set airs in opera they are frankly to be enjoyed, apart from the play, for their own beauty, and they occupy the proscenium at their leisure while the action waits modestly off-stage for its cue. Such an arrangement, it is obvious, represents the exact opposite of the classical conception that every scene must contribute to the progress of the plot. Nothing could illustrate the antithesis offered by these two formulae better than a comparison of the monologue of Don Carlos in *Hernani* with the monologue of Don Rodrigue which concludes the first act of the *Cid*. In Corneille's work the soliloquy portrays a psychic action and it ends with the completion of that action. In Hugo's work the soliloquy portrays a mood and ends before the psychic action has begun. In short, Don Rodrigue reaches his decision before he leaves the stage; Don Carlos leaves the stage before he reaches

his decision. Don Carlos' soliloquy belongs therefore, not to the spoken drama, but to the music drama, and is simply a magnificent baritone aria to be enjoyed for its sonorous splendor rather than for any dramatic interest.

Hugo's other works swarm with similar instances: (*Marion Delorme*, Act II, sc. I; *Lucrece Borgia*, Act III, sc. I; *Angelo*, Second Day, sc. IV; *Marie Tudor*, Second Day, sc. I; *Ruy Blas*, Act III, sc. II; *Les Burgraves*, Part I, sc. II), but perhaps the most flagrant case of all occurs in *Ruy Blas*. In this tragedy the plot is held up, not only by individual scenes, but in one instance by an entire act. The work is in reality a four act drama, arbitrarily extended to five, for the story comes to a dead stop with the curtain on Act III and does not pick up again until Act V. The interregnum is occupied by the comic mood, supplied in this instance by a picturesque buffoon, Don Caesar (enters Act IV, sc. II), whose connection with the main theme is little more than episodic.

The use of pageant (*Ruy Blas*, Act I, sc. V; *Hernani*, Act IV, sc. IV), may be mentioned as another variety of this practice; the action pauses to allow a visual mood instead of a musical mood.

Finally, if we examine his characters, we discover here too, the working out of the operatic formula. The complaint of the classicists that Hugo's heroes and villains represent violent extremes, or swing suddenly from one pole to the other is of a piece with the main body of their criticism. What the classicists fail to appreciate is that such a conception of character is essentially operatic, for inasmuch as music is inartic-

ulate, the strictly musical character cannot possess a complex soul. Sensitive analysis of psychological nuance cannot be conveyed through the mood, which means that the writer of opera must confine himself in the matter of character drawing, as in other things, to the principle of striking antithesis. This is precisely what Hugo has done, quite unwittingly to be sure, in all of his works. *Hernani*, *Doña Sol*, *Marion*, *Ruy Blas*, *Didier*, *Don Salluste*, etc. belong without exception to the transposed music drama, a fact which, if properly appreciated, will do much to palliate their seeming absurdity.

There remains one question which deserves a moment's consideration before we conclude. Hugo's critics might ask, in the light of the foregoing considerations, whether these alleged tragedies are not simply libretti,—libretti indeed of an unusually high order in that they are the work of a great poet, but conforming nevertheless to all the requisites of that genre. This objection, which might at first sight seem embarrassing, will appear less formidable if we compare any one of Hugo's dramatic works with the opera that has been drawn from it. If we parallel, for instance, *Rigoletto* with the *Roi s'amuse*, we find that Hugo's version contains five acts and 1694 verses, while *Rigoletto* contains three acts and 706 verses. In other words, Hugo's arrangement is longer on paper than Piave's by two acts and 988 verses. The story, however, is identical in both works, and on the stage, if Verdi's music be added to Piave's words, the playing time of both versions is also about equal. That is, Hugo's work con-

sumes as much actual time in performance as do the combined efforts of Piave and Verdi, or to express the equation mathematically, Hugo=Piave+Verdi. All of which implies that when making his adaptation, Piave cut out Hugo's verbal music to make room for Verdi's tonal music. The deduction becomes, in consequence, unavoidable that the *Roi s'amuse* is something more than a mere libretto. Comparison of his other works with the operas made out of them reveals the same process of condensation. In every case Hugo's orchestration has been deleted in order that space may be found for the composer's score. This compression, however, is not obtained by recasting the work; save for minor rearrangements, plot and characters remain unaltered. Retention intact by the librettists of both story and characters was made possible by the essentially musical nature of the original.

Hugo, in short, had an operatic mind; every dramatic idea from plot down to detail of scene occurred to him instinctively in terms of music drama.

His astonishing faculty for expressing action through visual antithesis, gesture, or through musical antithesis; his setting forth of plot as well as characters in startling chiaroscuro; his fondness for pageant; but above all his use of words to create a mood similar to the set airs of opera rather than to unfold action by shock of character on character, stamps his work unmistakably as transposed music drama. It is to this hybrid nature of his art, to the fact that it straddles the frontier separating tragedy and opera, that we may perhaps ascribe the misunderstandings which it has aroused.

Friends as well as foes seem to have been puzzled by its peculiar duality for, by virtue of its curious location, it actually invades, at times, the domain of tragedy as well as of opera. I have mentioned the scenes (*Hernani*: Act V, sc. III; *Roi s'amuse*, Act V, sc. III; *Ruy Blas*, Act II, sc. I; *Lucrèce Borgia*: Act III, sc. I) etc., where the presence of actual music is necessary; there are instances of the opposite sort (*Ruy Blas*, Act III, sc. V; *Marion Delorme*, Act IV, sc. VII), where the work is essentially on tragedy's side of the fence. In the main, however, Hugo's work conforms with remarkable precision, as we have seen, to the peculiar demands of the transposition d'art.

That his theatre should have failed to hold the affections of the French is not surprising. The Gaul is by nature a lover of the *genres tranchés*, and furthermore he is, of all continentals, the least musical. Transposed opera would, in consequence, have but few charms for him. The hostility of the classicists, however, is in the final analysis hardly less amusing than the enthusiasm of the romanticists. Both sides, as usual, showed little discretion and less acumen. They were too near the object to get the proper perspective. Hugo's operas are certainly not the highest form of art, but neither are they the lowest. They belong, on the contrary, to a very especial type of theatrical spectacle, a type that has a curiously sophisticated nature, and in consequence demands a similarly sophisticated appreciation. When met halfway, it will be found to possess its own especial beauty, and to give, in Aristotelian phrase, its own especial pleasure. The transposition d'art, moreover,

has come to be accepted in other fields, and such works as Gautier's *Émaux et Camées*, Debussy's *Clair de Lune*, or Richard Strauss' *Tone Poems*, are no longer questioned. I fail to see, in consequence, why Hugo's operas should be denied recognition, for they are, in point of fact, little more than a different application of the same artistic principle. Indeed, we may properly say that just as Gautier painted pictures without colors, or Mendelssohn wrote songs without words, so Victor Hugo composed operas without music.

in terms of the subject matter itself, and not in terms of the subject matter as it is perceived by the subject. This is the point of view of the realist. The realist would say that the subject matter is what it is, and that the subject's perception of it is what it is perceived to be. The realist would say that the subject matter is what it is, and that the subject's perception of it is what it is perceived to be. The realist would say that the subject matter is what it is, and that the subject's perception of it is what it is perceived to be.

V. REALISTIC 'OBJECTIVITY' VERSUS
CLASSICAL 'OBJECTIVITY.'

IT is rare to read a treatise on the nineteenth century realists without encountering sooner or later the word "objectivity." Whether the writer is a professional critic or an author discoursing in preface or letters upon the nature of his art, we find upon one point at least a unanimity of opinion: the realistic novelist must maintain throughout a strictly "objective" attitude toward his characters and toward his theme. Flaubert defines his ideal as "*un grand art scientifique et impersonnel*;"¹ Reynier insists upon "*cette impartialité et cette sorte d'indifférence qui sont la condition du vrai réalisme*;"² David-Sauvageot implies the same thing in his definition of a perfect realism as an "*appareil d'enregistrement complet, universelle, d'une exactitude mathématique*;"³ Brunetière gives an indirect rendering of the idea in the preface to his study of Balzac: "The Human Comedy," he says, "exists by itself and apart from its author;"³ in his essay on Maupassant, on the other hand, he states the matter directly: "The short stories of Maupassant are '*impersonnelles comme les œuvres classiques*,'" ⁴ etc.

Insistence from so many quarters upon the necessity for this especial quality in the writer cannot be considered fortuitous. There must be some reason back of

¹ *Les Origines du Roman Réaliste*: Introduction: p. vi.

² *Le Réalisme et Le Naturalisme dans le littérature et dans l'ant*: pp. 290.

³ p. vi.

⁴ *Le Roman Naturaliste*: p. 405.

the persistent recurrence of the words objective, impersonal, for in the seventeenth century, the century of a supremely objective literature, the terms are seldom, if ever, mentioned. It is evident that some fundamental change has occurred in men's attitude toward art and life for the nineteenth century to insist as though it were a paradox upon what the seventeenth had accepted as a platitude. This change, which we have now come to define as the Romantic Revolt, has been responsible for such profound alterations in every domain of human activity that it is certain that things will never come back to what was once considered normal. As the quotation from Brunetière about Maupassant would imply, there has been no return, in art or in life, to the status quo ante. It is true that Maupassant succeeds in abstaining as completely as does Racine from personal conspicuousness in his work, that he and the best of the realists do contrive to hold the mirror up to nature as did the great classicists, but even in this the most casual critic will admit that a fundamental distinction remains.

The objection will be made that Balzac, Flaubert, Maupassant are novelists, that Corneille, Racine, Molière are dramatists, and that no parallel can be drawn between their works because of the distinction of genres. The objection may seem a plausible one but its validity, as we shall see, is open to argument. Indeed, the very fact that the greatest writers of fiction in the seventeenth century were dramatists, whereas the greatest writers of fiction in the nineteenth century were novelists would suggest a fundamental deviation of

creative energy. This shift from one genre to another is especially noteworthy in France, for the Gaul has usually considered the theatre the *foyer*—par excellence—of literary success. That this phenomenon was, furthermore, not wholly volitional is proved by the inability of many of the great novelists to succeed in the drama. The forced preference on the part of a Balzac for the novel over the theatre carries an implication that is unavoidable: the stage postulated certain faculties which this eminent writer did not possess. The novel, on the other hand, was more accomodating; it permitted the substitution of other faculties for those demanded by the drama and, in consequence, held up promise of success to such masters of fiction who did not have the gift of the theatre. Wherein the nature of this gift differs from the novelist's gift, is worth a moment's consideration, for the distinction will suggest, I believe, a clue to the essence of nineteenth century realism.

The most obvious line of demarcation between the two genres is that a play is intended to be acted, whereas a novel is intended to be read. The immediate consequence of this difference is that in the drama the story is told by the characters, whereas in the novel the story is told by the author; that is, the dramatic writer finds himself obliged to present his narrative indirectly through the words of others, whereas the novelist may unfold his directly through his own words. The dramatic author, in short, must not merely be aware of how his characters will feel under given circumstances, but he must also know how they will express these feel-

ings themselves. The novelist, on the other hand, is not bound to possess so complete a knowledge. He must, it is true, know how his characters are going to feel, but he has the privilege, denied the dramatist, of interpreting these feelings himself, of communicating them to the reader in his own speech. Racine, for instance, will tell you exactly what is taking place in the souls of Phaedra or Roxana, but he does it in their words; Flaubert, on the other hand, will tell you equally well what Emma Bovary or Homais are thinking about, but he does it in his words. The distinction, though a minute one, is none the less important, for it implies a fundamental difference of method. Both types of author must have the sense of character but, whereas the dramatist's must be synthetic, the novelist's may be merely analytic and yet be eminently acceptable; in other words, the novel permits success with a limited supply of the synthetic gift, for by its very nature it invites the substitution of something less difficult. The fact that the greatest writers of fiction of the nineteenth century in France gravitated instinctively to the novel means then, two things: (1) that they lacked the faculty for character synthesis; and (2) that they all possessed something else to offset this weakness. The phenomenon appears first in Rousseau, the ancestor of all the moderns, and inasmuch as Realism derives directly from Romanticism (it has been called Romanticism going on all fours), a clear understanding of the nature of Rousseau's individuality will help our appreciation of the peculiarities of his descendants.

It has generally been conceded by the critics that

Rousseau's novel marks an epoch in the history of the genre, but wherein its precise originality consists is still a mooted point. Brunetière perhaps came nearest the truth when he said that the novelty of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* consisted in the treatment of love, but he immediately weakened this fine generalization by adding that, whereas that passion had hitherto been treated flippantly, either in the *gaulois* manner of the *fabliaux*, or in the galant manner of the Italians and *Précieux*, Rousseau was the first to present it as the one serious thing in life.⁵ Clever as this distinction appears, it is in reality only partially correct. That Rousseau was the first to consider love as the ruling quest of life is manifestly inaccurate. The *Précieux*, in their salons as in their novels discoursed of little else; to them as to Rousseau, this emotion was the major interest but, whereas the *Précieux* had transvalued it into a game of the intellect to be played according to rules, Rousseau presents it as a passion of the heart and the senses that knows no restrictions. Herein lies the essential originality, I believe, of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, and herein do we find the clue to Rousseau's own nature as well as the nature of all his followers. The loves of Saint Preux and Julie emphasize more clearly perhaps than anything else the curious duality of Rousseau's composition. In the words of Joubert, he had a "voluptuous mind; no one has ever described so perfectly the mingling of the spirit and the flesh and the delights of their marriage."⁶

⁵ *Le Roman Naturaliste*: p. 61.

⁶ Joubert: *Pensées*: p. 198 (Textes choisis par V. Giraud) Librairie Plon.

It is evident that we have here a psychological compound that is without precedent in the history of French letters. All of Rousseau's energies converged instinctively upon the meeting point between the spirit and the flesh, instead of concentrating, as had been the custom, upon one or the other. To this peculiar duality of his nature we may ascribe, however, other things besides the novel conception of love that makes the chief distinction of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. The bold treatment of *amour* as a composite passion, part psychic, part physical, is not the only important innovation forced into the novel by Rousseau. The fact that his *élan vital* was divided between two domains instead of being concentrated upon one, was bound to show itself in the by-products as well as in the chief processes of his fiction. Now one of the most far-reaching of these by-products was the idea of the milieu. It was natural that an author whose interests were divided equally between the psychic and the physical should give the physical equal space in his work, and inasmuch as one of the most tangible features of the physical is the place where the action occurs, it was inevitable that Rousseau should come to regard the setting of his story as co-equal in importance with the story itself. We have, in consequence, the first instance in French literature of repeated insistence upon the setting, of elaborate and highly artistic picturing of the place where the action unfolds. In other words, Rousseau is the first great writer of fiction in France to offset a lack of the faculty for synthesis in the domain of the

psychic by brilliant powers of description in the domain of the physical.

But this is not all. The trick of living alternately in the two worlds of the spirit and the flesh, of continually passing from one to the other and back again, developed a certain restlessness which showed itself in dissatisfaction with either world under prolonged residence. We find, in consequence, a tendency on Rousseau's part to long ever for the opposite of his actual condition. He dwells repeatedly in the *Confessions* upon his delight in escaping from reality and starting out for the "*pays des chimères*." Now this constant desire to flee from immediate actuality to some distant elysium dwindles to plain exoticism the moment you place your Paradise somewhere upon this earth. The choice of the shores of Léman for the setting of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* is an excellent case in point. Rousseau was living at the Hermitage when he conceived his novel. Charming as his immediate locality was, it had nevertheless, the drawbacks of actuality so that when he came to search for an adequate milieu for his story his restlessness made him pick a site in distant Switzerland. This choice, not only of milieu, but of distant milieu, is epoch-making for it introduces the new factor of exoticism. The beautiful lake of Geneva, we should never forget, was as unfamiliar to the average habitué of the Parisian *ruelles* as Hongkong or Tierra del Fuego are to us. That is a consideration which those critics who speak of Paul and Virginia as marking the début of exoticism have quite evidently overlooked. As a matter of fact,

But Milton has not
did all this earlier.

all that Saint Pierre did was to extend the Rousseau principle further in space. The later disciples, as we should expect, did scarcely more than apply the master's formula to new material. Mme de Stael gives us Italy, Chateaubriand, America, Spain, Greece, and the Orient. Little by little as exoticism in space reached the limits imposed by the poor traveling facilities of the day, writers began to exploit a new and less expensive field, exoticism in time. Chateaubriand, Sir Walter Scott, Victor Hugo turn to the Middle Ages as well as to distant lands for the milieu of their fictions, and thus the historical novel originates. We now come to Balzac, and inasmuch as his originality consists primarily in the dexterous twist which he gave to the Rousseau formula, it may be well to present a brief summary of the four phases which the evolution of the milieu underwent.

(1) Exotic milieu, space: Rousseau, Saint Pierre, Chateaubriand, Mme de Stael, Lamartine, etc.

(2) Exotic milieu, time: Chateaubriand, Walter Scott, Hugo, De Vigny.

(3) Exotic milieu, time and space: Chateaubriand, Walter Scott, Hugo.

(4) Domestic milieu, time and space: Balzac.

The idea of discarding the exotic in favor of the domestic appears now to have been so obviously the thing to do that its originality has never received the appreciation it deserves. Exotic milieu, we are too apt to forget, was the dominant fashion of 1830, and all contemporary writers were feverishly exploiting the last resources of the remote, the while blissfully

unaware of the rich domain right before them. It is Balzac's distinction that, harbouring no distaste for reality, he possessed in addition the acumen and independence necessary to break resolutely with the prevailing mode, and start one of his own. The shift from the distant to the immediate was epoch-making, for it effected at one stroke a complete revolution in the nature, scope, and purpose of the novel. The concentration of attention upon the familiar by eliminating the element of curiosity, made elaborate description of the milieu redundant. This put out of court the comfortable process of offsetting a poverty of character synthesis by a debauch of local color and started a reversion to the classical concept that the main interest of fiction is in the characters. But this does not exhaust the consequences of Balzac's innovation.

The transferring of the milieu from the exotic to the immediate occasioned a further, and if possible, even more important break with romantic tradition. The moment the setting of your story becomes familiar, the characters become familiar, for Turks or Hindoos do not live in Paris. If, therefore, you place your story in modern Paris, you must write about modern Parisians, and if your readers are Parisians, it is obvious that they will be well acquainted with the types to which your characters belong. You will find yourself obliged, in consequence, to portray your characters from very much the same angle that your readers view them if you are to be convincing. Thus it happened that Balzac, by the twist which he gave to the Rousseau formula, forced upon himself an objec-

But the immediate milieu was already used & described in the 18th cent.

*Abbé
P. de Brost*

tivity of attitude toward his characters that the Romantic writers had been free to disregard. This, it is evident, put an end once and for all to that identification of author and hero dear to the titanic disciples of Jean Jacques. Indeed we find here perhaps the most important result of Balzac's innovation. Along with the partial reversion to classical indifference toward physical externals, we have a parallel reversion to that objectivity of attitude which permeates all of seventeenth century literature. This revival of the impersonal manner implies an understanding of character psychology not found in Romantic art. It would seem, therefore, that Balzac's achievement amounted practically to a return to those fundamental principles which made the distinctive quality of the literature of the Grand Siècle. This, however, is only partially true.

The distinction of genres, the belief that tragedy was limited to the nobility, comedy to the bourgeoisie, and farce to the *valetaille*, artificial distinctions such as these had been so conclusively demonstrated by Romanticism to be invalid that no attempt was made to revive them. When we penetrate further and delve more searchingly into the mysteries of realistic art, we find that even in those essentials which appear to coincide with classical practice, there exists a subtle but important difference. The objectivity of a Balzac we discover to be of not quite the same quality as the objectivity of a Racine. Like all the descendants of Jean Jacques, Balzac possessed the knack of effecting new combinations of old ideas rather than the power of

creating new ideas. In other words, realism as he established it turns out to be an ingenious welding of ideas drawn from the apparently conflicting schools of Romanticism and Classicism. Just what the factors of this new combination were should by now be pretty clear. If Balzac discarded, on the one hand, the distinctions of genre dear to the Classicists, he also discarded the personal attitude beloved of the Romantics. On the other hand, if he preserved the objectivity practiced by the Classicists, he also retained the trick of living alternately in the spirit and the flesh developed by the Romantics. It is the fusion of these two elements with the shift from exotic to immediate milieu that we have, I believe, the ultimate answer to the problem of Realistic art.

The aim of the Realistic school to present an impersonal picture of the object, or to hold the mirror up to nature, may with perfect propriety be said to have been also the aim of the best writers of the Grand Siècle. The most obvious difference between the two schools is the absence in any of the Classical works of attention to physical externals; no description of the characters' appearance, no pictures, even brief, of milieu, no elaborate accounts of the technicalia of professions. On the contrary, the characters and their struggles which make up the story are presented in as abstract a manner as possible, divorced as completely as feasible from all idiosyncrasies of time or place. The Classical writers were interested, to the omission of nearly all else, in man, and even in man their attention concentrated almost exclusively upon one side of his nature. Inas-

much as they were highly endowed with the synthetic gift, they converged instinctively upon the psychic, and presented their people in the *finished state*, after the formative influences of heredity, environment, and occupation had made their contribution to the molding of the person's individuality. It is this synthetic method of character portrayal that explains the seventeenth century preference for the stage; the necessity of telling the story obliquely through the words of their characters, just suited the Classicists for it was precisely that fundamental expression of their characters' individuality that interested them. The Classicists, in short, attempted to hold the mirror up to nature, but its focus they directed upon the spirit.

With Balzac too we find, as I have intimated, a striving to achieve the impersonal attitude. Inasmuch, however, as his energies were divided between two domains, his practice of objectivity differs markedly from the practice made customary by the Grand Siècle. The presentation of the characters is no longer abstract, no longer divorced from time and place. On the contrary, the whole process straddles the domains of the psychic and the physical. In other words, Balzac gives a double picture of his people; he studies them in their psychology and their physiology; he depicts the effect of environment upon character, of character upon environment; the reciprocal influences of the spirit and the flesh; the conflict not only between soul and soul, but also between soul and matter. In brief, he tries in his way to hold the mirror up to nature, but whereas the Classicists had aimed it at the

center of the spirit, Balzac directs its focus upon the meeting point between the spirit and the flesh.

The shift is clearly important for it was bound to have far-reaching consequences. Although no valid criticism can be brought against it from the theoretical standpoint, as indeed it would appear in principle to have immeasurably widened the field of fiction, in practice we must confess that it was fraught with grave dangers. The fact of its location at the fork between the approaches to two domains proved an insidious peril. Investigation of the human soul is an arduous business, and in consequence it was inevitable that when the going in the domain of the spirit became difficult, the temptation to shift over into the physical where progress is easier (inasmuch as the physical is more tangible), it was inevitable that such a temptation would prove well-nigh irresistible. Indeed Balzac's entire method of presenting his people will corroborate the statement. In contradistinction to the synthetic method of Racine, Balzac employs the analytical process; in the parlance of today, he 'cracks up' the character into his constituent elements of heredity, environment, profession, habits and leaves it to the reader to reconstruct the synthesis. This retroactive method is undeniably ingenious, and no fault could be found with it were the balance between the psychic and the physical well kept. Unfortunately we can note, even in Balzac, a tendency to prefer the physical, to lavish minute attention upon it, to use it too often to explain the psychic, in fine to succumb to the temptation of transvaluing the spirit into terms of the flesh.

The distinction between this use of the physical and Rousseau's is highly significant, for it involves the whole distinction between Romanticism and Realism. Whereas Rousseau, by his choice of exotic milieu, could use the physical as an alternative to the psychic, Balzac, by his shift from the exotic to the familiar, was forced to use the physical as an interpreter of the psychic. In each case the physical is employed in the effort to escape the difficulties of the psychic, but in Rousseau's case the avoidance is frank, while in Balzac's it is casuistical. If it is easier to describe an exotic landscape than to draw a character, it is also easier to describe the ancestry, environment, professional struggles, personal habits of a character than it is to make the character who is the result of these influences talk as such a character would talk.

Taine complains in his brilliant essay that Balzac's characters have too often '*des mots d'auteur,*'⁷ that they express too frequently their author's reaction to the situation rather than their own. In this criticism I see interesting corroboration of my thesis. Deficient in synthetic power, Balzac finds himself upon occasions at a loss to know how his characters will react, and if artistic propriety forbids his shifting over into the physical, there is nothing left for him but to substitute his own reaction. We must remember too, that Balzac, being the founder of Realism, was the nearest of all realists to Romanticism. It is not easy to break away from one's antecedents and in consequence Balzac's frequent violations of his rule of objectivity

⁷ *Nouveaux Essais de Critique et d'Histoire* (Hachette): p. 103.

should not surprise us. Indeed these intrusions, implying as they do a lack of synthetic power, will help us to appreciate his forced preference for the novel over the stage. A play that is filled with '*mots d'auteur*' will not act, as the débacle of the Romantic drama and the later '*pièce a thèse*' have conclusively demonstrated. The novel, on the other hand, offers no such restrictions. By its very nature (that it was intended to be read) the genre invited not only the intrusion of the author, but also the intrusion of the physical, the picturing of milieu, the description of the characters' personal appearance, their gestures, dress, in short, all the things that in the drama were supplied by the actors, the costumes, and the scenery. The distinction deserves insistence. For whereas in the drama the author attends to the psychic and the stage manager to the physical, in the novel the author must attend to both.

Now experience seems to bear out the curious fact that no single individual possesses sufficient energy to fill both these domains, and yet that is precisely what the realist's nature will have it that he attempt. The division of his *élan vital* between the psychic and the physical appears, therefore, to preclude the possibility of supreme achievement in either. Indeed, we find here one of those curious contradictions first introduced by Rousseau. Even Balzac, that human dynamo, was often distressingly weak in the deeper recesses of character psychology. The frequency in his novels of '*mots d'auteur,*' or of frankly giving it up and shifting over into the physical, would argue that

he had set himself an impossible task, that a complete mastery of two such vast domains as the psychic and the physical is beyond the powers of one man.

