VICTOR HUGO IN THE LIGHT OF ENGLISH CRITICISM
AND OPINION DURING THE NINETEENTH
CENTURY.

BY

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INTRODUCTION

In the following pages I have set out to discover what English critics of the nineteenth century thought of the works of Victor Hugo. It has not been my intention to study the extent to which the general public of the period were acquainted with his works either directly or through the medium of translations, but to confine myself to an enquiry into the reactions of the more cultivated minds of the century to the writings of the great Frenchman. Indeed, it would be futile to consider the influence of the works of Hugo on the English public generally during the nineteenth century for they had none. The poetical works were, in many cases, not made available to them until years after their original publication, and even then only a small minority would be able to read them. There were some translations of the poems, e.g. Reynold's "Song of Twilight" ("Les Chants du Crépuscule"), but the translations were inevitably but a poor shadow of the original. There were several adaptations of the plays, but as I have shown in a previous thesis "Victor Hugo on the English Stage", most of them bore little resemblance except in plot to the original work. In many cases the public did not even know, nor were they always told, that the piece was founded on a drama by Hugo. The novels, of course, were much more widely read by the general public and numerous translations were made, but in most instances the
English versions were reduced to an exciting story, the ethical and sociological purpose of the work being forgotten.

The works of Hugo were, however, read and studied by a large number of eminent English critics of the nineteenth century. Numerous quotations will be found from the articles of such men as H. Southern, G. Moir, G. H. Lewes, J. H. McCarthy, C. Colvin, A. C. Swinburne, E. Dowden, J. Morley, R. L. Stevenson, R. O. Noel, F. W. H. Myers, Matthew Arnold, W. H. Pollock, G. Saintsbury, C. Vaughan, W. E. Henley, Mrs. Oliphant, C. B. Smith, J. Cappon, F. T. Marzials, R. Buchanan, J. Forster and J. P. Nichol. These men, among others, made a definite attempt to evaluate the works of Hugo, and their opinions are worth studying as giving a clue to the attitude adopted by the more enlightened literary minds of the century towards the works of Hugo.

This I have attempted to do, and in doing it I have incorporated into the text the exact words of the critics in the form of quotations, in the belief that this is the best way of presenting a true and clear picture of English opinions of Hugo's works during the period under survey. In the Preface to her book "English Opinions of French Poets (1660-1750)" in which she sets out to do in a general way for the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries what I have tried to do in a more particular way for the nineteenth, Miss R. H. Wollstein writes as follows:

"It is the judgment of this time that is the
subject of our study, and the individual opinions that form it must be left to speak for themselves. I have therefore collected such opinions as are important for our purpose."

This seems to me to be the most scientific method in dealing with the subject, and absolves the writer from any possible charge of tampering with the evidence. In order to make the narrative more continuous and to avoid breaking the thread of the argument it is sometimes tempting to state one's conclusions and to leave the reader to sift the evidence for himself. I have sedulously avoided doing this in the belief that in a work of this kind accuracy is of the utmost importance.

The method I have adopted in treating the subject is to take each of the works of Hugo, poetry, drama, novels, miscellaneous prose works, and to study the reactions of the critics to each separate work, drawing together in a final chapter the conclusions to which these separate studies have brought me. In presenting the material I have usually preferred to study each facet of the problem in turn, stating one side of the case before proceeding to a consideration of the other. I have thus brought together all the unfavourable criticism of a work before presenting the favourable criticisms. In this way, I believe, a better picture can be drawn of the general reactions to the work. In the case of the smaller works, where the amount of evidence is restricted, I
have sometimes used the chronological method as being the most satisfactory.

As the present work purports to be a study of Hugo in the light of English criticism and opinion I have taken no account of the many French critics who, during the nineteenth century, contributed articles on Hugo to English journals. One of the first critics to introduce Hugo to the English was Stendhal in the "London" and "New Monthly" magazines. Other French critics whose names will not be found in the present survey are Gabriel Monod, Jules Janin, D. Nisard, Camille Barrère, H. Céard, Paul Bourget. Their opinions are interesting, especially those of Stendhal, who gave Hugo a very unfavourable start in England, but do not fall within the scope of the present work.
INTRODUCTORY CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY OF CRITICISM OF HUGO IN ENGLAND

Before entering into a detailed study of the reception in England of each of Hugo's works it will be of interest to cast a swift glance over the whole field, and to form some idea of contemporary reaction to each work.

Victor Hugo's earliest volumes of poetry, "Odes et Poésies Diverses" (1823), "Nouvelles Odes" (1824), "Odes et Ballades" (1826), were well received by English critics, who were of the general opinion that the Ballades were, on the whole, superior to the Odes. The next volume of verse, "Les Orientales" (1829), was accorded a less enthusiastic reception because in it Hugo began to give evidence of that licence to which critics of his later works were so averse.

Meanwhile his first drama "Cromwell" (1827) had been written and had been rather coldly received in this country because of its lack of true dramatic qualities and its misconception of character. His next play "Hernani" (1830), although it was immediately adapted to the English stage, and drew large audiences, was little better received than its unfortunate predecessor. It also was found to contravene the laws of universal nature.

In the meantime Hugo had written his first prose-works, "Han d'Islande" (1823), "Bug Jargal" (1826), "Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné" (1829). Although English critics were alive to
the author's powerful imagination and vivid descriptions, the subject-matter of these stories was usually too horrible for them to welcome them with open arms. They found, however, a supporter in Henry Southern who, in the "Foreign Quarterly Review", commended them for their boldness of characterisation and the vigour of the writing. He was especially enthusiastic over the picture Hugo drew of the condemned man.

Hugo's next four volumes of poetry, written between 1831 and 1840, "Les Feuilles d'Automne", "Les Chants du Crépuscule", "Les Voix Intérieures", "Les Rayons et les Ombres", were almost completely ignored by contemporary English critics, although many of the poems contained therein were greatly admired later in the century. Possibly the critics were too busily occupied in castigating the "immoral" author of "Marion Delorme" (1831), "Le Roi s'amuse" (1833) and "Lucrèce Borgia" (1833), all of which they condemned for their disgusting subject-matter and indecent situations, though, rather surprisingly, G.H. Lewes wrote a spirited defense of "Le Roi s'amuse". The next drama, "Marie Tudor" (1833), was similarly reviled, less for its subject-matter than for the liberties which Hugo took with historical facts, while "Angelo" (1835) was either ignored or laughed at. What is even more surprising is that Hugo's next play, "Ray Blas" (1836), which was ultimately to attain a certain popularity in this country, was similarly ignored by contemporary critics.

Although Hugo's poetry and drama during this period
was not given the consideration which was its due, his novel, "Notre Dame de Paris" excited great interest and was everywhere welcomed as being a great and outstanding work. It was, indeed, the first of Hugo's works to be really welcomed in this country and it was several times translated, the first appearing as early as 1833.

Hugo's next work was his political guide-book "Le Rhin" (1842), the literary merits of which were recognised but which, as a political pamphlet, was not taken seriously. The critics were inclined to sneer at Hugo's suggestions for the rearrangement of Europe.

The study which the writing of "Le Rhin" had entailed led Hugo in 1843 to compose "Les Burgraves", a lengthy play which was a failure in France and which passed almost without comment in England.

Hugo wrote nothing more for nine years, and his next work "Napoléon le Petit" (1852), ("L'Histoire d'un crime", although written at this time was not published until 25 years later) met with less success in this country than might have been expected bearing in mind the unpopularity of Napoleon's coup d'état in 1851.

The first volume of poetry which Hugo produced after his long silence, "Les Châtiments" (1853), won golden opinions in this country both for its lyrical and satirical qualities after the death of its author, but was not deemed of sufficient
importance to warrant notice by contemporary critics. This work was followed three years later by "Les Contemplations", which was the first volume of poetry to excite any considerable interest among contemporary critics since the "Odes et Ballades". The section which dealt with the death of Hugo's daughter Léopoldine charmed English critics as no work so far had done. With this work we begin at last to see Hugo the poet appreciated more nearly at his true worth. Both the subject matter of the poems and their pure lyrical quality, a quality which English critics had always recognised as being Hugo's greatest asset, appealed to Englishmen in a way that the more objective and satirical poems had failed to do.

The next volume of verse, "La Légende des Siècles. Part 1", received a set back which was due in a large measure to the many bloodthirsty poems it contained and to the marked lack of any orthodox religious outlook, a defect which the Victorian critic could not easily overlook.

"Les Misérables" (1862) was accorded an equally cold reception by contemporary English critics, who accused the author of immorality, indecency, shallowness, insincerity and prolixity, though the "Westminster Review" and the "British Quarterly Review" did recognise it as the work of a genius. Later critics showed themselves much more sympathetic towards it, the change of attitude being probably due to the gradual growth of a more tolerant and less puritanical spirit as the
Hugo's most ambitious novel, "Les Misérables", was equally unsuccessful in obtaining the approval of the English critics.

"William Shakespeare", probably because of its subject-matter, attracted more attention than its importance as a literary work seems to justify, and, on the whole, one is surprised at the leniency with which this work was treated by English critics, bearing in mind that its subject was an English poet and that whenever Hugo dealt with things English he risked incurring the violent displeasure of Englishmen. No one can, in face of the evidence, acquit Hugo of the charge of inexcusable ignorance concerning England and the English, but in this case he was dealing with a poet whom he held in the greatest reverence, and English critics accepted his veneration for their idol.

The only contemporary critic to review Hugo's next work, "Chansons des rues et des bois", was O.H.Lewes, who was very grudging in his praise of it. Later critics were more alive to its many beauties, but it cannot be said to have attained to any popularity among them.

Two more novels followed, "Les Travailleurs de la Mer" (1866) and "L'Homme qui rit" (1869), neither of which was at all cordially received in England, the former because it seemed to lack human interest, and the latter because in it Hugo returned to his "indecent" and "immoral" hunting-ground. The latter was, of course, also vitiated in the eyes of all English readers by
the gross inaccuracies of which Hugo was guilty when dealing with English customs.

The year 1873 was one in which a wave of sympathy for distressed France was sweeping over this country, and it can readily be understood why Hugo's "L'année Terrible", which was a poetical record of the events which had taken place in France during the preceding years, should have attracted more attention and more sympathy than his previous volumes of poems. It was all the more readily received because, in addition to poems dealing with the political situation, it contained also poems of undeniable charm and loveliness on the subject of children and domestic bliss. The wide range of subjects made it possible for everyone to find something to attract him. With this volume of verse Hugo began to come into his own.

The ground was thus well prepared for the reception of the next masterpiece, a novel, "Quatre-Vingt Treize" (1874), which received a welcome greater than that of any of his novels since "Notre Dame de Paris". The critics were able to drop the charge of indecency and even to congratulate the author on his presentation of a character with whose political views he could have had little sympathy.

After this work appeared the second series of "La Légende des Siècles" which was much more cordially received than the first series, and which, furthermore, led to an upward revaluation of the first series which had been so severely handled
in 1859. Several critics, indeed, comparing the two series, gave the palm to the first, while not decrying the second to any large extent. Hugo was evidently winning his way, though gradually, into the hearts of English critics.

Fortunately his next volume of poems, "L'Art d'Être grand-père" (1877), showed him in the capacity in which the English had always acclaimed him to be supreme, the poet of childhood. Many critics claimed that this was his most charming volumes of verses.

Hugo's reputation in England would not have suffered, nay would have been enhanced, if he had published no more poetry. But a veritable spate of poetry followed, five volumes in as many years. The first "Le Pape" (1878), was coldly received, only two contemporary critics deigning to review it, and they not with any enthusiasm. "La Pitié Suprême" (1879) received only one review in which the critic confined himself to praising the technical dexterity of the author. "Religions et Religion" (1880) and "L'Anc" (1880) awakened little interest. Only the last of the five, "Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit" (1882) won any favour among English critics, George Saintsbury in particular devoting a considerable article to it in the "Fortnightly Review".

It was at this time, 1882, that Hugo returned to the theatre which he had utterly neglected since the failure of "Les Bur- graves", with "Torquemada", which attracted more attention
than one would have expected, considering how earlier and perhaps greater works had sometimes been ignored. There is little doubt that the intrinsic qualities of the play itself, the mastery of versification shown by the author and the power of imagination displayed, were largely responsible for its favourable reception, but it should also be borne in mind that English critics in 1832 were much more readily disposed to give Hugo's works sympathetic consideration than they had been earlier in the century.

In 1833 appeared the third part of "La Légende des Siècles". It is a little difficult to assess the opinion of English critics on this work because many of them in dealing with it were evidently voicing their views of the "Légende" as a whole. It can moreover be stated without fear of contradiction that the whole work was much more appreciated in 1833 than the adverse criticisms of 1859 would have led one to expect. As the century progressed so Englishmen gradually learned to appreciate Hugo's poetry.

"La Fin de Satan", published in 1886 though written thirty-one years earlier, passed unnoticed in England except by the faithful Swinburne, and even he found cause to upbraid its author for his inconsistency, though he described the work as the "loftiest expression" of Hugo's personal faith, and likened it to the "Divine Comedy" and "Paradise Lost".

In 1887 was published Hugo's diary, "Choses Vues", and
English readers showed an immediate interest in this plain simple and direct utterance, so unlike the exaggerated rhetorical and antithetical style to which they had become accustomed.

There remains only one major work to consider, "Toute la Lyre" (1888-1893), after which Hugo begins slowly to fade from the picture. Swinburne alone notices this work and "Dieu" which followed it in 1891, and he ploughed a lonely furrow in his attempt to keep alive the dying embers of Hugo's reputation in this country.
HUGO THE MAN

when one considers the length of Hugo's life, the vastness of his output, the multitude of his experiences and the size of his reading public, it is not surprising that opinions of him as a man should be so contradictory. They tend, indeed, to prove that Hugo's own theory that man is an amalgam of the sublime and the ridiculous, was no less true of himself than of the characters of his plays. For whereas some critics find him patronising and insolent (97/1) others draw attention to his lack of condescension and to his sympathy, youth and less distinguished authors, as is abundantly shown in his correspondence. While he impresses some by his violence and lack of self-mastery, others see in him a man of tact and discretion. To some he appears as a mountebank and a poseur, while to others he seems perfectly genuine. Two critics charge him with secretiveness, whilst two others praise him for his outspokenness. Havelock Ellis goes so far as to accuse him of being deficient in intelligence. He appears to be at one and the same time both of a forgiving and a vindictive nature. Whereas in the main one is led to believe that he is prejudiced, unreasonable and hasty of judgment, one critic describes him as broad-minded. The adjectives theatrical, affected and unaffected have all been applied to him, and though in one place he is commended for his thoroughness, elsewhere we are reminded of his contempt
for accuracy of detail. Although by no means a model husband he yet set a high value on family life. Indeed, all these seemingly contradictory criticisms go to prove that Hugo was, like most men, a mixture of good and bad, of vices and virtues, with a distinct preponderance of the latter.

There is, however, evidence to show that certain characteristics stand out as having made a definite impression on the large number of Englishmen who studied him. In numerous places Hugo is described as conceited, "cased in proof-panoply of self-esteem" as the "Monthly Review" aptly puts it, self-sufficient, pompous, proud, vain self-complacent, a braggart and an egoist. F.W.H. Myers, a critic who believed that Hugo's conceit proved a bar to all higher sublimity, and exercised a disastrous effect on his intellectual as on his moral career, describes him as having "arranged all voices of heaven and earth in a cantata of his own glory."

"His first thought is almost always of his own greatness: his first care for his own glory. His teaching shifts from pole to pole: the only lode-star to which it always turns is the poet himself."

His love of applause and craving for marks of honour were very unacceptable to the English mind, which showed itself intolerant of them.
On the other hand, in an article about Hugo which formed one of a series entitled "Celebrities at Home", the author asserts that Hugo was modesty itself and that it is unjust to accuse him of vanity or greed of homage. Listen also to the testimony of G.H.Lewes:

"The greatest of modern French poets, he has preserved the dignity of his calling without a single derogation. He has moved amid the plaudits and the hisses, the shouts and the jeers, with calm and resolute self-respect, compelling by his earnestness and ability the homage of even those whom he most offended by his assaults on their prejudices and opinions. Applause has never seduced him into a prodigal waste of power. He has never traded on his reputation." (66/2)

Nearly all his critics agreed that Hugo was kind, affectionate, tender, sympathetic, courteous, genial, affable, cordial and a warm friend, although J.P.Noehol in his "Victor Hugo; a sketch of his life and work" (93/4), states that it was difficult for the French poet to make, and still more difficult for him to keep close friends. When the word "ungrateful" was applied to him by English critics, as it frequently was, the writer was usually smarting under a sense of ingratitude and wounded patriotism at the part which Hugo had played in causing to be posted on
the walls of Dover, a town in the land which had given him shelter, a fiery proclamation, on the occasion of the visit of the Emperor to the Queen of England. In refutation of this however, G. Julian Harney, sometime Editor of the "Jersey Independent", in an article in the "Athenaeum" (85/8), denies that Hugo had any part in the libel on the Queen, and maintains that he was expelled from Jersey for standing up for British freedom (1). On the other hand Maude Petro, in "The Month", a Roman Catholic review, states that Hugo not only gave no thanks for the hospitality he received in Jersey nor for the shelter which Belgium afforded him in 1871, but that he preached rebellion in the countries which were friendly to him. Apart, however, from these incidents, Hugo seems to have impressed Englishmen by his kindness and warm-heartedness and his readiness at any time and at any trouble to himself to lend a helping hand to the needy and to sympathise fully with sorrow and suffering.

In a rather more particular way Hugo is described in several places as generous, charitable, (not merely of giving but of pardoning), frequent references being made to the dinners which he was in the habit of giving to the poor children, benevolent, humanitarian, chivalrous and great-hearted. J.P. Nichol reminds us that he suffered immense material loss through his exile, where he remained for the sake of his ideals and duty to his country, and maintains
that his refusal to return to France at the first invitation to do so was not a mere self-advertising pose as some assert. The critic who described Hugo as unchristian used the word, I think, in its narrower sense, and did not wish to deny him the aforementioned virtues. His love of children is so obvious and so well-known, and the references to it are so numerous that a passing mention of it is made for the sake of completeness.

Great tributes are paid also to Hugo's honesty and truthfulness, his nobility and unselfishness, (as when, for example, he refused to take advantage of a sudden political ferment in order to secure a production of "Marion Delorme", which had been banned after its first performance), as also to his fortitude and tenacity of purpose. Writing of "Choses Vues" in the "Westminster Review" (87/4), a critic says that so far from being merely a preacher of fortitude, Hugo's whole existence was a living example of that virtue.

There is ample testimony also to his courage and fearlessness (1). The critic of the "Saturday Review" (78/2) says that he attached little importance to his own life, and G.B. Smith in his Preliminary Note to his book "Victor Hugo; his life and work" (85/10), quotes his continued walks after dark after being attacked by thieves. His boldness was further exemplified by his being driven from Brussels for having uttered an unpalatable truth and by his persisting
in remaining in exile after he had been invited to return because he would not countenance a government which he thought pernicious to his country. Hugo's own allusions to his brave deeds and heroic gestures were usually viewed with a certain scepticism by English critics, who were aware of his proneness to exaggeration, a vice which often led him to overstep the boundary of truth.

Hugo's charm of manner and commanding personality impressed all who visited him. S.P.Oliver, writing of his sojourn in Guernsey, says:

"Nowhere could I have found greater sympathy and kindness than I and my family at the hands of Victor Hugo and his wife's sister." (70/1)

Rodan Noel writes:

What impressed me when I visited him at the Avenue d'Eylau was his unaffected, unassuming, genial cordiality, the rare charm of his manner. He neither preached nor soliloquised, but conversed." (88/2)

Among those who experienced his kindness and cordiality was Charles Dickens, as the following paragraph from Foister's "Life of Dickens" shows.

"One day we visited -------- and closed that day at the home of Victor Hugo, by whom Dickens was received with infinite courtesy and grace. The great writer then occupied a floor in a noble corner
house in the Place Royale --------- He was himself, however, the best thing we saw; and I find it difficult to associate the attitudes and aspect in which the world has lately wondered at him with the sober grace and self-possessed quiet gravity of that night of twenty-five years ago (1847). Just then Louis Philippe had enobled him, but the man's nature was written noble. Rather under the middle size, of compact close-buttoned-up figure, with ample dark hair falling loosely over his close-shaven face, I never saw upon any features so keenly intellectual such a soft and sweet gentility, and certainly never heard the French language spoken with the picturesque distinctness given to it by Hugo. He talked of his childhood in Spain, and of his father having been Governor of the Tagus in Napoleon's wars; spoke warmly of the English people and their literature; declared his preference for melody and simplicity over the music then fashionable at the Conservatoire; referred kindly to Ponsard, laughed at the actors who had murdered his tragedy at the Odéon, and sympathised with the dramatic venture of Dumas. To Dickens he addressed very charming flattery, in the best taste; and my friend long remembered the enjoyment of that evening."
On the other hand Havelock Ellis finds him plebian, and Mrs. Oliphant undignified, while in the eyes of many he is guilty of bad taste.

The size of the fortune which he made during his life-time bears testimony to the truth of the statement, frequently made, that he was a good business man and appreciated the value of money, a quality two ingredients of which, a positive greed for work and an enormous vitality, left an indelible impression on Englishmen, to whom such things as early-rising and a devotion to duty which left no time for any kind of sport other than that he shared with his grand-children, were an object of respect amounting to envy. H.W.Dulcken (81/7) evidently received a different impression, for he found no man less solicitous about accumulating money.

To say that Hugo was impressionable, childishly excitable and sometimes even hysterical is merely to reaffirm the rather obvious truth that he had in him much more of the artist than of the philosopher, and although he was not a religious man in the orthodox sense of the word, yet those who have felt his zeal as a reformer and sociologist will understand why he has been described as a seeker after truth who carried his principles into practice and had a high and earnest conception of duty.

It would seem therefore that Victor Hugo was to
Englishmen a fearless warrior in the cause of those whom he himself described as "Les Misérables", a warrior as proud and as full of self-esteem as were the knights of whom he wrote in "La Légende des Siècles", tempered withal by a kindliness of heart and a charitable and sympathetic nature which made him, and kept him, a human among humans. His vices were such as one might expect to find in a literary genius who was the son of a soldier of high rank and whose upbringing had carried him far afield and into strange places and had brought him into contact, while still a youth, with mature and eminent people. There were critics of Hugo who allowed his personality to obscure his genius, but those who could see the character behind the person saw a man of many heroic parts who, finding humanity in need of a champion, had sufficient courage and ability to wield on its behalf the weapon that is mightier than the sword, even though it were to his own hindrance.
HUGO THE PORT

In spite of a few assertions to the contrary (a), it was chiefly as a poet that Hugo's English contemporaries acclaimed him.

