

COVENTRY PATMORE AND THE CRITICS

by

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COVENTRY PATMORE AND THE CRITICS

A Study in Estrangement

Scire velis, mea cur ingratus opuscula lector
laudet ametque domi, premat extra limen iniquus?
Non ego ventosae plebis suffragia vener
impensis cenarum et tritae munere vestis;
non ego, nobilium scriptorum auditor et ultor,
grammaticas ambire tribus et pulpita dignor.
Hinc illae lacrimae.

Horace, Epistulae I xix.

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Introduction

The Preface which Coventry Patmore wrote for the last edition of the Poems issued in his lifetime, would deserve immortality on its own account, though the book which it adorns were trivial. It is at once a valedictory and an epitaph; in it a poet takes farewell of his readers, and indulges in a kind of posthumous comment on his completed works.

"With this reprint I believe that I am closing my task as a poet, having traversed the ground and reached the end which, in my youth, I saw before me. I have written little, but it is all my best; I have never spoken when I had nothing to say, nor spared time or labour to make my words true. I have respected posterity; and should there be a posterity which cares for letters, I dare to hope that it will respect me."

This preface is short, but its brevity is in inverse proportion to the dimensions of its claim. It is short as St. Paul's compendious apology was short:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ", because, for the man who can say so much, little of equal import remains to say. It is short as the reflections of Horace on his own achievement were short:

"Exegi monumentum aere perennius";

because no poet can go on in that confident manner long without thinking of the uncertainties of fame.

Though the preface is short, it stands as a masterpiece of two kinds of writing, the direct, and the oblique; and presents two complementary messages, one patent, one occult.

It is the happy function of the direct message to announce a triumph. This it does with serene finality. In three succinct and tidy sentences it affirms three separate prodigies of attainment; the realization of a life's ambition; a life's fidelity to a severe ideal; a strong but modest hope of future glory.

The oblique phrases in which the hidden message is contained are also short -- they amount to about one third of the preface -- but, like an inscription of Simonides, are packed with the meaning of all that they spare to say. They are an example of the least assilable kind of statement, which is statement by omission. They constitute a laconic manifesto, a tantalizing piece of informative reticence, a triumph of the most educative of the arts, "l'art de ne pas tout dire".

And among the most interesting things which they refrain from saying, there is an admission of failure in poignant contrast to the proclaimed success. For it seems difficult to believe that Patmore has chosen to speak of his respect for Posterity on any other grounds than that of his preferring not to mention his contempt for his own age; while the defiant hope that Posterity will respect him, barely conceals his recognition that Contemporaneity had not sufficiently done so.

The preface, then, in its two members, open and implied, is a dilemma. It presents us with the picture of an obviously gifted man who, by his own report, has desired and deserved fame, and has not had it. This is no unusual complaint for a neglected poet to utter. Nevertheless, for the sake of accuracy, let us examine his

grievance. Let us inquire, if his work was good, why and to what extent it was despised. Was his failure to ingratiate the public the result of bad manners, or bad technique, or of an esoteric and unwelcome theme? Or was it bad luck? The resolution of these doubts may afford us a clue to the tricky problem of literary prestige in general; may add to our store of vendable information on the difficult art of making poetry palatable. We all of us know that, de jure, in all true poetry there should be something so absolutely fine that we surmount spontaneously all our most obstinate prejudices to enjoy it. But are our minds in fact so disengaged? Are we really able to prescind from the content, and settle down to an aesthetic approval of the grammar? I am afraid that we often become very impatient when we suspect the existence of an adverse propaganda lurking in ambush behind the innocuous rhymes. Is it not possible, too, that even when a poem is manifestly innocent of a proselytizing tendency, it may nevertheless be based upon theological antecedents which have resulted in a social type antipathetic to the one we prefer, with a sensibility, and emotional life, and even a vocabulary that offends us? If this happens when the dogma is inexplicit and retired, how when it is openly, and perhaps aggressively stated? The only way we can prepare ourselves to experience joy in the artistic conformities of an uncongenial doctrine, is by patronizing it as a mythology, and so permitting ourselves to feel detached. This, however, is difficult with the writings of a poet who is not yet mythical.

Finally, to resume our historical theme, has Posterity, we may ask, justified Coventry Patmore of his hope? Or, since Poster-

ity, as the play says, is still around the corner, has it only justified his use of a term adaptable to long range prophecies? And does Posterity — that elusive entity! which we can sight but never overtake — give any indication that it is about to return (or even, we may ask, to merit) his respect?

The Poet

"Your son, my dear Patmore, is a poet". (Leigh Hunt.)

Coventry Patmore had the advantage of looking like a poet. Certainly on the grounds of his appearance alone no critic could have wished to attack him. His father, Peter George Patmore, who had been the intimate associate of many of the first writers of his day, and knew, if anyone did, what the physiognomy of a poet ought to be, was eminently satisfied. After long and seriously considering the person of his son, with a view to ascertaining his vocation, he decided that the credentials of a litterateur were luminous in his face. He thereupon sat down, and in the romance, Chatsworth upon which he was then engaged, left us a report of his findings. This is the first recorded critique of Coventry Patmore:

"See! his lithe, fragile form is bending over a book that is spread open on his knees, his head drooping towards it like a plucked flower. The pale face is resting on the clasped hand, over which, and all around the small exquisitely modelled head, fall heavy waves of auburn hair, concealing all but one pale cheek - pale and cold as marble, but smooth and soft as a girl's." (1)

This portrait is evidently that of a predestinated bard, and, as such, "mawkish with parental fatuity" (2), though it be, does not surprise us. We are familiar with it as the frontispiece of a dozen romantic volumes. Keats, in the artist's conception of him, (3), looks like this; and so does Shelley; and when a poet like Rossetti, draws himself, these are the very contours to which the pencil educates his frame. Evidently they are the lineaments which

convention thought desirable for poets; and the significant fact for us is that they represent the sort of apparition which the combined features, talent and personality of young Coventry was able to evoke.

His father, moreover, was not the only one who found in Coventry's physical presence a point de départ for romantic idealization. The process is also illustrated in John Brett's Prae-Raphaelite study (4) of his friend. The hair in that charming picture is crisp, and decorously combed; the face is humorous, sensitive, and eager; independence and mockery gleam from the eyes; and something about to be spoken tingles on the stubborn lip. Undoubtedly that something is a poem.

Endowments such as these may seem to be irrelevant and trivial. They are really important since they obtain recognition for the poet before he has done anything to deserve it, and hence needs it most. They advertise to others his yet unwritten books; and goad himself into activity lest by his life he falsify the promise in his face. It was in 1839 that Patmore made his first attempt to redeem that promise in gold, and gave to the expectant world The River, and The Woodman's Daughter. These poems were seen and approved by P.G. Patmore; and, then, at his instigation, read to a select little party of the members of The Cockney School, where they provoked a furor of happy enthusiasm. The coin was freshly minted, and rang true. "My strong and clear conviction of the extreme beauty and finish of what I heard read last night remains this morning undiminished. They will bear thinking over, and the impression they make is a lasting one I am sure", (5) wrote, thrillingly, Laman Blanchard. This is the

second important piece of criticism which Coventry Patmore received, and it is almost as flattering as the first. There was more of the same to follow, for its author was at once to become the volunteer commander of a "claque".

But before determining whether the praises they enjoyed were commensurate with their merit, it may be well to examine the quality of these early verses. And since there was to be a good deal of talk about derivation, it may be interesting to hear what Patmore had to say in explanation of his literary pedigree. The following is from a letter which he wrote in 1844 to Bulwer Lytton: (6)

"I was", he says, "at that time (1839-41) totally unacquainted with Tennyson, or with any of the other poets properly to be called of the present day, except Leigh Hunt. Next to the poets contemporary with, or immediately succeeding, Shakespeare, my favorites were (and still are), Coleridge and Wordsworth." In another place he says, "I did not try to imitate his (Coleridge's) style. I can hardly explain how he influenced me. He was rather an ideal of perfect style than a model to imitate; but in some indescribable way he did influence my development more than any other poet". (7).

These words, which have an unmistakable ring of sincerity, sufficiently indicate the character, and, to a certain extent, the sources of his poetry. They explain moreover the affability with which it was received by his father's friends. To such a little coterie of literary gentlemen whose tastes had been largely formed by the first and second generation of romantics, Patmore's first eager poems, which savoured so strongly of his admirations, must

have been an acceptable ragout^A. It was a ragout^A which, however garnished with modernity had undoubtedly Coleridge (8) for its main ingredient. It had some spice of newness in it that was to catch the Pre-Raphaelites, but it pleased these old fashioned palates best by recalling other dishes they had enjoyed when young:

"With bitter condiment and sour,
And sweet economy of sweet,
And odours that remind
Of haunts of childhood and a different day." (9).

It was doubtless very agreeable to be so often reminded of "Christabel", as, in reading The River, it was impossible not to be. All the fauna and flora of early romanticism flourish in the poem, almost in the vigour and suddenness of their youth. The quasi-supernatural livestock - "scritch owls", owlets, "voiceless bats", and "baying hounds" - lineal descendents of the Coleridgean Stud, propagate exuberantly from stanza unto stanza. Perhaps, too, these men who now stood on the threshold of the Victorian Era were relieved to find that the "mastiff bitch" who occupies so distinguished a place in the rhyme-scheme of the earlier classic had been precluded entry.

It seemed like an act of reverence to Keats to read that the manor hall windows were "bright with shapes of king and saint devout", (10), and that "withered cheeks of watchful kings start from their purple gear". (11). And the suicide theme (which would unman criticism by compassion when The Bridge of Sighs appeared a few years later) was thoroughly orthodox.

Yet, even today, a generation which feels but little nostalgia for the traditions of romanticism must admit, that The River was technically, a fine, virtuoso performance; and

with passages of authentic poetry.

"It is a venerable place,
An old ancestral ground;
So broad, the rainbow wholly stands
Within its lordly bound;
And here the river waits and winds
By many a wooded mound." (12)

"The Poems of 1844", says Edmund Gosse, "as we look back upon it across 60 years was a volume which might excuse in a father a somewhat rhapsodical burst of language." (13). Walter de la Mare has the advantage of another forty years to his perspective. "Even in verses written when he was only 16", he says, "(Patmore), was a supreme craftsman and artist." (14). Thus "Posterity" in her most lenient tone.

The elements which go to make up The Woodman's Daughter are perhaps less diverse. It "derives almost singly", says Mr. Page, "from Wordsworth's Ruth". (15). Beginning sweetly, and even blithely, as a pastoral, it accommodates itself to a gloomy tradition, by introducing episodes of seduction, child-murder, and madness. All this is told in a vein of sombre reverie, which connects it with the school of Newgate Calendar Gothic, exemplified in the then popular Dream of Eugene Aran. The seduction theme undoubtedly amplified the fascination of the poem even for this group of elderly readers, and presents to us yet one instance more of that curious absorption which the virtuous writers of the nineteenth century seemed to think so creditable to themselves, in the sorrows and the disgrace of a fallen woman. "A vengeance of Jenny's case indeed!" says cynical Posterity "when such a poet as this comes fawning over her, with compassion in one eye, and aesthetic enjoyment in the other". (16).

The descriptive passages in both these poems show the greatest skill. The poetical furniture is all so sprucely kept, that

it seems not a bit less sumptuous for being second hand. Patmore's was of the same school of interior decorating as his contemporary, Edgar Poe. Clocks of sepulchral intonation, rustling curtains, and clanking chains are his usual adjuncts to the midnight drear. The human protagonists of the first poem - a hapless lady, a lord unloved, and a "lover who feared to sue" - are insubstantial shapes of dream but their melancholy pervades the fields and their passion congests the skies. The lurid atmosphere of both poems is Coleridgean throughout; there are marsh lights; and dead winds; and wan, watery, wraith-like clouds; under which the rivers wind or sullenly plunge beneath the pall-like cedars.

After the composition of these early pieces (resumes Patmore's letter to Bulwer Lytton), "there followed a period of nearly two years in which I wrote nothing at all in verse, but in that time I read Tennyson and STUDIED some of Coleridge's prose metaphysical works. Then I began Lilian." (17). If this be so, Lilian may be thought to show the effect of his reading rather than of his study. The reviewers accused it of imitating the less inimitable portions of Locksley Hall. Actually the chief resemblance seems to be that through a long succession of stanzas in both poems the "spur which moves the noble mind" to compose is the pleasure experienced by a slighted lover in "heaping execrations upon the head of a jilt". (18). To add to the assortment of flavors which enhance the volume, this poem has a prologue and an epilogue in the brilliant vein of Byronic improvisation. (19). Conversely, it shows a concern for the virtue of its readers, which may enlist Patmore along with Mrs. Hemans (in W.M. Rossetti's insinuating introduction to her Poems) as "a leader in that very modern phalanx of poets who persistently coordinate the impulse of sentiment with the guiding powers of morals or religion". (20). There are, moreover, certain

lines in Lilian:

"On her cheek then and forever was the seriousness within," (21). which display once more an odd affinity with the cadences of Poe.

The remaining long poem, Sir Hubert, is a recital in the manner of Lilian of Boccaccio's story of The Falcon. "In this poem of courageous and happy love" says Page (22), "Patmore found himself, and bade farewell once for all to suicides and melancholy whores". Certainly, it is more optimistic in tone and more wholesome than the other works; it was written in a great hurry; and perhaps the poet was driven by the pressure of time to eschew the morbidities he had been so assiduously cultivating. There were also three sonnets, and other small pieces, barely long enough to do more than give the critics an opportunity to detect another echo. This time it is Sir Edmund Gosse and the voice he fancies himself to hear is from The Seraphim, published along with Other Poems by Elizabeth Barrett in 1838.

It is now something of a relief to be able to declare the limits to a versatility over-full of reminders. From its farrago of associations, there are a pair of noticeable absences. No critic discovered the slightest evidence of a flair for travesty so frequent in that age which rejoiced in the romantic Burlesques of Hood, in The Ingoldeby Legends, and Father Prout's Reliques. And the Chartists would certainly not have said that Patmore's social conscience had been aroused. The Cry of the Children has not reached his ears. He is not moved to sing The Song of the Shirt. (23).

Patmore's first two poems had been accomplished but old-fashioned. Lilian was topical and faintly propagandist. None of them was to escape the charge of eclecticism. The collection in general merited the reproach incurred by a lady in one of the

plays of Wilde, that she was "obviously a work of art, though one displaying the influence of too many schools".

Nevertheless there was originality evident even in its imitation. "It had" says Edmund Gosse, "a real distinction of its own, and spoke not in borrowed tones but in the accent of a new person." (24). Our long and apparently damning catalogue of resemblances has affiliated Patmore with Tennyson, Barrett, Poe. This is partly because the same diluted romanticism is visible in all these writers. They are all faintly redolent of one another, for all of them have foraged at the roots of the same vine. If Patmore borrowed, it was not from them but from their creditors.

In this treatise our main business is to consider the relations which existed between Patmore and his critics, hence we are concerned to notice any circumstance which was apt to procure or forfeit their respect. From this point of view we may say that the ubiquity of romanticism in his work was a strong point in its favor, and indeed, until the year 1844 at least, the future author of that Preface, the truth of whose dreadful innuendoes we have set ourselves to discuss, had certainly little to complain of from the critics. As we have seen, some of the most distinguished members of the journalistic world had studied his efforts at a kind of "Private View", and comforted him with their approval in cozy intimacy. He had their sanction to publish what they had heard; it was at their behest that he had composed additional poems sufficient to fill a volume; it was at their recommendation that a company was found to print it. The transaction (and something of its effect) is described in a letter of Robert Browning to Alfred Donett, July 31st, 1844:

"A very interesting young poet has blushed into bloom this season. I send you his soul's child; the contents were handed

and bandied about, and Noxon was told by the knowing ones of the literary turf that 'Patmore was safe to win'. So Noxon relented from his stern purpose of publishing no more verse on his own account, and did publish this." (25).

Yes, it was published by Noxon, in 1844, "when the poet was just of age, a thin green volume of Poems by Coventry Patmore, now a great biographical rarity". And almost immediately this author who was later to represent himself as estranged from his generation, was taken up and cuddled in its arms. Without repeating his father's ecstasies with regard to auburn hair and the plucked flower, some of these writers display a solicitude which is truly paternal.

Leigh Hunt in the last chapter of his Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla as it appeared in Ainsworth's Magazine, 1844, after deploring the early death of Keats and Shelley ... goes on ... "We hope we are not going to lose any more. But youngest England should have a care, and not hazard too many accidents by flood and field — too many horsebacks in all weathers and running races with time. Hear this, Coventry Patmore! You who want nothing but experience, and the study of the mechanism of verse, to become equal to the finest poets existing". (26). T. Noon Talford spoke of the book as "a marvellous instance of genius anticipating time". (27). Ruskin said: "If they were Tennyson's, everybody would be talking of them — but they are a little too like Tennyson to attract attention as they should". (28). Thackeray in a letter dated October 3, 1846, expressed his more moderate but still sanguine view of Patmore as "a clever young fellow who will be a genius one day". (29). We have already given Browning's account of the printing and the

reception of the book. It was not till 1851 that he puts on record the depth of the cordiality with which he had greeted it. "My old admiration for your genius continues unabated, of course; but why, why?" he asks Patmore, "have you not ere this turned it pale, as only yourself could, by the side of some as genuine new delight at some as unmistakable manifestation as the first? So wonders my wife too." (30). And even as late as 1884, in a letter of condolence on the death of Patmore's son, there is a generously inclusive sentence which manages to praise the later works without appearing to depreciate these very earliest ones: "On any other occasion I should have felt happy at this opportunity of assuring you that the many years which have gone by since I first became acquainted with you, have in no way altered the impression of your genius which came on us all by surprise in your first volume." (31).

An equally interesting reference is from the Præ-Raphaelite Diaries. William Rossetti writes, "my brother (Dante Gabriel Rossetti) and I ... admired the poems enormously, and I daresay that in a couple of years we had read every one of them through twenty or thirty times. Gabriel was certain to talk about them to fellow students at the R.A., etc., and more especially to Hunt, Millais, and Woolner". (32). Other members of the Præ-Raphaelite group such as F.C. Stephens, relate how they used to "carry the volume about with them ... and read it at leisure". And we have the testimonies of other people, not professionally interested in literature, who did the same.

All of these ovations were more or less private; yet they were of the sort that was bound to become public on account of the celebrity of their authors. "A laudato viro laudari" is a

formula for the intensest kind of praise, for then whatever we receive of approval seems to involve as a guarantee of its worth, all the approval enjoyed by our admirer, and so in a measure, makes his success our own. No poet, certainly, who enjoyed to the extent that Patmore did, the honours of the honoured, has the slightest excuse for chagrin. Public notices appeared in various periodicals. Their tone was in general more reserved, but on the whole, favorable. There was a very commendatory anonymous review (beside the reference already mentioned) by Leigh Hunt in Ainsworth's Magazine for July 1844., and a "useful criticism ... very discriminative, and full of friendly admonition and castigation" (33) (perhaps by John Forster) in The Examiner. Other reviews appeared in The Spectator (which innocently disparages in Patmore's Sir Hubert all those features for which Boccaccio is alone responsible;) in The Critic, and in Blackwood's. The Poems are mentioned (cordially) in Punch. (34). The mere number of articles devoted to this first volume is in itself flattering.

But among all the critiques elicited by the book, two were of transcendent importance to the author. One of these was private, a letter of friendly advice from Bulwer Lytton. The other was public and scandalous; the diatribe in Blackwood's. Both of them were to effect materially the next great development in his art.

Bulwer Lytton tactfully begins with a praise. He has read Patmore's book, and had pleasure in it. "Your pages abound with unmistakable testimonials of no common genius; - not one which does not proclaim the mind and heart of a Poet. I honestly, and without compliment think the promise you held out to us - is perfectly startling, both from the luxuriance of your fancy, and

the subtle and reflective inclinations of your intellect." (35). It was impossible that such an opening should not captivate the attention of its subject. But the writer has cleverly managed to insert into the sugar of his adulation the pill of sound advice. Amidst the official (though sincere and hearty) blandishments of the exordium, the topic sentence of his attack occurs. In that apparently friendly conjunction of "luxuriance of fancy" with "the subtle and reflective inclinations of intellect", Lytton subtly introduces his argument, the whole course and intention of which is to show that these two chief merits of Patmore's style are mutually repugnant, and that the former of them, like a brilliant parasite, has preyed upon and devitalized the latter. The object of his recommendations is to prune away the growth which has flourished, and to dung about and cultivate the barren tree which has not borne its fruit.

He therefore strenuously urges that Patmore apply himself to the development of that "practical power in which the greatest Poets - (and those below the greatest who have been most popular and cherished), eminently possess". "It is," he tells him, "a something wholly independent of what the Germans call 'form' - and should please and interest even if turned into prose and into any language - the 'form' shows the poetic gift and the substance is more than the gift; it is the Manhood or Godhead behind it". All of which is highly symbolic and opens the door to a number of interesting debates on Hylomorphism, Theology and the aesthetical problem of the intrinsic end of art. But what it actually was to mean for Coventry Patmore will be perhaps more clearly delineated in the following less rhetorical quotations:

"... The Poet in indulging fancy must remember that it is not by fancy alone that he secures us - his strong hold is the

heart - and when he deserts that he must hold the firmer to our understanding or common sense - mere fancy writes on water."

Do we not hear plainly in these words the first accents of an invitation to which Patmore certainly responded to forsake "imagination" for realism, scenery for psychology?

The call becomes even plainer: "As yet you seem to me to lean more towards that class of Poets who are Poets to Poets - not Poets to the multitude ... I should say you had only to aspire to be a Poet to the MASSES; - to be more practical in the sense of the word in which it was applied by Goethe to Schiller, to cultivate the power of enchaining human interest, to bring down your fancy to a level with the Heart and understanding - in order to achieve a very high destiny."

Whether for evil or for good this was undoubtedly the advice which was to turn Patmore into a "people's poet"; and in the ideals which the paragraph enshrines we recognize the formula for The Angel in The House. But it was not enough to suggest an end, and awaken the ambition to achieve it. There were certain technical faults in the poet to be amended; certain vicious tendencies to be curbed or eradicated; certain affections to be mortified.

The first of these (a fault to be amended) was "a lack of variety and sustained music in rythm (sic.)". "Most of your poems", the baron acutely says, "are really in almost the same metre, and that one which has too fatal a facility for that enjoyment in art which is derived from difficulty overcome, and which makes us prefer the marble statue to the wax figure. It is little more than the printer's division of one line into two that distinguishes the metre of Lilian from that of The River".

This mention of "lack of variety" and "fatal facility" is an

early instance of a complaint which was to follow Patmore for the greater part of his poetic life. The accusation relative to the two metres is absolutely true, as the following stanzas, either one of which might easily have been printed in the format of the other, will show:

"The waters, in their old content,
Between fresh margins run;
The pike, as trackless as a sound,
Shoots thro' the current dun;
And languid new born chestnut leaves
Expand beneath the sun."

live;
"On her face, when she was speaking, thoughts unworded used to
So that when she whisper'd to me, 'Better joy Earth cannot give',
Her following silence added, 'But Earth's joy is fugitive!'" (37).

The second criticism stigmatizes a poetical fault against which Patmore was afterwards all his life persistently to inveigh - (38) - the failure to subordinate the details to the whole. It was the undue ascendancy of vivid details over general scheme which he was afterwards to deplore in the Frae-Raphaelite writings: it may have been the indulgence of this vice in his own early work which had charmed (and possibly seduced) them. "It seems to me" says Bulwer Lytton, "that in common with Tennyson, you cultivate details to the injury of the broad clear whole - The River is indeed a most exquisite poem - but it is by the details alone that you make it so. Had you paid equal attention to the elaboration of a great conception -- (in) which, after all, the details would have stood out clear, single and luminous at the close - you would have tripled the beauty and popularity of the piece."

Another feature common of the Frae-Raphaelite technique comes in for censure: "Nerde I like", says the Baron "a repeated indulgence of that extra-plainness which Wordsworth introduced for a scientific purpose but which he and others have strangely abused, which introduces into the midst of the eloquence natural

and becoming to the dullest of us when elevated by sentiment and feeling -- a triteness that jars upon all the strings the poet has just awakened -- such lines for instance as:

'Endues the chairs and tables
With a disagreeable life';

might furnish critics not disposed to be unfair with much that might help to thwart popularity by ridicule". This prophecy was indeed fulfilled. The word "disagreeable" offended everyone, and the poet, to please them, changed the phrase to "grim and ghastly life". Without in anyway offering to differ from the general principles behind the criticism, we may say that at the worst this change merely substituted one kind of banality for another. Actually, however, in its context, the word "disagreeable" gets its effect from the figure *litotes*, a fact which its critics may not have appreciated. As for "the repeated indulgence of extra plainness" in the work of Patmore, anyone who is familiar with the kind of thing that was said about the Angel may deduce that it was an indulgence to be repeated again.

All that now remained for this correspondent to do was to wean Patmore away from his models. Such men as "Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and one or two living writers I could name. These are writers whom the young Poets are apt to overestimate - and, without imitating them precisely, their vein runs too much into similar channels ..." a tendency which the Baron deprecates. And whether we owe it to Bulwer Lytton's disapproval or not, we may say that Patmore's infatuation for the school, ended with his second book. Not that his admiration for them waned, but he ceased to allow "his vein to run (at least so obviously) into similar channels". Now any poet who has been the recipient of such a letter as this, a letter wholly devoted to the praise of

his own work, and to an examination, minute, critical, kindly, of his powers with a view to strengthen them, and of his faults in the hope of their correction; a letter moreover of great length, and signed with the name of a famous and busy man — may complain that he has been misguided if he likes, but certainly has no right to hint at neglect.

The tenor of Bulwer Lytton's advice had been to combine truth with charity. Its substance was repeated in one of the Reviews, in a tone that was openly malignant. The letter when considering faults had been like the surgeon's knife; the Review was corroding acid. Nevertheless, it did its work thoroughly, and though its author was probably servile, and its instigator vindictive, the general effect was wholesome. I refer to the notorious article in Blackwood's, August, 1844. (39).

An account of the genesis of this particularly ferocious piece of criticism is given by Mr. Champneys. In order to understand it, nothing more is required than to remember that P.C. Patmore had been "second to Mr. John Scott in a duel with Mr. Christie, the friend of John Gibson Lockhart.." and that "the original quarrel had been between Mr. Scott and Mr. John Gibson Lockhart, and turned on the question whether the latter was or was not the responsible and paid editor of Blackwood's Magazine". (40). This being so, it is not surprising that "this notice is one of the most savage that ever appeared in Maga even in its unregenerate days. It is probable that an attitude of fierce hostility would have been assumed whatever had been the quality of the poems. As the son of 'Tims' the quondam contributor to Blackwood, of the second of Scott — who was actually Christie's originally Lockhart's, and essentially Maga's antagonist — of the friend of Leigh Hunt, Keats and Hazlett, Coventry Patmore would

have been sure in any case to receive short shrift from the staff of the magazine. It is clear from a letter written by Laman Blanchard to P.G. Patmore that both considered the writer of this article to be attacking the father through the son". (41). Who the writer was is not certainly known. The style points to "the hand of a usually kindly critic, whose manner the article fits in all respects but that of virulence. But such virulence was more common and perhaps less culpable in those days; and the writer may have written under the editorial command to 'lay it on'. I incline to think that the hand is the hand of —, but the voice is the voice of 'Maga'". (42)

What "usually gentle critic" is intended to be represented by this more than usually irritating hiatus, we shall probably never know. At any rate his article is a classic in its genre, "scarcely less clever than it is savage and unscrupulous", one of the prettiest attempts at literary assassination that the nineteenth century, which produced its share of adepts in the traffic, was to see.

The reviewer begins by the friendly avowal that: "in the days of the knout, ... no such volume as Mr. Patmore's could have ventured to crawl out of manuscript into print ... Had Mr. Patmore's friends not thought proper to announce him to the world as the brightest rising star in the poetical firmament of Young England, we would probably have allowed his effusions to die of their own utter insignificance. But since they have acted as they have done, we too must be permitted to express our opinion of their merits; and our deliberate judgement is that the weakest inanity ever perpetrated in rhyme by the vilest poetaster of any former generation becomes masculine verse when contrasted with Mr. Patmore's puling muse".

So startling a disagreement between "Mr. Patmore's friends" and "Mr. Patmore's father's enemies" (as we may call the writers for Blackwood's) must, if it be anything more on both sides than wanton partiality, have some rather curious explanation. That explanation is not hard to find. The two opposing factions of reviewers were considering a different book. It is true that the pages submitted to their respective judgments were physically the same, down to the smallest details of punctuation and spelling. The difference lay in their own vision which had effected in each case a miracle of expurgation. The result was that those who were prejudiced in their favor, saw only the merits of the poems, with every offensive passage obliterated. Thus, as they were really viewing the amended poems which we have to-day, everything they say with regard to them is just and perspicacious; the only misleading feature about their judgments is that the volume as they considered it was still unpublished. The Reviewer for Blackwood's on the other hand saw only faults. As these were later corrected or removed, the volume as he considered it, is happily out of print.

Nothing goes farther to show the salutary effects of these two opposing types of criticism in Patmore's case than the transformation they effected in the subsequent appearance of the book. Everything which had been able to awaken intelligent approval was retained; all the excesses, the absurdities, the "slipshod vulgarities", the puerilities, "the silly and conceited rhapsodies" which had been so relentlessly exhibited in Blackwoods, were excised.

This operation was most serious in all that relates to plot. The plots had received their share of not unmerited ridicule, and apparently the only remedy which occurred to the author was to remove them. But when you have extracted the skeleton from the

body, it is no longer able to stand on its own feet. The result in the Poems is that they become unintelligible without a commentary. We are conscious all the while we are reading them, of extreme reserve on the part of the author as to what is going on. We defy anyone reading the present version of The Woodman's Daughter to guess that Maude has murdered her child, or even to have been conscious of more than a dim suspicion that she had conceived it. The cloud of asterisks, under which, as Blackwood's remains to witness, she was delivered, is also gone. We are in the dark. The poem is not a story; it is a collection of beauties, a mere anthology of its former self. (43).

Nevertheless, the gain has been enormous. Blackwood's has saved us from the necessity of any longer associating those beauties with the fatuous and dreary narratives they once adorned. We have already quoted a sufficient number of the many fine lines in the Poems, in order to justify, or at least to explain, the attitude of those who praised them. In gratitude to Blackwood's, we must now quote an equal number of the foolish lines which its ignoble (but useful) attack has caused us to be spared:

"Sir Hubert! and that instant
Mabel saw the fresh light flush
Out of her rosy shoulders
And perceived her sweet blood hush
About her, till, all over,
There shone forth a sumptuous blush." (44).

It is not necessary to repeat in full the ribaldries into which Blackwood's was provoked by this effusion. It is obvious that a blush of such dimensions as Mabel's, though an imposing token of modesty in itself, would require a considerable sacrifice of modesty to display.

It was also necessary that the poet should be reprimanded, not indeed for the logic, but certainly for the facility, the hysteria,

On the whole, Coventry Patmore had every reason to be content with his public. Even when he was being most bitterly reviled he had the satisfaction of seeing himself lumped in common obloquy with Keats. And, aside from that, whether he had been caressed or attacked, lauded or ridiculed, the best of reasons had in either case been assigned. But if he was satisfied with his public, he was by no means satisfied with his book.

His own criticism, which is the last we shall mention did not come until 1847, but when it came it amounted to a wholesale repudiation:

"The tone of the River", he confesses, "is unmanly; that of the Woodman's Daughter is of doubtful morality, and portions of Lilian are not of doubtful morality at all, but of a decided weakness and sensuality. Sir Hubert is alone healthy in its general tone -- but that can do little good. The times of chivalry -- the times when such love was beautiful -- are gone forever." (46).

It is no doubt good for a young author to be so disillusioned about himself. It is good for him to become aware of the impurities lurking at the root of all his thought and works. In the recoil from such a discovery comes courage to attempt more difficult themes, comes fresh clarity of vision and freedom from the mannerisms and false conceptions which have ensnared him in the past.

Blackwood's and others had rejected Patmore solely on grounds of taste. It is noticeable that his own and self-disapprobation introduces into criticism the canon of morality. This is in accord with his later theory that "bad morality is bad art", (47), and I think it is very likely that in the present instance his mind accepted the converse of this axiom in reasoning from the shoddy artifice of his style, to the underlying speciousness of his romantic theme. If this be so, he probably owes as much to Blackwood's

as to Bulwer Lytton, his determination to accept the latter's advice, and, leaving the pseudo-spirituality and meretricious exaltations of his first experiment, "come down to a level with the heart and understanding". (48). For though it is surely true, as he insists, that he had been "conscious of the defective character of the book from the first", (49), yet if he had attempted to convince me that by the jeers, by the ridicule, by the taunts, by the shameless insinuations and humiliating exposures of that nasty magazine, the vividness of this intuition had not been enhanced, I would not have been able to believe him.

