

RECENT FOREIGN LITERATURE.

ALTHOUGH not yet published, the lectures on Chateaubriand which M. Jules Lemaître has lately been delivering at the Sorbonne have already caused an extraordinary revival of interest in Chateaubriand and his work. And no wonder! For however literary fashions may change, from the point of view of literary history and evolution, Chateaubriand is the greatest name and the greatest influence of the nineteenth century in France. That fact is well insisted on by Victor Giraud in his interesting volume entitled, '*Nouvelles études sur Chateaubriand: essais d'histoire morale et littéraire.*' Giraud goes fully into the question of Chateaubriand's literary influence in the concluding chapter, '*Le sillage de Chateaubriand,*' where he demonstrates how the whole of 'romantisme' is contained in Chateaubriand's work: it embodies historical, mediæval, exotic, and Catholic elements; individualism, lyricism, sentimentalism are there, and so is a passionate love of nature. Classical 'romantisme' is there too, for Chateaubriand never repudiates the inheritance of a glorious past, but combines taste and reverence for the masterpieces of antiquity with eager search for what is new. The authors who form the French

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romantic school proper owe to Chateaubriand the inspiration of their themes, their style, their conception of the world, and their manner of expressing that conception. At fourteen Victor Hugo said: 'Je veux être Chateaubriand—ou rien.' Théophile Gautier wrote:

'Chateaubriand peut être considéré comme l'aïeul ou, si vous l'aimez mieux, comme le Sachem du Romantisme en France. Dans le *Génie du Christianisme* il restaure la cathédrale gothique; dans les *Natchez*, il rouvrit la grande nature fermée; dans *René*, il inventa la mélancolie et la passion moderne.'

Giraud declares further that in the '*Génie du Christianisme*' Chateaubriand created criticism as it is understood to-day; in the '*Martyrs*' and the '*Études historiques*' he inaugurated a new method of understanding and writing history; and surely '*Atala*' and '*René*' are in some degree responsible for the exotic novels of the present day.

From Lamartine and De Vigny to Anatole France and Bourget, there is scarcely any French writer of note who does not owe something to Chateaubriand. Béranger began by being his disciple, and Sainte-Beuve, although he depreciated Chateaubriand, was clearly working under his influence when he produced '*Volupté*' and '*Joseph Delorme*.' Without '*Les Martyrs*' Flaubert would not have written '*Salammbô*,' and although as thinkers and writers they are as the poles asunder, Comte owes much to the '*Génie du Christianisme*.' It was Brunetière who began

the rehabilitation of Chateaubriand, whose fame between 1830 and 1880 had fallen low, and he declared that during three generations Chateaubriand exercised 'une royauté littéraire' only to be compared with that of Voltaire.

A new conception of Chateaubriand is to be found in a volume by Albert Cassagne on 'La vie politique de François de Chateaubriand. Consulat, empire, première restauration.' Cassagne here declares that Chateaubriand was 'homme d'action par essence et poète par accident,' and shows him as a man of action, of the race of La Rochefoucauld and of Retz. The period treated in the book is from 1791 to 1815, and so, besides the hero, many interesting figures pass across its pages, among them Napoleon, De Bonald, Joubert, and Mme. de Beaumont. The book has something of the effect of an historical novel: our curiosity is excited by tales in which persons about whom we already know something play a considerable part.

Hitherto Chateaubriand's voluminous correspondence has been scattered through a number of works; the whole is now being collected and published by M. Louis Thomas as 'Correspondance générale de Chateaubriand,' with an introduction and notes. The first volume, covering the years 1789-1817, has just appeared, and four more at least, we are told, will be required to complete the edition. Thomas claims that when the letters can be read and studied all together, they will form one of the masterpieces of French literature, worthy of a place among the most famous collections of letters, and will also add a new work to those of the

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great prose writer himself, a work in which the man 's'y livre davantage, sans pose, sans apprêt' than in the 'Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe.'

Chateaubriand was a great writer, and is fully worthy of such memorials as these books. His merits cannot be obscured by so-called modern scientific criticism. For the true critic of art does not change; he will ever bring 'le libre et vivant témoignage d'un esprit sur un autre esprit, d'une âme sur une autre âme,' the testimony, of course, being combined with knowledge, exact information, and objective research. In Giraud's words, Chateaubriand's position in French literature may be summed up thus:

'Il y en a peut-être de plus complets, si l'on veut: Lamartine, Hugo et Musset ont mieux possédé les deux instruments, la prose et les vers. Il n'y en a pas, au total, de plus fécond et de plus grand. Parmi tous ceux qui ont manié notre langue française, il n'en est aucun qui l'aient honoré davantage, qui en aient mieux connu et utilisé les infinies ressources, qui en aient tiré des effets plus nouveaux et plus heureux.'