"Hugo's genius is to be found specially in his poems." (70/3)

"He is a poet before everything else." (78/6)

"He is a born poet." (83/2)

"He is a poet and nothing but a poet whether he wrote prose or verse." (85/2)

The critic of the "Saturday Review" (85/2) summed the matter up thus:--

"His prose is remarkable, his drama more remarkable, and his poetry most remarkable of all."

He is described as

"the head of modern French poets" (45/2)

"the first of French poets" (64/3) and (60/3)

"the greatest European poet of our century" (78/3)

"the greatest living French poet" (82/7)

"the greatest poet of France" (85/2)

"among the greatest poets of the world" (85/2)

(a) "Hugo is essentially a poet yet is more likely to live as a novelist than as a poet." (77/8)

"A man of incontestable talent, but not a poet." (52/1)
"one of the world's greatest poets" (85/19)
"the greatest poet of this century" (86/8)
"the greatest poet of our generation" (87/6)
"the greatest and noblest poetic genius since Shakespeare" (91/1)

It should moreover be noted that the authors of these expressions are, with the possible exception of Swinburne, who was an inveterate Hugo-litre, men whose eyes were not so dazzled by the splendour of Hugo's verse that they could not see the flaws in the gem, critics, in some cases themselves poets, whose eye could detect the deficiencies of a fellow-craftsman, whose words were carefully weighed before utterance was given to them, such men as Longfellow, Robert Buchanan, Roden Noel, F.T. Marzials and Joseph Forster. Others also have given vent to similar opinions:

"He is a goodly and sweet poet, a stately mourner, a lofty mentor, a general sympathiser and a dignified moraliser." (45/1)

"He wrote vigorous, beautiful and musical verses." (46/1)

"For vastness of conception, power of expression, variety of mood, and penetration of character there are few modern poets to rival Hugo." (77/3)

"beauty abounds in his verse." (78/3)

"No poet of modern times is gifted with so vast a
power of imagination, of grasp of character, of dramatic force, of command over verse." (79/5)

"He wrote the noblest verse of which the French language is capable." (85/13) (a)

The overflowing wealth and massive strength of Hugo's poetry receive due recognition, as also does his fertility of expression. His power was such that "he would touch an object and immediately it would live its own life." (96/1) His workmanship has been described as perfect (85/19), and even had he died in 1850, declared one critic (00/2), he would still have been a great poet. He alone, declared another, survived the wreck and dissolution of his school. He animated French poetry with new life, vigour and enthusiasm and succeeded in expanding the bounds of French poetry without sacrificing anything.

Tribute is frequently paid to the broadness and disinterestedness of his sympathies, the variety of his sentiment and the comprehensiveness of his affections.

"He was a poet of all parties." (45/1)

"He strikes chords of world-music and also the more intimate ones of the human instrument." (46/1)

(a) Although many English critics, headed by Matthew Arnold, believed that the French language was a poor medium for poetry, I do not think that Mrs. Oliphant intended to "damn with faint praise" when she used this expression.
"His verse sighs or vibrates, rushes impetuously or falls soft as dew, charged with thought or tender with graceful fancy." (81/5)

"The world to him was a vast poem. With its music he could arouse whatever emotion existed in man." (85/17)

"His mind was capable of reflecting the whole spectrum of human affairs." (85/18)

"He was both sublime and playful, roughly strong and daintily delicate." (85/19)

"He sounds all keys in the human heart, probes the depths of all human passions, scales all the heights of human aspirations. If ever man brought down to earth the divine fire from heaven, it was Hugo." (85/20)

There is, on the other hand, plenty of evidence to show that English critics were not blind to Hugo's faults and failings. Matthew Arnold denies that Hugo is a great poet in the sense that Wordsworth and Shakespeare are great poets, and claims that it is wrong to speak of the splendour of his verse and beauty of his style, as Sarcey does, because such terms can only be used of verse and style of a much higher kind, those of Dante or Milton for example (79/3). Alfred Austin, Poet Laureate, was even more severe. To say that Hugo is the greatest of modern poet is ludicrous, he
decãieres, unless clatter be the same thing as fame and confident conspicuousness is to be accepted as a conclusive credential of superiority (81/1). Roden Noel draws attention to the inequality of Hugo's verse, in which branch of literature Hugo, he maintains, falls more below himself than elsewhere (78/3). With many others he sees in Hugo's poetry much that is merely declamatory or rhetorical, extravagant and straining after effect, while Hugo's chief fault in his eyes seems to be a want of the sense of proportion and balance. Moreover Hugo frequently, we are told, confused the great with the grandiosc, and the grandiosc with the puerile (00/1). His poems are full of lugubrious passages, egotisms and extravagances, as well as beauties (66/4).

Hugo's fondness for enumeration draws down upon his head the invective of numerous critics. A writer in the "Scottish Review" (96/1) likens much of his work to a reference dictionary, the contents of which prove to be disappointing upon closer examination. He amasses detail without any selection or arrangement, and expands on lines of thought that please him without consideration for their place in the whole. His weakness for paradox, which often becomes merely irritating, is a butt for many, while few critics fail to mention that his taste is often at fault. Among these is the critic of the "New Monthly Magazine" who records, however, his conviction that neither his defects in
matters of taste, nor the strained and stilted passages and inflated or offensive metaphors to be found in his works can be a bar to the judgment that places Hugo among the stars of humanity, because of his wide range of sympathies and his impassioned and exquisite tenderness of feeling. The critic of the "National Review" (87/1) attributes Hugo's failure, the word is his, to the fact that he was always losing his way in regions where his Pegasus was too weak to follow him, and adds that he had no knowledge or discernment of truth in history or nature. His lack of law and order, of economy and reserve did not pass unnoticed, and he was frequently charged with inconsistency. His weakness for exaggeration, we are told, often led him to raise questions of the day into the importance of a world crisis, as for example in the Preface to "Le Roi s'amuse".

An interesting side-light is thrown on the variety of Hugo's talent and the esteem in which he was held by English critics of the nineteenth century by the comparisons and contrasts which they made between him and several of their own great poets. A writer in the "Athenaeum" asks:—

"What can England do to match such a Colossus? Swinburne has much of his bardic fire and lawless splendour; Tennyson, Rossetti, Morris much of his sensibility and beauty; Tennyson much of his tenderness; Browning has more than all his agility
of intellect. But all these qualities are combined in Hugo." (77/1)

Among the English poets with whom Hugo has been compared we find the names of Tennyson, Shelley, Scott, Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, Blake, Browning, Coleridge, Dryden, Burns and Swinburne. Campbell, Collins, Cooper, Kingsley, Macaulay, Spenser, Lockhart and Mrs. Heamans are also mentioned in the same connection.

Tennyson We find numerous comparisons with Tennyson. Contrasting Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" with Hugo's "Légende des Siècles", in the latter of which he discovers reflections of Tennyson's "compressed pictures and pregnant music", the writer in the "Dublin University Magazine" (60/1) finds Tennyson's work narrower, less eloquent, more self-contained, less disfigured by eccentricities and repetitions, more tender and holy, actuated by profounder thought; Hugo's more brilliant and interesting. Tennyson, he affirms, is the greater poet. The same writer finds the combats in "Enid" more thrilling than the one in "Le Petit Roi de Galice". Roden Noel expresses himself as follows:–

"In Tennyson's hand a blade of grass yields beauty that Hugo's Titanic power cannot obtain from a universe, because Tennyson touches the mysteries of the concrete, while Hugo revolts against the power that is." (60/3)
In another article (78/3) the same critic says that he failed to find in "La Légende des Siècles" the "finish and rich accurate perfection of Tennyson."

Alfred Austin sums up the general feeling in this matter when he says in "Macmillan's Magazine" (81/1):

"With the exception of Swinburne all English critics entertain no sort of doubt that Tennyson is a more considerable poet than both de Musset and Hugo put together, with a large margin to spare." a statement which seems in the main to be true judging from the available contemporary evidence.

A critic in the "New Monthly Magazine" (81/5), while admitting that the contemplative poetry of Hugo is comparable with "In Memoriam", thinks Tennyson the more perfect artist. Both poets, he says, are alike in their profound sense of the mystery and helplessness of human life, and both try to gather hope from the analogy of nature, but in vain.

There are, naturally, other comparisons with "In Memoriam." James Cappon in his book on Hugo (85/18) draws a parallel between this work and Hugo's poems on the death of his daughter, and comes to the conclusion that Hugo's method of the short poem is superior to Tennyson's long lament.

In J.P. Nichol's book on Hugo (93/4) we find an
interesting comparison between "In Memoriam" and "Les Contemplations".

"As the expression of a mighty sorrow 'Les Contemplations' is superior to 'Les In Memoriam'."

The same critic finds in Hugo "little deliberate word-painting of Nature in her smaller phases in the manner of Tennyson". Mr. Nichol further states that Tennyson's sonnet on Hugo does not prove that its writer was intimately acquainted with the works of Hugo, a statement which, if true, rather discounts the value of the encomiums contained therein.

The critic of the "London Quarterly Review" contrasts Tennyson's compressed thought and latent force with Hugo's self-emptying exuberance. Whereas Hugo strains to give you all that he has, adds the writer, Tennyson leaves you with the feeling that he has far more in reserve. (86/1)

A writer in the "Spectator" (87/5) speaks of the great gulf between Hugo on the one hand and Tennyson and Browning on the other, the latter having never uttered ought that is impure or base.

Swinburne makes two direct comparisons between Hugo and Tennyson, one in reference to "Toute la Lyre", the other in reference to "Dieu". Writing of the former of these two works (89/1) he compares Hugo's and Tennyson's verses on the valley of Cauterets and says that the solemn sweetness of the latter's majestic verses is not more memorable than the
visionary passion and contemplative sublimity of the former's.

But it was Shelley who of all the English romantic poets evidently seemed to have most in common with Hugo, Shelley who, as Swinburne justly observes, was, like his French contemporary, the poet of freedom. The Rev. Alexander, writing of "La Légende des Siècles" observes:

"Shelley's vague, dim rhetoric against priests and kings in 'The Revolt of Islam' is weak and vacillating compared with Hugo's fierce hate. "La Légende des Siècles" has Shelley's sentiment, colour, style and fierce pathetic indignation". (60/1)

The same writer describes Hugo as being "like Shelley in coloured fluidity and fierce pathetic indignation" in a later article (64/3).

"La Légende des Siècles" provokes a comparison with Shelley in the "British Quarterly Review" (60/3).

"Hugo has somewhat in common with Shelley, but his mastery of description and power of painting is superior to Shelley's."

Alater number of the same journal sets up Shelley as the only English poet with whom Hugo can be compared. The writer is C. Vaughan.

"With Shelley alone of the moderns Hugo can express in lyric shape the love and scorn which sustain and animate the union of man and man." (83/1)
G. Barnett Smith, in his "Life and work of Victor Hugo" (85/11) writes as follows:

"Amongst poets of energy, as distinguished from poets of art and culture, Shelley is the only name in nineteenth century literature which can stand beside Hugo's."

An unsigned article in the "Athenaeum", which, judging by the style, expressions and sentiments, is also by G.B. Smith, endorses this point of view.

"When was poetry as an energy, as one of those forces which go to the disciplining of the race, so concentrated as in Hugo? Only Shelley can compete with him here." (83/2)

Swinburne likens the two poets for their realism and mastery of language. Writing of "Le Romancero du Cid" from "La Légende des Siècles", he claims that Hugo has shown the equality of the French language as an instrument of poetry with the Greek of Aeschylus and Sappho, and the English of Milton and Shelley (86/8). The same critic, sitting in judgment upon "Toute la Lyre", commends the realism of the vision in the dream of the stone lions, and maintains that it surpasses the imaginative work of Shelley, and recalls that of Coleridge.

T.S. Ormond in his "Romantic Triumph" (00/2) couples the names of Hugo and Shelley in speaking of their
"sympathetic glow and enthusiasm for humanity."

Robert Buchanan seems to be alone in finding Hugo definitely inferior to Shelley. In his "A Look around Literature" (87/6) he accuses Hugo of failing where Shelley succeeded, in representing the happiness and life of his generation.

SCOTT Another English poet with whom Hugo was often compared was Sir Walter Scott, whose novels exerted such a profound influence on French literature. The Rev. Alexander, writing in the "Dublin University Magazine" (50/1) of the first volume of "La Légende des Siècles" claims that it has Scott's ringing, chivalrous lines and thrilling trumpet-blasts. Swinburne would, of course, place Hugo above Scott. In his "Study of Victor Hugo" (86/8), during the course of a eulogy on "Le Cimetière d'Eylau", a poem in "La Légende des Siècles", he says:

"It has the precision and practical fellow-feeling which animate the lagging verse of Walter Scott, and it has that breath and light and fire of perfect poetry which a Scott or a Byron is never quite permitted to attain."

F.T. Marzials, in his book on Victor Hugo (88/1), finds Hugo more gloomy than Scott.

"If Scott gives us the poetry of sunshine, Hugo gives us a poetry of cloud-wrack and un governable
passion."

The "Athenaeum" seems to be alone in placing Hugo and Scott at opposite poles.

"Hugo's true opposite in temperament and method is Walter Scott or Dumas. Hugo is a born troubadour as Scott is a born trouvère." (83/2)

By this the writer means that whereas in Hugo the story and situation are subordinate to form and music, in Scott the story and situation are the most important elements.

**BYRON** One is not surprised to find that Byron, who, like Scott, had a tremendous influence on French literature and thought, is frequently set up as a standard of comparison. A critic in "Fraser's Magazine", discussing the influence of Byron on "Les Orientales", states that Hugo has the ease of versification of a Scott or Byron (45/1). Sidney Colvin, writing of "L'Année Terrible" (72/1), maintains that in the matter of sublimity Hugo beats Byron. Roden Noel, in the "British Quarterly Review" (78/5) sees an affinity between the two poets, but claims that Hugo's range is vaster and that he has Byron's fierce satire and more than Byron's humour. This is not the opinion of the "Spectator" (93/2) which thinks that Byron's lighter touch gives him the advantage in satire. The same critic compares "La Légende des Siècles" with "Childe Harold", and finds the former superior in the matter of variety. J. Gappon (85/18) sees the "hard vigour of
Byron in the painting of Eastern life in "Les Orientales" while Swinburne (86/9) thinks that the description of the deluge in "La Fin de Satan" is unequalled either by Milton or Byron. There seems to be only one critic who would deny Hugo a place beside the great English poet. He expresses his profound disagreement with Brundtliere, who ranks Hugo as a lyric poet with Goethe and Byron, adding moreover that neither English nor Germans will endorse this judgment (87/1).

**COLERIDGE** Coleridge comes into the picture as a literary critic as well as a poet, more particularly as a critic of Shakespeare. F.T. Marzials, writing of Hugo's work on this subject says:

"we had hoped for something similar to Coleridge's treatise on the same subject." (64/3)

In reading some of Hugo's finest lyrics J.P. Nichol was reminded of "Kubla Khan", the music of which, says the critic, Hugo could rival. To another critic it was Hugo the visionary who recalled Coleridge to mind.

"No other poet of this century, except perhaps Coleridge, saw such visions and presented them in such a definite form." (00/1)

Sometimes we find Coleridge's name coupled with that of Shelley, with whom we have already dealt. Writing of "Les quatre-Vents de l'Esprit" in the "Athenaeum" (81/3) G.B. Smith in an unsigned article says:
"The crowning triumph of these volumes is the magnificent poem 'En marchant la nuit dans un bois'. It stands alone in French poetry and can only be compared with the choicest productions of Coleridge or Shelley."

These two great English poets are frequently on the lips of Swinburne when he is seeking a comparison with Hugo. We cite two passages from his book on Hugo, the first in reference to one of the lyrics in "Les Rayons et les Ombres".

"Not even Coleridge or Shelley could have produced this little piece of lyric work by combination and fusion of their gifts."

"---- the lyric poet who alone of all his nation has taken his place beside Coleridge and Shelley." (86/8)

**Wordsworth** Hugo is often said to be a great admirer of Wordsworth, and there are several comparisons between the two poets. One critic compares "La Grand'mère" (Odes et Ballades) with "We are seven" (29/2). The Rev. Alexander describes the first volume of "La Légende des Siècles" as having "Wordsworth accurate description". (60/1). J. McCarthy writing of "Les Pauvres Gens" asks: "What in Goldsmith, Crabbe or Wordsworth is more filled with simple beauty and quiet tenderness? (68/1). Other critics incline to the view that Wordsworth was undoubtedly the greater poet. Matthew Arnold, for example, compares Hugo
with both Shakespeare and Wordsworth, to the obvious
detriment of the Frenchman. Robert Buchanan, in "Alook
around Literature" (87/6) makes the following triple
comparison.

"The peace of Wordsworth, the passion of Keats,
the tender pang of Shelley are far from his (Hugo’s)
bosom."

F.T. Marzials denies that Hugo was a thinker in the sense that
Goethe and Wordsworth were, while J.P. Nichol (93/4) fails to
find in his works the "inward penetrative imagination of
Lamartine or Wordsworth."

**KEATS** The name of Keats has already been mentioned in
conjunction with those of other English poets, but he
sometimes appears alone. J.P. Nichol (93/4) writes thus of
Hugo’s mastery of language:—

"Equally with Keats he was a master of all the
secrets of his native language. He proved that
its metrical forms could contain colours as opulent
as those of Keats."

Writing of the two poems "Zim-Zizimi" and "Le Sultan Mourad"
("La Légende des Siècles") the critic of the "Athenaeum"
states:—

"The lines have the rhyme-emphasis of Dryden
and the colour and sweetness of Keats."

A less favourable impression is given by W.E. Henley, who
never learned to appreciate the great French poet. In his book "Views and Reviews" (90/3) he indulges in a little unnecessary arrogance. Referring to the play "Cromwell" he says:— "To compare it with 'Hyperion' or 'The Eve of St. Agnes' is to glory in the name of Briton."

**Browning** We find two references to Browning and one to Mrs. Browning. Edward Dowden, writing in the "Contemporary Review" (73/1) declares that "Hugo is incapable of such emotional logic as Browning brings into play." J.P. Nichol (93/4) sees an affinity in the philosophy of the two poets.

"Though Hugo is less cryptical in expression, his philosophy has in substance much in common with that of Browning."

"L'Art d'être grand-père" evoked from the critic of the "Athenaeum" (77/5) the statement that Mrs. Browning is the only poet who surpasses Hugo in rendering the pathos of childhood.

**Blake** This same collection of poems of childhood recalled to the minds of some English critics the name of Blake. One critic (77/6) finds in it "the same tenderness, eccentricity, extravagance and religious feeling" as in the poems of Blake. Swinburne, writing of the same work in his "Study of Victor Hugo" (86/8) states:—

"Even William Blake and Christina Rossetti are distanced in the race of song on their own
Dealing with a different poem, "Dieu", Swinburne is reminded of Blake because of his "passionate utterances of horror and hope, anguish and faith. To Blake, as to Hugo, these problems were insolvable except by faith." (92/1)

DRYDEN Dryden's name has already appeared. Here are one or two further quotations. "Fraser's Magazine" (46/1) draws a parallel between the "command of language and resounding versification" of the two poets. It is the "sonorous strength" of the two poets which connects them in the mind of the Rev. Alexander, lecturing in Dublin (64/2). E. Martinengo Cesaresco in her Preface to her father's translation of some of Hugo's poems (85/22), credits Hugo with Dryden's "soft and easy strength."

BURNS As a writer of ballads Hugo is sometimes compared with the Scotch poet Burns. J. McCarthy, in "Con Amore" (68/1) writes as under:

"Unlike Burns and Béranger Hugo is a balladist of rich and luxuriant fancy, tender feeling and graceful expression."

SWINBURNE Swinburne occasionally comes into the picture as a poet rather than as a critic. F. W. H. Myers (79/2) compares Hugo's unique power over the French language with Swinburne's over the English language, and finds something of unreality in both of them. He adds that there is nothing
in Hugo to equal Swinburne's highest flights.

Several other less important names occur from time to time in articles dealing with the poetical work of Hugo. "Fraser's" (45/1) finds in his work the "polish and delicate melody of a Campbell." A year later in the same journal we find another reference to the same poet. This time it is the poem "Regret" with its "graceful melancholy, at once kindly and dignified, its polish and finish," which recalls Campbell to the mind (46/1). In this same article also we discover the names of Collins and Lockhart, the latter in a comparison between Hugo's "Romance Mauresque" and the Englishman's "Vengeance of Mudara", which tells the same story, and which, according to the critic, is superior to the French poem.

Kingsley is suggested by the critic of the "British Quarterly Review" (60/3) as a model to Hugo when writing poems of the sea and of sailors. He resembles Macaulay in his "swinging rhyme" says the Rev. Alexander (64/2). J. Cappon (85/18), writing of "La Légende des Siècles", makes a reference to Spenser.

"In these poems, Hugo's world, like that of Spenser, has taken so completely in every part the peculiar ideal hue of his imagination that it seems as if steeped in one colour. But he can paint from that monochrome as few could from a full palette."

A writer in "Blackwood's (90/2) thinks that Mrs. Hémans
has expressed more simply "the faith which in his bereavement he tried to cherish", the reference being to "Les Contemplations" and J.P. Nichol (8/3) (93/4) describes him as "at once the Cowper and the Tennyson of France's poetic renovation."

The quality in Hugo which made the deepest impression on English critics was his imagination, and tributes to the power of his imagination, the beauty of his imagery, and the grandeur of his conception abound. A few quotations from some of the more eminent critics and journals will amply illustrate this.

"His images are of great beauty." (64/3)

"In his lyrics are vivid colours, graceful outlines and prodigal imagery." (68/1)

"----- singular vividness and intensity of imagination." (79/2)

"His images are of surpassing grandeur." (79/5)

"No poet of modern times has been gifted with so vast a power of imagination." (79/5)

"----- command of striking figures, a facile invention, a wide associative power for analogies." (85/18)

"------ his high-wrought imagination" (85/18)

"His imagination is of unrivalled energy. His fancy has the luxuriance and fecundity of nature itself." (85/16)
"In abundance and force of imagery, wealth and colour of diction, stormy rush of imagination, delicacy and quaintness of fancy, he is unsurpassed and perhaps unequalled." (85/19)

"There is no finer imagination in the French language clothed in more perfect verse. He often compels our admiration by some marvellous metaphor." (87/1)

"His imagination is boundless." (96/1)

Even those critics who did not recognise the greatness of the poet Hugo were bound to admit the power of his imagination.