Olympus

"Where, like a careless Parliament
Of gods olympic, six or eight
Authors and else, reputed great
Were met in council jocular."

If Patmore did not share the high opinion of his book, which, as we have seen, was entertained by some judicious readers, why, then had he caused it to be published? He himself provides us with the reason — and a very pragmatic reason it is! — in a letter to Henry Sutton. "I had been brought up without any means of getting my living, and published in the hope ... that what I had indicated of capacity (sc. in the Poems) might obtain for me friends ..." In other words, he was looking for a Patron; his Poems were addressed to cultured readers with a reciprocal interest in acquiring a protégé. Considering the book under this aspect, as the work of a young author advertising for a sponsor, we have the following anecdote from Mr. Procter to illustrate its success.(1)

"After a dinner at her house in 1846, Monckton Milnes said to her in the drawing room: 'and who is your lean young friend with the frayed coat-cuffs?' 'Oh, Mr. Milnes!' she replied; 'you would not talk in this way if you knew how clever he was and how unfortunate. Have you read his Poems?' Milnes took them away in his pocket, and wrote to her next morning, 'If your young friend would like a post in the Library of the British Museum, it shall be obtained for him, if only to induce you to forget what must have seemed my heartless flippancy. His book is the work of a true poet, and we must see that he never lacks butter for his bread.'
(2).

The impression made on this "true poet" by the interview and

its sequel may be recounted in his own words: "Lord Houghton (Milnes) was as thoughtful as he was kind and generous In a few months time, he got me an appointment ... in the British Museum -- the position of all in the world best suited to me". (3). And, indeed, it must have been as agreeable a post as it was to prove helpful; he was installed as a supernumerary assistant in the Department of Printed Books.

I mention this incident as an example of the compassion blended with admiration of which Patmore was on all sides the recipient, but especially from among his fellow poets.

It is about this time, too, -- in the interval between the appearance of his first and second volumes -- that Patmore becomes of fleeting interest to the biographers of Tennyson. The relationship which subsisted between the poets is neatly epitomized in a sentence from A.C. Benson: "Patmore", he says, "divided his friends into classes of which one was Tennyson, the other was the rest".(4). This undoubtedly represented his attitude in those early days, when, as he was wont afterwards to repine, (he who of all men seemed least likely to have cast himself for the role of an adorer) he had followed after Tennyson "like a dog". Yet, even while the infatuation lasted, he had been careful to emphasize that if he was seen to accommodate himself for once to the office of hero-worship, the case was altogether an exception. "It is a great good for me to find that I have my superior", he explains, "which I have never found in the company of any one else in Tennyson I perceive a NATURE higher and wider than my own; at the foot of which I can sit happily and with love I cannot enough value my advantage in seeing so much of Tennyson ..." (5). Haec forsam olim meminisse iuvabit.

The association was an idyll while it lasted. Tennyson had lodgings on the third floor, not far from Patmore's home, so that Patmore, regularly, two or three times a week, came tolling upwards to dine; and chatted with his mentor, long and reverently, over the port, - "Tennyson liked his port" - of doubtful quality. And Tennyson in his solemn voice, that voice which Patmore told his friends was "like a cathedral organ", would read from a Book of Elegies which was yet unpublished, the poem to be known as in Memoriam. There is even a very wide impression that the mysterious reference in the opening lines of that poem:

"I hold it true with one who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones..."

is to Patmore. Once, also, Tennyson, having gone away, discovered that he had left his precious work behind him, and sent an urgent message to Patmore, begging him to "institute a rigorous inquiry". So Patmore went to the house, and being accosted by the landlady, and assured that no such volume was there, and forbidden to enter, he vigorously pushed by her (according to instructions) and running upstairs, retrieved the manuscript -- "a long thin volume like a butcher's account book" -- from a closet where the poet kept his tea. This is Patmore's moment of glory in the Lives of Tennyson. Another anecdote which few of Tennyson's biographers omit is concerned with Patmore's famous essay on the English Metrical Critics. (7). To illustrate his theory of the dimeter brachycatalectic line, he had rather complacently preferred to use examples from his own work. These were impiously parodied by Tennyson, and not in a manner to support the theory. (8). So far all was merriment. Little is said of the breach this friendship suffered (not in consequence of the parodies), of the long years of

estrangement, or of the subsequent great revision which Patmore was to make in his estimate of the Laureate's work.

It is Patmore's own biographers who are at pains to explain the severance. Tennyson's apparent inertia in the early period of his friend's bereavement is undoubtedly a major cause. Later, Patmore, who wanted "the touch of a hand", was displeased with an offer of monetary assistance which came as a substitute. (9). But Champneys thinks that the chief reason was that Patmore had outgrown his admiration. (10).

But, although the days were to come when he could say that "among Tennyson's works, the second of the two little volumes published in 1842, contains, to my thinking, the greater part of all that is essential in his writings"; that (nevertheless) "Tennyson's best work though in its way a miracle of grace and finish ... is not finished from WITHIN"; that "In Memoriam and Maud are poor poems though they contain much exquisite poetry"; that "Tennyson has made a HIDEOUS mistake in publishing Maud"; that "the earlier (works) were Tennyson, the later Tennysonian"; and although a sight of the people who applauded Queen Mary (the most "dismal and ineffective" of plays) convinced him of the truth of "Dr. Vaughan's experience - after going about the whole world - that the English ranked in stupidity next to the negroes" - in spite of all this, not even Patmore who wrote the Preface could have denied that it had been a privilege for him in his youth to enjoy the society and the encouragement of a man so eminent and reputable, supposing he would no longer have said so great a man.

Indeed, Mr. Gosse draws upon his personal recollections to inform us that: "... all this is Patmore at his worst, in the rasping (11) mood which he too often adopted in the reminiscences

of his old age. But in happier hours, when he was more genially inspired, he would acknowledge what an unsurpassed advantage it had been to him, as a youth of two and twenty, to be admitted to the confidence of that noble and unique spirit..." (12). Mr. Champneys likewise is remembering his own conversations with Patmore when he says: "Certainly his spoken criticism of Tennyson was increasingly severe and his thoughts of him bitter. Equally certain was it that much of the old admiration survived, though obscured by the later ill-feeling. I have often, after listening to some trenchant diatribe against Tennyson the Poet, and Tennyson the man, and when the talk had for some time passed to other subjects, purposely alluded to some one of the earlier poems - when the old enthusiasm would break forth in words no less forcible than those in which the former strictures had been conveyed". (13). He continued loyal to Tennyson's youth, but dispensed himself from applauding his decay. With a little more consistency Patmore's attitude would have been one of unmixed gratitude, since the whole of his intimacy with Tennyson had been in the years which he professed were the latter's prime.

But while Patmore (transiently bestowed) was sitting at the feet of Tennyson, the Frae-Raphaelite Brethren (likewise briefly) were sitting at the feet of Patmore, and there played over English literary society for a moment the charming semblance of a hierarchy. Perhaps Cardinal Wiseman's English activities, which were receiving wide publicity at the time, were having repercussions. (14). Anyhow, the Frae-Raphaelite Diaries and Letters of this period glitter with the audacities, the enigmas and the provocations, with which Coventry Patmore seasoned his conversation, and which the young men carried home to marvel at and mull over. Their attitude

indicates exactly the kind of scandalized and half incredulous pleasure with which innocence always observes the indiscretions of maturity. They were then, as Patmore records, "little more than boys ... all very simple, pure-minded, ignorant, and confident". (15) He was a little older — just one year older than the oldest of the Brotherhood — but the publication of his first volume with the prestige it conferred; his known intimacy with the famous and the great; his unblemished character, fine manners, and evident mental power, all combined to establish him in an ascendancy over the group, which, I am sure, he thoroughly enjoyed. It must have been pleasant for him to feel that he could sway them as he liked; could encourage, or scold, or shock them.

He could encourage: "Patmore has seen, and appears much pleased with the prospectus (of The Germ)" they tell us jubilantly, "and has given us a little poem called The Seasons". (16). "Isn't it", says Rossetti ecstatically, sending the poem on to his brother William, "isn't it stunning?" (17). Sometimes the name of Patmore seems so studiously exhibited as to give the effect of deliberate anaphora. (18). "Patmore thinks Millais' picture far better than anything Keats ever did ...". (19). "Patmore spoke of Gabriel's poem, Dante in Exile, which he considers full of fine things". (20). "Patmore says that ... some of Gabriels translations from the Italian before Dante ... are the only true love-poems he ever saw". (21).

He could scold: "Gabriel showed him My Sister's Sleep, which he approves in respect of sentiment, but says that it contains several lines that will not scan, and that it is too self-conscious in parts, as in the "I believe" of the first stanza, and in "I

think that my lips did not stir". (22). "Patmore called on Woolner yesterday, and talked of my (William Michael Rossetti's) poem, in which he finds an objectionable absence of moral dignity, all the characters being puny, and destitute of elevation". (23). "We conversed a good deal of Woolner's poems, which Patmore says are so good he is surprised they should not be better." (24).

He could shock: In a series of excited exclamations his admirers retail and smack their lips upon what must be to us rather faded impieties, but which they canvass among themselves with the zest of scholars solicitous not to miss...the latest tinging heresy that has fallen from the mouth of the professor.

"Patmore, talking of Philip Bailey (25), remarked that he seems to be painting on clouds not having his foot on reality." (26).

Patmore says "Browning ...is a strange fellow. I can't understand why he can't set to and be a great man, but he never will". (27).

"Patmore does not believe we have any really great men living in the region of pure intellect; not even Tennyson, though he might have thought him such, had he not written." (28). "Patmore professes that Burns is a greater poet than Tennyson, in which opinion Tennyson fully concurs." (29).

Many other items, too, scattered at random through the pages contribute to the happy picture of a bustling domestic and artistic life, with the sagacious Mr. Patmore, the grizzled veteran of a single book, presiding wisely over his academy of alert, prospective authors, while the charming Mrs. Patmore sews, or (possibly) brews the tea. That she was indeed charming, we have the ronde portrait (30), executed by Millais in his characteristic early manner:

"Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes",
and the medallion profile by Woolner, so good that Jane Carlyle

accused her of always trying to look equal to it, to show. Mrs Patmore's medallion is mentioned in the entry for October the 27th, 1850: a companion piece had been done of her husband about a year before. (31). Millais, however, seemed to think that in the case of his host, the mind was more amenable to protraiture than the person; accordingly, he limited his homage in that quarter to an illustration from The Woodman's Laughter; and this fact coming to the ears of Tennyson we are told (32) he indulged an endearing fit of envy, and plainly said: "I wish he 'd do something from me". A brief reference to "Ruskin's Letter" (33) and some doubts about the propriety of thanking him for the same, reminds us how, in 1851, the moral guardianship of Patmore was of lasting assistance to the Free-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and perhaps prevented its death by inanition (there is nothing kills an artistic movement sooner) due to the lack of popular esteem. The Times having made a brutal assault on Millais' picture of "Christ in the Carpenter's Shop", Patmore invited Ruskin to defend it, and the result was two decisive letters, one which appeared on May 9th, in favor of Millais, the other on May 13th, by Holman Hunt --which awoke public interest in the work of the new school, and prepared the way for its really excessive vogue.

The whole history of Patmore's connection with this interesting and ingenuous coterie may be nicely abridged in a sentence from W.M. Rossetti: "From 1849 to 1853 or so we all saw a good deal of Mr. Patmore ...we all looked up to him much", (34), and symbolized in the raptures of Millais, who "as we walked home, (from a conversation with Patmore) unburdened himself of his observations and conclusions, and declared that if he had seen Patmore's hand alone cut off, he could have sworn to it as that of a man of genius". (35). Fortunately, there was never any occasion

for this rather sinister encomium to be pronounced.

Fatmore, however, scarcely required this or any other demonstration as a guarantee of his worth. He had very carefully appraised and graded the merits of practically all the artists of his generation, not excepting himself. "... in the society of nearly tip-top men, like Thackeray, Carlyle and Allingham", he wrote to his wife, "I feel an inferiority only of the means of expressing myself -- and this I sometimes experience even with the next class of talented men, like M-- of L--". (36). This is an invaluable item, as it shows him self-confessedly enjoying the society of "nearly tip-top men like Thackeray and Carlyle" and hints at a considerable extension of acquaintance among talents "of the next class".

As Robert Browning somehow or other failed to be mentioned in the inventory, we cannot say to which group he would have been assigned; at any rate, he was in the habit of visiting at the Fatmores, and around this period he joined the company of the artists who had praised her, by writing a poem on Emily. in her album. This poem was later published in Dramatis Personae as A Face. It is the one which begins:

"If one could have that little head of her's
Painted upon a background of pale gold
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers!..."

and continues for some nineteen lines of physical detail, acute, candid, sensuously vivid; almost -- in the fervor of its admiration -- an impudent poem, one would say, but saved by the innocence of the subject which somehow or other transpires.

It is a useful document for anyone wanting a verbal description of "The Angel", not done by its husband. It tends also by an air of happiness and beauty, to dissipate any idea a reader might have that Fatmore's later querulousness was due, like

Milton's, to his immature, juvenile and callow choice of a bride.

The following anecdote (37) emphasizes the distinction of at least three of the men who figure as an escort for Patmore at his entrance into the literary world. We append it by way of curtain-call to the impermanent splendours of his halcyon fame. "When we lived at 'The Grove, Highgate Rise' in a house which has since been burned down, we once had a small party consisting of Ruskin, Tennyson, and Browning only. Sydney Dobell came in late in the evening, and sat down by my wife, and began talking cleverly and predominantly, laying down the law about many things. Hearing my wife address Mr. Ruskin by name, he asked in a whisper, 'Is that THE Mr. Ruskin?' and became a little less authoritative. After making similar inquiries when he heard the other names, he became quite shy ..." (38). Poor Mr. Dobell! THE Mr. Ruskin, of course, had displayed long since in Modern Painters, and more recently in The Seven Lamps of Architecture, a wealth of erudition and a sumptuousness of pietism which was enough to frighten any respectable early Victorian gentleman. As for THE Mr. Tennyson, and THE Mr. Browning, the impeccable lyricism of the one, and the unintelligible psychology of the other were perfectly quelling. No wonder the author of The Roman was embarrassed.

And perhaps no wonder if he was a little surprised. The convergence of three such mighty names upon this humble parlour, denoted a respect for the host which his literary fecundity heretofore had hardly seemed to deserve. At least I suppose the unfortunate Mr. Dobell solaced his misery with some such reflection. It is even likely that Patmore agreed with him. He was preparing at any rate, to vindicate the widespread confidence in his powers by the issue of another volume.

What was it which — besides conversation — had deterred him from doing so sooner? The answer, I believe is twofold. Two separate but related events had chiefly impaired the full development of his talent. These events were the Religious Struggle, and Scruples. As they were both of them to have an effect as well upon the character as upon the reception of his future writings, it seems unavoidable that we give an account of their genesis and nature.

The first thing that we must understand about his religious struggle, is that Patmore, who seems to have been by temperament about as religious as Newman, had been brought up on the same pattern as John Stuart Mill. His father was as thorough-going a free-thinker as the Scottish Benthamite, James Mill: the only difference being that he did not oppose an equally free exercise of thought, or even — if it came to it — of belief, on the part of his son. The result of it was that Coventry Patmore, who had from an early age been sedulously guarded from the tyranny of religion, became, with precocious obstinacy, a theist at the age of eleven, and a christian at about sixteen.

But to become a Christian around 1842 was by no means so conclusive a step as it had been in the days of Nero or Dioclesian, when boiling oil, or lions, or the sword, were always at hand to ratify the one definitive choice. Coventry Patmore, in his ardent search for truth, read deeply on all sides of the question among books old and new: — read Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, and Butler's Analogy; read Emerson's Essays, and Maurice's Religions of the World; read Taylor's Holy Living and Dying, and The Aids to Reflection of Coleridge; read Swedenburg, and read St. Thomas of Aquin; read Straus' Life of Christ (39), and the Memoirs of Blanco White; and at the end of this formid-

able course of reading, to which many volumes could be added which I have not named, seems to have got into the rather equivocal position of being a Catholic or Anglican (41) for himself, but -- to spare his friends the theological snub -- a Psychological Relativist for everybody else. (42). Actually, he was confirmed in the Anglican Church in 1847. What interests us chiefly here is that the whole struggle had given a definitely religious turn to his ideas -- and prevented him from writing.

Other difficulties, due principally to his lack of training in the elements of ordinary piety, also added considerably to his sufferings. In an effort to conform his life to the precept: "pray always", he at one time fell into the indiscretion, from which it is lucky that he emerged sane, of attempting eight or nine hours daily, not of virtual but of actual, very intense, and physically prostrating, prayer. And, since the humiliating failure of his experiment with public praying at a meeting of the Scottish Free Kirk, he had resigned himself to an "utter solitude" in all that concerned the dearest interests of his spirit, which injured him, perhaps, still more.

During this same period he was also harrassed by scruples on one or two questions of practical morality, which, though they did not immediately bear upon anything so fundamental as the doctrinal issue adambated above, were nevertheless a surface irritant in the highest degree distracting! The disquietude and uncertainty which these scruples induce, may sometimes lead to an entire or partial catalepsy of the will, with regard to every activity to which they directly refer; and in the case of Latmore one of the activities was writing.

"I can only excuse myself to you for not writing anything at present by assuring you that I entertain serious doubts as to the utility of art. The most profligate ages have always been the most artistical -- Pericles, Augustus, Leo X, etc; and, of all classes of men, that for which I have from experience the least respect is the class of artists -- including poets, painters, musicians and critics."

"If you can prove to me that my fears of the lawfulness of art are unfounded, you may perhaps do much towards the production of a new poem by the writer of Sir Hubert." (43).

These sentiments while not necessarily in themselves a sign of health, were probably salutary. There is much in them that is morbid and excessive, but they err on the right side; they are earnest and not flippant. They are an improvement on that spirit of merely business expediency which had led their writer, as a means of securing employment, to publish a book he despised; (44), and on the spirit of artistic irresponsibility which had permitted him to indulge the cavalierly boast that he had written the larger part of it "while the printer's boy was waiting". They indicate that the "new poem", when it comes, will be more serious, and possibly also more didactic, than any he had produced before.

Nor is it an accident that it was as the "author of Sir Hubert" that Patmore liked to consider himself resuming his career. Sir Hubert as we saw was the only one of his early works he could approve for purity and wholesomeness of tone, and, as a matter of fact, it is to these very qualities, which the second class of scruples by which he had been assailed, had made him just then, particularly sensitive. These other scruples had to do with sex.

"It was given to me," says the autobiography, "... to discern

sexual impurity and virginal purity, the one as the tangible blackness and horror of hell, and the other as the very bliss of heaven, and the flower and consummation of love between man and woman." (45).

This is the ideal which was to be expressed with serenity -- or even with wit and urbanity -- in the Angel, but, meantime, he was perturbed. "I desire greatly to mortify the 'lusts' of the flesh' after your way," we find him writing to Sutton, "... I wish particularly to know what have been the results, bodily and mentally, of your experiments in DIET". (46). And again, (rather apprehensively after receiving an answer), "did you put your diet system in FULL practice at once, or gradually?" (47).

These are very strong hints, and they are supported by the still stronger affirmations of a later period (48) that he was then engaged in the always humiliating and often perplexing war against sensuality. That he intended to carry the campaign into the region of aesthetics, was soon made equally clear.

"You will be glad to hear that I am engaged on a new Poem (49). My new poem is to show the right nature -- or rather the wrong nature, and through that the right -- of love for a woman"

This "new poem" was Tamerton Church Tower. In 1854, Patmore was able to say: "For the first time in the last ten years I have now the health of mind and body and CONSCIENCE to write poetry ..." (50). But Tamerton Church Tower was printed in the interval, and reflects his trouble.

Tamerton Church Tower

"Parables and symbols are the only possible modes of expressing realities which are clear to perception, though dark to the understanding."

Patmore's second volume was issued in 1853. (1). It contained the one long poem Tamerton Church Tower, and an assortment of smaller pieces. Some of these were revisions of those early poems of which we have spoken in a former chapter. It is in this volume that the River makes its first public appearance since the removal of its plot; and The Woodman's Daughter is also here, recovering from a similar mutilation. Sir Hubert has been carefully pruned of all its absurdities; and -- possibly for the benefit of the Spectator critic -- its connection with Italian literature is plainly shown by a return to the original Boccaccio title of The Falcon. The title of Lilian has likewise been abandoned. It is now known as The Yew Berry:

"I call this idle history the 'Berry of the Yew'; glue,
Because there's nothing sweeter than its husk of scarlet,
And nothing half so bitter as its black core bitten through."

The hysterical melodrama of the earlier version is changed to sober fable, and becomes so impressive due to the transformation as to rate being described by one of its critics as "a powerful study of amorous misunderstanding". (2). There is some danger that this misunderstanding may be shared by the reader. The omission of the moralizing prologue and epilogue, along with some of the most lurid episodes in the story, while it has eliminated many blemishes, has deprived the poem of much of its meaning as well. Lilian also, as a part of this drastic revision, has changed her name to "Laura", and lost something of her identity in the process. "I cannot make

out whether Laura was Herbert's wife or only betrothed. The story is much more tragic if his wife. Surely it should be indicated which, (3) will be one of the comments of Posterity upon this corrected version.

The ordinary complaint about all the poems which Patmore rewrote and presented again, was that they paid for the increase of polish by a noticeable loss of drive; "...the acuteness of the intelligence is in excess of the instress or feeling and gives them a certain cold glitter". (4).

Among the smaller poems now for the first time published were some exquisite vers de société later to be incorporated into The Angel in the House. These were Honorias, Ladies' Praise, and Felix Love's Apology, and separately presented to the reader two remarkably idealized young persons, without any hint of the romance that would unite them (to the joy of thousands) in a poem (then to be called) The Happy Wedding.

Other poems, more trivial in subject, or less successful in treatment, were to be excluded from later editions of the Works. Some of them have been selected by the critics to be praised for this or that peculiar beauty, but of none of them can we now affirm that their excellence was characteristic of Patmore. One of them must be cited however, because it was symptomatic of the stand the poet was to take with regard to dogma. This little polemical exercise, which was printed as Hope against Hope, had been circulated privately under the name of Young and Old England, and ought to be worth reading, because, as we are informed by one of his friends with an air of veneration, "it took Coventry three whole weeks of hard work to write". (5). As we might have guessed from a scrutiny of the titles, the piece is a debate on the sub-

ject of religion between "Old England" (or possibly the elder Patmore) and "Young England" (which seems to speak for his son.) The device is indisputably hackneyed, yet there is, for us, a certain novelty in the bias of this propoganda which can assign to expiring age the role of agnosticism, and suffer the cause of religion to be defended in tones of ringing enthusiasm by a young man.

But there never could be any doubt that Tamerton Church Tower as it was the most prominent poem of the second volume, was also the most important. A great deal of self-discipline had gone into the production of this work. It had been written partly during, and largely as a result of, a period of intense intellectual and nervous strain. The poet had planned it carefully, and afterwards assiduously polished and refined it. "What do you think a fair days work," he asked in the early days of its composition, "Four lines? I do". (6). And with almost pathetic eagerness he insists, "I am bestowing unusual care upon it. You will like it I am sure... it will be nearly a year before I have finished it for I want to make it very complete". (7). One of the reasons for this meticulous labor was "to redeem the nonsense of the earlier volume". (8). His sense of artistic responsibility had grown with his moral conscience. There was to be no repetition of the cavalierly vaunt he had indulged on the previous occasion that half his book had been written "while the printer's boy was waiting". Indeed, this time, even after the poem seemed to be finished, he improved on the advice of Tennyson to "keep it by him for two years", by keeping it by him for five, working at it constantly. The motto which he had recently contributed to the Pre-Raphaelite periodical The Germ, "It is the last rub that polishes the mirror", was ever in his mind, and he was reluctant even to let Tamerton Church Tower out

of his hands, as long as it seemed possible by adding another rub, to add a little something to its polish: "Pray excuse my not sending you the unfinished poem you asked for ... The poem I am about, when it is finished, and if it comes new upon you, will rejoice your heart ... (but) ... I have a feeling for a poem upon which I am engaged so long as it is entirely in my hands, which disappears when a single copy is gone forth, and the feeling is an essential support to me while I fag about its completion". (9).

At last he recognized that everything he could do for it had been done, and relinquished his hold. Almost immediately it ceased to matter so intensely how it was received, because the inspiration for The Betrothal had come, annihilating, as long as it lasted, every mundane concern.

Yet he was not by any means lacking in susceptibility with regard to the poem which had so absorbed him; and even after the publication of The Betrothal he was still apt to be stung to fury by a contemptuous reference to Tamerton Church Tower. "What do you think," he exclaims, "of the gratuitous slight put upon me in Kingsley's Notice of Maud? I would not change Tamerton Church Tower ... for fifty Maud's". (10).

When we consider the writer's own enthusiasm for the piece, and the coterie of willing admirers to whom it was submitted, we are amazed at the feebleness of the impression which it made. The paucity of references to it in the journals and correspondence of the period would be altogether depressing, were we not permitted to surmise with Sir Edmund Gosse that it had been superseded in the interest of the public, as well as in the affections of its author, by curiosity about his forthcoming book. "There was a

general feeling that the volume of 1853 was experimental", he says, "and that the poet had something better up his sleeve". (11). Another explanation is, however, possible. It may be that its early readers found the poem baffling, and being uncertain upon what grounds it was to be discussed, continued silent until they should be given a cue. And this assumption seems justified by the nature of the criticisms subsequently made.

Nevertheless, the book did not go without praise. It was, indeed, the means of winning a very important new recruit to the ranks of Patmore's admirers. This was Thomas Carlyle, who expressed his approval in the following letter: (12)

Chelsea,
7 June, 1853.

My Dear Sir,

Accept many thanks for the beautiful little volume you sent me. I have read Tamerton Church and had surely no difficulty in detecting a great deal of fine poetic light, and many excellent elements of valuable human faculty, in that delicate and brilliant little piece; nor am I so intolerant as to give such qualities a stingy welcome on account of the vehicle (sc. poetry) they come in. I am glad of SUCH in any vehicle. Nor in fact (except for my own private use) do I take upon me to prescribe, or forbid, any particular kind of vehicle for them. Go on, and prosper, in what vehicle YOU find, after due thought, to be the likeliest for you.

For the rest, I hope you mean to come and see me again. I am often at home in the evenings; 7 o'clock, or a little after, is the time of tea.

With many thanks and regards,

Yours always truly,

"T. Carlyle"

Coventry Patmore, Esq.,
etc., etc.

I have quoted this letter in full, because, in the absence of any large body of favorable contemporary comment, it is pleasant to find that the poet received, as the seed of so much toil, at

least a cordial invitation to Tea. Carlyle's words about "the delicate and brilliant little piece" were also perhaps the only absolutely unqualified eulogy of Tamerton Church Tower which its author was destined to hear. After that initial scintillation, the slight flicker of interest which the poem had excited soon sputtered out. Finally Patmore himself seems to have lost confidence in its virtues, and in all editions of the Collected Poems it is relegated to the subordinate position of "A Study in Verse". When the world ignored it, and its author disparaged it, the vote of Contemporaneity would seem to have been unanimous for neglect.

But Posterity, as we have seen, was the principal beneficiary in Mr. Patmore's will: and the time has come for us to examine how this item in her legacy has been cherished. The birth of Posterity, we may assume, coincided with the death of Mr. Patmore, which was almost half a century later than the presumptive death of the poem. The two fatalities were chronicled together in the "D.F.E." — the official literary Obituary Columns which Posterity keeps. The article on Patmore was contributed by Dr. Garnett, his sincere friend and admirer, who occupied several pages in extolling the poet and his work, but less indulgent to the long-lamented poem, dismissed it in a tardy epitaph of a couple of lines: Tamerton Church Tower ... is a narrative poem, and as such quite pointless and uninteresting, but full of exquisite vignettes of scenery". (13). This is to say that the poem is an essential failure, though an incidental success.

Mr. Champneys, chief among the mourners, said: Tamerton Church Tower, though showing a very substantial advance upon the

earlier work both in subject and in form, still seems in both respects to fall far short of that which was to succeed it. The verse is less felicitous; the description of one at least of the female characters and the love making generally less delicate and refined". (14).

"Tamerton Church Tower", Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch agreed, "is, let me grant, a noticeable poem; but it is also a very callous one, and (worse than this) it treats of women with a shortsighted vulgarity most singular to find in a young poet destined to become the singer of wedlock and married love." (15)—a somewhat damaging pronouncement, the importance of which he considerably reduces by immediately adding: "It would be false for me to pretend that, after several readings, I understand that poem".

"Tamerton Church Tower", says, finally, Sir Edmund Gosse, "...is really a record of three impressions of travel on the borders of Devonshire and Cornwall. The poet and his friend Frank ride from North Tamerton (a village near Holsworthy) through Tavistock to Plymouth, and are caught in a thunderstorm. They celebrate in mock-heroics, the charms of Blanche and Bertha, whom they are about to marry. The curtain falls, and rises on the couples already married; they go out in a boat on the Cornish coast, are caught by another thunderstorm, and Mrs. Blanche is drowned. The curtain falls again, and rises on the widower poet riding alone, accompanied by his sad thoughts, from Plymouth through Tavistock back to Tamerton.

"It will be seen that the subject matter of the poem is exiguous in the last degree and that its attractiveness depends entirely on the treatment." (16).

It will be seen, also, that all these charges reduce themselves to two, that of "slightness", or "lack of meaning", and that of "coarseness".

Hitherto, and contrary to our usual method, we have abstained from presenting the theme of this poem in our own words, and that for the sufficient reason that not one of the critics we have had to consider, seems to have understood it. In 1912, however — about sixty years after it first appeared — Mr. Frederick Page established (17) beyond any shadow of doubt that the poem is a parable, the intention of which (as the poet himself had long ago given warning) "...is to show the right nature — or rather the wrong nature, and through that the right — of love for a woman". (18). Once this has been understood the criticisms which have been directed against it lose half their force; for it seems almost inevitable that a writer who sets out to show, dramatically, "the wrong nature of love", should be found putting into the hearts and minds of his characters, sentiments which he personally reprobates; and which, indeed, it is the whole purpose of the exhibition to denounce; while the complaint that the poem lacked meaning must at least be modified to the less serious objection that its meaning (in obedience to the definition of a parable) was hidden.

Acting upon this supposition, Mr. Page, in his turn, explains: "Tamerton Church Tower is a deliberately planned exposition of the Catholic doctrine that marriage amongst Christians derives its sanction from religion, that is, it is either a sacrament or a profanation". (19). It is, then, the right and the wrong nature, — "or rather the wrong nature, and through that the

right" — of NUPTIAL love which we are to consider. On strictly a priori grounds we may say that this is a theme which would be at all times most congenial to Patmore. Indeed, Mr. Page's alternatives, "a sacrament or a profanation", is almost certainly a reminiscence from some of the poet's later prose reflections, in which (it is surely pertinent to observe) he was given to developing in pungent speech theories with which he had already dealt in verse. "The state (of Nuptial Love)", one of these reflections reads, "in proportion to its fervor, delicacy, and perfection, is ridiculous unless it is regarded as a 'great sacrament'". (20). "A sacrament or a profanation": "a great sacrament ...or ridiculous": there is little to choose between the two.

Again when Mr. Page declares: "The poet's sense of catastrophe, before his wife is drowned, and his sense of guilt afterwards, are due to his consciousness that he had not brought his love into line with his religion, to 'love her in the name of God, and for the ray she was of Him'...";(21) he is once again a faithful reporter, at least of Patmore's later thought: "What love does in transfiguring life, that religion does in transfiguring love: as anyone may see who compares one state or time with another. Love is sure to be something less than human if it is not something more". (22). To compare this later Patmore with the young author of Tamerton Church Tower we can only say that though there are probably many "wrong natures of love", the "Love (which) ...is something less than human", is obviously one of them.

What Patmore understood as the function of religion in making love "something more than human", is hinted in the following

passage:

"...the so called extravagances of the youthful heart which always claims a character for divinity in its emotions, fall necessarily into sordid, if not shameful reactions, if those claims are not justified to the understanding by the faith which declares man and woman to be priest and priestess to each other of relations inherent in Divinity itself, and proclaimed in the words 'let us make man in our own image' and 'male and female created he them'. Nothing can reconcile the intimacies of love to the higher feelings unless the parties to them are conscious—and true lovers always are — that, for the season at least, they justify the words 'I have said, Ye are Gods'." (23). Undoubtedly, Patmore in 1848, was not yet the possessor of so elaborate a theology as this, but there is every indication that he intended to show in Tamerton Church Tower a specimen of nuptial love in which "the intimacies" had not been reconciled to "the higher feelings", and which "necessarily" declined into what he then adjudged to be a "sordid reaction".