The disproportion already evident in the *Comédie Humaine* becomes steadily more marked as we go down the list of Balzac's successors until in Maupassant and Zola we find the element of the psychic reduced to an absolute minimum. In other words, the focus of the mirror which Racine had directed upon the center of the spirit, and which Balzac swung over to the meeting point between the spirit and the flesh, has been pivoted still further until it very nearly converges upon the center of the flesh. It is this tendency which gives the naturalists their peculiar and unpleasant individuality. That this final exemplification of the realistic formula should have evoked indignation was to be expected; there are critics who cannot realize that decadence will always follow in the wake of progress.

In the ultimate reckoning, however, it is unfair to hold Balzac to account for the misdeeds of his successors; no one thinks of blaming the founder of a noble house for the excesses of his descendants. The idea of aiming the mirror at the meeting point between the spirit and the flesh was a genuine inspiration. The practice established by the writers of the Grand Siècle, although excellent, was inclined to be too exclusive. The physical exists, and no art that claims to be complete can afford to overlook it. Indeed the danger involved in the classical formula of degenerating into arid abstractions has been too clearly exemplified by

the eighteenth century to be dismissed. The psychic and the physical are bound together by mysterious ties, and any attempt to divorce them completely is foredoomed to failure. The pompous generalities or the dry maxims of eighteenth century tragedy are as dull in their way as are the anatomical debauches of a Huysmans or a Zola in theirs. Both principles, in fine, appear to exclude the attainment of perfection with human faculties; Classicism is too narrow, Realism too broad. That either one, however, is, in essential, superior to the other, still needs demonstration. With all due regard for the splendid achievements of the Grand Siècle, the fact remains that at its best, in the hands of a Meredith or a Turgeneff, the Realistic formula challenges impressively the formula of the Classicists even when expounded by Racine.

VI. RUDYARD KIPLING—PRIMITIVIST

THE ancient platitude that the estimate of an author's contemporary public is rarely just, that admirers as well as detractors are too near for the requisite perspective, and that balance of judgment becomes in consequence impossible, is illustrated in our own day with especial felicity by the literary fortunes of Rudyard Kipling. From the first sensation created by *Plain Tales from the Hills* to the publication of *Kim*, the attitude of Mr. Kipling's public (and it was deservedly large) may be described as one of expectation. The brilliancy, the smartness, the swagger of the early stories were tremendously captivating, and when it was learned besides that the author was still a young man, great things were naturally prophesied of him.

The succeeding books served only to increase among his admirers this feeling of expectancy, this belief that something big was coming. The discreet doubts suggested to the less emotional critics by the mediocrity of *The Light that Failed*, intensified, if anything, the impatience of the faithful who were determined that the great work was imminent. The publication of *Kim* occasioned, therefore, a roar of approval that suggested to an outsider the defiance of organized cheering. Here, it was trumpeted, was the masterpiece that had been foretold, a crushing rejoinder to those who had dared to hint that Mr. Kipling was not the equal of the great ones of the past.

With the setting-in of the inevitable reaction, we may note the beginning of the second period of Mr. Kipling's popularity. After the tumult and the shouting had died away, it soon became evident to the discriminating that *Kim*, despite its fine qualities, was, nevertheless, not a *Tom Jones*, a *Vanity Fair*, or a *Richard Feverel*. The realization of this fact spread, little by little, aided by the manifest inferiority of the master's later volumes, until the attitude of the public, which had formerly been one of expectancy, gradually changed to one of resignation. With the exception of a few superfervid partisans, people in general became reconciled to Mr. Kipling as he is, while a small group of self-styled intellectuals began to exhibit a franker disparagement.

Various explanations, or attempts at explanation, for Mr. Kipling's failure to produce the great work were put forth from time to time, but none, it seems to me, was ever entirely satisfactory. Leaving aside such delightful nonsense as the naive suggestion that his severe illness in New York had impaired his splendid faculties, we may first question whether any of the critics were correct in their diagnosis of Mr. Kipling's nature. All his readers, barring, of course, the so-called intellectuals, were dazzled from the first by the power, the brute vigor of his early work, and unthinkingly set it down as a splendid modern example of Anglo-Saxon sturdiness. Indeed, they seemed unanimous in ascribing to Mr. Kipling a generous share of that magnificent energy which we have usually con-

sidered to be England's most characteristic contribution to letters. This assumption, together with its logical corollary that the early stories were but the *coups d'essai* of young genius, inevitably led to the false conclusion that Mr. Kipling was to be a twentieth-century Fielding, and that once again we were to have a novel whose hero was a Man. The natural disappointment over the failure of the great work to come forth manifested itself, as I have said, in resignation, but a resignation of a peculiar sort, best illustrated perhaps by the words of Katherine Fullerton Gerould in her essay on *The Remarkable Rightness of Rudyard Kipling in Modes and Morals*. Mr. Kipling's fame, she asserts, rests not upon large works but upon "significant brevities." This curious statement is of considerable value for, apart from its charming naivetè, it gives us the clue, by inversion, to the fundamental weakness of Mr. Kipling.

It is quite true, as Mrs. Gerould says, that Mr. Kipling's fame rests upon "significant brevities," but what she and critics of a similar complexion cannot see, is that these "brevities" are "significant" in a sense diametrically opposed to her interpretation of the word. She means, of course, to be complimentary, to intimate that Mr. Kipling is brief from choice; whereas the exact reverse is the truth and, far from being brief from choice, Mr. Kipling is brief from necessity. Mrs. Gerould would intimate that Mr. Kipling prefers the short story whereas, in point of fact, Mr. Kipling's gifts restrict him to the short story. Indeed, Mr. Kipling's principal merit consists, not in compressing a profound

knowledge of human nature into epigrammatic form, but in camouflaging with much dexterity his miscellaneous superficiality. In this respect he is psychologically akin to the representatives of the movement described in France by the term *bas-romantisme*; that is, he is frankly to be classed—with certain important reservations to be mentioned later—among those of the moderns whom the lovers of classicism have been pleased to define as decadent. Such a statement may perhaps call out protests from the unthinking, who have been deluded by Mr. Kipling's artistry into considering him an emblem of Anglo-Saxon vigor, but an impartial inquiry will bring out some facts which even the staunchest of his admirers will find it difficult to avoid.

From J. J. Rousseau, the common ancestor, to the latest exponents of the movement, the main characteristic of all romantic writers has been a displacement of the conception of essentials. "It is the business of the novelist," says Alphonse Daudet, "to create characters, not to write fine prose." That the French master should have felt the need of stating so axiomatic a truth reveals the decadence that has befallen modern critical taste. The belief that cleverness of plot or beauty of style is of prime importance has ousted the classical doctrine that the characters constitute the essential element of the novel or the play. The fallacy of this modern idea appears especially glaring when we consider Shakespeare, Fielding, or Thackeray. We are all familiar with the chassis of Shakespeare's plays; and neither *Tom Jones* nor *Vanity Fair* has any plot

as the word is commonly identified by the devotees of O. Henryism. What interests us primarily in the work of these masters, is the characters. That all three were eminent stylists is an afterthought. The fact that they say the thing beautifully, important as it is, yields always to admiration for the thing itself. The formula of Daudet cannot, therefore, be emphasized too strongly in this day of tottering standards; in the final analysis, the chief business of fiction is the presentation of characters, not the concocting of trick plots or pretty phrases.

Now, suppose we apply this formula—admittedly severe—to Mr. Kipling, and see what we get. What characters does his name conjure up? Mulvaney, the best of *Soldiers Three*? Is he the equal, is he quite the equal of Falstaff? Stalky? How does he look beside Tom Jones? Very like Jones's valet, I fear. And is Kim the equal of Jones either, or of the brilliant Richard Feverel, the dashing Nevil Beauchamp. Do we love Kim as heartily as we do even such a stupid, blundering rascal as Rawdon Crawley? And Strickland, what is he beyond a name, a convenient lever for starting a smart detective story? Mowgli? After you strip him of his powers, unnatural if not supernatural, acquired while living in the jungle, is he a great character either? But how about Kipling's women? Well, there is Mrs. Hauksbee, but will any of Kipling's faithful care to place her beside Becky Sharp or Diana of the Crossways? William, from *William the Conqueror*, who liked "men who do things," is she a Portia or a Beatrix Esmond? And has Kipling anyone who arou-

ses deep affection as the good Colonel Newcome, such mixed emotions of respect and distaste as Lord Steyne? Can he produce even such a tremendous old scoundrel as Sir Pitt Crawley? Kipling's lovers? Scott and William, the Brushwood Boy and Miriam, for instance, —very nice, of course, but are they as poetic, (for it is *de rigueur* that lovers shall be poetic in fiction) are they quite as poetic as Ferdinand and Miranda, or Richard and Lucy Feverel?

The creation of characters, Kipling's apologists might say, is impossible in the short story. Difficult, we must admit that it is, but impossible, no. Flaubert did it splendidly in *Un Coeur Simple*, as did Maupassant in the rollicking tale called *Toine*, and Turgenev did it over and over again in his *Sportman's Sketches*. And all these masters created the personalities of their protagonists, each in a single short story. None of Kipling's people who appear in but one tale can compare for vivid existence with Felicity, Toine, or any of Turgenev's delightful rascals with the unpronounceable names, while Kipling's repeaters, Mowgli, Strickland, Gadsby are little better, although their appearance in a series of stories allows a more detailed presentation. Even Stevenson surpasses Kipling in this matter, for Will o' the Mill, to pick a random example, is a very living personality, a trifle odd perhaps, but none the less convincing and attractive.

The only conclusion, therefore, is that Mr. Kipling is unequal to the task, the very difficult task, of creating living personalities. He frankly lacks the power, the fundamental energy, without which the herculean

labor is impossible. His characters show dimly for a few moments, but with insufficient clarity to linger in the memory. The best known of them, Mowgli, stands out more sharply than the others, not because he is more complex or more living, but because he is more unnatural than they. In fact, Mowgli represents the ultimate *reductio ad absurdum* of the hero, as understood by the romanticists, the man of nature, and is especially deserving of study in that he is the logical outcome of Mr. Kipling's peculiar temperament. To classify Mr. Kipling as a romanticist, and Mowgli as the romantic hero, reduced to his lowest terms to be sure, may seem at first preposterous. But if we examine the matter more closely, fair ground for such a statement will appear.

The fundamental characteristic of the true romanticist is an intense dislike of immediate actuality, whether of time or place. This peculiar inversion was never perhaps exemplified with greater intensity than by the ancestor of all the moderns, J. J. Rousseau. In his *Confessions*, especially, does the master reiterate his horror of actuality, and his delight in escaping from it through reverie, in floating off in a dream to enchanted lands. Now, being himself an over-civilized product, it was inevitable that his Elysium, his fancies' paradise should be located in the primitive which, in his ignorance of scientific realities he conceived as a sentimental idyl of the Golden Age, the age of pastoral simplicity and rustic virtue, of innocent occupations and equally innocent joys. This type of inversion which Mr. Santayana has aptly termed the "corrupt desire to be primitive," has

been modified by each succeeding generation of romanticists until, in the person of Mr. Kipling, it attains a rare degree of complexity. Like Rousseau, Mr. Kipling prefers the primitive to the civilized, but beyond this general fact there is little external resemblance between them. Where Rousseau had dreamed of the primitive as the emblem of naive pleasures, Mr. Kipling's palate must have a more spicy fare. The idyl of pastoral virtue that Rousseau gratuitously assumed to have been characteristic of the primitive, Mr. Kipling, fortified by modern science, knows to be false; but where Rousseau would have been tortured by such knowledge, Mr. Kipling is delighted by it.

The very fact that primeval man was not what Rousseau had conceived him to be, a gentle patriarch, but a powerful brute, not an epitome of naive virtue from which civilized man has fallen, but simply a higher animal from which civilized man has risen, is precisely why Mr. Kipling likes him. In short, what Mr. Kipling has done, has been to give the Rousseauistic longing for the primitive a very sophisticated twist. He has substituted for the sentimental theory that primeval man was better morally than civilized man, the scientific theory that he was better physically; and in basing his preference upon this fact, Mr. Kipling makes it plain that his chief concern is with the physical aspects of life. This predominating interest in the physical, this constant and at times wearisome emphasis upon the physical rather than upon the moral or intellectual, is one of the salient peculiarities of Mr. Kipling and, inasmuch as it lies at the very foundation of his conception

of life, and consequently of art, it deserves to be examined in some detail.

The shifting of the quest for moral excellence to the quest for physical excellence is highly significant, for history has proved it to be symptomatic of encroaching decadence in the overcivilized. Like the Roman *délicat* who admired the burly gladiator, Mr. Kipling delights in the physical powers, of sense as well as of muscle, that appear at their maximum in primitive man, and he insists continually upon their stupendous worth. The higher powers, at least usually so considered, of intellect and imagination that made possible a Plato, a Dante, or a Newton, do not seem to interest Mr. Kipling very much; they belong to a different world, a world which does not hold a large place in his work. That he does not ignore these powers entirely is because he needs them in his business. For, if you investigate the matter at all carefully, you will find that Mr. Kipling's art consists in a single formula, the formula of writing in two worlds at once. Mowgli, his most characteristic creation, is a very felicitous example of this ingenious principle. The essence of his individuality consists in his being one part man to two parts animal, in his living in two worlds at once, the world of man and the world of animals. In other words, the character that Mr. Kipling has here created is what we may call, for want of a better term, a "trick" character. He owes his differentiation to a duality of nature nowadays not true of man. In contradistinction to the trained dog of the circus who has been taught by men to do things that animals in the natural state can't do, Mr. Kipling's

trained man has been taught by animals to do things that men under normal conditions can't do.

The cleverness that Mr. Kipling has displayed in the conception of this brilliant paradox is of a superficial sort, for it springs from weakness instead of from strength. The idea of a Mowgli, however ingenious, is in the last analysis a plain confession of impotence, for it means that only by giving him an abnormal duality can the author make his character distinct. If you remove Mowgli's extraordinary powers of insight and sense taught him by the animals, you have practically nothing left. That he remains in your memory at all, is not because he is a complex representative of our common humanity, but simply because he is a freak.

As for Mr. Kipling's animals—Baloo, Bagheera, Kaa, and the rest—will they withstand investigation either? Mr. Kipling may push further back into the primitive than did Rousseau, he may be discontented with mere pastoral existence, and long for a life yet more inarticulately physical. Even so, is his version of the primitive more correct in the light of modern discoveries than was Rousseau's? Are his animals more genuine, from the point of view of scientific accuracy, than were Rousseau's patriarchs? Will anyone of sense believe that a bear, a panther, a python, and a kite would club together, would co-operate quite in human guise to save a boy from a crowd of monkeys? Of course, it makes a good story for the immature. But is there any more truth in it than in Rousseau's idyls of pastoral innocence, at which it has become fashionable to sneer? Are not Kipling's *Jungle Books* the example

par excellence of the romantic cult of the primitive, and are they not essentially romantic in their flagrant substitution of charming sophistry for blunt truth? Is not Mr. Kipling's primitive very like Rousseau's after all, a sentimental assumption, a pleasing Utopia calculated to tickle agreeably the palate of the man in the street, surfeited with metropolitan routine?

There is another reason, however, besides those which I have already mentioned that will explain the persistent quest of the primitive in a writer like Mr. Kipling. I have already called attention, in discussing the character of Mowgli, to the peculiar nature of Mr. Kipling's art. Its basic formula, the location of the story, and consequently of the characters, in two worlds at once, will be found upon examination to coincide most happily with that other essential trait of Mr. Kipling's nature which we have been investigating, the fondness for the primitive. In other words, what Mr. Kipling has done, has been to combine with singular adroitness his technical discovery, the two-world formula, with the inclination of his temperament towards the primitive. The result of this amalgamation turns out, in practice, to be highly attractive, for it erects upon a simple foundation a structure that possesses a most deceptive appearance of complexity. For, if you will take the trouble to consider it, you will find that not only are his best stories, like the *Jungle Books*, located in the primitive, but what is more significant, in a very especial variety of the primitive, the meeting-point between two incommensurable worlds. In the *Jungle Books* we have the contrast under primitive con-

ditions, between the world of man and the world of animals; in his other stories, the contrast between the East and the West. *Without Benefit of Clergy, Beyond the Pale, The Mark of the Beast, The Man Who Would be King, The Bridge-Builders* are all set on the boundary line between the English and the Oriental races, the point where both civilizations disintegrate under the clash of contact, until the characteristic sophistication of each is reduced to its lowest terms; in short, until both retrogress to the primitive.

The selection of this especial locality for his stories bears eloquent testimony to Mr. Kipling's skill in making the most of his own shortcomings. By placing his work on the boundary between the civilizations of the East and the West, he can dispense with profound knowledge of either. The most superficial acquaintance with the elemental traits of the Englishman and the Hindu, if managed with cleverness, will be sufficient to cover a short story. And this cleverness Mr. Kipling possesses in the highest degree. His art as a writer of fiction consisting, as I have said, in a single formula, the formula of writing in two worlds at once, enables him to camouflage by smart juxtaposition of brilliant superficialities, his lack of inventive power. In *Black and White* he condenses with admirable, if unconscious, succinctness his recipe for the confection of the short story. Mix your colors, play the Englishman off against the Hindu, pass from one to the other and back again, dazzle by the startling contrasts of black man and white man, and you can finish a short story

before your reader discovers that you cannot say much about either.

That all of Mr. Kipling's best work depends on this ingenious principle, is proved by the fact that he has never written a great story that deals with but a single civilization, whether East or West. His writing, subsequent to his definite residence in England, is so manifestly inferior that all his admirers are forced to admit it, but the reason for this inferiority they do not seem to have grasped. They talk about the failing of inspiration, the dying out of the creative fire, and all that sort of thing, whereas the simple fact is that Mr. Kipling's formula will not work in smooth, sophisticated England. It requires the deep originality of a Thackeray or a Meredith to get contrast, vigor, and variety out of elegant, correct England. On the surface, both the people and the landscape present a quiet uniformity which baffles all but the profoundest observers. The external opposites, physical and psychological, of East and West that clash harshly under the fierce sun of India, are not to be had in smug, placid England, which means that a writer who deals chiefly in externals is hard put to find the stuff for a striking short story. The wealth of high-colored material, the conflict of primitive passions, the smashing contrasts of character and scenery presented by English outpost life in India, which made it easier to conceal creative weakness, are denied Mr. Kipling the moment he tries to write of England. No longer can he dazzle by brilliant juxtaposition of strikingly divergent civilizations, of Western activity and Oriental indolence, of practical achieve-

ment and poetic imagery, of machinery and mystery. The variety of England is the variety of delicate half-tones, of subtle complexities, in sharp opposition to India, the land of blazing colors and fierce simplicities.

In short, like the modern composers who must write in two keys at once (polyharmony), if they are to be interesting, Mr. Kipling must write in two civilizations at once if he is to produce anything of value. This similarity of procedure on the part of musician and writer is significant, and betrays a fundamental weakness characteristic of both. It is obviously easier to get variety out of two keys, or two civilizations, than out of one. You have more surface to mine, which means that you do not have to dig so deep, and in art as in everything else, it is the deep digging that is hard. It should be noted, too, that the variety in Mr. Kipling's stories, as in modern music, is an external variety, due not so much to the inventive powers of the artist as to the surface wealth of the material. This means that what the ultra-modern type like Mr. Kipling gives us is not a genuine originality, but a dazzling imposture of originality, and it is characteristic of latter-day appreciation that the imposture should pass undetected.

But this is not all. Despite his exceptional advantages of colorful materials, this modern artist cannot produce anything of substantial proportion; even with the unusual assets of the East versus West formula, Mr. Kipling has not the power to put forth anything but "significant brevities." To do him justice, it must be admitted that he knows it, and that in general he

does his best to keep within his limitations. With rare exceptions, he holds to the short story, the *conte*, and as long as he lived in India, or as long as the impressions of India were still strong in his system, he gave us one brilliant story after another, culminating in that characteristic collection *The Day's Work*, of which the first number, *The Bridge-Builders*, is perhaps the clearest example of his two-world formula. The decision to settle in England, important enough to any Englishman who has made his fortune in the colonies, was of exceptional gravity in Mr. Kipling's case. Although neither he nor his public was aware of it at the time, it settled the fate of his literary career. The two-world formula, East versus West (Indian tales), or man versus animal (Jungle Books) was no longer applicable to modern urbane England. The inevitable result was the gradual decline, from the point of view of merit, of his subsequent work, a decline that not even the great war has been able to arrest. All the talk about the dying out of Mr. Kipling's genius is, of course, sheer nonsense. Mr. Kipling's technical mastery was never more finished than it is today, he was never more able to say anything that he wanted but, alas, he has now very little to say.

His most popular stories since the fatal determination to settle in England, *An Habitation Enforced*, *They*, and the *Puck of Pook's Hill* series, owe their merit to the formula by which he won his early successes. *An Habitation Enforced* gives us the contrast between democratic industry and idle feudalism. It depicts the retrogression of a brisk business man, efficient and hard-

working, into the idle feudal landowner, pottering about on his estates and looking after the welfare of his tenants with good-natured condescension. That it is far from the splendid eminence of the Indian tales is because in this case the quest for the primitive leads back to idleness instead of to activity, and Mr. Kipling, like all decadents, and aesthetic worshipper of energy, finds it hard, very hard, to make the parasitical existence of the country squire seem estimable. *They*, which aroused so much enthusiasm with a certain public at the time of its appearance, is simply a very *outré* example of the two-world formula, for it is located on the frontier between the natural and the supernatural. The basic idea, the longing of the childless heroine, so powerful that it peoples her mansion with the spirits of young children, is simply a pretty conceit, shrewdly calculated to draw the favor of the sentimentalists. For the curiosity of those few who might like to know what a master could do with the same theme, I suggest Maupassant's *La Reine Hortense*. This *chef-d'oeuvre*, however, is not for the squeamish, not for those who must believe that "all's right with the world."

As for the *Puck of Pook's Hill* series, we have simply the Kipling formula applied in time instead of in space. For the East versus West, or Man versus Animal, he has substituted the Past versus Present, and given us a collection of clever historical vignettes the best of which are placed, as we might expect, in the primitive, but for Mr. Kipling, a new type of primitive, the primitive of time rather than place. Despite their attractiveness, they are not quite convincing; the magic

of oak, ash, and thorn is puerile rather than impressive, and in general, the setting is not sufficiently poetic to carry conviction. There are fine passages here and there, like the first glimpse of Hadrian's Wall; but the effect as a whole is disappointing.

There remain two types of stories to be discussed, one of which is the story that deals primarily with machinery. In *The Ship That Found Herself* and in .007, we have a very interesting case of the overcivilized quest for the primitive. The two-world formula appears here in a new guise as the Animate versus the Inanimate, with this difference, that Mr. Kipling attempts to endow inanimate things with a life of their own, to depict them as he did his animals as existing apart from man in a little world of their own, incommensurable with the world of man. The foundation of scientific fact upon which Mr. Kipling erected the fantastic *Jungle Books* is no longer to be found in these stories of animated machinery. Indeed, those of the critics who lauded these yarns to the skies were probably unaware that, in this instance, Mr. Kipling had reverted to one of the most ingenuous traits of primeval man and made capital out of it. Our hirsute forefathers, in their simplicity, attributed life to all inanimate things, and not merely life but sex. Now, all that Mr. Kipling has done has been to take up that aboriginal conceit and attempt to reconcile it to modern conditions. The result has been *The Ship That Found Herself*, .007, the *Bell Buoy* (verse), etc., very clever, to be sure, but possessing little merit other than that of the brilliant *tour de force*.

The peculiar twist which Mr. Kipling has given to the Rousseauistic longing for the primitive appears, however, not only in the more general features of his work, but even in such details as the language. Here, too, we find this persistent quest in the form of a conflicting duality. Mr. Kipling has simply gone back to the King James' version of the Bible, appropriated the powerful idiom of that masterpiece, and amalgamated it shrewdly with the language and life of today. This process, closely akin to Debussy's amalgamation of the whole-toned scale with the modern diatonic system, this process has resulted in the production of a peculiar medium of expression, remarkable as much for its singularity as for its power. From the very first appearance of *Plain Tales from the Hills*, people were impressed quite as much by the style as by the story, by the way the thing was said, as by the thing itself. This idiom, the result of combination rather than creation, is especially prominent in his poetry, and is largely responsible for its very distinctive charm. The compound of biblical quaintness and metropolitan raciness in a modern verse form setting, when handled by Mr. Kipling at his best (*Dipsy Chantey*, *Peace of Dives*, etc.) is undeniably effective, and explains much of his popularity. But the chief appeal, in his verse as in his fiction, is to be found after all in the two-world formula presented in terms of romantic nostalgia (*Mandalay*, *Song of Diego Valdez*, etc.).

There remains one important feature of Mr. Kipling's art which should not be omitted from even so summary an article, and that is his method of telling

the story. At its most characteristic (*Sending of Dana Da*, *The Bonds of Discipline*, *Their Lawful Occasions*, etc.), it bears an interesting resemblance to the methods of the modern artist in painting and music. The theory of broken colors that has been developed by the impressionistic painters, finds its parallel not merely in the music of such artists as Debussy, but also in the fiction of writers like Mr. Kipling. In painting, this theory consists in presenting a given color in the primitive stage of its component elements, rather than in the ultimate stage of the completed color. The fusing of these primitive elements instead of being done beforehand on the palette by the painter's brush, is done afterward on the canvass by the observer's eye. The process is similar in music. The overtones of a given chord play the part of the primitive elements of a given color; the fusing is done afterwards by the listener's ear instead of beforehand by the composer's notes. In both cases, the synthesis is abstract and mental rather than concrete and physical, and is done, it should be pointed out, not by the artist but by his audience (observer or listener) acting under the impulse of his suggestions.