"He is not good on the ground, and the perfect poet is at much at home on the ground as on the misty mountain tops. He cannot reason; he has no humour; but he can take you higher than anyone else." (81/2)

"An enormous imagination operated amid inferior faculties." (97/1)

In an article published in the "National Review" (00/1), in which the writer is drawing a comparison between Hugo and Goethe, we find some enlightening statements about Hugo the imaginative poet. The writer claims that "if the first qualities of poetry are imagination and music, Hugo ranks above Goethe." He reiterates that Hugo's poetical qualities were first and foremost poetical imagination, adding that his vision was equally penetrating as regards what he say
and what he imagined. He then continues:

"No other poet of this century, except perhaps Coleridge, saw such visions and presented them in such a definite form. ———— His genius reflects every ray and colour of nature. Nature plays on him and he interprets Nature. He is the Wagner of poetry in whose soul the mysterious voices of Nature reverberate, and he expresses the elemental secrets of sky and sea, forest and fire, dawn and sunrise, dusk and the stars, in a multitudinous orchestration in which each individual evolution is subordinated to and dominated by one ruling mind."

According to some critics, notably the Rev. William Alexander, Dean of Emily, who delivered a lecture on "La Légende des Siècles" at the University of Dublin (64/2), a lecture which was afterwards printed in the Dublin University Magazine, Hugo had fancy as distinct from imagination. By "fancy" the writer implied something which, while not lacking in subtlety, was of a more definite character, as opposed to "imagination" which was indefinite, vaster, more serious, more sublime, more infinite. To illustrate his contention the Rev. Alexander quotes the following line from "Plaine Mer":

"Du dôme de St. Paul son mat passait le faute."

which he finds poor when compared with Hilton's description of Satan's wand. The latter's tends to the infinite; Hugo's is
simply an exaggeration. The Rev. Alexander discovers this predominance of "fancy" in "Le Sacre dela Feme", where "there is nothing great or serious, and where all is glaring and coloured, the very fogs and shadows being illuminated." Hugo does not possess, claims the Dean, that imagination which is characteristic of the greatest poets.

J. Pringle Nichol (93/4) deals with the same problem. While not denying that Hugo had a rich and decorative fancy which he used to the full, he grants him an imagination such as few writers have ever possessed to the same degree of intensity. It is not the inward, penetrative imagination of Lamartine or Wordsworth, nor the psychologically creative imagination of Shakespeare and Racine. Hugo's imagination is almost entirely plastic and pictorial, claims Nichol, in support of which thesis he quotes the many impressive and sumptuous tableaux of "La Legende des Siecles". It is at its highest, continues the critic, when it tends towards the infinite, and Hugo is unique among poets when his subject permits him to depict immense material spaces filled with Titan forms, as in "L'Expiation", "Le Satyre" or "Le Pape".

In the last of these poems, for example, Hugo has contrived to convey, in a manner unmatched in literature, the sense of immeasurable distances and the sound of the trump of innumerable multitudes of men. It is in such scenes as these that his imagination exalts and triumphs.
What was the most potent source of inspiration for Hugo? Certainly not the idea, for most English critics deny him any worthy of the name. Nor, with a few outstanding exceptions, did the most intimate experiences of his life furnish him with inspiration, for most of his poetry is objective rather than subjective. No; according to Havelock Ellis, Edward Dowden and others, the source of the primitive power and charm of Hugo is that, like the savage, he owed his ideas to the images which evoked them. He did not illustrate his ideas by means of images; it was the latter that gave birth to the former. Dowden expresses it thus:

"Sensations created images and words, and these created ideas." (97/1)

Havelock Ellis, who insists on the solid and primitive qualities of the French peasant in Hugo, finds his poetry quite impersonal.

"Poetry for him was not a self-revelation. He cultivated the craft of poetry with the same stolid impersonal spirit in which his forefathers had followed the crafts of carpentering and bootmaking."

And again:

"Hugo was not one of those poets who have cast the most intimate experiences of their lives into their work. Not only was the impulse absent, but also the necessity." (02/1)
J.P. Nichol is substantially of the same opinion, but views the question from a different angle. He claims that all Hugo's work is the expression of his exuberant personality, and calls Hugo himself as witness to the truth of this statement. But that this is not a refutation of Havelock Ellis's thesis is proved by the ensuing explanation. This expression of personality, says Nichol, takes the form, not so much of the introduction of intimate experiences, but of the expression and illustration of some ethical theory proper to himself. Hugo, continues the critic, preaches the ideal rather than points the reality. Later in the same work Nichol returns to the subject, invoking Hugo's worldly wisdom and passion for success as an explanation of the objectivity of much of his poetry.

"The very sanity of his mind and body prohibited him from uttering those poignant notes which escape when a wayward emotion throws into dismay the senses and the brain. His worldly wisdom seconded his natural temperament. He preferred to the experience of a passion vibrating through his soul the publication of a successful volume of verses, a theatrical triumph, a political oration." (93/4)

There is, however, the other point of view, and we find a writer in the "Athenaeum" (81/3), probably G. Barnett Smith,
expressing the opinion that Hugo's great danger is that of writing too much about himself.

The vastness of Hugo's subject-matter is an object of admiration among English critics.

"The world was to him a vast poem, and he penetrated its secrets. With his music he could rouse whatever imaginative emotion existed in man. He could unveil the mysteries of nature." (85/17)

J. Cappon devotes several paragraphs to this subject. Writing of the poems published between 1830 and 1845, which period includes "Les Feuilles d'Automne", "Les Chants du Crépuscule", "Les Rayons et les Ombres" and "Les Voix Intérieures", he says:

"Hugo attacks all subjects with the indifference of a philosopher for whom there are no considerations of art. His mind is capable of reflecting in its depths the whole spectacle of human affairs."

Cappon draws attention also to the workaday character of Hugo's poetic genius.

"The territory of his genius is no nebulous region like that of Lamartine, but the broad sunlit fields of the working world. His art is but the finer expression of the ordinary occupations and meditations of men." He notes the changes which other men have forgotten, the sudden growth
of novelties which they have ceased to remember
wore not always there, the unheeded subsidence of
tings once great, the evolutions of Time." (85/18)

Or again:

"He knows the inner movements of most other arts
as well as his own and can divine the secrets of the
master in music and sculpture."

"Chords from many diverse worlds of poetry pass
sounding through his song."

No critic of "La Légende des Siècles" has failed to remark
upon the vastness of the horizon which bounds Hugo's vision.
This work, say the majority of critics, gives a fuller review
of the spiritual development of humanity than could easily be
got in any other form.

When children are the subject of his poetry there is
no one who will deny that Hugo is the supreme and unchallenged
master who understood and expressed the child-mind in a manner
which leaves the reader deeply moved.

"No poet has entered with such full sympathy
and intelligence into the wonderland of children's
life, its joys, miseries and fantasies, and none
has touched so finely the tender chords which
attach adult life to that infantile world." (85/18)

Quotations expressing this view are so numerous that we
forbear to reproduce others.
There is a good deal of evidence to show that English critics were not greatly impressed by Hugo's love poetry.

"He seldom achieved a faultless rendering of the subtle psychology of lovers' hearts." (97/1)

"His art does not deal with lovers." (85/13)

"His amatory poems have not carried the world with them." (76/2)

J. P. Nichol finds in Hugo's work little real love poetry, though a fair proportion of verses dealing with love; but they are rather exercises of fancy or imagination on the love-themes than the cry of personal experience.

This notwithstanding, there are not wanting, especially among the critics of the first half of the century, those who recognised that Hugo could sing of love as well as of fallen empires, and that his love-poems had surpassing delicacy and tenderness, an earnest passion, and a graceful and attractive melancholy.

The ease of Hugo's versification, the variety of his rhythms, the richness of his rhymes, and the number and complexity of his metrical effects won the admiration of even the most unwilling and grudging of his critics. The "Saturday Review" (85/3), replying to Matthew Arnold's caustic remarks about Hugo's use of the Alexandrine, a subject which we shall treat under the heading of Drama, writes as follows:
"Only complete ignorance could compare his (Hugo's) Alexandrine with this (of Lamartine or Chénier) or with any Alexandrine of any poet from Racine downwards, Hugo is not to be scanned by couplets, but by verse paragraphs of irregular length, where the rhymes simply mark the breaking of each successive wave. When Englishman understand that French prosody does not come by nature, they will be able to enter into the almost fanatical adoration with which three generations regard the author of "Aventuriers de la Mer", "La Tristesse d'Olympio", "Le Chasseur Noir", of the marvellous lines in "Le Quatre Vents de la l'Esprit" beginning; "Je suis fait d'ombre et du marbre", of a thousand Alexandrine tirades scattered about every play from "Cromwell" to "Torquemada", and every book of verse from the "Odes" to "L'Art d'être grand-père".

F.W.H.Myres, who can hardly be described as a Hugolâtre, gives the French poet his full need of praise for his versification. He writes thus in the "Nineteenth Century" (72/2):

"It is in the rediscovery of disused metrical effects and the invention of new ones that Victor Hugo was most truly the heir of the literary revolution. His improvements consist mainly in an increased richness of rhyme and an increased variety;
He then proceeds to discuss the questions of Rhyme and Metre under separate headings.

**RHyme**

"In a page taken at random I find eleven rich rhymes to three poor ones; in a page of Racine seven rich rhymes to seven poor ones. This implies wonderful command over language. Hugo's rhymes do not depend greatly on a similarity of grammatical termination."

**METRE**

"Victor Hugo has supplied charm in such variety to the Alexandrine. He has surpassed the elder poets in the number and complexity of his metrical effects both in lyric, epic and dramatic verse. In one point in which he is often praised his success is less complete than at first sight appears. He has taken great pains to avoid the "chevilles" introduced by the tragedians at the ends of lines to secure a rhyme. But he has sometimes introduced half a line or a whole line which, on examination, proves to be nothing better than a pretentious "chevillé". His use of "enjambement" and the "mot propre", instead of the insipid paraphrases once in fashion, are instances of the skill with which he has extended the conventional limits of versification. The changes adopted by Victor Hugo have been almost wholly advantageous. Where it was well to make the
old rules more stringent, as in the case of rhymes, he has done so; where it was well to relax them, as in the case of 'enjambement', he has relaxed them; where a wholly new life and variety were needed in the rhythmical structure, he has infused that life. He has revived what was good in early French poetry and has added new artifices of his own. He covers more ground than Lamartine or De Musset. His works form an unfailing repertory of metrical and rhetorical artifices, and he has shown a more complete command over the resources of the French language than any previous author."

Many others pay tribute to Hugo's unfailing mastery over the resources of the French language and to his command of words.

"Equally with Keats he was a master of all the secrets of his native language. Of Hugo's command over words it is impossible to say anything in excess. He transformed it as the vehicle of expression in verse. He discovered in it possibilities of rhythmic harmonies unguessed at. Before Hugo French verse had long suffered from stiffness and thinness, which denied to it various artistic effects. He renewed its outward texture. He proved that its metrical forms could contain colours as opulent as the colours of Keats, could rival in music the 'Kubla Khan' of
Coleridge. ———Never since the sixteenth century had French poetry known such variety of metrical effects, such richness of verbal colour." (93/4)

"None has rhymed with such felicitous daring. None has lent such vitality to common-place rhymes or taken such note of mysterious links between sounds and ideas." (87/1)

"With the case of versification and conscious command of numbers of a Scott or a Byron, you will find conjoined the polish and delicate melody of a Campbell." (45/1)

"———his superb metrical command over the rebellious French language." (85/11)

"———master of all the harmonies of verse." (97/1)

"With such command of language, and such a resounding march of versification we shall begin to believe in the possibility of a French Dryden." (46/1)

"Hugo's central distinction lies in his unique power over the French language, resembling Swinburne's power over the English language." (79/2)

"———his wonderful command over language." (79/3)

"———his prodigious wealth of vocabulary." (79/2)
"He wrote the noblest verse of which the French language is capable. His power over that language is boundless. Never had there been so great a gamut, a compass so extended." (85/13)

"Modern French is Victor Hugo. He has taught everybody how to write. As a technician he will remain. He has the sense of words and rhythm that Milton had." (85/16)

"For his feats in verse and his achievements in language there can be nothing but praise. He does what he will with the Alexandrine. French as he handles it is a true musical instrument, a vehicle of expression not merely of ideas but of emotion." (85/16)

"Words were living powers for him and language a moving mass of significant myths which he aggrandised." (97/1)

"--------a vocabulary of inconceivable range and majesty." (72/1)

"His command of language is so regal and his vocabulary so opulent that they often mask the poverty of the idea." (85/11)

J.P. Nichol (34/4) describes Hugo as "incomparably the greatest artist in words who has yet appeared in his country or century". The same writer makes it clear also that the birth of the
Parnassian School of poetry, which rose up out of the ruins of the Romantic School, was due in a large measure to Hugo's successful efforts to enrich and widen the manner of literary expression. Mr. Nichol quotes the poem "Gastibelza" (which Verlaine declared to be the only true poem Hugo ever wrote) as being the best example of Hugo's witchery of words and mastery of indefinite suggestion. And yet, continues Mr. Nichol, Hugo was always respectful of the genius of his language. His reforms never touched its essential characteristics. He would, indeed, have been dismayed by the innovations, in syntax and metre, introduced by the Symbolists and Decadents.

Some critics dwell rather on Hugo the Liberator of the French language, and compare the state of the language as he found it with the state of the language as he left it.

"He has set free the poetry of his country which he found so shackled." (72/1)

"It was reserved for Hugo to achieve the complete liberation of French rhythm and revolutionise the French vocabulary." (93/4)

"With unquestionable originality of conception Victor Hugo unites a fervid diction, an immense richness and variety of verse, while under his masterly management, in his at once powerful and delicate handling, the language of French poetry receives an expansion and a freedom to which in
the higher lyrical strain, it was a stranger. Nor is this additional liberty attained at such sacrifices of elegance and grace as the devotees of the formal school of French verse are apt to charge upon the bold genius of the innovator. Nay, the more daringly he seizes, the more exquisitely happy seems he in his purpose; the greater the charm that accompanies his movements (45/1).

"He found the language in which he wrote the prey of pedants and the scorn of poets. He left it of a substance as varied and rich as that of the earth itself, and idiom which in a single expression can combine the exquisite propriety of Voltaire with the clear-cut elegance of Racine, the heroic pomp of Corneille with the passionate intensity of Musset."

(85/16)

These numerous references to the richness and fervour of his diction, the wonderful variety of his illustrations, the colour, power and resonance of his language, lightly and easily wielded, and to the sometimes comic liberties he took with it, to his word-fertility and his rich verbal palette, words being to him as pigments are to the painter, all bear witness to the high regard in which Hugo the poet was held by English critics, who were also greatly impressed by the way in which he avoided both the monotonous cadences of the classical writers and the pale elegance of the moderns.
English critics seem to have been so dazzled by the brilliance of Hugo's diction, versification and imagination that the question of the form in which these found their expression received less attention than it deserved. When F.T. Marziale refers to the perfection of Hugo's form he is undoubtedly thinking of the shorter poems. James Cappon, writing of the period between "Les Feuilles d'Automne" and "Les Rayons et les Ombres", a period which included "Les Chants du Crépuscule" and "Les Voix Intérieures", finds Hugo's poems defective in the art of composition. In the longer poems especially he finds a looseness of structure and a want of leading lines to support the masses of colour and ornamental detail which Hugo lavishes on every subject. R.C. Macdowall, while granting that Hugo's form is always beautiful, seldom finds that it becomes secondary to the emotion which spiritualises it. W.E. Henley, writing of "L'Ano", says that "formlessness is the only form".

Let us now consider the progress and development of Hugo the poet as they presented themselves to English critics. It seems that Victor Hugo, like most writers, reached the point at which his genius attained its fullest development long before the end of his life. The same can be said of practically all creative artists, from Shakespeare downwards, but none the less many English critics take advantage of this seemingly derogatory fact to suggest that Hugo's work towards
the end of his life declined to such an extent as to be almost negligible. Others state that never really progressed, though they differ as to whether that implies that his early work was of a very high order or his later of a very low one.

A writer in the "St. James' Magazine" (62/2) begins an article full of diatribes against "Les Misérables" by stating that Hugo has produced a great quantity of poetry in a decreasing order of merit.

F.W. H. Myers, writing in the "Nineteenth Century" (79/2), puts the case thus:

"During the years preceding the coup d'état d'État Hugo was increasingly in want of something to say. His style continued to improve; his mastery over rhythm and rhyme grew more magical than ever. But each succeeding volume of verse—"Les Voix Intérieures" (1837), "Les Rayons et les Ombres" (1840),—was weaker than the last. "Les Châtiments" is perhaps his best work. Sarcasm, declamation, imagination, all his powers culminate and are concentrated there."

W. E. Henley, in an article which appeared in the "Scottish Church" (85/16), makes frequent allusion to the stagnation of Hugo's mind.

"All his life he neither learned nor forgot anything. In "Hernani" (1830) and "Les Quatre
Vents de l'Esprit" (1891) the voice, the method, the matter are more or less the same."

"The virtuosity displayed in "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois" (1865) is prodigious, but so is the virtuosity of certain among the "Odes et Ballades" (1896) (e.g. "Les pas d'armes du Roi Jean"), and of some of "Les Orientales" (1889), (e.g. "Les Djinns", "Les Tronçons du Serpent"). There are numbers in "Les Rayons et les Ombres" (1840) and "Les Chants du Crépuscule" (1835) which move one as deeply as "Eviradmis", "Le Crapaud" and "Les Pauvres Gens" (1st series of "La Légende des Siècles" 1859). There is the same poverty of thought, the same prodigality of fancy, but the thoughts are stale and worn, the operation of the fancy jaded. He ends as he began, not as the greatest of artists, but as the richest of temperaments."

James Cappon (85/13) finds in the poems published between "Les Feuilles d'Automne" (1831) and "Les Rayons et les Ombres" (1840) many of the defects of his early work, though the verse is less meagre in thought than in his earlier poems, and more melodious tender and graceful than in his later. The light themes of his earlier poetry have given way to lines of grave and meditative beauty.

Francis Paul (67/1) in an article regretting the
indiscriminate praise sometimes lavished on Hugo by English critics, makes frequent reference to the decline of Hugo's power, to the darkening shadows of his long decadence, and claims that his power and originality attained their highest development between the years 1852 and 1865, a period which included "Les Châtiments", "Les Contemplations", "La Légende des Siècles" (1st series), and "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois", and that the publication of the latter work marks the beginning of the period when his facility and richness of verbal invention left him.

According to J.P. Nichol (93/4) Hugo never surpassed "Les Orientales" (1839).

"Les Orientales" is technically the work of the mature Hugo. For the rest of his career he merely drew deeper and more varied music from an instrument now perfect to his hands. His power as an imaginative poet was never more superbly manifested on its sombre side than in "Le feu du ciel" ('Les Orientales'). In richly decorative fancy he never surpassed 'Sara la Baigneuse', nor in metrical dexterity 'Les Djinns' ('Les Orientales'). 'Malédiction' ('Les Orientales') is worthy of a place among the anathemas of 'Les Châtiments'. In 'Les Orientales' Hugo attained maturity as an artist in words. Nearly thirty
years elapsed before, in the first series of 'La Légende des Siècles' he showed again a mastery over verbal music and colour equal to that displayed in this glowing volume. ————Exception made for 'Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois' Hugo's subsequent poetical productions were merely variants—often superb and welcome, occasionally superfluous—on motives already handled in his volumes of 1829-1831.

On the other hand many English critics recognise the fact that Hugo's immense vitality was hardly dimmed by the passing of years, that his later works contain as much fire as his earlier ones. The Hon. Roden Noel writes thus in the "British Quarterly Review" (79/3):

"That a poet of Hugo's years should retain all the fire and intensity of youthful genius, while conquering for himself also the moderation and artistic restraint of maturity, is a phenomenon rare enough to be remarkable."

A writer in the "Athenaeum" (83/2), who believes that Hugo's highest mark in poetry was reached in "Zin-Zizimi" and "Sultan Mourad" ('La Légende des Siècles' 1859) bears testimony to the unquenchability of Hugo's fire.

"Not all the trials and sorrows of his years can abate it. Neither fate nor chance nor time can quell the fire of Hugo".
This critic can see in the last volume of "La Légende des Siècles" no decadence of true poetic impulse, no subsidence of that marvellous brilliance which dazzled Europe when the first volume was published. He adds, however, that he fails to discover any growth of those highest poetic qualities in which Hugo's magnificent poetry was always weak - self-dominance, serenity, wise sweetness of a balancing judgment.

A very forceful article in the "Saturday Review" (85/2) directed mainly against Matthew Arnold's fulminations against Hugo, contains the following statement: -

"That the later volumes of Verse are unfit to rank with the former is cant. Nothing Hugo has ever written excels the finest parts of "Los Quatre Vent s de l'Esprit" (1881)."

F.T. Marzials, though he found most of Hugo's later declamatory verse unreadable, is of similar opinion as to the perennial vigour of Hugo.

"Years had no chilling influence on this exceptional nature. When the man had reached maturity the poet grew in strength and vitality."

(85/11)

James Gappon sees a distinct advancement in the later poetry.

"While his prose has become even more laden with antitheses, climaxés and exaggerations, his
poetry, notwithstanding some audacities and occasional fine fantastic work, has grown steadily in real simplicity and directness, till in the works of these later years, e.g. 'Les Quatre Vents de l'Espri t' (1831), 'Religions et Religion' (1830), his line has the quiet and unassuming but profoundly subtle art which we find in an Epistle of Horace." (35/18)

Esme Stuart (96/1) is of the opinion that from "Les Châtiments" (1853) and "Les Contemplations" (1856) dates his period of perfection of workmanship and highest poetical flight. In Hugo's best period this critic would include "La Légende des Siècles" (1859-1883), "Chansons des Rues et des Bois" (1865), "L'Année Terrible" (1872), and "L'Art d'Être Grand-père" (1877). Elsewhere in the same article the writer maintains that it is in "Les Châtiments" that Hugo's power reaches maturity, and that although his later poems are more echoes than new notes, they are none the less noble echoes.

Edward Dowden in his "History of French Literature" (97/1) writes:­

"During the closing ten years his poems had waned, but they were still extraordinary."

If it was as a poet rather than as a novelist or dramatist that Hugo was acclaimed in England, so it was as a lyric poet rather than as a writer of satiric or epic verse that he won the admiration of English critics. Although we
do find the statement that Hugo was more successful in
dramatic than in lyric art (60/3), and that it is not in his
lyrical work that we look for the noblest outpourings of his
genius (85/19), the large and overwhelming majority of his
English critics can hardly find adequate and sufficient praise
for the high quality of his lyrical work.

