VIRGIL'S TOMB.

Extravagance in no Acts.

CHARACTERS—SCHOOLBOY, ITALIAN GUIDE, VIRGIL.

Sceene—Grotto of Posilippo.

GUIDE. This, sare, is Virgil's tomb.

SCHOOLBOY. Oh, do let me see!
I've often thought he'd be the death of me,
And the verses he has to do, I'm certain
What time I would save
If all his lines were written in the grave!
Virgil engaged! Such things can scarce
be hinted!
But how I wish he never had been printed!
Let's look into his epitaph—"Virgilii ego
Mare!
Vicus, Parthenope, cecini pascua, rura duces."
—Whether Silenus comes from Troy or from
Harrow,
Nouns in *i* or *ambe* vocative in *i*,
Short, pock'ty, pleasant, pleasant! Virgil!
But why dost trouble me?

SCHOOLBOY. That's very cool!
As if you'd never troubled us at school.
(Virgil, outraged by Eton chaff, re-enters tomb. Curtain).

VICTOR HUGO'S NEW STORY.

Criticism by Algernon Charles Swinburne.

We are tempted, in spite of its manifest rhodomontade, to give place to the eloquent tribute paid by the young English pagan to the French romancer's latest work. We find the review, as follows, in the *Fortnightly:*

THE OUTRIVER OF VICTOR HUGO.

Only once in my life have I seen the likeness of Victor Hugo's genius. Crossing over when a boy from Calais, I had the fortune to be caught in mid-channel by a thunder-storm strong enough to clap the pocket some three good hours over the due time. About midnight the thunder-cloud was right overhead, full of incessant sound and fire, lightening and darkness so rapidly that it seemed to have life, and a delight in its life. At the same time the sky was clear to the west, and all along the sea-line there sprang and sank as to music a restless dance or chase of lightnings, flashing across the lower sky; a race and rut of lights, beautiful and terrible as the course of shining Oceanides along the tremulous floor of the sea. Eastward, at the same moment, the space of clear sky was lighted with a large splendid semicircle of too intense purity to be called blue; it was of one tone inassuming to man; and without in it, between the storm and the sea, hung the motionless full moon; artemis watching, with a serene disdainful or scorn the battle of Titans and the revel of the nymphs, flashed across and overshadowed the smit of divine indifferent light. Underneath and beneath this was the crackling and quivering of the water sparks. In the same heaven and in the same hour there shone at once the three contrasted glories, golden and fiery and white, of moonlight and of the double lightning; and the sea was one with and like this miraculous heaven by a flaming floor of water.

That, in a most close and exact symbol, is the best possible definition I can give of Victor Hugo's genius. And the impression of that hour was upon me the impression of his mind; physical, it touched the nerves with a more vivid passion of pleasure than music or wines; spiritual, as it exalted the spirit with the senses, and above them, by the very amount of sense and delight. It is no fantastic similitude, but an accurate literal one two causes working to the same effect. There is nothing but that delight like the delight given by some of his works. And it is because this recent book has not seldom given it me again, that I have anything here to say of it.

THE BOOK TO BE REGARDED AS IDEAL.

It is a book to be rightly read, not by the lamplight of realism, but by the sunlight of his imagination reflected upon many years. Only so shall we see it as it is, much less understand it. The outline, the shape, the meaning, are ideal; and therefore cannot be impaired by any want of realism. Error and violation of likelihood of fact, would destroy a work of Balzac's or of Thackeray's, cannot even lower or lessen the rank and value of a work like this. To put it away because it has not the great and precious qualities of their school, but those of a school quite different, is just as wise as it would be, on the other hand, to assault the fame of Rosa on die ground that he has not written in the manner of Shakespeare; or Newton's, because he has not written like Milton. This present volume, I shall leave the discussion of names and the anatomy of probabilities to the things of matter and details, as well and scientifically defined long since by Mr. Charles Reade, as "anonymous work by ear-dribbling about." I shall not stop to look at them; and it will not greatly hurt the master poet of an age that they should shriek and titter, cackle and hoot inaudibly behind his heel. It is not every demigod who is vulnerable here.

This book has in it, so to say, a certain elemental quality. It is great because it deals greatly with great emotion. It is a play played not only between human character and wind and sea, thunder and moonlight, have their parts too to fill. Nor is this all; for it is itself a thing like those things. As they are an elemental life. It pieces and shakes the very roots of passion. It catches and bends the spirit as Pallas caught Achilles and bent him by the hair. Were it not so, this would be no child of the master's; but so, as always, it is. Hence, the birth-mark of the great race is visible.

