



NOTES



Purity in Poetry

English poetry is as a rule pure enough to be read by all. At any rate it is true to say that the pure is the best, and that he who shuns what is tinged with obscenity does not miss much from a literary point of view. Shakspeare sinned in few instances owing to the greater coarseness of expression in his day. Byron was objectionable here and there. A few moderns who will not be heard of in ten years are neither fit to be read nor worth reading. Among the old dramatists of the past there were notorious offenders, such as the "literary skunk" Wycherly. But apart from such cases which grow as the thistle grows in the corn the tone of English poetry is traditionally lofty, pure, and moral. There should be no need to warn our readers against either poetry or prose which could bring a blush to the purest brow. Unfortunately we cannot say as much for modern prose as we have said for poetry. There are too many novels in circulation—written often by neurotic women or by mannikins like George Moore—which have no earthly excuse for existence and which nobody should read. Let Elinor Glyn, Victoria Cross, and *id omne genus* be anathema maranatha. Our Church prohibits us from reading obscene books, and that should be enough for us. Girls ought to recall what Dr. Johnson said to a lady who mentioned that she had read an old novel: "Madam, you should be ashamed to tell it." One who knew the corruption of the human heart from sad experience in pagan Rome uttered the warning—

tenebras ne tange poetas!

Callimachum fugito. Non est inimicus Amori:

*Et cum Callimacho tu quoque, Cœc, noces.
Me certe Suppho meliorem fecit amicae,
Nec rigidos mores Teia Musa dedit.
Carmina quis potuit tuto legisse Tibulli,
Vel tui, cuius opus Cynthia sola fuit?*

Verses About Poets

Mr. Birrell closed his study of the alleged obscurity of Browning with a few apt lines descriptive of that poet's work. In him we can

Discern
Infinite passion and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

Of Arnold he quotes—

Whence that completed form of all completeness?

Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness?

And of the spell of Rossetti's "luscious lines" he cites—

In sundry moods 'tis pastime to be bound.

Matthew Arnold's lines on three great poets are well known and very true—

Time may restore us in its course
Byron's wild power or Goethe's force,
But when shall Europe's later hour
Again see Wordsworth's healing power?

And Dryden's stanza is almost hackneyed by frequent quotation—

Three poets in three distant ages born
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed;
The next in majesty; in both the last.
The force of nature could no further go;
To make a third she join'd the former two.

Needless to remark it is a very English estimate of the three, and naturally very kind to Milton, last and least of the trinity. Nowadays he is an unhonored prophet in his own country, and few read him at all, which is a pity.

The Wogans

At first sight one might be inclined to wonder that "Wogan" is an Irish name. But if you consult a dictionary you will find that it is only the Sassenach form of "Fagan," about which there is no doubt. A recent number of the *Jacobite*—a brave little paper which still keeps green the memory of all the far-off things and battles long ago connected with the Stuart cause, referred to the fidelity and honor with which the Wogans served the "rightful King" in bygone years. And, indeed, the names of Charles and James Wogan stand out like stars against the dark background of history; and never were there braver champions of any lost cause than those two Irish soldiers. There is a novel by A. E. W. Mason—it is called *Clementina*—and if you read it you will find in a fine, stirring story an account of the marvellous exploits of Charles Wogan, who rescued the Princess Clementina Sobieski from Innsbruck and brought her safely, amid hair-breadth escapes, into Italy to be married to James Stuart. The story tells us that Wogan's heart was lost to the Princess whom he saved, but that he honorably and faithfully kept his trust and far better or worse in the domestic chapel of Cardinal Origa, Charles, as proxy to the King, married Clementina not as her own man but as the King's. She, too, the story goes, was by no means indifferent to the gallant soldier who had brought her into Italy. And as they stood face to face in the chapel on that far away morning there was enacted a marriage that was a tragedy for the bride as well as for the bridegroom's proxy:

"In a word there was no ruffle of the great passion which these two, man and woman, had trodden beneath their feet. She did not hint of Iphigenia and he borrowed no plumes from Don Quixote. Nor need one fancy that their contentment was all counterfeit. They were neither of them grumblers, and 'fate' and 'destiny' were words seldom on their lips."

In another of Mason's novels—*Parson Kelly*, in which he collaborated with Andrew Lang—you will find more of the Wogan family. The book seems to have dropped out of sale of late years, but it is worth a hundred of the novels that are thrust on buyers to-day. Of the end of Charles's life Mason writes in the epilogue to *Clementina*:

"At La Mancha he lived for many years, writing a deal of Latin verse, and corresponding with many distinguished men in England upon matters of the intellect. Matters of the heart he left alone, and meddled with no more. Nor did any woman ever ride his black horse into his city of dreams. He lived and died a bachelor. The memory of that week when he had rescued his Princess and carried her through the snows was to the last too vivid in his thoughts. The thunderous roll of the carriage down the slopes, the sparks striking from the wheels, the sound of Clementina's voice singing softly in the darkness of the carriage, the walk under the stars to Ala, the coming of the dawn about that lonely but perched high-placed among the pines—these recollections, one may think, bore him company through many a solitary evening. Somewhat the world had gone away. Clementina had gone into her convent. . . . James was fallen upon a deeper melancholy and diminished hopes. He, himself, was an exile alone in his white patio in Spain. . . ."

And so, with his dreams and with his scholarly leisure, this brave Irish soldier of fortune went slowly down the western slope of his days, with two great human loves to light his memory of the downgone days: a great love for a beautiful woman and a greater love for honor.

Ala, the lost causes! How many a Wogan came out of the distant western land in all these years that followed the English invasion, and went forth to carve with their swords a glorious path in other lands. They led the lances among the hills of Spain; they rode to victory with the lilies of France; they charged at the head of Austrian cavalry; and in many cases survived but to eat out their hearts while they ate the bread of exile and climbed the hard stairs of the stranger's walls.

Examination Successes

HOLY CROSS COLLEGE, MOSGIEL.

In the recent matriculation examination of the University of New Zealand the following students of Holy Cross College passed or completed:—W. B. Flynn (Auckland), J. W. Murphy (Dunedin), B. A. Quelch (Dunedin), C. E. Robing (Christchurch). The following gained partial passes:—B. Doherty (Auckland), J. J. Fletcher (Wellington), P. E. Kelly (Christchurch).

ST. CATHERINE'S COLLEGE, INVERCARGILL.

Matriculation: Joseph Timpany. Public Service Entrance: Josephine Timpany, Margaret Fraser, Kathleen Martin, Catherine McNamara, Nancy Loughnan. Intermediate: Roma Kempton.