A writer in the "Edinburgh Review" (63/2) explains the
popularity of "Les Misérables", the work under review, and one
for which he can find neither justification nor praise, by the
fact that Hugo stands in the foremost rank of lyrical poets of
France.

Justin Mc Carthy (68/1) finds Hugo without a rival in
France as a lyricist.

Writing in 1872 Dr. Kenningale Cook finds many of Hugo's
poems ordinary and monotonous, but discovers, even among the
smallest, gems of lyrical art. (72/4)

The "Athenaeum" (83/2) declares that as a lyricist his
place is beyond cavil.

Even W.E.Henley (85/16) grants that Hugo's lyrics are the
delight of every one with heart and ear and the loveliest
expression of the language, and discovers in him the most
copious and varied lyricist of his race.

Lady Pollock (85/17) maintains that his great supremacy
lies in his lyrics.

Cecelia E. Motekerke (91/3) pays fitting tribute to the
tender and delicate grace of Hugo's lyrics, and upholds that in that branch of the poet's art he stands without a rival for sweetness, brevity and charm.

J. P. Nichol (93/4) claims that Hugo is, at bottom, totally and solely a great lyrical poet.

Edward Dowden, in his "History of French Literature" (97/1), bestows high praise on Hugo the lyric writer:—

"To say he was the greatest lyric poet of France was to say too little: the claim that he was the greatest lyric poet of all literature might be urged."

A writer in the "National Review" (00/1), comparing Victor Hugo with Goethe, holds that the former far surpasses the latter in lyrical gift. "'Eviradmus', he writes, seems to possess every quality a true lyric is capable of possessing, winged passion, grace, freshness, delicacy, prismatic splendour, iridescent texture."

H. C. Macdowall designates Hugo as one of the greatest lyric poets of the world, and declares that, outside his own country, he will be remembered for his lyrics.

In this chapter we have purposely omitted all reference to Hugo's ideas and philosophy, which will be considered in the chapter dealing with Hugo the philosopher.
CHAPTER

ODES ET POESIES DIVERSES (1822)
NOUVELLES ODES (1824)
ODES ET BALLADES (1826)

Those volumes of verse received in England a large measure of praise, which is all the more surprising considering the youth of the poet (Hugo was only twenty when the earliest volume appeared); and although it seems to be generally recognized that the "Ballades" were superior to the "Odes", the latter excited a certain amount of admiration.

Very shortly after the publication of the last of these volumes, Henry Southern, a discerning critic, recognized in them the beginnings of a new era in French poetry. He wrote in the "Foreign Quarterly Review" (29/2):

"The opinion in England that French poetry is not poetry at all, that it is at its best prose in metre, and at its worst a pompous jingle of big but unmeaning words, is so firmly rooted —— that we fear it is but lost time to inform the mass of our countrymen that —— the French are beginning to produce poetry and poets. Yes: poetry of the heart, of the imagination; poets of profound thought — aspiring, delicate, fanciful — drawing their recollections from remote epochs, gilding the past with the venerable hues of romantic association, painting the future in the brightest colours of hope..."
and tenderness."

Two further quotations from the same article are worthy of reproduction.

"These two divisions ("Odes of Fancy", and "Odes of Personal Experience") of the work, as well as the ballads forming the latter part of the second volume, cannot be read without the highest gratification by anyone susceptible of the pleasures of the imagination."

"In general every lover of poetry must dwell with delight on the harmony of their tone, calm and peaceful as a summer's evening, on the delicate tenderness of the affection they develop, on the admirable play of the imagination in which the author dresses up the objects of his regard, whether they be simply the golden dreams of former happiness, or the more real charms of existing loveliness. The poet here is in his true character, pensive and wayward, sensitive and contemplative, alive to the brilliancy of the world, easily affected by the recollection of the past, desponding for the future, but showing in his pride and his high-mettled fierceness the unbroken spirit of youth, and, in fact, proving that his melancholy and his sorrow are rather the reaction
of an over-wrought temperament than the bitterness of the heart, torn and bruised by a life of care and sad experience."

In 1846 a critic in "Fraser's Magazine" (46/1) summarises what he considers to be Hugo's contribution to the Ode in France.

A bolder grasp of measures, a more ample sweep of language, a greater freedom of thought, a finer play of imagination, and an immeasurably deeper intensity of feeling by the introduction into that heretofore cold and formal style — of a pervading passion, a natural earnestness of emotion — these have been the contributions of Victor Hugo to the Ode in France."

G. Barnett Smith (85/11) finds in the "Odes" the first noble efforts to emancipate French poetry from the trammels which had too long governed it.

W. E. Henley writes thus in the "Scottish Church" (85/16),

"The 'Odes et Ballades' stamp him as an artist in style, and the greatest poet of his day."

Later, in a volume of collected criticism (90/3), he compares Hugo's rhythms in these volumes with the rhythm of Ronsard and the Pléiade.

"The richness of his rhymes, his curious
cadences, show him to be an artist endowed with technical imagination of the highest quality, the very genius of style, and a sense of the plastic quality of words unequalled since Milton."

Lady Pollock, writing in "Temple Bar" (85/17), sees in these volumes heralds of future greatness. She is struck by the real emotion and original thought to be found in them, and by the absence of that monotony which had been a characteristic of French verse.

Several writers praise the "Ballades" at the expense of the earlier volume of "Odes". James Cappon, after rather a mixed criticism of the earlier volume, continues:—

"It is in the 'Ballades' that we first get pure and sustained notes, of a fine quality if not very full in tone. In these he is more master of the material: delicate graces of style, tender turns of fancy, power over the word." (85/18)

Swinburne concurs in this opinion.

"It is in the 'Ballades' written between his twenty-second and twenty-seventh years that Hugo first showed himself, beyond all question, and above all cavil, an original and great poet. The fire, the music, the force, the tenderness, the spirit of these glorious little poems must needs impress even such readers as might be
impervious to the charm of their exquisitely vigorous and dexterous execution." (86/3)

And elsewhere:

"--------the brilliant, vivid ballads, full already of supple harmonies and potent masteries of music, of passion and sentiment, force and grace." (72/2)

C. Vaughan, in the "British Quarterly Review" (83/1), suggests a reason for the fact that the ballad suited Hugo's genius better than the ode. After describing the "Odes" as "somewhat wild and tangled", he continues:

"Narrative matter and antique form lend a directing and pruning hand, and the poem becomes for the first time self-supporting. There is a sense of harmony and fitness in every part. Victor Hugo craves for some human interest round which to cling. When, as in the 'Odes', and 'Orientales', this is lacking, the result, except in so far as melody is concerned, is disappointing."

The earlier "Odes" proved unacceptable to some English critics, notably Henry Southern (29/3), because of their subject-matter. The kind of royalism expressed in these poems, a royalism which regarded all dead Bourbons as martyrs and saints and him who reigns as "prêtre et roi infaillible", and
in those eyes of which the Revolution was nothing but anarchy and atheism, and its great men, regicides and traitors, was little appreciated or understood in England. Southern, however, concludes his article with the following thought:

"We are far from denying that even in the midst of an exaggeration incidental to the celebration of public events, many thoughts of great beauty are to be found."

Justin McCarthy is another who is not impressed by Hugo's loyalty as expressed in the "Odes". He thinks that it is more a matter of taste than of feeling, and he can discover in the "Odes" little of the earnestness with which, at a later date, he expressed such different sentiments. "Victor Hugo, he adds, was not made to warble adulations; his genius was of the antagonistic kind." The subject-matter of the "Odes" did not lend itself sufficiently to his true lyrical faculty.

E.C.G. Murray in his book "Men of the Third Republic" (73/3) dismissed the "Odes" thus:

"The Odes with which he won the floral games at Toulouse ("Les Vierges de Verdun", "Le Rétablissement de la Statue de Henri Quatre", "Mélée sur le Nil") contain immature or borrowed thoughts in \( \Xi \) lines which do not flow smoothly and are often redundant."

James Cappon can find little to commend in the earlier
"Of the earlier odes nothing very favourable can be said. They are remarkable for their vigour and richness of language, but, in general, there is more facility than fineness of invention. Hugo wrote many volumes before he reached his highest notes. "(35/18)

The same critic, however, pays tribute to the richness of imagery, the freedom and novelty of expression and the melodious line of these poems, which are free from all the stiffness and languor that beset the Alexandrine in less skilful hands.

F.T. Marshals (83/1) was no more warmly impressed. He found in the "Odes et Poésies Diverses", which he regarded as a product of the classical rather than of the romantic school, the stock classical apostrophes.

"A rhetorical periphrasis too often takes the place of and immediate, direct word."

This critic does, however, recognise in Hugo the pioneer of a new school.

"Though the poems contain too much eloquence the eloquence is real, though misplaced, and the author's power of compelling language into metre without recourse to the obvious inversions which French verse tolerated all too long, marks him as the pioneer of a new school."
A critic in "Fraser's Magazine" (63/3) is very scathing towards these volumes. They are inspired, he contends, by a sense of superior intelligence. The "Odes" are pompous, fervent and feeble, and full of amiable platitudes, and are not worthy of detailed criticism.

Edward Dowden (97/1), like many others, prefers the Ballads to the Odes.

"Hugo's strivings after originality, which did not achieve success until he wrote the 'Ballades', are hampered in these early volumes by the literary methods of his predecessors."

To give a just impression of the reception accorded to these volumes by English critics it should be added that they found in them many beautiful occasional pieces, many thoughts of great beauty, and some of his daintiest work. Swinburne has high praise even for the "Odes", which he commends for their force, ease, freshness, fluency, simple and sincere feeling, cordial and candid faith.

Which of the individual poems in these volumes found most favour with English critics? Pride of place must be given to "La Fiancée du Timbalier", described by the critic in "Fraser's Magazine" as a "splendid Ballad", the rhythm of which suggests, says James Cappon (65/12), the continued fanfare of trumpets and the passing of mounted cavaliers. The same writer commends also "Le Géant", a poem in which
wild hyperbole is not out of place. The Celtic giant is a true emanation from a wild warring life of the past, thus successfully carrying out Hugo's endeavour, explained in the Introduction to the "Ballades", "to give some idea of what might be the poems of the first troubadours of the Middle Ages."

"Hugo here shows his power of expressing the physically grand without labour. His art gains, indeed, in fineness and simplicity from the vastness of the materials. He has a power of remote poetical suggestion akin to Milton's power of dealing with the great legendary spaces in history. His song, like Milton's, seems at times to come from a height where his vision and language have lost the habitual limitations of man, a faculty which reached its highest development in 'La Légende des Siècles'. " (35/13)

It is interesting to note at this point that Henry Southern selected this poem for translation in an article in the "Foreign Quarterly Review" (39/2).

J. Cappon singles out also "Le Pas de d'Armes du Roi Jean" for its fine dramatic depth and vigour of conception. In this poem the warlike humour of a feudal age, its range of feeling in art and beauty, and some reflection of its social pressure, are skilfully brought out. In form it is an imitation of the Minnesinger's art. It is deft in movement and choice in
rhymes. The curt, truncated phrase expresses baronial brusqueness and imperiousness to the life.

The same critic mentions "A Trilby, le Lutin d'Argail" for its quaint turns of fancy and its rich choice of word and phrase.

"La Grand'mère" is another general favourite for its touching sympathy. H. Southern (29/3) thinks it worthy of "We are Seven", and believes that Hugo must be a great admirer of Wordsworth. These, together with the lines on the funeral of Louis XVIII and "A la Colonne", are the poems in these volumes which attracted most praise among English critics.

In conclusion one may be permitted the conjecture that faults and failings notwithstanding, the English public recognized in Hugo the rising of a poetical star who one day would become one of the most brilliant in the firmament. It will be noticed also that, unlike a large number of the works of Hugo, the Ballades at least, and, subject matter apart, the Odes as well, proved immediately acceptable to the few English critics who thought them worthy of attention. They were as well received by Henry Southern in 1839 as by W.E. Henley in 1885. On the general public they could have had no influence at all, for the volumes were not made available in an English edition until 1912.
CHAPTER

LES ORIENTALES

One of the first things that struck the English critic, as, of course, it struck the French critic, was that this volume belied its name, such orientalism as it contained being spurious. Henry Southern (39/2) thought that Hugo had hit the tone of Moorish song rather than that of the genuine East, and added:

"We must not therefore be astonished to find a considerable part of the 'Orientales' occupied by Greek topics."

James Cappon (85/18) found that the poetry of Eastern life in this volume did not go deeper than the sparkle and colour of its surface, and was the outcome of a temporary enthusiasm for the richness and glow of Eastern colouring rather than an attempt at comparison between civilisations.

"Neither in 'Les Orientales' nor elsewhere has Hugo brought out the profounder significance of the East."

A critic in the "London Quarterly Review" (66/1) who finds little to say in favour of "Les Orientales", states that Hugo has missed altogether the subtle spirit of the East, while F.T. Marzials (83/1), who describes it as "a brilliant, superb work", is of the opinion that it matters little if the poems are of doubtful Orientalism, so superb are they as pieces of art, so fine is the quality of the workmanship. Edward Dowden
in an article in the "Contemporary Review" (73/1) explains that Hugo, being still unprovided with sufficient subjects from his personal experience, and finding the monarchical pagant grow somewhat tarnished, had turned to Greece and Spain.

"With Spain the recollections of his boyhood connected him. Greece was a fashion of the period."

It should be remembered that Hugo himself, in the Preface to "Les Orientales", claimed that Spain was part of the Orient, and that Spain was half African.

"Les couleurs orientales sont venues comme d'elles-mêmes empreindre toutes ses pensées, toutes ses rêveries; et ses rêveries et ses pensées se sont trouvées tour à tour, et presque sans l'avoir voulu, hébraïques, turques, grecques, persanes, arabes, espagnoles même, car l'Espagne c'est encore l'Orient; l'Espagne est à demi africano, l'ville est à demi asiatique."

Greece certainly was a fashion of the period, and it is not surprising that critics should have discovered in some of the poems dealing with Greece the "hard vigour" (85/18) of Byron.

The most striking quality of "Les Orientales" was, not surprisingly, its glowing imagery, which everywhere found favour. A few quotations will serve to show the delight with which the critics greeted this feature of the volume.

"It reached the utmost limits of purely artistic poetry." (49/1)
"Never was any poem more striking for harmony, flowing delicacy, richness of colouring, abundance of imagery." (49/1)

"Les Orientales' are rich in colour and imagery." (73/3)

"Les Orientales' are miracles of colour and sound. They shine and sparkle and gleam like fiery opals, sapphires and rubies. Our eyes and ears are filled with vivid sensation. The desires we possess for splendour and harmony are gratified." (73/1)

"It is the most musical and many-coloured volume of verse that ever had glorified the language. It is superb and entrancing." (86/3)

"———-the auroral resonance and radiance of the luminous 'Orientales'." (72/2)

"A brilliant and superb work." (83/1)

"It possesses brilliant colour and great variety of tone. " (83/1)

"———-glowing imagery of early youth." (91/2)

"———-amazing studies in colour and form, marvellous combinations of harmony and lustrous tinctures." (97/1)

W.E. Henley (85/16) thinks that this volume contains some of Hugo's finest craftsmanship.
"Les Orientales" reached the utmost limits of purely aesthetic poetry. Never had the French language attained such a high degree of elasticity and grace. (45/1)

F.T. Marziali was impressed by the skilful versification evidenced in this volume (63/1), while G. Barnett Smith described it as "full of energy and inspiration, fresh, simple, and vigorous" (65/11). Justin McCarthy in his book "Con Amore" (63/1) singles out for special praise the "touching pictorial poems" such as "Lazzara" and "Les adieux de l'hôtesse arabe". A critic in the "London Magazine" (29/1) commends "Canaris" for its boldness, and "Les têtes du bârel" for its daring, and adds that "Lui" is one of the best poems in the volume.

To counterbalance this praise we find Hugo accused in this work of reckless hilarity, unreality and extravagance, though Edward Dowden (73/1) questions whether it matters that "they ('Les Orientales') remain remote from our imaginative reason, our understanding heart, our conscience." Justin McCarthy (63/1) finds foreshadowed in this volume not only the beauty, fancy, imagery of his later works but also their extravagance, grotesqueness, absurdity and horror. "Le Danube" on Colbre" is, he says, spoilt by sundry extravagancies such as this undoubted genius sometimes permits himself to run into.

A writer in "Fraser's Magazine" (46/1) compares "Romance Mauresque" with Lockhart's "Vengeance of Tudara" which tells
the same tale, to the disadvantage of the French version. Writing shortly after the publication of this volume, a critic in the "London Magazine" (29/1), after having credited this and the earlier volumes of poetry with originality and boldness of conception, goes on to make a comparison between Hugo and Lamartine, to the detriment of the former.

"In the 'romantic', admitting the definition given of that style by its opponents, he (Hugo) would certainly claim precedence of his contemporary (Lamartine), for his flights are incomparably wilder, his licences in language and versification bolder: ++--+but as a poet, judging of him as he has appeared in his works up to this day, we consider him far beneath M. Lamartine."

The same critic then proceeds to deliver himself of a few cutting remarks about the "disgusting babble" to be found in the Preface to this volume, from which the volumes of Lamartine are free, and ends with this parting shot:--

"We entertain the hope that the years of study and improvement that are before him may be so employed as to render him, with the talent and strength he undoubtedly possesses, a poet whose success shall be independent of modes and schools and party associations."
"Les Orientales" is frequently described as being poor in thought (73/3), lacking in personal emotion (93/4) and feeble in fancy. J.P. Nichol, for example, writes thus:

"In 'Les Orientales' there is little or no personal emotion, little or none of the meditation, to which Hugo afterwards became so partial, on man, on nature and on human life." (93/4)

W.E. Henley, who describes this volume as one of Hugo's finest feats of craftsmanship, adds that it is one of his feeblest efforts in the matter of fancy and emotion.

It seems, therefore, that English critics found greater admiration in this volume of poems for Hugo the craftsman than for Hugo the artist. Here was evidently a virtuoso endowed with an uncanny command of his instrument. Perhaps later he would learn to compose music for it, for harmony, of which this volume is undoubtedly full, however brilliant, is not music, nor verse, however bold and original, poetry.
As a number of English critics, like a number of French critics, reviewed together the volumes of poetry published between 1831 and 1840, ("Los Feuilles d'Automne", "Les Chants du Crépuscule", "Les Voix Intérieures" and "Les Rayons et les Ombres"), it will be convenient, before considering these works individually, to examine the general observations which they elicited from English critics. Even a cursory reading of those four volumes will reveal that they are but four chapters of a single volume, the volume being the work of Hugo's finest lyrical period and the highest production of his genius as a lyrical poet.

The best English summary of the poetical work of this period is to be found in James Cappon's book "Victor Hugo: a Memoir and a Study." (35/18). This critic discerns in the earlier poetry of this period a "reflective and sombre melancholy" which has replaced the light themes of his earlier poetry. The poems are full, he says, of earnest meditation on the life around and within him, though at the same time Cappon is well aware of the lack of originality of many of Hugo's ideas. It is the descriptive power with which the things themselves are put before the reader, a descriptive power of singularly fine quality, fresh, varied and penetrative, which particularly commends itself to this critic, as also does the vigour and reality of Hugo's themes, which, unlike those of Lamartine,
deal, not with some nebulous region, but with the "broad sunlit fields of the working world."

"His art is but the finer expression of the ordinary occupations and meditations of men. The fineness of that expression makes him a potent moralist even if a commonplace one."

Cappon draws attention, as no critic could fail to do, to the excessive beauty of the poems which deal with children.

The poetry of this period, continues the critic, has no fiercely democratic note, less of the polemical than any he wrote afterwards. The verse is less meagre in thought than his early work and more melodious than his later, and has more tenderness, flow and grace. It is during this period that he comes nearest the lyrical art of Lamartine and De Musset, with less fineness but more vigour and reality.

Nevertheless, these volumes still contain many of the defects of his early work. He is still too prone to abandon himself to every impulse of fancy, and to expand on lines of thought which have no place in the work, to amass details without sufficient selection and arrangement. Cappon prefers the shorter poems to the longer ones, because in the latter he finds a certain defectiveness in the art of composition, an "inward looseness of structure, a want of leading lines to support the masses of colour and ornamental detail which his fertile invention lavishes on every subject". In the shorter
poems, on the other hand, the "wild lyrical inspiration courses in one molten current from end to end."

Delicacy is the keynote of these volumes, says C. Vaughan in an article in the "British Quarterly Review" (83/1). This critic sees in these poems a great advance on the earlier ones, not only metrically but in depth of significance.

"Here is heard a note that was last struck by Lucretius and by the poet philosophers of Greece. It is not the life of man in its stir and movement but the heart of man in its stillness that is laid before us - man stripped of every accretion, standing face to face with God, and with the problems of his inmost nature."

Unlike the "Légende des Siècles", says the critic, where all the interest is centered in the situation, here the handling is abstract, and the poems, in which men and women pass as shadows in the background, are not descriptive, nor dramatic, but religious.

The most striking feature of these volumes is, perhaps, the variety of subjects dealt with, and the sentiments expressed.

"There is no lack of variety in Hugo. He has diversity of manner, free and facile multiformity of style. Ennui is a state of feeling he is never likely to produce in his readers. Besides the materials of history, abundant are the subjects
which engage his taste, which his fancy selects, his imagination embellishes. Into the feeling-fraught heart of humanity he enters and inly dwells; with beauty-breathing nature he respires; with calm-inducing, thought-suggesting, love-fostering nature he meditates and quickly feels. Gentle, domestic affections; home, parents, children, friends; the love of infancy, the reverence of old age; kindly cheerfulness and chastened sorrow; a calm, meditative melancholy dwelling upon recollections of early hopes and dreams gone by—these are among the feelings which occupy him who, at other times, with the eye of a poet, patriot and sage, regards the changing scenes and actors in the great drama of nations. Pensive, serene, peaceful, glides among homely haunts, by the household hearth, amid the fields, the hamlets and the woods, the verse that elsewhere rolls its mighty stream around kings and emperors, triumphs and trophies, and shattered thrones and contending factions." (46/1)

An earlier article in the same journal expresses like sentiments.

