

vocalization and words is so far from being inevitable that it is difficult to bring about or maintain it. When Du Maurier made *Trilby* vocalize one of Chopin's Impromptus he adopted the only way he could make her vocalize and be a modern romantic. Florid vocalization is hardly a way of expressing the plain meaning of words at all. It acts on words in much the same way as repetition does, expounding them and setting them in different lights. To do this with the pained lyric with a strong personal note would as a rule be insufferable. In the days of the intimate Elizabethan lyric, music as we understand it was only in its infancy. As poetry became artificial vocal music became florid, and the two went together naturally enough. For the musical exposition of words of an ornate, artificial type no musical form could ever be more fitting than the old *aria*. As poetry became natural again the difficulty of combination began to be felt. First Gluck and gradually everybody began to theorize against the florid style. It died eventually in Italy, the land of beautiful voices and beautiful vowel sounds, and it remains in modern music only as the vocalized refrain, as in *Solwig's* song, in 'Carmen,' and in some of Rubinstein's songs. Until poetry becomes classical in style once more, and impersonal in expression, the utmost effect that a hundred Trazzini's could have on composition would be to bring about the supply of marketable florid songs. The living lyric or the romantic narrative poetry that Wagner wrote must ever tend in the direction of melodrama or accompanied speech."

WILL WHITTIER'S FAME SURVIVE?

AT this hour stock is being taken of the hostages given to fame by our Quaker poet, Whittier. Is his fame enduring and upon what does it rest? That question does not bring forth unqualified answers. Certainly his centenary has evoked recognition of a wide-spread character. The daily press particularly have noted his birthday, December 17, in a manner which seems to show that he holds a place near to the heart of the man in the street. He is remembered for his championship of the cause of freedom, for his glorification of the simple life of early New England, for his fervent Quaker piety; but critical opinion is not so sure of him. With the settlement of public questions in which he bore a hand, such as slavery, it is said that interest in his occasional verse has subsided also.

Viewing him as a pure poet, criticism, even before his death, wore "a supercilious air, dwelling upon his perfectly obvious limitations, his lack of finish, his defect of ear, and the general crudity of many of his improvisations." These things, says the *Chicago Dial*, have "obscured the critical vision, and prevented his entire work from being seen in its true perspective." But that time of patronage and depreciation has passed, *The Dial* thinks, and our eyes are turned in the direction where "his qualities of positive excellence are seen to be more deserving of attention." Some of these qualities are indicated in these words:

"He has been variously compared to Crabbe, Cowper, and Burns, and even to Tennyson. The comparisons may not be close, but the fact that he suggests them at all is significant. The faithful and minute realism of his New England descriptive pieces more than confirms the likeness with Crabbe, and the lyrical quality of Burns, his acknowledged master, is echoed in many of his New England songs and ballads. It was a Southern poet, Paul Hayne, who spoke of his verse as 'rythmic gold,' and compared him with the poet of 'The Task' in this quatrain:

God's innocent pensioners in the woodland dim,
The fields, the pastures, know and trust in him,
And in their love, his lonely heart is blest.
Our pure hale-minded Cowper of the West.

"As for Tennyson, if Whittier touches him at all, it is upon the idyllic side, and also in a few rare flashes of spiritual insight. We have often thought that the closing stanzas of 'Burning Drift-Wood' would not suffer greatly if set in comparison even with the faultless stanzas of 'Crossing the Bar.' Here they are, ready for the touch-stone.

I hear the solemn monotone
Of waters calling unto me,
I know from whence the airs have blown
That whisper of the Eternal Sea.

As low my fires of drift-wood burn,
I hear that sea's deep sounds increase,
And, fair in sunset light, discern
Its mirage-lifted Isles of Peace."

