

to extend the discordant contradictions of his own interior world to all living nature, so far as she shares in the life and aims of men. *Fragmentarisch ist Welt und Leben*. It was as thus conceived that he apprehended, envisioned and passionately loved nature.

Heine's spiritual development falls into three distinct stages: first, the acute crisis of life and suffering, expressed in his *Lieder*. This period was characterized by sensuousness, infatuated contemplation of Nature, and pantheistic interpretation of her phenomena. In the second period of his development social and political questions preoccupied him. The poet was

impelled to turn the light of his spiritual fire and the shafts of his irony upon the speculative and practical problems of life — *Zeitgedichte, Atta Troll, Germania*. He was consumed with a profound longing for a new life, although he concealed this aspiration behind a mask of bitter ridicule. The last period, in which his individualist aspiration and his sensuousness alone survived, was characterized by a complete absorption in attachment to life itself, that became more powerful precisely in the degree that he was isolated and deprived of all that life bestows. This period reached its tragic conclusion in the *Romanzero*.

DICKENS AND MEREDITH

BY JAMES MOFFAT

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From the *Hibbert Journal*, October
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IT was at the Saracen's Head in Towcester that the editor of the *Eatonswill Gazette* astonished Mr. Pickwick by informing him that a critic on the staff of his newspaper had just written an article upon Chinese metaphysics. "An abstruse subject," said Mr. Pickwick. "Very, sir," replied Mr. Pott; "he crammed for it, to use a technical but expressive term; he read up for the subject, at my desire, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*." "Indeed," said Mr. Pickwick; "I was not aware that that valuable work contained any information respecting Chinese metaphysics." "He read, sir," said the edi-

tor, laying his hand on Mr. Pickwick's knee, and looking round with a smile of intellectual superiority, "he read for metaphysics under the letter M, and for China under the letter C, and combined his information, sir."

At first sight a study of Dickens and Meredith might seem only possible as the result of a similar effort to combine information artificially. The two novelists appear remote from one another in style and spirit. Their names suggest points of contrast rather than anything else. Dickens with his broad popular appeal, Meredith with his smaller audience of people who 'con-

sent to be thwacked by a fantastic delivery of the verities'; Dickens with humor predominant, Meredith with wit and all the self-consciousness and cleverness born of wit; Dickens splashing in sentiment, Meredith the scorner of sentiment; Dickens direct and generally journalistic in style, Meredith apt to be allusive, jerky, and compact. . . . Their methods of story-telling seem to belong to different worlds. Yet the worlds touch. Meredith never refers to Dickens in his essay on Comedy, probably because comedy meant for him dramatic comedy; but he knew Dickens and admired him. Even as Meredith went his own road, the spirit of his older contemporary in Victorian fiction sometimes influenced him more or less unconsciously.

Both were Hampshire men, though Dickens made himself a man of Kent, and though he never knew cricket, Hampshire's pride, as Meredith did — otherwise he could not have written the absurd sentence about the Dingley Dell innings. When Meredith described cricket, as in *Evan Harrington* and *Diana of the Crossways*, he knew better than that, even if he could not create a spectator and critic in the pavilion like Mr. Alfred Jingle. Both men were also Londoners; London streets and the London river, London theatres and London society, fill some of their most characteristic pages. Both were passionately fond of walking, though Meredith did his by day. Both suffered in marriage. Both were lovers of France. And both lived in a full-blooded Homeric enjoyment of eating and drinking. Meredith's wine chapters and feasts at inns are as catching as those in Dickens, though he hints that his convivial persons show their culture as well as their sociability, their taste in wine being part of their appreciation of life.

These common features lie on the surface. It is more apposite to notice, for example, their common interest in boys, which was comparatively new in our fiction. Henry Kingsley certainly makes use of children in his novels. But Dickens and Meredith first found out the value of the boy. The real boy, I mean, for Paul Dombey was never a boy, and the Fat Boy was never anything else. But David Copperfield as Trotwood, Pip, Joe, Kit with his red cheeks and shock-head, Todger's boy, and the glorious Trabbs's boy, show what Dickens could do in this line. Most of them are on an humble social plane; but boys are boys on any plane, and they are not far from the boys who are so mischievous and merry in Meredith's novels, and who are dear to him because they are so unsentimental. There is Crossjay in the *Egoist*, for instance, who 'was not only indolent, he was opposed to the acquisition of knowledge through the medium of books, and would say, "But I don't want to" in a tone to make a logician thoughtful' — like Mr. Weller's friend, the charity boy.