"Represented there shall you recognise the hopeful aspirations, the restless inquietude, the promises, the lessons and the warnings of the age; its splendours and its taints, its ground for
exaltation, its occasion for humility, its perfections and its comings—short, its acquisitions and its needs—all these varieties of sentiment and different phases of feeling shall you encounter in one and the same author. " (45/1)

We are a little surprised to find Victor Hugo credited with the virtue of impartiality, but so it is. Commenting on the poetry of this period a critic writes:

"For he (Hugo) emphatically is the poet of all parties— we risk the word which the ambiguity of the phrase may excite. Never are his political judgment and choice allowed to weaken or nullify his human sympathies; rarely do they contract the sphere of his appreciating affections or dim the vision of the imaginative eye, searching and seeking the grand, the beautiful and the passionate.

In them (the volumes under consideration) the heroism of La Vendée and the triumphs of the Empire alike find commemoration." (45/1)

As in other volumes of his poetry Hugo impressed the critics with his metrical triumphs, with the tenderness, flow and grace of the lines. James Cappon found these volumes more melodious than the later works, and less meagre in thought than the earlier ones. F.T. Marshall (38/1) finds these four volumes "full of good things", but distinguishes between the
first of these works and the other three, the tone of which, "though it no longer possesses the gladness of youth, yet has less of the melancholy of age than the "Feuilles d'Automne".

In addition to the fact that the four volumes of poetry under consideration show a certain similarity of thought and aim, and that several English critics dealt with them together, there is an additional reason for considering them as four parts of one consecutive work. In the preface to "Les Rayons et les Ombres" Hugo writes:

"On trouvera dans ce volume, à quelques nuances près, la même manière de voir les faits et les hommes que dans les trois volumes de poésie qui le précèdent immédiatement et qui appartiennent à la seconde période de la poésie de l'auteur, publiés l'un en 1831, l'autre en 1835, et le dernier en 1837. Ce livre les continue."

We have therefore good authority for considering these four volumes, "Les Feuilles d'Automne", "Les Chants du Crépuscule", "Les Voix Intérieures" and "Les Rayons et les Ombres" together.
The most striking feature of this volume of poetry, when contrasted with those which preceded it, is its comparative calmness and tranquillity, and what the French would term 'recueillement'. It is a book of recollections, of grave and tender self-possession, of sadness without ecstasy, of tempered joy. As Hugo himself says in "La Pente de la Rêverie":

"Mon esprit -------avait au fond trouvé l'éternité."

A contemporary critic, G. Moir, writes as follows:

"Growing calmer in his feelings as life advances, more still as the noise about him increases, he has published a volume worthy of the better days of poetry, tender, domestic, chastened both in its mournfulness and its mirth." (32/2)

Edward Dowden, who makes a number of comments on this work both in his "History of French Literature" and in various magazine articles, says:

"There is something pathetic in the calm of 'Les Feuilles d'Automne'!" (73/1)

"It is replete with charity for human kind, a faith in God, and hope of immortality." (97/1)

F.T. Marzials sees the more sombre side of the book.

"Its melancholy is the melancholy of dead hopes, youth and so many of its illusions having flown." (83/1)
To E.C.G. Murray it is a collection of "sweet dreams and wondrous harmonics." (73/3)

Another salient feature of this work is the intimacy of the writing and the tender domestic touches which imbue it with a sense of homely felicity. Swinburne speaks of that "domestic tenderness, too pure and sweet and simple for perfect expression by any less absolute and omnipotent lord of style." Dowden describes the lyricism as being "tender, grave and intimate, and imbued with a feeling for hearth and home."

Here also is more personal emotion than in the preceding volumes.

"It is filled with the unstudied expression of youthful hopes, recollections, sorrows, friendships and loves." (52/3)

"Victor Hugo, who heretofore had been looking abroad for motives of song, now in 'Les Feuilles d'Automne' quietly folded the wing, dropped down and found himself." (73/1)

"He sings of his sorrows in delightful verse." (68/1)

"In 'Les Orientales' there is little or no personal emotion. --- It is in 'Les Feuilles d'Automne' that these strings are first sounded." (93/4)

Another feature of this volume that impressed the English
critic is that for the first time Hugo seems susceptible to the influences of nature, influences which were absent from the preceding volumes of poetry. Edward Dowden, in his "History of French Literature" (97/1) speaks of Hugo's "sensibility to the tranquillising influences of nature" to be felt in "Les Feuilles d'Automne". In an article in the "Contemporary Review" (73/1) the same critic writes as follows:—

"The feeling for external nature is fervent, but large and pure. The poet stands in the presence of nature and receives her precious influences; he is not yet enveloped by her myriad forces and made one with them; neither does he yet stand at odds with her."

A study of the "Odes et Ballades" and the "Orientales" on the one hand, and of "Les Feuilles d'Automne" on the other will leave the impression that Hugo had entered upon a new phase of his artistic life when he wrote the latter work. His awakened interest in nature and his more frequent references to his own feelings, are two aspects of this, but by no means the only two. English critics seem well aware of this development and several references to it can be found.

"'Les Feuilles d'Automne' marks the accomplishment of one period, the abandonment of old things, and the beginning of a season of recollection." (73/1)

"In thought and emotion it is touched with the spirit of a new departure." (85/3)
It is in this volume that we see for the first time Hugo's skill in writing of children, in which department most critics recognise his pre-eminence.

"What child-poetry can compare with his? When childhood is his theme we have some of the gentlest most graceful, most delicate, most tender of human words." (83/1)

"The verses on children, which begin here, are the germ of 'L'Art d'être Grand-père'. " (93/4)

The poems most frequently cited are those dealing with children, such as "Lorsque l'enfant paraît", and "Dans l'alçôve sombre". "Pan" and "Bièvre" also are frequently quoted to illustrate Hugo's power of description.

"Les Feuilles d'Automne" has been described by English critics as "incomparable in form", (85/3) "freer from faults than the poetry of his later years" (97/1), "unsurpassed in melody" (86/3), and these critics generally have remarked upon the exquisite and graceful lyrics, the tender cadences, the beauty of the harmony and the sweetness of the melody, but the word most frequently used to qualify this volume is the word "delightful".

It will be noted that this volume of poetry was not well known in England. Only George Moir seems to have bothered about it on its appearance and it is unheard of again until the revival of an interest in Hugo in the 70's.
"Les Chants du Crépuscule", like its predecessor, commanded high praise and won golden opinions from English critics. This is how one critic describes "Napoléon II", the longest and one of the most important poems in the book:

"It is replete with beauties, alternating fire and pathos, haughty grandeur and melancholy, soul-subduing — remarkable for the rapid profusion of its language, the happy variations, the skilfully wild changes of its measures, the whole closing with verse as mournful as ever fell from a poet musing on the revolutions of nations and the destinies of the great of the earth." (45/1)

Edward Dowden is again one of the critics who interested himself in this early volume of poetry. For him it has two outstanding characteristics: firstly, here for the first time says Dowden, the individual appears, although others found traces of him in "Les Feuilles d'Automne"; secondly, it is an expression of the incertitude of the period.

"In 'Les Chants du Crépuscule' the personal and impersonal have met in living union; the individual appears, but his individuality is important less for its own sake than because it reflects the common spiritual characteristics of the period." (73/1)
And later:-

"when the first acclamations which greeted a constitutional king had died away, there came a season of hesitation and surmise; a season of distrust. The dawn had seemed to open before men's eyes; and now again it was twilight, the twilight of religious doubt, the twilight of political disquietude. 'Les Chants du Crépuscule' corresponds to this moment of relapse in the wave of thought. Incertitude within, a vaporous dimness without — such is the stuff out of which this poetry has shaped itself. The poet neither denies nor affirms, he hopes."

This last sentence is, of course, a translation of Hugo's:

"Il n'est pourtant, lui, ni de ceux qui nient, ni de ceux qui affirment. Il est de ceux qui espèrent," to be found at the end of the Preface to the volume.

This same writer notes also Hugo's savage attack on the dictionary, an assault which is already beginning.

"The noblesse of the poetical vocabulary had been rudely dealt with by Victor Hugo; a rough swarm of words now forced their way into the luxurious tenements of aristocratic noun-substantive and adjective." (73/1)

J.P.Nichol (93/4) praises this volume for the beautiful
love poems which it contains, and quotes in illustration
"Autre Chanson", which, in various settings, is well known to
English musicians. G.B. Smith commends the volume for its "tones
of gentleness and lofty scorn", and Swinburne for its "floating
and changing melody." Another critic quotes "Au Bord de la
Mer" as a characteristic example of Hugo's power of description.

But what is most noteworthy about this volume of poems
is that it was almost completely ignored by contemporary
critics, despite the fact that it was the first volume of
Hugo's poems of which a complete translation was made (by
G.W.M. Reynolds in 1836 - entitled "Songs of Twilight"). We
shall note that the same is true of "Les Voix Intérieures"
and "Les Rayons et les Ombres". It is evident that Hugo's
poetry made little or no impression on the England of the 30's
even when it was praised by later critics.
LES VOIX INTERIEURES (1837)

The word most frequently encountered in criticisms of "Les Voix Intérieures" is the word "delicate". The two poems "A des oiseaux envolés" and "Une nuit qu'on entendait la mer sans la voir", the former a poem of childhood, a genre in which Hugo excelled, and the latter illustrating Hugo's conception of nature, made a deep impression on English critics. Swinburne says of the latter:—

"It is one of the most perfect lyrics in all the world of art for sweetness and sublimity."

And again:—

"We have in these stanzas the very heart and mystery of darkness, the very music and the very passion of wave and wind." (72/3)

The ode "A l'Arc de Triomphe", containing a fervent panegyric of Paris, finds frequent mention.

"As Horace sang Rome, he sings Paris." (85/18)

"A Virgile" and "Pensar, Dudar" also have many admirers, the latter being quoted, in conjunction with "La Tristesse d'Olympie" and "Sagesso", (both from "Les Rayons et les Ombres") as providing the motive in the great symphony of which "Les Chants du Crépuscule", "Les Voix Intérieures" and "Les Rayons et les Ombres" form the score.

G.B. Smith (85/11) notes in this work, as elsewhere, a desire to elevate the race, and adds that, though this great
patriot may sometimes be mistaken as to the means, he never is in the honesty and purity of his intent.

J. P. Nichol (93/4) complains of a certain amount of repetition, but adds that one cannot but be grateful for a book which gave us "A des oiseaux envolés" and "Al'Arc de Triomphe".

F. W. H. Myers (79/2) comments on the "banalities of the Funeral Ode", and finds therein a "characteristic touch of impracticable sentimentalism."

Another critic, contrasting Hugo's attitude towards nature in this volume and in "Les Châtiments", complains that he was here "too much a worshipper of nature to have the power of withdrawing himself where he might watch. Consequently his work is more that of the inspired dreamer than of the artist." (83/1)

The abundance of the evidence, however, is in praise of this volume, of its "satisfying harmonics" (81/5), and its "fervent and intimate echoes". (72/2)

It will, however, be noted that none of the above is contemporary criticism. As with the preceding volume of poems "Les Chants du Crépuscule", contemporary critics failed to notice it.
This volume contains many poems which were singled out for special mention by the English critics of the day; "Ce qui se passait aux Feuillantines vers 1813" for its descriptions and evident enjoyment and love of nature, this latter being a notable feature of this volume; "Guitare", which Swinburne (72/3) couples with "Une nuit qu'on entendait la mor sans la voir" (Voix Intérieures) as being one of the most perfect lyrics in the world;—

"——that most wonderful and adorable poem in which all the sweet and bitter madness of love strong as death is distilled into deathless speech." and of which James Cappon says:—

"The love song of Gastibelza is a new Phrygian note, the very breath of ecstasy and passion, combined with crystalline clearness and delicacy of expression — rare union of romantic imagination of the North with the clear sensuous form of Southern art." (85/18)

"La Tristesse d'Olympic" naturally calls forth much comment. C.Vaughan, writing in the "British Quarterly Review" (83/1) says of it, and of two other poems, ("Sagesse" and "Pensar, Dumar") :—

"There, with the same delicacy of touch and the same limpid movement of style and rhythm, we find for
the first time powers that set Hugo alone among modern poets."

Another writer (00/1) describes this poem as "the most perfect utterance of the sadness that hangs about the memory of happy times." Miss Meetkerke (94/1) is of the opinion that "La Tristesse d'Olympio" and "Oceano Nox" are the best poems in the volume, and that without them it would be singularly impoverished.

The calmness referred to by G. Vaughan is a marked feature of this volume of poems, but Edward Dowden (73/1) differentiates between the calm expressed in "Les Rayons et les Ombres" and that which permeates the earlier "Feuilles d'Automne".

"The calm of 'Les Rayons et les Ombres' may be more profound; it is at all events a different calm - that of one who has the parting with youth well over, who has gone forward with confidence, and discovered the laws of the new order of existence, and found them to be good. In 'Les Rayons et les Ombres' the horizon is wider and the sky more blue."

It should be noted that this last phrase is a translation of a sentence in Hugo's preface to the volume under survey.

"Seulement dans les "Rayons et les Ombres" peut-être l'horizon est-il plus élargi, le ciel plus bleu, le calme plus profond."
Elsewhere in the same article Dowden insists that the calm of this volume, if it is profound, is also passionate.

J. P. Nichol (93/4) seems to regret that Hugo the lyric poet should sometimes have stood aside in order to make place for Hugo the moralist, an inferior article. Writing of this collection of poems he says:

"It is a lovely piece of autobiography, and various lyrics, perfect in form, redeem frequent redundancies and moralising prolixity."

The word "autobiography" is not inappropriate for a volume which includes, for example, "Ce qui se passait aux Feuillantines vers 1813" and "La Tristesse d'Olympio".

G. B. Smith sees in this volume the "expression of Hugo's ever-widening aspirations after human perfectibility."

(85/11)

In addition to the poems already mentioned as having been selected for special praise we must quote "Ecrit sur la vitre d'une fenêtre flamande", described in "Faser's Magazine" as "fanciful, and rich in thought and expression, elegantly fantastic and spiritual. The sound is an echo to the sense."

(45/1)

We draw attention once again to the absence of any real contemporary criticism of this work.
LES CHATIMENTS (1853)

The popularity in England of this volume of poetry is indicated by the fact that many critics claim that it is Hugo's best work, or, at least, contains some of his most brilliant lines.

"'Les Châtiments' is perhaps his best work. Sarcasm, declamation, song, all his powers accumulate and are concentrated there." (79/2)

"'Les Châtiments' contains some of his finest work." (85/3)

"There are passages of scorn and pathos in 'Les Châtiments' which it would be difficult to equal in any language." (85/11)

"His power and originality attained its highest development between 1852 and 1865. In some verses of 'Les Châtiments' and some chapters of 'Les Misérables' his genius soared higher than ever before." (87/1)

"'Les Châtiments' is the most noble and perfect of his political powers." (93/4)

"There exists no volume of so-called satirical poetry which approaches 'Les Châtiments'." (93/4)

"From the literary point of view there is little but praise for 'Les Châtiments'." (93/4)

"From 'Les Châtiments' and 'Les Contemplations' date his period of perfection of workmanship and highest
poetic flight." (96/1)

"It is in 'Les Châtiments' that his power reaches maturity." (96/1)

Edward Dowden (73/1) sees in this volume an unshaken faith in the people and in the future, and in his "History of French Literature" (97/1) describes it as "satire, with some loss of critical discernment, infused with passages of a lyrical quality unsurpassed in literature, touched at times with epic grandeur."

Roden Noel (73/3) commends "Les Châtiments" to those who think that Hugo is always over verbose or invertebrate, and adds:

"They are short, swift, concentrated and deadly as a flash of lightning. Every word tells and none is merely for effect. It is the loftiest moral indignation that burns and scalds in this poetry, and no feigned false fire of artificial rhyme-mongery. Warm, generous human blood is in this poet."

G. Barnett Smith (85/11) claims that this volume is more powerful than "Napoléon le Petit", and E.C.G. Murray, in his book "Men of the Third Republic" (73/3) states that "every line breathes fire."

Countess Martinengo-Cesaresco, in the prefatory notice to Henry Carrington's "Translations from the poetry of Victor Hugo", (85/20) finds in "Les Châtiments" the "soft and easy strength of Dryden allied to an intensity and variety of imagination".
invective scarcely to be found in any other poetry."

C. Vaughan (63/1) draws attention to the great changes which have taken place in Hugo between the publication of the last volume of "Les Rayons et les Ombres" (1840) and "Les Châtiments" (1853), a period which embraces the Revolution and Hugo's passing to the extreme left and into exile. These events, says the critic, could not but exercise a deep influence on Hugo, and this influence is quite evident to the reader of this volume of poetry. To the delicacy of the earlier volumes had succeeded a determination, a decision. The adversity through which the poet had passed had only served to strengthen his hand and give him a faith.

"He can deal now with men and things in large masses and can see shape and meaning where before was confusion."

On the other side of the picture are those, not great in number, who object to the personal indignation and rancour which find place in "Les Châtiments." Edward Dowden (73/1) calls them "the roaring of an enraged lion" and wished that the poet could have kept his indignation somewhat more under control.

"He is not Apollo shooting the faultless and shining shafts against Python, but a Jupiter tonans, a little robustious, and whirling superabundant thunderbolts with equal violence in every direction."

A writer in the "New Monthly Magazine" (61/5) dubs this
volume "a manual of maledictions", and raises objection to the partiality shown by Hugo.

"He does not condemn the worst excesses of the Revolution or repudiate its most atrocious crimes. It is only when France has the worst of it that Hugo can see the barbaric stupidity of war. He failed to look upon Austerlitz and Marengo (French victories) in the same light as Woerth and Gravelotte (French defeats)."

The same writer adds that Hugo's grief at the humiliation of France might have been more dignified.

The "Scottish Review" (96/1) accuses Hugo of having wasted much energy in chastising his enemies, alleging that vanity, revenge, individual hatred, find no place in the work which lives.

James Cappon who, like many other critics, does not think that Hugo's nature and genius are conducive to successful satire, naturally believes that the satirical side of this work is not the strongest. For him "Les Châtiments" is "a song of consolation for the exiled, a requiem for the fallen brave of the Republic, a moment, a prophetic chant and a cry of defiance." After paying due tribute to Hugo's imaginative power of language, the critic continues:

"In 'Les Châtiments' we note a tendency to leave the soft melodious line for something
stronger and more emphatic. His line is more dramatic than ever, and full of strong emphasis. His phrases are short and energetic; there is less melody but more rhythmic accent. Rhythm and accent take the place of melody. The dash, the hiatus, and the break are used with the utmost freedom. The management of these elements, always a remarkable feature in Hugo’s versification, now becomes marvellous, and with his command of remote imaginative suggestion, gives his poetry a strong and peculiar character of originality, as in ‘Le Chasserc Noir’.

This wild movement of imagination is, at times, says the same critic, united with great clearness of expression and suggestion, resulting in a union of fantastic freedom in the thought with lucidity of phrase, as, for example, in “Nous nous promenons parmi les décombres à Rozel-Tower” (Book 6 No. 4). This critic recognises also the presence of meditative quiet and tender lines amid the “fierce flow of angry rhythm”.

Although F.T. Marzials (88/1) describes “Les Châtiments” as “a terrible book, a book of lashing invective and sarcasm”, he absolves Hugo from the charge of using his tremendous literary power for the mere purpose of inflicting pain.

“He fought merely for what he had persuaded himself, rightly or wrongly, were causes of momentous import.”
J. P. Nichol (93/4), while awarding high praise to the literary side of this work, which he describes as "an outburst of red-hot lyrical wrath", regrets the indiscriminate rancour with which Hugo pursues and scourges all who are connected with the coup d'état, and the "ferocious personal allusions."

Unlike F. T. Marzials, he believes that "his (Hugo's) indignation is a personal one against a definite event, person and period, not the indignation of the satirist against human follies and vices, everywhere and always." Nevertheless, he grants that "there exists no volume of so-called satirical poetry which approaches 'Les Châtiments'." Its one grave defect, adds this critic, is its frequent rhetorical appeal to the gallery.

Mrs. Oliphant, writing in the "Contemporary Review" (85/13), refers to Hugo's frenzy against Napoleon, expressed mainly in the volume under consideration and "Napoléon le Petit", as stamping and roaring and foaming at the mouth.

"The passion of 'Les Châtiments' sometimes reaches a certain sublimity of vituperation. It is too grand for its subject."

C. Vaughan (83/1) is struck by the fact that in "Les Châtiments" for the first time appears that "elemental treatment of nature with which the name of Hugo is associated. Nature is still the equal, at times even the mistress of man, but the face she turns on him is no longer that of mockery,
but of exaltation, of defiance, of horror."

Another critic's objection to "Les Châtiments" is on the question of its vocabulary which, he avers, though rich becomes monotonous. His dialect, says this critic, is that of Bellville and of Les Halles (s1/5).

It will be interesting to note which of the poems in this collection were granted special mention by English critics. Swinburne mentions several; and although due allowance must be made, as always when Swinburne writes of Hugo, for the rhapsodical nature of his remarks, the selection itself is of intrinsic interest. As an example of the "pealing thunders and blasting sunbeams of 'Les Châtiments'" he quotes "Le TE DEUM du ler janvier 1852" (Bk.1 No.6), which he describes as "soaring strongly to the very summits of lyrical passion." The poem is for him an "imperishable record" and the poet "a second Juvenal", a remark which suggests that Swinburne does not share the general opinion that Hugo is far from his best as a satirist. "Au Peuple" (Bk. 2 No. 2) is "one of the most wonderful symphonies of tragic and triumphant verse that ever shook the hearts of its hearers with rapture of rage and pity. The first and last two stanzas seem to me absolutely unsurpassed and unsurpassable for pathetic majesty of music. If ever a more superb structure of lyric verse was devised by the brain of man, it must have been ——-in a language utterly unknown to me." Of the "Souvenir de la Nuit du Quatro" (Bk.3 No.3) he writes:
"Nothing so intplerable in its pathos was ever written."

He describes the close of "Ainsi les plus abjects, les plus vils," (Bk. 3 No. 4) as "a nobler protest than ever has been uttered or ever can be uttered in prose against the servile sophism of a false democracy which affirms or allows that a people has the divine right of voting itself into bondage."

(The poem refers to the plebiscite taken on December 20th 1851, which ratified the coup d'état.) "Orientale" (Bk. 3, No. 6) and "Un bon bourgeois dans sa maison" (Bk. 3 No. 7) are described by Swinburne as "superb examples of their kind", the interview between Abd-el-Kader and Bonaparte in the former being notable for "its simplicity and fulness of lyric tone and colour."

"On loge à la nuit" (Bk. 4 No. 13) is for the English critic "perhaps the very finest and most perfect example of imaginative and tragic satire that exists, the most vivid in presentation the most sublime in scorn, the most intense and absolute in condensed expression of abhorrence and in assured expression of belief."