Now if we consider the matter carefully, we shall find that Mr. Kipling's especial contribution to the art of narration is the application of this retroactive process of broken colors to literature. Instead of molding the story into the clear outlines of the finished shape before presenting it to the reader, as did the classicists, Mr. Kipling attempts to give it in the original stage of nature, still enmeshed in the irrelevancies of the

raw material. The narrator, whoever he may be, is represented as primarily more interested in his own affairs than he is in the story, and hence what he tells of the story, the thing the reader wants to hear about, is a very slight proportion of what he actually says, a hint here, a suggestion there, dropped every time the orbit of his interests touches the orbit of the story. The relationship between this method and the broken color process in painting and music is obvious, for here too, the synthesis is completed afterward by the reader, instead of beforehand by the writer. The especial charm of this trick of presenting the narrative tangentially, of giving all the important material in parentheses, consists, we should note, not so much in delight in the story itself as in the pleasure of disentangling the story from the mass of irrelevancies cunningly arranged by the writer. In other words, the emphasis is laid primarily upon the manner of telling rather than upon the thing that is told, which means that the artist, having little of direct interest to present, must sting the reader's attention by indirect method of presentation. In all fairness to the impressionists, however, we must admit that their principle has some foundation in fact. Few colors in a landscape are primary; every musical note has its over-tones; and few of us in telling a story can subordinate our personal interests to the story itself. As a matter of fact, therefore, what the impressionists have done has been a reversion to the primitive, an attempted reconstruction of color, tonality, or story as they exist in the primary stage of nature. But, being over-civilized, the impressionists

over-emphasize the primitive elements of color, tonality, or story, with the result that instead of achieving a simple rendering of nature, they give us an over-spiced, exotically artificial product, further removed from actuality than was the work of the classicists, who professed little interest in such things.

It is a fortunate thing for Mr. Kipling that his writing, at its best, contains something besides this *bas-romantisme*. The Anglo-Saxon heritage of physical vigor has been sufficiently powerful to arrest in a measure the encroachments of decadence, and to enable him to give us a few works, albeit short, of unquestioned solidity and power. There are times even, when he drops entirely his impressionistic manner, and tells the story with classic simplicity and reserve. *Without Benefit of Clergy*, *Muhammad Din*, *Beyond the Pale*, *The Man Who Would be King*, are splendid examples of this; they contain very little plot, very little movie stuff; and yet they can be read over and over again with unflinching pleasure. That is the true test of eminence in the domain of fiction, and it is interesting to discover that those of Mr. Kipling's stories which meet this test successfully are his least characteristic. In them he forgets to be clever, to say smartly cynical things, to pose; in short, he forgets Mr. Kipling, and in proportion as his idiosyncrasies dwindle, does the value of his art increase.

The same holds good of his verse; the one pure poem in his entire repertoire, *To the True Romance*, reveals similar high qualities: loftiness of theme, nobility of emotion, and exquisite perfection of form.

It would be well for the self-styled intellectuals, the parlor poets and the rest, who make a practice of sneering at Mr. Kipling, it would be exceedingly well for these mental homeopaths if they had to their credit so fine an achievement. For sustained exaltation and classic repose, this poem has few peers in modern verse, and it amply justifies the phrase of Charles Eliot Norton: "The English poets from Chaucer to Kipling."

Fine, however, as is the *True Romance*, finer poems have been written; great as are his best short stories, greater ones still have been written; in fact, Mr. Kipling has been surpassed in every domain of literary activity save one: the horror story, the story dealing with the supernatural. In *The Mark of the Beast* he has produced beyond cavil the best thing of its kind in literature. Even Maupassant pales by comparison for Mr. Kipling has reverted, with incredible power, to the most primitive, the deepest-rooted of all human horrors. It was inevitable that this especial type of story should exercise a strong fascination for Mr. Kipling. Located on the borderland between the two worlds of the natural and the supernatural, it presented splendid opportunities for the application of his formula. In *The Mark of the Beast*, moreover, he has succeeded in developing his favorite principle with especial felicity, for what he has actually done has been to multiply his formula by four. The story in this case is written, not in two worlds, but in eight: the natural and the supernatural, the East and the West, man and animal, and finally, disease and health, for

the protagonist is a Hindu priest, magician, and leper who transforms by loathsome power an Englishman into a wolf. The miracle is recounted in Mr. Kipling's very best style, itself a *chef-d'oeuvre* of vigor and suggestive force; and so appalling is the conception, so perfect is the artistry, that the story remains absolutely without a rival in any literature.

It is significant, I think, that here alone Mr. Kipling knows no superior.

Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.

VII. O. HENRY—JONGLEUR

NOT the least amusing of literary paradoxes has been the posthumous fame of O. Henry. At the height of his prosperity, a prince of best sellers and monopolist of the short story market, the years that followed his untimely death appear to have thrust upon him a more serious esteem. Considered in his prime as little more than a smart panderer to the popular craving for slang and surprise, he is now in a fair way to be regarded in some quarters as a classic. University libraries include complete editions of his work, seminars in literary composition are directed to accept his stories as models of adroit narrative, earnest scholars investigate his bon-mots, his inversions of plot or psychology and report on their findings with gravity, publishers bring out "éditions de luxe" under the alluring if misleading title of the "American de Maupassant; in short, the modest prestidigitator to the Four Million is about to be solemnly ushered to a seat in the Academy of the literary Immortals. How the irony in this final turn of the wheel of fortune would have affected him, we may only surmise; on the other hand, we do know what he thought of the honorary degree, "American de Maupassant." Nothing could make him angrier than to be compared to the French master, and in this indignation there was real virtue: the title is unfair to both of them. In truth, no two writers belonging apparently to the same literary move-

ment, and possessing a few evident faculties in common, could be at heart, more unlike than Sidney Porter and Guy de Maupassant.

The easy parallel between the American exponent of the tabloid thriller and the Latin expert may be taken as a representative sample of criticism as the art is practiced in these our United States. The superficiality of the comparison confesses to a lack of thoroughness, to an absence of intellectual acumen that appear the boon companions of the American love for the obvious and flashy. For if we investigate the work of the two writers with energy, we find that the further we go, the more widely do their natures diverge. The argument that both have their origins in the same literary movement is beside the point. It is possible for two men starting from the same place, to advance in opposite directions, and, as it happens, that has been one of the commonest features of romanticism. There could, indeed, scarcely be found an apter instance of this curious phenomenon than the one presented by the artistic careers of O. Henry and de Maupassant. In the final analysis, the fact that both were short story specialists, that both possessed the knack of springing the Jack-in-the-box dénouement about exhausts the kinship between them.

Upon the mature reader, the typical Maupassant story leaves the impression of absolute reality, of life in the raw, unarranged by art; the representative O. Henry yarn, on the contrary, stamps the memory as a highly dexterous juggling of paradox, improbability, and coincidence. The divergence is clearly fundamen-

tal. Maupassant is a realist, and a super-realist, whereas O. Henry is an avowed romanticist. In fact, he rather fancied himself in the rôle of Scheherazade in ordinary to the Four Million; he professed, as time went on, an ever increasing interest in his chosen part of revivalist of the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*; as his titles would indicate, he felt himself the discoverer of a new Orient, all the more piquant in that it was located in the West, a Bagdad more fecund than the Bagdad of old in the marvellous, the magical, the wondrous,—Bagdad on the Subway.

With this no sensible person will quarrel. Any man has as much a right to be a romanticist, as he has to be a realist, a naturalist, a cubist, an imagist or any other variety of -ist. The point of importance in the whole matter, is that the moment you join a given artistic sect, you repudiate the others, and with them, interest in immense and varied segments of life. Man, like all other phenomena of nature, will always escape even the most elastic of formulae; so endless and conflicting is his variety that all attempts to squeeze him into statistics have failed. The Greeks, and in imitation of them the Latins, and the French of the neo-classical period succeeded perhaps better than all others; indeed, succeeded so well that many people of intelligence still refuse to admit that their findings can be emended. The supermen of the Age of Pericles, concentrated their investigations upon a very small élite, the most remarkable instance of the survival of the fittest that evolution can point to. The result of their studies cannot, in consequence, be con-

sidered final, for it is not based on sufficient data to be conclusive. However much that may distress the classicists, the inadequacy of the formulae originated by the Greeks should serve, on the other hand, to dampen the conceit of our cocksure modern schools that profess so glibly to have mastered all the secrets of humanity.

Now the fountain head of all these schools is clearly that curious movement of revolt known as romanticism, whose first and most powerful spokesman was Rousseau. He did not, of course, originate it; no single individual is capable of forcing the entire race to a complete reversal of all its conceptions of life. Rousseau came simply at the right moment, and he happened, further, to be more deeply, more widely representative of the revolt than others. In addition, he possessed a faculty for expressing the new ideas and emotions which has remained unsurpassed to this day. The important thing for our purpose, however, is that we find in the work of O. Henry a striking illustration of the Rousseau formula. The Great Obscurantist's most alluring discovery seems to have been a new perception of the duality of human nature. "One would say," he admits in the *Confessions*, "that my head and my heart do not belong to the same person." Realization of this peculiar divergence had certainly occurred to men before Rousseau; all intelligent minds have been aware of the warring elements in human nature but, whereas the classicists had striven with might and main to reduce this incompatibility to a minimum, Rousseau did his best to increase it. In

other words, Rousseau's originality consists really in a shift of attitude toward fundamental facts. The possibilities which this fascinating principle opened up, were apparently limitless; so vast, indeed, was the new world which he had discovered that countless followers in the century and a half since his death have failed to exhaust its treasures. The trick of living in two worlds (the head and the heart or the spirit and the flesh, which is Rousseau's main exploitation) was applied by his pupils in other ways. Specialists arose on all sides who made it a business of working this formula in ever narrowing domains of human activity; as time went on, and the internal resources of human nature began to wear thin, the exploiters turned to externals. Mendelssohn or Tieck express themselves in two arts (music and poetry) at once; Gautier and Hugo in painting and poetry; Kipling tells two stories in one civilization, or one story in two civilizations; Debussy writes in two modes (diatonic and whole-toned scales), or in two keys at once; Joseph Conrad writes of two elements at once; poets write free verse; essayists pour forth prose poems, etc., etc. Although the nature of the combinations in vogue today would argue that the end is in sight, still it must be confessed that all the possibilities of the Romantic chess-board have not yet been played out. Personally I will own that, amusing as it is, I shall be glad when the game is finished and we shall be free to start a new one.

Now O. Henry, as I have already intimated, belongs to the Romantic movement. It would probably have

surprised him, perhaps painfully, to be classed among the descendants of a person of so dubious a character as Jean Jacques, but the fact is unavoidable; O. Henry was a romanticist, and furthermore a late one. The significance of his appearance at the beginning of the 20th century, during (we hope) the last stages of the Great Malady deserves especial consideration. The Rousseau formula of duality, whether in content or expression, had been worked pretty hard before Sidney Porter felt the itch to write; all the larger, the readier, the easier domains had been systematically exploited, and so conscientiously had the job been done that to the average observer nothing this side of eccentricity remained. Indeed, the rise of the erratic schools, cubism, futurism, imagism, etc., would seem to have proved that all that was sane in Romanticism had been exhausted. But O. Henry had a remarkably shrewd eye.

The New World, South as well as North of the equator, had been written up before *Cabbages and Kings*. In our own hemisphere, authors from Cooper to Mark Twain had made famous the frontier life of the early settlers, the raw struggles of the pioneers, the Indian wars, the logging life of the Mississippi, the gold hunters of '49. Other, and more consciously elegant scribes had professed with Howells and James, to study the new civilization that had arisen upon the foundations laid by our forefathers. That a distinctly American literature, however, had been developed is a matter for reasonable doubt; as Voltaire would say, there is material there for extended conversation.

Indeed, if exception is made of a little of Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Thoreau, and Walt Whitman, we may consider the huge balance of our native output but an imitation of European models. Howells' stuff, for instance, recalls Thackeray without the stick; James has the artificiality, but lacks the body of Meredith; Emerson is a Concord Montaigne. In other words, our writers, with a few exceptions, were un-American; they wrote with their eyes on Europe and their backs to the scene before them. We need not be surprised, therefore, if they did not become aware of American life as it is, if they were unable to perceive the quality that distinguishes it from the older civilizations of Europe, if they failed to grasp the essence of that individuality which permeates all our activities, which, to borrow a term from Chemistry, is the base of our boasted Kultur. Just what is the nature of this base? A careful appraisal of its peculiar complexity will go far to explain the idiosyncrasy of such a writer as O. Henry.

Our noble country has often been dubbed, in Fourth of July orations, or Campaign Speeches, the "Melting Pot," and we have come to accept the epithet with complacency. That we realize, even dimly, how loosely the terms fits, is debatable; in fact, it is almost a certainty that the majority misunderstands the situation completely. The conventional interpretation is of the United States in the rôle of a highly polished crucible wherein the raw materials of Europe are fused into a new and homogeneous culture; in other words, that America, by virtue of its alchemy, trans-

forms the dross of the Old World into the gold of the New. Such a conception is undoubtedly flattering to our pride, but that it is anything more than a fatuous myth, is absurd. On the contrary, honesty compels the piquant admission that the reverse accords better with the truth. Our country may with some propriety be called a "Melting Pot" but, at its best, it is a crucible of crude design and rough efficacy in which samples of European culture in varying degrees of advancement, are mixed up pell-mell, and stewed together until much, if not all of their sophistication has evaporated. Some varieties withstand the *aqua regia* of the primitive struggle for existence better than others, but all of them lose something. The result is, consequently, the grotesque mess of slag, scale, rock, dross, with here and there an undissolved jewel which we proudly describe as our civilization. In short, what the "Melting Pot" turns out, is not one new culture, compounded of many raw materials, but an unfused mixture of many old cultures in varying degrees of individual retrogression. How completely foreign to the situation in any of the European countries this is, needs no insistence. Even the less advanced of the smaller civilizations across the Atlantic possess a distinctive note, a clearly established hierarchy of attributes among which a given one predominates sufficiently to tone the whole, but such is not the case in America. Our distinctive note is to have no distinctive note, to be a conglomeration of sharply divergent entities, all on practically the same plane of importance. The absence of unity, of coherence, of repose that such

a state of affairs entails is perhaps the one salient characteristic of our Kultur. Life in America is not smooth, orderly, dignified, flowing in long established channels; on the contrary, it is restless, feverish, pushing, swarming, constantly breaking the rude levees and overflowing from one domain into another. Every state, county, city, family is in ceaseless rivalry with some other, struggling, hating, fearing its competitor; nothing is stable, everything, everybody is either going up or going down. In fine the social life of the United States bears a relation to the Social life of Europe somewhat similar to the relation between the boiling crater of a Vesuvius and the quiet lake of an extinct volcano. In both cases the fire is there, but in one it has retreated for the time being much further underground. If we remember in this connection, that Classic art is founded on repose, Romantic art upon restlessness, we can realize without difficulty what a rich field the American Scene offered to a writer of romantic instincts like O. Henry.

The Rousseauistic formula of playing off incommensurables against one another, which in the old country had been so well applied that little of any value remained, found new and dazzling opportunities in a land of myriad divergencies such as ours. The absence of any fundamental unity in American life which would have dismayed a classicist was, on the contrary, just what the Romanticist needed. One of the latter's most serious weaknesses is a lack of energy, of the driving power which alone makes possible the arrival at essentials, the divination of what lies beneath

the surface of appearances. No better illustration of the Romanticist's predicament when faced by a smooth, homogeneous culture, could be found than the case of Kipling. Dazzling when writing of British outpost life in India, he was ruined, artistically, the moment he settled in England. The urbane uniformity of life's surface there was all he could see; the fire beneath quite escaped him and, in consequence, his later work is remarkable only for its dullness. O. Henry, on the other hand, was preserved from a similar literary débacle, not by any virtue of his own, but by the simple fact of his residence in America. Lack of keen perceptions, of penetrating analysis, of imaginative reconstruction of the hidden mysteries beneath the surface was no serious artistic handicap to a writer this side of the Atlantic, provided he possessed a quick eye for picturesque externals. By smart juxtaposition of glaring antitheses, social, psychological, linguistic, conjoined to a juggler's gift for the trap-door dénouement, O. Henry contrived to produce some two hundred short stories without giving himself away. That his untimely death robbed the world of any masterpiece, I venture to doubt. The common eulogy of the critics (i. e. those who admired him; there is another group) that "he died with his best work still in him" was a nice thing to say at the time, but that really exhausts its merits. There is no sign whatever in his work, once he had found his vein, of progress; number 1 of his 200 good stories is just as good as number 200. That he would have written something big had he lived, is a hypothesis that will withstand no opposi-

tion; our old champion Antecedent Probability knocks it out in one round. The habit of couching one's criticism in the conditional contrary to fact is unfortunately too common a practice in the United States. It betrays a want of acumen, an eagerness to escape the work of investigating the reality at hand that is characteristic of American bluff. All of O. Henry's critics, even those who most warmly admired him felt in one way or another that he had missed somehow the attainment of true greatness, and in their desire to explain his failure without prejudice to him or labor to themselves, hit upon the easy solution that he died in mid-ascent of Parnassus. The truth, however, compels the frank and admittedly harsh statement that, no matter how long his life, he could never have reached the summit; he did not possess those gifts, either of energy, imagination or insight which enable mortal men to attain and dwell at ease in the rare atmosphere of the Olympians. All this you will say, amounts to little more than a list of generalities, of statements rather than of proofs. I agree, and will admit that my thesis calls for more substantial support. What I have said above was simply intended to be viewed in the light of the necessary preliminaries; certain misconceptions needed to be exposed, certain fatuous myths exploded before any sound, sincere investigation of O. Henry's work could be attempted. I believe the moment has come, however, for a more detailed examination of his art.

O. Henry's stories are grouped under various titles, which were evidently intended by the author to suggest

the tone of the collection: *Cabbages and Kings*; *The Four Million*; *The Trimmed Lamp*; *Options*, etc. In some cases the titles are apt, but in others they could be exchanged without damage. The collection, *Strictly Business*, for instance, could figure equally well as the *Four Million*; many of the stories in *Roads of Destiny* would be as appropriate under *Cabbages and Kings* as are the lawful inmates of that directory, and vice versa. The same holds good for the groups labelled: *Voice of the City* or the *Trimmed Lamp*. In short, it would seem that the essential quality of his gift had escaped O. Henry himself. His failure to perceive that the resemblance between stories was, in many cases, superficial, is not serious of itself, but it deserves insistence in that it is a symptom of a real weakness. The inability to see beneath the surface of his own work, would encourage the inference of a similar incapacity to see beneath the far more misleading surface of life, and this, all will admit, is a graver matter. Now, if we put any one of his representative stories under the microscope, we find precisely that. O. Henry has no understanding of life at all comparable to Turgenev, Chekhov, Flaubert, or even Maupassant. This means that in order to tell a story he had to find something else. Turgenev will achieve variety by dexterous counterplay between the hidden forces and the outer restraints of life. That is, he gets his contrasts by shrewd juxtaposition of the externals and internals of one life. O. Henry, on the other hand, because of his inability to penetrate the surface, can attain variety only by juxtaposition of the

externals of two lives. What for instance do we have in *Cabbages and Kings* or *Roads of Destiny*, i. e. those stories of South America, but the contrast between our life and the life of the Spanish Americans. In every one of these picaresque tales the antithesis is between glittering superficialities; the fundamental divergencies between the mystical, muddle-headed Anglo-Saxon and the clear-brained, passionate Latin escaped O. Henry entirely. All he could see was the piquant contrast between the langorous poetry of their speech and the crisp rawness of our slang, their physical indolence and our practical activity. In consequence, his *contes* below the Equator deal all of them with the two civilizations, for his knowledge of either will not suffice, by itself, to fill a short story. How much, for example, can he make out of a South American revolution? The 13 pages of the *Fourth in Salvador*. Clever? Amusing? Certainly, but consider, if you please, what Joseph Conrad could do with the same material in that masterpiece, *Nostromo*. The *rapprochement*, you will say, is unfair. Perhaps it is, for it is equivalent to the comparison between a magnificent life-size painting and a newspaper caricature. O. Henry you will object, "did not try to write a novel; he was a short story writer." I agree with you, but allow me in my turn to ask if you can point to a single effort in his chosen field of the short story that is composed in one life, in one mode, or in one speech, that does not attempt to combine two or more lives, modes, or speeches, that does not strive to get a homogeneous effect out of heterogeneous material. In

short, can you give a single example from his repertoire that gets below the surface, that handles with a master's ease the hidden springs of the thing we call life?

But suppose we look into those collections that purport to picture our civilization: *The Trimmed Lamp*, *The Four Million*, *The Voice of the City*, *Strictly Business*, etc. They, you may insist, are written in one key. Superficially the diagnosis seems plausible, but let us pursue our quest a bit further. Those stories that deal with New York, Bagdad on the Subway, are they, for instance, written in a single mode? What is the point of the *Call of the Tame* but the conquest by New York of a Cow-puncher from Dakota, the Victory of the East over West? The *Defeat of the City*, is that anything more than the country versus the metropolis? The *Gold That Glittered* is no more than the fortunate adventures of a South American Revolutionist in New York, or Latin versus Anglo-Saxon; *Babes in the Jungle* records the defeat of Western sharpers by the superior technique of the Manhattan craftsmen; *Compliments of the Season*, the *Complete Life of John Hopkins*, the *Girl and the Habit*, the *Social Triangle*, *While the Auto Waits*, *Lost on Dress Parade*, *Nemesis and the Candy Man*, *A Cosmopolitan in a Café*, illustrate on the other hand, the Romantic formula in a different posture, the contrast between our Aristocracy and our *tiers état*, between the Four Hundred and the Four Million. It should, I think, be obvious that the trickery in these amusing yarns consists simply in the crisp juxtaposition

of elegance and tawdriness, of luxury and destitution, of gentility and vulgarity, of cloaked millionaires and cloak models.

As for those stories of the West, Southwest, and South, we can find the same principle in operation as it is elsewhere; what difference there is, is one of disguise. *Madame Bo-Peep of the Ranches*: New York in Texas; *The Buyer from Cactus City*: Texas in New York; *One Dollar's Worth*: American versus Mexican; *Whistling Dick's Christmas Stocking*: Hobo versus Gentleman; *The Department of History, Statistics and Insurance*: Officials versus Outlaws; etc. In short, we must pay O. Henry the compliment of admitting that he could do what our other writers could not do, find material in our Kultur to fit his limitations. His eye may not have been penetrating, but it was quick and shrewd; it enabled him to see what others could not see: the infinite, if superficial, variety of the Melting Pot, the welter of conflicting colors, the dazzling antitheses thrown off by the seething struggle of our civilization. And in these clever stories we get an intense picture of the swift inconstancy of our life, a keen impression of the instability of our social institutions, a kaleidoscopic rendering of the headlong relativity of our existence. The fact that we have no basic culture, no indigenous standards which seems to have puzzled so many, found in O. Henry an enthusiastic supporter. A Romanticist, resting his art on the formula of multiplicity, he could have encountered no field more congenial than our America. The very absence of fundamental stability in our life was to him

a Godsend; it saved him from *débauche* in that it permitted the apparent permanence of his inspiration by offering an endless procession of new disguises for his formula. That he was smart enough to appraise the situation correctly and make the most of it, is very much to his credit; that in doing so, however, he gave proof of "amazing genius" is less certain.

Like so many of the moderns, O. Henry was a man of one idea; all his energies, his dexterity, his cunning focussed upon the problem of dressing that idea out in a dazzling series of ever changing costumes, rather than in the creation of ever new ideas. With the vulgar, the uncritical, he naturally succeeded, but with the discerning his fate has been less complimentary. Indeed, the majority of those who make a profession of intellectuality see a point in ignoring him, or in listing him disdainfully among the who's who of the Newspaper guild. This I consider unfair, a typical instance, in our criticism, of pseudo rather than genuine intellectuality. What the intelligentsia fails to perceive, is that O. Henry is a craftsman rather than an artist, that his gift is not inspirational but mechanical, that instead of making ever new designs, he repeats the same design on ever new material. With what remarkable persistency he pushes the romantic trick of conflicting duality to its uttermost limits will be even clearer if we look into his technique more minutely.

Suppose we consider for a moment the question of his colloquialisms. To the majority, O. Henry's chief attraction is the picturesque flavor of his slang; to the minority, he is but a vulgar writer with an exuberant

facility for low *argot*. In both praise and blame, and I have heard much of both, I have yet to find an illuminating statement of the nature of his effects in this genre. What both Intelligentsia and Stultitia have seemingly failed to perceive is the curious fact that here also, indeed, especially here does O. Henry practice his formula of contrasted divergencies. In other words, he gets his results by the ingenious trick of bringing into sharp opposition the measured flow of dignified English, and the racy sparkle of metropolitan slang. The one offsets the other, and vice versa, just as East offsets West, North offsets South, Poverty is a foil to Wealth, or magistrate a foil to crook. Such stories as *Whistling Dick's Christmas Stocking*, *Proof of the Pudding*, *A Bird of Bagdad*, *The Fifth Wheel*, *The Girl and the Habit*, and above all *By Courier* owe their charm primarily to the contrast between the stilted and the colloquial, between cold, staid, conventional English, and warm, colorful, reckless *argot*. *By Courier* is an especially felicitous illustration of the O. Henry formula at its best. This smart little *conte* of the ignorant but shrewd messenger boy who runs back and forth between the sulky lovers' in the park, translating their stiff, melodramatic phraseology into his grotesque metaphors until he succeeds in effecting a reconciliation, is the example, par excellence, of the principle. The boy's slang in this case, offers little that is intrinsically new or imaginative, but thanks to the shrewd antithesis created by the lovers' high flown periods, the entire combination achieves an effect of surprising originality. The thing was easy

enough to do, the intellectuals will say. I will grant that willingly. The point, however, is not that it was easy or difficult, but that nobody before O. Henry had ever thought of doing it. Like Columbus' egg, perhaps, it is a secondary, rather than a primary originality, but whatever its nature, it is indubitably his, and no disdain, however superior, can deprive him of it.