It is in this way that Chateaubriand should be studied. There is too great a tendency to pay attention to his love affairs, sentimental and otherwise, and to neglect his importance as a man of letters. But serious students of literature know that the human interest is not obscured by the historical sense; in fact, when the latter is employed in the right spirit, the former is enhanced.

In 'Jean Chapelain 1595-1674, un poète protecteur des lettres au XVII^e siècle,' an historical

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and literary study based on unpublished documents, Georges Collas gives an exhaustive account of a man who deserves a place in the history of French literature and civilization, a man whose career must interest all students and admirers of the national period of French history. Born in the reign of Henri IV., he entered on his literary career when Richelieu became minister, and when the Hôtel Rambouillet was in its greatest glory. He attained the zenith of his fame in the year of Corneille's 'Cid' and Descartes' 'Discours sur la méthode.' He was Richelieu's literary adviser, a friend of Retz, and an original member of the French Academy. He died just as 'le Roi-soleil' was beginning his glorious reign, when Racine was drawing tears from the Court over his 'Iphigénie,' and Boileau was publishing his 'Art poétique.' Fond of literature, passionately attached to politics, interested in medicine and science, he was acquainted with all that was being done in Europe by poets and scholars. There was scarcely an author, certainly in France, whom he did not advise or criticise, scarcely an institution on which he did not leave his mark. Indeed, Chapelain was everything except an epic poet, yet despite Boileau's ridicule, he is worth studying as a man, an author, and a patron of letters.

Collas' book, which was suggested by Tamizey de Larroque's 'Lettres de Jean Chapelain,' is divided into three parts, 'Avant la Pucelle, La Pucelle, et Après la Pucelle.'

French scholars are still industriously carrying on their researches in English literature. I have before

me at this moment a volume of 500 large octavo pages on Herrick, a pamphlet on Browning, and a work entitled 'English Fairy Poetry,' the last written in excellent English. Of the three, the Herrick is the most important. It is the thesis on which M. Floris Delattre, Professor of English at the Lycée Charlemagne, was granted the doctorate of the University of Paris. The sub-title is 'Contribution à l'étude de la poésie lyrique en Angleterre au dix-septième siècle.' The book is divided into three parts, dealing respectively with 'l'homme,' 'le poète, and 'l'écrivain.' In the first Delattre has essayed a portrait of the man as he appeared to his contemporaries. The summing up of his character seems to me excellent. Herrick is a man of robust health; there is nothing languid about him:

'Il aime le vin capiteux et "non adulteré," la grosse chère, les bons compagnons. Il aime les femmes presque sans distinction. . . . Il jouit de la surface aimable des choses, sans prendre la peine de les approfondir pour les connaître. . . . Il y a en lui un élément calme, pondéré, positif même, qui le rattache à l'ancienne famille provinciale dont il est issu. . . . Il vit uniquement dans le tangible. . . . Il accepte les idées que sont courantes à l'époque, sans les vivifier jamais de son expérience individuelle.'

But, notwithstanding, in the domain of sensations and 'sentiments jolis,' Herrick is without a rival.

If Herrick's poetry possesses little originality, little depth, or little passion, sensibility and imagination predominate. He does not criticise life, he enjoys it; he is not a critic of life, but an artist of

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life. He is especially the poet of human joy. Life as he represents it is—

'une fête de mai, toute claire de soleil et de fleurs. Les abeilles y font entendre sans répit le bourdonnement de leurs rondes dorées. Le poète s'avance vers nous avec un sourire, jouant sur son pipeau des airs légers, alertes, capricieux. Il peuple de rêves jolis sa solitude. Il fait déborder le vallon de ses notes fraîches.'

Indeed, he pipes as though he would never grow old.

Where, however, Herrick is original is in his attitude to country life, and M. Delattre brings out with great clearness that feature of Herrick's poems, one too seldom regarded by English critics, who are apt to neglect the fact that our poets appreciated Nature, even before the publication of 'The Seasons.' Herrick describes 'la fraîcheur, la claire gaieté, la charme de la campagne qu'il habite,' he is, in fact, the laureate of 'la vieille glèbe d'Angleterre.' He describes rural occupations with knowledge and delight, and as Delattre says, a 'paysan malgré lui,' he composed what may veritably be called English Georgics.