"Le chant de ceux qui s'en vont sur mer" (Bk. 5 No. 9) has in it, says Swinburne, "equal magic for my own ear at least, incomparable in the whole wide world of human song. Even to the greatest poets of all-time such a god-send as this - such a breath of instant inspiration - can come but rarely and seen given as by miracle."

"L'Expiation" (Bk. 5 No. 13) is "so tremendous in its anti-climax that not the sublimest and
most miraculous climax imaginable could make so tragic and sublime an impression, so indelible from the mind." "Le Chasseur Noir" (Bk. 7 No. 3) is described as one of the "greatest lyric masterpieces of all time, unsurpassed in the world for ardour of music and fitful change of note from mystery and terror to rage and tempest and supreme serenity of exultation."
The song of the two Napoleons ("Chanson" Bk. 7 No. 6) is "a masterpiece of skilful simplicity in contrast of tones and colours. "Patria" (Bk. 7 No. 7) "gives the final word of union between sound and spirit, the mutual coronation and consummation of them both." "La Caravane" (Bk. 7 No. 8) "a magnificent picture, is also a magnificent allegory and a magnificent hymn." Of "Chanson" (A quoi ce proscrit pense-t-il?" Bk. 7 No. 14) Swinburne writes:—

"There is no song more simply and more nobly pitiful than that which tells us in its burden how a man may die for lack of his native country as naturally as for lack of his daily bread."

And of "Saint-Arnaud" (Bk. 7 No. 16):—

"There is hardly a more splendid passage of its kind in 'La Légende des Siècles' than the description of the departure of the fleet in order of battle from Constantinople for the Crimea."

Referring to "Ultima Verba" (Bk. 7 No. 17) he says:—

"Nor is there a loftier passage of more pathetic austerity in all this book of 'Châtiments'"
than the final address of the poet to the miserable soul of the murderer and traitor who had earned no soldier's death."

And the Finale of Swinburne's Rhapsody is a crescendo of praise.

"It is impossible that a human tongue should utter, a human hand should write anything of more supreme and transcendent beauty than the last ten stanzas of the fourth division of this poem ('Lux'). The passionate and fervent accumulation of sublimities, of marvellous images and of infinite appeal, leaves the senses too dazzled, the soul too entranced and exalted to appreciate at first or in full the miraculous beauty of the language, the superhuman sweetness of the song."

(The reference is to the passage in which the omniscience and omnipresence of God is inferred as a proof of ultimate triumph over the evil powers that be.)

Other critics also singled out certain poems for special praise. F.T. Marzials chooses the description of the retreat from Moscow("L'Expiation" Bk.5 No.13), and of the child shot during the Coup d'Etat ("Souvenir de la Nuit du Quatro" Bk.2 No.3). Of the latter Marzials says ;-

"There is a simplicity and directness about it beyond praise. Almost each line is self-sufficient, pregnant and decisive, like a line
from a dialogue of Euripides." (83/1)

James Cappon chooses "L'Expiation", evidently a general favourite, "A l'Obéissance Passive" (Bk.3 No.7), "Le Chasseur Noir" (Bk.7 No.3) and "Chanson" (Bk.6 No.4), the first two of which he commends for their force and splendour of imagination, the third for its rhythm, accent and command of remote imaginative suggestion, and the fourth for its union of fantastic freedom of thought with lucidity of phrase. "A l'Obéissance Passive", says Cappon, is written in a wild Phrygian strain, and contains every form of metaphor, apostrophe and rhythm. It is remarkable for its felicity of phrase, even in its extravagance. "L'Expiation", according to the same critic, is "in that large, grandiose and sombre style which Hugo perfected in his later years. It is remarkable for its fantastic horizon, its curious incongruities and its imaginative power of language. Leave that element out and the conception seems an empty, barren grandiosily, the details commonplace and of doubtful taste." (85/18)

A writer in the "Scottish Review" (96/1) describes "Nox" and "Lux" (the Prologue and Epilogue respectively to this volume) as "a palpitating poem of hatred for a debasing system. It has the true poetic ring and is no mere verse-making. The final note of hope in the poem is intensely dramatic, culminating in a fine crescendo followed by a gradual descent."
Roden Noel (78/3) selects "Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam" (Bk.1 No.7), "Le Te Deum du 1er Janvier 1852" (Bk.1 No.3), "A un Martyr" (Bk.1 No.3), "L'Homme a ri" (Bk.3 No.3), "Sacer Esto" (Bk.4 No.1), "A un qui veut se détacher" (Bk.5 No.10), He describes the first as being "as fierce, as scathing, as annihilating as Swift, Juvenal or Byron." Every word of the "Te Deum" is a "thunderbolt". Roden Noel is evidently not one of those who despise Hugo as a satirist. It is, he adds, in these brief eagle-swoops of fierce song that the sound of the poet's voice is most striking.

"In L'Homme a ri' Hugo reveals how he believes in the power and survival for great ends, of his own verse."

"Sacer Esto" is commanded for its "terrific severity", in which every word tells, and "A un qui veut se détacher" for its warmth and humanity.

J.P. Nichol mentions by name only "A l'Obéissance Passive" (Bk.2 No.7) which he cites as an example of Hugo's passionate sincerity.

It seems, therefore that "Les Châtiments" not with considerable approval in England both for its lyric and satiric qualities, though there were not lacking those who maintained that Hugo did not possess the mental and literary attributes which go to the making of a good writer of satire.
Again it will be noted that contemporary criticism of this work is almost entirely lacking. We have not yet reached the time when a volume of poems from the pen of Victor Hugo would prove of sufficient interest to English critics to warrant the devotion of a whole article to its consideration. Almost all the criticisms of this work, much of it favourable, is to be found after Hugo's reputation had been made and consolidated in England by other and later works.
Like its predecessor "Le a Châtiments, this volume provoked many English critics to utter words of unmitigated praise.

A critic writing in the "Saturday Review" (56/1) claimed that if any doubt could ever have existed as to which of the three lyrical French poets - Lamartine, Béranger, Hugo - was the greatest, these volumes would suffice to put an end to all controversy on the subject, and added:–

"Hugo has drawn a draft upon the admiration of posterity which will not be dishonoured."

This same critic refers to Hugo's indomitable courage and energy of character, the brilliance of his poetic powers, the wide range of his lyrical works, the variety of his themes, the flexibility which he has imparted to French prosé verse, the sincerity which characterises his works, the unsurpassed grandeur of his ideas, the verve and vigour of his expression and the unequalled richness of his imagery.

"One tenth part of his lyrical treasures would suffice to make his name live as long as the French language."

The "New Monthly Magazine" (56/2) writes as follows:–

"The richly-tinted picture poems, descriptive scenes, strains of household love, happiness, bereavement, are frequently beautiful and moving."
Gracefully set 'souvenirs', or tender 'regrets' show the exiled minstrel's skill of hand and warmth of heart."

E.G.C. Murray, in his "Men of the Third Republic" (73/3) writes:

"'Les Contemplations' conciliated all who could be touched by tenderness, sorrow and misfortune."

In a later number of the "New Monthly Magazine" (81/5) we discover the following very flattering description of the work, corroborating what the writer in the "Saturday Review" said about the relative merits of Hugo and Lamartine as lyric poets.

"Had he (Hugo) written these alone he must have taken rank as the most musical, intense, profound of French poets. After the sonorous rhythm of his verse Lamartine's graceful accents seem pale and nerveless. All beauty of nature, all human joy or grief, finds an echo in these strong and splendid harmonics."

The same writer thinks "Les Contemplations" superior to much of the later work.

"In 'Les Contemplations' we find little of the revolt and destructiveness, the fantastic crudity that disfigures later writings, and less arrogance."
Lady Pollock, writing in "Temple Bar" (87/15) says:—

"'Les Contemplations' contains the essence and perfection of the poet's genius, the expression of his inmost soul."

Edward Dowden has an equally high opinion of this work.

"'Les Contemplations' is the culmination of Hugo's powers as a lyrical poet." (97/1)

Swinburne praised the work for its "infinito and exquisite variety", and for its "inexhaustible melodies and unsurpassable harmonics".

"The songs of childish loves and boyish fancies are unequalled by any other poet's known to me, for their union of purity and gentleness with a touch of dawning ardour and a hint of sheer delight." (66/3)

In sharp contrast to the opinion expressed in the "New Monthly Magazine" (81/5) about the absence of a spirit of revolt from this volume we quote Miss Neethke in the "Gentleman's Magazine" (91/3) :—

"The second volume of 'Les Contemplations' contains the one note of revolt in all his writings. His grief here is bitter but real, his resignation pathetic. He is swayed by the conviction of the justice of inexplicable laws."

By far the most popular section of this work was the one containing the poems addressed to, and in memory of, Hugo's
dead daughter.

"In the second volume dealing with his great loss, the most abundant of rhetoricians is subdued in expression. His loss strengthened his sympathy with the suffering. The first principle of life with him was compassion." (85/17)

"The immortal songs of the fourth book contain touches of such thrilling beauty, so poignant in their simplicity and so piercing in their truth. " (86/3)

"Considered as the spontaneous, unlaboured, yet perfect expression of a mighty sorrow, these poems have hardly their equal in literature. They are decidedly superior from this point of view to the elaborate exquisiteness of Tennyson's "In Memoriam". These poems contain an absolute refutation of the charge of heartlessness and egotism." (93/4)

"In the group of poems on his daughter are beauty and pathos interpenetrated by consoling faith in humanity, nature and God. " (97/1)

J.P. Nichol is not the only critic who compares Hugo's elegies with Tennyson's.

"We hear echoes of 'In Memoriam' in 'Les Contemplations'. Like Tennyson, Hugo tries to gather hope from the analogy of nature, but in
See also in this connection James Cappon (85/18):  

"Both Hugo in the poems on the death of his daughter and Tennyson in 'In Memoriam' have succeeded in grouping with wonderful effect the lights and melodies of existence round this sombre centre. But there are notable differences. Instead of the clever but somewhat artificial synthesis by which Tennyson has made one long poem of this subject, Hugo has given us a number of short ones. Hugo's is the better and more natural method. If the subject is enlarged till an epic of life passes before us, then the predominance of the central subject is unnatural and monotonous. All these poems are natural and spontaneous. There is a free, not artificial arrangement of light and shade, and each poem has that which is in harmony with its mood. There is no attempt to guide grief in the ways of metaphysical sequences. The freshness and spontaneity in these later poems is irresistible. There is no appearance of external labour in the line - the words seem to leap from the heart. There is a wild humanity, a Promethean touch in 'Il est temps que je me repose' - a free ethical feeling akin to that which we may find in Job or Isaiah, devout but very real and
and human. Hugo is peculiarly powerful in giving reflections of the way in which the fantasy hovers about the graves of the dear dead, and reminiscences of scenes where their figures were familiar; e.g. 'Elle avait pris ce pli', and 'A elle. Louise B.

A writer in "Blackwood's Magazine" (90/2) is much less complimentary, and suggests that "the faith which in his bereavement he tried to cherish has been more simply expressed by Mrs. Heamans", though the critic concedes that "marred as they are by certain characteristic faults, we do get in these poems the true voice of the heart."

A detailed study of the work in its philosophic aspect is to be found in James Cappon's book "Victor Hugo: a Memoir and a Study." (85/10) After establishing that, thanks to the desultory character of Hugo's education, which developed his poetic sensibility and the range of his intuitions in excess of the organizing power of his thought, the merit of Hugo does not lie in his metaphysics, Mr. Cappon concludes:--

"'Les Contemplations' is still a poetry of impressions and intuitions which want orientation. His amorous poetry in 'Les Contemplations'—e.g. 'Lise', 'Vieille chanson du jeune temps', 'La Coccinelle'—are perfect, fresh and delicate in the sentiment and with a charming novelty of conception. The essential moment is happily seized and the whole
scene, action accessories put before you at the least expense with light suggestive touch. The sentiment in all these poems is general rather than individual. Melancholy has inspired them."

Later he continues, speaking of the same volume of poems:

Here are the tendencies which are moulding the poetry of his later years. While philosophy is invading it at one end in its epic subjects, all metaphysical and abstract elements are being thrown out of it at the other in its purely lyrical subjects. In these, now that the mediaeval and romantic oriental phases have passed, he seeks only themes and sentiments which are universal and natural. The beauty of the flower, the song of the shepherd or the birds, Lisa who passes with a flower in her corset - these are now his lyrical subjects. This double process goes on till we have at one end the smallest and finest lyrical notes, and at the other the organ-tones of his great poems. But the impulse at the centre is one and the same. The truth of nature has everywhere become his aim."

The same critic, remarking on the simplicity of the subjects and the oldness of the matter, and the profoundness in the treatment of it, writes:
"Reading these poems is like coming to Homer from one of the metaphysical poets."

Referring to Book 6, "On the Borders of the Infinite", which contains Hugo's most ambitious philosophical poems, Mr. Cappon writes:

"His philosophy is still vague, vast, cosmic, bringing together the distant ends in nature and in the history of man, orienting itself with difficulty in a mass of great analogies and far-reaching fancies."

Elsewhere in the same book James Cappon emphasizes the vagueness and lack of direction of Hugo's philosophy as expressed in 'Les Contemplations'.

"The philosophical element in 'Les Contemplations' is of no great value. A vague all-embracing principle of unity brings things together at that point where the characteristic differences are lost, and remains, therefore, abstract and empty. To follow him we must rise to that plane where resemblances count for much - differences for little. The curious range of his illustrations and his unique power of characterising things and their relations, give a sort of value to a philosophic conception which would be worthless in other hands. His metaphysic is rambling."
Fragments from all systems find themselves neighbours in his. His faculty for organising ideas on abstract lines is small. There was always something loose and imperfect in the structure of his longest poems. The vague metaphysic and philosophy of history which we find in the later poems of 'Les Contemplations' are but the preparatory studies for the stronger work of that kind in 'La Légende des Siècles' and 'Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit'.

A writer in the "Saturday Review" (56/1) foresees that the last book will be the least popular because it is the most profound, but himself recognises that "in scaling the heights of his great argument he occasionally misses his footing and brings down rubbish in his falls." But this critic's final summing up of Book 6 is extremely favourable.

"The poems in this book contain passages which nothing in Hugo's previous works can equal and which little in the French language can surpass. E.g. "Pleuras dans la nuit" (Bk. 6 No. 6) He humbly adds; "we cannot understand 'Ce qu'jdit la bouche d'ombre'."

Of the poem just mentioned Swinburne writes thus:

"It touches the highest point of poetic meditation. All is lofty in its coherence of construction, so perfect in its harmony of composition." (36/8)
Like the critic of the "Saturday Review" Swinburne also has a very high opinion of Book 6.

"If nothing were left of Hugo but the 6th Book of 'Les Contemplations' it would yet be indisputable that he was among the foremost in the front rank of the greatest poets of all time." (86/8)

J.P. Nichol (93/4) thinks that "Les Contemplations" contained much of Hugo's deepest and tenderest philosophy, but adds:

"Especially when writing of speculative subjects he was growing less and less able to realise when he had said enough."

The writer of a rather sketchy article in the "New Monthly Magazine" (56/2) is mostly impressed by the gloominess of "Les Contemplations", which he describes as "sorrow-laden". He continues:

"Tones of lamentation and anguish occur frequently. As Hugo has grown older he has grown sadder. Gloomy words prevail, though passages of tenderness and affection are interfused. Everywhere we are haunted by Time, the skeleton, and Death the shadow. He is ever vexing the spirit within him over the Problem of Life. He is continually fretting his hearts of hearts with the Mystery of Death. It is full of
feverish and querulous stanzas. E.g. "Hélas, tout est sépulcre". We are all the while stumbling over graves and in the dark. At times he expresses himself like a man without hope or a God."

This critic takes strong exception also to the tone which Hugo adopts when speaking of the Deity, and to the way in which he, like Emerson, heaps together promiscuous names, good and bad, sacred and profane.

"The way in which he upbraids his Maker is audacious."

Several critics praise this work for the suppleness of the style and the naturalness of the language, the universality of which is well summed up by a writer in the "New Monthly Magazine" (61/5) who defends Hugo against the attacks of Matthew Arnold, and lays all the blame on the intractability of the French language. He writes as follows:—

"His (Hugo's) lines show vigour and variety, They are rough and broken with passion, languid with tenderness, swift or grave in cadence, colloquial or majestic."

James Cappon (85/18) does not always share this opinion. In "Tbc" (Bk.6 No.2), for example, he finds "the same vaulting ambition, extravagance of language, which is just saved from being ridiculous because the achievement which follows is very considerable." It is interesting to note that Swinburne
calls these same verses "majestic" (86/8).

W.E. Henley (85/3), a rather luke-warm admirer of Hugo, not surprisingly finds his admiration for "Les Contemplations" mingled with some disappointment. Amid the noble poetry which this volume contains, he finds a great deal of mannerism, affectation, hyperbole and effects manqués.

It is both interesting and instructive to run the eye down the list of poems selected by Swinburne for special mention out of the large number of poems in these volumes. "Lise" (Bk. 1 No. 11), "La Coccinelle" (Bk. 1 No. 15), and "Vieille chanson du jeune temps" (Bk. 1 No. 19), poems already praised by James Cappon and by a critic in the "Gentleman's Magazine" (91/3), he describes as "sweet miracles of simple perfection"; "L'Enfance" (Bk. 1 No. 23) and "L'Unité" (Bk. 1 No. 25) are "a pair of flawless jewels"; "Le Crépuscule" (Bk. 2 No. 26) has "touches of magical and mystic beauty"; "Mélancolie" (Bk. 3 No. 2) has "a foretaste and promise of all the passionate meditation, all the studious and indefatigable joy, all the forces of wisdom and mercy which were to find expression in 'Les Misérables'". The Epilogue, "Écrit en 1856" (Bk. 5 No. 3), is "as noble in imagination, in feel, feeling and in expression as the finest pages in 'Les Châtiments'. The verses addressed to friends whose love had not forsaken the exile – Jules Janin (Bk. 5 No. 8), Alexandre Dumas (Bk. 5 No. 15), Paul Meurice (Bk. 5 No. 21) – are models of stately grace in their utterance of serene and sublime resignation, of loyal and
affectionate sincerity. But those addressed to the sharers of his exile have yet a deeper spiritual music in the sweet and serene perfection of their solemn cadence. "Aux Feuillantines" (Bk. 5 No. 16), for example, is "a faultless little poem, musical as the laugh of childhood." "Apparition" (Bk. 5 No. 18) reveals "a sovereign simplicity of insight and of style." "Claire" (Bk. 6 No. 8) is "exquisite in its mystic tenderness". "A la fenêtre pendant la nuit" (Bk. 6 No. 9) "renders the aspects and sounds of sea, cloud and wind and trees and stars with an incomparable magic of interpretation." "Aux anges qui nous voient" (Bk. 6 No. 13) is "full of infinite sweetness and awe."

Such is Swinburnes list which, extensive as it is, omits however some of the poems which have since become most popular. Another interesting list is to be found in the "New Monthly Magazine" (61/5). It includes "Fête chez Thérèse" (Bk. 1 No. 23), which is described as "a Watteau picture, gay, sparkling, animated, yet with a gaiety posed rather than boisterous"; "Lettre" (Bk. 3 No. 6), "an aquarelle in words."; "Pastourea et Troupeaux" (Bk. 5 No. 23), of which the critic makes a good though somewhat free translation; "Maitre d'Études" (Bk. 3 No. 16) and "Intérieur" (Bk. 3 No. 18) which are commended for their extremely faithful etchings of our social miseries; "Lise" (Bk. 1 No. 11) which "exhales the exquisite perfection of youth and innocence". The only poem in these volumes, says the critic of the "New Monthly Magazine" which is guilty of
spitfulness and bad taste is the one directed against the Marquis de C. "Ecrit en 1846" (Bk.5 No.3) "When political passions possess Hugo self-control is forgotten", says the critic, who speaks also of Hugo's "unreined license of invective", and of his "rabid violence of opprobrium".

"He descends to the amenities of the gutter."

An earlier critic in the "Saturday Review" (56/1) had chosen "Réponse à un acte d'accusation" (Bk.1 No.7), a "clever and spirited poem", which he thought an excellent reply to charges of lowering the dignity of poetic diction, and which he described as "a poetical version of Hugo's manifesto on the canons of art contained in his preface to 'Cromwell!' " This critic mentioned also "À propos d'Horace", (Bk.1 No.13) which he accused of too many extravagances, and the lines to Mme. D.G de G. (Delphine Gay de Girardin), (Bk1 No. 10) which he describes as "charming", as also are the lines to Mlle. Louise B." (Bk5 No.5), (It was this lady, Mlle. Louise Bertin, daughter of Arnaud Bertin, some time editor of the "Journal des Débats", who composed the score of the opera "La Esmeralda" founded on Hugo's novel "Notre Dame de Paris"). And special mention is made also of that lovely poem "Elle avait pris ce pli" (Bk.4 No.5) in which Hugo tells how his little daughter used to come into his room and scribble in his books.

"Réponse à un acte d'accusation" comes in for praise
from a critic in the "Scottish Review" (96/1), who describes it as a "splendid torrent of defence against accusations of his enemies," This writer selects as an example of satire of the first order "Quelques mots à un autre" (Bk.1 No.26).

E.D.A. Morshead, reviewing Swinburne's "Study of Victor Hugo" in the "Academy" (86/6), mentions "A quoi songeaient les deux cavaliers dans la forêt" (Bk.4 No.12) as being one of the best of Hugo's minor poems and one peculiarly attractive to the English reader.

It is very evident that this volume of poems excited more interest, both contemporary and later, than any of the volumes so far considered. This may be due, as K.W. Hooker suggests in his "Fortunes of Victor Hugo in England", to the publicity given to Hugo in 1855 when he was expelled from Jersey and took up his residence in Guernsey, but a careful reading of all the poetic works draws one to the conclusion that the subject-matter of the earlier books of this collection, especially the poems dealing with the sad death of Hugo's daughter Léopoldine, was such as would appeal more surly to an Englishman than would the rather more detached poems of the earlier collections. It is true that most English critics found the philosophy of "Ce que fit la bouche d'ombre" a little too much for them, but this did not in any way detract from their admiration for the charming domestic touches in Book 4.
The first part of this tremendous work, which appeared in 1859, failed for two very substantial reasons to win the affection and approbation of most English readers. Although most of them were forced to recognise its great moments and high lights, of which there were many, they could not overlook the many hideous and bloodthirsty poems it contained, nor the lack of a religious outlook which characterised the whole work. Though they admitted the perfection of the images, the brilliance of the language, the power of imagination, the mastery which Hugo obtained over the French Alexandrine, and similar beauties, they could never forget the horrors and atrocities in which the great French poet seemed to revel, nor the lack of reverence which he invariably displayed when referring to the Deity.