There are, of course, many stories that are written entirely in slang. The collection, for instance, called the Gentle Grafter is a case in point. There was obviously no opportunity here for contrast between orthodox speech and verbal audacities. To get variety into the language of these picaresque reminiscences of an entertaining crook, O. Henry was forced to some exertion, and to his credit, be it said that he gave himself that trouble. The speech of Jeff Peters coruscates with witticisms, with 'Malapropisms,' with clownish twistings of the language, with verbal 'Charlie Chaplinisms'; in short, the genial Jeff Peters, besides being a versatile cracksman, is also a remarkable linguistic contortionist. The initial effect of his pyrotechnics is undeniably dazzling; what neither the amateur nor the professional critics seem to have noticed is that here too, the trick is mechanical. All that O. Henry has done has been to dovetail two meanings in one word, two ideas in one sentence, two languages in one phrase: "illegible for office," "charity covers a multitude of skins," "requiescat in pieces."

The first of these examples offers, as it happens, a piquant instance of the kind of change we love to call progress. Where Artemus Ward misspelled the word,

O. Henry misuses the word. The advance in refinement is unavoidable, but to anyone of discernment, it is an advance in externals only. As regards the second and third of these verbal acrobatics, we have a more significant situation. Both of them exemplify O. Henry's formula to a nicety in that each is an attempt to combine incommensurables. The arrangement, "charity covers a multitude of skins," is particularly appropriate to my argument. The word "skin" is used here in its colloquial connotation, "skin game"; that is, O. Henry's "mot" is achieved not by the creation of a new idea, but by the combination of two old ideas, one expressed in conventional English, the other in the racy idiom of the metropolis. A similar criticism holds good for "requiescat in pieces"; the combination here is even more mechanical for it amounts simply to a new kind of maccaronic. Both instances (skin—sin; pieces—pace) rely for their effect upon similarity rather than identity of sound. This type of joke, cousin germaine to the pun, is not of a rare or admirable consistency and when we realize, in addition, that it is engineered by a combination of ready made idioms, or ready made ideas, rather than by the creation of a new idiom or a new idea, our praise cannot be wholly unqualified. Especially is this true of 'requiescat in pieces.' A man of Jeff Peters' ignorance would not be likely to introduce Latin, even maccaronic Latin, into his conversation. His appalling misconceptions of English put out of court the assumption of any familiarity, however illegitimate, with the tongue of the Caesars.

Real wit resembles somewhat the process of casting; two factors are postulated by that art, the metal and the mould. Cellini's knowledge appeared in his choice of the right alloy, his creative faculty in the shaping of the mould. In a similiar fashion, the wit of Voltaire represents the crystallization in exquisite mold of material carefully selected by a shrewd judge of humanity. Now O. Henry's alleged wit represents the exact opposite. Instead of choosing raw materials with keen discrimination, and then casting them into a mold of his own creation, he picks out finished products, the work of other artists, and attempts to weld them by brute force. In other words, he does not make anything, he simply pieces together ready made things or, to put it more succinctly, in the parlance of the automobile world, O. Henry's jokes, like the rest of his art, are assembled, rather than manufactured. The consensus of the best opinion in the motor industry still holds the manufactured car a better all 'round proposition than the assembled car.

There remains the trick ending, of which O. Henry is considered a perfect master. Oddly enough, we find here too, the operation of his formula. The shock of his dénouement is located at a coincidence; two or more actions lead up to this coincidence; O. Henry takes the reader down one avenue of approach, but masks the other. The surprise at the junction is occasioned by the sudden appearance of the second and hidden action which reverses the anticipated result of the first. These actions may be physical or psychological, and they may occur in different places, differ-

ent people, or in the soul of one person. Let us take as an example of the first case, *Jeff Peters as a Personal Magnet*.

Down and out, Jeff Peters, a quack, meets in a country town his old pal Andy Tucker, and they talk the situation over. The next day Peters is sent for by the Mayor who is ill. In spite of the ironic objections of the sick man's nephew, Peters guarantees to cure his Honor by mental suggestion. When the cure is made Peters, who has no license, is arrested by the supposed nephew, who turns out to be a detective hired by the Mayor. Hand cuffed and crestfallen, Peters leaves with his captor. When, however, they reach the gate he says:

"I reckon you'd better take 'em off, Andy—Hey? Why sure, it was Andy Tucker; that was his scheme." Very neat of course, but not especially fine grained. The surprise is arranged by the simple omission of the identity of the supposed nephew, alias detective, alias Andy until the last paragraph. There is no good reason in the story itself for this lapsus; the occasion for the concealment is a purely external one, the contriving of a surprise for the innocent reader. Two actions, you observe, Peters in the open, Tucker's incognito; you follow Peters until they meet at the gate.

The *Skylight Room* will serve to illustrate the formula of two psychic actions approaching a coincidence. Miss Leeson, the pretty occupant of Mrs. Parker's spare room keeps off the would-be suitors at the boarding house by expressing preference for a star—Billy Jackson she calls it—that twinkles right over the

skylight. Although overworked and weak, she repels all advances, all offers to help her. One morning, however, she does not appear, and when her door is forced open, she is found unconscious. The ambulance arrives, and the young 'medico,' upon hearing her name charges madly upstairs, carries her down himself and rushes her off to the hospital. The point: Well, the young 'medico's' name is William Jackson. Very simple, of course, and achieved by the mechanical trick of concealing the approach of William Jackson and the mutual forgiveness of a lover's reconciliation until the end.

Ikey Schoenstein's Love Philtre will do very nicely as an example of two psychic actions in the soul of one person. Chunk McGowan a naive 'roughneck' loves Rosy Riddle, but despairs of winning her. In his dilemma he begs Ikey Schoenstein, the drug clerk, to sell him a love potion. Now Ikey loves Rosey too, and accordingly he mixes a dose of opium which he hands the unsuspecting Chunk. Not satisfied with this, he tells the girl's father of Chunk's intention to elope with her. The next morning, to his surprise, enter the triumphant Chunk:

"Pulled it off."

"The powder?" gasps Ikey. Now for the trick. At the moment of administering it, during supper at the boarding house, Chunk's better nature (about which the reader has heard nothing) overcomes his unscrupulous desires: "Win her on the square," he says to himself, and then his eyes light on the sour face of her father, 'who is lacking in proper affection for his com-

ing son-in-law.' So he watches his chance and dumps the powder into the old man's coffee. And there you are.

It is the Jack in the Box ending, of course, the juggler's trick, rather than the great artist's sound conclusion. "Masterly exposition" is Mr. Alonso Smith's explanation of the manoeuvre. Well, I am not so sure. Exposition that exposes half of the situation, to spring the other half at the end savors too much of the detective story to suit me. We think at once of the professional magician: "You see my hands, ladies and gentlemen—nothing in them," and then he deftly turns the audience's eyes to one of his hands while he pulls the trick with the other (*Jeff Peters as a Personal Magnet*), or he has the card up his sleeve (*Skylight Room, Ikey Schoenstein's Love Philtre*).

This brings us to consideration of the essential nature of O. Henry's art. It cannot bear comparison with the best in the genre because it is founded on mechanical dexterity instead of on creative insight. The real weakness in his work springs from his inability to get contrast out of homogeneous material. He does not know life well enough, deeply enough to see, and hence make us see, the variety that lurks in the most humdrum of lives, and as he lacks the art of a Pierre Loti to make monotony fascinating, he ruins himself in the quest for antithesis. Like Kipling, or Hugo, or Gautier he must write in two worlds, two civilizations, or two *patois* at once or he is lost. That he is aware of it himself, even if subconsciously, will be

proved beyond cavil by a careful examination of his conceded masterpiece *A Municipal Report*.

Here, his admirers will say, is a story that deals with one civilization,, the 'Old South' *en débauche*. That seems at first hand, undeniable, but suppose we consider the masterpiece more closely. The title reads: *A Municipal Report*, but the story deals with the murder of a degenerate Southern gentleman by his negro servant. 'Major' Caswell has been living off his wife, forcing out of her the slender pittance she earns by writing, and squandering it over the bar. The time comes when Uncle Caesar, who worships his mistress, can stand it no longer, and he accordingly strangles his master after a desperate struggle in a dark alleyway. What has all this to do with Rand & McNally's Municipal Report? Intrinsically, nothing whatever; the story and the statistics of Nashville's commercial prosperity have actually no bond in common; they belong to different worlds, the world of romance and the world of Government. Then why does he cut the sequitur of his narrative with paragraphs from the Municipal Report? The answer, I think, should by this time be obvious. For a late romanticist like O. Henry, the attempt to write in one civilization was a formidable venture. Incapable of seeing beneath the surface of life, he found himself in a serious predicament when faced by the necessity of getting antithesis out of quiet, humdrum Nashville. He lacked precisely those faculties postulated by the task he had set himself, the ability to draw you the dull, sleepy town beneath whose placid exterior lurks violent romance.

To apply his formula there was need of the penetration of a Turgenev who can extract from the most unpromising material the profoundest of contrasts between passion and monotony (*The District Doctor*), but such gifts were denied O. Henry. In this dilemma, he followed a course very similar to that pursued by a social bounder who has made a *faux-pas*; in the frantic attempt to extricate himself from the quicksands of his own crudity, he makes violent efforts that only sink him deeper. Thus O. Henry, confronted by a smooth, homogeneous civilization that threatened the failure of his formula, clutched wildly at any expedient, no matter how preposterous, in the futile hope of saving himself. If he could not get contrast out of sleepy Nashville, he would bring contrast into it; if the story he had to tell was, of itself, only mildly affecting, he would inject impressiveness into it by setting it off in harsh contrast to the peptonized dryness of a Government Report. The weakness of the scheme should be evident to the simplest. Whereas in his other *contes* the antitheses were plausible in that they actually exist side by side in our life, in this case the antithesis is entirely artificial; the passing from one world to another and back again, (East versus West, North versus South, Anglo-Saxon versus Latin, etc.) which in the other stories has basis in fact, finds no such solid ground here. The constant transition from the story to Rand & McNally, and back again is but the desperate attempt of the shallow artist to conceal his own impotence. The grim irony of the Municipal Report is not intrinsic in the story, but is

brought in from without; the effect produced by this arbitrary juxtaposition of romance and statistics could find an illustrative parallel had Beethoven constantly broken the flow of the Pastoral Symphony by the brisk rasp of a saw-mill. From the artistic standpoint he would have been fully as justified and indeed, some of the modern composers have done things nearly as bad. That they have shown any restraint at all we may attribute to the curious fact that the ludicrous is more repellantly perceptible in music than in the other arts. The blindness of all our critics to the 'outré' nature of O. Henry's masterpiece offers ironic evidence of the naïveté of American taste. This *reductio ad absurdum* of the mechanical formula of contrasted incommensurables has been lauded to the skies, has been repeatedly quoted as typical of American genius, as characteristic of our unparalleled ingenuity, as a brilliant sample of our amazing inventiveness. It is, and that is perhaps the saddest thing of all. Like the rest of us, O. Henry's energies focus upon the problem of advertising a poor thing instead of manufacturing a good thing; there are symptoms of it in all his work, but we have to wait for the Municipal Report to find the weakness in complete and frank effrontery. It was natural that your typical American should admire it.

Just what the verdict of posterity on O. Henry will be, no contemporary can foretell; that much of his work, however, is ephemeral seems certain. The life of slang is short; no medium is less stable, less rigid, less durable, and at least two thirds of O. Henry depends for its effectiveness upon the slang of his day. Now, a

serious proportion of that slang is already obsolete and we may confidently predict that all of it will have lost its savor, when it has not become absolutely incomprehensible, in a few generations. There will then remain a residuum fixed in the more permanent vehicle of plain English; O. Henry's favor with posterity will rest upon this residuum distilled out of his *répertoire* by the passing years. Whether it will mellow pleasantly until, like old wine in old bottles, it will know the triumph of tickling the soul of the epicure, we cannot presume to decide. That such a consummation appears doubtful, the foregoing analysis would argue. O. Henry certainly possessed a quick eye for picturesque externals, for amusingly disparate superficialities, for the bizarre juxtapositions of American life, and he did sense, in his way, the appalling instability, the fleeting inconsequence of our social institutions. At his best he does succeed in conveying an impression of the incoherence of our strivings, the absence of any ideal, the dull scramble for the vain thing we dub success. And he has a genial tolerance for our stupidities and follies.

All this is undeniably creditable, but of itself not sufficient to insure immortality. The fatal romantic weakness of attempting to squeeze all of life into the mould of a single formula must in the long run debar O. Henry from a high place in the hall of fame. There will be instances, of course, where the formula works admirably (*By Courier, The Fourth in Salvador, The Call of the Tame, etc.*) but, on the other hand, there are more cases where its absurdity is lamentable (*Defeat of*

the City, Shocks of Doom, Municipal Report, Strictly Business, Proof of the Pudding, The Girl and the Habit, etc.). Where the great writer such as Turgenev, meets the conflicting manifestations of life with the supple adaptability of intangible genius, O. Henry exhibits the rigidity of Molière's charlatan who has one remedy for all diseases. The distinction is clearly fundamental. Like all talented Romanticists, O. Henry bears a relationship to the Olympians somewhat similar to the relationship that exists between a jongleur and an actor. In contradistinction to the readiness of a Garrick or a Coquelin who could take any part in any play, the jongleur must have the play arranged to meet the exigencies of his little trick, whether that trick be one of hand or of personality. The corollary to such a situation is inevitable. Whereas the Olympian has a fine poise, a genial sophistication, the romanticist has nothing,—but his trick. The charm of the *Sportman's Sketches* is lasting because Turgenev arouses your interest; the attraction of the *Four Million*, on the other hand, is ephemeral because O. Henry arouses only your curiosity. Turgenev can do something besides spin an exciting yarn, and you return again and again for that something; O. Henry, on the other hand, has nothing but the ability to create suspense and when that subsides, your interest vanishes. It is, of course, the distinction between the actor and the acrobat, and that it should have eluded detection is ironic evidence of the nature of modern appreciation.

In all fairness to O. Henry, however, we must admit that he exhibits a genuine skill in the business of keep-

ing the closet door shut on the skeleton. Fortunate in the possession of a sharp eye, he made the most of the happy fact of his residence in this country. Although incapable of inventing more than one trick, he contrived by inexhaustible ingenuity to find a never ending series of disguises for that trick. Thus he succeeded in pleasing long after a less shrewd fellow would have been discarded by the public. "We charm but a given length of time," says the great French Moralist, "when we have but one kind of wit." Now O. Henry, as we have seen, had but one kind of wit, and yet he has pleased and will continue to please for a good while to come. That he will eventually cease to attract is a conclusion which the foregoing argument would encourage, and the maxim will then be vindicated. But he will please longer than one kind of wit would lead us to expect, and in that he obtains a partial refutation of the French epigrammatist. It is no small matter to emend, by your achievements, the wisdom of La Rochefoucauld, but O. Henry has done it. Let that be his title to fame.

VIII. MOZART, CHOPIN AND DEBUSSY

SINCE the invention of the instrument by the ingenious Bartolomeo Christofori, there have been three composers who have understood the piano: Mozart, Chopin, and Debussy. Of these three Mozart is undeniably the greatest—indeed, all subsequent musicians are unanimous in ascribing to him the supreme position among masters of the art, although to the layman, Beethoven seems perhaps the more logical choice. The reasons for this divergence of opinion between the expert and the layman are fundamental and therefore natural. Criticism, as Anatole France has often insisted, is in the last analysis subjective; we compare in accordance with our preferences. Now our preferences in matters of art are the immediate result of our appreciative faculties, intellectual as well as emotional. It is evident, therefore, why the expert and the layman are not likely to agree in their estimates of this or that musician. Other things being equal (to borrow a phrase dear to mathematicians), the expert has the advantage over the layman in the domain of training. His faculties have been fostered, his acquaintance with the minutiae of the art has been deepened; in short, he is in a position to weigh not only the emotional ingredients contained in a given masterpiece, but also the intellectual, the technical ingredients. His pleasure, in consequence, is more complete from the hearing of a great composition, for he enjoys with the head as well

the heart. The layman, on the other hand, can only enjoy through his feelings, and that is one reason why his critical indictments are so apt to be truculent, in opposition to the expert's, which are prone to be patronising. About the only quality which the layman seems capable of appraising mentally is size. Given two works of equal intensity, he will invariably vote for the bigger of the two. Should the smaller happen to be the more perfect, that fact will in no wise affect his judgment, for perfection in art is something he can't appreciate. To do so requires especial equipment, both of mind and heart, equipment which the layman, naturally, does not possess. He may not know anything about art, he will tell you, but he knows what he likes. The meaning of this ingenuous confession is, of course, clear enough. In estimating a work of art, the untutored is obliged by the fact of his inexpertness to lay stress upon the broader, the less subtle features of the masterpiece. In other words, he is able to appreciate only those qualities which are sufficiently obvious to make the task of recognition easy. Now size is, of all artistic qualities, the most obvious. There is need of the least effort, the least sensitiveness, the least intelligence to appreciate it. No unusual complexion, either of heart or mind, but especially of mind, is necessary to recognize it. That is why the layman, whose intellect in matters of art has never matured, always casts his vote, in an aesthetic competition, for the "bigger" work. His ideal is the Colossus of Rhodes rather than the Venus of Milo.

If we bear this simple fact in mind, it will not be diffi-

cult to understand the preference accorded by the average music lover to Beethoven in the hierarchy of great composers. Whether writing for orchestra, voice, or piano, Mozart is always intent on the achievement of perfection; size *per se* he considers of secondary importance, and he is never willing to attain it at the expense of beauty. Beethoven, on the contrary, revels in the gigantic, the gargantuan; whatever he attempts bears the stamp of the mighty fist; even his smallest compositions, his slightest efforts, suggest the colossus at play; he is undeniably the "biggest," in its most primitive sense, of all the musicians, and so overwhelming is his immensity that the innocent layman immediately produces the natural but questionable deduction that he is the "greatest." Further, it must be admitted that the type of emotion which Beethoven commonly gives us is more within the range of the average man. However cavalier it may sound, there is no use denying the uncompromising fact that the public, though not oversensitive, is nevertheless better equipped emotionally than mentally. Descartes said: "I think, therefore I am"; and, intellectual though he was, quite naively fancied himself representative of humanity. Rousseau, over a century later, emended that maxim and said, quite as naively taking himself to be an exception to humanity, "I feel, therefore I am."

Now, whatever the respective philosophical merits of these two sententiae, we must admit that from one point of view at least, Rousseau's is the keener. In the growth of every human being, sensation comes before thought; indeed, in many cases it is the only one of the

two that ever does come. The important feature, however, from the critic's position, is that in any work of art you have a subtle combination of intellect and emotion. In fact, to be precise, any emotion itself that is the least bit above mere sensuous perception is a delicate compound of intellect and feeling. The lower the emotion, the greater the proportion of feeling; the higher the emotion, the greater the proportion of intellect. Then there is the loftiest, the rarest of all emotion, that is intimately connected with the regions above the intellect. "The heart," said Pascal, "has its reasons, of which reason knows nothing." It is obvious, therefore, that if a given work of art is to secure a popularity that is wide rather than long, it must present emotion that contains the lowest percentage of intellect and the highest percentage of feeling. The compositions of Piccini, Rossini, and Donizetti are admirable illustrations of this fact. Rossini himself harboured no illusions anent the merits of the stuff he so fluently turned out; it coined money, and that was all he asked of it. When he wanted good music he would go to hear something by Mozart. Beethoven, he often said, was the greatest composer in the world, but Mozart was the only one, and this estimate has generally been considered by the experts a fair statement of the truth.

In Beethoven's work feeling, for the first time in music, begins to overtop intellect; passion to conquer reason. The beauty of his music at its best, as well as the immense significance of his position in the evolution of the art, nobody of sense would deny. As Rossini succinctly put it, he is the greatest composer in the

world. But the fact remains that, wonderful though he is, he never achieves that exquisite balance between intensity of emotion and felicity of form which is the essential quality of Mozart's genius. The scale which, before Mozart, had inclined too far on the side of intellect, begins, with Beethoven, to incline too far in the opposite direction on the side of emotion. Bach and Hayden are still too arid, Beethoven is already too violent; the moment of perfect poise occurred but once; the nice equality between the two essential but opposing elements in art—the head and the heart—appeared in music for the first and last time in Mozart. Indeed, since the age of Pericles, no creative artist has ever attained that smiling, olympian serenity which is the individuality of the Hellenic spirit. Beethoven is, after all, a Renaissance type. He has the colossal imagination, the boundless fervor, the herculean proportions of a Michelangelo; Mozart the elusive, unattainable perfection of a Praxiteles.

Nowhere is this contrast between the two masters more readily perceptible than in their music written for the piano. Splendid as Beethoven's sonatas are, their beauty is frequently marred by brutal, muddy passages which even his warmest admirers find it difficult to condone. All sorts of funny explanations for this characteristic fault have been given by fervid devotees, but perhaps the silliest is the assertion that the trouble is really with the instrument. Beethoven, his apologists gravely assert, would have fashioned these passages otherwise had he possessed our modern heavily strung instruments. Unfortunately, the piano of his day was

a weak, tinkling thing; close, heavy combinations, which seem unspeakably coarse to us now were probably quite euphonious on the instruments of 1800. That kind of argument, though undeniably attractive, is in fact little more than a plausible sophistry. Mozart, we should remember, was Beethoven's predecessor; the piano for which he wrote was even less resonant than the machine at Beethoven's disposal, and yet there is not a single measure of Mozart's sonatas or concerti that is not eminently satisfactory today. The truth of the matter is that Mozart understood the piano, whereas Beethoven did not. Mozart wrote his sonatas immediately for the piano; Beethoven composed symphonies and then forced them ruthlessly upon the piano. Mozart sonatas are effective, apart from their natural beauty, because they are essentially pianistic; Beethoven's achieve their purpose despite the medium for which they are written.

It is idle to assert, as certain enthusiasts are fond of doing, that Beethoven was too great for the instrument; that his ideas were too massive, his emotions too intense for so weak a medium of expression. What this type of critic fails to notice is the curious fact that, great as he was, Beethoven never really appreciated either the piano's strength or its weakness. Although he wrote constantly for it throughout his life, there is not the slightest evidence of progress—in the pianistic sense—as the years went by; his later works are no better than those of his youth. It would seem that, when writing for the piano, he forgot that a given musical idea is not necessarily suitable to every instrument; in

other words, that what is one instrument's meat may be another instrument's poison. There is ample evidence of this neglect in much of Beethoven's writing beside his piano music; he did not understand the voice either. Indeed, he was always very impatient of singers' shortcomings, and once gruffly remarked that they should be able to do everything except "bite off their own noses." Such an attitude, of course, can have but one meaning. Beethoven, like the majority of the great composers, was to a certain extent a specialist. In his case the favorite instrument was the orchestra. He understood it; he was at his ease when writing for it; in fact, as he himself often admitted, every time an idea occurred to him, it occurred orchestrally. When, therefore, he wrote for other media, what he really did was to transcribe his orchestral ideas. He never wrote directly for either voice or piano. Mozart, on the other hand, is perhaps unique among musicians in that he knew no specialty; he was equally felicitous, whether writing for orchestra, voice, or piano. No instrument or combination of instruments had any secrets from him; he brought to each a penetrating comprehension of the mysteries of its individuality, poetical as well as technical, that has never been surpassed. None of the great specialists can outdo him even in their own field; none can show greater adaptability; none are more marvellously supple, more exquisitely fortunate in the delicate task of matching idea and medium.

Now the piano, by its very nature, is perhaps the most isolated among stringed instruments. It forms its tone by percussion instead of by friction, a fact in itself

of the utmost importance, for it creates a peculiar difficulty for both composer and player. If we compare, for instance, a note produced by the violin with the same note produced by the piano, we find that, whereas the violin is capable of sustaining that note at an even degree of intensity, or of increasing the volume of sound at will, the piano, on the contrary, can only sustain the note in diminuendo. In other words, a note struck on the piano is loudest at its inception, begins to decrease in power immediately, and continues to dwindle more or less rapidly to silence. The shortcomings of such a method of tone production are obvious. In the first place, being incapable of sustaining its notes, the piano is out of court in the matter of giving a true legato. This weakness is more prominent in the slow movement where the individual notes are held longer than they are apt to be in the rapid, brilliant variety of composition. Legato expects, of course, that in a given melody, each preceding note shall end and the following note begin with a precisely equal volume of sound, in order that the transition from one to the other be as smooth as possible. On the violin this is an easy matter, for the vibrations of the string are kept at a constant degree of intensity by the friction of the bow. With the piano, on the other hand, we are confronted by a very different situation. There the string after the initial blow of the hammer is left to its own momentum, which means that its vibrations rapidly dwindle in intensity and soon cease all together. It is a foregone conclusion, therefore, that if the melody calls for sustained notes at an even volume, or,

what is worse yet, at an increase of volume on each or any note, the thing can't be done on the piano at all. If, let us say, two successive sustained notes are struck on the piano with equal force, there will inevitably be a marked difference in power between the sound produced by the first as it ends, and the second as it begins. This difference in power will naturally be proportionate to the length of time the first one was held, and will consequently be more noticeable the longer the first one was held. What you actually achieve, then, when you attempt a legato on the piano is a series of dwindling notes, each weaker at the end than the following one at the start. The result is a curious impression of unevenness, a rising and falling inflection, which grows more pronounced the slower the tempo becomes.