It is not, whatever it may seem, a novel or a study, historical or social. What touches on life or manners, we see to be accidental by-play as soon as we see that the book is, indeed, the story of the battle of a human spirit, first with Fate, then with the old three subordinate enemies: the World, the Flesh and the Devil. And here I will say where the flaw, as I think, lies; for, like other great things, a great book can have a flaw. The Flesh and the Devil, dealing in Bad Infinities, are perfect; the World is drawn wrong. And the reason is not far to seek. We all break daily against the Flesh and the Devil, we must all rub shoulders and shake hands with them; and they are always much the same at root, only stronger and weaker with this man than with that; therefore do we know the land of a great poet to paint them greatly, after their true and very likeness. But the World is multiform. The paths of one spirit in its career, you must have come close enough on that side to breathe the breath of its mouth, and see by the light of its eyes. No accumulation of fact upon fact gleaned and laid up never so carefully, will avail you instead. Titan himself cannot paint without colors. Here we have canvas and case and light made ready, but the colors are not to be had. In other words, here are many curious and accurate details painfully studied and stored up for the use of a man who is not seldom for misuse. Here are many social facts rightly detailed and duly laid out side by side, but no likeness of social life. Here are the blocks of the clay, for example, much as we find them in Swift; here is often visible even a ravenous excess of labor in the research of small things useless, because the collector of them has never applied his spirit to the spirit of the time in which these small things played in passing their small parts. He cannot, because that time has no attraction for him on any one side to temper the reposition he feels from another side of it. Pure hate and scorn of slander or of people over the heads of observation, much more of description, even in the historic mind, what, then will they do, when the mind is not historic? Swift has undoubtless there it, now much that is hateful and contemptible in Addison, English or other; and also, he certainly has far more admirable and thankworthy. Doubtless also, some other English mind, not less English and visible of evil and shameful human nobleness, has a more rounded, wider, and, for the time of "unmixed good," or evil; and he only who has felt the pulse of humanity, who has felt how he or she heart really beat toward evil or toward good, can be the man who writes of a nation or a time, forever bad and base in the main, without any love for it, cannot write of it well. A great English poetess has admirably said that a poet's heart may be large enough to hold two nations. Victor Hugo's, apart from his heroic love of man, a love matchless except, by Shelley's, holds two nations especially close, two of the greatest. Yet has often been said he is French and Spanish; that is, he loves France and Spain, the spirit of them attracts his spirit; but does not love England. There are great Englishmen who—no man has praised more highly than he; but the spirit of his literary England has no attraction for his. Hence, he has made important than any passing errors of grotesque nomenclature or misplaced detail, the spiritual and fundamental error of the book, seen only from its social or historic side. We catch nowhere for a moment the note of English life in the reign of Anne. Those for whom I write will know, and will see, that I do not write as a special pleader for a country, or a class, or one who will see no spot in England or nobility. But indeed it is an abuse of words to say that England is governed or misgoverned by her aristocracy. A republican, studying where to strike, should read better the blows on his enemy's shield. "England," I have heard it said, "is not a despotism tempered by epigrams," but a plutocracy modified by accidents."

CHARACTERS: THE WORLD, THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL.

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"THE FLESH."

In this poem, as in the old pictures, we see the serpent writhing, not fangless, under the foot of an angel, and its head or its tail or its coil the heel that bruises his head. Only this time it is hardly an angel of light. Uncommanding or her office as another St. Michael, the Angel of the Flesh stands under the uncomprehended sun. Seen but once in full, the naked glory of the Titaness irradiates all one side of the poem with excess and superfluity of splendor.

Among the fields and gardens, the mountain heights and hollows of Victor Hugo's true poetic kingdom, there are strange superb innatures, bird—and—beast—of—various—fur—and feathers, but yet there was nothing like them in Balzac, working with other means, might have given us, by dint of anxious anatomy, some pictures of the virgin harlot. A marvelous study we should have had, one to burn into the brain and brand the memory forever; but outlines a thing to admire than desire. The magnet, the attractive, the influence—attractive, but, it would not have given us. But now we have it, from the hands of a poet as well as a student, new-blown and actual as a gathered flower, in warm bloom of blood and breath, clothed—with live color—with living—warm flesh, passionately palpable. This we see, first—and feel, and love for this spirit. It is a strange beast that hides in this den of roses. Such has been, however, and must be. "We are all little, and, beginning with Tennyson, Mr. Reade's definition is complete; "a possible Asiatic intent in an actual Diana." She is not merely spotless in body; she is perverse, not unclean. There is nothing of foulness in the mystic rage of her desire. She is, indeed, "stainless and shameless;" to be unclean is common, and her virtue depraved, "will touch nothing common or unclean. She had seven devils in her, and upon her not a fleck of filth. She has no more in common with the lewd, low bitterlings of the baser school of realism, than a creature of the brothel and the street has in common with the Alcmaids who rest in snow the living limbs of Apollo. We seem to hear about her the beat and clash of the serpent timbrels, the music that Æschylus set to verse, the music that made mad, the music of notes of the psalm, shrill and strong as a sea wind, the "shrill-voiced" bellowing undersong of these great choristers from somewhere out of sight, the tempest of tambourines giving back thunder and the thunder, the fury of divine fire, the thickened with human blood the hill-streams of Citheron.

It is no vain vaunt of the modern master's that he has given us in another guise one of the Æschylean women, a immaculate goddess, whose tone of voice "gave a sort of Promethean grandeur to her furious and amorous words," who had in her the tragic and "Titanic passion of the women of the Æsculian feats "seething as water under the stars." And that all this fierce excess of imaginative color and tragic intention, the woman is modern and

"I know not if it has been remarked how Nature's work in the tragic mode, much as in Molière, a Frenchman of the French, at bottom comic, as recognizable as Molière life, passing under and through the tide-stream of his genius. There is a mere material Theme mixed into his mind, a more northern tone intertwined, than into any other of the great French writers, Rabelais excepted. Yellow, for instance, in so many ways so far from both, is nothing if not Parisian. And, if I am wrong, no third great Frenchman has ever found such acceptance and sympathy among Englishmen unblinded with the French spirit as Rabelais and Molière. For them instinct breaks down the bar of ignorance.

"For one instance, if a court lady had indeed insulted Swift, she would certainly have had, by way of answer, something like Dulinda's phrase, "more monstrously Swiftian for quotation," something, no doubt, of the "Ode to the Honour" which Swift would