A writer who thought so highly of Hugo as to class him as "the first living poet of France or the Continent, and, with one exception, the first in Europe" (59/8), wrote thus of Part I of "La Légende":

"Bloodthirsty Sultans, bandit princes, profligate and perfidious emperors and fabulous knights-currant pass before the eyes of the weary spectator."

The Rev. William Alexander, M.A., Dean of Enly, writing in the "Dublin University Magazine" (60/2), of the second
volume of Part 1 says:—

"The general admiration felt at the outset (he had already published an article on the first volume of Part 1) is severely tried before the end. As the landscape of history is unrolled by Hugo the spectator becomes shocked and disgusted."

The reverend gentleman goes on to describe Hugo's figures as "pallid and fearful phantasmagoria rather than the legend of the progress of humanity. One's flesh creeps; one is sick with horror. He finds these pages full of "murderers and wantons". "Hideous and bloody shapes shadow every page." He complains of a "sombre repetition of brutal deeds" which calls up a sentiment of disgust. "History according to Hugo," he adds, "is a reeking pool in a slaughter house, and humanity is summed up by two figures; a gigantic bully, cunning, cruel, sensual, and a gigantic sneak, sobbing at his feet. Our race consists of a few drivers called kings, and a myriad of donkeys. Hugo's humanity is not humanity, nor his progress progress. His legend is a lie. It libels history and God."

But the good Father has to relent somewhat and later in the same article he confesses to being "charmed by his (Hugo's) genius and bound by the spell he weaves."

J.M.Ludlow, writing in "Macmillan's Magazine" (59/3), explains the prevalence in these poems of the horrible and hideous by the fact of Hugo's exile.
"As to the writer's conception of a hero, virtue in so repulsive a form never trod the earth. The result of making the hero so unlovely must be to make whatever evil he has to overcome absolutely demonical. The hideousness of his stories becomes unavoidable. The iron of nearly ten years exile has, moreover, entered into his soul. As he looks towards France, the scene of his triumphs, his conception of righteousness comes mainly to be that of righteous vengeance only; on that alone he dwells and gloats till his poetry becomes that of the shambles and the charnel-house."

Nine years later, Justin Mc Carthy in his book "Con Amore, or Critical Chapters", (68/l) writing of the section of the work entitled "Los Trônes d'Orient", which includes among others "Zim-Zizimi" and "Sultan Mourad", says:--

"'Les Trônes d'Orient' is full of objects beyond the domain of art. What art is there in a bare, ghastly enumeration of the barbarities of an Eastern sultan. A paragraph from the most exaggerated newspaper description of the worst scenes of the Cawnpore massacre put into rhyme would exhibit quite as much poetic power. The very purposes of horror which these passages were intended to serve fail utterly. The reader is pained, shocked, revolted
at the first few lines; he has not gone far before inevitable weariness triumphs. In some instances Hugo does not even essay any description of the horrors to which he devotes page after page of enumeration. If this is, as its author claims, truth and life, then 'Hurrah for death and falsehood by all means'.

And later in the same article, after denouncing three-quarters of the work as either "entirely incomprehensible or entirely horrible", he writes:

"He (Hugo) might have given to the world noble and beautiful images, exalted thoughts. Instead we have a succession of fantastic, ghastly or hideous groups and scenes, illumined here and there by some ray of pure feeling, relieved at very rare intervals by some form of quiet human dignity and beauty, but on the whole leaving an impression, which the mind gladly seeks to efface, of fantasies as chimerical as they are monstrous, visions as absurd as they are revolting. The mind struggles to shake off the whole poem like a nightmare."

The tyrant, who figures so conspicuously in these volumes, drew many adverse criticisms from English critics.

"The one personage who is everywhere present to Victor Hugo is the tyrant." (59/3)
Hugo's continuous attacks upon kings upset a number of English writers.

"Hugo is unable to contemplate a castled crag without reverting to the cruelty of monarchs. Shelley's vague, dim rhetoric against priests and kings in the 'Revolt of Islam' is weak and vacillating compared with Hugo's fierce hate. ....... It is in 'Eviradmus' that his wrath glows with the whitest heat. He should turn from petty and blood-stained annals of provincial history to more brilliant pages and names that sparkle like diamonds." (60/1)

"Hugo assigns the vilest characteristics to kings of turbulent nations. Carlyle's representatives of Divine Law correspond with historical truth more nearly than the fierce and foolish assassins which Hugo delights to create that he may stigmatise them." (59/2)

"Kings and princes play the role of stage-
ruffian in all his historical scenes (e.g. Camute). The governing classes are painted in sombre colour."

(60/3)

Referring to "Le Jour des Rois", which he describes as "a hideous and fearful picture", Justin McCarthy in "Con Amore" (63/1) writes:

"Hugo takes a repulsive delight here in parables of the cruelties and crimes of kings."

In an article which is significant mainly for the narrow, pseudo-religious point of view adopted by the author, who fails entirely to judge Hugo as an artist, J.M. Ludlow accuses Hugo of coarseness.

"His present work contains many a passage which the husband will not read to his wife, nor the son to his mother: not designedly evil but written with gross coarseness of language."

This same critic is also in the forefront of the attack upon Hugo's irreligion, so evident in these poems, some of which deal with incidents taken from the Bible. Ludlow thinks that Hugo, whose God is a God of more power and light, is "to a great extent, the product of his age and country, where freedom, reverence, the Bible are wanting alike." For him the stories culled from the Bible are mere travesties of the originals. Even in the story of Daniel ("Les Lions"), complains the critic Hugo "manages to miss the very point of the story - the setting
up of man as God, and Daniel's calm protest against the doing so. Darius's name is not even mentioned. Daniel is merely a righteous man thrown to the beasts."

Mr. Ludlow is therefore very relieved to find only one legend taken from the New Testament ("Première rencontre du Christ avec le tombeau"), in speaking of which he quotes chapter and verse in evidence of Hugo's failure to discern the real beauty of the Scriptures.

"Think of the utter incapacity to discern the real beauty of the Scriptures, which is evidenced by the man who for "Are there not twelve hours in the day?", substitutes, apparently as an improvement, this speech of a more vulgar wonder-worker: "Quand un homme a marché tout le jour au soleil, dans un chemin sans puits et sans hôtelerie, s'il ne croit pas, quand vient le soir, il pleure, il crie;

Il est las ; sur la terre il tombe haletant.
S'il croit en moi, qu'il prie, il peut au même instant
Continuer sa route avec des forces triples."

"A passage like this", adds the critic, "may belong to the Koran or the Golden legend, but not to the Gospel."

The writer becomes more envenomed as he proceeds,
substituting vituperation for criticism. "Christ's gospel," he writes, "according to Victor Hugo is worn out. In its place he presents us with a gospel of - balloons." (This is an allusion to the aero-navigation which Hugo envisages in "Plein Ciel").

And from this point to the end of the article Mr. Ludlow confines his attention almost entirely to the religious aspect.

"And this is what France, noble France, has come to, in the person of her greatest living poet! ....... Victor Hugo shows the utter emptiness and impotency of all efforts towards human advancement which are not based on Christ's gospel."

"Victor Hugo has written many beautiful, some true and some great things; but he has failed to see of whom he held his many marvellous gifts in trust. He has believed in himself and not in God......... So he remains a "grand poète manqué".

We quote also the Rev. W. Alexander (60/1) who writes thus in the "Dublin University Magazine":-

"He who can feel with such enthusiasm the throbbing heart of chivalry feels no rapture in the presence of the Liberator of our race.
Humanity's fairest development is unappreciated by Hugo."

And again:—

"The poet of humanity must fail who kneels not at the feet of Christ. Had Hugo been baptised in Christianity he would have gained in power over the heart of man and in poetical beauty not less than in truth."

Another writer (60/3) explains the phantoms to be found in Hugo's work by the inability of his logic to grasp the God of Creation, the result of which is that he struggles to originate a purely Hugoese revelation. This critic further complains that Hugo's unvaried tale of unmitigated suffering and unchecked wrong is false both to God and man, and loses thereby much of the tragic spirit which it might otherwise have. And when this critic comes to a more detailed analysis of the several poems that make up this work he finds in the final scene of "Ratbert" in which the archangel is seen wiping his beard, a regrettable lack of reverence.

The tendency to Pantheism is explained by the fact that perceiving that there must be a solution to the riddle of life which his logic cannot express, he turns with baffled anger on all that is and seeks repose in this doctrine, using the Bible as a magazine of legends which he is free to adapt to his own purposes.
Another serious charge against which it would be difficult to defend the author of "La Légende des Siècles" is that of having deliberately and with malice aforethought ignored certain periods and episodes which should undoubtedly find a place in any work which pretended to be a record of the progress of man through the ages. The English critics were not slow to remind Hugo that such figures as Joseph, Moses and David deserved inclusion in some form or other, as also did the Heroic age of Homer and the Athens of Pericles, and that to omit any mention of Greek legend was to admit that the work made no real attempt to live up to its title. And where were the great sovereigns and warriors of medieaval Europe? And why does the "Perfect Man" appear only once (Première rencontre du Christ avec le tombeau)?

"It is easy to prove the advancement of the world when some vague dream of a philanthropic paradise is compared with the darkest portions of history and fiction. But even Hugo's genius breaks down in the attempt to prove that the devil in the nineteenth century is dying." (59/2)

Hugo has, in fact, a case to prove, and he selects and sifts the evidence which history and literature offer him in order to prove it, admitting only such as is favourable to his case and ignoring the remainder. The result is, as the Rev. Alexander rightly reflects "a truncated work" (60/3).
This theory would, of course, explain the almost wearying recurrence in this work of examples of tyrants and assassins.

J. H. Ludlow puts the case as follows:

"Either Victor Hugo has given us here but a few scraps of the real 'Légende des Siècles' such as he has planned it, or he has taken but slender pains to work out his subject. His grand title is but the outer shell of a temple of legend; within we find, as yet, little more than mere heaps of materials, some indeed highly carved and polished, but none, except perhaps the 'Cycle Héroïque Chrétien' and 'Chevaliers Errants' divisions, forming so much as a single compartment of his subject." (59/3)

Nor can Justin McCarthy (69/1) excuse the "glaring omissions" and thinks that one is entitled to expect something more than a mere succession of pictorial or statuesque effects from a work which claims to be a great philosophic épopée, which should neither distort nor misrepresent as Hugo's does.

Of the philosophic content of these poems, as of Hugo's philosophy in general, we find little that is complimentary. One writer (59/2), unruffled by that "quackery of the soul" (60/3) which often passes for philosophy in Hugo's work, calmly and rather superciliously announces that though Hugo may persuade himself that there is a profound philosophic meaning
in his utterances, in reality, at the moment of actual writing, he is "no more concerned with the suppression of Satan than is his reader." It is, the writer maintains, fortunate that Hugo's natural poetical instinct generally fixes itself on the immediate object of his imagination, instead of frittering itself away over theories of progress. It matters not, continues the writer, who provides the French with sentimental philosophy as long as Hugo can write such ballads as "Chanson des Aventuriers de la Mer".

Another critic, writing in the "British Quarterly Review" (60/3), is similarly impressed by a different, "Les Pauvres Gens", and asks why Hugo should waste his powers in vain philosophy when he can write such scenes as these. He feels at first a desire to laugh at Hugo's idea of the millenium in "Plein Ciel", but that desire is soon replaced by a feeling of sorrow for a thinker whose plan for the restoration of fallen humanity is nothing but a reversal of the cosmic order. And as Hugo advances into the fuller light of modern history and thought, his poetry, so says the same critic, becomes more and more torn by the antagonisms of French logic with a Divine government.

"His philosophy is inextricably confused with his fancy, and both are betrayed by his rhetoric."

Justin McCarthy (68/1) is quite unable to discover the great philosophical and moral purpose of "La Légende des
and is compelled to the conclusion that the work is a failure, the offspring of wasted genius.

"La Légende des Siècles" is a wreck — audacious fantastic, monstrous, useless. Hugo has attempted something beyond his strength."

Nor is Justin McCarthy the only critic who, testing the poem by its vast aims, finds it a failure. Several others, the Rev. W. Alexander among them, are forced to the same conclusion. Disappointment is, indeed, the word that best sums up the general attitude of the English critics towards the First Part of this great work.

This is not, however, to say that no words of praise for "La Légende des Siècles" are to be found in the several articles devoted to that work. Such is by no means the case. Many tributes are paid to the brilliance of the language, to the perfection of the images Hugo evokes, to the mastery he shows over the French Alexandrine, to his noble sympathies for the weak. In spite, however, of these tributes the feeling remains that English critics in general failed to discover in this work anything which could make them hail Hugo as a poetic genius of the highest order.

The poems which evoked most comment, and in which English critics showed most interest were: "La Conscience" (Bk.1 No.2), "Le Sacre de la Femme" (Bk.1 No.1), "La Chanson des Aventuriers de la Mer" (Bk.11), "Le Petit Roi de Galico"
(Bk. 5 No. 1), "Les Lions" (Bk. 1 No. 4), "Première rencontre du Christ avec le Tombeau" (Bk. 1 No. 3), "Zim-Zizimi" (Bk. 6 No. 1), "Sultan Mourad" (Bk. 6 No. 3), "Ratbert" (Bk. 7), "Le Satyre" (Bk. 3), "Les Pauvres Gens" (Bk. 13 No. 3), "Eviradmus" (Bk. 8 No. 2) "La Rose de l'Infante" (Bk. 9), "Aymerillot" (Bk. 4 No. 3).

"Le Sacré de la Femme", although it is sometimes described as a "striking "poem, is thought by Rev. Alexander (60/1) to be one of the poorest in the volume, and the figure of Eve to be unworthy of Hugo.

"The angels who float around her are copied from the saloon of a steamer or restaurant".

The reverend gentleman objects for similar reasons connected with his cloth to "Première Rencontre du Christ avec le Tombeau".

A writer in the "Athenaeum" (59/1) describes the "Chanson des Aventuriers de la Mer" as one of the most original lays of the sort ever imagined by poet or chanted by minstrel. This poem finds high praise also in the "Saturday Review" (59/2). The "British Quarterly Review" (60/3) is not so complimentary.

"Hugo sings the hazards and enjoyments of third-rate Levantine pirates."

"Le Petit Roi de Galice" is compared, to its detriment, with Tennyson's "Enid" (660/1) which "is more thrilling and yet has less savage vigour" (59/3). The Rev. Alexander grants, however, that there is nothing in the "Idylls" superior to the boy-king's flight, and recognises the beauty of the prayer
under the evening sky. Justin McCarthy (63/1), who is by no means blind to the extravagances of the poem, appreciates the vein of noble sympathy with oppressed weakness which pervades this and many other of Hugo's poems.

"La Rose de l'Infante" met with universal approval. Justin McCarthy (63/1) described it as an exquisite picture and a marvellously artistic piece of work. James Cappon (85/18) called it a "wonderfully finished picture". To Swinburne (86/3) it is the "crowning flower". The Rev. Alexander selects it as being the most admirable thing in these volumes.

"The character of Philip is drawn in a few lines with marvellous power, and the conception which links and yet contrasts father and child, the strokes which bring out the Infanta's beauty and haughtiness, the art which unites the child's rose with the father's fleet, are nothing short of marvellous." (60/2)

Among other remarks we find the following:

"It is among the most admirable." (85/4)

"It could not be surpassed." (93/2)

Critics seem to be unable to make up their minds about "Ratbart", the "horror and atrocity of which is too much for English tastes" (60/2), because, in spite of this, it is "full of splendid detail" (59/3), the picture of the child Isora evoking especial admiration. The critic of the "British
Quarterly Review" (60/3) devotes considerable space to this poem. He writes thus of it:

"The rapid touch with which he (Hugo) individualises each false and cruel member of the Emperor's council is excellent. Isora is a gem of poetic painting. In the description of the slaughter we marvel at the skill with which he pours the new wine of passionate description into the classical form. He is never more powerful than when he sacrifices the proprieties of heroic verse to his dramatic instincts. Fabrice's anguish at the murder of Isora is given by Hugo with extreme simplicity yet concentrated power."

This writer, like several others, demurs to the lack of reverence in the final scene where the archangel is seen wiping his sword on a cloud.

Swinburne in his "Study of Victor Hugo" (86/8) expresses the opinion that "Eviradmic" and "Ratbert" are the two greatest of Hugo's romantic and tragic poems of mediaeval history or legend. The latter poem is, he says, unsurpassed for tenderness passion, righteous wrath, and History will forget Bonaparte before humanity forgets Ratbert.

It is not surprising that the poem which called forth the readiest praise should be "Les Pauvres Gens", "a masterpiece of simple pathos told in the homeliest and therefore the most
powerful style." (59/3) The critic of the "British Quarterly Review" (60/3) confesses his inability to do justice to it and asks:

"Why does he (Hugo) vainly philosophise when he can create such scenes as these."

Justin McCarthy (68/1) writes thus of it:

"What a picture of simple benevolence, of unpretending, almost unconscious self-sacrifice! What a noble unlettered faith! What in Goldsmith Crabbe or Wordsworth is more filled with simple beauty and quiet tenderness!"

C.E. Meeterkerke (91/2) said that there was hardly a line of it which was not a perfect gem, and in another article (94/1) called it the best sample of Hugo's comprehensive genius.

"He never touched upon the humble heroism of the poor with such precision and detail, such variety of vivid pathos."

The "Spectator" (93/2) found it unsurpassed for perfection of simple style.

"Eviradmis", which comes in for high praise from the Rev. Alexander for its admirable description of the hero, for its author's appreciation of the knightly mission, for its perfect description of the old Donjon of Corbus and of the hall where the feast is spread, is less enthusiastically received by Justin McCarthy, who finds the description of the old
legend-haunted tower so exhaustively elaborated that it wearies the most sympathetic reader. For him the description of the grim old hall and its rooms of empty armour-suits is wearisome in the extreme. This point of view is, however, exceptional, as witness the following remarks:

"His most important composition is 'Eviradmus'." (85/10)

"'Eviradmus' is the loveliest love-song in the world, the purest and keenest rapture of lyric fancy, the sweetest and clearest note of dancing or dreaming music." (86/3)

"— one of his best creations." (91/2)

"'Eviradmus' is pre-eminent, grander even than Roland and the Cid." (91/1)

"'Eviradmus' seems to possess every quality a true lyric is capable of possessing, winged passion, grace, freshness, delicacy, prismatic splendour, iridescent texture." (100/1)

J. Cappon (85/18) thinks it the greatest success in the volume and speaks of its original conception and its universal significance.
Since the appearance of the First Series of "La Légende des Siècles" eighteen years before, the English critic seems to have learnt to appreciate the earlier volume more nearly at its true worth and to be more in a position to appraise the fine qualities of the Second Series. When it comes to a comparison between the two volumes the balance is always on the side of the earlier volume.

"The 'Légende des Siècles' shows no advance on its predecessor." (77/3)

W.E.Henley (85/3) declares that the first instalment is the best. G.Barnett Smith (85/10) is of the opinion that the Second Series scarcely rose to the level of the First Series, and J.P.Nichol (93/4) also thinks that the earlier series is the better. The "Ateneum" (83/3) maintains that in spite of the wealth and splendid variety of the Second Series of "La Légende" the manner was often too pretentious for the matter and the tale of little meaning though the words were strong.

Other critics, however, find Hugo's powers unimpaired by the passing of years (77/1, 77/2, 77/3) which, while they bring him no philosophic mind, detract in no way from his energy and fire. James Cappon thinks that the progress to be observed in this volume consists not in any new conclusions but in the new experiences which the poems contain.
was, of course, more lavish in his praise. The Second Series of "La Légende des Siècles" was for him a "gift too vast in its magnitude for the measure of human thanksgiving" (80/2). Another critic takes an equally fervent view:

"If we take this collection as a group of 'occasional poems' they are, in spite of philosophy, a precious gift. They have more beauty and more music, brilliance and tenderness, benevolence and nobility of temper than are just now at the command of any other man."

The epithets most frequently met with to describe these poems are "grandiose", "colossal" and "vast". Roden Noel (78/3) admires the breadth of Hugo's touch and the profusion of his style as expressed in this volume. The "Saturday Review" (77/3) reviewing this work describes Hugo as one of the most comprehensive poets the world has seen since Shakespeare, and finds in these volumes "many instances of the grandeur and daring of thought which he can convey to his readers in words full and eloquent."

The "Athenacum" devotes two considerable articles to this work (77/1, 77/3) hailing this "gifted and noble writer" and acknowledging the debt of gratitude due to him for "enriching with beauty this dull world." After describing Hugo as being without a peer in France this journal asks:

"What can England do to match such a Colossus?"
Swinburne has much of his bardic fire and lawless splendour, Tennyson, Rossetti and Morris much of his tremendous sensibility and beauty, Tennyson much of his tenderness; Browning has more than all his agility of intelligence; but all these qualities are combined in Hugo." (77/1)

James Cappon (35/13) thinks highly of the work, although he is of the opinion that the subject is too vast for any one man to deal with.

"Even amongst great poets it is only the magnitude and variety of Hugo's resources that could have seemed at all adequate. What a masterful hand has everywhere laid hold of the varied matter of life and moulded it in supremely significant forms of art."

This same critic finds originality not only in the freshness and power of Hugo's conceptions but also in his language and style.

"It is not the classical style of art, nor the romantic, chivalric style of Chaucer, still less the subjective art of the later poets. Hugo has learned something from all three. Its chief characteristic is a natural profundity, as of a man who had rubbed away all the artificial coatings of things and reached the natural form. ———— This is
naturalism, the naturalism of a later age which has learnt all that is to be got from more artificial styles. But the plain, uncoloured ground of this style with its strong and often homely phrase, is precisely that needed for Hugo's peculiar effects. 

"It is the style of a great master, at bottom clear and simple, but capable of rendering at a stroke every turn of the poet's fancy."

Many other tributes to the vigour and freshness of Hugo's language could be quoted, and several other critics have remarked upon Hugo's naturalness and reality.

"Instead of drawing upon the recollection of past emotions, Hugo has written from present experience, and produces poems as tragic in their depth of pathos as his earlier works were in fire and passion." (77/3)

"Hugo contrives to make actual historic fact enter the atmosphere of legend so as not only not to lose its reality but to contribute its significance to the idea of the whole." (85/18)

We are not surprised to find a large number of critics drawing attention to Hugo's deficiency as a philosopher as exemplified in this volume. We should, indeed, have been surprised had it been otherwise. The point of view is well summed up in the "Athenaeum" (77/3)
"It is when we consider Hugo's claims as a philosopher who has some solution for the 'riddle of the earth' that we see how exceptionally deficient he is. Unless the philosophic power of a poet be of the first order, so gigantic a conception would, of itself, be a sign of an ill-balanced and imperfectly artistic mind."