Having given what support we think is due to Mr. Page's reading of the parable, we now pause to agree with an obvious deduction from this, before going on to a synopsis. Since "the necessary purification of desire is the theme of the poem" he concludes, "...the landscapes are not vignettes providing it with its only excuse for existence: they all have their significance or their symbolism". (24).

This last sentence is directly addressed to Dr. Garnett's appraisal: indirectly it seems to dispose of Sir Edmund Gosse's theory of the poem as a fancy kind of Cornish Baedeker. It is

true that the physical action of the poem consists of nothing more or less than a trip to Plymouth from Tamerton, and return. Even such a trip, including, as it does, a wooing, a wedding, and the drowning of the bride, contains too much of human experience to be comfortably summed up in the phrase "impressions of travel" -- at least one would have thought so before being carried away by the verve and grace of Sir Edmund Gosse's fascinating study. But it is potent to anyone who reads the poem with Mr. Page's explanations in mind, that far from the story's being subordinate to the trip, the trip is only a symbol of the story: and every word of conversation on the way, and every changing incident or aspect of weather and scene, has its bearing on the much more important interior drama.

There is something menacing in the very air the morning they set off together, the bridegroom and the bridegroom's friend, upon their journey to the home of the bride, on the vigil of the wedding:

"Our English skies contain'd that Spring,
A Caribbean sun;
The singing birds forget to sing,
The rivulets to run."

"For three moons past, the skies had frown'd ..."
and everything seems congested with the energy of a slow gathering and tremendous storm. The friend of the bridegroom (who is also the poet) is a highly idealistical type; like Romeo, in love with love, and full of chivalrous dreams of romance which want only an object. That object seems to have been found when he hears that lovely Bertha has a sister:

"'Is Blanche as fair?' ask'd I, who yearn'd
To feel my life complete;
To taste unselfish pleasures earn'd
By service strict and sweet."

But the reply which he receives to this ingenuous query is not

addressed to his idealism:

"Well, some say fairer: she'll surprise
Your heart with crimson lips;
Fat underlids, that held bright eyes
In laughing half-eclipse ..."

and so on for another stanza, after which there is a faint protest from the poet to remind us that his concern is with the divine realities of which the flesh is nothing but a symbol; and he asks what "mysteries of good and fair" these "blazon'd letters" (sc. fat underlids, bright eyes, crimson lips) spell? But the green obstinately returns to his theme:

"Hermouth and teeth, by Cupid's bow!
Are letters spelling 'kiss';
And, witchingly withdrawn below
Twin worlds of baby bliss..."

and would go on, did not the poet, "with love and anger faint", at least in the first edition, stop him. In the definitive collections, he is, however, encouraged to expound:

"Her waist, so soft and small, may mean,
O, when will someone come,
To make me catch my breath between
His finger and his thumb!"

(A provocative explanation of the hour-glass figure!) (25).

This whole passage has been summed up by Mr. Page: "Frank (the bridegroom) with his physical way of looking upon a woman, and his coarse songs, represents a lower level of spiritual apprehension ... and .. the poet soon sinks to his friend's level". (26). But it is surely one of the weaknesses of the parable that this gradual relaxation of the poet's ideals is not sufficiently explicit. The passages which a former age censured for "a short-sighted vulgarity", might even be thought by modern standards, to err on the side of coldness. It is true that a real villain might not talk any worse, but it is probable that a stage villain (I suppose we may consider Frank as a villain) should. Patmore in admitting only the minimum

of grossness into the speeches of his characters has allowed their dramatic quality to be misunderstood. As a consequence he is rebuked for offending by the very thing he was perhaps too timid in avoiding; and the critics can perceive in the words of his villains nothing more base than they are willing to ascribe to the low taste of the author.

Meanwhile the poet's interest in the unseen lady grows:

"Not to be gone, Frank rose and eyed
Dark cloud and swinging branch;
But less long'd he to greet his Bride
Than I to look on Blanche.

Her name, pair'd still with praise at home,
Would make my pulses start;
The hills between us were become
A weight upon my heart."

and sinister auguries bode evil for the reckless passion:

"The string of rocks had travell'd on,
Against the southern shroud,
And like some snaky skeleton,
Lay twisted in the cloud.

'No storm to-day!' said I, 'for, see,
Yon black thing travels south'..."

"Yon black thing", representative of guilt, was travelling south indeed, because he travelled south who bore it with him.

The hints from the scenery grow more ominous as the pair advances; a meteorological portent or two adds terror to the lovers' uneasy forebodings:

"Perchance, by much of bliss aroused,
Your heart will pant for more;
And then the worm of want lies housed,
Within the sweet fruit's core!

Far worse, if, led by fancy blind,
But undeceiv'd by use —"

And so they came to Plymouth and the poet "led by fancy blind", there expedites his wooing:

"I kiss'd her twice, I kiss'd her thrice
Thro' tresses and thro' tears,
I kiss'd her lips, I kiss'd her eyes,
And calmed her joys and fears.

So woo'd I Blanche, and so I sped,
And so, with small delay,
I and the patient Frank were wed
Upon the self-same day."

It is indecently quick work; the poet has practically married her on sight. But it is not the haste merely which Mr. Patmore disliked, but mainly a certain implicit lack of nobility, a want of that sublime "faith which declares man and woman to be priest and priestess to each other of relations inherent in Divinity itself", "... without which, (love) falls necessarily into ... sordid reaction". He could never resist an occasion to sing of a wedding however, and in view of its antecedents and tragic consequences, there is a certain inopportune felicity in this one.

"And friends all round kiss'd either Bride,
I Frank's, Frank mine; and he
laughed as for once we thus defied
Love's sweet monopoly.
And then we drove by garth and grove;
And soon forgot the place
Where all the world had look'd shy love
So rudely in the face."

There follows a period of lotus-eating, and faintly ominous bliss:

"Ere summer's prime that year the wasp
lay gorged within the peach;
The tide as though the sea did gasp,
Fell lax upon the beach."

And then in a long foreshadowed catastrophe, "Mrs. Blanche is drowned".

"What guilt was hers? But God is great,
And all that may be known
To each of any other's fate
Is, that it helps his own."

pronounces her husband in a somewhat unfeeling elegy.

Nowhere is the evidence clearer that Patmore intended the poem to represent a moral failure, punished, (and simultaneously redeemed) by tragedy, than in the mood of joyful repentance which

characterizes the poet's homeward journey.

"So lay the Earth that saw the skies
Grow clear and bright above,
As the repentant spirit lies
In God's forgiving love.

The Lark foresook the waning day,
And all loud songs did cease;
The Robin, from a wither'd spray,
Sang like a soul at peace."

There are moreover intervals of hilarity in this contribution, in which we are given mental glimpses of another lady called Ruth:

"Charms for the sight she had; but these
Were tranquil, grave and chaste,
And all too beautiful to please,
A rash untutored taste ..."

("i.e.", says Mr. Page, "the taste for Blanche") (27), and there is no doubt that Ruth will succeed to Blanche, or that, in this more deliberate match, idealism at last will triumph.

Thus the poem closes with a moral, and we cannot say that its popularity would have been greater if this had been understood. A diatribe against the extra-marital aberrations of sex, though a difficult theme for poetry, might conceivably enjoy a limited vogue among the members of an anti-vice society. But a poem which sets out to decry the indulgence of a too exuberant sensuality within the bonds of wedlock, will find few allies. It opposes itself to the spirit of charivari in which for many the principal interest of a wedding consists, and which is so often confused with the ideal of nuptial love, as to justify his daughter's apprehension (which Patmore himself was never tired of quoting) that "marriage is a somewhat wicked sacrament". But then, as we know, the love-song which the younger Tobias sang to his Bride, though the means of saving him from the doom which destroyed her former suitors, has had little effect on the composition of epithalamia since.

Moreover, the poem is lacking as a didactic treatise (28) because, though it admirably portrays the emotions of fear, of temptation, of guilt, and of remorse, it never adequately defines the crime by which they are all aroused, and by which the subsequent tragedy is (artistically) to be explained. It is on this account that Mr. Page, who gave us, in 1912, the best exposition possible of the author's intention comes forward in 1933, to depose that the intention, failed of its effect. "The morality of Tamerton Church Tower" he now declares, "is as sound as Patmore's principles in art, and like them, only wrong in its application." (29). How was it wrong? "It was wrong!" he suggests, "because Patmore in his highly commendable, and fundamentally right, yet temporarily exaggerated zeal for the sanctity of wedlock, mistook for the blight of sensuality, what was only "the disturbance of innocence by passion — that passion (he adds) without which innocence cannot attain to the virtue of peace, since peace is the equilibrium of the two antagonists." (30). "The relations of innocence and passion were...the main subject of Patmore's thought. Their reconciliation was a practical problem of Patmore's early married life, and Tamerton Church Tower is his recognition that the problem was there, whether or not he had solved it." (31). In other words, Mr. Page contends, that though Patmore's thesis of a "right" and a "wrong", a "sacramental" and a "profane" kind of wedlock, is fundamentally sound, the same "disturbance" is possible in both. The symptoms of disorder which the poem adduces are possible in at least the initial stage of either kind of marriage. Hence the poem is equivocal, and comes dangerously near to the taint of puritanism.

The poem was intended to be a psychological and moral study, and it is as such, and not as a series of "vignettes" that it is to be criticised. Nevertheless a word may be said about the ORGANIZATION of the exquisite little pictures which have been so admired in the poem, and which our preoccupation with the main theme, has unfortunately compelled us to neglect. These pictures are in two unified series. The first series presents, in the baleful light of guilty premonition, every landmark observed by the poet on his downward journey to his disastrous wedding. The effect of this series is one of foreboding gloom, which grows more and more intense, as the descriptions accumulate. The second series shows us exactly the same scenes as they appeared to the altered mind of the homegoing poet, i.e., in the clarity which all things assume for him who is recovering from an infatuation. The physical objects in both series are identical; it is only the aspect that differs. This effort at precisely balanced construction no doubt occupied much of the time which we know the poet devoted to the composition of the piece. The consequent symmetry was perhaps almost too perfect, and may have lead to the widespread impression that the poem is only a geographical tour de force.

Now what is Posterity likely to say of a work which is so susceptible of being understood, and not completely satisfying to those who understand it; which has at various times, and (usually but not always) by various persons been censured for "pointless narrative" and approved for "vivid description"; admonished for vulgar dialogue; and distrusted as a Manichaean sermon? The answer, I suppose, is that these are not unlikely faults to be found in a youthful production, and that if Posterity finds any-

thing in the piece worth admiring, or even if she only decides to cherish it as a commentary on the other works and an interesting bit of evidence in the evolution of an author, she will easily tolerate these. Such at least would seem to be the opinion of one of the latest critics to make his (it must be confessed) considerably delayed appearance.

"Tamerton Church Tower is an unequal work", he says, "and being to find fault I found the songs faulty ... (but) ... it would be a calamity in literature if (it) were suppressed.... It is an early piece and so immature, but so is Love's Labours Lost and others of Shakespeare's plays, which are faulty though they teem with genius and could never be spared. It is recognizable that poets ripen and that faults of youth and immaturity can be found in works which are even masterpieces in other ways We must also acknowledge that if we criticise in the rigour of justice no human work except short pieces of music and small examples in the arts of design could stand." (33).

These words were written in 1883, about thirty years after the issue of the poem, and by that time Patmore agreed with them. "Tamerton Church Tower", he admitted, "is incorrigible (but) I should be sorry to condemn (it) to extinction". (34).

But a more fitting representative of modernity (Patmore's "Posterity") is perhaps Mrs. Margaret L. Woods, a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. To judge by her it is not evident that Tamerton Church Tower has any of the qualities we suggested as being necessary to make it survive. Writing of the piece in The Eighteen Eighties, she speaks of it as "Taverton Tower", and, even in that careful series, it seems that there was none to detect the error. (35).

The Birth of an Angel

"... nascitur, non fit."

"The wife of one who has to gain his livelihood by Poetry", wrote Coventry Patmore (quoting Dryden) to his wife, "... must either have taste enough to relish her husband's performances or good-nature sufficient to pardon his infirmities. How happy am I in possessing a wife who has both!" (1).

Emily Patmore certainly relished her husband's performances. During the composition of the Angel in the House, she wrote: "I hope this week will do as much as last week did for the Poem ... When I allow myself to think about the joy of its being finished and published, I feel a whirl of joy ..." (2). And, as only one instance of the many privations she was willing to endure for its sake, we have the following confession: "sometimes I almost wish that something would interfere with our letting the house after all ... Nothing but the recollection of your Poem makes me reasonable again. You have almost reason to be jealous of the Poem when you find I will give you up for it." (3).

But her contribution to the sacred work was by no means limited to sympathy, and exterior sacrifice. In her humble way, she collected "Ideas for the Poem"; she sought for, and supplied it with ingenious similes; she asked, from time to time, questions that had an innocent effect of satire impossible for her husband to resist including in the text.

"Learn that to me, though born so late,
There does, beyond desert, befall
(May my great fortune make me great!)
The first of themes, sung last of all.
In green and undiscovered ground,
Yet near where many others sing,
I have the very well-head found
Whence gushes the Pierian Spring."

"Then she: 'What is, Dear? The life
Of Arthur, or Jerusalem's Fall? ...'"

It was not, surprisingly enough, either the one or the other,
as his indulgent explanation shows:

"Neither: your gentle self, my Wife,
And love, that grows from one to all." (4).

The wife in these stanzas is Honoria; and Honoria is not really Emily. Nevertheless there is no doubt that Patmore drew his ideal Wife in the poem, very faithfully from the real model. "... Emily's letters", says Mr. Champneys, abound in revelations of feminine feeling from which the poem has obviously profited, and to the best portion of which they are inferior only in absence of poetic form. (5).

Emily also shared to the full her husband's conviction about the great beauty and value of sacramental wedlock, and was as anxious as he was for their propagation. This sympathy was undoubtedly of great assistance to him when he came to write the poem. But most important article of all - she had already provided him with that loyal collaboration in life, without which, collaboration in art would not have been important; - she had shared with him the only experience by which his theories of marriage could be confirmed; she had been his partner in a nuptial union which justified the purity of his hopes. The Happy Wedding he acknowledged, (while that was still the title of the poem) to her "will be far more yours than mine". (6). Gallantry aside, the Happy Wedding obviously depended equally on them both. They had both been faithful, and

were both rewarded. The child of their marriage was the "Angel". By this paternity, the happy father maintained he had become immortal. He who had been the husband of Emily, was destined thereby to live;

"To be delight to many days
And into silence only cease
When these are still, who shared their bays
With Laura and with Beatrice." (7).

But Emily was not the only friend who attended with interest, and solaced with inquiry, the very prolonged gestation of the "Angel". Pangs had been noted, and duly reported, as far back as St. Patrick's day in 1847. "He thinks," confided Mr. Fryer to his spouse, upon returning from a conversation with his hero, "of writing a poem to be THE poem of the age, but half doubts his own powers. I tell him that THE poem of the age WE expect from his pen and that it seems to me he has quite genius enough to write it." (8). The judgement was one in which Mrs. Fryer concurred; and, indeed, before the appearance of the work, hardly anybody who heard about it dissented. All the advance reports were favorable. Later critics -- and, we regret to say, sometimes with Posterity among them -- would alter the formula by a couple of syllables with withering effect. Not "THE poem of THE Age", but "A poem of ITS age", would laugh Posterity, and even Patmore's own posterity, too. For: "This poem is intensely of its age", writes Derek Patmore, grandson of the poet. "It embodies all the virtues and faults of the mid-Victorian era, and, as such, it has a nostalgic charm". (9).

But for the era itself the charm was one of eager anticipation, and excitement. "Patmore has been occupied the last month with his poem on marriage", the Pre-Raphaelite Diaries of 1850 announce, "of which, however, he has not meanwhile written a line; but having meditated the matter, is now about to do so. He expresses himself

quite confident of being able to keep it up at the same pitch as the few astonishing lines he has yet written ..." (10).

But expectation became ever keener; the symptoms were more carefully observed and tabulated; the nature of the poem was more accurately foretold, as the time of its advent drew near.

"Patsmore", one of his sympathizers remembers, "called me one day in a state of unusual excitement and animation. Its cause he did not care to conceal. There was, he assured me, one particular theme for Poetry, the more serious importance of which had been singularly missed by most poets of all countries frequently as they had taken its name in vain. That theme was Love; not a mere caprice of fancy, or love, as, at best, a mere imaginative Passion - but Love in the deeper and softer sense of the word. The Syren woman had been often sung by the Pagan Poets of old time, and the Fairy Woman, by the Troubadours of the Middle Ages. But that Love in which, as he affirmed, all the Loves centre, and that Woman, who is the rightful sustainer of them all, the Inspiration of Youth, and the Consolation of Age, that Love and that Woman, he asserted, had seldom been sung, sincerely and effectually!" He had himself long since selected that theme as the chief one of his poetry, but, often as he had made the attempt, it had never succeeded in his judgement. But a double change had come to him.

The poet had lately undergone a severe and painful malady and for him the Daughters of Melody had been brought low - as he had feared, forever. But his health had returned, and the spring flowers had had their resurrection. He had made one attempt more, and this time a successful one. He had written with a facility he had never known before; and his poem was already finished. In a few weeks more The Angel in the House appeared." (11).

By The Angel in the House is here meant only the first book, called "The Betrothal" and published by John W. Parker and Sons, late in the Autumn of 1854.

The happy event is commemorated by Patmore in a series of allusions which stress the amount of deliberative planning; the long periods of apparently fruitless waiting; the impatience, the anxiety, and the throes which preceded the final glorious nativity of the poem. "The first book of The Angel in the House took only six weeks in the writing, though I had thought of little else for several years before (12). I have often found that in writing anything of consequence, that the idea, when it has entered into my mind, has to brood there for years, without making any seeming progress, but in reality ripening, until the impossibility becomes all of a sudden the easiest of things... (13) the discovery of the mode of treating a subject is a great inspiration and delight, and ought to be co-instantaneous with the actual composition. So, in the case of the 'Angel'... after years of thinking and not making... in ripeness of time and knowledge a sudden illumination [came] and I [wrote] the whole poem off as easily as a letter." (14).

Some of these memoranda were written many years after the "Angel" first appeared, but the poet had lost none of his confidence in the importance of that early achievement. As the impression remains that the poem was an extempore piece of fashionable versifying based on a trite and sentimental theme, I have given the poet's own assertion that he believed himself inspired, and that nonetheless, he had not shirked the "fundamental brain work" by which his inspiration was to be controlled. This was indeed the claim he had made at the time.

"I am", he said,

"Not careless of the gift of song,
Nor out of love with noble fame;
(But) meditating much and long
What I should sing, how win a name.
Considering well what theme unsung,
What reason worth the cost of rhyme
Remains to loose the poet's tongue
In these last days, the dregs of time ..." (15).

It has already been sufficiently indicated, and is anyway well known, what "reason" Patmore did consider to merit the expense of the very expert, highly polished, and very prolonged rhyme he was ready to give it. But the fact that the publishers of The Betrothal brought out a birthday reprint of Tamerton Church Tower at the same time, makes his choice more striking. These two companion volumes were like the two sides of a medal - the obverse displaying a figure of the "right"; the reverse of the "wrong" kind of love; though luckily, in the case of the "Angel" there was never the same ambiguity as to the meaning of the seal. Incompetent and misleading as a satirist of vice he may have been, but as an exponent of the domestic pieties Patmore was recognized at once as being equally clear minded and felicitous. Naturally, as the apologist of the right kind of love, Patmore begins by placing his lovers in the most desirable situation a benevolent imagination could invent. They enjoy, besides freedom from economic stress (a freedom which Coventry and Emily had not shared) virtue, tradition, breeding, background and entire compatibility of moral outlook and person. It is true that there are some slight and mainly putative obstacles to the match, but these are only to give the illusion of reality, and to make success more agreeable when it comes. Patmore's intention was to show the development of which nuptial love was capable when nothing was allowed to thwart it - a development to which all lovers might, and ought, to aspire, but

which in its fulness few could be expected to attain. The conditions are not precisely those of Paradise, but human weakness and the possibility of disaster are so vigilantly guarded against that the general impression of life in the "Betrothal", as in Dean Churchill's home, ("A tent pitched in a world not right") (16), is that of a little reconstructed Eden. The "Betrothal", as much as Tamerton Church Tower, is a parable of universal significance and Miss Brégy is right when she says that "in this quiet domestic idyl one is conscious of the first man and the first woman, of the last man and the last woman, and of God, in Whom love finds its source". (17).

The second book which appeared in the following year, under the title of The Espousals continues the same theme, in the same tone, and with the same success as far as the wedding. The original scheme had called for four more parts which would have examined with like minuteness and under similarly ideal conditions, the growth, the potentialities, and the deeper spiritual implications of nuptial love. But it was a subject which required the most delicate handling, and it is probable that Patmore dreaded lest a candid treatment might lead to ribaldry or to some other form of abuse. Hence he relegated this theme to the more cryptic system of the Odes. A sequel to the "Angel" called The Victories of Love also contains two books - "Faithful Forever" which was issued in 1860, and "The Victories of Love" which appeared serially in MacMillan's Magazine in 1863. The subject of these latter works is the practical problem of incompatibility and the thesis of the poet is that lovers of good-will may, by forbearance and mutual faith, extort from a marriage that is less ideal, a blessing that is almost equal. Inevitably the treatment in these two books is more prosaic, but the

matter is always interesting, and there is nothing in any one of the four books we have mentioned to cast suspicion on Fatmore's claim that he had never written when he had nothing to say.

The structure of The Angel in the House is very elaborate, and if the scheme had been brought to completion, would have been even more so. The portion which we have consists of a Prologue, Two Books, and an Epilogue. Each book is divided into twelve cantos, and each canto is accompanied by a series of preludes of philosophic or imaginative interest, remotely connected with the text. Oddly enough, these pieces, which are largely didactic and contain precise statements of the doctrinal supposita of the poem, are the very sections which have been the most admired. "The preludes", says Herbert Read, "display a complex fusion of fantasy and wit which put them on the highest level of English metaphysical Poetry". (18). They are preserved from banality or dryness by the fineness of the insight and the sprightly style. The poem abounds in a kind of serious cleverness, the "sparkling humilities" (19) of Ruskin's phrase; and its general effect, to quote John Freeman, is of a "glittering peace". (20). It should be added that, in the original version, each chapter of narrative was followed by a series of epigrams, or "sentences", which provided a still more pithy expression of the thought than is found in the preludes. The majority of these were later suppressed, or incorporated into other parts of the poem.

A very noticeable improvement over any former work of the author was in the delicacy and resourcefulness of the metre. The "Angel" was written throughout in rhyming octosyllabic quatrains.

Patmore's reason for choosing so plain a vehicle was a good one. He considered it "a gay and jocund measure, eminently adapted to a story of successful love and happy marriage". (21). He defended this "modest and unpretentious" metre to the end. Of those who criticised it he observed: "Were Bismarck to take (them) a drive in a tax-cart they would never guess if they were not told, that the Prince was anything better than a grocer. Though I travel the same ground and at the same level (in the Odes), I have immensely gained in reputation with these ninnies by mounting a 'mail phaeton'. I have even thought of rewriting the 'Angel' for them, in the metre of the 'Unknown Bros' ". (22).

"The versification of The Angel in the House moves with an almost incomparable gaiety and grace", says Louis Garvin. "The poet is the master, nowhere the victim of the medium, and breaths it like a swan. In the expression there is an ease, a dignity - at once an intimacy and a distinction, inimitably happy, indescribably gracious". (23). Mr. Garvin wrote in 1897, and the degree of metrical accomplishment to which it was then possible for him to refer, had not been won either quickly or without labour. During the period from 1846-1862 Patmore was obliged to earn money by writing for the magazines, but "so completely is his mind devoted to the abstract laws of poetic art that, when he is reviewing contemporary poets, the reader often has to read page after page of theory before he comes to the actual subject, which is often disposed of in a brief and somewhat perfunctory manner. It is evident that it was his own poetic education which was the main object of his thoughts..." (24). The culmination of this rather surreptitious apprenticeship was his Essay on the English Metrical Critics, (25), published in 1857 in the North British Review. The study he had expended upon the subject

is particularly noticeable in this article, which Houseman cites in 'The Name and Nature of Poetry' (26) as containing, along with a few pages of Frederick Myers "all, so far as I know or all of value, which has been written on such matters", and the practical results of the knowledge he had acquired were soon visible in the very rigorous process of correction he thence forward imposed upon the "Angel".

"For thus I think, if any I see
Who fall short of my desire." (27).

is a couplet from the early version which obviously requires an unfair degree of assistance from the reader if it is to be accommodated to the dominant iambic pattern. After the poet's conscientious exercise of labor limae in 1857, the cooperative effort demanded of the reader becomes appreciably less:

"For thus I think, if one I see
Who disappoints my high desire." (28).

Actually, however, metrical alterations were only a small part of the changes introduced into the text of the different books, after their first publication. In 1855 two separate letters to Allingham inform us, first, (in January) that he is occupied with "a thorough revision of the 'Betrothal', with a view to a second edition, which sooner or later will probably be required" (29), and then (in September) that he is "getting on with my Book 11. at a moderate rate, and I think not unsatisfactorily. I have written and finished nearly eleven twenty-sevenths of the whole, and expect to have it ready for the spring season". (30). As "Book 11" had been part of his plan from the beginning, the fact that he was willing to interrupt its progress shows the importance which he attached to the duty of re-writing.

This is further emphasized at a later stage in this same correspondence when he says, evidently now with reference to the manu-

script copy of the 'Espousals' - "Thank you very much for your pencillings, many of which I at once agree with, and all of which shall have a full consideration, particularly in the second edition, which will be the Poem, these two volumes being only a hurriedly composed mass of materials for the same and only published in the hope (a fallacious one as yet) that the world would not let such a promising steed starve while the grass was growing". (31).

Altogether the discussions with Allingham extended from October 1854 to August 1857, a period of about three years, dating from before the birthday of the 'Betrothal'. During that time every conceivable type of alteration is effected. Passages are omitted, lines revised, sections transposed or recast. The proof of the author's frantic industry (he was uncomfortable when he was not revising - "a bad line" it was to be said of him, "lay on his conscience like a sin") (32.), was witnessed by Sir Edmund Gosse. "In 1864", he confides, "Coventry Patmore, knowing my great interest in the history of the Angel in the House, presented to me copies of these original editions as altered and arranged by him for the second edition of the united work. The precious relics lie before me as I write, and the alterations all in the poet's beautiful handwriting, are so very numerous that in many cases, for pages together, the manuscript entries exceed the print in bulk to form a variorum edition of the Angel in the House would be a task before which the boldest bibliographer might shrink". (33).

In 1863, Aubrey de Vere succeeded to Allingham's role as literary uncle to Patmore. His very free and copious recommendations are largely concerned with The Victories of Love, but this work and the Angel in the House are, as he explicitly says, "two portions of a common design, if not common poem", (34), and may conveniently be

treated together. The gist of Mr. de Vere's advice to Patmore, omitting a detailed account of his suggestions which cover several pages, is contained in the following passage. (Lest the trend of Mr. de Vere's remarks might seem to the reader to be too severe, let it be recorded that, though never blind to errors of treatment and far less to dangers of them, he yet considered the Angel in the House "one of the most beautiful of modern poems.") (35).

"On the whole, I can honestly congratulate you on a work very greatly improved, and by which, when it is brought to perfection your entire theme will have been worthily completed. But to bring it to this state of perfection a good deal remains, in my opinion, to be done; and if I am right in this, the present seems the opportunity for doing it, as the Public Opinion will probably be made up, as regards the Poem, when the second edition, put forward as the revised one, has been published. After that it will be very difficult to make more than a few very devoted Students of Poetry pay attention to any further alterations." (36).

Further alterations there were indeed to be, for the devoted Student of Poetry to observe. In September, 1883, we find Patmore once again taking counsel with a brother artist in view of another issue of his works; the artist on this occasion is Father Hopkins; the prospective book is the two volume edition of 1885 - and the book which Patmore has asked Hopkins to examine is the immediate predecessor of this - the four volume "Poems" of 1879.

"I expect that, as you go through the poems", Patmore hopefully says, "you will find that I have removed many of the things you objected to. Since the earlier editions the whole work has been revised by me with extreme care and every verbal fault that I could see amended. But your quick sense and new eye will find many defects wha (sic.)

escaped me, and, as far as the time allows - for I expect to begin printing very shortly - I shall make full use of your suggestions." (37).

From these words of Patmore it seems likely that there has been yet another redressing of the poem, in the period after the letter of de Vere, and prior to the edition of 1878. The invitation which he addressed to Hopkins resulted in an interesting correspondence, exceedingly voluminous when we consider the fact that it lasted but a few months. Father Hopkins' criticisms were pungent but respectful; they ranged from the most searching analyses of moral content, to arbitration between variant readings, the resolution of syntactical knots, and a confirmation or rejection of the minuter elegances of style. It was criticism from within. Father Hopkins accepted the standard of the author, and making no attempt to inculcate an alien one of his own, strove to assist him to perfection within the ambit proposed. "Your careful and subtle fault finding" exclaimed the delighted Patmore, "is the greatest praise my poetry has ever received". (38).

The greater part of Father Hopkins' suggestions had little practical effect, but the few that had, were a contribution to the brilliancy of the definitive volume. Patmore had very carefully weighed the rest, and often regretted his not being any longer in a position to act upon them. Some of these corrections would have involved other alterations, he thought, of a more radical nature, and the time had passed when he could exercise his inventive talent upon the "Angel". Only slight verbal changes were now in his power. This will not exculpate him from his failure even to comment upon the following paragraph:

"It deserves consideration whether it is not more natural and unaffected to write walked and talked, than walk'd and talk'd (and though and through than tho' and thro'), keeping the accent for the

older form walked and talked when you use it. It seems reasonable that the exception should be marked, not the rule, and now-a-days the contraction is the rule, and the full form the exception." (39). But Patmore seemed to prefer a page that was splintered with apostrophes. The sundered or truncated forms remain.

Mrs. Fryer, Emily Patmore, William Rossetti, William Allingham, Aubrey de Vere, Gerard Manley Hopkins - all of them had lent their encouragement to the preparation of successive editions of the poem. The names of these people have come down to us because they put their ideas into writing. Doubtless there were many others whose help we cannot recognize because it was merely vocal. The author had certainly profited by his association with Tennyson in the days of composition, and had probably acted more than once upon his recommendations. That he did so at least once, we shall have occasion to mention later on. But now, at last the long series of multiplied collaborations was drawing to a close. The strictest inspection was no longer able to reveal to its author any corrigible fault, and when he looked back on the many years of anxiety he had devoted to the improvement of this cherished book, he felt entitled to say: "I have spared neither time, nor labour (nor my friends when I thought that they could help me) to make my words true ... I have written little but it is all my best".

On which of its many appearances should we say that the "Angel" as we have it now was born? "Every Angel", says Thomas Aquinas "is a species in itself". Perhaps it was the rule with this species of Angel as it was with the Phoenix, to be, at returning intervals of time, born anew from the ashes of discarded copies. The rule that practice makes perfect applies, and every nativity was more

successful than the last. When the edition of 1885 was at length off the press, Patmore naturally sent a complimentary copy to the man who had shared with him the fatigues of its immediate preparation. He was rewarded by the following terse congratulation: "Thank you very much for the 'Angel in the House', which reached me the night before last; to dip into it was like opening a basket of violets. (41). To have criticised it looks now like meddling with the altar vessels; yet they too are burnished with wash-leather". (42).

This last sentence is reminiscent of the motto Patmore had invented years before. He had never allowed himself to forget that: "It is the last rub that polishes the mirror".

The Angel on the Shelf

Musing, I met in no strange land
What meet thou must to understand,
An Angel!

Most unfortunately for Coventry, the "sudden illumination" and "ripeness of knowledge" which enabled him to write the Angel in 1854, coincided with a burst of indiscreet loquacity on the part of his father, which was even riper and more illuminating. The latter's book of damaging recollections, My Friends and Acquaintance, preceded the publication of the Angel by a couple of months, and made the name of its author odious in advance. The heedless gossips who read My Friends and Acquaintance, never pausing to dwell upon initials, immediately attributed all the credit of his father's long and mis-spent life, to the innocent youth who was about to issue an edifying volume. "The weight of The Times attack on my father's book has fallen on me — even Punch abusing me by my full name on account of it" (1) said Coventry, lamenting that he was obliged to present the first portion of his great work, in a colorless anonymity that had never been part of his plan. It is one of the many ironies associated with the Angel that it was once in a position — had the author only been alive to the chance — to enjoy a succès de scandale. The really piquant contrast between the temporary notoriety of the author, and the severe morality of his book, would not have escaped a modern advertiser.