Prof. Bliss Perry, writing of Whittier in *The Atlantic Monthly* (December), voices what may perhaps be the puzzled view of the critical spirit. "Does Whittier to-day, fifty years after the full maturing of his powers, and fifteen years after his death," he asks, "either compel or persuade his countrymen to listen to him?" He hesitates to give a frank answer, and indulges in many abatements of whole-hearted praise. "In spite of the clear resonance with which he now and again struck the note of nationality, and in spite



LUISA TETRAZZINI,

Hailed by London as the greatest of florid singers, appears January 15 at the Manhattan Opera-house, New York. Her repertoire is confined to the old Italian operas, but she is said to give them a renewed vitality.

of his cosmopolitan curiosity about the world at large, . . . Whittier never lost a sort of rusticity," he asserts, and goes on to meet the objection that Burns also was a rustic with the declaration that Whittier's rusticity "seems now, as Burns's provincialism does not, to narrow the range of his influence as a poet." The American poet was, in addition, he thinks, "limited in his physical capacity to perceive beauty and in his artistic power to interpret it," and "even in that field of moral ideas where his strength lay, his path was likewise narrow." After such abatements we may, the Professor thinks, "fall back upon Whittier's gift of fiery and tender speech." But even then we find no easy answer to the question whether Whittier compels or persuades his audience. There is more in the changed temper of the people, the writer hints, than in the failure of the poet, as the following shows:

"Our people as a whole respond quickly to personal leadership. They have an immense latent capacity for moral and political enthusiasm. The career of Theodore Roosevelt is a sufficient proof of this. But there is no master voice in the world of letters to which the American people are now listening. In Whittier's early manhood he set himself deliberately to learn the principles of true liberty from the prose of Milton and of Burke. There are few

greater names in our literature than these. But aside from the perfunctory reading of extracts for school and college examinations, who is reading Milton and Burke to-day? Who is reading Byron and Shelley, poets of emancipation, kin to Whittier by many bonds of sympathy, and far transcending him in poetic variety, power, and beauty? The mind of the American people is occupied with other concerns. For that matter, there is not a single living poet, in any country of the globe, who is generally recognized as a commanding voice. Tennyson was the last. That others will arise in due time no one who knows the history of humanity can doubt. But they have not yet come."

The Southwestern Christian Advocate (colored, New Orleans) devotes almost the entire contents of its issue of December 12 to Whittier. Besides the contributed articles, it prints an editorial expressing the gratitude of a race for the work of "the poet, the abolitionist, the editor, the statesman, and politician whose name is inseparably connected with the freedom of the negro and whose unselfish efforts paved the way for the proclamation that made Lincoln immortal and a race free." It continues characteristically:

"One hundred years ago God took him from the quarry of the common people. Born poor on purpose that he might be all the closer in touch with the poor. So poor that even in New England he was not blest with a liberal education. Born in due time—a time that tried men's souls—when the nation's conscience slept. Born when God was calling for a tall white angel to take the trumpet of human liberty and blow so loud as to stir the world and resurrect the American conscience. Born of a weak and, in number, an insignificant people; a people, moved by the spirit of God, pious in life and trustful of God; a people that feared God and hated shams and sins. Thus came this prophet of God into the world, marked in heart and brain for a peculiar work for a lowly people. How well he filled his mission it will take ages to tell.

"John Greenleaf Whittier heard the call of duty and answered without hesitancy or equivocation. It was the turning from a remunerative literary career, which would have offered him ease and comfort, only that he might serve in poverty a movement for the freedom of a people. He threw himself into the breach with bitterness toward none, but a strong indignation against the 'sum of villainies.' His talent and time were consecrated to the negro's freedom. He is essentially the poet of freedom. True there were others who wrote and in whose poems may be found mighty strokes for the cause of freedom, yet Whittier so clearly outstript these and out-classed them in number and the quality of his productions in behalf of the Christian slave and the slave who knew not God that he stands out almost singly and alone as the great poet of freedom."

THACKERAY'S "BEST FRIEND"

THACKERAY once confessed that he could describe an Irishman perfectly, but that to describe a Scotchman was beyond him. The man to whom this confession was made was Prof. David Masson, who held for many years the chair of English literature in Edinburgh University, and was the biographer of Milton. His death occurred within the past few months and his reminiscences, taken down from dictation by his daughter about six years ago, are to be found in *Blackwood's Magazine* (December). They relate to the figures met in mid-Victorian years at the Museum Club in London, when Professor Masson was a young journalist. There he fell in with Thackeray, who, apropos of the admission that Scotchmen fell outside the pale of his literary inventiveness, while the Irishman held no such baffling position, told the following anecdote, which Andrew Lang, writing in *The Evening Post* (New York), says gave him "a great inclination to cry" in pure affection and admiration for a man whom I never saw." Professor Masson, according to his own account, demurred to Thackeray's self-depreciation and reminded him of *Mr. Binnie*. To this Thackeray replied, and we quote from *Blackwood's* the rest of the recital:

"Oh, that's not what I mean; that's a mere facsimile of a man I know; a mere description from life. But what I mean is, I couldn't invent a Scotchman; I should go wrong. But oh! I'm quite at home with the Irish character! I know the Irish thoroughly.