M. Delattre devotes a chapter to Herrick's religious poems. The mixture of frank paganism and real devotion, which is one of the most striking characteristics of Herrick's work, is perhaps not quite clearly brought out, but the critic shows in what way Herrick stands apart from the group of seventeenth century religious poets. He lays stress on Herrick's indubitable sincerity, and declares that he did not write his 'Noble Numbers' from a sense

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of duty, but '*en dépit de sa morale si peu chrétienne spontanément et par conviction.*' At any rate, whatever was the moving cause, we owe to Herrick the triplet, characterised by Swinburne as '*divinely beautiful*':

'We see Him come and know Him ours,
Who with His sunshine and His showers
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.'

The volume probably includes everything that needs to be known about Herrick and his work. The classification of the poems according to subject is most useful. Under the main heading, Herrick the poet of society, we have chapters on the king and court, friends, Devonshire peasants, on himself, women, and love. Under the heading, Herrick and the country, are chapters on pastoralism, rural life, folk-lore and fairy-lore; and under that of Herrick's wisdom, chapters on his moral and religious ideas. Technical criticism of him as a writer includes his debt to his forerunners, his style, versification, and the order and chronology of the *Hesperides*.

Lastly, M. Delattre is to be congratulated on his excellent translations, which form almost a third of the book. They are in a sort of rhythmical prose.

M. P. Berger, whose fine study of Blake is well known, has written a short pamphlet on Browning's poetry, eminently calculated to assist French readers to a right appreciation of it, and not unlikely to be useful to English students. It is a marvel of clear and concise criticism and explanation. He brings out very vividly Browning's wealth of characters:

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‘Philosophes calmes ou sceptiques de l’antiquité, moines hargneux, savants subtils ou rêveurs de moyen âge, esprits enthousiastes et artistes de la Renaissance, hommes de notre temps surtout, convaincus ou indifférents, froids ou passionnés, âmes insignifiantes, esprits morbides, ambitieux sans scrupules, amoureux désespérés, apôtres enthousiastes de tout ce qui est grand et noble, philosophes et savants, martyrs et imposteurs, femmes aux âmes nobles et aux cœurs si pur, se pressant en foules lumineuses, âmes viles parfois, hommes aux instincts grossiers, aux intelligences obtuses et aux cœurs étroits.’

We are almost reminded, though in a different kind, of the ‘God’s plenty’ of Chaucer.

Berger sees, too, in Browning the poet of ‘modernism,’ although his personality is too strong to allow of strict labelling. The most striking point in Browning’s faith, according to this critic, is that the imperfections of man are a sign of his superior destiny; in a word, Browning expounds the optimism of evil. Therefore he is the most ‘fortifiant’ of poets. His peculiar genius is summed up by the critic in the phrase: ‘il n’est pour ainsi dire, ni poète ni philosophe, mais un peu de l’un et l’autre à la fois.’ But I take it that all great poets are philosophers in so far as their outlook on life passes beyond the trivial and ephemeral and fixes itself on the important and enduring.

History and its by-ways always fill a prominent place in French literature.

Pierre de Vaissière does not intend his book, ‘De quelques assassins. Récits du Temps des Troubles (XVI^e siècle),’ to be merely a portrait gallery of assassins, but to assist a clearer

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understanding of the history of the times in which the dramas were enacted. The victims are there as well as their murderers: François de Guise, Coligny, Henry IV. The manner of death of such important persons, with the causes that led to it and the consequences that resulted, are here studied in detail. Among the assassins whose careers are described are Jean Poltrot, Charles de Louviers, Jean Ganourtz *dit* Besme, and Jacques Clément. Greater knowledge of such men will, according to Vaissière, 'rendre compte pas seulement de l'esprit des mœurs, et du caractère d'une époque, mais en même temps de bien des points ignorés ou mal connus de l'histoire politique.'

New facts and an original point of view are to be found in the Vicomte de Motey's 'Un héros de la grande armée, Jean-Gaspard Hulot de Collart, officier supérieur d'artillerie (1780-1854).' The work is based on Hulot's professional notes, reports, and private correspondence, as well as on that of his brother, Baron Hulot the general, and on the archives of the French War Office. There is no doubt that very often the history of a subordinate person or action helps to throw light on events that are well known and on the policy of the leaders. In addition, this very carefully prepared volume fully illustrates the truth of Taine's words: 'Plus j'étudie en histoire, plus j'attribue de prix aux textes de première main, *abondants, caractéristiques et bien classés.*'

The importance of the Emperor Paul I. in the history of Russia is well brought out by M. K. Waliszewski in his new work, 'Le fils de la grande

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Catherine, Paul I^{er} empereur de Russie, sa vie, son règne et sa mort 1754-1801 d'après des documents nouveaux et en grande partie inédits.' Paul I. of Russia is one of the most enigmatic figures in history. Was he or was he not mad? However that may be, his reign is much more than a mere dramatic episode in the history of modern Russia, his work had an extended compass and a lasting effect: it has survived the workman. It may have the aspect of paradox, even of caricature; but are not paradox and caricature present to-day in the 'spectacle que nous offre l'immense empire, Etat constitutionnel et parlementaire, gouverné par un souverain autocrate, qui passe pour n'avoir rien abdiqué de ses droits'? The book is most interesting, and certainly helpful to a better understanding of modern Russia.