But this is not all. The inability of the piano to produce tones of constant volume is detrimental to a certain type of polyphonic writing dear to Bach, Beethoven, and Schumann. In this sort of composition it frequently occurs that one of the voices fastens on a note while the others weave lovely harmonic patterns about it. It is consequently essential for the musical scheme that the note which is held should not fade, but continue at its initial degree of intensity; it is the keystone of the structure, and if it fails, the whole edifice crumbles. Now that is precisely what happens on the piano. In the exquisite arietta of Beethoven's last sonata, (*opus III*), to cite a simple example, it frequently occurs that the moving parts whose notes are being struck, drown out the *sostenuto* parts whose notes are being held, and as the latter are poetically the more

important, the final effect is imperfect. In Mozart's music such blunders never appear. Although the piano for which he wrote was but a poor affair, he not only understood it, as he found it, but to a rare degree foresaw the main features of its future evolution. Unlike Bach, Beethoven, or Schumann, he never attempted to thrust upon the piano music which, though beautiful, was really more suitable to another instrument; he never insisted on demanding of it effects which it could not produce. With the readiness of the superior genius, he frankly accepted the piano for what it was, with its strength and its weakness, and wrote for it only the music that it could adequately render.

Since the piano, he noticed, was averse to *sostenuto*, he never indulged in his sonatas the graver emotions, the solemn theme, the rich involved counterpoint which the lesser masters essayed. His piano style is essentially monophonic and favors the rapid staccato, which the piano, naturally, can handle to perfection. When he does demand legato at all—and it is not often—he generally confines it to rapid flowing passages of such momentum that the individual notes are too short-lived to reveal the piano's weakness, while his counterpoint, also comparatively rare, succeeds with admirable felicity in catering to the instrument's best qualities, its point and brilliancy. The lofty conceptions, demanding breadth of style and gravity of treatment, he dedicated to the mass, the opera, or the symphony, as all of these combinations command, when advisable, a perfect legato. This does not mean, however, that Mozart's piano music lacks significance, as a great many

serious people insist. On the contrary, there are few compositions that can match, for stately grace or ideal beauty, the more elaborate of his *andantes*. In fact, of all slow movements none is, by its very nature, so congenial to the piano as the *andante* and what is more, none is so difficult for the composer. As its name implies, it deals in emotions that shun all extremes, whether grave or gay; it is neither fast nor slow, neither brilliant nor solemn. In other words, it is a genre that fulfills, when handled by Mozart, the *ἡρόδερ ἀγαυ* of the Greeks. It follows, therefore, that to write a real *andante*, there is need of the nicest balance between mind and heart, the purest of genial serenity, the most sensitive of technical craftsmanship. This rare combination Mozart possessed in the highest degree. In no other composer do we find so perfect a blend of all the warring elements that are necessary to the creation of the finest art. Beethoven is too apt to be brutal, Hayden too inclined to be trivial, while the lesser masters lack the capacity for sustained effort upon which this species of composition insists.

The serious people, however, will tell you that they prefer Beethoven; he has depth, gravity, dignity,—he is more “profound.” Without wishing to disparage the splendor of the great man's gifts, it is none the less true that this sort of compliment is more favorable to Mozart than it is to Beethoven. What the serious people can't seem to grasp is that dignity is more closely related to serenity than it is to gravity, and further, that gravity is less profound an attitude than serenity. It is the deep waters that are smooth and

serene. The trouble with the serious people is that to them, serenity is incomprehensible; it puzzles them, when they don't class it immediately with frivolity. Their conception of the masculine in art is similar to Charlotte Bronte's ideal of the "manly man"; they must have their music à la Rochester, if they are to pronounce it virile. All that is delicate, exquisite, of nice measure and pure beauty they deem feminine. Not the least amusing feature of this popular misconception is that if you treat it as a paradox, it turns out to be correct. The untrained mind is just as sure to be wrong in its opinions in art as it is in other specialties. To possess correct ideas in matters of art, as in any other branch of human activity, means labor, and the hardest of all labor, the labor of thinking. To mental idlers, Beethoven typifies the masculine in music, while the musicians, all of them, know that it is Mozart who is the most truly masculine of the composers. Paradoxical as it may seem, Beethoven is really the first of the essentially feminine musicians, and no surer proof of so startling a statement could be found than the fact that, in popular estimation, he represents just the reverse. The popular judgments in art are infallible, after all, if you turn them inside out; they succeed, though quite unconsciously, in rendering unto Caesar that which is Caesar's.

The fanciful notion that virility is synonymous with immensity is a favorite popular fallacy, and it is to this misconception that Beethoven owes much of his reputation with the general public. A surer method, however, of determining the sex of an artist's

work is to examine the relation between the emotional and the intellectual elements of which it consists. If the purely mental qualities outweigh, or balance, the emotional, you have a reasonably certain test of the artist's virility. Bach, for instance, is undeniably a masculine figure; the appeal of his music is chiefly to the mind of the hearer—too much so, perhaps, to deserve to be classed with the highest that the art has produced. In Beethoven's music, on the other hand, emotion overrides intellect; his feelings are too violent to be kept by his intelligence always within the bounds demanded by beauty. From the standpoint of perfection he fails too, not because he has too little feeling like Bach, but because he has too much. The one supreme artist that music has thus far produced is Mozart. In him we find the absolute balance between these two hostile faculties, which means that in his music alone do we meet with immediate and perfect beauty. This does not signify, however, that Mozart is less intellectual than Bach, or that he has less feeling than Beethoven. On the contrary, he is as well endowed as either. No composer has ever equalled the incredible intellectual mastery in every department of music that was second nature to Mozart. Again, no composer has ever attained that profound serenity of soul, that harrowing intensity of pure emotion that was his especial privilege. Mozart, indeed, represents in music the superman, as Homer does in poetry, or Alexander in worldly matters. Like them he was noble without being stilted, genial without being frivolous, original without being odd. Like them, he

looked upon life as a delight, not a duty. Like them, he was incapable of seriousness, as that word is interpreted by the vulgar. Unlike the lesser men, he never stooped to gravity; he was never solemn in the naive sense that is so impressive to stupid people. Even his immortal *Requiem* is notable for a complete absence of this conventional trait. It is not profound in the shallow sense in which serious people use the word, but profound in the highest sense, for it is happy. Instead of treating the august theme in the conventional manner, as a lesser artist would have done, from this side of the grave, in other words, instead of writing a dirge, Mozart viewed the subject from a loftier plane. His *Requiem*, essentially original, is written from the other side of the grave, and breathes forth a serene happiness that is deeper than the most solemn of solemnity, the most pompous of gravity. It is concerned, not with the horror of death, but with the peace of Nirvana.

This lofty poise, this exquisite nobility which is Mozart's essential characteristic, naturally led him to prefer the andante among the slow movements. At the same time, being highly intellectual, he noticed that, of all slow movements, the andante is the most congenial to the piano. It rarely, if ever, demands prolonged sostenuto; in fact, it can do very well without legato, which is the piano's worst bugbear. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the slow movement of Mozart's piano sonatas is generally the andante, and that whenever he selects a basically graver tempo, he multiplies the notes per measure, so that what you get is, after all, the equivalent of the andante. When

writing for the strings, on the other hand, he often selects the adagio, of which he had an equally felicitous command. In fact, no music is more beautifully harrowing than the adagio of the Eb symphony. Not even the divine arietta of Beethoven's last sonata for the piano can quite equal it for exquisite perfection. To have attempted either on the piano would never have occurred to Mozart. At best, the result would be (and in Beethoven's case actually is) imperfect, because of the instrument's weaknesses, and Mozart did not approve of half-way achievements. It was better, he argued, to write piano music, when writing for the piano, and since the instrument was of limited scope, it naturally followed that its music would be of restricted quality. Within its boundaries, however, this piano music of Mozart is of unwearying variety. Lovely to the untutored ear, it is doubly fascinating to the enlightened critic. Beautiful as are its melodies, its technical perfection is no less a source of endless delight. There are people, I know, who do not like it, people who consider themselves competent judges, who pride themselves on their taste, who, in the conventional sense of the word are deemed educated. Argument with such people is, of course, out of the question. "He that hath ears to hear" is really all that one can say, and as that is not a democratic observation, it is best left unuttered. "Certain qualities," says La Rochefoucauld, "are like the senses; those who do not possess them can neither appreciate nor understand them." This pithy maxim is especially true in such matters as the appreciation of art. There are

people, as I have said, supposedly educated people, who cannot enjoy Mozart, but neither can a blind man enjoy colors. Nobody, however, thinks of blaming the colors. Mozart himself once remarked in a letter to his father that he wrote music for "all ears but asses!" Every subsequent musician has heartily agreed that this is a fair statement of the truth and a moderate portion of the public, it is pleasant to note, has also been of a similar opinion. It is, after all, only those who do not really like music, who dislike Mozart. People whose ideal, whether openly avowed or not, is ragtime, who must have their rhythm explained by the base drum, such people will of course find Mozart caviar. Discrimination of this sort, however, is in itself a compliment, an oblique compliment, to be sure, but all the more valuable for that very reason. The worth of a compliment resides in its sincerity, and of all varieties, it is the indirect, the unintentioned compliment whose sincerity is unimpeachable. Mozart, as we know, never allowed himself to be influenced by the aversion of the philistine; he refused to stoop to conquer, and despite the well meant advice of his friends, he persisted in writing for the minority. His music, he would insist, was intended for ears that were sensitive rather than large.

In this respect his piano music is especially noteworthy. It is never brutal, ponderous, blatant; the instrument never jumps under its blows. On the contrary, it is dainty, lucent, sparkling, graceful of rhythm, pure of melody, perfect of design. And not the least interesting feature is the fact that in the last

analysis, its nature has been determined by the instrument. The great artists, after all, seldom quarrel with the rules or the instruments. Art they know is selective, hence the rules. Furthermore, no artist, not even the noblest, is greater than art itself. On the contrary, the more eminent the artist, the deeper his respect for the rules laid down by his art. The fatuity of some of our modern fellows, who consider their inability to cope with the rules a proof of their superiority over these same rules, and seriously strive to force this delusion upon a credulous public, is one of the most amusing of contemporary psychological phenomena. The real artists, however, are aware that in art, of all things, there is no short cut to achievement; whatever a man's natural gifts, eminence means work, and more particularly, that very disheartening kind of work, the drudgery of developing technique. Beethoven, who valued his own music as highly as anyone, never failed to express his despairing admiration of Mozart's mastery. "We never," he often said, "will write anything like that." He knew whereof he spoke; nothing quite like it has ever been written. The exquisite congeniality of idea and form, each unthinkable without the other, because the two were one at creation, has never been equalled by any other composer. An immense quantity of music has been written, since Mozart's day, for the piano, much of it beautiful, and some of it excellent piano music, but, as Chopin was wont to say, none that was "really good."

Chopin, perhaps, was finicky, but he understood the piano pretty well. It never occurred to him to deny

the immense splendor of Beethoven's sonatas; he knew their worth probably as well as the average conservatory enthusiast. And it was precisely because he also knew the instrument that he made bold to criticize. There is no doubt about it, Chopin, though inferior to Beethoven as a musician, is none the less superior to him as a piano musician. Chopin's conceptions may not be as colossal, his ideas as beautiful, his emotions as noble, but such as they are, his ideas or emotions are presented with a felicity that Beethoven could never command. With Alfred de Musset, Chopin could rightly say: "My glass is not large, but I drink from my glass."

Chopin's favorite medium, as everybody knows, was the piano. What little he has left that was intended for other instruments is woefully insignificant; he knew nothing about the voice, and not much about the strings. His piano concerti, even, are far from being in his best vein precisely because he was forced to do some writing for the orchestra. The scores are weak, uncertain, amateurish; the startling contrast afforded by the juxtaposition of the brittle tones of the piano, and the unctuous legato of the strings, which is the concerto's main charm, and which Mozart exploited to perfection, seems to have escaped Chopin entirely. His piano parts are not much above the average, while the orchestral portions are considerably below. It is only when handling the piano as a solo instrument that he is genuine, easy, superior, and he was always ready to admit this peculiar limitation. Of the quality of his gifts, he was well aware; his

range might be narrow, but within its boundaries, it was singularly original, and he was not unconscious of its worth.

In the years that had intervened between Mozart's untimely death and the advent of Chopin, the piano had been the object of much mechanical ingenuity. It had gained in fullness, in power, in clarity, and in resonance, but chiefly in resonance. It could hold a note much longer than when Mozart played on it, for it was more heavily strung, acoustically better made, but its fundamental characteristics were unaltered; its strength and weakness remained the same. Now Mozart, we may recall, had rested his piano style on the instrument's chief strength, its ability to produce a rapid and brilliant staccato; he had avoided its shortcomings, its inability to give a sostenuto, with scrupulous wariness. Chopin, on the contrary, approached the delicate problem from an entirely new angle, and in this he had the advantage over Mozart, of working with a better instrument. True, the piano still had the serious defect that it could only hold its notes in *diminuendo*, but, instead of writing music which should avoid that defect, (as did Mozart), Chopin elected to write music which should be based precisely on that defect. His melodic, his harmonic scheme, he chose to found on the very fact that the notes of the piano gradually die out, and further, that a large number of notes can be held simultaneously in this peculiar state of dwindling resonance, by the pedal. His chief discovery (which merits the highest praise) is that a given combination of notes, which would be unendur-

able, if all were struck together, is beautiful, if they are struck consecutively, and held by the pedal. The reason, of course, lies in the fact that those struck first have already begun to weaken, by the time the later ones are played; in other words, what you finally have is a group of notes, each one of which is sounding at a different pitch of intensity from its fellows. The vistas which this ingenious discovery unfolded were richly alluring, and Chopin was not slow to appreciate their attractions; in fact, they were doubly inviting, for they contained the pleasant elements both of novelty and of paradox.

The classicists, we must bear in mind, had always made a sharp distinction between consonance and dissonance. They indulged freely in dissonance, it is true, but never for its own sake. In their writings, a dissonance, whenever it appears, invariably plays the part of connecting link between two consonances; it prepares the following consonance in one way or another, and is always resolved into that consonance, whether as expected or by surprise. Music to the classicist was, therefore, founded on two opposing elements: concord and discord. Both were essential to the art, but of the two, concord was considered the more important. However a composition might begin, it must end, the entire work as well as its subdivisions, on a perfect concord. This conception of the duality of music had been looked upon as little less than an axiom; nobody had ever thought of questioning it, and until the advent of Chopin, it had ruled supreme throughout every domain of the art. It is

Chopin's chief contribution, from the aesthetic as well as the technical point of view, to have demonstrated that this dogma of the classicist was not necessarily infallible, that a type of beauty could be created which denied this duality of concept; in other words, that a strict separation of concord and discord was not absolutely essential. The enforcement of this paradox was no easy matter, and it is extremely doubtful if Chopin would have succeeded, had it not been for the peculiar gifts of the instrument which he had chosen for his medium. The ability of the piano to hold on the air, by means of the pedal, a group of dying notes of unequal volume, made possible the hitherto unheard-of combination of discord and concord, the presentation of the unresolved discord, in short, the cult of discord for its own sake. By Chopin, this revolutionary tenet is still cautiously applied. However bold his theory might be, its practice in his hands at least, is extremely conservative. In fact, he exhibits rare dexterity in the manner in which he contrives to minimize the unorthodox features of his music, to graft them unobtrusively onto the classic system. This insistence upon discretion in the use of novelty is one of his finest traits, for it reveals an intellectual poise, an elective sanity seldom found among innovators.

Just how his theory worked out in practice may be very happily illustrated by an examination of the *Étude in e minor* (opus 25; no. 5). As he conceived it, the coda works into the major and brings the composition to a close on the arpeggio of E major. Now

had Mozart or Beethoven written that arpeggio, it would have contained only the notes of the triad of E major, i. e.: E G# B, (repeated as many octaves as the design demanded. With the pedal on, the air would have been filled with the clean chord of E major, the perfect consonance which, in the opinion of the classicist, the close of every composition demanded. What Chopin gives us, on the contrary, marks a striking innovation in the history of musical evolution. The arpeggio, as he writes it, runs as follows: E F# G# B for several octaves, and the entire structure is held by the pedal. The result, thanks to the piano's peculiar weakness (which has often been emphasized), the result is also a satisfactory conclusion, but of a novel, rich flavor which the classic arpeggio consisting of the pure chord cannot give. The reasons why this paradoxical harmonic arrangement remains beautiful are two-fold. In the first place, if we count the notes of Chopin's arpeggio, we find that, of the four per octave, E F# G# B, three, E G# B, belong to the chord, while one F#, does not. That is, the relation between the number of notes in the chord, so to speak, and the number of notes out of the chord, is in the proportion of three to one. The mind of the hearer, consequently, receives a stronger impression of the chord of E major, than it does of the note of F#. In the second place, since the entire structure is written as an arpeggio, the individual notes are struck consecutively and held on the air by the pedal. This is highly important; indeed, it is the crux of Chopin's discovery. The inability of the piano to maintain a single note at

a constant volume of sound is here absolutely essential to the harmonic scheme. If the notes of the combination E F# G# B are all struck together, the result is not lovely, for as all sound with equal intensity, the discordant F# disagrees earnestly with its immediate neighbors E and G#. When the notes, on the other hand, are played consecutively, those preceding the F# have begun to fade when it is struck, while the F# itself is already weakening by the time the following notes are played. Finally, if the arpeggio ends (and Chopin is always careful to do this), if the arpeggio ends on one of the two strongest notes of the chord E or G#, those notes, being the last, are naturally the loudest, and as the structure dies away, they keep uppermost the impression of the chord of E major. What we actually have, then, is a delicately spiced dissonance in which the dominant ingredient is the chord of E# major, sufficiently dominant, indeed, to make a satisfactory conclusion to the composition. The clear outlines of the chord are, however, exquisitely blurred by the F#, which performs a rôle analogous, let us say, to the discreet bit of garlic in a rich sauce. The basic flavor, in both cases, is deliciously mellowed by the deft intrusion of a pungent foreign element.

The twenty-third prelude, that iridescent bit of gossamer, is a more elaborate application of this ingenious pianistic trick. Into the shimmering rhythmic swirl of the arpeggio of F major, there is introduced a foreign element, this time the sixth note of the scale. The lucent purity of the fleeting ripples is delicately troubled, nicely filmed by the dainty dissonance, pro-

ducing an artistic effect of rare and haunting beauty, a beauty that is Chopin's peculiar property, and that is an essential part of his charm. The two instances just cited of this technical idiosyncrasy are, however, very elementary. The dissonant element in both cases consists of a note that, although foreign to the chord, is not foreign to the key. In the first example, F# is the second note of the scale of E major, while in the second example, D is the sixth note of the scale of F major. It follows, therefore, that although they disturb the harmonic scheme, they do so with sufficient discretion to alter its quality without impairing its beauty. In fact, what Chopin actually achieved was the creation of a new type of beauty, a beauty that is no longer a pure product, but a compound wherein lurks a tiny bit of alloy, the alloy of ugliness. In other compositions such as the *F minor Etude* or the *Ab Impromptu*, Chopin increases the dose of dissonance by inserting and holding by the pedal notes that, not only are not in the chord, but apparently not even in the key. Such notes, to be sure, were well known to the classicists under the name of passing notes, but were never used by them as an integral part of the harmonic scheme. The classicists never held such notes by the pedal, never allowed them to blur the sharp outlines of their melodies. On the contrary, the passing note meant to the classicist exactly what its name implies; it enabled him to pass from one note to another without a break in the melodic line, but, as the pedal was never used in such cases, the contour of the melody remained definite and sharp. In Chopin's

music, however, these passing notes of the classicist are fused by the pedal into the harmonic base. The result, naturally, is something entirely new, a rich spicy flavor, gratifying to the epicure, though not quite so digestible, perhaps, as the simpler fare offered by the older school. Even in these more extreme cases, nevertheless, Chopin is careful to confine himself as a rule to the overtones of the fundamental or the dominant of the key, and there too he contrives generally to insert the least extreme of these overtones. In this process of composition he found the piano of immense assistance, and to him belongs, of course, the credit for recognizing the instrument's adaptability. Combinations that, if written for strings or wind, would not have been pleasing, Chopin discovered were delightful when expressed on the piano with the proper use of the pedal. Indeed, it is precisely because of the instrument's inability to hold its notes at a constant volume, that the proportion of dissonance in a Chopin composition is kept within the limits demanded by beauty. In other words, the success of Chopin's art is due primarily to the piano's greatest weakness, its incapacity for *sostenuto*, exploited in conjunction with its most characteristic strength, the pedal, and we cannot admire too heartily the amazing dexterity with which the feat is accomplished.

This fundamental harmonic innovation which is the essence of Chopin's originality has its parallel in the development of the other arts. The other composers of the same artistic eminence as Chopin attained excellence in piano writing only insofar as they were

influenced either by him or by Mozart. Liszt vacillated all his life between the Chopin method (*Etude in Db: Un Sospiro*), and the Mozart method (Rhapsodies, transcriptions, etc.). Schumann, who began by reviving the Bach love of counterpoint in conjunction with the Schubert rhythmical novelties, admitted later the discoveries of Chopin, and in his most significant work did his best to adopt them (*Fantasia in C major*). Mendelssohn apparently was unaware that anything had been written for the piano after the death of Clementi. In the same way the romantic painters have a style as personal as the romantic composers. The soft landscapes of Corot no more resemble the precise works of the older school than the filmy creations of Chopin resemble the cleanly outlined music of the classic masters. A similar situation prevails in literature. It would be difficult to find a more striking divergence than is offered by a comparison of the prose of Pierre Loti and Voltaire, or the poetry of Hugo and Racine. As with painting and music, so in literature, the classicist's balance between the head and the heart has given away to a voluptuous fusing of the spirit and the flesh, a delicious drowning of intellect in a slough of sensation. So notable a similarity of evolution in three different arts cannot fail to be of some significance, for it must be one symptom of a profound psychological fermentation which has eaten into every domain of human activity. The majority of the writers about music, however, have hitherto been pleased to overlook it. As a matter of fact, they have insisted upon treating their subject in a highly

exclusive manner, so much so that to read them one would never infer that music bore any affinity to life and world influences, whereas the exact reverse is the truth. Indeed, like any manifestation of artistic energy, music is finely sensitive to all cosmic tendencies. Whenever a new attitude toward life has appeared, it has found its way into music as into the other arts, but as music is the youngest of them, the new movement has always appeared there later than elsewhere. The classical period in French literature, for instance, reached its zenith in the middle of the seventeenth century, but it is not until the end of the eighteenth century that we have the classical period in music, at the very moment when in literature the leaven of romanticism is beginning to work. Again, the romantic schools, both of France and Germany, are in their decline when, about 1840, the movement is really triumphant in music. And finally, with the advent of realism and impressionism, we can discover a similar comparative chronology. Music is once more behind the other arts, though, it may be observed, not as far behind as on the first occasion. In fact, the leading exponent of literary impressionism in France, Pierre Loti, is still living while Debussy, the most eminent impressionist in tones, is dead.

Now one of the prominent characteristics of the French and German romantic schools was their belief in the so-called "mélange des genres," and more especially, their belief in the principal corollary of this proposition, the artistic value of the ugly. They began, it is true, by limiting the rôle of the ugly, by

using it only as a foil for the beautiful, but it was not long before they found themselves becoming interested in the ugly for its own sake. This tendency, which is at first more apparent perhaps in the broader features of their work—as, for example, their choice of subject—is found upon close scrutiny to permeate even the minutiae of their technique. Contrary to the classical doctrine, for example, that in verse only a limited variety of abstract words or phrases could be used, the romanticists decreed the introduction of common, homely words, of hearty, concrete phrases. The application of this theory is eminently successful in the poetry of the greatest masters. The verse of Victor Hugo is of a rich splendor of color, of a haunting magic that even the exquisite alexandrines of Racine find it difficult to rival. The reason is that Hugo's gorgeous lyrics are cunningly spiced throughout by the dissonant pungency of strong, live, words and expressions which impart to his style a flavor that is of much potency. This endeavor—and often a successful endeavor—to achieve a new type of beauty by the deft use of the alloy of ugliness is one of the essential features of romantic art, and is to be found, to a greater or less degree, in every one of its exponents. Chopin, naturally, is not the only musician to exploit this fertile vein, but he enjoys the distinction of being the first, and more especially, the first to exploit dissonance for its own sake. The extreme discretion, however, which he displays in the practice of this dangerous innovation places him unquestionably among the great composers of all time. Although by temperament an

avowed romanticist, he nevertheless retains enough of the classic sanity to make possible the attainment, now and then, of pure beauty.

Just how far the piano comes in for a share in this rare artistic achievement is hard to say. The relationship between Chopin's temperament and his technique is exceedingly intimate, as is the case with all great artists. Which one of the two is responsible or, to put it less strongly, which one of the two influenced the other, is not an easy question to answer. Whether Chopin's technical discoveries of the possibilities of the pedal affected his creative imagination, whether what he had to say was modified by the way he said it, whether the manner affected the matter, or vice versa, can really never be settled. Chopin never applied himself seriously to any instrument save the piano, so that we have no means of comparing his piano music with music written for other media, and are unable, in consequence, to determine just how far what he gave to the piano was affected by the peculiarities of the instrument. In Mozart's music, on the other hand, no such difficulty confronts us. It is a very simple matter to settle with mathematical precision the extent to which his piano music was limited by the idiosyncrasies of the instrument. Even the most cursory comparison between his symphonies and his sonatas emphasizes beyond any possible doubt his conception of the rôle of the piano. That Chopin appraised the situation with equal lucidity and that, like Mozart, he also limited the poetic quality of his music to meet the demands of the piano, is a problem for the musical exquisite, a problem somewhat

similar in value to the intricacies of "imaginary quantities" so dear to the mathematical epicure.