There was one advantage in the suppression of the author's name. It made, as long as the secret was kept, for sincerity of criticism; and the first of many eulogies to be pronounced by Mr. Ruskin, had, in particular, a gratifying note of naïveté.

"Rossetti was with him a day or two after he received it: R. (Ruskin) asked him if he had seen or knew anything about 'a glorious book called The Angel in the House.'" There were other happy surprises. A novelist, Mrs. Catherine Gore, whom Patmore had known in her Paris days, where, in the height of her glory as the author of Cecil; or The Adventures of a Coxcomb, she presided over an animated salon, now tired, and old, and disenchanted, read the Angel in the seclusion of her country home; and was charmed by its sudden freshness. "I not only recommended it to all my friends, but wrote up to a London publisher to ascertain the name of the author, which I heard sometime afterwards, with real satisfaction," (3), she jubilantly proclaimed.

So, from the first the Angel found strong adherents; at the same time, it provoked from those who did not admire it, symptoms of pronounced distaste. The Dorchester poet, William Barnes, consoled Patmore thus: "I find, what I daresay you already know, that it is appreciated in direct proportion to the reader's refinement". (4). The opposition, for their part, declared it was being promoted by a clique.

Emily Patmore's dossier of praise, in particular, may read at first like the typical publisher's blurb, but I think that when we examine more closely the opinions she has collected, and their authority, we shall discover that she had cause for exultation. "You must forgive my vanity, if I tell you a few of the great things that have been said about it," she pleads, "W.S. Lander writes a letter full of somewhat senile ecstasy, which I will not quote. Carlyle calls on Coventry to quit the field of fiction and bring his powers to bear upon the world of fact, which, for the want of the like of him, is what it is, — this,

I mean, a propos of power displayed in this book. Ruskin writes 'I cannot tell you how much I like your book. I had no idea you had this high kind of power. The book will be, or at least ought to be, one of the most popular in the English language, and BLESSEDLY popular, doing good wherever it goes.'

Tennyson writes: 'You have begun an immortal poem, and if I am no false prophet, it will not be long in winning its way into the hearts of the people.'

I quote from memory, but I am not far wrong. A friend of Tennyson's, Aubrey de Vere, himself a poet, writes in the same tone, and adds, 'Alfred said to me,' (he was with Tennyson when he received the book) 'that your poem, when finished, will add one to the very small number of great poems which the world has had.'

Do not laugh at my boasting. I have not copied out these same things for ANYONE before, but somehow I feel as if you would sympathize with me in the pleasure they caused me."(5).

Actually, Emily's letter by no means exaggerates the number, or the fervor, of the endorsements by England's literary great, with which her husband's book began its travels. Her characterization of Lander's letter as "somewhat senile ecstasy" is untrue as well as ungrateful. Emily seems to have misunderstood the irony by which he contrives at one and the same time, to praise the realism of the Angel, and stigmatise the contemporary taste for a mediaeval setting: "I rejoice to find that Poetry has come out again safe from rickety halls and musty armours, and that Love has dight his wings and cooled his tender feet in our pure streams". (6). Carlyle, on the other hand, was not yet, though his conversion was imminent, com-

pletely resigned to the "vehicle", and before going on to deliver the exhortation which Mrs. Patmore reports, he speaks of the Angel in a sentimental tone which is not without a suspicion of condescension. "A most cheery, sunshiny, pleasant volume", he (indulgently) calls it, "pure, fresh, quaintly comfortable, -- like a Cathedral Close, with its old red brick buildings and trim lawns." (7). Aubrey de Vere was genuinely enthusiastic, commending the poem for "four qualities which especially distinguish it... its soundness and geniality as well as elevation of sentiment; its descriptive power. Its power of REASONING (I do not mean ARGUING) in verse, and its singular beauty both of diction and metre. But (he adds) after the praise of such a man as Tennyson, nothing that I can say is of much importance". (8). Not to derogate too much from Mr. de Vere's opinion, we have for once awarded to it precedence over that to which he deferred. He, and Tennyson, and Mrs. Tennyson had read the poem together "sitting on a cliff close to the sea ...the eldest child playing near". They "had greatly enjoyed that reading". (9). Afterwards Tennyson wrote to Patmore with a fulness that slightly surpasses Emily's claims for him. "...I still hold that you have written a poem which has a fair chance of immortality; though I have praised (Lander like) so many poems that perhaps my praise may not be much thought of; but, such as it is accept it, for it is quite sincere. There are passages that want smoothing here and there; such as:

'Her power makes not defeats but pacts',
a line that seems to me hammered up out of old nail-heads ...
little objections of this calibre, I could make; but as for the whole, I admire it exceedingly, and trust that it will do our age good, and not our's only. The women ought to subscribe a statue for you ..." (10). This approval is all the more valuable for

being so measured and, as it were, unwilling. Unfortunately for Patmore, however, the most memorable phrase in it has proved to be the one about "a line hammered up out of old nail-heads", a censure the historians have invariably mentioned, and usually multiplied. "Tennyson said some of the lines sounded as though they had been hammered up out of old nail-heads", is a sentence one learns to recognize among the many recurring motifs in the Patmorean critical saga, though the single line of which Tennyson spoke was amended before publication. (11). Tennyson's last and joking reference to "the women" is an example of another sort of facetiousness to which the Angel seems to have been foredoomed, and which may indicate a temper in the age impatient of Patmore's "modern chivalry", (as he called it himself), or "uxoriousness" (as it appeared to his foes). The prophecy was a shrewd one, nevertheless, and when the book began to be read "it pleased all women" says Edmund Gosse "and many men". This condition of things was cheerfully accepted by the poet, who had at least some of the courage of Euphues to say: "It gives me pleasure, particularly ... that the poem is liked by women, who are always the arbiters of real poetical success -- besides being by far the best critics of emotional poetry ..." (12).

Browning's praises, which did not, somehow, find their way into Emily's anthology, were probably vocal merely. The only record we have of them, which shows them to have been in substance like Tennyson's, though very much more emphatic, is from an autobiographical memorandum written by Patmore himself. "When the Angel in the House first came out, Browning said of it 'I do not say that it will be now, or soon; but some time or other, this will be the most popular poem that was ever written'". (13).

Browning also proved to be, in this matter, a sagacious judge of public taste.

The Angel in the House, as we have seen, is generally regarded as a typical Victorian product. There were those among the Victorians who detected in it evidences of modesty and restraint which seemed to connect it with a still earlier day. "I have read it," said Henry Taylor, in a letter Emily would have enjoyed, "and it seemed to me a poem of rare and peculiar amenity and grace. I know not where else in these days one can find that easy, gentle, and ingratiating temper in poetry, so free from false stimulus and false allurements". (14).

This little list is representative of the group of artists and men of letters who gave the Angel its first cordial welcome into the world. But bad fairies as well as good attended its christening.

It may not be altogether fanciful to detect in Rossetti's various comments (which also have furnished anecdotes for the historians) a rift in the lute of his earlier regard for Patmore. His tone in the following passage from a letter to Allingham, is not unfriendly, but its manner seems to betray a discomfort which might be caused by a suppressed inclination to sneer.

"You asked me how I liked the Angel in the House. Of course it is very good indeed, yet will one ever want to read it again? The best passages I can recollect now are the one about 'coming where women are', for the simile of the frozen ship, and the part concerning the 'brute of a husband'. From what I hear, I should judge that, in spite of idiots in the Athenaeum and elsewhere, the book will be of use to its author's reputation, — a resolute poet, whom I saw a little while back, and who means to make his book bigger than the Divina Commedia, he tells me" (15).

Rossetti's patience endured for two more volumes, but after Faithful Forever appeared (by this even some of Patmore's admirers

were beginning to wish he wouldn't) he wrote to Allingham in exasperation:

"I wrote to P. after reading his book which he sent me, saying all that I (most sincerely) admired in it, but perhaps leaving some things unsaid; for what can it avail to say some things to a man after his third volume; 'of love'", asked Rossetti, parodying the opening line of Tennyson's "Love and Duty," "of love which never finds its published close, what 'sequel?' And how many?" (16).

Rossetti's spleen against the "idiots in the Athenaeum" does not necessarily prove his sympathy for Patmore. He is referring to a review of the Angel which we will later examine, written by H.F. Chorley, a recognized and much resented enemy of the Brotherhood. Moreover, of the two passages which he selects as "the best", the first was such an might easily be detached from its context, and treated as a "love-poem" in the ordinary sense; while the second seems to have been rather negligently read or inaccurately remembered. The phrase "brute of a husband" certainly does not suggest anything typical of The Angel to me. I am inclined to think that Rossetti, since he assigns no definite reason for withholding his affection from the poem, as indeed he seems to do, is secretly antipathetic to the central theme: a suspicion which acquaintance with his own poetry does much to corroborate. For it does not seem to have been with a view to the domestication of Angels, that Rossetti was shaping his elaborate House of Life.

We have, moreover, in another letter to Allingham, of later date, a half admission that it was not the execution which offended Rossetti in the poem, but the whole bearing and intention: "I think myself that Maryanne, with all its faults, is better worth writing than the Angel in the House" (17) -- i.e., than The Angel in the House with all its perfections. The author of Maryanne

was William Bell Scott, and he certainly agreed with Rossetti, as the following, not deliberately insulting letter from him to Patmore, with its imputation of low virility, shows: "Your poem", concedes Mr. Scott, "is certainly homogeneous, and is so evidently tempered to your own pulse, that no remarks or advice could or should be influential to the author. At least, for my own part, I can't see how such could be of any service. There is an idiosyncratic difference that causes men to view life and marriage every one in a different aspect. Your poem presents them in a loveable and delectable form very complete in itself, the amount of passion and exaltation being commensurate with the circumstances in which you place your actors ..." (18). The writer includes with a pleasant account of "a little dove of a quaker" who has read Patmore's book, and seems to be making love to its author "in her heart". From the point of view of our sophisticated literary tradition the emotion of the little quaker, might seem almost as damning as the openly avowed repugnance of Mr. Scott. Naturally his letter was not one of those which Emily tied up in blue ribbons; but it is valuable as a plain statement of what Rossetti undoubtedly felt, but was too timid, or too loyal, to do more than hint: — the possibility of an intense recoil from the respectability, and apparent coldness, of the Angel.

Depreciatory remarks about the emotional qualities of the poem were also frequent in the press. This was recognized, and even expected by Patmore. "Hannay has written a notice of it in The Leader", he says, "regarding it from the ultra-pagan point of view, from which, of course, it looks rather dull." (19).

Neither does he appear to have been much disturbed by an attack on his originality in the Spectator where, as he somewhat

hilariously reports "in the beginning (the Angel is declared to be) an imitation of Tennyson, in the middle, of Petrarch, and in the end, a mere echo of Cowley", and where "to complete this specimen of critical acumen, the poem is bracketed with Gerald Massey". (20).

But a poet is not independent of the audience for whom he writes; he cannot long (at least, not cheerfully) continue producing masterpieces to feed the pens of detractors; his inspiration requires to be nourished with sympathy and esteem. A year later, from a deficiency of these two commodities Patmore's attitude of bravado suddenly fails; and we find him presenting to Monckton Milnes a discouraged summary of his moral, emotional, critical and financial plight:

"If you have seen the minor literary journals, you will be somewhat surprised by the contempt with which the Angel has, in many cases, been received. The Literary Gazette says it is so bad that it would pass as a joke but for the respectable name of the publisher. The Athenaeum goes out of its way to write a contemptuous squib in rhyme; the Westminster laughs at it in a minor notice, and so on. One column of very qualified praise in the Examiner (as I HEAR, for I never see any criticisms) and a candid notice in the Press (which nobody reads) is all I have got in return for years of preparation and labour, and an infinite sacrifice of worldly advantage to self and others. Unless the Quarterlies come to my rescue my poetical career is at an end: for though while men like yourself, Carlyle, Tennyson, and Ruskin think highly of what I do, my confidence cannot be exhausted, my ability to write books at my own cost, and to devote to verse time that could be turned to immediate advantage, is." (21).

Patmore's statement that he saw no criticisms refers to a vow he had taken to read no more press notices until April. He was at work both on the revision of what he had already published and on the completion of the other books essential to his scheme.

"I have lately given up everything to attend to this work, and it is of the very greatest importance to me that it should succeed," (32), he says. To a resolution such as this, the midge-like teasings of the reviewers were distracting, if not painful. Emily read, and, for his own eventual perusal, retained, every favorable account. Cutting them out, and sewing them together in strips, sometimes, by a little expert manipulation of the scissors, she was able to expunge an offensive paragraph. By the less considerate fidelity of his friends he was kept informed of the articles wherein he had been disparaged -- a service which "without an inexpedient fuss", he found himself unable to avoid. Thus, from these two sources, long before he read the notices in papers like the Critic or the Dublin University he was made aware, (indeed it had sometimes been at his request) that his supporters were not making all their pleasant speeches idly, and in private; and that, on the other hand, in the Examiner, and the Westminster, and the Gazette, which he also had not seen, views of the kind expressed in the letter from William Bell Scott, were making their way into print. The "minor notice" in the Westminster, is, in particular, a representative newspaper statement of the grounds on which many people, (indeed we believe the majority of those who, on one pretext or another disagree with it) have secretly despised the Angel.

"The Angel in the House is on the inexhaustible themes of Love, Woman, and Marriage The love that warms the writer is a small, tranquil, pale flame, which we may compare to that

of hydrogen gas, which does burn, but does not give out much light or heat, because it has no solid stuff to take hold of. The love is of a spiritualized, sentimental nature -- what there is is of passion, strained and diluted by passing through an Anglo-Catholic Church medium -- with as little genial warmth and nature as the May sunbeams that have passed through the stained glass of the triple-arched casement of a church. We seem as we read, to see our old playfellow, the ever youthful, well formed Grecian Hero metamorphosed into a high church parson, with spectacles, stand up coat-collar, and a white cravat. Bishop Butler says, in his Analogy, we can as well imagine ourselves without bodies as with them; we have far less difficulty in conceiving the love described by the author of the Angel in the House to be entirely without any bodily point d'appui whatever. The poems however, for the most part evince much care and reflection, and contain many morsels of nice description, and fine and delicate shades of feeling well expressed; and the author when we once reconcile ourselves to his smooth and agreeable temperament, will not fail to extract recognition as a man of intellectual culture, fine feeling, and poetic insight." (23).

It is almost a pity that Patmore did not read this review. No doubt it would have consoled him to find that instead of being arraigned (as, after his first volume, he had been by Blackwood's) for "puerile vulgarities" and "slovenliness of verse", he is now conceded -- more or less graciously -- to be "a man of intellectual culture, fine feeling, and poetic insight", whose work "evinces much care and reflection"; and that far from being reproached for indelicacy and coarseness, as had been the case with Tanerton Church Tower, he is now being blamed for an excess of the opposite virtues. Posterity however

may read the review, and draw from it whatever moral she will. At least we can be sure she will marvel at the praeternatural acumen of the writer, who even at this early date, was able to discern, behind the incongruous "spectacles and cravat" of the Angel, the naked figure of the all "Unknown", and usually "un-suspected Eros". But the news that the obviously trim flame of the Angel is also "small and pale", will not excite Posterity. The charge is one with which she is too familiar, having herself alternately repeated and retorted it over and over again. (For Posterity once even went so far, in the vehemence of her defence, as to proclaim the Angel in the House "the most sensual poem" ever written," (24). But this was after the Unknown Eros had provided her with a gloss.)

One other objection to the poem expressed itself in the livelier form of parody. This was the piece already mentioned, the "howl" as Patmore called the article, emitted by "the idiot in the Athenaeum", as Rossetti called its author. Here is a sample:

"The gentle reader we apprise, that this new Angel in the House contains a tale not very wise, about a person and a spouse. The author, gentle as a lamb, has managed his rhyme to fit, and haply fancies he has writ another In Memoriam."

It might be remarked here, as an example of ingenuity in a not too ingenious composition that the critic has given point to his assertion in the second stanza, by temporarily adopting the rhyme scheme of In Memoriam, and at once returning before the reader can notice his departure, to the authentic pattern of the Angel. He goes on to impugn the apparent trivialities and general innocuousness of the narrative:

"Now his intended gathered flowers, and took her tea and after sung, is told in style somewhat like ours for delectation of the

young" and so on, for some time, concluding with a resumé of the whole:

"From ball to bed, from field to farm. The tale flows nicely purling on; with much conceit there is no harm, in the love-legend here begun. The rest will come another day, if public sympathy allows; and this is all we have to say about the Angel in the House." (25).

It is obvious that this lampoon of Mr. Chorley is chiefly directed at the metre. It, and the Review from the Westminster quoted above, may stand as representative of the two main charges which were to be made whenever the poem was attacked, one that it was a piece of Anglo-Catholic pietism, tame, proper and devoid of passion; the other that it was facile. The objections gained in compression as the years went on, and probably took their permanent shape in Mr. Frederick Harrison's characterization of the Angel as "goodie-goodie dribble" (26), and the Athenaeum's description of the metre as "garrulous and prattling". (27). Those who disliked the Angel always did so because they considered it either one or both, of these two things. The two complaints irritated Patmore increasingly as the years went on. He misquotes Mr. Harrison's stinging epithet -- it is always "goodie-goodie Muddle" to Patmore -- several times in his Essays, (28), and while he does so in a jocular way, both the repetition, and the unconscious softening of the phrase, leave us with the impression that it rankled; while, as we have said before, his championship of the metre remained undaunted: "The reason it is not so popular as you think it ought to be", he explains to a correspondent, "is probably the apparent fluency which has been given to it by laborious finish. Pope says that 'Easy writing's sometimes damned hard reading'. The public and especially the Critics do not know

that 'easy reading's sometimes damned hard writing'." (29). Whether the reviews had anything to do with it or not, it is certain, in 1856, the poem for which Browning had prophesied such extraordinary popularity, was selling only slowly.

Ruskin, it is true, had already begun in private, that campaign of enthusiasm, which after the first notable sortie in his letter to the Critic of 1860, was to adapt a tactic increasingly public, and to leave memorials of its victories, in the shape of quotations from, and tributes to, Patmore, scattered abroad in the pages of his printed works. (30). Carlyle, likewise, after reading the second book of the Angel, had become a fervent partisan, and pledged himself to do all in his power to further its success. The two letters he wrote to Patmore, the first about The Espousal, in 1856, and the second about the Victories of Love in 1860, are masterpieces of verbose laudation. It would be tedious to do more than hint at the vocabulary he employs, with his talk of "execution and conception full of delicacy, truth and graceful simplicity; high, ingenious, fine", and of "the delineation managed with great art, thrift and successthe genial felicity and real skill". (31). It was the only modern book he had "troubled", to take with him to his summer home, and we are not left in any doubt whether he thought it had repaid the trouble. But the sympathetic denunciations of the English people which follow, are a confession that in spite of all that he or Ruskin or anyone else could do, the reading public did not share their tastes. "Probably there never was such a plebs before ", he says, "the only remedy is not to mind them; to set one's face against them like flint: for they cannot kill me after all though they think they can do it: one has to say, 'dull impious canaille,

it was not for you that I wrote; not to please YOU that I was brandishing the weapons God gave me!" (32).

But if the scorn or indifference of the "plebs", and of the reviewer, too (an equally "dark blockhead" vociferated Carlyle, "with braggartism superadded") were to be construed as the Angel's all sufficient proof of merit, the flattery was by no means one which the author desired them to prolong. Patmore, a lady who knew him reports, was by this time grown so thin, that she never saw him eat a mutton chop, without feeling terror lest it carry him off. He was, in fact, discouraged by low sales, worn by the cares of poverty, and harassed by overwork; and, in a last desperate effort, "resolving not to die of dignity", he at length wrote to the Edinburgh Review, ignominiously beseeching the editor to give his book "a puff". (33). The well known Patmorean arrogance was here at its nadir, but, as if to discourage him from ever being humble again, his petition was ignored. It can hardly have been as a result of this letter that after the poet had contrived to eke out his slighted, and badly, paid existence for four years longer, it was actually in the Edinburgh that Aubrey de Vere's generous, able and very influential article appeared.

Meanwhile, the Americans with their more lively ethical enthusiasms, had spontaneously, and without the necessity of any cabal of authors, taken the poem to their hearts. Items from the American papers had, from the first, bulked large in Emily's filings. Miss Howells had sent her "a whole batch of review praise" (34) immediately after the publication of the Petrothal in the United States in 1856. A year later, a party of Americans in Rome "very much devoted to literature and especially to Poetry" told Aubrey de Vere that there was "quite a rage for it in

in America" and that "its success there was something remarkable". (35). They recommended the author to try American publishers if he wanted his poem to pay. Americans, far from being dashed by the apathy of the English public in face of what they themselves admired, took it as a sign ^{of} their own superior acuteness that they had been the first to discern the poem's merit. "It is a most beautiful and original poem", stoutly maintained Nathaniel Hawthorne, "... but I doubt whether the generality of English people are capable of appreciating it. I told Mr. Patmore that I thought his popularity in America would be greater than at home, and he said that it was already so; and he appeared to estimate highly his American fame, and also our general gift of quicker and more subtle recognition of genius than the English Public ... he saw that we were his own people, recognizing him as a true poet." (36).

The English public, however, in spite of the maledictions of Carlyle, and the distrust of Hawthorne, was about to give striking evidence of a change of heart. It may have been, as Mr. Gosse suggests, that "the reaction from the Indian Mutiny had something to do with it", and that minds distressed by violence and guilt, found balm in the ordered cadences of the Angel, and recognized in its prevailing gaiety of heart a realm of innocence into which they were for the moment glad enough to retire. Doubtless also, though they can hardly have studied it carefully, the strong ethical system on which the poem is grounded, reassured them as to the ultimate solidity of their own way of life, — with all its customs representing, as did those of the Churchill household in the poem:

"The fair sum of six thousand years
Traditions of civility." (37)

A great relief indeed it was to remember the latter after you had seen what could happen in a country that lacked them!

It was likely, also, that even without the timely assistance of the Mutiny, the incessant propaganda carried on, both in public, and still more in private by men like Mr. Ruskin was due to have its effect. Yet, when all possible allowance is made for these different causes, and for the notorious fickleness of public taste, it is still clear that "as regards the ultimate success of the Angel ... the Edinburgh article of January 1858, was a landmark in the progress of its reputation". (38).

Aubrey de Vere's article, (39), while not particularly brilliant in itself, was a highly skillful piece of advocacy.

As far as exposition was concerned, he confined himself to developing at greater length the thesis of Landor, that the Angel had a particular claim to interest because in an age when a specious archaism tended to be confused with the very substance of poetry, this poet had dared to be modern, and "renouncing the stimulus of curiosity...had derived the interest of his work from higher sources, the philosophic analysis of the affections, and a descriptive power, equally harmonious and vivid". (40). The unorthodox cheerfulness of tone he justified by saying that the author "appreciates the dignity of the social ties; and thus treading upon firm, unyielding ground, he can afford to sport with the lighter side of his theme", (41), and added that by this very "manly and healthy cheerfulness, ...it is an effectual protest against the morbid poetry of the age, as in its serenity, it dissents from the 'spasmodic school', which delights in jerks and jolts, and tolerates not music that has not a dash of discord in it". (42). After so much of apology the review confined itself to its principle office and crafty function of

exhibiting such tantalizing fragments of the narrative as might excite the curiosity of the reader to hear more; of presenting in the character of independent lyrics, the wittiest and most fascinating of the preludes; and of drawing attention to the quaintness and metaphysical audacity of the happy comparisons which abounded throughout. Undoubtedly it was this technique of benevolent and discriminating selection which soon awakened the public mind to the interest of the piece they had despised without examining. Now, having tasted of the morsels they rose in a body to demand the feast: in other words the Angel began to sell: "first by the hundreds and then by the thousands". This, if you exclude the somewhat private rhapsodies with which it had been previously greeted, was the real beginning of life for the Angel in the House.

There was nothing in the next ten years of sales to make an author complain. If the hostility -- or stupidity -- of the reviewers had damped his prospects at first: if there had seemed to be an organized conspiracy on the part of the Fress to misrepresent him to the public: the public at least was not going to be deterred by this from gratifying its taste for Patmore to the full, when it actually found by experience that it liked him. Clergymen recommended the book to their flocks; young men presented it with an insinuating blush to their sweethearts; old ladies took it off with them to dream upon in the country; it became "a poem for happy married people to read together, and to understand by the light of their own past and present life", (43), the breviary of lovers, the bulwark of manners, the anthem and epitome of the English conception of home.

A great many people were afraid that, if the author continued it, the charm might evanesce. They were only too well

aware, these people, that the sequel to the marriage hymn is usually written in prose. "We trust, however", cautioned his undaunted champion, Aubrey de Vere, "that if he cherishes the domestic interest and familiar incidents of life, he will not carry these predilections to excess. A chain cannot be kept from trailing, if it be drawn out to too great length." (43). The author did not continue the poem, but as we have seen, began a new one instead. The latter portion of this was published serially in MacMillan's Magazine to satisfy the curiosity of readers who could not wait for it to be finished. The Angel of real life, Emily Patmore, was dying at the time, and Patmore consented to this arrangement, being in need of cash.

When Emily Patmore died the first success of the Angel died with her; or at least, if not precisely with her, only a short time later, and largely as a consequence of her death. For if Emily had not died, it is probable that Patmore would not have become a Catholic — certainly, not so soon. Neither would he ever have married again. But it seems to have been largely these two events which caused a sudden revulsion of feeling from a book which the public had only too fondly praised. "It is a great nuisance that you have become Roman Catholic", Ruskin said, "for it makes all your fine thinking so ineffectual to us English". (44). "The real ethical beauty of Patmore's ideas, the charming art of his best illustrations — what, in short, constitute him a poet of a high order — had never touched these deciduous admirers", says Gosse, and they determined in their thousands never again to turn the pages of a favorite who had become the husband of a second "Angel", and a Papist into the bargain." (45).

Swinburne's first Poems had come out a few years before. Atalanta in Calydon was printed in the very year of Patmore's

second marriage and conversion. It is no doubt possible for a disinterested student of poetry to admire impartially both these writers at once, but it is hardly possible for a rational being, to accept them both simultaneously as prophets, and feel that he is at one and the same time, living true to their mutually repulsive doctrines. The people who chose the Patmorean decorum, would certainly have to reject the Swinburnean frenzy, and vice versa; but after 1865, the people who chose Patmorean decorum were few. How dull, how hateful, how ludicrous, the Angel seemed to the rest of them, is nowhere better shown than in Swinburne's own parody upon it. The Angel was nothing he understood, and everything he loathed; and if it had not been already dying, his ridicule would have killed it.

"Its nudity had startled me;
But when the petticoats were on,
'I know,' I said; 'its name shall be
Paul Cyril Athanasius John!'
'Why', said my wife, 'the child's a girl!'
My brain swooned, sick with failing sense;
With all perception in a whirl,
How could I tell the difference?" (46).

These are not the most amusing lines from Person in the House but they are an indication of the main grounds of its attack which I suppose we may say was on the score of prudery. It was an attack which Patmore had foreseen, and armed himself against it in advance.

"Ice-cold seems heaven's noble glow
To spirits whose vital heat is hell;
And to corrupt hearts even so
The songs I sing, the tale I tell." (47).

It was an attack which he was more definitely to withstand, in retrospect, many years later, in a letter to W. S. Henley. "You know, I think", he says, "That I am not prudish; I do not call the supreme good of humanity evil, as it is the nature of prudes to do; but it is for the sake of the supreme good that

I desire to protest against its profanation by being made the jest, and, far worse, the means of gross pleasure to the multitude." (48).

But whether the accusation was true or not mattered little; for the time being it succeeded. By 1870, nobody read the Angel in the House any more, and only the very brave confessed to having once admired it. "Swinburne", says Mr. Leslie, with lofty hibernian scorn, "Swinburne flattered the pig and Tennyson flattered the prig... and Patmore never came into his own, for his own received him not." (49). "His book was one to be mentioned in the same breath with Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy" (50), says Gosse. Indeed so low had his reputation sunk that friends introducing strangers into his house, sometimes did not think it worth while to apprise them of his identity and quondam fame. On one of these occasions a lady who had not even heard the name of her host before entering, was struck by an odd coincidence when she met him:

"Patmore!" she said. "Patmore -- I am sure I have heard the name before. Yes, and now I know how I heard it. I remember that long ago a sister of mine got engaged to a briefless barrister -- a BRIEFLESS barrister! Of course, my father would not hear of the marriage; but I remember that the briefless barrister gave my sister a book, and it was called 'The Angel in the Home' or something or other, and I am sure the name on the book was Patmore, and I knew that it was put away in a cupboard, and I think I know the very cupboard it was put in, and I believe it is there now" (51).

Canticum Novum.

Cantate Domino Canticum novum. Ps. 97

Hunc ego mitibus mutare quaero tristia. Horace C.l. 16.

Nobody knew when he had begun to write them, or in answer to what new grandiose conception, but in 1868, the long-suffering friends of Coventry Patmore found their attention suddenly imp^xortuned by another volume from his new ignominious pen. It was not (at least ostensibly (1)) a continuation of the Angel. It was designated merely "Odes (Not Published)"; it was merely signed, "C.P." There was little difficulty in sensing a defeated reputation behind the flimsy covert of initials; and despite the boldly experimental character of the work, about the whole presentation was an air one was apt to think secretive, timid, and ashamed. This was not surprising. The attitude of the general public to Patmore in 1868, was not such as to encourage ostentation. The plumes of his "created and prevailing name" (2) drooped low. So much being understood, the only explanations for this private issue which the reticent author volunteered were contained in a brief and tight-lipped introduction:

"I meant to have extended," he began (but the very mood of the verb foreboded disappointment) "I meant to have extended and developed this series of Odes until they formed an integral work, expressing an idea which I have had long at heart; but feelings which are partly conveyed by the concluding Piece have discouraged me from fulfilling my intention; and I now print these fragments of the proposed Poem for private distribution among the few persons who are likely to care for them as they stand." (3).

The tone of this introduction (I have quoted it in full) was not such as the ancient Rhetoricians guaranteed to *reddere auditores benevolos, deciles et attentos.* There was something a little terse and incommunicative about it, despite the apparent candour of its phrasing. One wondered uneasily what those "feelings" were, which had evidently blighted all his hopes, and which he did not dare, or at least did not care, to reveal. The fact that he mentioned them was, in itself, vaguely incriminatory and a little ominous. Who, one asked, was to blame? Then, although the substance of the introduction was a chronicle of failure and desolation, there was a note of pride combined with its dejection, which rendered it impotent either to ingratiate or to inspire esteem. Its attitude towards the "few persons who were likely to care" was a desponding blend of arrogance and mistrust, towards the innumerable others who were presumed to be incapable of caring, one of implied compassion or contempt. The general effect was one of discouragement, with a hint of pessimism and even misanthropy.

The same oddly assorted characters of crypticism and defiance were evident also in the contents of the volume. The reader who resisted the temptation to scrutinize first the "concluding Piece", in order to obtain a little more definite information about the nature of the mysterious emotion therein "partly conveyed", was at least spared the shock to (or the titillation of) his political susceptibilities, by finding it asserted, with supreme economy and force, in the first three lines of that sombre composition, that the Reform Bill of the previous year of Grace was nothing short of a crime; that it could not have been committed but for the wanton treachery of England's "false" nobility; that the Prime Minister,

"their Jew", was certainly, and by the interposition of Divine Providence, mad when he passed it. These were thoughts and sentiments a little startling to the complacent and progressive spirit of 1868. But even if, by some extraordinary failure of curiosity, or by the ascendancy of orderly and established habits, you began at the beginning of the book (and in that case it was scarcely likely you would ever see the end) you were not thereby to be spared discomfiture. Why, the very first thing that affronted your eye as you loyally turned to peruse your friend's effusions, was a typographical pattern in the last degree eccentric. The lines of disparate length had not even the advantage of systematic arrangement, as in 17th century novelties like those of Geo. Herbert, who alternately plucked and feathered his verses to look like "Easter Wings", or chiseled and sculpted and embossed them into "Altars" -- they had not -- to take a nearer example -- the dainty felicity of the dormouse tail which rippled across a page of Lewis Carroll. Indeed these lines appeared to stop just wherever they pleased, without consulting the convenience of their neighbors, or the polity of the whole Ode, or even allowing for the symmetry of a preconcerted stanza. This abrupt and wilful behavior of the verses, (*numerusque fertur lege solutis*) was not at all in the manner of the day, and the last thing you would have expected from so precise and tidy a metrist as "C.P." In fact it was enough to make you doubt whether "C.P." did really stand for Coventry Patmore; and if you decided that it did; why there was nothing left for it but to sit down and confess your bewilderment honestly, and endeavor to mollify him by praising his former works, and felicitating him upon the beauty of his moral character. "I will be frank enough to say" you (if, as seems likely, you were Alfred Austin)

began, "I will be frank enough to say that ... I have found my full enjoyment in some degree trammelled by the irregularity of the verse, which, though I may be wrong, seems to me not quite to satisfy the happy compromise between expectation and surprise, which I suspect lies at the root of the felicity of rhyme.