The best friend I ever had in the world—the nicest and most delightful fellow I ever knew in the world—was an Irishman. But, d'ye know, he was a great rascal! I'll tell you how he served me once. He was in low water, and was always coming to me to borrow a sovereign or two, when I hadn't many to spare. But he was such a dear delightful fellow, it was quite a pleasure to lend them to him. One day, however, he came to me and said, I say, Thack, you're a writer for magazines. Now, I've got a paper that I think would suit a magazine, and I wish you'd get it into one of them for me, because I'm hard up at present, and a few guineas would come in handy.' I took his paper, and actually kept one of my own papers out of *Fraser's Magazine* of the coming month, tho it was rather a considerable sacrifice for me at the time, in order to get my friend's paper in. Oh! you've no idea what a nice, delightful fellow that was! Well, the paper appeared; and it was perhaps a week or two after the beginning of the month before I next stepped into Fraser's, the publisher's shop. I thought Fraser looked rather glum when I went in; but I did not know the cause till he said—

"Well, this is a pretty affair, Mr. Thackeray!"

"What affair?" I asked.

"Why, that paper of your friend's, in this number!"

"What about it?" I said.

"He went to a drawer, and took out a newspaper clipping, and asked me to look at it. I did; and found, to my horror, that my friend's paper was denounced as a barefaced plagiarism. It had been copied *verbatim* from an article that had appeared in some other periodical. The date and all other particulars were given.

"I was of course greatly annoyed, and indeed excessively angry; and I thought, 'Well, I must cut the fellow forever; there's no getting on with him.' I took the clipping with me, and went straight to my friend's rooms, intending to blow him up, once for all, and have done with him. I showed him the clipping, and declared his behavior to have been scandalous. What do you think he did? He laughed in my face, and treated the whole affair as a capital joke!

"That's how my Irish friend served me; but oh! he was the nicest friend, the dearest, most delightful fellow, I ever knew in the world!"

From this, according to Professor Masson, "Thackeray went on to speak more seriously of the Irish, and of his intimate knowledge of and his great liking for them." Further:

"Among other things, he said there was one most likable quality that he had observed in them, and it was this: that there would never be found an Irishman anywhere in the world so low down but there was some other Irishman still lower down, depending on him, and whom he was assisting.

"I ventured to suggest that there was no great difference between the Irish and the Scotch in this respect; for it might be said of the Scotch (I said I preferred to put it in the reverse way) that there was no Scotsman anywhere in the world so high up, but there was some other Scotsman, still higher up, whom he was looking up to and being helped by; that, in fact, to blend his observation and mine, the world might be said to be a kind of Jacob's ladder, with ascending and descending angels upon it. Thackeray laughed; and at this point our talk ended."

THE following letter from R. L. Stevenson to Marion Crawford has lately come to light. We quote from *The British Weekly* (London):

SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES.

(Postmark, April 15th, 1890.)

Dear Sir: I sail in some forty hours back among the islands, which are now more homelike in my eyes than the world to which I once belonged; I have a thousand calls upon my time; I do not know you, it is likely we shall never meet, and I think it not improbable that my literature may be abominable in your eyes. For all that, I sacrifice some of my last moments to send you my salutations and thanks. Years ago I read "Mr. Isaacs"; I did not like it—I suppose I was a fool—and read no more of you till the other day, when I fell a prey to "Greifenstein," and I am now surrounded by your works and in the middle of "With the Immortals." It is reviving to me to know I have a contemporary of your strength; tho I suppose you are younger, as I hope you will soar higher and farther, than

Your admirer,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S.—I trust you will not think I expect an answer; it is my weakness to rush in with encumbering gratitude when I am pleased; but the act suffices. And indeed I can not now be said to possess such a thing as an address; the ship in which I leave sails with sealed orders, and I myself am ignorant whither I am bound or where I may bring up. Some of your books—poor waifs!—are to make the same blindfold launch; they will be read in a better climate and in lovelier places than their author dreams of, Italy not being forgotten.

R. L. S.