To this ingenious harmonic innovation, which is the very essence of his art, Chopin joined another and no less remarkable invention. Everyone who knows his music is familiar with the curious floating languor, the haunting insistence that imparts to his melody its peculiar, almost hypnotic, fascination. The creation of this truly romantic illusion is accomplished by means of a clever little trick which, like his harmonic novelties, is also genuinely pianistic. The inability of the instrument to maintain a *sostenuto*, which he had so readily turned to account harmonically, Chopin utilized also to create a new type of melody. There is, of course, but one way of giving anything like the equivalent of a continued note on the piano: to keep repeating the note. But this way admits, in practice, of several variations. Mozart either repeated the note with great rapidity, or trilled it—a method as simple as it is convenient. When well done, the trill is capable of a brilliant imposture of *sostenuto*, for the repetition of the main note is so speedy that, with the assistance of the pedal, the ear of the listener is almost deceived. In fact, the break between the individual notes is so brief that the mind of the listener, knowing what is intended, willingly bridges the lacunae, and hears what it wants to hear, a continuous note. All great musicians have known this, and have taken skillful advantage of this favorable attitude on the part of their public. Chopin, naturally, was aware of this interesting psychological phenomenon, but unlike Mozart, he developed its pos-

sibilities in a fundamentally different way. If he desired the effect of *sostenuto* or *crescendo* on a given note, he also repeated the note, but not by trilling or by the rapid *staccato* which Mozart had favored. On the contrary, Chopin made the essential feature of his melody the slow, rhythmic, monotonous repetition of the note. In contradistinction to the classicist, who had striven to keep the break between the individual notes as brief as possible, Chopin widens this break as much as the instrument will permit; where the classicist had attempted to conceal the piano's weakness, its inability to sustain its notes, the romanticist does his utmost to emphasize this weakness, for the essential charm of his melody rests precisely on this weakness. The curious hypnotic spell which is cast over the senses of the hearer by this insistent recurrence of a dying note is a significant specialty of the Chopin melody, and differentiates it sharply from all melody that precedes it. In the majority of cases, the trick occurs in the melody itself, witness the *Ab Etude* (opus 25, no. 1), but there are instances where it appears in the accompaniment, as in the celebrated prelude in *Db* (opus 28, no. 15).

Like his harmonic innovations, this novel melodic scheme marks the beginning of a new era, not only for pianoforte composition, but also for pianoforte playing. If the *Ab Etude*, for example, be rendered after the classic fashion, the result is incredibly ludicrous. Hayden, Mozart, Beethoven even, were sparing in their use of the pedal. Their style, clean-cut and precise, was all point and brilliancy; it relied for its effect upon a brittle clarity of touch, a sharp accuracy

of finger. Chopin, however, basing his style almost entirely upon the pedal, developed a fundamentally new method of execution, of which the most important feature is the almost total absence of staccato, in the classic sense. In striking contrast to the crisp sparkling glitter of Mozart, Chopin's melody is soft, dreamy, unctuous. The high notes of the *Ab Etude* glint like drops of mellow sunlight, floating on a full lucent river. To play this music adequately postulates a rich sensuousness of touch that no pianist before Chopin had ever developed. In fact, Chopin's style at the piano has been described by contemporaries as unique; even Liszt, the supreme virtuoso, is said to have never quite equalled the marvellously subtle substitute for legato, which all agree, was Chopin's most notable characteristic. In our own day De Pachmann, whom those who were fortunate enough to hear both declare plays Chopin better than Chopin himself, De Pachmann refines nuance to such incredible delicacy that he cheats the shrewdest listener into believing that he hears a perfect sostenuto. Like the sleight of hand artist who lifts billiard balls off the tip of his wand, De Pachmann induces his audience to think that he is really doing something which it knows in cold blood that he can't. In both cases it is simply a matter of deceit, and of the rankest kind of deceit, but as Pascal says, we prefer a pleasant falsehood, even though we know it is false, to a grim reality.

This tendency in Chopin to attempt and well-nigh achieve the impossible, to insist that the instrument do something it cannot, and, as our colloquialists say, "to

get away with it," this tendency is essentially romantic. It springs, to a certain extent, from the revolt against all that is irksome, the revolt against every form of restraint, whether imposed by arbitrary rule or limited instrument. If a thing happened to be forbidden by tradition, especially classic tradition, your romantic Titan considered the very fact of its being forbidden a challenge to his defiance. He was superior to instrument or rule, and he was eager to demonstrate his superiority. In literature the romantic schools, particularly those of France and Germany, revelled in this naive exaggeration of the ego; nothing was beyond the prowess of those supermen, and they found an especial delight in desecrating everything that hitherto had been looked upon as established, everything that tradition had made sacred. The classicists, as is well known, had believed implicitly in the doctrine of the "genres tranchés" in art; that is, they divided as with a knife not only the various arts, but the several domains within each art. Music, to them, was music; painting was painting; poetry was poetry; and, in Aristotelian phrase, each furnished its own special pleasure. To be more minute, within the precincts of literature, for example, they separated sharply comedy from tragedy, lyric from epic; a play was either one or the other, a comedy or a tragedy all the way through; a poem was either a lyric or an epic, and this conception of art had become to them almost a religion. The rise of opera, it is true, had provoked a certain confusion, but this confusion which is neo-classic rather than classic, remains essentially objective and impersonal.

The revolt of the romantic school, on the other hand, was aimed not only at the neo-classical, but at the truly classical attitude as well. Since the classicists forbade the confusion of the arts, the romanticists inevitably vowed the confusion of the arts. All of them, literature, music, painting, sculpture, even architecture, should, they decided, invade each other's domain, appropriate each other's means, produce each other's effects. The chaos that resulted is significant. Friedrich Schlegel, for instance, spoke of architecture as "frozen music." He might have called music "molten architecture" with exactly as much reason. Tieck wrote symphonies in words; he even carried affectation so far as to be fussy about the key: the composition was in D major, if you please; Chateaubriand and Hugo painted in words; Théophile Gautier etched, engraved, carved in words. The musicians, on their side, were about as bad. Chopin wrote ballads, painted nocturnes in tones; Schumann wrote short stories (Novelettes), fables, romances in tones; he even tried character etching; and in that collection of truly poetic vignettes, the *Carnival*, the most crabbed of classicists must admit that he has nearly succeeded. Later composers, such as Debussy, aim at a still closer precision of subject, and in compositions like *Reflections in Water*, *Church Bell through the Leaves*, *Gardens under the Rain* strive to focus the listener's attention upon concrete objects which are almost, if not entirely outside the domain of their art.

Such a tendency reveals at bottom a serious creative weakness which in practice amounts to an inability on the part of the artist to be interesting within the bounds

of his own art. The romantic writer, because of his incapacity for the creation of character, must fill up his work with effects drawn from the other arts: painting, music, or sculpture. In a similar fashion, the romantic composer is forced by his poverty of strictly musical inspiration to rely on borrowed plumes. Lacking in melodic imagination, he must fill up his pages with something else; he must tell a story, paint a picture. His music, in other words, must attempt to substitute for another art, must try to do something for which another art is really better equipped. The pleasure, therefore, which it gives, is of a very especial nature, and consists, not in the charm of the music as music, but in the cleverness with which the music appropriates effects that belong frankly to another art. In short, the romantic composer like the romantic writer, is always gunning on some other fellow's lands; he gives you, not the sound pleasures of the rightful owner, but the more hectic delights of the poacher.

It would be idle, of course, to question the valuable contributions which the new schools have added to the world's pleasure. With all their faults, their lack of depth, of sanity, of measure, especially of humor, it must be confessed that they have, nevertheless, exploited with much skill certain fundamental psychological facts. It is pretty universally admitted today that there does exist some confusion in the registering of the perceptions, that the senses of eye and ear overlap at their boundaries. This confusion, which is essentially subjective, and which depends for its intensity and extent upon the idiosyncrasy of the individual,

this confusion has been dubbed by the scientists "color audition." There can be no reasonable doubt of its certainty; every normal person of artistic inclinations is blessed with it to a greater or less degree; it is a perfectly natural phenomenon, and like all natural phenomena, it is not repellant if kept within bounds. The classicists knew of it but, being artists of great fecundity, they did not feel the need of insisting upon it to the exclusion of every other factor. They used it on occasion, but sparingly, and only when they wanted certain rare effects. They appreciated instinctively its assets as well as its liabilities, and they were careful never to allow the latter to invade their works. The musicians among them (as well as some of the critics) were aware also that, of all the arts, music is the least articulate. "There will never be a good opera," said Boileau, "for music cannot narrate." However strongly one may disagree with so round an opinion (Boileau expressed himself one hundred years or so before *Don Giovanni*), it is impossible not to confess that the astute author of the Satires found music's main weakness with singular shrewdness. Unlike the other arts, it is tongue-tied. Painting, even sculpture, can tell a story, if necessary, although their range is naturally far more limited than literature. But music can convey nothing that is definite; it cannot be circumstantial, explicit, precise. Mozart knew it, of course, and frankly accepted this limitation, as he had accepted the piano's shortcomings. Save when writing for the stage, he never called upon music to do anything beyond its powers, and even when composing his operas

he contrived, by incredible virtuosity, to produce a marvellous, two-fold creation. The score of *Don Giovanni* or the *Magic Flute* follows the libretto with scrupulous accuracy, and yet, as music pure and simple, as "absolute music," it is equally substantial. Perfect with or without the text, it marks a height of achievement never attained by any other composer, a height of achievement beside which the efforts of even the best of the romanticists appear singularly crude. Not one of the elaborate characterizations of Wagner can rival for poetic insight, delicate humor, or exquisite dexterity, the musical portrait of Papageno. The raw boor of Schikaneder has been transformed by the composer's magic into Ariel; the grub has become a butterfly. And not the least deserving of remark is the fact that this music for Papageno, while attaining a rare degree of personal individuality remains, nevertheless, perfectly satisfactory when considered solely as music.

The same cannot be said of several of Schumann's sketches. The most characteristic of them are too odd to be readily intelligible without a previous acquaintance with the title; they are peculiar rather than beautiful. So much so in fact, that unless he be forewarned of their purport, the listener is incapable of fully enjoying them. They are striving to express something, of that he feels assured, but what that something is, the music by itself is powerless to convey. This drawback is far more pronounced in the works of the ultra-modern composers. Unless the mind of the audience is correctly oriented by first hearing the title, the compositions of Ravel, Debussy, Schoenberg, and the rest are almost unintelligible. Their works are, in most cases,

musical translations from another art, and as the translation is inarticulate, the hearer cannot appreciate it unless he is first made acquainted with the original. The pleasure given by this sort of art consists, as I have said, in comparing the translation with the original, in weighing emotionally and mentally the greater or less cleverness with which the translation renders the original, instead of enjoying either for its individual worth.

Now Chopin, who was an artist of taste, who though a romanticist had a keen sense of the ridiculous, Chopin was aware of his art's limitations. He realized, as had Mozart and Beethoven before him, that although music may depict unmusical subjects, and do it interestingly, its chief appeal must rest, after all, upon its worth as music. This sanity of attitude is one of the reasons why his work has commanded so universal an admiration; why it has always pleased both expert and layman. Whatever it may intend to portray, whether nocturne or ballade, prelude or mazurka, it is always attractive as music. Like Mozart in his operas, Chopin achieves in his nocturnes or ballades a two-fold creation, a musical Janus that artistically is unimpeachable, but, unlike Mozart, he reaches his goal along a different road. Where Mozart had illustrated, word by word, a precise libretto, Chopin chose to depict a far less definite object. In this he was correct, for music unless accompanied throughout by a written text (libretto), is forced to confine itself to generalities. If, therefore, a composer wishes to attempt the particular, he must restrict himself to the least particular of the particular

subjects, or else he must find some way of treating a particular subject in its most general relationships. Of this latter method, Chopin's Nocturnes are a singularly happy illustration. The title itself, Nocturne, is especially fortunate, for it summarizes in advance what the music will attempt: to present the mood created by the thing, rather than the thing. It is, therefore, a more accurate heading than the title Night would have been. Music, Chopin realized, does not command the resources of painting, and cannot, in consequence, render directly the sensation of night; it can only convey that sensation obliquely through the mood which night creates. Painting, on the other hand, by an immediate rendering of the sensation of night succeeds, as a corollary, in awakening the mood which night compels. Chopin's artistic procedure, therefore, is as ingenious as it is sound. With singular correctness he has chosen the rendezvous of painting and music, the mood, upon which to erect his edifice. From this central locality he commands the approaches in both directions, and is thus able to construct a rare and complex whole from the reciprocally sympathetic contributions of both arts. In doing this, he shows himself, like Beethoven in the *Pastoral Symphony*, a lineal descendant of Rousseau, for all he he has done is to put into practice an idea that Rousseau had formulated in theory, but had never carried out. In other words, Chopin's work is the fulfillment of Rousseau's prophecy, in matter as well as in manner, but more especially in manner. Rousseau, we may recall, states emphatically, in the *Dictionnaire de Musique*, that music can invade the

domain of the other arts and paint definite objects but, he is careful to insist, only by awakening emotions which those objects arouse. This method, as we have seen, is exactly what Chopin has carried out in the composition of his Nocturnes, and the wide popularity of these works bears eloquent testimony to the rare skill of the musician, and the still rarer insight of the theorist.

It should also be noted that, to a certain extent, these nocturnes of Chopin rely for their appeal upon the interesting phenomenon of color-audition. Painting and music undoubtedly overlap in this narrow domain as well as in the larger field of the poetic mood. Chopin knew this, of course, but, unlike the later composers, he remembered that in this matter too music is inarticulate. If it is unlike literature, in that it cannot express a definite emotion, so it is unlike painting in that it cannot render a precise color. Just as the listener cannot name exactly the emotion which a given composition awakens, so he cannot state accurately the color which it creates. He cannot tell whether what he feels is pathos or despair, for instance, any more than he can tell whether what he sees is red or blue. In both cases the impression, although intense, is vague. The truth of the matter is that both emotion and color are essentially a musical emotion and a musical color; although located near the line between music and the arts of literature and painting, they are still on music's side of the boundary, and consequently are indeterminate. This is a fundamental fact, and although it has never been formulated before, so far as I am

aware, it has, in practice, been accepted unconsciously by all the great artists. Music, they realized, is after all, music; it works in tones, not in words or pigments and can, therefore, never usurp completely the territory of either literature or painting. That it can invade, or at least approach, their territory is, on the other hand, not to be doubted; we have ample evidence of such a possibility in the works of the romantic and impressionistic schools, but that this is music's primary function none save the ultra-extremists will affirm.

The difficulty that confronts any attempt to confuse the arts lies in the fact that such confusions are inevitably subjective. As Rousseau says, music may produce effects similar to painting, but only by arousing emotions analogous to those aroused by painting. In other words, music may approach the domain of painting by means of suggestion, but more than this Rousseau was too sensible to allow. Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*, Chopin's Nocturnes, even Debussy's *Reflections in Water*, are all splendid illustrations of the power of suggestion at its best. They are sufficiently general of subject to allow room for individuality of interpretation, which the method of suggestion makes inevitable. Each person in the audience is of course affected in accordance with his nature; he responds to the musical suggestion after his own fashion; the mental picture which he forms under the urging of the music is to a certain extent his own and, hence, different from the picture conjured up by others. It follows, therefore, that if suggestive music is to be truly successful, it must confine itself, as does Beethoven's *Pastoral*

Symphony, to the most general aspects of the subject in order to have something in it for everybody. The more advanced of the modern fellows, critics as well as composers, are, however, little inclined to accept this restraining truth. They refuse to admit the subjectivity of the method of suggestion; they insist that there is no such thing as variety of individual interpretation. If a given composition means a certain thing to anyone of them, the assumption is that it means precisely the same thing to everybody else. This, of course, is a charming mirage and needs no refutation. We all know the story of the brutal philistine who was overjoyed at the skill with which Straus suggested the whirring of the windmills in *Don Quixote*, whereas that particular passage was intended by the serious composer to conjure up the bleating of sheep. The difficulty of any attempt at precision in the use of suggestion is amusingly illustrated by this piquant incident. But, as I have said, the modernists will not accept any suggestions in this matter, especially the suggestions of sanity. Music, they affirm, can tell a circumstantial story, paint a definite picture, and they profess not only to write the music, but also to understand the story, see the picture. I can recall, in this connection, an entertaining review by one of our decadent critics, of a performance of Straus' *Domestica*. "The trumpets," said the sanguine enthusiast, "were red." I believe also, that to his precious ears, other instruments were "gold," etc., etc. Columns of this sort may appeal to the elect, who possess the key to this particular type of cipher, but it is to be hoped that most of us have too

much blunt sanity to find such stuff palatable; the tendency to see red even in music will, we trust, remain confined to a safe minority.

One of the most amusing features of this cult of suggestion by the extremists is their apparent belief in the objectivity of their method. A recent article on Debussy harps complacently upon this alleged trait in the eminent French composer. To the author, such pieces as *Reflections in Water*, *Pagodas*, or *Gold Fish* seem far more objective than the Andantes of Mozart or Beethoven. Where critics of this type stumble is in the meaning which they give to the word objective, when applied to music. The classicists, in literature at least, understood the term to signify that you should write with your eye on the object; in other words, that you should present the object in as impersonal a manner as possible. The romanticists, naturally, insisted upon the exact reverse, that the writer should steep his object in the flavor of his own personality. It will be seen that both schools, while they differ radically in point of view, are nevertheless one in this, that the manner as well as the matter is of importance in deciding whether a work is objective or subjective. Montaigne's *Essays* are an excellent example of this distinction. Although he himself is the material of his *Essays*, the manner in which he views that material is essentially impersonal. He is interested in himself, not primarily because he happens to be the individual Montaigne, but because he thinks that the individual Montaigne is representative of our common humanity. *Au Maroc* of Loti, on the other hand, though objec-

tive in theme, is essentially subjective in treatment. What the reader absorbs is an intense realization of the effect produced by Morocco on that rare individual, Pierre Loti. Of Morocco itself he learns little; indeed, Morocco is merely an excuse for discussing the idiosyncrasies of Pierre Loti, whereas Montaigne is but an opportunity for inquiring into the representative features of human nature. It becomes evident, therefore, that a glib use of the words objective and subjective is, even in literary criticism, fraught with possibilities of inaccuracy. The situation in music, however, is still more complicated.

The classical doctrine that you should write with your eye on the object cannot be applied as rigorously in music, because of the peculiar nature of that art. Racine is reported to have said that dramatic art consisted in "making something out of nothing" (*faire quelque chose de rien*). If that is true of the drama, it is still more true of music. All the other arts, even literature, are to a remarkable degree imitative; the sculptor, the painter, even the novelist and the poet, have their models to start from; however superior to reality the finished work may be, it has its foundation in reality outside the soul of the artist. The appreciation of this fact has been the cause of many theories and almost as many quarrels since the days of Aristotle, but all the theorists have agreed upon this, that whatever else the arts of poetry, painting, and sculpture may be, they are at bottom imitative, they start, all of them, from an external reality. Thackeray's Stein, or Moliere's Trissotin, for instance, were drawn, to a cer-

tain extent, from the life, and the same process is true in a yet more tangible sense, of painting and sculpture. The musician, however, has no model. The primary creative impulse is in his case original in the highest degree, for he must literally "make something out of nothing." The notes, the harmonic foundation, the laws of composition, are the musician's materials, as the clay or the colors are the sculptor's or the painter's materials but, unlike the sculptor or the painter, the musician must produce his work entirely from within; he must, in the most intimate sense, originate. This fact, it seems to me, has not received the attention it deserves from the critics or the public; indeed, not even from the musician's fellow artists. If you suggested to a painter that he paint a picture, even the most abstract or allegorical type of picture, without any models, he would be moved to Homeric mirth; the thing simply can't be done, he would tell you. And in a more limited sense, the same is true of literature. Even a Dante had his model, and granting that the Beatrice of the *Divine Comedy* is infinitely above Beatrice Portinari, the fact remains that the poet received his primary inspiration from without. However glorious his artistic achievement, it should not be forgotten that he had an external reality to start from; he did not make something out of nothing. Mozart's or Beethoven's symphonies, on the other hand, were produced without the goad of external suggestion, without the help of models; they are the offspring, in the truest sense, of the pure creative fire, and of all artistic work have the surest right to be called imagina-

tive, for they were actually made out of nothing. Those of our experts in aesthetics who condescend to receive music on a lower footing than the other arts, who affect to consider the musician an inferior type of the artistic species, would do well to weigh the peculiar difficulties which confront the composer before passing such patronising judgment. In no other art is there necessity for such genuine creation, for such fundamental productive impulse as there is in music; in no other art is there such absolute aloofness from outside reality; in no other art is such a call made upon the abstract faculties of mind and heart; in no other art is the link with what we call life so intangible.

Those of the critics who have noticed this fact ever so dimly have coined a phrase wherewith to designate such independent music as the symphony, the sonata, or the quartett. "Absolute music," is the phrase, and in a sense, it may be said to correspond to the term "objective," in literary criticism. That is, "absolute music" aims at the presentation of emotions in their most abstract aspects, in their most general outlines, just as objective writing, in literature, aims at the presentation of the object in its most general, its most abstract relationships. In both cases, the personality of the artist is scrupulously concealed; every tendency toward idiosyncrasy, whether of thought, feeling, or expression, is sedulously avoided; the endeavor is always toward a precise but impartial rendering of the theme; it is for the audience, in fact, for each member of the audience, to draw his own conclusions. The *Jupiter* symphony of Mozart, or the *Bajazet* of Racine

give you absolutely no clue to the individuality of their creators; neither work has a style, neither work attempts to present its theme from a given angle, in neither work do the emotions or the opinions of the artist intrude. The subject is rendered, in both cases, in its most isolated form, as detached as possible from local or temporal reality. Both the musician and the dramatist are interested in abstract essences rather than in picturesque externals; they strive constantly to present the inner, rather than the outer, significance of their subject; in short, they are concerned with the spirit rather than with the flesh.

In literature, the realists of the nineteenth century professed to revive this classical doctrine, and such writers as Flaubert or Maupassant, for instance, did succeed in writing with their eye on the object. Where they differ from the classicists, is in the qualities of the object which interest them. Maupassant, unlike Racine, is concerned primarily with the externals of his object, with the flesh, rather than the spirit. These externals, however, he presents in a carefully impersonal manner, his aim being to reproduce them, as far as it is humanly possible, exactly as they are. In this, it should be noticed, he champions the direct opposite of the artistic program favored by such belated romanticists as Pierre Loti, who considers externals only from the point of view of their effect upon his own highly organized personality.

Now Debussy epitomizes in music a tendency parallel to the tendency exemplified in literature by Pierre Loti. The tendency represented in literature

by Maupassant has as yet found no real counterpart in music. The objectivity of Debussy, that critics harp upon, is no more genuine than the objectivity of Pierre Loti. "*La Soirée dans Grenade*" or "*Reflets dans l'eau*," closely resemble, in their essential features, the descriptive writings of Pierre Loti. The external objects which they profess to portray are really of secondary importance; the main thing is the effect which they produce upon the highly sensitized souls of Debussy or Loti, and that is the principal impression which the hearer or the reader carries away. That both writer and musician possess realistic gifts is not to be doubted, that both are able to render the object after a fashion, no one will deny, but that either succeeds in presenting the object impartially cannot be admitted by the unprejudiced critic. Both are too profoundly personal, both are too egocentric, both have, in consequence, too prominent a style. With neither does the matter sink the matter; indeed, it might almost be said that the matter serves too often merely as a pretext for a brilliant display of the manner. Enthusiastic devotees, naturally enough, chatter about the magic of Loti's style, the rare fascination of Debussy's style, etc., and will tell you that no preceding artist in music or literature ever rendered his theme with greater felicity. It certainly would be useless to deny that Loti and Debussy succeed, each in his own way, in saying what he has to say with wonderful expertness, but that they do this better than Racine or Mozart is distinctly open to question. It is a far cry from the piano sonatas of Mozart or

Beethoven to Debussy's *Gold Fish* or *Gardens under the Rain*, but that the great French impressionist is a more skillful technician or a more objective artist than the classic masters cannot be demonstrated. The mere fact that in *Gold Fish* Debussy attempts to render an external, concrete, object does not necessarily mean that his work is objective. There must be evidence, on the musician's part, of a strict impersonality of attitude; the object must be presented impartially, in its most general, its most representative, aspects. This one does not find in Debussy's *Gold Fish* or, indeed, in any of his compositions. Possessed of a manner, a style, it is impossible for him to be truly objective, genuinely impartial. Despite his best efforts, his own personality crowds into the foreground, and insists on getting between us and the object. The result is that what little of the object manages to filter through his personality comes out so profoundly tempered by the process that its original complexion is modified almost beyond recognition. There are, naturally, exceptions to this rule, one of the most notable being the piano piece, *Reflections in Water*, but what one generally gets is Debussy's conception of the object, and unless one is pretty well acquainted with Debussy, one experiences difficulty in recognizing the object. If to this be added the fact that music is inarticulate, and finally, that Debussy is especially fond of rare or exotic objects, the reason why his music has never been popular becomes evident. Unlike Chopin, who had always been careful to confine himself to the poetic mood, and especially to the more

general type of mood, Debussy revels in the particular, the unusual. He loves the rare thing, the precious emotion; his art suggests the dainty bibelot, the curious perfume, the eastern beauty of the Chinese fan, the tiny idol glowing in the smoke of rich incense. Much entertaining stuff has been written by his admirers in the hope of accounting for this very peculiar quality of his music. One cannot peruse ever so indifferently the least ambitious article on the subject without meeting such terms as "augmented chords," "whole-toned scale," and the like. All this is true enough as far as it goes, but unfortunately it doesn't go very far. The idiosyncrasies of Debussy's art that some critics love to dally with, are but external manifestations of something more essential; they are symptoms, so to speak, of a disease, a very well recognized disease, which has infected all the arts, but which, in music, has apparently not been clearly identified.

Debussy cannot be considered an innovator in the sense that Mozart or Chopin may be deemed innovators. Mozart's creative discoveries in orchestration, or Chopin's creative discoveries in piano writing find no parallel in the art of Debussy. There is nothing fundamentally new, in the truest sense of the word, in Debussy's harmonic principle; he has really discovered nothing; he has not even rediscovered. He is not an innovator, but an adaptor. Unable to create, he is forced to combine; unable to produce new ideas, he is obliged to piece together old ideas, and the skill with which he does this has enabled him to achieve, with a certain public, a reputation for originality.