"But The Angel in the House strikes me as better and finer even than I thought it when I read it many years ago.

'About it blow
The authentic airs of Paradise'...

"I know no modern poem where the attention is so often arrested by the complete fusion of thought and expression concerning matters that touch us all. It abounds in couplets that register themselves in the memory by virtue of their terse and original embodiment of a familiar truth — familiar yet too often overlooked; and there is hardly a page that has not its verse appropriate to the emotions and experience of all mankind. Thus you say what belongs to us all in your own peculiar way, satisfying the canon of Horace (*difficile est proprie communia dicere*) respecting what is really 'difficult' in literature. In an age somewhat enamoured of spurious originality, I gladly note how real and sincere is yours. Selecting the oldest of forms you have made it, by your treatment, absolutely new." (4).

Then you thanked him warmly for his sincere and valued gift, and breathed a secret aspiration that he would take your hint, and return to the "oldest of forms" in which he was such a master, and refrain from producing anything more like the "bright disorder" of the Odes. Your appreciation of the Angel was welcome, for it was both sincere and able, but your silence about the Odes was conspicuous by contrast. To compliment an author upon his

earlier work is like telling a woman she was lovely once, or praising a crocodile for its beauty in a previous incarnation. Your opinion remains unaltered that it is but a crocodile now.

I do not know whether Cardinal Newman was one of those who received a copy of the original Odes, but a letter of his exists (5) in which he is tactless enough to adopt the poet's apologetic description. The Cardinal speaks of the poems as "beautiful fragments", leaving the impression he has picked up some limbs and is looking about for the torso. Likewise his appeal to the Aeolian harp in conjunction with the mention of fragments, jars unhappily on the ear like the twang of a broken string.

But even if you were able to surmount the strangeness of an unaccustomed form; if you could forget, for the moment, those abrupt and epileptic jerks of curtailed endings; there remained the difficulty of a novel theme, of unpopular views, of harsh expressions, of stern denunciations, of sinister threats, of wailful prophecies, of a curious blend of religious and erotic fervor which no "decent christian" would connect with the cold formalities of worship. Thus the first of these Odes (later called Prophets who Cannot Sing) was a smack in the face of the Victorian prophets who could; the second, an apparent trifle (later called Felicia and finally, Beata) was apt to prove exasperatingly recedite to one who had not been thoroughly schooled in Patmore's theology of love. "It is really", says Father Connolly, "an instance of Patmore's escape from the awfulness of infinity, which he so feared. The boundless rays of Heaven's infinity striking a diamond stalactite in the black cavern of earth are a symbol of God's infinite attributes, made finite for man in the woman he loves." (6). But if such an arcane of mystical speculation underlay the slightest of these productions,

(for this second poem was only fifteen lines - and some of these you could mistake (7) for half or quarter lines - long), who would dare to begin the next, which had a forbidding bulk of one hundred and seventeen lines? Also, this next was a frank account of the poet's attempt to reconcile devotion to his dead and his living wife, particularly embarrassing if you happened to be acquainted with either or both of the ladies in question; and harrowing in any case, in its remorseless exposure of the ineluctable perfidy of man. "Tired Memory" he called it later (but he left a good deal of it out); and the next, "Faint yet Pursuing". "Faint yet Pursuing" is a confession of partial defeat in a moral life that yet is more strenuous than the majority of people would ever think of attempting. A religious pedant might be scandalized at the Horatian common sense of its resignation: "Nec quidem prodire tenus si non datur ultra" is the underlying principle of this Ode. The Fifth begins with an "O", as they say a real ode should. The apostrophe is to Pain, and "Pain", in later editions, was its title. But the attitude towards suffering which the address implies was hardly the kind to be understood amid the muslins and the cretonnes of a Victorian parlour. It was a time when religious hearts were almost universally oppressed by doubts as to the omnipotence, or wisdom or goodness of a God who could license physical evil: when the mechanic's hand, in idle hours, spontaneously fashioned tools that added to the ease or amenities of existence; when the aspiration of Reformers and Visionaries was towards a world in which everything uncomfortable or offensive to the senses should have been abolished; when (in short) the Utopia of the world's desire was a town-planned universe that reeked with anaesthetics:

and Coventry Patmore perversely sought to be heard in it, singing a bizarre mediaeval strain, which throbbed with passionate ardour for the grim mistress of anchorets and ascetics. The Sixth was a fling at the age upon a point where the Age was especially vain. It was to be called The Two Deserts, and one of the deserts was the mighty waste of empyrean dirt revealed by that proud toy of the scientist, the modern telescope; and the other desert was a brood of germs, the "torment of innumerable tails" (9) which Science, using the opposite instrument, preened itself upon finding in a glass of water. The Seventh Ode, ("Deliciae Sapientiae de Amore") devoted itself to hymning Virginity to a world that had hardly cared to hear of Marriage; and it opened with a rebuke not only to the lecher, and to the sybarite, but to the primly virtuous who mistook for that most passionate purity by which "the heavens themselves eternal are with fire", (10) an effete and sterile coldness. The Eighth ("Dead Language"), was a poetical unveiling of the scorn and pessimism thinly veiled in the prose of the introduction. The poet neither expects nor intends his thought to be understood:—the worthy will discover its meaning: for the rest it is (and fitly) "a language dead". The Ninth (called, briefly, "1867") was that anti-democratic manifesto, and anti-semitic libel, with which we began.

It would be idle to pretend that this book did not mark a change, if not altogether in the thought, at least in the public manners of Coventry Patmore. Hitherto he had written with a grace and urbanity sometimes reminiscent of Frier. His endeavor had been to present a lofty doctrine, adjusted to the capacity of his hearers. For their sakes he had laboured to simplify what was complicated, to mollify what was hard and repellant. He had

sought to feed them with wholesome truth accommodated to the weakness of their palates. "Iac parvulis" was the unconscious motto of his book as it had been (but consciously) that of Saint Thomas Aquinas. And he had tried to obey the Augustinian precept:- to be childlike in teaching the child.

But now when he found that his well meant efforts were rejected, that his condescension had led to ridicule and misunderstanding, he seems to have felt that it was useless to address his age in its own tongue any longer. "In his new mood", says Cosse, "he had nothing more to tell the curates and the ladies about Frederick and Felix." (11). It was still his aim to publish truth, but he no longer sought to do so in a conciliatory manner. In fact he had begun to take real pleasure in a language that if not actually fierce, was full of brusquerie.

"A double voice is truth's to use at will:
One, with the abysmal scorn of good for ill,
Smiting the brutish ear with doctrine hard,
Wherein she strives to look as near a lie
As can comport with her divinity;
The other tender soft as seem
The embraces of a dead love in a dream" (12).

In the Odes of 1868, "Truth" speaks with both her voices. "She smites the brutish ear with doctrine hard", and as a result, the volume acts as a universal corrosive; there is something in it for every one to hate. "Truth" also uses her other voice, but these accents, "tender soft as seem the embraces of a dead love in a dream", are apt, like the very simile he employs to describe them, to be thought too intimate for some, and too phantasmal for others, and, in any case, to stir up memories and associations of the dead love which the qualmish heart had believed to lie buried with her. Besides, in 1868, who did not know that Coventry Patmore, in a line like that, was taking you on an indecent tour of his own psychological mansion; conducting you through the chamber of

horrors that the tidiest conscience may, at midnight, become; and entertaining you with recollected intimacies in a fashion that was enough to cause the skeleton of his dead wife to rattle in its closet?

All things considered, was it really surprising that this little book, so quick, so rude, so poignant, so august, should have been "universally received with indifference or mystification"? (13).

Muskin, the friend, the defendent, the consoler, the faithful ally of previous campaigns, who had found it necessary to signalize so voluminously his approbation of the Angel, "found it needless to say that he recognized their nobleness", (14) with respect to the Odes. This feeling of exemption from the duties of propaganda, may, it is true, be construed as a compliment. There is indeed every likelihood that the man who was later to write that "no living human being has ever done anything that has helped me so much as the Odes", (15) intended his words in that sense. But, at the time, from the point of view of the author, who had nothing but that one rather guarded sentence to go on, there was nothing in Muskin's following silence (however reverential it really was) which struck him as flattering. Carlyle, too, while we know that he continued to befriend, and to be befriended by, Patmore, remained, at least as far as writing went, remarkably taciturn. Sir Henry Taylor, (another old admirer) whose letter in acknowledgement of the gift, is one of the very few we have, perhaps expressed the general bewilderment in the gentlest possible phrases. He had, he said "read them more than once or twice with a full sense of their peculiar significance & (sic) grace", but confesses to "not always perhaps knowing how to construe and develope unerringly the sublime sense". (16).

But if it was not at all surprising to find them so received, it was not surprising, either, to find the poet (however much he had expected and prepared himself for a failure) nevertheless cast down by such a reception. He had printed about 250 copies, and, of that number, about 103 were left. In disappointment and chagrin, he now collected these, and sitting before the fireplace in his vast baronial hall of Heron's Ghyll, tossed them sadly to the flames. Fortunately for us:- fortunately for Patmore when the sullen mood departed;- his prudent daughters had abstracted copies. A similar attempt to make a similar hecatomb of the "Angel", similarly failed a few years later. Poets in the main can rely on their daughters to provide against the consequence of their theatrical gestures. The successful immolation of *Sponsa Dei* however, happily remains as a proof of Patmore's sincerity; and the honor of many a wavering poet's hand, was redeemed by one effectual holocaust.

One can understand why he wanted to burn the book, and obliterate from memory his new unlucky venture. "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat and wept. How can we sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land? By the waters of Babylon there we sat and wept, when we remembered Sion."

There had been, however, one exception to the general apathy of his correspondents. The letter of Mr. R. Monteith is almost the only one I have not quoted, but it is perhaps the earliest exemplification of the truth in Sir Edmund Gosse's dictum that the *Eros*, "wholly unintelligible to the multitude, (is) discovered with a panic of delight by a few elect souls in every generation". (17). Mr. Monteith's letter seems to me as accurate a forecast of the Unknown Eros as we have seen that Bulwer Lytton's was of the Angel. It is written with strange and

beautiful appropriateness from:

22, Half Moon St.,
June 21st, '68.

"Dear Mr. Patmore,

You know I left home without having an opportunity of looking at the Odes, and forgot to take them with me. Now I have succeeded in borrowing a copy, and have just had a quiet read of them to my very great satisfaction.

I will not trouble you with praises — but will only say — for God's sake or your soul's sake, WRITE. Do not leave any of the reproach of poetic sterility unremoved which it lies with you to remove from the children of the Church. You have a call as distinct to my ear as if I heard it delivered to your guardian angel for you.

You are very grimly bitter against sun, moon and stars. And you sometimes seek a curious STING in the style in preference to beauty; and you perhaps like the intricate too much: and but what are fifty such perhapses when the Divine gift is there vivifying such a breadth of mental muscle? You are one who cannot fail to be true and living, and intensely interesting to any but the quite shallow.

I trust to see many score of pages quickly follow this little prelude. With the slightest diminution of the occasional ODD and OBSCURE you may educate the Catholic mind of England to things yet unimagined by it. You CAN write on divine things — truly, deeply, and beautifully — how then will you dare not to write?

Four out — not merely in the spirit of soliloquy, as if indifferent whether understood or not — but at the same time not aiming to be easily taken up by the crowd. As some Saint bade a Grandee of Spain do — throw yourself every morning on the floor of your room and offer your gifts to God, and then every day FOUR OUT. I would not be always theological — only very often so — and I would make some great Religious these your piece de resistance, and your life work!

You will not have patience to read this, but your wife will, and she will interpret for me. I do hereby pray God that you may not fall short of your vocation.

Ever yours,

'R. Monteith'" (18).

I have quoted this letter in full because I think it is a true indication not of the only audience by whom Patmore's "new song" was to be enjoyed, but at least of the kind of audience by whom it was to be most rapturously welcomed, and most pertinaciously cherished. Mr. Monteith was a precursor of the

many literary Catholics who were soon to venerate Patmore as their peculiar treasure, who in the persons of Alice Meynell, Francis Thompson, Lionel Johnson, Father Hopkins and others were to pay to his work a respect so near to worship as to expose him once more to the critical taunt that he was the idol of a coterie. For I think it is useless to pretend that Catholics are not in general more apt than others to feel at home with Patmore. "It is noticeable", says Lionel Johnson, "that the truest appreciation of his works, its order of ideas, comes from fellow Catholics; from a Franciscan versed in mystical theology; from a brilliant young Jesuit poet dead ere his prime; from Mr. de Vere much of whose poetry is own cousin to Patmore's; from one of his daughters, a nun. These knew what he knew, felt what he felt, moved in the same or in a similar sphere of Catholic experience; for them 'though in a strange land' this was the Lord's song." (19).

It is necessary to confess that if Mr. Monteith may seem to have thought such a consummation only natural, and Lionel Johnson been able to report it as simply historical, Patmore at this early stage, did not regard it as likely. "I fear that few Catholics will think of them as you do", he writes about ten years later to Mrs. Bishop. "To be otherwise than merely conventional and commonplace in expression is to be suspected, by the immense majority of Catholics of verging at least on the unsound in substance. I expect that my audience will be limited almost wholly to members of the Invisible Church." (20).

The Unknown Eros
1868 - 1878

Multa Dircaeum levat aura cyncum
tendit, anteni, quotiens in altos
nubium tractus. Horace C.IV. ll.

R. Monteith, the first articulate sympathizer of the Odes, had enjoined upon Patmore, as we have seen, "to make some great religious theme your 'pièce de resistance'". It was all of seven years before Patmore printed another ode, but, when he did so, the very title was indicative of a religious (not to say sectarian) purpose. How it Seems to an English Catholic, (1) appeared in the pages of the Fall Mall Gazette for March 8th, 1875; and it would be exceedingly entertaining to know how it seemed to the majority of English Protestants who read it. To the polite and secular ear, if only it were alert and well-informed enough, the opening lines were noisy with papal thunder:

"That last
Blown from our Sion of the Seven Hills
Was no uncertain blast!" (2).

exulted Patmore with the glee of a small boy applauding a fire cracker; and the statement was only an introduction to a deal of autonomous blasting of his own. To speak of the Vatican as "Sion" was a telling piece of arrogance in the face of a nation still studious of the Scriptures: one might simply have refused to understand it, had not the accompanying geographical reference been so exact. But the main bearing of the poem, of course, it was impossible to misunderstand. Everybody in England knew that on July 18th, 1870, the twentieth oecumenical council of the Roman Church had declared the much debated doctrine of Papal Infallibility to be "a divinely revealed dogma". The pronouncement

had been bitterly resented in England. Mr. Gladstone in particular had regarded it as a particularly disgusting invasion of the Temporal by the Spiritual power, and after retiring from political leadership in 1874, had given it as his opinion that no one could become a convert to Catholicism without renouncing "his mental and moral freedom, and placing his civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of another". (3). In November, 1874, he had issued a pamphlet on "The Vatican Decrees in their Bearing on Civil Allegiance", to which, in January, 1875, Newman had replied with his "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk"; and it was evident that the author of the contribution to the Fall Mall Gazette (it was signed C.P.) had come to add his drop of acrimony to a contest already embittered. The poem was no more conciliatory to the generality of Catholics than it was to Protestants. It seemed to accuse them of a sleepy timidity; and bade them awake to engage in a struggle, they were, in truth but little anxious to evoke.

To a people accustomed to meditating on the Passion in the peace and comfort of their Sunday pews, it spoke with a disquieting approach to actuality of imminent martyrdoms, sacrifices and betrayals. It contained a couplet directly offensive to the Irish, and passages vaguely denunciatory of almost everybody else. It was full of apocalyptic griefs and terrors, and combined the anathemas of an angry prophet with the taunts and jeers of a derisive schoolboy. It was universally challenging and promiscuously insulting. It was the first piece that Patmore had published since the last line of his "Wedding Sermon" had brought to its serene conclusion the story of The Angel in the House.

"We were much struck with the poem in the Fall Mall",

said Dr. Newman, "and wondered who the author was: we felt the great compliment paid to us unworthy; and most we felt the depth and seriousness of the appeal itself. I have been prophesying a great battle between good and evil, truth and falsehood, for this forty or fifty years --but I suppose it is ever going on -- and there will be no crisis till towards the end of the world.That does not interfere with our duty to be ever thinking of the end, or the wholesome warning given us by such a remarkable poem as the one you speak of". (4).

The compliment from which Dr. Newman and his priest of the Oratory demurred is contained in the following lines:

"Lo, yonder, where our little English band,
With peace in heart and wrath in hand,
Have dimly ta'en their stand,
Sweetly the light
Shines from the solitary peak at Edgbaston,
Whence, o'er the dawning land,
Gleam the gold blazonries of Love irate
'Gainst the black flag of Hate." (5).

The "gold blazonries of Love irate" were a symbol, of course, for Dr. Newman's "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk"; the "black flag of Hate", was Gladstone's pamphlet. Was it not natural that Newman should admire an Ode wherein he was represented in this heroic pose; wherein, besides, he found an interpretation of events past and current, a spiritual attitude and vein of speculation, all in a line with his own? And was it not equally obvious that the Ode was no part of a diplomatic scheme to smooth the ruffled feathers on Mr. Gladstone? In fact, we may say that the poem sets out to alienate in successive passages, the sympathies of one set of readers after another. It was like dancing to the end of an elimination waltz to be able to thread your way unscathed through the maze of its affronts.

Almost a year later (January 18th, 1876) a second Ode by "C.P." came out in the same paper. It was called Peace, but it brought not peace, but a sword. Its motto was: "Prepare for War". The best way to test experimentally what for susceptible contemporaries the force of its abusive lines must have been, is to read it with the Isolationist attitude of a certain section of the American people during the years 1939 and 1940 in mind. Then imagine that some one of our own generation has been foolhardy enough to portray an advocate of their policy in something like the following burlesque. The speaker is the putative Isolationist himself, but our modern Patmore will lose no time in attaching to him what he deems a more appropriate label.

"But in his heart the fool now saith:

"What, make or keep
A tax for ship and gun
Then 'tis full three to one
You bully but intends
To beat our friends?"

"If times get worse
We've money in our purse.
And patriots that know how, let who will scoff,
To buy our perils off." (6).

The Isolationist, who had his own adducible reasons for non-participation would not have been pleased by these insinuations; and it was not likely that the Englishman of 1870 (who had, as it turned out, far less interest in the Franco-Prussian War, than America had in Britain's resistance to the Nazis) was pleased by them either. The fury of Patmore's invective was by no means exhausted with these two aspersions, but he went on, with raucous mimicry, to imply, that behind the sanctimonious Pacifist talk of people, politicians and press, there lurked a score of highly instinctive, discreditable motives. The trenchant verses of Peace, whether they have the right to call them-

selves poetry or not, hacked at the roots of national self-interest, sentimentality, and complacency, with too fierce a stroke, and too savage a joy, to admit of their being popular. The more constructive sections of the poem, also, are occupied in strenuous and emphatic advocacy of political doctrines not universally admitted and hence certain to offend as many readers as they won. The poem is full of profound and interesting maxims:

"Prophets, indeed, taught lies when we were young,
And people loved to have it so;
For they teach well who teach their scholar's tongue!"

and counsels of indisputable wisdom:

"But to sit silent now is to suborn
The common villainy you scorn.
In the dark hour
When phrases are in power,
And naught's to choose between
The thing which is not and which is not seen,
One fool with lusty lungs,
Does what a hundred good, who hate and hold their
Shall ne'er undo." (7) tongue,

A melancholy conclusion!

In that same year of 1876 the Fall Hall Gazette also printed seven other poems by "C.P." The next one after Peace was The Rosy-Boson'd Hours (8), being a return to the mood and manner of the Angel, an account of a honeymoon journey with a mildly indecorous initial stanza which has caused the ribald critics to forget all the less dubious felicities that succeeded it.

"A Florin to the willing Guard
Secured, for half the way,
(He lock'd us in, oh, lucky-starr'd)
A curtain'd, front coupé." (9)

After that, in rapid succession, came the odes Let Be; (10), A Farewell; (11), If I Were Dead; (12), The Two Deserts; (13), The Toys; (14), and Prophets who Cannot Sing; (15). The following year had nothing to offer but one rather flabby social

skit, The Girl of all Periods; (16). In 1878, another Ode called Arbor Vitae, (17) was printed in The Week.

Of this collection, three, The Two Deserts, Prophets who Cannot Sing and Arbor Vitae, may fitly be classified, along with the political odes, within that portion of Patmore's work we call satirical. Later additions to this group were 1867 (18) and 1877, (19), which were first published among the thirty-one Odes of the anonymous volume, The Unknown Era of 1877; and 1880-85 which actually appeared as The Merry Murder some years before the time indicated in its final title, among the forty-two Odes of the undated Poems, probably of 1879. There are other Odes, too, like the little, hybrid lyric-epigram, Magna est Veritas, (20), and The Cry at Midnight, (21) which though philosophical and speculative in subject, are definitely satirical in tone:

"For want of me the world's course will not fail;
When all its work is done, the lie shall rot;
For truth is great and shall prevail
When none cares whether it prevail or not." (22).

in the quatrain-like ending of the former, in which much of the bitterness of Patmore's political hopelessness is condensed. Even the longer idyllic pieces such as L'Allegro, (23), deviate into acerbity; while traits of satire are frequent even in the Psyche Odes.

Arbor Vitae may be the most audacious piece that ever got into an English newspaper. As it seems, however, to have been misunderstood by Gosse, (24), and even, to some extent, by Osbert Burdett (who is cautious in the remarks he makes about it, (25), there is some reason for thinking that the hospitable editorial bosom never apprized what manner of serpent it nursed. Catholic readers (26) have been at one in recognizing in Arbor Vitae an allegory of the Church, not altogether respectful of

her ministers, and of her opponents, or of those indifferent to her, finely contemptuous. The congregations of priests are figured as

"...Nests of the hearse bird
That talks but understands not his own word."

and the cultured reader of The Week, we presume, was intended to find himself in the following lines:

"Beside this tree,
Praising no Gods, nor blaming, sans a wish,
Sits, Tartar-like, the Time's civility,
And eats its dead-dog off a golden dish." (27).

"Many a man has been burned for less than his (Patsmore's) letter to the 'Omar Khayyam Club' written only a few days before his death" says Dr. Garnett; (28), and it is perhaps more surprising still, that in the eighteen years of opportunity for revenge which the earlier publication of Arbor Vitae allowed, no action was taken.

The Two Deserts likewise was written in a spirit of contradiction: "He disliked 'gush', and there is a story of his visiting Greenwich Observatory in company with Aubrey de Vere. They were shown through the telescope a new comet and other fine things, which filled them both with exultation, but de Vere unfortunately giving voice to his enthusiasm about the bigness of the starry heavens on the way home, Patsmore suddenly 'dried up', and maintained that the stars were only created 'to make dirt cheap'" (29).

The philosophical conception underlying this idea is a noble if rather perverse one. We are evidently meant to despise matter, argues Patsmore, since we see such quantities of it cast aside for the construction of superfluous stars. But there is a kind of gamin impudence with which he makes the remark which exaggerates even Pasterity. "The somewhat cheap jibe", Pro-

fesser Lucas calls it, "that the stars were only created to make dirt cheap". (30). Professor Lucas also announces (as though Patmore had not already done so)(31), that Coleridge once said something similar.

The most outrageous of Patmore's Odes were those which had dates for titles. Each one of these dates (in our official histories) represents the triumph of a new Reform Bill. Each one of these dates represents (for Patmore) a new stage in the decline of England's greatness; what he writes on the occasion is correspondingly saturnine. "He saw that the Reform Bill (s) would destroy the Squirearchy, and with it the rural England of The Angel in the House: 'The England that was England when England was England', as Mr. Belloc's friend said. Therefore his poetry was stopped." (32).

For the Reform Bill of 1867 he wrote:

"And, now, because the dark comes on apace
When none can work for fear,
And Liberty in every Land lies slain,
And the two tyrannies unchallenged reign
And heavy prophecies suspended long
At supplication of the righteous few,
And so discredited, to fulfilment throng,
Restrain'd no more by faithful prayer or tear,
And the dread baptism of blood seems near
That brings to the humbled Earth the Time of Grace.
Breathless be song" (33).

For that of 1884, he is even more violent:

" Forward! glad rush of Gergesian swine:
You've gain'd the hill-top, but there's yet the brine.
Forward! to meet the welcome of the waves
That mount to 'whelm the freedom which enslaves.
Forward! Bad corpses turn into good dung
To feed strange futures beautiful and young ..." (34).

The last line is the cue to his mood. He is singing an elegy for an England he believes to be already dead: he is already looking forward to some new civilization her ruins may fertilize. This settled conviction is manifest again and

again throughout the Odes. In the Proem, (35), we are treated to an account of her (England's) death agony. Here is Patmore's tumultuous version of Mathew Arnold's more placid "Weary Titan."

"O, season strange for song!
And yet some timely power persuades my lips.
Is't England's parting soul that nerves my tongue,
As other Kingdoms, nearing their eclipse,
Have in their latest bards uplifted strong
The voice that was their voice in earlier days?
Is it her sudden, loud and piercing cry,
The note which those who seem too weak to sigh
Will sometimes utter just before they die?
Lo, weary of the greatness of her ways,
There lies my land with hasty pulse and hard
Her ancient beauty marr'd,
And, in her cold and aimless roving sight,
Horror of light;
Sole vigour left in her last lethargy,
Save when, at bidding of some dreadful breath
The rising death
Rolls up with force;
And then the furiously gibbering corse
Shakes, panglessly convulsed, and sightless stares,
Whilst one Physician pours in rousing wines,
One anodynes,
And one declares
That nothing ails it but the pains of growth." (36).

One had space only for small selections from very long poems. I have chosen the passages most offensive to the national pride, and I suggest that they presented the average reader with a serious dilemma. Either he could admit the truth of Patmore's analysis, which seemed vaguely treasonable, and very depressing besides; or he could look on Patmore as a madman. The universal consent to the second of these alternatives is the best explanation I can give of Patmore's survival from one Reform to another. Another factor, also, was the anonymity of their original publication. "The Odes" attracted a good deal of attention", Mr. Champneys understates, "but their authorship was recognized by few beyond the circle of the poet's intimates. It is said indeed that 'a poeta minimissimus' (sic) who bore the same initials (C.P.) was anxious to disclaim connection with them." (37).

The embarrassment of this unfortunate, and still unknown "C.P." implies that the Odes had awakened some resentment. After the Unknown Bros of 1878, the authorship was no longer a secret, but we find the Spectator of 1890 still suffering from the surprise of that revelation. "These irregular metres lend themselves to invective. Nothing can be more different from the sweet shocks of the earlier verse than these stiletto thrusts of scorn," (36) it says in sour reproof. But in general the policy of critics then and since has decreed that Patmore is to be treated as an amiable old Cassandra, and gently spoofed. There was not, however, any recognition of Cassandra's unhappy faculty of being right as well as objectionable.

"Patmore", says Gosse who generally acceded to the opinions of his contemporaries when these were particularly strong, (39), "was the wildest of political prophets. In an Ode like Arbor Vitae the splendour of the imagery, the rush of inflamed and angry thought, must be accepted for their own sake; beneath the symbolism there lies no justice of public apprehension. The attacks of Patmore upon the government of his day are not contributions to philosophical poetry, consistent and intelligible even in their savagery, like the admirable Iambes of Auguste Barbier. They resemble much more those political Odes of Leopardi, such as the Italia and the Angeles Mai, in which the cup of scorn and anger overflows without an aim, merely covering the whole scheme of things with a spatter of contumely." (40). (This was written soon after Patmore's death).

"So with the Odes", observes another critic at about the same time, "it is well to begin by separating those which take hold of the doors of Heaven from those which exhaust themselves in constructive damnation of Mr. Gladstone." (41).

Mr. Arthur Symons is willing to justify Patmore on aesthetic grounds, and finds no exception to "writing which is classical in a way in which perhaps no other writer of our time is classical in that fiercely aristocratic political verse, which is the very rapture of indignation and wrath against such things as seemed to him worthy to be hated of God". (42). (Mr. Symons is expressing in 1920 an opinion he formed in 1897, and which continues to be tenable.)

"When he speaks of politics he is grandiose and rather silly; when of telescopes and microscopes of which he did not approve (this is a mis-statement) he is pettish though charming" (43) says a third, (a representative of 1933).

The tradition that Patmore's political Odes are to be derided is as strongly established as the tradition that the versification of the Angel is too facile, and that its domesticities are tiresome. All of these established attitudes are recognized, and to some extent honored by the greater part of that very influential class of modern Grammatici, whose interpretations, synopses and pronouncements, amusingly presented in a quickly assimilable form, determine the rating to be given to poets by the vast numbers of the reading public who have no time to read the poets themselves. I may speak of the Grammatici again.

However, for the past twenty years or so, it has become increasingly familiar to hear Patmore's mournful predictions about England, amplified to include in their catastrophic phrases almost the whole of western civilization. (44).

"For some unexplained reason, perhaps because many were expressed in verse, it has been the fashion to decry Patmore's political prophecies. Yet they have been startlingly fulfilled; and the modern critics of the servile state only depict what he

analyzed so ruthlessly. Increased rather than curtailed by education, 'the orgies of the multitude', (45) have begun." (46). So speaks the combative Osbert Burdett. He and Mr. Page so far as I know, are the only critics who have cared to vindicate Patmore as a thinker worthy of respect upon political problems.

With reference to the "elegiac" passages of the Proem already quoted, Mr. Burdett affirms:

"When we look at history the story of Rome seems short, but how many of us remember that the story of England since it became a nation at the Conquest has hardly yet passed that limited term? Of the remoter future then, Patmore sees merely the beginning of what is politely called a period of transition, or, more strictly, a 'corruption' of our civilization, which means that after the decline shall have been completed the seed of a national life will spring again elsewhere. In that far view there is no pessimism but a certain exaltation in acknowledging that the death which must precede that resurrection is beginning." (47).

Mr. Burdett began to present his views of Patmore in various magazines like the New Statesmen, the Dublin Review, the London Mercury, about 1919. His book was published in 1921. At that time, doubtless, it was easy to take a "far view"; easy, and perhaps salutary. At the present moment all we can say is that the chances of popularity for Patmore's political verses are perhaps less than before. The thesis "Every Kingdom has a Grave" is only satisfying when applied to the long interred empires of the past. For a living empire in its hour of crisis, the doctrine brings but little "exaltation".

Mr. Burdett is very successful in justifying Patmore's opposition to the zeitgeist on other grounds, and quotes with glee the Patmorean prediction of the servile state:

"...the prying despotism of the vestry -- the more 'virtuous' the more paltry and prying -- persecuting each individual by the intrusion of its myriad-handed, shifting, ignorant, and irresistible tyranny into the regulation of our labour, our household, and our very victuals It will be a despotism which will have to be mitigated by continual tips, as the other kind has had to be by occasional assassination. Neither the voter nor the inspector yet know their power and opportunities; but they soon will. We shall have to 'square' the district surveyor once or twice a year, lest imaginary drains become a greater terror than real typhoid; we shall have to smoke our pipes secretly and with a sense of sin, lest the moral supervisor of the parish should decline our offer of half-a-crown for holding his nose during his weekly examination of our bedrooms and closets; the good Churchman will have to receive Communion under the 'species' of ginger-ale -- as some advanced congregations have already proposed -- unless the parson can elude the churchwarden with white port, or otherwise persuade him; and, every now and then, all this will be changed, and we shall have to tip our policemen and inspectors for looking over our infractions of popular moralities of a newer pattern." (48).

Is it possible to deny that there are regions of the world where much of this has been realized? Yet aside from Mr. Burdett, and the authors of such books about the dissolution of Europe as we have mentioned, Patmore's writings in prose and poetry, have been rather airily dismissed. The prose is not my theme; but it is pleasant to have as one of my earliest memories connected with Patmore's work, a picture of a group of students at the Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto, squealing with pleasure over these pages from Religio Poetae at the time when Prohibition was in force.