As a rule, Meredith's boys are happier, for Dickens has his eye mostly on the sufferings of boys in the lower classes and at school. Yet both novelists were alive to the problem of popular education, which was beginning to agitate the English mind about the middle of the last century. Dickens indeed represents the earlier phase of protest against its abuses; Meredith is the more constructive thinker of a later day. Few wiser things have been written on education than his words in *Lord Ormont and His Aminta*, or earlier in *Richard Feverel*, upon the aims and methods of education. When Dickens wrote, it was the brutality of some English schools that required reform; the children were cruelly treated and their imaginations were being starved.

Meredith's eye was on the education of the upper classes, which was inadequate and stiff rather than coarse, as he saw it, unequal to the demands of a wider age.

Certainly no one, not even Tennyson, did more to put vitality into the demand for the higher education and ampler opportunities of women. Women, I find, do not often care for Dickens, perhaps because he takes a Victorian limited view of their functions, perhaps because the henpecked husband is so common in his tales. Almost the only woman with strength of mind is Miss Betsy Trotwood. But, if women have any gratitude, and if gratitude ever acts as a motive in the choice of reading, they ought to buy, read, and study Meredith.

The two men also agreed in their antipathy to ecclesiasticism. With Dickens, this was rooted in his objection to Christianity as he often found it — not simply indifferent to social reform but presented as a religion which ignored the human no less than the humane, amounting to 'a gloomy sacrifice of tastes and sympathies . . . austere faces, inexorable discipline, penance in this world and terror in the next — nothing graceful or gentle anywhere.' He knew and drew good clergymen. But we almost forget their outlines in the gallery which is bright with Mr. Stiggins, the Rev. Melchisedech Howler, and the preacher at Little Bethel. In organized religion Dickens saw generally little more than hotbeds of hypocrisy. Taine has pointed out acutely that, unlike Molière, he did not select a typically religious man as his supreme hypocrite. Mr. Pecksniff, no doubt, has the language of piety at his command ('Charity and Mercy! not unholy names, I hope'); he can talk so nobly of the soul that Mrs. Lupin wonders not to see a stained-glass glory of the saints shining over

his head; he likes Tom Pinch to be organist in the local church, as his young man. But he is a moralist. Taine is right in emphasizing that. Nevertheless Dickens did find material for his satire and caricature of hypocrisy among religious people as well as among philanthropists and moralists. Carlyle's influence is marked at this point, just as it is in Meredith.

The Comic Spirit, Meredith explains, is 'only hostile to the priestly element, when that, by baleful swelling, transcends and overlaps the bounds of its office . . . as for example the spectacle of Bossuet over the dead body of Molière: at which the dark angels may, but men do not, laugh.' Meredith's novels introduce us to Anglican curates and rectors more often than to dissenters. He despises them too heartily to pillory them, though once a Tractarian cleric is ridiculed as 'a kind of bitter, clawed, forked female, in vestments over breeches.' As a rule, they are amorous, brainless, and heavy. He too shares the antipathy of Dickens to an ultra-Puritan misreading of Christianity, as though the good were synonymous with the ugly and the uncomfortable. 'The peacemaker with Providence performing devotional exercises in black bile' — that is one of his acid phrases for the ordinary hymn.

But his principal charge against the clergy is their devotion to the status quo. They are 'Society's trusty rock-limpets,' another buttress of the traditional in life. He could admit an honest one to his pages, like Woodseer's nonconformist father in the *Amazing Marriage*, but his reasoned objections to Christianity led him further than Dickens's instinctive antipathy to unworthy representatives and representations of that religion. However, if he and Dickens touched the clergy unkindly, it may be claimed

that, like the lawyers, the editors, the hospital nurses, and the medical students, in short like everyone except the Barnacles in Government offices, we have had the grace to profit by their words and wounds.

Mid-Victorian England gave both novelists another cue in the rise of the manufacturing classes to wealth, the social changes produced by a phenomenon like the extension of the railway system, and the prosperity of a new set of people, who had hitherto been outside Society. Lady Dorothy Nevill has enabled us to understand from the inside the invasion of society during the forties and the fifties which began to break up the earlier exclusiveness. With the help of her pages we can fill in the background of both novelists. Meredith's chosen soil was society — the upper and middle classes of England, people with some leisure and means; so that this profound displacement came home to him. No doubt Dickens also, especially in later books like *Our Mutual Friend* and *Little Dorrit*, had noted the rise of the new wealth and its incipient alliance with the aristocracy. But Meredith had opportunities for a deeper analysis. The rise of the manufacturing aristocracy in the sixties, the seventies, and the eighties, which effected a partial transformation of English society, was only beginning when Dickens drew Mr. Bounderby and the Merdles. He could do justice to the manly side of the movement, as in the case of Mr. Rouncewell the ironmaster, but the inferior side of it offered him rich material for satire.