Like Rousseau, his evident ancestor, he knows not the solid gifts of the highest artist (such as Racine, for example), but the brilliant impostures of the charlatan. Indeed, the parallel between Rousseau and Debussy is suggestive, and will bear a more intimate inquiry.

Rousseau's originality, it has often been pointed out, consisted in the serious exploitation of the paradox. An important feature of his system of education, for instance, the doctrine that the child must not be forced against his inclinations, was original only because it was seriously presented by its eloquent sponsor. In a similar fashion, his thesis that the development of the arts and sciences was responsible for the deterioration of morality was original only in so far as it was a charming sophistry gravely put forward as a brilliant verity. This shrewd method of achieving a reputation for creative power Rousseau carried into literature itself. Incapable of writing good verse, he took up that mongrel genre, the "prose poem," and solemnly forced it upon the public. So skillfully was the trick played in each instance, so seductive were the sophistries adduced in support of his paradoxes, that the brilliant obscurantist was not really unmasked for over a century. Indeed, the mental poison which he stimulated in the public is far from being eradicated even today. Its deadly effects may still be seen in almost every branch of human activity, whether government, education, or art.

Now Debussy, in music, is perhaps the most striking representative of this system of psychological camou-

flage first extensively practiced by Rousseau. Harmony, after centuries of groping, had finally attained in the early eighteenth century a certain stability, due to the general acceptance of the diatonic scale with its corollaries, the major and minor modes. This development is curious from many points of view, but not the least because it was to a large degree unconscious. Musicians apparently became aware of harmonic principles instinctively; a clear intellectual appreciation of the situation did not come about, in many instances, until considerably after the *fait accompli*. The key of A major, for example, was always scored, in the early eighteenth century, with two sharps only, F# and C#. Whenever the G# occurred in the melody, the sign of the sharp was inserted, an interesting proof of the curious fact that the musician's instinct was ahead of his intellect. That the key of A major contained the three sharps, F#, C#, and G#, was not yet recognized intellectually, but simply felt intuitively. As the years went by things clarified, and by the advent of Mozart, the so-called modern harmonic system was generally understood and accepted. This groundwork offered sufficient material for the great masters, from Bach to Chopin. Possessed of immense fertility in the matter of invention, they found no occasion to quarrel with their materials; they experienced no difficulty in being interesting and original within the rules which the diatonic system had formulated. It never occurred to them to overstep the boundaries of the system in search of new material wherewith to offset a lack of creative power; far less

would it have occurred to them to go back to an earlier and cruder system, had they deemed additional material imperative. They were perfectly aware of the existence of the whole-toned scale, but its value they knew to be historical, rather than actual. As a matter of fact, the whole-toned scale marks a stage in the upward struggle of the art of music toward perfection; it is better than what preceded it, but inferior to what followed. Of itself, it is not beautiful, especially in the light of music's subsequent development. To Mozart such a fact was a platitude, and had anyone proposed to him the whole-toned scale as a newly discovered type of beauty, his amazement would have been boundless. That he was thoroughly familiar with it, aesthetically, as well as technically, is demonstrated by the charming manner in which he used it in that rollicking bit of chamber music, the *Village Musicians*. No more delicious satire of the country orchestra, composed of local talent, has ever been imagined. Whole-toned scales, augmented intervals, bloom luxuriantly; Debussy is anticipated with a vengeance, and at the end, by desperate efforts, and still more desperately unorthodox progressions, they all come out together. This sprightly *tour de force* is doubly interesting for, apart from its intrinsic cleverness, it established clearly the attitude of the classicist in this matter. The value of the whole-toned scale, *per se* is, for aesthetic purposes, confined to comedy, and more particularly to caricature, a narrow domain in the realm of comedy. With much wit, Mozart has defined its true status; the upward progress of the art

of music has tumbled the whole-toned scale from the cathedral choir into the village orchestra.

To the decadent romanticist, however, incapable of real creation, this archaic system offered a quick and easy method of acquiring a reputation for originality. With a shrewdness worthy of Rousseau himself, Debussy has seized upon this joke of the classicist, and has gravely offered it to the public as a new type of beauty. The astuteness of the composer has been equalled only by the naïvetè of the pseudo-cultured who have "fallen" for the alleged novelty with amusing unanimity. Like the "holy awkwardness" of the pre-Raphaelites, it seems to have awakened a solemnity of worship that is even more amusing than open hostility. Apparently in art, too, ignorance is the mother of devotion. The real originality of Debussy, the Rousseauistic trick of making a paradox out of a platitude, seems to have escaped both public and critics. Debussy has repeatedly been spoken of as a great innovator, the creator of a new harmonic scheme, and all that sort of thing, whereas, in reality, he is little more than a very clever charlatan, an ingeniously subtle adaptor. A few of the experts, to be sure, have not been taken in by the allurements of the great impressionist's art, but none of them, so far as I am aware, have diagnosed its essential nature. The new harmonic scheme which Debussy is deemed to have created turns out, upon examination, to be little more than a very skillful combination of the pre-Palestrina modes and the modern diatonic system. While apparently progressive it is, in fact, like the pre-

Raphaelite program in art, insidiously retrogressive, and offers interesting proof that the decadence of inspiration which has permeated literature and painting, has at last found its way into music.

There is, however, yet another parallel between Debussy's art and the art of the pre-Raphaelites, or the art of the symbolists and impressionists. Mr. Santayana has said that the yearning of Rousseau, the ancestor of all the modern movements, for the simplicity of the golden age was but the "corrupt desire to be primitive." However corrupt such longings on the part of Rousseau may have seemed to Mr. Santayana, they appear remarkably sound when compared with the desires of the master's last disciples. The pre-Raphaelites in art, the symbolists in literature, the pre-Palestrinaites in music, have all given to the Rousseauistic longing for the primitive a slight, but exquisite twist. What these delicates yearn for, is not the golden age of nature, but the golden age of art. What they aspire to revive, is not the naïve existence of primitive man, but the naïve methods of the primitive artist. The *vers libre*, the prose poem of the writer, the "holy awkwardness" of the painter, the whole-toned scale of the musician, are but different manifestations of one and the same thing: each is the result of pernicious anemia of the creative faculty in the over-refined aesthete. Incapable of solid originality, the decadent artist is forced to fill up his work with outside material, and if he is to appear original to his public, the material which he selects must be unfamiliar to his public. That is, of course, one reason for

the debauch of exoticism, whether of time or place, in romantic art, and especially in decadent romantic art. Exoticism has undoubtedly many attractive elements, not the least attractive being the fact that it at once absolves the artist of the most difficult of all labor, the labor of invention. With all due respect to Debussy's eminent gifts, the exploitation of that particular form of exoticism, the whole-toned scale, is a much easier thing to do than the composition of a *Jupiter symphony*. It is a far simpler matter to express an indifferent idea in two modes at once, than it is to produce a great idea in one mode. Where the latter task demands the deepest of inventive energy, the former postulates little more than extreme technical dexterity. This, it must be confessed, Debussy possesses in the highest degree. However much one may differ with his followers as to the essential value of his music, there cannot be two opinions concerning his wonderful craftsmanship. Whether writing for orchestra, piano, or voice he is always deft, precise, exquisite. He hasn't much to say perhaps but being French, he knows how to say it with point, and when he has said it, to have done. These qualities, which are conspicuous in all his work, are never more happily in evidence than in his music dedicated to the piano. Like Mozart and Chopin, he thoroughly understood the instrument. The compositions which he has written for it may be questionable of content but, from the technical angle, nothing more truly pianistic has ever been devised. In this respect, at least, his work is of unimpeachable

eminence, and deserves to rank beside the splendid achievements of Mozart and Chopin.

Not the least interesting feature of Debussy's piano technique is the fact that it is, fundamentally, little more than a sensitive combination of the apparently incompatible principles of Mozart and Chopin. Indeed, this love of amalgamating opposites lies, as I have already pointed out, at the root of Debussy's art. Just as his harmonic scheme is but the fusing of the seemingly hostile pre-Palestrina modes and the diatonic system, so his piano style is, in its main features, but a compound of the radically opposite styles of the classicist and the romanticist. Mozart, we may remember, had chosen to found his piano technique upon the instrument's main virtue, its ability to give a brilliant staccato. Chopin, on the other hand, had elected to base his technique upon the instrument's chief weakness, its inability to maintain a perfect *sostenuto*. Debussy the last of the three great piano experts, has achieved individuality by a deft amalgamation of these essentially divergent principles. This delicate compromise induced, naturally, changes in both of its component elements with the result that the final product bears little external resemblance to either. Like Mozart, Debussy readily accepts the piano's strong point, its capacity for perfect staccato. Like Chopin, on the other hand, he accepts as readily the piano's inability, even with the pedal, to give a genuine *sostenuto* and, like Chopin, he rests his harmonic scheme upon the peculiar possibilities arising from this weakness. Finally, unlike either, he practically dispenses

with melody, in the traditional sense, whether of the Mozart or the Chopin variety, and relies for his appeal almost solely upon harmonic or rhythmical novelty.

In practice, this ingenious system occasions a delicate, but profound modification of both of its opposing elements. The Mozart type of staccato which is notable for point and brilliancy loses those essential characteristics when grafted onto the Chopin use of the pedal. This is, indeed, the first genuine novelty in piano technique that Debussy has given us, the invention of a new staccato. In sharp contrast to the sparkling glitter of Mozart, Debussy's staccato is deep, luscious, languid; the contours of his notes are soft, filmy, liquid, not bright, crisp, or brittle, and yet each note has the staccato quality of being isolated from its fellows. Nowhere is there made the attempt to produce (as is true of Chopin) an imposture, however subtle, of legato; nowhere is anything demanded of the piano which the piano cannot do. This new and very ingenious staccato is, it will be noticed, intensely pianistic; indeed, more completely so, perhaps, than the staccato of Mozart. The great classicist's piano music is undeniably incomplete in the sense that it is practically oblivious to the possibilities of the pedal. Mozart's staccato is, therefore, less profoundly, less comprehensively pianistic than Debussy's, for it ignores one essential feature of the instrument's individuality.

The artistic opportunities offered by this new staccato were as inviting as they were original, and Debussy has exploited them with singular felicity. Effects which hitherto had never been heard, effects of curious

beauty, of exotic fascination have been made possible by this clever combination of divergent piano styles. Of course, so radically new an element in music requires a correspondingly new quality in the performer. Just as Chopin's *Ab Etude* (opus 25, no. 1) is ludicrous if played in the classical style, so Debussy's *Gardens under the Rain* is equally ludicrous if rendered after the Chopin manner. To produce the sort of staccato demanded by Debussy's piano music, calls for an entirely new method of finger action. The keys must be pushed down more slowly; that is, more time must elapse in the actual pressing down of the keys, to achieve the requisite effect. It is not an easy trick for any one reared in the classical school to acquire; in fact, only players of rare adaptability, of singularly elastic nerves, ever do acquire it. There are few things more painfully comical than the efforts of the average amateur to produce it. What the horrid d'Albert says of the Arietta from Beethoven's last sonata (for the piano) applies even more happily to the music of Debussy: "Young ladies should not attempt it."

This creation of a new staccato, in itself sufficiently considerable a feat is, however, not the only claim of Debussy's piano music to distinction. The ability of the instrument to maintain by means of the pedal an imperfect or dwindling sostenuto, which Chopin had turned so brilliantly to account, has been used by Debussy to obtain effects of a complexity hitherto unknown. The Chopin method of exploiting this attractive quality in the piano was limited in the majority

of cases to the blurring of a single chord by the nice insertion of a pungent, foreign element. It should be recalled that Chopin usually does this by writing the chord as an arpeggio; that is, but one, or, if you count the accompaniment, rarely more than two notes of the chord are played simultaneously. The essence of the trick consists in holding by the pedal a series of consecutive, dwindling notes for, Chopin discovered, in this way only can the harshness of the discordant element be sufficiently mitigated to become agreeable. This process, which contemporaries found shockingly unorthodox, appears singularly timid when compared with the complicated arrangements in which Debussy revels. Whereas Chopin was satisfied to trouble discreetly the outlines of a single, definite chord, Debussy knows no such modest aspirations. Whereas Chopin was contented to strike in succession single notes of a given chord, Debussy must strike in succession entire chords, and by means of the pedal, fuse them into a gorgeous welter of beauty that is entirely outside the classical formula. It is, of course, the Chopin method carried to its logical extreme, and thanks to the piano's incapacity for perfect sostenuto, it is eminently successful. The care that Chopin evinces to minimize the dissonant element in his compositions by writing his combinations in arpeggio form, Debussy also evinces, but in a very different way. In the first place, the chords that Debussy writes, where Chopin would write single notes, these chords are of themselves, if taken separately, consonances or near-consonances. In any event, they are intrinsically

not unpleasant to the ear. In the second place, being struck consecutively and held by the pedal, the earlier ones have weakened sufficiently by the time the later ones are played, to make the ultimate effect rich and beautiful. And finally, Debussy is always careful to express such combinations in pianissimo, thereby diminishing still further the shocking hostilities that arise between the component factors of his arrangements. Where Debussy differs from Chopin, is chiefly in the extent to which he carries Chopin's discovery of the possibilities emanating from a sensitive use of the pedal; the fundamental principle, the exploitation of the dwindling sostenuto, he simply expands, but in its main features, does not alter.

There is, however, one cardinal point in Debussy's use of the Chopin idea which should not pass unnoticed. Whereas Chopin's dissonances were, after all, classical, or better, a modification of the classical principle, Debussy's dissonances are due, in general, to the conflict arising from his endeavor to amalgamate the whole-toned scale with the diatonic system. To really combine such widely divergent principles would seem, at first sight, about as likely of solution as the old problem of squaring the circle—in other words, a manifest impossibility. Debussy, nevertheless, does succeed, by dint of extraordinary ingenuity, in effecting a compromise between these apparently incommensurable systems, a compromise which, if odd at the first hearing, is not without elements of real beauty. Indeed, the more familiar one becomes with this new idiom, the better one likes it, although the claim of

the fanatics that it is superior to the idiom of Mozart and Beethoven is one that no critic of taste will support. To rank Debussy, as a musician, above Mozart or Beethoven, would be about as sensible as to place Swinburne as a poet above Shakespeare, or D'Annunzio above Dante.

Like Swinburne or D'Annunzio, it is in the minutiae of technique that Debussy excels, rather than in the essences of his art; in the secondary matters of form and expression he is perfection; the sensitive dexterity of his craftsmanship has rarely been surpassed; he has few superiors in the delicate business of matching idea and medium. His weakness, as it true of Swinburne and D'Annunzio, lies in the ideas which he has to express. In the higher regions of creative imagination, his place is significantly small; he is incapable of sustained inventive fertility. Where Mozart scatters ideas in glittering profusion over each composition, Debussy exhausts his technical ingenuity in the effort to make one idea cover an entire work. *Gardens under the Rain*, for example, is an admirable elaboration of one idea, so skillful indeed, that the listener remains, to the end, unaware of the fundamental poverty of the composition. The same is true of *Reflections in Water*, *Evening in Granada*, *Puck's Dance*, etc. *Evening in Granada* is, perhaps, the most typical example of the Debussy method at its best. The entire work is in reality but a remarkably delicate mosaic of the various facets of one idea. It contains no single theme of genuine significance or power, of vital breadth or sustained eloquence. On the con-

trary, it is a sensitive arrangement of tiny piquant bits, of minute, exotic motifs, all of which, upon close examination, bear a strong family resemblance, but no one of which is sufficiently forceful of personality to dominate the whole composition. One feels as if the musician had taken a single idea and put it through a refracting instrument, split it into its component elements, and then arranged these elements in a pattern of rare and ingenious beauty. The effect upon the hearer of this type of music is curious. He misses the feeling of centralization of design, of unity, in the matter of idea as well as of composition. The work seems to him episodic and aimless, rather than coherent and purposeful; in the parlance of the painter, the thing doesn't "spot well." Each portion is undeniably lovely, of subtle, haunting fascination, but taken altogether, the final impression, though pleasing, is delicately unsatisfactory. Instead of a logical singleness of structure, both intellectual and emotional, the thing seems to be a capricious arrangement of beautiful sounds.

In Debussy's defense it must be admitted that he is keenly aware of this peculiar limitation and that he does his utmost to conceal it. However loose his compositions may sound to the uninitiated, a close examination reveals to the connoisseur a remarkably orthodox rigidity of construction. *Reflections in Water*, for instance, is almost as firmly built as a Mozart Rondo. The main theme is presented three times, there are two episodes, the second but an elaboration of the ideas of the first, and a coda. *Evening in*

Granada, though more complicated, is certainly as coherent as a Chopin Ballade; one does not require much sophistication to follow the scheme with comfort. Where Debussy fails is in what he has to say, not in how he says it. As I have repeatedly stated, his works are elusively disquieting because his ideas themselves lack vital significance. He knows this as well as the most hostile of critics, although he is perhaps less eloquent on the subject, and he is careful, in consequence, to be brief. He is well aware that otherwise he would be wearisome and of that, being French, he has a mortal horror. He prefers, and very sensibly, to be attractive though minute, rather than big but boresome. This means that, given his limitations, he must be of necessity a miniaturist, and in fact, that is one notable feature of his work. His compositions are nearly all very short, even his symphonic compositions, and he has written only one large work for the stage. So restricted an output is significant and makes but a poor showing when compared with the formidable number of Mozart's masterpieces. This characteristic inferiority is noticeable also in each composition. The merest trifle by Mozart leaves the impression that the master stopped from choice, whereas even the tiniest bit of Debussy suggests that the composer stopped from necessity. Mozart, the hearer feels, could have gone on forever, but Debussy, he suspects, stopped just in time. So serious a weakness is naturally of considerable importance in determining the standing of an artist, and becomes more so in proportion as that artist's technical gifts are of a

high order. This unfortunately is the case with Debussy, whose craftsmanship is of so fine a quality that it has blinded a certain public to his very obvious shortcomings. So brilliant is his manner that many of his admirers have been led to overlook the poverty of his matter and some, even, are so deluded as to affirm that in art, the manner alone is significant.

It is difficult, I admit, not to be carried away, when one studies him, by the truly wonderful skill which he evinces throughout in the matter of expression, and nowhere is this skill more surprising than in his piano music. In this respect he is the equal of Mozart and Chopin, and quite surpasses the other masters who have written for the piano. Compared with even the best that Beethoven has left us, Debussy's work is technically incomparably superior. Beethoven's orthodox harmonies are often brutal, ugly, vulgar, whereas Debussy's enormous heresies are blended with such delicate cunning that the ear is never shocked or harrowed. Much depends naturally upon the performer. Reticence (the better part of tact), sensitive comprehension, subtle finger action are imperative, if this music is to achieve its purpose. Unusual readiness on the part of the audience to forego a natural prejudice in favor of melody is also necessary for, when all is said and done, the art of Debussy is peculiar and will probably never appeal to the multitude. His compositions are not for the fellow who wants to whistle the concert on the way home in the cars; they are for the fastidious epicure, the exquisite connoisseur, the amateur of the musical curio. Debussy loves to dally

with the precious idea, the rare color, the dainty emotion; he scorns the orthodox generalities, the abstract conceptions, the impersonal attitude which the classicists and the sanest of the romanticists, had considered the real business of the art. His genius is essentially exotic and he makes no attempt to restrain it. Those of the critics, however, who would find fault with him for this forget that the artist is not responsible for the quality of his gifts, and that Debussy has, on the whole, been wiser to be Debussy than to attempt to be a Mozart. It should be said also, in his defense, that however *outré* his compositions may appear, they are nevertheless pretty sound, both of mind and heart. In his way he has a real feeling, an innate instinct for the beautiful, even though his particular type of the beautiful is apt to be curious. There are few piano pieces, for instance, more truly lovely than his *Reflections in Water*. Like the Nocturnes of Chopin, its conception rests upon a solid artistic principle; it differs from the Nocturnes only in the manner in which that principle is applied. Chopin, when he attempted to paint in tones, chose to produce his colors obliquely, by working through the mood created by his notes; Debussy achieves his purpose more quickly, through the quality of the notes themselves. Debussy's subject, it will be noted, is at once more precise, and his rendering of that subject more immediate. *Reflections in Water* is a splendid example of his method at its best. If, in this composition, he has been singularly felicitous in his choice of subject, he has been even more happily inspired in the selection of his instru-

ment. Next to painting, music is the art that can produce with the greatest readiness the sensation of color reflected in water. When in motion, water is perceptible through the ear as well as the eye, which means that, like painting, music has in this case a direct avenue of communication with the thing it wishes to express. Further, of all musical instruments, the piano, by virtue of the liquid quality of its notes, is the most likely to create the mixed illusion that Debussy has so wisely chosen for his task. And finally, the fact that any sheet of water is nearly always in movement to some extent, occasions another fortunate bond between Debussy's subject and his art. Music, unlike painting, attains its end through motion, and for that reason, is particularly adapted to the rendering of subjects that are themselves in motion. Now Debussy has applied all those principles, but especially the last, with remarkable insight in the piano piece, *Reflections in Water*. He has noticed that one essential quality of water reflections is their even, regular, undulating progression, and this quality he has expressed through the rhythm of music which, by its very nature, is also of even, regular movement. Colors floating in the living mirror of water, are naturally in motion, constantly flowing, glinting, melting, but with a swaying symmetry that corresponds readily to the rhythm of music. So subtle has Debussy's observation been, so exquisite is his artistry, that the illusion which he creates is well-nigh perfect. Indeed, so direct is his magic, that the title *Reflections in Water* is scarcely necessary to the understanding of the composition.

Not the least remarkable feature of the work is the manner in which it begins. The approach of so remote a subject as *Reflections in Water* might well have puzzled the most eminent of musicians, but Debussy apparently found the task to his taste. The opening measures plunge us—after the genuine classic fashion—in *medias res*. The rhythmic undulations of the rich, flowing chords form a deep, living welter of color wherein tiny drops of sunlight glint and melt. Lucent iridescences of fleeting nuance quiver in evanescent play; harsh, brilliant flashes blare out and soften; rare, pale tints shimmer and vanish. Little by little the turmoil subsides, the colors deepen to shadows; the quiet of evening steals over the waters; a mellow note or two, dying in beauty, and all is still.

This truly poetic conception is the more to be lauded in that it never for a moment oversteps the legitimate boundaries of its art. As the title suggests, the subject is at once precise and general. What the music aims to convey is a definite thing: reflections in water, and yet it does not attempt to present those reflections as actual, pictorial colors, such as green or blue for example. Music, Debussy knows well enough, is inarticulate; it can render neither a precise emotion nor a definite color, and in this case, as in the majority of his works, he readily accepts that limitation. The colors which he gives us, in this instance, are musical, not pictorial; we feel them intensely but we cannot define them accurately, and in not asking this of us, Debussy is artistically correct. It is unfortunate for his reputation that he has not maintained his sobriety

throughout. Such compositions, for example, as *Water Color—Green* in which he would render an actual color, must always be a failure. Even though the color “green” refers to the prevailing tone of the picture, and to that extent may be considered general, it is nevertheless too precise for music to render with circumstantial accuracy. The principle on which he attempts to rest a *tour de force* of that nature, will not permit of such definite relationships. Color-audition is unavoidably subjective; no two people see the same color in the same note—in fact, as I have already said, they do not see any pictorial color at all. What they see is a musical color, a type of color that will always elude definition because it is expressed through an inarticulate medium. When a composer, therefore, invites us to see “green,” or “blue,” or “red” in his music, he is treading on artistic quicksands in company with his fellow decadents of literature, those “exquisite invalids” (to quote Anatole France), who dispute over the “colors” of the various vowels.

Such nonsense, it is gratifying to note, is not a common thing in Debussy’s music. It is rare indeed that he errs in the matter of taste; his art, if not great, is in the main notable for a certain classic sobriety. Its real weakness consists in its poverty of fundamentals, its lack of energy both of mind and heart. It is not the ideas themselves, but the skill with which they are pre-ture, and to that extent may be considered general, it sented, that commands our chief admiration. Undeniably beautiful, this music is located dangerously near the uttermost boundaries of the art and, although at

its best legitimate and sound, it is, nevertheless, of a type that cannot be dwelt on too long. Concerned with the over-refined, the super-precious, the ultimate Thule of the exotic, it must necessarily be restricted in amount; like Chartreuse or Benedictine, it is not harmful if taken in small doses. Debussy himself was well aware of it. The majority of his compositions, as I have said, are short; exquisite trifles, dainty cameos, lovely miniatures. He seldom risks anything large or powerful; he hasn't the strength and he knows it. On the other hand he does attain, at times, the real classic repose that is the distinction of the superior artist. Especially is this true of *Reflections in Water*. Behind the flashing turmoil, the incessant movement, there is a real calm, a fine serenity which triumphs in the end, and which is remarkably impressive. It is the result of a deep restraint that in music has become increasingly rare since the death of Beethoven. Mozart, in his *Requiem*, or Beethoven, in his last sonata for the piano, actually attain that unclouded serenity which is the essence of the "glory that was Greece." To affirm that Debussy belongs with these Olympians would be—to put it mildly—over-enthusiastic. It is true that in *Reflections in Water*, or the *Afternoon of a Faun*, he very nearly reaches this lofty plane, but at no time does he ever attain the pure beauty of the finest of Mozart or Beethoven. When judged by the highest standards, Debussy is undeniably a lesser artist, an artist who, thanks to an extraordinarily nice critical faculty, succeeds in achieving a harmonious perfection excelled only by the supreme masters.