I have now come to the point where it is customary for me to say: what of Posterity? But I have carried the history of the criticism right down to our own day, 1942, and the only question I can think to ask about Posterity is: will there be any? To such an extent has history, at least, been upon the side of the "Pessimist". A word might be added about the personalities -- the "constructive damnation of Mr. Gladstone" etc-- which distinguish the political Odes. "There are two lines in one Ode that I could wish were not there", (49) his daughter said, and the wish was echoed by many people to whom Patmore's incessant castigation of public figures was merely painful. "'Their Jew'", objected Mr. Hopkins apropos of a breezy reference to Disraeli, "this is a hard saying, all politics apart. Many people speak so, but I cannot see how they can be justified ..." (50) and he went on to urge the duties of charity. Patmore's persistent animosities were harmful to himself in the end. Mr. Gladstone, who had heard himself indicated in excoriating lines:

"You strive their leader, lusting to be seen
His leprosy's so perfect that men call him clean!" (51).
(52).

and a score of more dangerous, because more moderate statements, had his own revenge. When the name of Patmore was suggested for the Laureatship after the death of Tennyson, the Prime Minister said: "But Patmore died a good many years ago." The spokesman for Patmore made a gesture of dissent. "I am sure", repeated Gladstone comfortably, "that he is dead." (53). The day has probably come when Patmore's malignancies interest us more by their fidelity to his own vehement hatreds, than they shock us by their injustice to his foes. The names of his enemies stick out of the Odes like cloves in pickled viands: they spice his style in the same way as do the names of Dante's enemies whom he consigned, for his own private delectation, to

Hell eternal.

At the same time as political odes (and others which I shall consider later) were appearing in the Pall Mall Gazette, Patmore was producing a separate series of Odes, theological, mystical and religious, which were not printed in the newspaper, but enjoyed an eager audience of One. This was Patmore's daughter, Sister Mary Christina (née Emily) a nun of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, in the convent of St. Leonards-on-the-sea. "Undoubtedly", says the Biographer of this talented, and interesting girl, "his daughter's choice of the religious life had been the principal cause of his turning his thoughts more to the subject of divine love and the mystic espousals of the soul with God". (54). "He always asked for her opinion on his work, and ... letters of her's he carefully kept, for she had by this time surpassed him in the experimental knowledge of the sublime truths he was endeavouring to express." (55).

But besides the interest awakened by his daughter's vocation, two literary events had shortly before he began the Unknown Eros, stimulated his curiosity in, and added to his psychological understanding of, the religious life. These were his discovery of St. John of the Cross, and his reading of Marie Lataste. (56). Simultaneously his artistic sympathies had been aroused by his introduction, through Denis MacCarthy's newly published translation, to the works of Calderon. They were, he said "the astonishment and delight of every reader who comes upon them for the first time - an astonishment and delight almost like that of the acquisition of a new sense". (57).

Patmore's acquaintance with mystical writing was of long standing. While employed in the British Museum he had been set to catalogue the Fathers; his acquaintance with St. Thomas

Acquinas and St. Augustine dates from then. His second wife did not, we are told, until near her death, understand his religious poetry, but the comment she made upon The Victories of Love tells us that, at least, she would not have objected to the exalted character of his later work: "certain passages", she complained, in what was perhaps the oddest criticism ever to be made of a poem, "do not quite come up to the level of a Kempis, than whom nothing ought to be lower, to my way of thinking". (58). It was also, collaboration with Mary Patmore that Coventry translated St. Bernard's De Diligendo Deo.

The extent to which this particular type of religious reading, and of emotional experience, determined the character of the Odes, may be seen in Patmore's own profession:

"I only report the cry which certain 'babes in Christ' have uttered: 'Taste and see that the Lord is sweet'. And far be it from me to pose as other than a mere reporter, using the poetic intellect and imagination so as in part to conceive those happy realities of life which in many have been and are an actual and abiding possession; and to express them in such a manner that thousands who lead beautiful and substantially Catholic lives, whether outside or within the visible Church, may be assisted in the only true learning, which is to know better that which they already know." (59). "There is nothing in the Psyche poems that is not in the Saints", says Fage, "Calderon would have encouraged their gaiety, and St. John of the Cross their sensuousness." (60). And Patmore has left us another memorandum about his plans for the work: "This Poem to consist of a series of Poems on texts from the Canticles, and to contain all the essential matter of St. John of the Cross". (61).

It is clear that in Patmore's day, and to the generality of readers, poems such as these might be thought to be of a derivation sufficiently bizarre, to say the least. "How it Seems to an English Catholic, already objectionable on political grounds, probably narrowed its appeal still further, by assuming certain standards of life, sharply at variance with the ideals of Protestant and materialistic England.

"Come who have felt, in soul and heart and sense,
The entire obedience
Which opens the bosom, like a blissful wife,
To the Husband of all life!
Come ye that find contentment's very core
In the light store
And daisied path
of Poverty,
And know how more
A small thing that the righteous hath
Availeth than the ungodly's riches great.
Come likewise ye
Which do not yet disown as out of date
That brightest third of the dead Virtues three,
Of Love the crown elate
And daintiest glee." (62).

Yet this panegyric of the three monastic vows, which was probably as unintelligible to many people as a runic tune or rosicrucian symbol, and the more galling in proportion as it was better understood, was equally able, in its way, to penetrate with sweetness, the hearts of those who lived for what it described. Sister Mary Christina was delighted with it:

"At last Sunday is come, and I can write about your Ode which Mama so kindly copied out. It would be impertinent in me to praise it, but I can say that it gave me great pleasure, and new pleasure every time I read it. To say nothing of the general sense, in which I flatter myself I quite understand you, you may imagine how under the circumstances, these lines went to my heart:

'The daisied path of Poverty!
The brightest third of the dead Virtues three!'

I hope Dr. Newman has read it. When shall I have the others?
.... Ever since I read it and imagined all the rest you have
been writing, I have been indulging in a sort of ecstasy of
pride at being your daughter, a very innocent sort of pride, I
hope." (63).

Sister Mary Christina also liked the clearer and more ex-
plicit development of the same theme in Legem Tuam Dilexi; and
never could get the following lines from that poem, out of her
mind:

"For, ah, who can express
How full of bonds and simpleness
Is God,
How narrow is He,
And how the wide, waste field of possibility
Is only trod
Straight to His homestead in the human heart
And all His art
Is as the babe's that wins his Mother to repeat
Her little song so sweet!" (64).

Sponsa Dei was also submitted to her judgement. In 1878
she wrote him a criticism of the published Unknown Vers. To
her the entire collection seems to have been "for poetic beauty
apart from the purely spiritual ... wonderful and delicious".(65).
"I think the Odes are very like Holy Scripture", she adds, in
the way Shakespeare is, viz, in being intensely human, and in
not saying the words allowed to express the thing but the thing
itself." (66).

Sister Mary Christina's words have a significance far be-
yond that usually allotted to the appreciations of a daughter
upon her father's verses. She was a person of strong poetical
intuitions; and one whose spiritual life was remarkable for phen-
omena which approached the mystical, putting her in the same
class as the model for Psyche, the French Marie Lataste. Her
approbation is therefore a guarantee of the success of Patmore's
"report". Besides this, her words are important because she

stands as the representative of one class for whom the Odes would, in the nature of things, have a peculiar and almost professional interest. In fact I would suggest that the perpetuity of Patmore's fame as a mystical poet depends to some extent upon what numbers of "religious" will be able to persist, and, in this calamitously shaken world, have any leisure for study. (67).

"To some extent", but not entirely. Religious have no monopoly either upon mystical experience itself or the analogical perception of its meaning. "I confess I see little in later Victorian literature which bears the stamp of so much originality, combined with such absolute distinction of form, as the best of Patmore's religious Odes", says Gosse. "Their subject, of course, must always remove them from popular approval, but it is to be conceived that a small circle, of those who comprehend, may continue as time goes on to contemplate them with an almost idolatrous admiration." (68).

This "small circle" has included many people who were not "religious", and sometimes it may also be said, not even noticeably moral. Mr. Arthur Symonds, for instance, yields to no one in his "almost idolatrous admiration". For him Patmore's very austerity has compulsive charm. He speaks with a perversity of relish of the severest Ode of all, the eulogy of Pain which is at once a lyric rapture and betrays an almost unholy depth of acquaintance with the hidden, tortuous, and delightful ways of sensation." (69). The roster of non-"religious", (i.e. lay) non-catholic initiates into the mysteries of the Odes would also include such names as Champneys, Gosse, Louis Garvin, John Freeman, Percy Lubbock, Cornelius Weygandt, Walter de la Mare, Herbert Read, and many others. Nevertheless it remains a fact about the religious Odes that they were written by a Catholic,

working from Catholic sources, and using their highly specialized and almost technical vocabulary, and with the reactions of one particular Catholic reader in mind. Consequently, the best preparation for their enjoyment is PER SE, training in the system with which they are concerned. Those outside the system, at least apart from preliminary study, must always be unpleasantly aware that the Odes are esoteric. Ifor Evans quotes a section from one of them as an example:

"And this thy kiss
A separate secret by none other scann'd
Though well I wis
The whole of life is womanhood to thee
Momently wedded with enormous bliss..." (70).

"In this piece", he admits, "no word is strange, but the contents cannot be revealed without some knowledge of Patmore's whole philosophy." (71). This is true; and yet anyone has a clue to the meaning of the lines who has memorized one or two of the little catchwords from St. Augustine which are so common in religious houses. (72).

But the Odes present other difficulties besides obscurity. One is by no means sure of liking them, merely by apprehending what they mean. There were the Psyche Odes. "The Metaphor of sex", Gosse well explains, "runs through the whole of the Unknown Eros, but is, perhaps, developed most clearly in the three Psyche Odes, in which Patmore's genius may seem to have culminated..." (73). The simplest explanation of what is meant by the "Metaphor of sex" with regard to Divine Love; the history of its development; its justification; and the esteem in which it is held by the Church generally, may be gathered from the following paragraph which I have chosen from a pious book having no connection with Patmore:

"It is scriptural, and philosophically justifiable to think of God's dealings with mankind, whether collectively or individ-

ually, as those of a bridegroom with his bride. Our Lord when on earth was pleased to suggest such a relationship himself and the idea has become a part of Catholic tradition. One had but to recall the influence of Solomon's Song of Songs on spirituality for confirmation of this. The Saints have seen something inherently fitting in illustrating God's presence in the hearts of those who love Him by comparisons drawn from the closest of earthly unions. Nor do the metaphors used exaggerate the reality they signify: they fail by deficiency rather than by excess. (74)

It will not be necessary to expound the theme at any greater length in this treatise. Patmore was well aware of its dangers, and probably anticipated in his own fears the scandal with which his work was to be received by his contemporaries. At any rate he seems to have looked for some kind of ecclesiastical warrant for the undertaking. "Patmore had been apprehensive of passages in his earlier work. After his reception into the Catholic Church, he was anxious to destroy whatever was in-accordant with the Council of Trent. The great theologian Cardinal Franzelin was asked whether it lay inside Catholic theology to symbolize the union of God and the soul by sex. Rather startlingly he replied that such teaching was Catholicism itself." (75).

Thus fortified, Patmore was able to laugh at the well-meant, but rather Victorian than Christian expostulations of both critics and friends. "For," in Patmore's life time" says Coase, who viewed this development of Patmore's art with understanding and sympathy, "the Psyche Odes were not a little of a stumbling block to all but a few readers, who themselves were apt to feel that they wandered in these strophes

Sub luce maligna,
Inter arundineasq; comas, gravidumque papaver,
Et tacitos sine labe lacus, sine murmure rivos,

as if in a land where words had lost half their meaning and ideas all their definition." (76).

How violent the repugnance was which these Odes could engender even in Patmore's most devoted admirers, may perhaps appear from this letter of Aubrey de Vere:

Curragh Chase,
January 26, 1890.

"My Dear Patmore,

In the hope of gaining a post I send you a hurried line to tell you how glad I am to hear that you are about to publish an Edition of your later Lyrics at once cheap and 'sumptuous'.

I think it is possible that such a volume may suddenly make an immense addition to the circulation of your works, --but on one condition, viz., that it does not include the three 'Psyche' poems. (77).

I am of course not going to repeat the remarks which I made to you on that subject many years ago, when contemplating it from the moral and philosophical as well as from the poetical and artistic point of view; but I believe that even then I expressed also my belief that those three poems would greatly impair the circulation of YOUR poetry, and thus diminish its power of benefiting well-disposed readers, although doubtless the poetry of many writers owes much of its fame to what we should regard as the least commendable part of it. I said then that those three poems would be always least liked by those who most appreciated the rest of your poetry, (78), and that they would be absolutely misunderstood by the many, some of whom, whether through dullness or malignity, would probably confound you with the poets to whom you bear least of real resemblance, and with whose works your Poetry ought to stand in the most obvious contrast, if it is to take the place it deserves.... you may be certain that the more you rise in general estimation the more will these three poems be turned against you, and that by more than one class of hostile readers..." (79).

Others in whom the wounded Victorian proprieties did not groan so loudly, yet spoke about the "Psyche" poems with caution.

"This poem and the two next", said Father Hopkins, "are such a new thing and belong to such a new atmosphere that I feel it as dangerous to criticise them almost as the Canticles. What I feel least at my ease about is a certain jesting humour

which does not seem to me quite to hit the mark in this profoundly delicate matter ..." (80).

Sister Mary Christina alone, was completely undisturbed:

"Eros is exquisite; it is enough to say that I know what you mean. I like this line very much:

'It is a spirit, though it seems red gold.'" (81)-(82).
is her short but sufficient comment.

Gosse, in his book on Patmore, gave the impression that Newman also had objected to the "Psyche" Odes, when, without any further explanation, and in the process of asserting the hostility, or at least the apathy, of a 'majority of English Catholics' to the Unknown Eros, he adds that "in an unpublished letter Newman wrote 'I do not like mixing up amorousness with religion, since they are two such very irreconcilable elements'." (83). The publication, in its turn, of a Life and Letters of Gosse has brought out the interesting fact that this mysterious letter of Newman's refers to Gosse's own little volume of capers On Viol and Flute. (84). We do not definitely know whether Newman ever read the "Psyche" Odes. But they were in the volume which he received from Patmore in 1878, and which he acknowledged in the following note:

The Oratory,
Dec. 8, 1878.

"My Dear Mr. Patmore,

Thank you very much for the present of your Volume. Thank you also for pointing out to me your poem "The Child's Purchase".

But it needed not that to make me feel the original and beautiful colours which you can throw over themes sacred and secular. Wishing you all the blessings of to-day's Feast, I am, my dear Mr. Patmore,

Sincerely yours,

'John H. Newman!'" (85)-(86).

This letter does not descend to particulars, but, in its very reticence and vagueness, the intention was manifestly rather to widen than to restrict the number of poems included within the bounds of its approval. It would be more just to argue from this blanket approbation that Newman was in sympathy with ALL the Odes, than to apply to Patmore's religious writings a censure (whether merited or not) which was originally directed at a book of gallantries from another hand.

Dislike of "Psyche" was, in general, even more vehement than dislike of the political Odes. The Victorians, if we may believe the testimonies of their poets, were not offended by eroticism. Neither, if we may believe the accusations of modern rationalists, were they averse to religion. But they found the mixture insupportable. The classical expression of their recoil was embodied later by A.E. Houseman, who is giving voice to his own opinion, in a remark that seems to have been based on that of Newman. Houseman, immediately after declaring the intensity of his respect for Patmore's "best work", adds, "But as for his nasty mixture of piety and concupiscence, I should say as little about it as possible." (87). This was precisely the attitude of the contemporary Press.

"Whether the Eros be 'unknown' or not, to our minds there is too much of it", said the Spectator in 1890, "we find ourselves agreeing entirely with Psyche

'Ah me! I do not dream

Yet all this does some heathen fable seem' (88)" (89).

Alas for the perversity of reviewers! Do we find them now attempting to restore to their "old friend, the naked Grecian Eros" the "spectacles and cravat" which had formerly so disfigured him, as they thought, while he was masquerading as an "Angel in the House"? We do indeed. And to make up for their

old sneers about "pale, hydrogen flames" they now protest that: "There is too much passion". (90).

Mrs. Virginia Crawford, writing a decade later in the Fortnightly Review spoke of the "Psyche Odes" as "stepping down to a less enlightened circle of readers". (91).

The attitude persists even to our own emancipated age and we hear Rose Macaulay in 1931, complaining of the sex-analogy, and imploring for a little less of Eros and Psyche. "He pressed the analogy further still, it seems in his prose *Sponsa Dei*, of which even Father Hopkins disapproved", (92) adds Miss Macaulay.

Mrs. Margaret Woods, also, writing about the same time, speaks with unwilling respect of the "marvellously altered (i.e. from the Angel) style of the Odes". But she adds with insight and candour that "it requires a sympathy with Coventry Patmore's outlook, which I lack, really to enjoy the bulk of his later poems ...the southern mysticism which uses the language of earthly passion to describe divine love is unpleasing to the normal Briton." (93).

Here indeed is the crux of the whole matter, which Chesterton also had perceived when he wrote: "The Victorian Englishman simply thought him (Patmore) an indecent sentimentalist, as they did all the hot and humble religious diarists of Italy or Spain." (94). It is significant that Mrs. Woods, who would probably not care to be described as a Victorian, uses almost the very phrase when she goes on to speak of Patmore's "exotic sentimentality".

On the whole, in spite of the enthusiasm of a few convinced supporters, it seems likely that it will be with regard to the "Psyche" Odes that Alice Meynell's sagacious words will prove most strictly true:

"Whatever criticism may learn in time to come, the Unknown Eros will hardly then have many readers, and will no doubt still keep the accidental loneliness that surrounds it now by reason of the indifference of the majority; but its essential loneliness is its own quality, conferred by no world's neglect; not an effect of conspicuousness or difference; not a mere contrast, for it is relative to nothing." (95). It may be said of the "Psyche" Odes, by the most indifferent, that to have provoked such enchanting criticism is something.

There is a tendency among those who are reviewing the Odes, to give a list of their favourites. In nearly every case these favourites are the same; and from the recommendations of Quiller-Couch, Weygandt, Leslie, Freeman, etc., the reader will easily acquire a brief anthology of titles. Opinions vary as to the order of merit, but few collections will omit any of the following: The Azalea; Departure; The Day after Tomorrow; The Toys; Eurydice; A Farewell and Tired Memory. Sometimes, though less inevitably the four seasonal odes at the beginning of Book 1, will be included as well. If Patmore is represented in anthologies (96) it is generally from among the members of this group that the selection is made. These poems have attained a certain currency, if not popularity. Some of them have been many times reprinted in magazines (97), or even quoted in sermons. (98). The consensus of opinion from all classes seems to be that they are "simple in expression and concerned with the easily comprehended themes of human love and woe." Undoubtedly something of the respect they are accorded is due to the INTELLECTUAL prestige, of the less palatable religious and satirical odes, as the Eclogues of Virgil are more admired (even by those who read no more of him) for being written by the author of the Aeneid. The quality which

is most praised in these elegies (this group may be more properly called elegies than odes) of Patmore, is their poignancy; and it is difficult to read an account of them in which the word is not allowed to occur. "For my own part," says one writer, "this is the only modern verse, other than some lines of Shakespeare, Burns and Keats, which I find it hard to read without tears; and though I have read these Odes a hundred times, I know not where, precisely, the secret of their unfailing poignancy is lodged." (99). "The Azalea," says another, "is even more poignant. These were Odes of unrelieved sorrow such as no English poet has had the lacerated courage to write about his dead." ¹⁰⁰ "The Toys," insists a third, "approaches The Azalea in poignancy". (101).

What no critic seems to have noticed in Patmore is a slightly abnormal sensibility which may at times be a little disturbing. The phenomenon of synaesthesia seems to me to be commoner in him than in any other poet. His fondness for olfactory images is curious and rare. Was Patmore an olin? No critic has asked the question, and it hardly belongs to me to do so. But if he was the peculiarity might suffice to account for the estrangement of some of the few remaining readers who have not been able to assign any other reason for their hearty dislike of his work.

The Banner of Renown

Lo, my book thinks to lock time's leaguer down,
Under the banner of your spread renown!
Or if these levies of impuissant rhyme
Fall to the overthrow of assaulting Time,
Yet this one page shall fend oblivious shame,
Armed with your crested and prevailing Name.

Francis Thompson (Dedication of
New Poems to Coventry Patmore).

Patmore wrote the Preface which first awakened our interest in the history of his reputation, in 1886. It may well be, that no other year in his life was so ideally suited to the composition of such a piece. It was a time when he could still look back with vivid recollection to the long years of contumely and neglect. But it was also a time when symptoms of the approaching resuscitation of his fame were appearing with increasing frequency; and he could look forward to the vote of Posterity with a complacency greater than he had ever felt even in the glow of his now historic popular success.

HE COULD LOOK BACK TO THE YEARS OF CONTUMELY AND NEGLECT!
In private, he had enjoyed the praise of the richest, and, at the same time, the most fastidious, poetic minds. Tennyson, Browning, Ruskin, Rossetti, Barnes, Hawthorne, Carlyle, and more recently, Father Hopkins and Edmund Gosse, together with a score of minor luminaries, had delighted in his work, and had foretold it immortality. But their paeans were mainly of a confidential sort — LAUDAVERUNT, AMAVERUNTQUE DOMI. In public, it had to be acknowledged, he had more frequently been insulted than praised, or even than criticized fairly. The tone of reviewers had been only too often patronizing and derisive, if not, as in the case of Blackwood's in 1844, of the Westminster and

the Athenaeum of 1855, positively, and scurrilously cruel. It was true that the taunts of the Press had been unavailing, if their purpose was to discourage readers, and to diminish sales; the author, on the contrary, had been finely fortified against any amount of critical disapproval by seeing his book become, from about 1858-1868, a poetical best seller. During this period the works of Patmore were graced with a halo of popular esteem, which may have made censure seem an impertinence, and certainly caused it to be ineffective. They were considered to be not merely fluent and scintillating verse, as so many men of letters freely acknowledged, but, something of infinitely greater worth, a treasury of morality and wisdom. "The Angel achieved popularity, and endeared itself to thousands who cared little for poetry as poetry": (1) is a sentence with no disparaging connotation, if we remember how many of the elite who cared very greatly for poetry as poetry, admired it, too.

But after the year 1864, the year in which Patmore became a Catholic and also married again, managing, by this double misdemeanor, to invalidate both the sentimental and the religious appeal of his poem, the great and comfortable support of vulgar success began to be withdrawn. At the same time he found himself exposed to the more virulent dislike of the educated; his poems were stigmatized as "Idylls of the Dining Room and the Deanery", (2) and parodied by Swinburne. No one now who did not already know him was apt to feel interest in a poet universally reviled: those who had admired him, and whose conviction of his worth remained unchanged, were ashamed of differing from the multitude, and had no heart to speak. The term of this oblivion was something like twenty years. By the end of it Patmore had learned to hear his book recalled with wonder as

the quaint favourite of a by-gone day. (3). More terrible still, this poet whose standards were so high, whose conviction of his own fidelity to those standards, so unalterable, and whose disdain of his contemporaries so intense that he could say: "I am the only poet of this generation, except Barnes, who has steadily maintained a literary conscience", (4), had the experience, in his chance reading of a novel by Justin McCarthy, of finding himself named as the fellow poet of Tupper; and the even more singular experience of finding himself by that time so hardened to detraction, as to feel no stronger urge than the inclination (which he quickly indulged) for a burst of cordial laughter. (5).

HE COULD LOOK FORWARD HOPEFULLY TO THE VERDICT OF POSTERITY:

It was not only his conviction of his own genius which enabled him to do this, or his confidence in the vitality of his art which he believed would enable him to survive even England's imminent decay, and to share the immortality

"Of those who, in the bird-voice and the blast
Of her omniloquent tongue,
Have truly sung ..." (6).

It had been already possible for him, to enjoy some scant, premonitory comfort, and take hope for his poetical reputation, even in its hour of obscurity. In 1879 the first hints of a Patmore revival had begun to be manifest, and the exultant author was able to peer through

"The darkness, suddenly increased
To the gray secret lingering in the East." (7);

the 'grey secret' in this case, being Florilegium Amantis; a book of selections from Patmore's Poems, made by his friend Dr. Garnett. This book enjoyed a good success. Even the Athenaeum was full of praise, especially for the skill of the compiler, who had succeeded, it was implied, in extracting an ounce of pre-

sentable gold from a ton of muck. (8). The Unknown Eres, also, had contributed enormously to the rehabilitation of Patmore's fame. No one can deny that, as we have said, it was too aggressive in subject and tone, too difficult and too forbidding, ever to be popular. But in general it commanded the respect that is always paid to an able antagonist; people at least were made to feel that the author of the Unknown Eres was not one to be extinguished by a supercilious sneer, as they had believed the author of The Angel in the House could be. Moreover there was a sufficient number of people who had tasted in the Eres a divine draught, and sacred pabulum, in poetry elsewhere inaccessible,

"Heart-succouring savour of each several meat,
and kernell'd drink of brain-renewing power," (9),

which awoke their minds to an intoxication of delight, and challenged the apathy with which they had hitherto spoken of the Angel. An example of the way in which these two forces -- the authority of the Odes to recommend, and the convenience of the book of extracts to invite, a re-examination of the works -- could operate together, may be seen in the following letter of 1881.

Hilford House, 7 Aug. 1881.

"Dear Mr. Garnett,

Thank you for your 'Florilegium'. It is a very welcome gift. It is just what I wanted, and what I was wishing I had by me only the other day. How very kind of you to send it to me.

More than once I fear I have shocked Mr. de Vere by my inability to appreciate Mr. Patmore. In truth I could not understand his and many another's admiration for the 'Angel in the House'. I tried to and could not read the book, and frankly told him so. But, when, in the 'Pall Mall' I came across 'The Toys', 'Let Be', etc., I was completely carried away by the strength and insight of the poet. I wondered and wondered who the new singer was. His words were always haunting me. I never dreamed he was the author I had lost patience with. And, when I heard that he was, I wondered more.

As soon as the Parliament is up we shall get away to the sea. The 'Florilegium' will be one of my holiday companions, and with curiosity as well as interest I shall carefully study it.

Indeed, if the truth were told, it kept me up late last night, and beguiled me from the weekly crowd of newspapers.

With kind regards from my family,
I am, dear Mr. Garnett,
Yours very sincerely,

'A. Lambert'." (10).

The publication of the Florilegium was, according to Gosse,-- a witness who viewed the return of Patmore's fame with highly-partial interest --a very significant step in its recovery. (11). A factor also to be taken into account was the existence of a new generation of readers, quick to rebel against the favouritisms, the exclusions, the intolerances of their parents; and the emergences of a new crowd of editors and writers to positions of importance. In 1881, Coventry Patmore was happy in possessing the friendship and esteem of Henry Sidgwick, and Frederick Greenwood. The latter who had already had the boldness to print so many of the Odes in the Pall Mall Gazette, had a special tact in handling Patmore, and talent for provoking him to write. Afterwards when he had left the Pall Mall and become the editor of the St. James Gazette instead, it was largely his encouragement and the hospitality of his columns which did much to elicit Patmore's later (and most admirable) prose; a class of work which though even more plain-spoken and audacious than the poetry, (12) was received with unexpected approbation; and paradoxically added to his prestige. In 1883 Patmore also made the acquaintance of Father Hopkins. This added nothing directly to his reputation, then, (the association is more likely to tell in his favour to-day) but there is little doubt that the kind of appreciation it brought, did much to confirm in Patmore the high opinion he had formed of his own work; and we have seen of what material assistance it was, towards the correction of irritating flaws in the preparation of his volumes for the press. "A very good critic assures me that your suggested

corrections have had a very decided effect on the impression made by the whole poem," (13), is Patmore's acknowledgement of this important service. The demand for a new issue of his poems, was in itself a very encouraging thing, but, the public favour it conneted was not enough to satisfy the vicarious ambition of his friends. " I see that this is the 6th edition", observes Father Hopkins, "which shews (sic) a steady popularity or a steadily reading public. But it is a popularity and ^a public rather below the surface. This may content you, in itself it is not satisfactory. A good book is to educate the world at large. The Angel in the House is in the highest degree instructive, it is a book of morals and in a field not before treated and yet largely crying to be treated. It cannot indeed ever be popular quite with the general, but I want it to be popular as a classic is, read by many, recognized by all. And I am not satisfied because it is not enough recognized." (14). Patmore's reply to this commiserative letter contains some very interesting facts. "I think that the Angel is in a fair way to get the sort of recognition you desire for it," he says, "Six large editions (10,500 copies) in England and more than twice that number in America is quite as large a circulation as is SAFE. A great popularity always produces a reaction -- such as is setting in now against Tennyson." (15). Two years later Father Hopkins recurs to the same theme, and we learn that his dearest hopes for a circulation even larger "than is safe", have been gratified by the publication in 1886 of The Angel in the House as number 70 in Cassell's National Library, price per copy £ 3d. It is unfortunate that a letter from Patmore should be missing from the series just at this point, so we have no means of knowing whether this dangerous interval of prosperity was as distasteful to him in the event, as it had seemed, in anticipation,

unwelcome. What follows is a quotation from the next of Father Hopkin's letters. " I have to acknowledge with thanks the National Library Edition of the Angel and am delighted with the news of its sale. (These cheap issues are a great boon: indeed it was time they came, if literature was not to be buried under litter). It would seem that there is some kind of smoldering fame a writer may have, which on being fuelled with a cheap supply breaks into flame. That at least accounts for a part; the other part must be readers to whom you have hitherto been a name only or not even that. But every way it is truly good news.

But now does it not show that I have some reason for wishing you to aim at the few only? Here you see are the many." (16).

Here indeed they were! Another two years and the Victories of Love and Other Poems, were added to the same series (as No. 122, in 1888). This cheap publication, it was well said, "'tapped a stratum' ...of almost untouched reading or ready-to-read public", (17) and the result was a truly phenomenal sale. Unfortunately, Patmore's biographers are unable to supply us with any exact figures. Says Champneys: "It seems impossible to ascertain how far such contemptuous notice as he at one time received affected the sale of his poem, nor can any accurate estimate be given of the circulation ultimately reached. I think however, that it may be confidently stated that at the time of Patmore's death, without reckoning the popular edition published by Messrs. Cassel, (18) the sale had amounted to between two hundred thousand and a quarter of a million copies". (19). A notice in the Athenaeum after Patmore's death, informs us (perhaps not very reliably) that in the popular edition alone, a much greater number, "nearly a million copies", sold in a short time. The Athenaeum adds that two years later, The Victories

of Love enjoyed "the same success". (20). The two volumes made The Angel the poetical "Cone With the Wind" of its day!

Evidently, in the edition of his Poems which came out in the year of his death 1896, Patmore had small reason to retract any of the optimistic phrases from the Preface of ten years before.

In 1886, still another edition of his poems was projected; this time — a sure indication of the ceremony his work was thought to deserve — it was to be illustrated by the popular artists, Frank Dicksee, and Alfred Parsons. It being discovered that these two gentlemen had work on hand, sufficient to occupy their time "for years and years", the enterprise was abandoned. With so many other editions, both Collections and Selections about, and finding the market brisk, Patmore could well afford to be unconcerned. "I do not much care —" he said, "indeed I do not care at all. It is Bell's (21) idea." (22).

The Poems of 1886 was of indirect, and perhaps mainly temporary, use to Patmore's reputation in another way, viz., by being made the subject of three separate reviews by Edmund Gosse. These three critiques, one in the Athenaeum, June 12; another in the St. James' Gazette, June 13; and the third in the Saturday Review, June 19; were Gosse's amiable attempt to produce a reaction against the "unfair criticism" (23) of which Patmore had so long been the victim. It was evidently his policy, in these reviews, to meet the prejudiced reader half way, and not to afflict him with any more encomiums of the Poems under discussion, than it was felt that he could comfortably stomach. In his efforts to be conciliatory, however, Gosse fell into the fatal snare of granting too much; and, with a complaisance that has proved in the long run disastrous to the reputation he sought to defend, managed to be more spirited, vivid and altogether memorable in his admission

of the poet's faults than in his assertions of his qualities. By ripping lines untimely from their context and presenting them as instances of bathos, he acquiesced in long established custom with regard to Patmore, of quoting only such lines as (whatever their dramatic value in the original) appeared perfectly pointless when displayed alone.

"Passing, they left a gift of wine
At widow Neale's ..." (24).

was one of these expressions, quoted in The Saturday Review. The line, one would think, is harmless enough; the errand of which it speaks commendable and edifying. But it contained a quality of homely realism which stank like a laundress in the nostrils of the Nineteenth Century. There was also (so complex and so subtle are the overtones that give their value to words) something inherently middle-class and sordid in the Irish name. Readers who came upon the line isolated in the harsh spotlight of criticism, carried away a set of associations which, for the rest of their lives, at the mere mention of the Angel in the House, would ignominiously shuffle forth from the squalid dens and cubby holes of the mind. The allusion to "widow Neale" (25) has become an outcast, rejected by Economic Snobbery in her function as warden of poetic taste. Another line of Patmore's which has also become a counter for the critic's to play with, (it represents the Foot in the Saintsbury article for the Cambridge History of Literature) is:

"Our witnesses the cook and groom
We signed the lease for seven years more." (26).