Now, while Dickens's main count against the *nouveaux riches* was that they were heartless, Meredith charged them with being brainless. Dickens deprived them of their wealth, by what he considered dramatic justice; Mr. Merdle's money vanishes, like

Mr. Dombey's. Meredith made them lose themselves, not their money. He does refer casually to 'the Puritan rich of the period, emerging by the aid of our extending wealth into luxurious worldliness, and retaining the maxims of their forefathers for the discipline of the poor and erring' — a caustic sentence! But what he objected to principally in these rich upstarts was their imperviousness to ideas and their disposition to be content with the existing social order. They are selfish? Yes, said Meredith, but the fault is still more radical: they will not think.

We might almost argue that the effect of money accumulating in a few hands is found by Meredith not in the suffering entailed upon the poor but in the untoward results for the owners and their children.

It was in this connection that the passion for mounting in the social scale amused and interested Meredith. He set himself to study it as it was fostered by sudden wealth and as it fostered snobbishness, unreality, and sentimentalism. One of the contemporary questions which engaged the mind was, What is a gentleman? Now, since 1850 Dickens had been editing *Household Words*—editing it and contributing to it. Meredith also contributed to the paper, not novels but verses. When Dickens quarrelled with his publishers, Messrs Bradbury and Evans, *Household Words* became *All the Year Round*, and in 1860 he started the serial publication of *Great Expectations*, in which the false ambition that led Pip to be ungrateful to Joe and feel ashamed of the forge and of Biddy, was the snobbish passion for being a gentleman, on the score of the money which he imagined was his by special favor of Miss Havisham.

The greater Victorians took this seriously; you find Ruskin and New-

man discussing the meaning of 'gentleman' in the abstract. But what is most interesting for our present purpose is the odd coincidence that Meredith's contribution to *Once a Week*, the rival magazine to *All the Year Round*, was a novel with exactly the same motive. In October, 1860, he had nearly killed the paper with *Evan Harrington*, which, to our amazement, missed the public. But the striking thing is that he had anticipated the notion which was in the mind of Dickens as, two months later, he launched *Great Expectations* upon its successful course. The subtitle of *Evan Harrington* is, *He Would Be a Gentleman*. Evan was tempted to despise trade, incidentally brewing, but especially tailoring. Like Pip, he was at first snared by showy social pretensions, then disillusioned, and finally made alive to the real qualities of a gentleman. Meredith's novel took a wider and deeper view than that of Dickens. He made allowance for the fact that birth and blood do count, even while he was deriding the conventional disparagement of trade. But it remains remarkable that in that very year he had deliberately attempted in fiction to do what Dickens was about to do, exposing false ambitions and unmanly conceptions in those who desired to be gentlemen.

After they had lit up 1861 with *Great Expectations* and *Evan Harrington*, both men paused for a little, Dickens occupied with editing his magazine and with public readings, Meredith writing poetry and acting as a war-correspondent in Italy. The next novels they published, almost simultaneously, show them further apart. *Sandra Belloni* has few points of contact with *Our Mutual Friend*. No doubt, both tales reflect the social rise of the *nouveaux riches* in London — that affinity between the later

Dickens and the earlier Meredith which we have already noticed. Both circle round London merchants and their doings. But, apart from other considerations, Meredith was now doing in his own style what George Eliot did, developing fiction out of a distinct philosophical theory; and, although that theory of life and religion found expression in his verse rather than in his novels, yet the latter were being written under its influence, and this meant a departure from the more naïve attitude of Dickens. *Sandra Belloni* emphasizes this. Yet there is one odd reminder of Dickens in it. We know poor Mr. Guppy in *Bleak House*, the little law-clerk who for prudential reasons loved and wooed Esther Summerson, haunting the theatre when she was present and gazing up from the pit with hair untended, collar awry, and woe depicted on his fatuous face, that is, with a carefully prepared expression of profound dejection. Well, Meredith has that also in *Sandra Belloni*. Braintop, the young clerk, is also in love; he too looks up adoringly to the box in the theatre where his bright, particular star, Emilia, sits far above him. Only Braintop was more careful about his personal appearance than Mr. Guppy; 'he took an opportunity furtively to eye himself in a pocket-mirror.' But this may be no more than a curious coincidence, like the similarity between the two novelists in their use of family reminiscences in *David Copperfield* and *Evan Harrington*, where some rather unfilial suggestions for the picture are taken from the author's father.