In discussing the music of Chopin and Debussy, I have had occasion to mention their skillful use of the powers of suggestion. This important feature of all modern art was first mentioned, in connection with music, by Rousseau. The *Dictionnaire de Music* contains a remarkable passage in which the subsequent development of music is outlined with uncanny vision. Among other things, Rousseau points out the peculiar capacity which the art possesses of creating illusion by suggestion. Although attaining its end through motion, music, he says, can nevertheless suggest repose; although acting only through sounds, it can nevertheless produce the illusion of stillness. This interesting fact, which Rousseau was apparently the first to notice, turns out upon examination, to be the exact counterpart of the situation in the plastic arts. The Greek sculptors, for instance, succeeded in forcing a medium, which itself is motionless, to produce in the highest degree the illusion of motion. In other words, they literally compelled their art to do something that really is out of its domain, and this *tour de force* they performed by the magic of suggestion. As Lessing would say, they seized the "pregnant moment," the moment that stirs the retrospective as well as prophetic faculties of the imagination, the moment that makes the beholder visualize all the motion that has preceded the moment, as well as all the motion that follows. Now music, we shall find, can do the exact opposite. Instead of creating its illusion by expansion, by spreading out into both the past and the future, from one central moment, music can get its effect by reversing

this process, so to speak, by contracting in both directions back to the central moment which is motionless. Like painting or sculpture, music also performs the trick by suggestion, but by a kind of suggestion diametrically opposed to that peculiar to the plastic arts. Mozart's Andantes repeatedly awaken the sense of a fine repose, as do the loftiest of Beethoven's slow movements, but it remained for Debussy to actually achieve the direct illusion of stillness, both of motion and sound. The coda of *Reflections in Water* is chiefly remarkable, aside from its beauty, for the intensity with which it creates the impression of absolute absence of motion. With sensitive magic, it narrows the imagination of the listener onto the moment of deep stillness that creeps over the waters in the quiet of evenings. Debussy, I know, has been severely criticized by lovers of the classical in art, but if the *Discobolus*, or the *Winged Victory* which tread dangerously near the boundaries of sculpture, are permissible, it seems to me that the music of *Reflections in Water* which is simply the reverse process, can also be tolerated.

The success of so difficult a feat as the coda of *Reflections in Water* is due, in a large measure, to the composer's rare technical skill. The illusion of stillness is created by the most delicate, yet the simplest, of means. Only a profound comprehension of the nature of the instrument can account for so real an achievement. The suggestive magic is the result of a very deft use of the dwindling sostenuto, a type of sound that is possible only on the piano. In fact, *Reflections in Water*

owes its appeal chiefly to the peculiar qualities of the instrument for which it was written. Like all of Debussy's piano music, it is intimately, even curiously, pianistic. Neither Mozart nor Chopin have known how to exploit the instrument's individuality with greater perfection. Even on paper—to borrow the parlance of the epicures—even on paper this music of Debussy's "looks well." And after making allowances for the artificiality of so remote a stage of appreciation, one must admit that there is something in such a statement. However much the layman may scoff, it is a fact that by long association of eye and ear, the connoisseur does develop a faculty for estimating music by its appearance on paper. The music of Mozart, for instance, presents to the mind, whether through the eye or the ear, a definite individuality which varies with the instrument, or group of instruments for which it was written. The characteristics of all good piano music are to the expert as readily perceptible to the eye as to the ear. The compositions of Mozart, Chopin, and Debussy for this medium have a distinct similarity of appearance which the trained eye can appraise at a glance. The spacing of the notes, the web-like scheme of the accompaniment, the curve of the melody, the use of rests, all are peculiar to good piano style, which is expansive and flowing, rather than intense and crowded. In all other respects, however, the piano writing of these three masters is as widely divergent as the poles, and bears eloquent testimony, not only to the originality of the artists themselves, but also to the remarkable versatility of the instrument. Indeed, as I

have already intimated, much credit must be given the piano—*per se*—if the art of Chopin and Debussy is to be adequately explained.

Suggestion, which is the crux of romantic technique, and which is inseparable from romantic illusion, suggestion is, we have noticed, one of the most distinctive features of the music of Chopin and Debussy, as opposed to the music of Bach, Haydn, and Mozart. Just how suggestion is achieved, how Chopin and Debussy go about it, whether it be the larger business of treating a poetic mood, or the more special task of fusing rich discords, how they actually play the trick, is a matter of considerable interest in the domain of technique, and deserves to be formulated with a sharper precision than has yet been done. Moreover, as the piano itself comes in for a large share in the glory of the discovery, the question is of particular importance to the critic of pianistic art. A satisfactory explanation of the method whereby suggestion is accomplished, is not easy to give; the process is both subtle and complicated, for it consists in the stirring of the imagination of the listener in an elusive and singular manner. If we remember, too, that music is of all the arts the most abstract, the most isolated from concrete reality, it will be evident why the task of accounting for any feature of its nature offers such unusual difficulties. In the past I have endeavored to solve the problem by a comparison between music and one or more of the other arts; and it seems to me that, in the present instance, this process may again prove helpful. The compositions of Chopin and Debussy—but especially the composi-

tions of Debussy—evinced as a matter of fact a close kinship to the work of the impressionistic artists; indeed, one of the most popular theories among a certain class of modern painters, the theory of “broken colors,” has its parallel, and a significantly close parallel, in the compositions—especially the least orthodox compositions—of Debussy. A comparative examination of this theory and its practice will throw considerable light upon the manner in which the trick of suggestion is played, how both painter and musician succeed in working their magic undetected.

The so-called theory of broken colors, which, as I have said, has been forcing its way to the front in painting, is as ingenious as it is subtle, as sophisticated as it is unorthodox, and may therefore be considered characteristic of modern tendencies in art. It had been the practice of the classic schools to observe, in the arrangement of mutually hostile colors, certain well established laws. One of the most fundamental of these laws demanded that aesthetically incommensurable colors be separated by careful gradations; that colors which “swear” at each other be kept at a safe distance from one another on the canvass. In short, much emphasis was laid by the older generation of painters upon the necessity of carefully nuanced progression in the linking of remote or mutually repellant colors. Now, the up-to-date fellow has chosen to discard *in toto* this axiom of the classicist—to throw it ruthlessly overboard; instead of grading remote colors, he delights in laying wholly dissimilar colors side by side; colors that orthodox taste had long pronounced hostile to one another,

he insists on placing in immediate and brutal proximity to each other. The effect which appears indescribably messy close at hand turns out to be surprisingly pleasant if the picture be viewed at a distance. What the painter has actually done in instances of this nature is, of course, obvious. Instead of composing the tone of his picture on the palette, and then putting the completed tone onto the canvass, he has put the elementary colors of his tone, in the raw state, onto the canvass, and left the composing to the eye of the observer. The fusing of the elementary colors into the desired tone is achieved not mechanically, by the brush and on the palette, but mentally, by the eye of the observer working from a distance on the raw materials on the canvass. In other words, the modern painter dispenses, to a certain extent, with one stage in the process of making a picture, the stage of composition on the palette. In his defense, however, it must be admitted that his method is, if anything, more difficult than the old-fashioned method of the classicist. The composing of the tone on the palette called for mental exertion only in the selection of the ingredients; the fusing of those ingredients demanded nothing but the mechanical labor of stirring them with the brush. The modern method, on the other hand, postulates not only the mental exertion necessary to the selection of the ingredients, but also the mental labor requisite to the correct placing of those ingredients on the canvass. Where the classicist had simply used his hand in fusing the elements of his tone, the impressionist uses his mind in arranging those elements on the canvass in such

fashion that the task of fusing them into the desired tone may be reasonably comfortable to the observer. In short, the modern fellow replaces a certain amount of mechanical labor in the making of a picture, by a certain amount of mental labor, and he does this, not merely on his own part, but he requires a similar substitution on the part of the observer. The passive state of appreciation which the completed tone of the classicist evoked is replaced by the more active state which the subtler, though less complete picture of the impressionist demands. This highly sophisticated theory may, naturally enough, be applied—and many of the modern artists do apply it—to each color in a given picture as well as to the tone of the whole; that is, the color of each single object in a picture may be presented in the primary stage of its component elements, instead of in the final stage of the complete color.

Such a method is interesting, apart from its effectiveness, insofar as it offers additional evidence in favor of the claims of the classicist that the fundamental tendency of all romantic art is but the sophisticated attempt to revert to the primitive. The theory of broken colors is, it will be noticed, the very deft exemplification of this tendency in the domain of technique, and its success depends largely upon the skill which the artist displays in the use of suggestion. Not only the selection of the elemental ingredients, but the adequate placing of those ingredients calls for a sensitive understanding of the magic of suggestion, if the fusing of the component elements into the desired tone is to be at once comfortable and pleasing to the observer. It is

evident that the practice of this theory introduces a new and subtle element into the technique of painting and that it demands of the artist a correspondingly new and subtle discrimination wholly foreign to the classicist. The effect of this retroactive method of composition is inevitably very different from the simpler and more direct method of the older schools. Instead of a clean, cool, precise vision of the object, one receives a rich, warm, blurred picture, weltering in color but lacking in sharp detail. Where classic art was accurate but a trifle rigid, impressionistic art is loose but elastic; where classic art emphasized minuteness of line, impressionistic art lays stress on breadth of color. In other words, the situation in painting is significantly akin to the situation in literature, in fact, to the situation in every domain of human activity: intellectual clarity, the faculty for sharp distinction has been engulfed by the rising tide of lax emotionalism.

Now this particular form of the modern tendency in painting, the theory of broken colors, has its parallel (and a remarkably close parallel it is) in the art of Debussy. The classicists in music, as in painting, had always been careful to nuance their colors, to modulate by sensitive degrees when connecting remote chords. To them, the juxtaposition of distant and unrelated keys was abhorrent; they saw to it, when writing in a particular key, that their harmonies should always keep that key in mind; they never placed side by side harmonic arrangements brutally suggestive of the fundamentals of foreign keys. If they found occasion to use chords somewhat remote from the key

in which they were writing, they presented those chords in their closest relationship to the key in question, and in their most distant relationship to other keys. Mozart, for instance, when writing in C major, would be careful, if he wished to introduce the triad of d, to write that triad in the first or second inversion (that is: f a d, or a d f) instead of in the fundamental (d f a); under no circumstances would he leap brutally from the triad of C (c e g) to the triad of D (d f a). The shock produced by the juxtaposition of the fundamental tonalities of C and D was one that his sensitive organism could not tolerate, and until the advent of impressionists like Debussy and Ravel, musicians generally had been of similar orthodox delicacy. Even Chopin, radical though he was, even he could never have imagined the scandalous heresies of *Reflections in Water* or *Evening in Granada*; his progressions, despite their apparent enormity, remained in essential conventional; his innovations were content to enrich the classic conception of harmony by the discreet spice of dissonance.

Debussy, on the other hand, has chosen to break with accepted tradition in this matter, and has consequently developed a technique as odd as it is radical. Like the impressionists in painting, he scorns the nuanced transition, the orthodox modulation, the plain, mono-colored statement of tonality. The opening chords of *Reflections in Water*, for instance, are, most of them, entities as strongly reminiscent of other keys as they are suggestive of the key in which the composition is written, and the manner of their arrangement would, upon close scrutiny, seem at first to heighten

this impression. Instead of separating them by modulated transitions, Debussy has placed these distantly related chords in immediate and brutal proximity to one another, and left the fusing of them into the fundamental tonality of the composition to the ear of the listener. The success of this method depends upon several factors, many of which bear a striking resemblance to the factors that determine the success of the impressionistic method in painting. In the first place, the several chords which are the component elements of the fundamental key (and which, in this respect, correspond to the broken colors in painting), the several chords must be selected with accurate discrimination, a matter of no little difficulty. In the second place, these chords, once chosen, must be so placed that the ear of the listener can fuse them readily and agreeably into the fundamental tonality, and this, it is obvious, is no easy task for the composer. Finally, a correct appreciation of the function of the pedal is absolutely imperative if the desired effect is to be obtained. The program which Debussy has here adopted is, therefore, remarkably akin to the program advocated by the impressionistic painters; in fact, what we really have is but the application of one theory to two distinct arts. The divergencies that crop out in the practice of this theory are due to the fact that painting and music occupy different domains, rather than to a difference of intention on the part of the artist. Like literature, the domain of music is time, whereas the domain of painting is space, a fact observed by Rousseau as well as by Lessing. Neither of the great critics, however, was

pleased to go further and define accurately the middle ground which, by virtue of its peculiar individuality, music occupies between poetry and painting. Words, said Lessing, are successive in time, whereas colors are co-existent in space; tones, said Rousseau, are successive in time, whereas colors are co-existent in space, and that is as far as either cared to push the investigation. That both were correct up to that point is indubitable, but that something yet remained to be done before the final status of the three arts was definitely established, is no less certain. Although music resembles literature in that the domain of both is time, as distinct from painting, whose domain is space, it will be discovered, upon careful investigation, that music occupies the domain of time in a broader manner than does literature. This fact, which none of the critics seem to have considered, springs from the different natures of the two arts; literature achieves its purpose through words, music through tones. Now both words and tones are akin in that they must be successive in time, in opposition to colors, which are co-existent in space. Tones, however, differ from words in this important particular, that, besides being successive in time (melody), they may also be co-existent in time (chords and counterpoint). That is, tones, although endowed with the faculty of the successive like words, possess also the faculty of the co-existent like colors, but this faculty (of the co-existent) tones exercise in the domain of time and not of space. In short, although music must deal with the successive, like literature, it may also deal with the co-existent, like painting, with this difference,

that the co-existent in music is ephemeral and changing, whereas the co-existent in painting is permanent.

The artistic possibilities that arise from this dual faculty are too far-reaching for the compass of so short an article, and it will be impossible to do more than accord them the briefest of summaries. Since music possesses properties peculiar not only to poetry, but also (in a certain degree) to painting, it might at first seem plausible to assume that music is a more complete artistic medium than either of the others. The greater breadth of range effected by the two-fold combination of the successive and the co-existent is, however, quite offset by the fact that music (working in tones instead of words or colors) is, therefore, less articulate than either poetry or painting, and that, in consequence, what it gains in complexity, it loses in precision. It may, perhaps, depict more than either painting or poetry, but it cannot do it as clearly; its capacity for the creation of artistic illusion may be wider than the capacity of either of its rivals, but it is certainly less explicit, less circumstantial. Its appeal, if more generous, more renderingly poignant, is undeniably less definite, because—when all is said and done—it reaches our consciousness primarily through the heart rather than the head.

If the above conclusions are correct, it becomes at once obvious that the task of the musician is a more complicated one than the task of either the poet or the painter. In arranging his materials (words), the poet has only to consider the difficulties of the successive; the painter, on the other hand, must deal in the placing of his colors, only with the difficulties of the co-existent.

The musician, however, must cope not only with the difficulties of the successive (melody), but also with the difficulties of the co-existent (chords and counterpoint). His art, in other words, postulates faculties akin not merely to those of the poet, but also to those of the painter, and the complexity of the situation is further increased by the fact that music is, as I have said, a less articulate medium than either poetry or painting. Finally, if we remember the unusual obstacles presented by the retroactive method of broken colors, it becomes manifest that the task of the impressionistic composer is of serious proportions. His acquaintance with the magic of suggestion must be wider than that of either the poet or the painter, for it must include an understanding of suggestion as achieved through the co-existent as well as through the successive.

This two-fold ability Debussy, like all great musicians, possesses to an extraordinary degree; it is in evidence all through his work, but nowhere is it, perhaps, better exemplified than in the opening measures of *Reflections in Water*. Indeed, a more successful illustration of the broken color theory in music would be hard to find. The several chords, if examined closely, will appear brutally unsympathetic, and their arrangement but the wilful combination of a set of infinitely repellent particles. The effect, however, is singularly beautiful at a distance, just as the color scheme of the impressionistic painter is beautiful and harmonious from afar. In both cases we are witnesses of a *tour de force*, a *tour de force* all the more fascinating in that it is curiously,

even oddly, elusive. A vast amount of vaporous appreciation of this peculiar species of art has been written, but in no case, it seems to me, do the impressionistic critics perceive the essentials of the thing anent which they rhapsodize so brilliantly. All artists, but the impressionistic artists especially, offer us, in point of fact, an exhibition of legerdemain—in excelsis. Like the magician, who picks billiard balls out of the air, they begin and end by deceiving us; that is their real intention—to create beauty, and to achieve this creation through deception. That we come to their exhibition willing, expecting, eager, to be deceived, is part of the game; the artists realize it, if we do not, and the more exquisite their sleight of hand, the greater, they know, will be the mutual satisfaction. Now the legerdemain of the impressionist, whether he be painter or musician, attains its goal through suggestion and, curiously enough, one of the fundamental requisites of his manipulation of suggestion is distance. The work of the impressionistic painter, seemingly a chaotic mess of color close at hand, becomes, as I have said, harmonious and agreeable, if viewed from the proper distance. In a similar fashion, the compositions of the impressionistic musician attain their full significance only through distance, but distance in time instead of in space. That is the secret formula, discovered in music by Chopin, and radically elaborated by Debussy, the formula which constitutes the core of all romantic technique, the value of distance in the achievement of suggestion. In music, it may prove interesting to note, this discovery was made possible by the peculiar abilities of a single instru-

ment, the piano. The imperfections of the percussion system of tone production conjoined to the exceptional advantages of the pedal created a situation of unparalleled opportunities; the dwindling *sostenuto*, which is the piano's especial privilege, was, Chopin noticed, particularly adapted to the task of blurring the harmonic or melodic outline at a distance. Tones which, if struck simultaneously, would be horrible, fused agreeably, he noticed, when placed some distance apart in time and held on the air by the pedal. The perceptive faculties of the listener are blurred by the distance in time, just as, in painting, the perceptive faculties of the observer are blurred by the distance in space. In both cases the harsh outlines of the conflicting colors or chords are no longer perceived distinctly, which makes it possible for the observer or listener to fuse them easily and pleasantly. If, therefore, certain colors or chords in such a combination are rightly emphasized, they protrude sufficiently through the blur to stimulate the imagination of the observer or listener in the right direction. It is upon the realization of this important phenomenon that the romanticists, and that odd by-product, the impressionists, have founded their conception of technique. The classicists, it should be pointed out, had understood the factor of distance in a totally different way. In painting they placed dissimilar colors at a distance on the canvass, so that the effect might be pleasant close at hand; in music, they placed notes involving dissimilar harmonies at a distance in register, so that they were agreeable even though struck simultaneously. In neither case was there any attempt to

achieve the melting of contiguous, dissimilar colors or harmonies by the blurring effects of distance upon the perceptive faculties of eye or ear; in neither case was any attempt made to create illusion by suggestion.

A certain amount of education has been necessary, as we all know, before the general public could be brought to enjoy the impressionistic painters, and the same thing will, of course, be true of the work of the impressionistic musicians. I can remember distinctly the horror excited among the conservatives by the secessionists in painting of 1902, a horror that today could scarcely be understood; their works seem mild enough to us now. In a similar fashion, it is reasonable to suppose that the compositions of Debussy, which at the present moment appeal to a very small portion of the music-loving public, will in time find increasing favor, and perhaps at some remote date be even considered orthodox. To estimate correctly the standing of an artist is no easy task, especially for his contemporaries; it is hard to be sure, for instance, whether a composer like Debussy, is really at the head of a new movement, or merely in the wake of the old; whether he is an inspired leader or an elegant straggler. There are, however, certain general standards by which all artists can be measured, and in the preceding pages I have attempted to point out how and where Debussy satisfies, as well as how and where he falls short of the demands of supreme excellence. With all due admiration for his wonderful gifts, the suspicion will not down that his place is not among the Olympians. Like the art of the impressionistic painters, his work, of superior merit

technically, must be found wanting, when judged by the highest standards; its perfection, external rather than internal, resides too often in the minutiae of expression instead of in the nobility of the thing expressed. In short, the impressionist, whether he be painter, musician, or poet does not represent the best, the most vital aspects of creative energy. Undeniably clever, he is odd, complex, exotic, where genius is original, simple, and domestic; emphatic of expression but niggardly of ideas, where genius is sober of statement but generous of thought; over-refined and precious, where genius is powerful and hearty; trifling, where genius is fundamental. That the impressionist, on the other hand, has not been of real value in the evolution of art, is a different matter.

If there is one fact which a comparison of the music of Mozart, Chopin and Debussy must have emphasized above all others, it is the fact that the very diversity of their art has nevertheless been the result of a willingness on the part of each composer to abide by the piano's limitations, to ask of the piano only what the piano can do. The difficulties which confronted them were unusual and demanded for adequate solution a clear understanding of the essential nature of the instrument. To write genuine piano music, it is necessary to think in piano terms, not in orchestral or vocal terms, and this cardinal principle the three masters recognized instinctively. That such widely divergent music as they have left us could spring from this single formula is as much a compliment to the instrument as it is to the composers. The artistic possibilities offered

by the piano were rich and varied, but they were fraught with dangers of a peculiar quality, for the piano, as I have repeatedly said, has unusual weaknesses as well as unusual powers. Each of these three masters appreciated instinctively the problem before him, but each solved the problem in a different way. Mozart preferred to insist on the instrument's more positive ability, its ability to produce a brilliant staccato, and accordingly he dedicated to it, as a rule, only that portion of his art that could be expressed through staccato; the type of music that required *sostenuto*, he reserved for other instruments. Chopin, on the contrary, devoted himself almost exclusively to the piano. There existed a rare intimacy between his kind of poetic imagination and the peculiar individuality of the instrument. Its negative quality, the inability to maintain a perfect *sostenuto*, attracted him as much as the positive virtues of point and brilliancy. He saw, with genuine intuition, the possibilities which a deft exploitation of this weakness offered to art and determined, in consequence, to rest his music almost entirely upon this weakness. So successful was he in the application of this ingenious principle, that the essential beauty of his work depends, for its realization, exclusively upon the individuality of the instrument. No other medium save the piano can produce that curious, hypnotic reverie that is the most characteristic feature of his work. When transcribed for other instruments, the charm vanishes; not even such a prestidigitator as Ysaye can revive it. The reason, of course, is that besides being essentially pianistic, it is also peculiarly pianistic; its needs the

piano's imperfections to make it perfect. In order to create that melting, voluptuous melancholy, it must have the shortcomings of the percussion method of tone production conjoined with the advantages of the pedal. In other words, Chopin's poetic message is inseparable from its medium and positively cannot be transmitted through any other. So subtle an amalgamation of idea and expression, so happy a congeniality, between matter and manner is of the highest credit to the composer's abilities, and were this his only title to fame, he would still deserve to rank well in the history of the art.

A similar eulogy may also be written for the piano compositions of Debussy. This is all the more significant because, unlike Chopin, he had something to say for other media besides the piano; he was familiar with the voice, the orchestra, his power of expression was not limited to one instrument. It is evident, therefore, that what music he intended for the piano was composed, so to speak, with malice aforethought; that whenever he wrote for the piano, he had something especial to say which that instrument alone could adequately render. In this he displays a discrimination akin to Mozart's delicacy, but that is about as far as the resemblance goes; in all other respects he is far distant from the attitude of the great classicist. Chopin, as I have said, elected to emphasize the piano's negative qualities, especially the incapacity for genuine *sostenuto*; the positive virtue of point and brilliancy, attracted him but little, and his most characteristic compositions are almost totally devoid of them. Debussy,

the third of the great piano experts, has achieved eminence by a sensitive amalgamation of the apparently incommensurable formulae of Mozart and Chopin. In company with the former, he makes no attempt to produce an imposture, however subtle, of legato, but confines himself to staccato. On the other hand, attracted by the piano's unique capacity, the capacity for dwindling sostenuto, he has succeeded in grafting the Mozart principle of staccato on to the Chopin use of the pedal. The result of this ingenious combination is as novel as it is singular, especially as Debussy has further chosen to dispense almost entirely with melody, either of the Mozart or the Chopin variety. The illusion created by this process is likely to be peculiar rather than beautiful and, in fact, that is the most serious charge which can be brought against Debussy's music. It always impresses the listener as odd, whether he likes it or not, and he feels the necessity of mastering its strangeness before he can bring himself to enjoy it. Debussy's attempt in addition to reconcile the whole-toned scale with the diatonic system and his presentation of the inevitably curious result in broken colors is but one more obstacle in the path of an immediate and pleasurable appreciation of his music. That he is, on the other hand, always artistic and that he actually attains, at times, the level of pure beauty, is due, aside from his technical mastery, to his keen feeling for proportion, his exquisite sense of symmetry. Charlatan though he be in the matter of the whole-toned scale, he is too much of an artist to rest his work entirely on such harmonic legerdemain. His best compositions

do not insist on it to the exclusion of everything else, but use it generally when certain pungent effects are desired. True art, Debussy is well aware, demands something besides the knack of making the Philistine stare. That in itself is not so difficult a matter. The realization of beauty in some form must and always will be, the quest of everyone who aspires intelligently to the name of artist, and it is the achievement of this quest now and then that entitles Debussy to serious consideration. His particular type of beauty is perhaps too odd to be given the highest eulogy, but it is undeniably his own. With Rousseau he might very well have said: "If I am not better than others, at least I am different."

This difference, which none will deny who have heard his music, this difference is due, as we have seen, to the clever amalgamation of existing formulae, rather than to the discovery of a new formula. Debussy's originality, therefore, is of a more questionable value than the originality of either Mozart or Chopin, and this fact should always be borne in mind whenever the attempt is made to establish the relative positions of the three masters in the evolution of pianistic art. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that Debussy, by a real understanding of the instrument, has done much to emphasize its peculiar versatility. It certainly is a far cry from the limpid, sparkling purity of a Mozart Sonata to the gorgeous exotic beauty of *Evening in Granada*, or the *Sunken Cathedral*, and what is of especial significance, this astonishing diversity has been attained by a strict adherence to the

limitations of the instrument. In the last analysis, therefore, the piano is responsible for the music, not only for its existence, but for its nature. Much of Mozart, all of Chopin, and not a little of Debussy would never have come into being had it not been for the creation of this remarkable medium. That is a platitude, of course, but one that is too easily lost sight of, and one that it will do no harm to remember now and then. However much the great artists, from Mozart to Debussy, deserves the eulogies which have been accorded them for their lovely piano music, it would perhaps be not amiss to reserve a modicum of this praise for the humble inventor of the instrument, the ingenious Bartholomeo Christofori, who builded better than he knew.

Biblioteca de
RUSSELL P. SEBOLD