To a person of familiar heart, with a knowledge of the kindly domestic hierarchy of the *societas oherilis*, these lines seem to commemorate a perfectly natural and friendly cooperative act. The question apparently is whether the human dignity of

cook and groom entitle them to a situation in poetry.

"No, no it's contrary to etiquette."

The cook and groom must be excluded; and the line which acknowledges them as human beings able to take some humble share in a dignified and necessary domestic transaction, is regarded as ludicrous.

It is obvious that Gosse in isolating for ridicule such lines as these, was "being cruel only to be kind"; he is making what he deemed to be expedient concessions. Unfortunately, however, readers rarely notice or remember any part of a poet's work with such indelible distinctness as the snippets that they read in reviews; and this is especially true if the readers chance themselves to be reviewers. Thus it has happened to Patmore (and partly as a result of Gosse's most engaging and well intentioned articles) to be known chiefly in connection with such lines as these, unfairly presented beneath a thin film of contempt. Nor is it necessary to have read these old papers by Gosse: the same lines have been served up, with comments slightly rechauffés, in every paper by whomsoever since.

In the Athenaeum article also appeared a single unhappy sentence, which by the perversity of the Grammatici (once again it is of them that I am speaking), has perhaps a better chance to become immortal than has the serious poem at which it sneers. "This laureate of the tea table with his hum-drum stories of girls that smell of bread and butter, is in his inmost heart the most arrogant and visionary of mystics", (27) says Gosse, and there is hardly a word in the sentence that has not been used to Patmore's disadvantage a dozen times at least. (28). Such is the fatal power of style to play tricks with its possessor and lead him to traduce the friend he desires to save. At the time,

Gosse's advocacy was very useful to Patmore, who wrote him a brace of thank you letters in which real gratitude mingles with an obviously strained facetiousness, the result of a conscientious effort to "join in the fun". Patmore's concluding sentence "your criticism almost tempts me to break my resolution to write no more, in order to show the world that, if I choose, I can depict a melancholy where after the most approved cotemporary type", (29), shows that he had his own opinion of the appetites which found his maiden heroines insipid.

Gosse's praises were probably the most generous possible to a sophisticated pen. He could not have written with greater fervor, and still retained the respect of the audience to whom he catered; he could not have written with greater fervor and retained his own standards of propriety unimpaired. There is a measure of wry veracity, nonetheless, in Osbert Burdett's rhetorical interrogation of the Mans of Gosse: "But must there not be something lacking in the sincerity of a critic who declares unworthy of the Muse the kind of house which he and every cultivated person wishes to inhabit, the kind of manners which he most desires in his own friends and family, the world of detail in fact, which it has been the aim (and reward) of his own success to achieve?" (30).

Before he died Patmore was to have one more taste of a potion always sweet to writers, and which he had been for many years—since the death of his daughter—without. It was HOMAGE he was to be given; the homage of a refined, judicious, and respected mind; a homage that was a delicious blend of completest understanding with supreme, unhesitating honor; a cup of reward and consolation administered by a beautiful and beloved hand.

It was in 1891 that the first article which Alice Meynell wrote about Patmore appeared in the National Observer: It was published again in her Rhythm of Life in 1893. Alice Meynell never tired of writing about Patmore. To the end of her life pieces continue to come; Introductions to Selections from his verse; Introductions to the Angel; more reviews; notices in the Meynell paper, The Register; a note to the Catalogue of Coventry Patmore's Books. (31). Patmore, who had admired her verse for many years, but was more than infatuated with her prose, responded in kind, and "the shuttlecock of praise" passed back and forth between them. Their response to one another's minds was as natural as love.

Alice Meynell's was the criticism by which Patmore wished to be remembered. It was the kind of criticism which every poet must secretly long to deserve. I think he must have become at last indifferent to Posterity, in the knowledge that for one living reader, everything he had written was as precious as a revelation.

Even after many public confessions, in her exquisite and curiously thoughtful prose, of her deep veneration for his work, she felt that the full reality of it was left to be expressed, and she suddenly breaks off in a letter to him to say:

"I have never told you what I think of your poetry. It is the greatest thing in the world, the most harrowing and the sweetest." (32). This was from a woman of ordinarily stinted praise, of scrupulously weighed and parsimoniously measured words. "His poetry", Alice Meynell's daughter simply says, "His poetry broke her heart, and was the happiness of her life." (33).

"It is art of poetry that overwhelms and captures her", she goes on, and quotes from her Mother's essays and letters. "... an art so quick and close that it is the voice less of a poet

than of the very Muse'." She was ravished by the simplicity of his art. "'Other simplicities may be achieved by lesser art, but this is transcendent simplicity. There is nothing in the world more costly. It vouches for the beauty which it transcends; it answers for the riches it forbears; it implies the art which it fulfils. All abundance ministers to it, though it is so single'." (34)

She never expected, nor ever ceased to wish that The Unknown Eros should be admired by everybody. "Why the Unknown Eros should have found so few readers," she confesses in one of her books, "it might be hard to say ... Probably a doubt as to the whole meaning of many among the Odes has discouraged even Patmore's willing readers. The beauty was there, but it was to them an uncertain magnificence, a glow from a doubtful fire, a pealing call of an uncertain word, remote as thunder, the heart-piercing utterance of an obscure grief — obscure as waters are obscure because they are profound, not because they are turbid." (35).

Again, she, privately, wrote: "I have read the Odes yet again with a new amazement ... I cannot tell you what a consolation it is to me to read them as I get time. But I read them with many tears and my heart is full of sorrow." (36).

And with a superb and feminine act of prudence, she forestalled anything that criticism could ever say against them. To her it was not the Odes, but their readers who were on trial; and their capacity for literature she measured according to the fire of their response. "To prophesy that the Odes of Coventry Patmore shall be confessed, a hundred years hence, high classic poetry, is assuredly to promise the critics of a hundred years hence high classic quality in their judgement." (37).

But though her defence of the Angel was equally strenuous,

she had no difficulty in penetrating to the reason for its condemnation. She said what Ruskin had said in his letter to the Critic when he justified Patmore by the example of Homer; she said what many years later Osbert Murdett was to say in his criticism of Goosse; that Patmore's poetry was considered ridiculous because the age had a narrow idea of what was suitable in art, as well as of what was dignified in life. From first to last there has been a singular unanimity among the champions, as among the opponents, of the Angel.

Here is an eloquent long passage from Mrs. Meynell's apology:

"It must be owned that some of the accessory persons and conditions of The Angel in the House were unwelcome to poetry as we have come to hold it. But this is an avowal that we are either content, or very weakly, very ineffectively ill-content, to live in a social world that we confess to be unworthy of poetry. Coventry Patmore, as we understand his attitude, refused to be content with such a world, and refused moreover to be impotently discontent. If the world was unfit for his poem, he would reject the world --and he at least knew how to reject, and did not play at rejection. He did not believe that there was such unfitness; because love and immortality were there, as elsewhere, with humanity. The modern age chose to be ashamed of the manner in which it chose to live, to be associated, to prosper, to order its affairs; no other age has condescended to that kind of shame. But Coventry Patmore was not modern in this matter. He thought the daily civilized ways of a Cathedral town, granted that they were delicate and gay, and not dull, no more unfit for a 'realistic' art than other contemporary ways, neither delicate nor gay, have been held to be before, and notably since, the writing of The Angel in the House. Coventry Patmore wrote

of convention in the manner of a realist, and he had for this precedents older than his critics stopped to remember. If so much of explanation is to be offered in answer to still current criticisms, how does it befall that any reader should pause upon the mere intervals in poetry so profound and penetrating as, in a hundred passages, shakes the metre with a hand of control?

Among such passages are these records of beauty:

'Her eyes incredulously bright,
And all her happy beauty blown
Beneath the beams of my delight.
So much simplicity of mind
In such a pomp of leveliness!
Eyes that softly lodge the light.' (38).

and elsewhere are words that touch the heart so close as these:

'His only Love, and she is wed!
His fondness comes about his heart
As milk comes when the babe is dead.' (39).

and again:

'Alone, alone with sky and sea
And her, the third simplicity.' (40).

Here is a quatrain winged, not weighted, with meaning:

'Far round each blade of harvest bare
Its little load of bread;
Each furlong of that journey fair
With separate sweetness sped." (41).

Again:

'Blest in her place, blissful is she;
And I, departing, seem to be
Like the strange waif that comes to run
A few days flaming near the sun,
And carries back, through boundless night
Its lessening memory of light.' (42).

It is possible that this early poem (all the quotations are from the early poem) is condemned because the reader takes the 'Angel' to be the woman, and an angel obviously feminine is a kind of sentimentality. But I prefer to take the 'Angel' to be Love. Patmore's masculine mind probably referred the name rather to such an angel as he who in the Old Testament took up a prophet by the hair of his head and carried him across country. Together with Love, Patmore's subject was the Child in the House,

before ever Pater so varied Patmore's title." (43).

It is interesting too, after all that has been said to defame it, to find this writer (sensitive poet as she was) speaking in defence of Patmore's metre: "Children are taught that if the frame of man were unpacked of its organs, no hand of man would be able to replace them all within the space they had filled; and in like manner, a quatrain of Coventry Patmore's writings, if any one, by fault of memory, should chance to spill its words and phrases, would baffle a restorer. There is surely nothing tight or thronged or hard, but the fulness is definite." (44).

The abundance of quotations in her writing makes it easy to explain another service which Mrs. Meynell performed for the fame of Coventry Patmore in the last year of his life. She produced a volume of selections called The Poetry of Pathos and Delight. "She hoped, by choosing among his less difficult poems, to give to a world that was indifferent or estranged an easy approach to this unknown, -- as one might hope for any great good suddenly to befall mankind. Her selection therefore did not consist of 'best passages'; but of poems concerned with the 'human and intelligible' passions of delight and sorrow." (45). There was an introduction "that served to let her give yet another version of her praise". (46). This book, Coventry Patmore said, had a very marked effect on the sale of his poems.

Another poet who delighted to honour Patmore in the brief "public exaltation" that preceded his death was Francis Thompson. They met in 1894. Patmore had an ascendancy over Thompson which the younger poet was at first inclined to resist, owing to the fact that he was doubtful of the orthodoxy of some of Patmore's ideas. Having taken counsel with the Franciscans on this matter, his scruples were removed, and he gladly submitted himself to

Patmore in the character of a disciple.

"Amen, Amen, I say to thee; when thou wert younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee, and lead thee where thou wouldst not," (48) was his quaint record of the new affiliation. Of their first meeting he said: "Though never a word on either side directly touched or explained the exceptional nature of the proposal, it was well understood between us -- by me no less than by him -- that it was no common or conventional friendship he asked of me. Not therefore has he sought out my Welsh hermitage; and scalped the fibres of me." (49).

Thompson's direct tributes to Coventry Patmore are to be found in the Dedication of New Poems, (which is placed at the head of this chapter) and the Ode (50), which was printed in the Athenaeum after Patmore's death. He also was the author of various reviews, chiefly touching the prose. But perhaps the most enduring witness to his admiration is to be seen in the way he imitated Patmore's metres, and adopted his ideas. On this point, Thompson's biographer declares that "'Religio Poetae', at first a stumbling block, was to become the corner-stone of his later poetry". (51). His most successful handling of the catalectic ode measure, is to be found in To Monica Thought Dying. (52). It was the function of Thompson, Mr. Megroz suggests, to "employ Patmore's ideas more splendidly". The same critic, in an interesting alignment, represents Francis Thompson as the inheritor of Patmore's magnificence, Alice Meynell and A.E. Houseman, of his reticence. (53). The first part of this statement is indisputably true. It is true also that Patmore has influenced

poets since his time, far less directly, than indirectly through Francis Thompson.

There were many other interesting and distinguished names among the little party of readers to whom Patmore's works were the dearest gift the Nineteenth Century had given. Some of them we have mentioned; many others it has happened to us to neglect. Let us at least name Katherine Tynan, "a poetess ... a simple, bright looking biddy with glossy red hair", who deeply venerated Patmore's muse for its austerity, and innocently asked Father Hopkins, "How is it Father Hopkins, that however bare it is, it is always poetry?", a question to which Patmore returned an evasive answer: "Your friend Miss Tynan's criticism was striking. I hope it's true that it is poetry even when bare." (54). And Robert Bridges, who wrote a touching letter, of which the following is part:

"After I got home, I took down The Unknown Eros and read about half of it again; and I wondered again, since you can write such poetry as there is in the best of these Odes, how you could interest yourself in my performances. Certainly your great power makes your praise of my work the best thing which I ever had or am likely to have in that kind. It struck me when I was with you, that you thought I was indifferent to the poetry of your Unknown Eros. The only point on which I could be is that it makes me rather sad I should never hope to write anything so beautiful as, say, the end of 'Wind and Wave', and when I read it last night it occurred as familiarly to me as a beauty of Shakespeare or Milton" (55).

But it must be admitted that even then, in the hour when the flame of his renown burned with its quickest and most vehement brightness, the number of literary persons who threw on

incense, was small compared to the number who threw on water. This contrast between the intense interest of the few, and the dense apathy of the multitude has been observed before; "Few turn to him, but fewer still leave him", one of the devout explained, "He is an excellent instance of the wisdom of Wordsworth's admonition, 'You must love him ere to you, He will seem worthy of your love.'" (56).

But what those who had learned to love him never could (and cannot still) understand, was the indifference of the rest. "The convention opposed to him has the unresistance of a vapor and the omnipresence of a fog", one of the former exasperatedly says, "This is the chief reason for the neglect of Coventry Patmore. People cannot believe that marriage is not, of its nature, prosaic". (57).

The perfect representative of the taste to which the Angel in particular, was more deadly than poison, (and less delectable), is the author of Modern Love. "When Meredith wrote of his own marriage in Modern Love, in a tone the exact opposite of Patmore's, he made a bitter success out of his love's failure, where Patmore makes a sugary failure out of his success." (58). It is possible to agree with every opinion expressed in this sentence except the last, and still not have any cause to wonder at Meredith's failure to admire the Angel in the House. Meredith did admire Alice Meynell, however, and possibly made an effort, in order to please her, to extend that admiration to an ideal so much opposed to his own (frustrated) marital hopes. It was unavailing. He speaks for the majority:

"I have read the Patmore extracts", he tells her in a letter "...The worst of it is, he stirs a demon imp in me ...I think there is nothing you would like that I should not esteem. As

to the Angel, the beauty must be felt, but I have been impressed in old days by the Dean, and the measure of the verse, correct as it is, with the occasional happy jerk, recalls his elastic portliness, as one of the superior police of the English middle-class, for whom attendant seraphs in a visible far distance hold the ladder, not undeserved, when a cheerful digestion shall have ceased." (59).

Alice Meynell however for all his banter, abated not a jot of her devotion. She was as typical of the faithful Patmorean few, as he of the crowds who listened sceptically whenever Patmore was praised.

Posterity

Sa réputation s'affermira toujours, parce
que on ne le lit guère.

Voltaire.

Coventry Patmore has been dead for almost half a century. During that time the reputations of many of the contemporaries whose work he largely despised have undergone revision. The bulk of critical opinion is nearer to him now about Tennyson, about Browning, about Rossetti, than it was. He was right about Matthew Arnold; (1), wrong, though not obstinately wrong, about his friend, Father Hopkins. It is interesting to inquire, were they wrong or right about him? Posterity has torn the laurel wreath from many a mouldering brow; the names of some she had adorned with posthumous honours. What has she done to Patmore, he who wooed her so loudly and lustily; who felt so securely, in his own mind, that destiny had made him express for her, and that she would be quick to discern and to reward the merit which the jealousy of his own age had held its eyes from seeing?

I think it can only be said that she eludes him still. That she eludes him still, and yet, at the same time, continues to look upon him with an eye of promise. She is a coy and delays to give her answer.

It cannot be denied that the time when he could be, in a mood ^{of} facile cleverness, "damned with faint praise" or annihilated by a sneer, is gone. You can, of course, continue to tell the same stories over, to quote the same (always the same) supposedly feeble lines, to be, in general, as supercilious and condescending as seems becoming to your own dignity and purity of taste; but in doing all this, you must take account of a growing list of critical

names of the first importance against you. You will neither pass unchallenged by individualist, and aggressive, polemical essayists, who move in the van of literary fashion; nor escape the more massive opposition of the authors of manuals, the ponderous determiners of the orthodox in letters. Official and traditional opinion is slow to be modified, but in the case of Coventry Patmore, we can say that the change which has taken place in the course of the past fifty years, has been sufficient, slightly to ruffle the complacency of those who have committed themselves to the earlier critical attitude with regard to him, of delicately abusive badinage.

Thus, Mr. Herbert Palmer, in his Post Victorian Poetry, which appeared in 1938, has the following story to tell:

"As to Coventry Patmore, the poet of domestic love and erotic mysticism, though he was alive in 1892 and did not die until 1896, he seems to have been very much underrated save by a small band of devoted admirers, for when Professor George Saintsbury published his crowded History of Nineteenth Century Literature in 1896 he did not so much as mention his name; (2), and when Clement Shorter published his little handbook Victorian Literature in the year following, he depreciated Patmore as 'not always sincere' and declared that his 'admirers spoilt him by adulation', spitefully adding, "he probably looked forward with the same keen assurance to the verdict of Posterity as did Southey; and Posterity, it is all be certain, will be as ruthless in the one case as the other'." The measure of the time that has elapsed since then, is given in Mr. Palmer's comment that this is "a judgement which has certainly not established Mr. Clement Shorter among the prophets". (3).

Another very good example of the (largely) enforced respect with which the pundits are beginning to speak of Patmore, may be had by comparing the full-length Cambridge History of English Literature, in (say) the edition of 1927, with George Sampson's recently printed abridgement. This latter book we are assured in the Preface "represents, in the main, the general consensus of opinion". (4). "The writer of an epitome must respect his terms of reference, but he is entitled to move freely within them. He may not transform the matter, but he may add or amend; and so, while this volume presents, in the main, the views of the parent History, it includes certain modifications" (5).

The "modification" in the account of Patmore, is, as I have remarked, slight; but it is significant. He has not been removed from the bracketing, "Lesser Poets", perhaps because that would have been to "transform the matter"; perhaps because there is not yet a "consensus of opinion" that he deserves to be anywhere else. But the tone of the article is changed. Some of the self-confidence that distinguished Saintsbury's pronouncements on The Angel in the House is missing. Instead of being gratified with the usual easy flow of condemnatory adjectives — "ambling" versification; "somniaferous" story; "deliberate" banality of subject; instead of being (I think preposterously) told that the Angel is "a development of Tennyson's The Miller's Daughter, written in "half-conscious, half-unconscious revolt against Tennyson and Browning", (6), the reader is somewhat tartly reminded that "Those who know The Angel in the House merely by ill-report should endeavour to know it at first hand". (7).

We are also told that "Patmore, often for reasons not poetical, has been over-praised; but he is original enough to survive". (8). If the first part of this statement (as it probably is) be true, the author of this treatise thinks that his reading of innumerable essays and reviews has justified him in making the remark that, often, also, for reasons "other than poetical", has Patmore been underpraised. So all is even. One cannot help wondering, after considering over so long a space, the vicissitudes of Patmore's reputation, whether there has ever been a poet before, who has been for so many different reasons, and at so many different times, to the same extent with violence assailed, and defended with passion.

It must be admitted also, that though the general critical atmosphere is more favorable to Patmore than it was, the forces of settled opposition are strong. To illustrate the diversity of opinions which still prevails, we have only time to pair off one against another the following few quotations, pro and con. Needless to say, this list is only representative, and by no means exhausts the number of attempts at appraisal.

Mr. Ifor Evans belongs (shall we say?) to the party on the left. "The Angel in the House" he says (in 1933) "constitutes as a whole, such an original and daring element in the poetry of the whole century that it may be suggested that Patmore should stand with Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, as one of the major poets of his age." (9).

Mr. Hugh Walker replies from the right: "There is probably no other poet of equal reputation whose permanent position in literature is so insecure." (10) - (1931).

Mr. H.J.C. Grierson (on the left) concedes to the Angel "Some exquisite writing" and recognizes "in a strangely Victor-

ian setting, the theme of Vita Nuova". (11)-(1928).

Mr. Granville Hicks (on the right) almost agrees with him, but suggest a rather different model from Dante. "Coventry Patmore's Angel in the House was perhaps a more perfect rendering of the evangelical spirit than anything of Trollope 's." (12). This was in 1939. Was it intended to be favorable; an early manifestation of the Trollope vogue?

To take only one more example, Miss Caroline Spurgeon has this to say: (Her book appeared in 1913, and was reprinted in 1927):

"The profound and very difficult theme is treated by Patmore in a manner at once austere and passionate in the exquisite little preludes to The Angel in the House, and more especially in the Odes, which stand alone in Nineteenth Century poetry for poignancy of feeling and depth of spiritual passion. They are the highest expression of 'erotic mysticism' in English; a marvelous combination of flaming ardour and sensuousness of description with purity and austerity of tone. This latter effect is gained largely by the bare and irregular metre, which has a curiously compelling beauty of rhythm and dignity of cadence." (13).

But to J.W. Cunliffe (1934), Patmore is not to be praised either for originality of theme, or distinction of metre.

"Coventry Patmore combines Dante Gabriel Rossetti's worship of earthly love, with Christina Rossetti's mysticism, but he has not their distinction of spirit or their metrical facility. It is but rarely ... that he rises above the homely cadences of the Angel in the House." (14).

All this is very interesting, and leads to but one conclusion that the OFFICIAL literary position of Patmore has not yet been established. But an attitude of unmixed disparagement is no longer the fashion.

Doubtless one of the chief instruments for bringing about this alteration of feeling about Patmore has been the periodic championship of his cause, by active and able writers. Many of these have been quoted frequently enough, throughout this treatise. Edmund Gosse, Louis Garvin and Alice Meynell were among the first who deliberately set out to explain and publicize what they believed, in their different degrees, to be the much maligned beauties of Patmore's work. They did for the Odes what Leigh Hunt had undertaken to do for the early Poems, and Aubrey de Vere for the Angel. Frederick Page may perhaps be called a disciple of Alice Meynell. His first article on Patmore was submitted to her. He has carried on, for many years, an incessant propaganda, which culminated, a few years past, in his "Study" for the Oxford Press, from which we have so often quoted. He is a thorough Patmore scholar, well versed in every aspect of Patmore's system, and knowing or conjecturing more about influences and sources, than it is likely Patmore ever did himself. John Freeman, also, is a pupil of Alice Meynell. (15).

The First World War seems to have had an effect like that of the Indian Mutiny in turning readers back to contemplate the sanctity (domestic and otherwise) in Patmore. The arrival of the Patmore centenary in 1923, was another quickener. Among the men who began writing on him in these years was Cabert Burdett, whose vigorous commentary The Idea of Coventry Patmore will long be valuable both for winning readers to the Poems, and then for explaining the Poems to the readers. "Mr. Burdett's is a masterly book, and none the less so that it respects its own limits, and deals solely with the 'idea' of Coventry Patmore. This is as separable from the 'poetry' as thought from life, or light from heat; and one who loves Patmore is not too happy at the

dissection." (16). Thus, Mr. Page. Mr. Burdett's book, indeed, is masterly; and it is true that his interest centres on Patmore's system. He wishes to defend the institution or the SACRAMENT of Marriage, as much as he wishes to defend his poet. His thesis is that the second campaign can hardly be carried on apart from the first. "The great and persistent error has been to regard the style of Patmore's epic apart from the subject, and to pretend that a violent recoil from the subject is only a recoil from the style. In what then does this recoil consist? In principle it is a recoil against the existing institution of Marriage." (17).

A little later on, he writes "This then is the prime cause of the recoil from Patmore's theory of love, a recoil which asserts that Marriage is necessarily 'dull', and that the muse should echo the revolt, know nothing of matrimony, and refuse to describe the atmosphere in which it abounds. The overture is not only preferred to the piece, but even mistaken for it". (18).

There is no approach to compromise in his praise of Patmore's style:

"To the manner in the Odes a sincere praise has been given: it is as if he had invented in the free iambic a new manner of verse... In The Angel the distinction of the style is apparent to anyone with at all a subtle ear for verse. The Preludes, where no unaccustomed demands are made upon the reader, intersperse the sections of the narrative on which they hang as pearls upon a string. But without the body of narrative, the epic would dwindle to a series of lyrics, and in regard to the narrative portions we must remember that vulgarity of style consists in literary or other mannerisms, (19) while the introduction of familiar details,

tests poetical language so severely that only a very fine style can survive the attempt. The details are trivial by convention, they are not trivial to the subject, unless that which is true of every past age is false of our own. For if we linger with delight over the design on the shield of Achilles, and with Nausicaa and her girls taking the washing to the shore, (20) why should not Love find in Salisbury Close a fair setting, and in the manners and dresses of its inhabitants a fit décor for epic verse. To exclude them on principle is to separate art from life; and the only effect of that is to degrade the one and make us recoil with loathing from the other. Indeed the secret of this objection is that we are living in an age when art is prized as an escape from actuality." (21).

Mr. Burdett also opposes himself to a large class of people (in which Mr. Herbert Read seems to be enrolled) who admire the Odes, but cannot abide the Angel. "It is more plausibly supposed that Patmore's place in literature rests upon The Unknown Eros, those last verses complete the philosophy whose base was laid in The Angel in the House. The truth is that either is incomplete without the other; and the latter, in which the verse flies upon a more exalted pinion, raises such a splendid vision in the reader's mind, that nothing which its writer wrote can be dismissed without respectful curiosity We can forgive an unsympathetic reader for beginning with the Unknown Eros; but the theme is not for him if he is content to stop there: his capacity for the higher flights must be judged by his mastery of the lower levels." (22).

Another writer on Patmore in the early twenties, was E.I. Watkin. Like Burdett he had no doubt but that the opposition to Patmore was largely the opposition to an ideal:

"The clouds of wilful confusion hid the figure of Patmore. His contemporaries loved him by mistake; the mistake removed, they neglected him Because Patmore was the prophet and singer of wedlock, the Victorians imagined him the Laureate of their sentimental proprieties. To be sure, Patmore does not undervalue propriety, the decencies, indeed the courtesies of life. But for him they are the comely order of a sacramental rite whose every word and gesture is a symbol, not the barren formalities of a Buckingham Palace levee; and his Victorian public failed to grasp the distinction. But since the Victorians refused to see the essential animality of sex as a natural phenomenon they could not see the necessity of its subordination to the supernatural love-life of the Spirit. Content with excluding, from the public view, at least, the grosser and more lawless forms of sex, they canonized its regulated use as a thing finally and absolutely good, as itself spiritual love and the adequate love of an immortal spirit. Hence it neither could nor should be transcended and absorbed by a virginal love higher and fuller. Don Juan shocked the Victorians; St. Bernard annoyed them. For ears polite the house of ill-fame did not exist; and the Convent ought not to exist

But the Nineteenth Century is dead. And its passing has left the issues clearer. Either human sex-love is an animal passion, the flower of natural life whose end is the enjoyment and subordinately the propagation of natural life; or it is, potentially, at least, the reflection and sacrament of a spiritual and supernatural love-life that weds immortal souls with their Divine Creator and Lover. Naturalism maintains the former, Catholic Christianity the latter alternative.... If this latter creed be our choice, let us go to school with Patmore." (23).

But there are a great many readers who like to feel that their taste in books has nothing at all to do with their moral choices, and for them perhaps Mr. Herbert Read's will be a more winning appeal. It is indeed probable that his brief but brilliant essay has already done more than anything else that has been written, towards ^{redeeming} the name of Patmore from an apparently endemic tendency, to associate it with dowdiness and decay. Mr. Read's essay is entirely free from the suspicion of special pleading; it does not concern itself too deeply with moral undertones or implications; it is realistic, frank, and generous in tone; it is superbly literary, and all in all, has managed to restore to the legend of Patmore, a good deal of the fascination which belonged to the man.

Mr. Read does not believe there will be a revival of the Angel, and there are many students of Patmore (besides Mr. Page) (24) who are willing to disagree with him on that. But he does not seem to be sensible of its charm. The most he will allow for it is this: "It is wit-writing of an extremely competent and felicitous kind, but it is not, and perhaps never pretended to be, lyrical poetry of any emotional intensity". (25). It may not be amiss here to record the views of another modern critic, Mr. E.H.W. Tillyard, who is inclined to praise Patmore, on this very ground, that when everyone else was endeavouring to be "intensely lyrical", he was modestly content to keep alive the "Poetry of Statement". (26). I could not forbear introducing yet one more figure into this interesting critical ^à mêlée.

Mr. Read's opinion of Patmore's later work is more respectful:

"Even at its best Patmore's poetry is spoilt by ugly inversions and elisions, unexcusable considering the freedom of the

form. But in these last Odes we are hardly aware of such faults; the thought is irradecemably fused in the expression, and the result is true poetry of the rarest and perhaps the highest kind - metaphysical poetry such as has been written by Lucretius, Dante, Donne, Crashaw, and Wordsworth. Those who limit poetry by a narrow lyrical conception of the art will find little to charm their indolence in Patmore. But those who are braced for the highest levels of the art, where the flowers are few and fugitive, where Nature and Humanity, to adopt a saying of Patmore's, are beautified and developed instead of being withered up by religious thought, will find in the best of the Odes a fund of inspired poetry for which they would willingly sacrifice the whole baggage of the Victorian legacy in general." (27).

In another place he says: "Whenever a critic of faithful conscience recalls the poets of this period - Tennyson, Arnold, Clough, Patmore, Browning, Rossetti - it is on the name of Patmore that he lingers with a still lively sense of wonder. The rest have been fully estimated, and their influence, if not exhausted, is predictable. Patmore is still potential; but to what extent, and whether purely as a poet or more likely as a mystic, are questions which must be answered in this general stocktaking." (28).

This is the most that Posterity has to tell us. "Patmore is still potential." Posterity in other words has not yet answered to Patmore's expectations but thinks that HER Posterity may do so.

"Posterity" has also been very reluctant to decide whether it is "purely as a poet", or "as a mystic" that Patmore (if she decides to consider him) is to be considered. A mystic, W. Paul Claudel, has translated him into French (28)^a, and a litterateur, Dr. Mario Praz, into Italian (29). Of two recent articles in Carmina (the English Catholic Poetry Magazine) one bore the

title of The Poetry (30), and the other of The Philosophy (31) of Coventry Patmore. An article in Thought was called, of course, Patmore's Philosophy of Love, (32) and it is perhaps, also, only to be expected, that, in the Carmelite Review we should find M. Charles Du Bos choosing to name his article The Philosophy of Love in Patmore.(33). At least it may be said, that whether Patmore's mystical reputation be eventually greater than his poetical one or not, he will hardly be without mention in the histories of modern mysticism, or without influence in the developing theology of marriage.

Meanwhile lovers of Patmore go on reading him, and articles (friendly or antagonistic) go on being written. It makes no difference to the great mass of readers. There is too much in his work that is recondite and hard, and of course they are averse to difficulty.

"And indeed, in this, as well as in every other language", Lord Chesterfield long ago advised us, "the easiest books are generally the best, for whatever author is obscure and difficult in his own tongue certainly does not think clearly. This is in my opinion the case of a celebrated Italian Author, to whom the Italians from the admiration they have of him, have given the epithet of IL DIVINO: I mean Dante. Though I formerly knew Italian extremely well, I could never understand him, for which reason I have done with him, fully convinced that he was not worth the pains necessary to understand him." (34).

This quotation is not as irrelevant as it may appear. Once or twice in his life Patmore seemed to challenge comparison with Dante. (35). And in our own day there have not been wanting those, who considered it, in some respects, a fair comparison.(36).

NOTES AND REFERENCES

In the Notes and References three volumes rather frequently quoted --- "Memoirs and Correspondence of COVENTRY PATMORE" by Basil Champneys; Coventry Patmore by Edmund Gosse; and Patmore, a Study in Poetry by Frederick Page -- will be indicated by the names of their authors, Champneys, Gosse, and Page, respectively.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I: THE POET.