Two books that make delightful reading of the lighter kind are the second volume of Emile Bergerat's 'Souvenirs d'un enfant de Paris' (1872-1880), and Charles Samaran's 'D'Artagnan, capitaine des mousquetaires du roi.' In the first we have sprightly accounts of all the interesting people in Paris during those years of light-hearted, gay bohemianism. The book, however, is not suitable for the reading of the young people our dramatic censors seek so carefully to protect. M. Samaran gives us the true history of a hero of romance who was in reality 'un cadet de Gascogne plein de ressources, un soldat d'élite de l'ancienne France, pénétré de ses devoirs, parfait serviteur de son roi, prêt à verser son sang pour lui, à tout moment.'

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The following recently published books deserve attention :—

Les contemporains étrangers. Par Maurice Muret.

The author declares that 'le cosmopolitisme littéraire procure à ceux qui le pratiquent des plaisirs intellectuels raffinés, multipliés à l'infini.' Bernard Shaw is the only English contemporary noticed.

L'œuvre scientifique de Blaise Pascal. Bibliographie critique et analyse de tous les travaux qui s'y rapportent. Par Albert Maire.

The preface is by Pierre Duhem. The book is a thorough piece of work—the author is the Librarian of the Sorbonne—and indispensable to students of the history of science.

Du Luthéranisme au Protestantisme. Evolution de Luther de 1517 à 1528. Par Léon Cristianî.

Not a biography: the life is only dealt with so far as is necessary for following the inward drama that led to a new era in the history of Christianity.

Geschichte der Alttestamentlichen Religion kritisch dargestellt. Von Eduard König.

The purpose of the work is to assist historical research.

Godeau, évêque de Grasse et de Vence (1605-1672). Première partie. Jeunesse de Godeau et son épiscopat à Grasse de 1636 à 1639. Par Georges Doublet.

The work will be completed in two further parts, 1640-53, and 1654-72. Godeau was one of the first members of the French Academy.

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Le directoire et la paix de l'Europe des traités de Bâle à la deuxième Coalition 1795-99. Par Raymond Guyot.

The author, founding his conclusions on new documents studied in a new way, thinks that Europe would have been quite willing in 1797 to have accepted definitive peace.

Die amerikanische Literatur. Von Dr. C. Alphonso Smith.

Lectures given at the University of Berlin, 1910-11. A very useful brief survey of the history and evolution of American literature.

W. A. Mozart. Sa vie musicale et son œuvre de l'enfance à la pleine maturité, 1750-77. Par T. de Wyzewa and G. de Saint-Foix.

An 'essai de biographie critique.' It contains a new chronological catalogue of Mozart's works.

Richard Strauss. Von Max Steinitzer.

A good account of the modern composer's work.

Monuments de l'art ancien russe. Published by the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts at St. Petersburg.

A sumptuous volume with fine illustrations, many in colour.

Von Apelles zu Böcklin und weiter. Gesammelte kunstgeschichtliche Aufsätze, Vorträge und Besprechungen. Von Karl Woermann. Vol. I.

This volume goes to the seventeenth century, and among the subjects treated are the art of antiquity, the art of the Italian renaissance, and old German art.

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Among new novels the following are the most important :—

Les frontières du cœur. Par Victor Margueritte.

Du mouron pour les petits oiseaux. Par Léon de Tinseau.

La neige sur les pas. Par Henry Bordeaux.

A variation on the theme that forgiveness is better than revenge.

Monsieur de Lourdines. Par Alphonse de Chateaubriant.

This novel, which relates the life of a 'gentilhomme campagnard,' has obtained the 'Prix Goncourt.'

La bonne fortune de Toto. Par Gyp.

An amusing comedy in the dialogue form usual with this writer on contemporary Parisian manners.

La serre de l'aigle. Par Georges Ohnet.

A mixture of history and legend, the combination being treated as romance.

Die Burgkinder. Von Rudolf Herzog.

Die Göttinnen oder die drei Romane der Herzogin von Assy. Von Heinrich Mann.

ELIZABETH LEE.