A broader comparison of their works will disclose the organic relation between the two men. For example, there is the question of social morality. We know how the fear of offending Mrs. Grundy, or rather of vexing the

prudish soul of James Ballantyne, made Scott handicap *St. Roman's Well* by hesitating to reveal the real connection between Clara Mowbray and her lover. He blurred that, and spoiled the story. Dickens had done the same in *Dombey and Son*, by evaporating the intrigue between Mrs. Dombey and Carker. The result was, that the plot suffered. Meredith from the very first had the courage to take the plunge, even though many in Victorian England disapproved of his frankness. In *Richard Feverel* he drew the young man and the strange woman as they were. Both novelists did treat tenderly the fallen woman who remains essentially pure, who is the victim rather than the temptress. Emily in *David Copperfield* belongs to the same class as Dahlia in *Rhoda Fleming*; in each case the novelist punishes the aristocratic seducer, the one by killing him, the other by letting him live and miss what he sought. In both novels, by the way, emigration appears as the way out of the difficulty for the girl — which is quite intelligible, if we remember what the Colonies were considered to be in Victorian England. But the franker tone of Meredith upon the whole question of the sexes is noticeable. Dickens was unable to work quite clear of the atmosphere in which Mr. Podsnap lived, where the question that settled everything was, Would it bring a blush to the cheek of the young person? Besides, he was writing for a circle of domestic readers in *Household Words*, and rightly he had to be careful. At the same time, a comparison of their methods in dealing with this topic enables us to measure the advance made within a single generation, an advance partly due to the unflinching spirit of Meredith himself.

In passing from Dickens to Meredith we can also note an advance in cos-

mopolitanism. Both were fond of traveling on the Continent. Neither spared the England they both loved. But when Dickens traveled and looked at other countries, he rarely attained the detachment of mind which is essential to fruitful traveling. He applied his English measure to them with rather an offhand air. He laughed at this patriotic self-superiority in the Americans, but he was not quite free from it himself, from the insularity which Meredith satirized in Sir Willoughby Patterne, who traveled round the world, including America, 'holding an English review of his Maker's grotesques.' Meredith is patriotic, but he is never insular, as Dickens is apt to be. It is needless to labor this point. But one evidence of Meredith's breadth of mind is furnished by his plea, in *Lord Ormont and His Aminta*, for the cosmopolitan idea of educating English boys along with foreign boys, in order to bring nationalities together and to enable England and the Continent to understand one another better — 'our healthy games, our scorn of the lie, manliness; their intellectual valor, diligence, considerate manners.'

Again, Meredith shows a surer touch and greater skill in portraying English gentlemen. He knew country-house life and the upper classes, in their strength as well as in their weaknesses. He was an impenitent Radical, politically, but he could draw Conservative aristocrats without caricaturing them, doing ample justice to their great qualities; the sturdy squire in the *Adventures of Harry Richmond* and Romfrey, the rich landowner in *Beauchamp's Career*, are real figures. He knew political and social life among the upper classes. There he found much to appreciate, as well as many a foible to deride, especially self-satisfaction and the inability or the disinclination to think. The latter weak-

ness made the rich, whether old or new, rich material for the comic spirit in the novels. Mr. Dombey is proud, but he is proud of being a London merchant; *Dombey and Son* is the title for his ambition. Now Meredith met wealthy men who were proud of other things than their wealth, and proud of the wrong things — proud of rising in the social scale to be gentlemen, for example. Their fatuous pride laid them open to repeated strokes of humor, which he administered just because he understood what real gentlemen were. He can draw the genuine article and the imitation with equal success. Dickens, again, never found his favorite ground in good London society, although at one time he had the entrée to it. Even in *Our Mutual Friend*, when he comes to draw the *nouveaux riches*, he is really more at home with Mr. Silas Wegg and the Wilfers. The fact is, Dickens had a class-feeling which hampered his range, while Meredith had too broad a mind to allow himself to read any class in the country through the medium of democratic prejudices.