1. Chamneys.I. p.46.
2. Gosse. p.22.
3. See, for instance, portrait C.W.Brown.
4. Chamneys.I. p.84: or Gosse, cut opposite p.32.
5. Chamneys.I. p.48.
6. Page. p. 31.
7. Academy. Feb.6.1897. article by Francis Thompson.
cit. Meynell. p. 164.
8. Chamneys. (I.p.50) denies any influence but that of Coleridge. Gosse (p.23) denies the Coleridge but suspects that Patmore has carefully read Miss Barrett. Page (p.29) who seems to have gone into the question of sources very carefully, says of "The River", "The attentive reader will hear in it Patmore's reading of 'Christabel', 'The Ancient Mariner', 'Isabella', 'The Eve of St. Agnes', 'The Dream of Eugene Aram'". I have accepted some of these hints.
9. Poems. p.318."Arbor Vitae".
10. Poems. p.348."The River".
11. Ibid.
12. ibid. p.396. (Edition of 1844. cit. Page p.29)
13. Gosse. p.22.
14. The Eighteen Eighties. Intr. p.xv.
15. Page. p.30.
16. Contemporary Review. Oct. 1871."The Fleshly School of Poetry." F.S.Maitland (Robert Buchanan).
17. "Letter to Bulwer Lytton." Page. p.31.
18. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. 1844. "Coventry Patmore's Poems"
19. For quotations see Page p.33.
20. Poetical Works of Felicia Hemans. Intro.p. xxvii.
21. Poems. of 1844. "Lillian". cit. Page. p.31.
22. Page. p.35.
23. All these poems were nearly contemporary. Elizabeth Barrett's "The Cry of the Children", and Thomas Hood's "Song of the Shirt" appeared in 1843. Francis Mahony's "Father Prout" began in Fraser's Magazine in 1836, and Richard Barham's "Ingoldsby Legends" in Bentley's Miscellany a year later. Hood's comic pieces had appeared at intervals from 1826.
24. Gosse. p.22.
25. cit. Gosse. p.26.
26. Page. p.25.
27. Gosse. p.26.
28. "Letters of Ruskin to Patmore." Chamneys.II. p.278.
29. Chamneys.I. p.62. The letter of Thackeray from which this is quoted was printed in the Athenaeum. June 4.1887. Chamneys gives the full text.
30. "Letters of Browning to Patmore." Chamneys. II. p.316.
31. Ibid.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I: THE POET, etc.

32. This was in 1844, 1845, before the Brotherhood had been formally established. cit. Chamneys.I. p.82.
33. Page. p.28.
34. This does not exhaust the number of reviews.
35. The long letter from which the following quotations are taken is in Chamneys.I. pp.54, 55, 56, 57.
36. Poems. p.402. "The River".
37. Poems. p.392. "The Yew-Berry".
38. See Saturday Review of Literature. Dec.5, 1896. "Recollections of Coventry Patmore". by Richard Garnett.
39. Chamneys.I. p.10.
40. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. Aug. 1844. "Coventry Patmore's Poems."
41. Chamneys.I. p.52.
42. Ibid.
43. "So too the reticence of the River is extreme. There are hints that the disappointed lover drowned himself, but I cannot feel sure of it. Still I do not say that this mystery may not add more interest and greater awe; only for myself I should like to know". Further Letters of Gerard Manly Hopkins. p.173.
44. Poems. of 1844. "Sir Hubert". cit. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine.
45. Ibid. "Lillian". cit. Blackwood's.
46. "Letters to H.S.Sutton". April 14, 1857. Chamneys. p.153.
47. Principle in Art and Religio Poetae. p.15.
48. See supra. Letters of Bulwer Lytton.
49. "Letters of H.S.Sutton". April 14, 1857. Chamneys.II. p.152.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II: OLYMPUS.

1. "Letters to H.S.Sutton", Chamneys. II. p.153.
2. Chamneys.I. p.54. This story came to Chamneys through Edmund Gosse.
3. ibid.
4. Tennyson. A.C.Benson. p.90.
5. "Letter to Emily Patmore". Aug.1850.Chamneys.I.p.195.
6. The material for the following paragraph is derived from a memorandum of Patmore (1872) and a letter of Tennyson's (1850). They are given in Chamneys.I.pp.179,180.
7. Appeared first in "North British Review" 1857 and was later printed in Amelia,1878, as a "Prefatory Study of English Metrical Law".
8. The parodies are given in Chamneys.I. p.112.
9. This witticism is a bare-faced plagiarism from Shane Leslie's Studies in Sublime Failure.
10. The ensuing quotations are nearly all from memoranda of C.P. Chamneys. I. pp.198,199 passim.
11. Perhaps there is room to include another rasp. It is the last of Patmore's memoranda. "Mr. Gosse was complaining that Tennyson had charged him £ 150 for a song called "The Thrustle" printed in the "New Review" while Mr. Gosse was editing it. C.P. replied that he thought it very poor pay for such a poem, adding he would not have written it himself for £ 500". Chamneys. I. p.199.
12. Gosse. p.32. Mr.Gosse goes on to say how the theologian of "In Memoriam" had graced these interviews with "glorious sparkles of thought about God and man".
13. Chamneys.I. p.189.
14. Wiseman was made first Archbishop of Westminster in 1850. This was the beginning of the restoration of the R.C. Hierarchy in Britain, and also the year in which the majority of the documents quoted in this chapter were dated.
15. Chamneys.I. p.83.
16. ibid. p.89. (Prae-Raphaelite Diaries.p.222.)
17. Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Letters and a Memoir. II. p.53.
18. The examples given are actually somewhat widely spaced. Others not suited to the subject-division adopted in our text, are much closer, and justify our assertion. See e.g. the entries on p.232 or p.267 of the Prae-Raphaelite Diaries.
19. Chamneys. p.91. (Prae-Raphaelite Diaries. p.222.)
20. ibid. p.93. (P.R.D. p.222.)
21. ibid. p.93. (P.R.D. p.224.)
22. ibid. p.92. (P.R.D. p.230.)
23. ibid. p.90. (P.R.D. p.230.)
24. ibid. p.90. (P.R.D. p.228.)

NOTES TO CHAPTER II: OLYMPUS. etc.

25. Author of Festus (1839) and the Mystic (1855) etc.
26. Champneys. I. p.90. (P.R.D. p.229).
27. "Letters to Allingham". Champneys. II. p.174.
28. Champneys. I. p.93. (P.R.D. p.282).
29. ibid. p.90. (P.R.D. p.232).
30. Exhibited in the Grosvenor Gallery in 1886 as "Portrait of a Lady".
31. Champneys. I. p.89. (P.R.D. p.225).
32. ibid. p.93. (P.R.D. p.278).
33. ibid. (P.R.D. p.302).
34. ibid. p.85.
35. ibid. p.91. (P.R.D. p.232).
36. "Letters to Emily Patmore". Aug.1850. Champneys. I. p.195.
37. Champneys. I. p.130 note. Patmore wrote this memorandum in 1850, 1851. "He would tell it", says Champneys, "with ever greater verve".
38. Patmore adds by way of redress to Dobell. "There are however many passages in Dobell's poems which none present need have been ashamed to own, though most of his work is exasperating rubbish."
39. Of course in the George Eliot translation of 1846.
40. "I have read Blanco White, most carefully and most sorrowfully. Take my advice and recommend that book to no young man. I was nearly lost by it. I wonder I did not commit suicide during the month of despairing atheism induced by it."
"Letters to H.S.Sutton". May 24.1848. Champneys. II. p.160.
41. "The more I think and read and pray, the more profoundly am I convinced of the justice of the views I am taught by the Churches of England and Rome". ibid. April 26. 1847. Champneys. II. p.155.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III: TAMERTON CHURCH TOWER.

1. Pickering. Tamerton Church Tower and Other Poems.
2. Gosse. p.56.
3. Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins. p.173. Oct. 25, 1885.
This is "Posterity" for the early poems.
4. ibid.
5. Mrs. Alfred Fryer in a letter to H.S.Sutton. Champneys. I. p.94.
6. "Letters to H.S.Sutton". Champneys. II. p.159. Feb. 21, 1848.
7. ibid. Feb. 21. Feb. 15. 1848.
8. ibid. Feb. 21.
9. "Letters to Allingham". Champneys. II. p.171. Feb. 8. 1850.
10. ibid. p.181. Sept. 12. 1855.
11. Gosse. p. 58.
12. Champneys. II. p.310.
13. Dictionary of National Biography.
14. Champneys. I. p.114.
15. Monthly Review. 2, no.1. p.149. Jan. 1901.
16. Gosse. pp.53, 54. It has not seemed worth while to carp at the numerous inaccuracies of this entertainingly plausible resume.
17. Int The Catholic World. July 1912.
18. "Letters to H.S.Sutton". Champneys. II. p.159.
19. Catholic World. July 1912.
20. Principle in Art and Religio Poetae. "Love and Poetry". p.338
21. Catholic world. July 1912.
22. "Love and Poetry". p.338.
23. ibid.
24. Catholic World. July 1912.
25. "I have the modern taste about small waists, too....they are odious to me". Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins. p.172.
26. Catholic World. July 1912. p.511.
27. Page. p.59.
28. "...didactic art'...is a contradiction in terms....The teaching of art is the suggestion - far more convincing than the assertion - of an ethical science." Principle in Art and Religio Poetae". "Emotional Art". p.22.
29. Page. p.56.
30. ibid. p.52.
31. ibid.
32. in 1938.
33. Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins. pp.172.176.
34. ibid. p.177.
35. The Eighteen Eighties. p.13.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV: THE BIRTH OF AN ANGEL.

1. Champneys. I. p.135.
2. ibid. p.139.
3. ibid. p.138.
4. Poems. "The Angel in the House". p.4.
5. Champneys. I. p.141.
6. ibid. p.138.
7. Poems. "The Angel in the House". p.4.
8. Letter of Mrs. Alfred Fryer. March 17, 1847. Champneys. I. p.95.
9. "Portrait of My Family". by Derek Patmore. p.87.
10. Pre-Raphaelite Diaries. p.267.cit. Champneys. I. p.160.
11. Aubrey de Vere. cit. Champneys. I. p.160.
12. Champneys. I. p.261.
13. ibid. p.251.
14. ibid. p.254.
15. Poems. "The Angel in the House". p.4.
16. ibid. p.11.
17. Catholic World. March.1910. "Coventry Patmore". by Katherine Bregy.
18. The Great Victorians. "Coventry Patmore" by Herbert Read. p.397.
19. The angel in the House, Together with The Victories of Love. Introduction by Alice Meynell. p.24.
20. Quarterly Review. July 1923. "Coventry Patmore" by John Freeman.
21. Champneys. I. p.161.
22. ibid.
23. Fortnightly Review. 1897. "The Praise of the Odes". by Louis Garvin.
24. Champneys. I. pp.107,108.
25. Reprinted in "Amelia" as "Prefatory Study in English Metrical Law".
26. The Name and Nature of Poetry. by A.E.Houseman. He says: "A few pages of Coventry Patmore and of Frederick Myers contain all, so far as I know, or all of value, which has been written in such matters."
27. See North American Review. March, 1897. "The History of a Poem". by Edmund Gosse.
28. Poems. "The Angel in the House". p.64.
29. "Letters to Allingham". Jan.5, 1855. Champneys. II. p.178.
30. ibid. Sept. 12, p.181.
31. ibid. Feb. 24, 1856, p.182.
32. Studies in Sublime Failure. by Shane Leslie. p.1366
33. North American Review. March, 1897. "The History of a Poem" by Edmund Gosse.
34. Letters from Aubrey de Vere. Jan.10, 1853. Champneys. II. p.336.
35. ibid. Nov.30.1855. p.331.
36. ibid. p.336.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV: THE BIRTH OF AN ANGEL. ctd.

37. "Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins". Sept. 18, 1883. p.152.
38. ibid. Oct. 31, 1883. p.177.
39. ibid. Sept. 23, 1883. p.153.
40. There were six editions up to 1885.
41. "... to dip into it is NOT like opening a basket of violets; anything less like the fresh wild sweetness of violets than these pedestrian stanzas, sometimes facetious, sometimes sentimental, though sometimes also pleasant and pretty could scarcely be discovered among all the annals of verse." New Statesman and Nation. I. Suppl. V - VI. March 28. 1931. "Coventry Patmore" by Rose Macaulay.
42. Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins. March 14. 1885. p.214.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V: THE ANGEL ON THE SHELF.

1. "Letters to Allingham? Oct. 1854. Champneys. II. p.178.
2. ibid. Nov. 6. 1854. Champneys. II. p.179.
3. Letter of C.V. Gore. Dec. 30, 1858. Champneys. II. p.383.
4. "Letters from W. Barnes". Dec. 22, 1860. Champneys. II. p.358.
5. From a letter to Mrs. Gemmer. cit. Champneys. I. p.167.
6. Poems. (Champneys. Intro. xxviii. from a letter of Nov. 5. 1854)
7. "Letters from Carlyle". Jan. 18, 1855. Champneys. II. p.310.
8. "Letters from A. de Vere". Nov. 30, 1855. Champneys. II. p.331.
9. Memorandum of A. de Vere. Champneys. I. p.164.
10. Letter from A. Tennyson. Champneys. I. p.165.
11. See, for instance The Great Victorians. p.391 or Studies in Sublime Failure. p.128.
12. "Letters to Allingham". Sept. 12, 1855. Champneys. II. p.181.
13. Champneys. I. p.167.
14. Letters of H. Taylor. Feb. 7, 1856. cit. de Vere 1890. Champneys. II. p.340.
15. Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. ed. by Geo. Birkbeck Hill. p.99.
16. ibid. pp.236, 237.
17. ibid. pp.116, 117.
18. Letters from W.B. Scott. Jan. 8, 1855. Champneys. II. p.357.
19. "Letters to Allingham". Nov. 6, 1854. Champneys. II. p.178.
20. ibid.
21. Letter to Monckton Milnes. Jan. 30, 1855. Champneys. I. p.170.
22. "Letters to Allingham". Jan. 5, 1855. Champneys. II. p.179.
23. Westminster Review. Jan. 1855. "Belles Lettres". p.283.
24. Page. p.175.
25. Athenaeum. Jan. 20, 1856. Henry Fothergill Chorley. Quoted in the Library of Criticism.
26. The Choice of Books. Frederick Harrison. Chapter iv. p.74.
27. Athenaeum. Dec. 5, 1890.
28. For instance in "Distinction". see Principle in art and Religio Poetae. pp.44, 56 etc.
29. Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins. May. 17, 1885, p.215.
30. In Sesame and Lilies. and in Time and Tide. in the appendix to Elements of Drawing. and in Arrows of The Chase
31. "Letters from Carlyle? Champneys. II. p.311.
32. ibid. p.312.
33. Letter to Monckton Milnes. Champneys. II. p.171.
34. Letter of Emily to Allingham. 1856 (no month given), Champneys. I. p.155.
35. Letters of A. de Vere to Palmere. Feb. 14, 1857. Champneys. II. p.332.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V: THE ANGEL ON THE SHELF. ctd.

36. English Note Books. Nathaniel Hawthorne. vol. I. p.368.
Jan. 3. 1858. Champneys. I. p.99.
37. Poems. "The Angel in the House". p.11.
38. Champneys. I. p.176.
39. It was printed anonymously.
40. Edinburgh Review. Jan. 1858.
41. ibid.
42. ibid.
43. English Note Books. Hawthorne. loc.cit. p.99.
44. Edinburgh Review. loc.cit.
45. "Letters from John Ruskin". Dec. 24. 1864. Champneys. II.
p.283.
46. "The Person in the House. Idyl CCCLXVI. cit.
A Century of Parody and Imitation.
47. Poems. "The Angel in the House". p.19.
48. "Letter to W.S. Henley". Nov. 8, 1892. Champneys. II. p.272.
49. Studies in Sublime Failure. Shane Leslie. p.166.
50. North American Review. March, 1897. "The History of a
Poem". by Edmund Gosse.
51. Champneys. I. p.384.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI: CANTICUM NOVUM.

1. Mr. Page argues that in reality, it was. Page.p.119, et passim.
2. Dedication of "New Poems". by Francis Thompson, 1896.
3. "Odes (Not Published) . of 1868. Father Connolly's Reprint.
4. "Letter from Alfred Austin". Jan.7.1890.Champneys.II. p.370.If thus of the "Eros" in 1890, a fortiori of the "Odes" in 1868.
5. The Angel in the House. Together with the Victories of Love.
6. Mystical Poems of Nuptial Love. p.163(Father Connolly's Note),
7. I say "mistake" because according to Patmore's theory of metre the lines, including the pauses are all the same length, having the time of twelve syllables. See Page.p.147-170.
8. Odes (Not Published). of 1868. Reprint p.26.
9. ibid. p.28.
10. ibid. p.32.
11. Gosse. p.125.
12. Odes (Not Published) of 1868. p.125.
13. Gosse. p.131.
14. "Letters from Ruskin".April 26,1868. Champneys.II.p.284.
15. Letters of Patmore to . Champneys.I. p.250.
16. "Letter of Sir Henry Taylor". Sept. 17, 1868. Champneys.II.p. 367.
17. Gosse. p.151.
18. "Letter of R. Monteith". June 21, 1868.Champneys.II.376.
19. Post Liminium. Lionel Johnson. p. 242.
20. "Letter to Mrs. Bishop". Feb. 22,1873. Champneys.II.p.240.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII: THE UNKNOWN EROS.

1. Later called "The Standards". Actually the first of the Odes to be published was the notorious "1868", which under the title of "Last Year", appeared in the Pall Mall Gazette, as early as April 6, 1868, some months before Mr. Monteith's letter. This fact of which even Champneys seems to be ignorant was discovered by Frederick Page. The ode was printed in small type and double columns. "It was" says Page, "as strange a letter as was ever printed in a newspaper". Page. p.114.
2. Poems. p.318. "The Standards".
3. Life of Cardinal Newman. Wilfred Ward.II. p.401.
4. Letter from Newman. March 28, 1875. Champneys.II. p.241.
5. Poems. p.318. "The Standards".
6. Poems. p.295. "Peace".
7. ibid.
8. July 7, 1876.
9. Poems. p.419."The Rosy Bosom'd Hours".
10. Nov. 3, 1876.
11. Nov. 7, 1876.
12. Nov.14, 1876.
13. Nov.22, 1876. (Recovered from the bonfire of 1870.)
14. Nov.30, 1876.
15. Dec.20, 1876. (Recovered).
16. Aug.20, 1877.
17. Jan. 5, 1878.
18. This was the last of the nine (not published) Odes of 1868.
19. Later rejected.
20. 1877.
21. First published in The Unknown Eros and Other Odes. by Coventry Patmore in 1878.
22. Poems. p.291. "Magna est Veritas". "There are again poems... the pessimistic tone of which we find it hard to reconcile with any Christian creed. Such is the short poem, "Magna est Veritas". D.C.Lovey, Reviews and Essays. p.166.
23. First published in 1878 in Amelia.
24. He thought it a political piece. See Cosse. p.150.
25. The Idea of Coventry Patmore. Osbert Burdett. p.145.
26. See Alice Meynell, Second Person Singular. p.103. or Shane Leslie, Studies in Sublime Failure.p. 176. or Father Connolly, Mystical Poems of Nuptial Love. p.221.
27. Poems. p.317. "Arbor Vitae".
28. Saturday Review. Dec.5,1896."Recollections of Coventry Patmore". R.Garnett.
29. Cosse. pp.198,199. Patmore's own account of the event is to be found in Champneys.II. pp.110,111.
30. Ten Victorian Poets. F.L.Lucas. p.92.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII: THE UNKNOWN EROS. ctd.

31. Chamneys-II. p.111.
32. Page. p. 124.
33. Poems. p. 294. "1867".
34. Poems. p. 300. "1880 - 1885".
35. First published as Ode I. in The Unknown Eros of 1877.
36. Poems. p.269. "Proem".
37. Chamneys. I. p.247.
38. Spectator. no. 64, p.512. April 12, 1890.
39. I mean in such things as the political odes, the question of realism and banality in the "Angel".etc. In all these his opinion can be taken as typical of his day, though he generally phrases it as though making a concession, "to assuage a review, and attract an audience".
40. Gosse. p.150.
41. Studies in Literature Third Series. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. p.128. This particular study was written about 1900.
42. North American Review. Feb. 20. "Coventry Patmore the Most Austere Poet of Our Times". by Arthur Symons.
43. New Statesman and Nation.I. Suppl. V - VI. March 28, 1931. Rose Macaulay. Mrs. Crawford (Fortnightly Review, Feb. 1901) writing many years before, had been even more astringent. Patmore's so-called "anti-feminism" sometimes explains the asperities of female reviewers.
44. It hardly seems necessary to refer to specific books like Peter Wurst's, "The Decline of the West", or Dawson's, "Progress and Religion";- Aldous Huxley's, "Brave New World", may also be instanced as an example of the lengths to which "pessimism" now will go.
45. Poems. p.291. "1867".
46. The Idea of Coventry Patmore. Osbert Burdett. p.183.
47. ibid. p.184.
48. Principle in Art and Religio Poetae and Other Essays. p.316. "A 'Pessimist' Outlook".
49. A Daughter of Coventry Patmore. A Religion of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus (S.H.C.J.). p.144.
50. Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Dec.6, 1883, p.195.
51. Poems. p.299. "1880 - 1885".
52. See for instance "Courage in Politics", "Distinction", etc.
53. Chamneys.I. p.343.
54. A Daughter of Coventry Patmore. A Religion of the S.H.C.J. p.134.
55. ibid. p.144.
56. Page. p.124. Marie Lataste was a French Mystic of the Early Nineteenth Century. An account of her life may be found in the Catholic Encyclopedia.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII: THE UNKNOWN EROS. ctd.

57. Principle in Art and Religio Poetae. p.156. "A Spanish Novelette".
58. Chamneys.I. p.217.
59. The Rod, The Root, and The Flower, Preface. cit. Mystical Poems of Nuptial Love. Notes p. 151.
60. Page. p.125.
61. ibid.
62. Poems. p.321. "The Standards".
63. A Daughter of Coventry Patmore. A Religious of S.H.C.J. p. 133.
64. Poems. p.324. "Legem Tuam Delixi".
65. A Daughter of Coventry Patmore. A Religious of S.H.C.J. p. 141.
66. ibid. p. 144.
67. This statement may be considered startling, but only because the taste of priests or nuns is not apt to be widely publicised. It would interesting to discover in how many Catholic Colleges in the United States alone Patmore is at the present moment being chosen for Post Graduate study by "religious" majoring in English.
68. Gosse. p.242.
69. North American Review. "Coventry Patmore the Most Austere Poet of Our Time". Arthur Symens.
70. Poems. "Eros and Psyche". p.337.
71. English Poetry in the Nineteenth Century. Ifor Evans. p.145.
72. e.g. "God loves each one as though he were all: all as though they were one".
73. Gosse. p.273.
74. The Love of God. Dom Aelred Graham. p.34.
75. Studies in Sublime Failure. Shane Leslie.p.148.
76. Gosse. p.238.
77. They are "Eros and Psyche", "De Natura Deorum", and "Psyche's Discontent". Poems. pp.337 - 351.
78. As far as present day ecclesiastical opinion is concerned this prophesy seems quite false. A poem like Tristitia, of somewhat wavering orthodoxy has always been distrusted as well as admired: but the Psyche poems are universally welcomed as the freshest representatives of a long mystical tradition.
79. Letter of Aubrey de Vere. Chamneys.II. pp.341 - 342.
80. Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Jan.3, 1884. p.198.
81. Poems. "To the Unknown Eros". p.312.
82. A Daughter of Coventry Patmore. A Religious of S.H.C.J. p. 141.
83. Gosse. p.239.
84. The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse. by Evan Charteris. p.91.
85. "Letters from Cardinal Newman". Chamneys. II. p.377.
87. Ten Victorian Poets. F.L.Lucas. p. 97.
88. Poems. De Natura Deorum. p.347.
89. Spectator. April 12, 1890.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII: THE UNKNOWN ERGS. ctd.

90. ibid.
91. Fortnightly Review. Feb. 1901. Coventry Patmore , by Virginia M. Crawford.
92. New Statesman and Nation.I. Suppl.V - VI.March 28,1931.
93. The Eighteen Eighties. ed. by Walter De La Mare.p.15.
94. The Victorian Age in Literature. G.K.Chesterton.p.201.
95. The Second Person Singular. Alice Meynell.p.94.
96. In the Oxford Book of English Verse, it is "The Toys"; "Departure", is also common.
97. Again "The Toys".
98. "The Toys". by Monsignor Fulton Sheen.Catholic Hour Broadcast. March 7,1942.
99. The Moderns. John Freeman. p.285.
100. Studies in Sublime Failure. Shane Leslie. p.125.
101. The Time of Tennyson. Cornelius Weygandt.p.263.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII: THE BANNER OF REKOWN.

1. Studies in Literature, Third Series. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. p.118.
2. cit. Ten Victorian Poets. F.L.Lucas. p.89.
3. cf. Champneys.I. p.384.
4. ibid. p.261. Mr. Herbert Read has the following comment:
"This (statement of Patmore's) is perfectly true. He was a 'clerc' who never betrayed the tradition of intellectual integrity of which every poet should be the trustee. Everything he wrote was written with a great sense of responsibility, not only to the public, but to his own inner light or inspiration". (The Great Victorians. p.389.).
5. The Angel in the House Together with the Victories of Love. Introduction by Alice Meynell. p.3.
6. Poems. "Proem". p.269.
7. Poems. "1867". p.291.
8. "Letters to Dr.Garnett" . April 12, 1879. Champneys.II.p.223.
9. Poems. "Arbor Vitae".p.317.
10. "Letters to Dr, Garnett". Aug.7,1881. Champneys.II.p.223.
"Miss Agnes Lambert was a daughter of Sir John Lambert, Secretary to the Poor Law Board. She subsequently became a friend of Coventry Patmore". Patmore's comment on her letter is interesting. "You know well enough,"he says,"that the substance of the 'Angel' is exactly on the same level with that of the 'Odes', which should be just as imposing and affecting to any exclusive admiration of "Eros" as any of the pieces in the Poem. I am very glad, as it is, that I bethought myself of stilts, for the sake of such as could not see me without". Champneys. ibid.
11. North American Review. March 1897. "The History of a Poem". Edmund Gosse.
12. His attitude to review work was occasionally reckless. "When," relates Gosse, "one was recommended to look out for an article ... where, 'by way of a spree, I have run a-muck against everything and everybody', one trembled, and not perhaps without cause". Gosse.p.171.
13. Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins. May 17,1885,p.215.
14. ibid. May 14, 1885. p.214.
15. ibid. May 17,1885. p.215.
16. ibid. May 12,1887. p.230.
17. ibid.
18. my italics.
19. Champneys. I. p.177.
20. Athenaeum. Dec. 5, 1896 (unsigned).
21. As I say, these figure may not be accurate. They at least testify to a feeling that the circulation was unusually great.
21. George Bell and Sons, the Publishers.
22. "Letters to E.W.Gosse". Champneys. II. p. 258.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII: THE BANNER OF RENOWN. etc.

23. Chamneys.II. p.255.
24. Poems. "The Angel in the House". p.144.
25. "The Saturday Readers ... look upon 'Widow Neale' as my average". "Letters to E.W.Gosse." Chamneys.II.p.257.
26. ibid. p.28.
27. Athenaeum. June 12, 1886.
28. I presume it is not an accident that Professor Lucas says: "If the poem had a coat-of-arms it might well be a piece of bread-and-butter rampant". Ten Victorian Poets. p.86. Again Professor Lucas is possibly indebted to Gosse for the quotation from Baudelaire, which graces the title page (p.75) of his essay on Patmore. (cf. Gosse. p.83.)
29. "Letters to E.W.Gosse". Chamneys. II. p.257. Patmore also wrote to Father Hopkins, about the same matter, but confessing his hurt. See "Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins. p.221."
30. The Idea of Coventry Patmore. Osbert Burdett. p.20.
31. This last is reprinted in Studies in Sublime Failure.p.171.
32. Alice Meynell, A Memoir. Viola Meynell. p.110.
33. ibid. p.111.
34. ibid.
35. The Second Person Singular. Alice Meynell. p. 101.
36. Alice Meynell, A Memoir. Viola Meynell. p.111.
37. The Second Person Singular. p.94.
38. Poems. "The Angel in the House". p.122.
39. ibid. p.73.
40. ibid. "The Victories of Love". p.171.
41. ibid. "The Rosy Boson'd Hours". p.419.
42. ibid. "The Victories of Love". p.157.
43. The Second Person Singular. Alice Meynell.pp.105,106.
44. The Angel in the House Together with the Victories of Love. Introduction by Alice Meynell. p.22.
45. Alice Meynell, A Memoir. Viola Meynell. p.120.
46. ibid.
47. The Life of Francis Thompson. Everard Meynell. p.189.
48. ibid. p.190.
49. "A Captain of Song". addressed to Patmore before his death, but published after it, in the Athenaeum. Dec.5, 1896.
50. The Life of Francis Thompson. Everard Meynell. p.189.
51. Complete Poetical Works of Francis Thompson. Modern Library Edition. p.6.
52. Modern English Poetry, 1882 - 1932. R.L.Mégroz. p.76.
53. Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins. pp.224, 227.
54. "Letter from Robert Bridges". Chamneys.II. p.373.
55. The Moderns. John Freeman. p.293.
56. New Statesman. "The Critics and Coventry Patmore".
57. Osbert Burdett. March 1, 1919.
58. Ten Victorian Poets. F.L.Lucas.p.91.
59. Alice Meynell, A Memoir. Viola Meynell. p.130.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IX: POSTERITY.

1. "The future belongs to you and me and Mathew Arnold, unless we are lazy". "Letters to Allingham". Dec.29, 1856. Chamneys.II.p.184. He was wrong about Allingham!
2. I cannot vouch for the truth of this. Patmore is certainly mentioned in later editions of the book.
3. Post Victorian Poetry. Herbert Palmer.pp. 23,24.
4. The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature. George Sampson, Preface p.xi.
5. ibid. p.xii.
6. These phrases are all from Professor Saintsbury's words on Patmore. The Cambridge History of English Literature. XIII. p.189 ff.
7. The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature. George Sampson. p.733.
8. ibid.
9. English Poetry in the Nineteenth Century. Ifor Evans. p.141
10. Literature of the Victorian Era. Hugh Walker. p.510.
11. Lyrical Poetry from Blake to Hardy. H.J.C.Grierson. p.119.
12. Figures of Transition. Granville Hicks. p.49.
13. Mysticism in English Literature. C.F.R.Spurgeon.pp.50,51.
14. Leaders of the Victorian Revolution. J.W.Cunliffe. p.240.
15. " " I am now writing to Fred Page an opinion of his Patmore Paper," she says in a letter to my father. 'I should like some things altered, and he is only too ready. But as I could not have written so fine an essay, I hesitate'. Another paper on Patmore which drew her warmest approval was by John Freeman, and the fact that he could speak of Patmore as 'the poet I chiefly love,' was enough to establish a friendship between them". Alice Meynell, A Memoir. Viola Meynell.p.261.
16. Catholic World. "Points of View". Frederick Page.June,1921.
17. The Idea of Coventry Patmore. Osbert Burdett.p.202.
18. ibid. p.204.
19. On this point see Louis Macneice's criticism of the Garden Party Scenes in the Princess. By implication, though he may not know it, Mr.Macneice is justifying The Angel in the House. Modern Poetry. Louis Macneice.
20. For an interesting comparison between Homer's way of handling this theme, and Alexander Pope's - between the "realistic" and the "poetical" method - see Ruskin's letter to the Critic. Chamneys.II. p.230. It may also be found in the Critic, Oct.27, 1860, and in "Arrows of the Chase".vol. II. p.243.
21. The Idea of Coventry Patmore. Osbert Burdett.p.211.
22. ibid. p.2.
23. The Dublin Review. Sept.1923. "The Happy Marriage". E.L.Watkin.
24. Page. p.80.
25. The Great Victorians. "Coventry Patmore". Herbert Read. p.392.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IX: POSTERITY. ctd.

26. Poetry Direct and Oblique. E.M.W. Tillyard. pp. 109-113.
27. The Great Victorians. "Coventry Patmore", Herbert Read. p. 401.
28. ibid. p. 388.
- 28a. Poèmes de Coventry Patmore. Paul Claudel. Intro. Valéry Larbaud. Nouvelle Revue Française. 1912.
29. Poeti Inglesi Dell' Ottocento. Mario Fraz. R. Bemporade Firenze.
30. Carmina VII. "The Philosophy of Coventry Patmore". Wilfred Childe.
31. Carmina IX. "The Poetry of Coventry Patmore". Derek Patmore.
32. Thought. March and June, 1934. "Patmore's Philosophy of Love". Eleanor Downing.
33. Carmelite Review. "The Philosophy of Love in Patmore". Charles Du Bos.
34. Chesterfield's Letters to His Son. cit. Post Liminium. Lionel Johnson. "Dante". p. 97.
35. "A resolute poet who means to make his work bigger than the Divina Comedia, he tells me". (Rossetti.) See also "Prophets Who Cannot Sing". Poems. p. 353.
36. Theodore Maynard. cf. The Catholic Literary Revival. Calvert Alexander. p. 69.

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