This raises another question—but of affinity rather than of contrast. Both Dickens and Meredith reflect the hostile criticism which was stirring against officialism during the latter half of the last century. Among the immediate effects of the Civil War in America, historians have noted a diminished respect for the State. The temper of mid-Victorian England, as Dickens and Meredith were writing, cannot be understood apart from the opprobrium incurred by the Government in consequence of their mismanagement of the Crimean War. Carlyle's attack upon the mental and moral deficiencies of England had included Downing Street, and men felt that the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* perhaps were not so extravagant after all. Dickens and

Meredith were writing in that epoch of reaction and disillusionment, when the efficiency of the State was being questioned in wider regions than those of social reform or of education. Both novelists indicate the mood of an angry, humiliated country. Dickens saw officialism as the root of the trouble; Meredith, with keener eyes, detected a lack of brain-work, at once the cause and the effect of self-conceit. But they were at one in their caustic criticism of Governments that did not govern.

Still, literature does not live by any amount of well-meaning criticism of institutions or social abuses. It may include that, but, as we can see from Aristophanes onwards, it must be imaginative and genial if it is to last. Whenever the novel, in particular, surrenders itself to propaganda, its artistic qualities are almost certain to suffer, for propaganda dries up the sense of proportion which keeps wit and humor alive. Both Dickens and Meredith carry on the healthy tradition of English fiction at its best, which combines a criticism of life with warmth of imagination, with a richness of nature which tends to exhilarate, to warm the blood, to melt frost, and to scatter mists. This is essential to the spirit of comedy.

A happy ending is not required for a novel of this quality; neither Dickens nor Meredith provided that finish as a rule, though it must be admitted that Dickens felt the drag of his great public in the direction of bliss for the last chapter. What is required is much more fundamental—the temper which makes Meredith put this sentence into the lips of a sorely tried woman in middle life, 'Who can really think, and not think hopefully?' — the temper which breathes from the middle-aged gentleman in *Pickwick*, who wakened Mr. Pickwick early one mon-

ing by shouting to him from the garden. Mr. Pickwick 'looked to the right but he saw nobody, his eyes wandered to the left and pierced the prospect; he stared into the sky, but he was n't wanted there; and then he did what a common mind would have done at once — looked into the garden,

and there saw Mr. Wardle. "How are you?" said that good-humored individual, out of breath with his own anticipations of pleasure. "Beautiful morning, ain't it? Make haste down and come out." ' A middle-aged gentleman, breathless with his own anticipations of pleasure!

THE SCOTTISH CHAUCERIANS

BY LOUIS GOLDING

[Mr. Golding is a brilliant young English writer of prose and poetry whose literary career began before he was out of Oxford. In company with Robert Graves, Alan Porter, and Edmund Blunden he led the literary renaissance that won for Queen's the reputation earlier attributed by Johnson to Pembroke — 'that nest of singing birds.' The two volumes of the Queen's College Miscellany which he edited are now a desirable acquisition for the bibliophile. While in the University, Mr. Golding was literary editor of several newspapers. He assisted Mr. Thomas Moulton in founding the magazine Voices (since defunct) and by twenty-five was the author of two volumes of verse and a novel which had to be reprinted within six months of its appearance. It is agreeable to find, in this essay, that at least one modern writer does not scorn his predecessors.]

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(LONDON TORY WEEKLY)

UNHAPPY are the poets of dialect. They might be conceived as seated unsteadily upon a three-legged stool, whereof the legs are their master language, the dialect of it they have adopted or that has adopted them, and their one sure support of poetry. How much happier had the fate of the Scottish Chaucerians been had they taken the precaution to be born in China or Peru. Alas for that lovely company, King James and Henryson, Dunbar and Douglas! The obscurest poet of the obscurest Mongolian race is sure of his Judith Gautier or Arthur Waley or Powys Mathers, to detach him from his darkness sooner or later, and to set him burning among some constellation of 'Colored Stars.'

If Dunbar had been a Chinese waiter in a London restaurant, if James had but been a railway porter in Bath, what praise would have been too lavish for so distinguished a music as they devised? I have always felt that they are set dubiously upon a border-line of appreciation, these Scottish post-Chaucerians. They are not read with enthusiasm in Scotland. Is it because the forms they wrote in were imported from a foreign land then so hostile? They are hardly read in England at all, saving in the Universities. Is it because their dialect is too difficult? But it is a tenth as difficult, perhaps, as the Romance poetries that Englishmen read so assiduously. Shall Mr. Scott Moncrieff need to transfer