This journal quotes Hugo as "a notable instance of how an endowment of the philosophic temperament may exist without any of the philosophic faculty", and designates his "thought" as mere "sentiment". It is Hugo's method, says the writer, which is at fault.

"He imagines a striking situation first and looks round for some philosophic doctrine of which it may be used as a symbol."

Another criticism of this work often met with is its lack of unity. The "Athenacum" writes as follows (77/3) :-

"This group of poems has no more to do with the Legend of the Ages than with the Man in the Moon. They have no 'idée mère' whatsoever save that man's life in the world has been sad and chequered. Scarcely one of the individual poems themselves has an 'idée mère' which is new and, at the same time, true."

And again (77/1) :-

"As the reader is carried along from beauty to
beauty, from glory to glory, he finds to his delight that there is no 'idée mère', nothing but poetry."

James Cappon (85/10), writing eight years later, thinks that this series "seems to lack the sequence and continuity of the first, and has somewhat the effect of disorganising the order of the work." Nevertheless it "adds immensely to its completeness in bringing out the religious and aesthetic side of the development of man, which the first series, mainly occupied with the sociological aspect, had neglected."

Commenting on the lack of homogeneity in the style of the second and third series the "Aténacum" writes:—

"In firmness and fulness of expression Hugo's highest mark in poetry was reached in 'Zim-Zizimi' and 'Sultan Mourad'. In these two astounding poems the French language rises into an equality with the great poetic language of Euripides. The lines have the rhyme-emphasis of Dryden, and the colour and sweetness of Keats." (83/2)

Other features of this work to which English critics took exception were the wildness of some of Hugo's conceptions, the audacity of his metaphors and epithets, and his lack of reverence, delicacy and refinement.

It is sometimes alleged that in Hugo imagination and fancy are at war with each other. This is a view frequently expressed by the Rev. Alexander who writes as follows:—
"He (Hugo) is so anxious that there should be an ethical core in all his stories that often, having rendered a dramatic situation with an imaginative vigour that is unmatched among living men, he will, instead of stopping where the incident ends, look round for any fanciful and artificial conclusion that may come first to hand - a conclusion which destroys perhaps all that has gone before - e.g. 'L'Aigle du Gasque' and 'Paternité'. " (77/3)

The poems in this volume which received most attention from English critics were :-

"La Terre" (Bk.1) A "touching poem" (77/1) and "hymn of great beauty" (77/3) which exudes an "intense passion for this beautiful earth and pathetic life of ours." (77/1)

"Welt, Castellan d'Osbor" (Bk.3), full of exceedingly fine invective and concentrated power. "The dark grandeur of the forest and the lonely tower, the shallow splendour of the Empire, the infinite courage and tenderness of Welt, the different types of the fickle mob - all these are brought before the reader's mind with marvelous art and concentrated power." (77/3) The "Athenaeum" (77/1) declares that "for invective there is nothing even in 'Timon of Athens' grander than the old warder's tremendous eloquence when he comes out upon his lonely
battlements to howl defiance in the teeth of the foes who have invested his stronghold." (77/1)

"L'Aigle du Casque" (Bk.9) which, according to several critics, is ruined by its conclusion. The "Saturday Review" (77/3) describes it as the least happy of all in the volume. "There is a sense of incongruity and absurdity about the whole work, and the end, which aims at a sublime terror, is childish."

"L'Epopée du Ver" (Bk.11), a poem which, says the "Atenacum" (77/2) demonstrates that the author did not know when to stop. "It should have concluded with some great and tranquil thought." The "London Quarterly Review" (86/1) describes it as a mass of stilted commonplace. The "Saturday Review" (77/3) praises its "biting eloquence and fire" but deplores the revolting images which disfigure it. It is quoted as an example to illustrate how much more successful Hugo was when dealing with the Alexandrine than when manipulating the four-line stanza of "Tout le passé et tout l'avenir".

"La Paternité" (Bk.15) which seems to suffer from the same blemishes as "L'Aigle du Casque", but which the "Argosy" (94/1) describes as one of the most pathetic. "The scene where Don Jayme kneels before the statue of his father is one of Hugo's pure touches of art."

"Tout le passé et tout l'avenir" (Bk.19) which is full of beauty
stately verse and brilliant epigrams as it is, is far below Edward Young's 'Night Thoughts' in that Hugo begs the question as to whether there is a God."

"Jean Chouan" (Bk. 21) is frequently described as one of Hugo's most admirable poems and a fine historical sketch.

"Le Cimetière d'Élysée" (Bk. 21), a "striking and vigorous piece of dramatic narrative" couched in language that "makes the blood tingle". (77/1) The "Saturday Review" (77/3) thinks it one of the finest poems in the whole collection. "It is full of keen touches of character and magnificent description."

F.T. Marzials (83/2) also classifies it among the best, while Miss Cecelia Meekers (94/1) describes it as one of Hugo's finest historical sketches, needing no charm of imagination. Swinburne (86/8) says of this poem:-- "Here all the Homeric side of a poet born of war-like blood comes out into proud and bright relief. There is no better fighting in the Iliad. It has the martial precision and practical fellow-feeling which animate the lagging verse of Walter Scott and it has that omnipresent
breath and light and fire of perfect poetry which a Scott or a Byron is never quite permitted to attain." Esme Stuart in the "Scottish Review" (96/1) writes: "In 'Le Cimetière d'Eylau', which is perfect throughout, subject and words are exactly fitted, and the juxtaposition of ideas is not too startling. A battle could not be better rendered."

In summary it could be said that this series was, for the most part, well received and that it served in some measure to draw attention to the somewhat underrated beauties of the first.
LA LÉGENDE DES SIÈCLES
PART THREE 1033

As the articles appearing soon after the publication of the Third Series of "La Légende des Siècles" dealt usually with the complete work rather than exclusively with the latest series, there seems to be less actual criticism of this volume than of its predecessors bearing the same title. Critics are still of the opinion that, owing to the lack of homogeneity of style in the second and third series, the work is more complete at the end of the first instalment than at the end of the third. Those critics who venture a comparison seem, on the whole, to prefer the earlier volumes, in much the same way as critics of the second volume found virtues in the first which had escaped the attention of contemporary writers. F.T. Marziani, for example, thinks that if the verse in the third series is not fully equal in power to the first two, it might have immortalised many another poet. J.P. Michel voices the same feelings in his "Victor Hugo; a sketch of his life and work";

"Even the least good, the latest, could only have been written by a poet of superb powers." (93/4)

There seems to be general agreement that there is "no decadence of true poetic impulse, no subsidence of that marvellous brilliance which dazzled Europe when the first part was published. Neither fate, nor chance, nor time can quell the fire of
Hugo." (83/2) This same critic adds, however, and he voices a view very prevalent among English critics, that "there is no growth of those highest poetical qualities in which Hugo's magnificent poetry was always weak — self-dominance, serenity, wise sweetness of a balancing judgment."

Which poems in this volume claimed most attention? The critic above quoted, almost certainly Mr. G. Barnett Smith judging by the style of the writing and the opinions expressed, thinks that the two finest poems in this volume are "Les quatre Jours d'Elciis" (Bk. 7) and "La Vision de Dante" (Bk. 20). He qualifies his praise, however, by saying of the former poem — that the author made the same mistake as Carlyle in thinking that railing is an effective weapon of attack in literature.

"Without self-dominance there can be no effective satire. Hence Hugo's futility as a satirist." (83/2)

The latter poem he describes as "vigorous, eloquent and melodious", but adds:—

"The voice is the voice of Hugo. Where Dante would have used three words he uses thirty. It fails as a dramatic monologue. There is no serious attempt to identify the poet with the character assumed. Eloquent invective of a personal kind — which would have been most effective if uttered by Victor Hugo in his own person—becomes silly when put into mouths that never
could have uttered it." (83/2)

Swinburne (86/8) describes "La Vision de Dante" as a great and terrible poem.

G. Barnett Smith quotes as the most perfect lyrics in this volume "Les Paysans au bord de la Mer" (Bk. 8), "La Chanson des Doreurs de Proues" (Bk. 11) and "Ocean" (Bk. 22).

"The metre of 'Les Paysans au Bord de la Mer' for simple sweetness can scarcely have its equal in any poetry." (83/2)

Swinburne also had a high opinion of "La Chanson des Doreurs de Proues", which he described as a magnificent instance of purely dramatic vision.

"It displays mastery of metre, majesty of colour and simplicity of style. It is no less exact than sublime; no less accurate than passionate." (86/8)

"Le Bey outragé" (Bk. 10) is sometimes praised for its Oriental colour which, says Mr. Smith, is equal to anything in "Les Orientales".
It will be convenient to conclude the section dealing with "La Légende des Siècles" with a few illustrative quotations from some of the many articles which appeared after the publication of the final volume in 1833, and which gave an impression of the whole series rather than of any one section or poem in it. It will be seen at once, as was inevitable, that the critics viewing the work as a whole found much more to say in its favour than those who, before the completion of the work, were apt to take exception to some particular section poem or image which displeased or offended them.

"These volumes are united by an apprehension, profound and tender, of the pathos of man's mysterious life on the earth, by a pity such as has never before been expressed by any poet, a beautiful faith in God such as can only find echo in rare and noble souls, an aspiration for justice and the emancipation of man." (83/2)

The "Spectator" (85/4) is of the opinion that "La Légende des Siècles" is the most connected in purpose and spirit of Hugo's volumes of verse. A "Titanic might of imagination characterises the whole work". Among the most admirable poems this journal mentions "Aymarillot", "La Rose de l'Infante", and "Jean Chouan".
G. Barnett Smith in his book "Victor Hugo: his life and work" (85/10) wrote as follows:—

The greatness of his (Hugo's) fame as a poet must ultimately rest upon this work which is far more striking than any of his previous poems. It is remarkable for its brilliance, energy, literary skill and powerful conceptions. It scintillates with the brilliant lights of genius."

Two extracts from "Victor Hugo: a Memoir and a Study" by James Cappon will give the view of this critic:—

"'La Légende des Siècles' is, like Dante's poem, a cradle and a grave; it is a sombre retrospect of the past, and evokes a consciousness of it so complete and just as to be a fatal judgment on it. On the other hand it is only in the light of a new and better ideal of life that this view of the past would be justifiable or tolerable. On this side the 'Légende des Siècles' is the épopée of the dawn. As 'Les Châtiments' was Hugo's protest against the coup d'état, 'La Légende des Siècles' is his protest against all that makes coups d'état or autocratic imperialisms possible." (85/13)

"Hugo took up the subject on the ideal
historic side. The form which he selected was eminently adapted to the subject and his power of treating it. If his works lacks the refined intellectual interest which belongs to that of a poet whose matter is modes of thought, it gains in massiveness, simplicity and poetic colour."

Ibid.

The "Spectator" (85/19), though it thinks the subject too vast and the treatment too disconnected, describes this work as "the grandest poem since Milton," and as "the only epic during the last two centuries."

The "London Quarterly Review" (86/1) quotes our first extract from James Cappon's book on Hugo and entirely agrees with it, adding that although the poem is marred by a great deal of sound and fury, only the great novels can stand in comparison with it.

E.D.A. Morshead writes thus in the "Athenaeum" (86/4):

"We are unable to find in 'La Légende des Siècles' enough of true artistic unity to entitle them to take rank with the lowest kind of epic."

The Hon. Roden Noel (86/7) writing of this work compares Hugo to Musset, Burns and Béranger, but fails to discern in him the finish and rich accurate perfection of Tennyson.

"Hugo is more akin to Byron, but his range is vaster. He has Byron's fierce satire and more
than Byron's humour."

Swinburne, in his "Study of Victor Hugo" (86/8) is, as
might be expected, full of adulation for this "imperishable
and inappreciable masterpiece" which he describes as the
greatest work of the century and the mightiest poem of our age.

"History and legend, fact and vision, are
fused and harmonised by the mastering charm of
moral unity in imaginative truth. There is no
more possibility of discord or default in this
transcendent work of human power than in the
working of those powers of nature which transcend
humanity."

In writing of "Booz endormi" Swinburne says :-

"We cannot imagine Dante or Isaiah endowed
with his (Hugo's) infinite variety of sympathies,
interests and powers; as little can we imagine
in Sophocles such height and depth of passion, in
Shakespeare such unquenchable and sleepless fire
of moral and prophetic faith. In hardly any one
of these can we recognise the same buoyant and
childlike exultation in such things as are the
delight of a high-hearted child.

Or again :-

From the author's prefatory avowal that his
book contains few bright or smiling pictures a
reader would never have inferred that so many of
its pages are fragrant with all the breath and radiant
with all the bloom of April and May. ———Tragedy
may be hard at hand ——— but the glory of beauty,
the loveliness of love, the exultation of noble
duty and lofty labour in a stress of arduous joy,
these are the influences that pervade the world
and permeate the air of the poems which deal with
the Christian cycle of heroic legend."

Some enlightening comparisons ensue:—

"In the tone and colour of his genius he
(Hugo) has more of the Hebrew than the Greek. In
his love of light and freedom, reason and justice,
he is not of Jerusalem but of Athens; but in the
bent of his imagination, in the form and colour of
his dreams ——— he is nearer akin to the great
insurgent prophets of deliverance and restoration
than to any poet of Athens except Aeschylus."

And later:—

"Juvenal is not so strong in righteousness
nor Pindar so sublime in illustration as the poet
who borrowed from nature her highest symbols to
illustrate the glory and duty of righteous wrath
and insuppressible insurrection against wrong-
doing when he wrote 'Le Régiment du Baron Madrueco'"
Elsewhere also Swinburne insists that Hugo is greater than Juvenal. He sums up Hugo's latest work thus:

"In this book faith shines as a kindling torch, hope breathes as a quickening wind, love burns as a cleansing fire. It is tragic, not with the hopeless tragedy of Dante or the all but hopeless tragedy of Shakespeare. In Victor Hugo it is the hunger and thirst after reconciliation the love of loving-kindness, the master passion of mercy, which persists in hope and insists on faith, even in face of the hardest and darkest experience through which a nation or a man can pass."

F.T. Marzials, in his "Life of Victor Hugo" (33/2) describes the first two volumes of "La Légende des Siècles" as novel, striking and superb, and congratulates the author on having chanced upon a subject, or class of subjects, so in harmony with his genius.

"Only a great poet can leave with impunity the solid ground of nature, and attempt to give reality to the supernatural. Victor Hugo holds us. We never doubt what lives so fully in his imagination, which he reproduces so vividly."

Marzials comments upon the advantage, to a poet of Hugo's calibre, of a subject of such a concrete character.
"Each contained a story; and he (Hugo) was an excellent story-teller and a great artist, who set himself to tell his story as well as possible and with as little abstract disquisition and declamation as possible. "Thus the legends did him the service of holding his work together, of forcing him to concentrate himself."

The critic then proceeds to praise the high quality of the language and verse.

"There is a rugged force about the language, quite new in French poetry. As Milton, like a sculptor, hews English into shapes of imperishable beauty, so here Victor Hugo moulds French, a far less plastic material, to his every purpose. He never violates its laws, but bends it to his fancy and imagination, and the result is superb. And so with the verse. The French Alexandrine becomes ductile to his touch and as fit as our own blank-verse for the highest poetic use."

Marzials's terse but emphatic summary is:

"'La Légende des siècles' is the work of a great master. It marks an epoch in the history of French literature."

In the course of a review by Hon. Röden Noel of the above-mentioned book by F.T. Marzials the reviewer describes
"La Légende des Siècles" as a "grand legendary epic" (93/2). Miss Cecilia Hoetkerke, in the "Gentleman's Magazine" (91/3) is equally laudatory.

"It is a grand procession of the most striking figures of all ages."

A critic in the "Spectator" (93/2) reviewing Léopold Mabilletau's book on Hugo cites "La Légende des Siècles" as Hugo's greatest work, and, though he finds much in the work that is either extravagant or mere padding, he admits that it contains many perfect pieces and some examples of a simple style that could hardly be surpassed. He quotes in particular "Booz endormi", "La Rose de l'Infante" and "Les Pauvres Gens".

J.P. Nichol in his book on Hugo (93/4) writes:

"The general consensus of literary opinion regards it ("La Légende des Siècles") as his masterpiece."

It was in this book, says Nichol, that the "mastery of the formal side of poetry attained its apogee." He sums it up as follows:

"As a series of impressive and sumptuous tableaux drawn in a disjointed and arbitrary manner for all times and climes, it has not its like in literature."

Miss Cecilia E. Hoetkerke, whom we have already quoted, devotes some space to this work in the "Argosy" (94/1), in which she
"It would be hard to find the page in this his crowning work that any lover of poetry would willingly spare. There is no subject he fears to handle, armed as he is with a keen love of justice and an implacable hatred of evil and evil-doers. Whatever theory he puts forth is supported with such vigour, so many striking analogies, such vivid and just observation, that it never fails to interest. In his perception of what is good and true and in his manner of holding fast to what he has so found, there is the essence of all true worship and belief."

And later in the same article:

"So great a triumph of imagination, such riches of thought, such perfection of words, were never found united in greater fulness of harmony."

And again:

"Hugo is stronger than any other poet in his power of developing an idea by a series of analogies all appropriate and just. Though image is piled on image, symbol on symbol, nothing obscures the clearness of the original thought, and abnormal objects are made to appear familiar."

And to sum up, Miss Meetkerke writes:
"We know of no poet in any language whose telling of a plain unvarnished tale is so touching and so delicate."

An examination of the foregoing quotations reveals an appreciation of the beauties of this vast poem for which one seeks almost in vain earlier in the century. It is abundantly evident that the critics of the last decade of the nineteenth century had come to esteem the lyric poetry of Hugo in a way which earlier critics, who did not enjoy their distant view and were apt to pounce on any detail which offended their ear, found impossible. We see Hugo gradually but surely coming into his own, thanks not so much to outstanding men like Swinburne, whose fulsome flattery sometimes served merely to arouse resentment in those whose eyes were not entirely blinded to the many weaknesses of this great French poet, but to the many more obscure poets whose just appraisal of Hugo is not nullified by overweening adulation.
The only contemporary evidence of interest in "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois" is an article in the "Fortnightly Review" by the editor of that journal, the famous George Henry Lewes (65/1). This article serves to show that even in 1865 a discerning critic like Mr. Lewes could only grudgingly admit a certain beauty of language and fertility in novel expressions, while he prophesies that Hugo will never gain acceptance in England as long as he talks nonsense. He is charitable enough to admit that his failure to appreciate this volume of poetry may be due to a lack of understanding of a foreign poet, and he cordially recommends the work to literary students as an exercise in versification and as an illustration of a prodigal and often felicitous talent of expression. He grants Hugo's extraordinary powers of language and his inexhaustible imagery, but as it is drawn for the most part not from actual experience of nature or human nature, but compounded out of verbal suggestions, he finds it incongruous and incapable of being realised in thought.

"It is not representative but kaleidoscopic. No sooner do we pause to contemplate one of these images, to realise in thought the suggestions of the words, than we find ourselves confronted with nonsense or
inanity. He often had no vision which he was
endeavouring to express in words, but was trying by
the shock of words to elicit a spark. If it is
permissible to fling words at random in this manner
poetry will present little difficulty, and novel
turns of phrase will spring up like mushrooms. It
is the mere jingle of verbal suggestions which
determines V. Hugo's use of metaphors and not any
imaginative perception of obscure relations. This
kind of writing which passes in weak minds as
imaginative, would be extremely facile if men were
not restrained by a wholesome terror of nonsense."

He continues in similar strain;

"In this volume of poems there are few whose
meaning is not silly or trivial. They do not withstand
the indispensable test of reflection."

Mr. Lewes condescends to grant that Hugo might possibly
have written something worth while if he had been able to
exercise more control.

"Scattered through the volume there are couplets
and stanzas which show that if he could restrain the
diseased excitability of his organ of language by a
rigorous determination to subordinate language to
thought, and if he would relinquish the unfortunate
pretension to be a profound thinker, he might produce
poems of sterling value."

To ensure that his readers shall be in no doubt as to his opinion of "Chansons des Rues et des Bois" he reiterates his charges.

"There is so much in these poems that is demonstrably absurd, tasteless and incorrect, that we cannot be far wrong in asserting that although Frenchmen will see many merits we fail to see, yet that they, no less than Englishmen, must be impressed with the great radical faults of vagueness and incongruity. Hugo is at variance with logic and common-sense. The grace of rhythm and the exquisite choice of diction cannot prevent the images from being incongruous, cannot give the thoughts coherence. They may startle and dazzle like fireworks but they will not bear examination. The longer the mind pauses over them to endeavour to realise definite images from their suggestions, the more misty or absurd they appear."

Of the poems about youth he writes:—

"We find in the poems about youth only the traditional commonplace, the stock properties of Love, Wine and Kisses, the cant of literature, not the experience of life. They are masquerade dresses for masquerade thoughts."

And to sum up:—

"In spite of occasional flashes which
remind us that the writer is not a mere artist in verse, but a poet, we close the volume with no desire to reopen it and with fresh confirmation of our old opinion that V. Hugo, although in some respects splendidly endowed, is so deficient in the cardinal qualities of Vision and Sincerity that he excites little of the loving admiration which is so willingly given to poets who touch and teach."

Edward Dowden, writing in 1873, eight years after the publication of "Chansons des Rues et des Bois", in the "Contemporary Review" (73/1) seems much more anxious to discover whatever there is of value in this work. While he is fully aware of the lack of ideas which a survey of the work discloses, he recognises in it an "ideal of beauty." After calling the attention of the reader to the striking contrast which these slight caprices present with the tragic legends which immediately preceded it, he continues:

"The songs, while their tone and colour are very different from those of Victor Hugo's youth, are a return to youth by the subject of many of them, and by the circumstances that once again style becomes a matter of greater importance than the idea. These later feats of style are the more marvellous through their very slightness and curious delicacy. Language, metre and meaning seem recklessly to approach the brink of
irretrievable confusion; yet the artist never practised
greater precision. All stlyes meet in mirthful reunion.
Yet an ideal of beauty floats over it. As to idea— the
idea of such songs as these is that they shall have no
idea. Such is the mirthfulness of the book; not mirth
in the 'happy, prompt, instinctive way of youth'; but
the wilfulness perpense of one who seeks relief from th
thought and passion."

In the same year F.C.G. Murray, in a book entitled "Men
of the Third Republic" (73/?) dismissed this volume as a
"collection of trifles in which the grotesque predominates",
while the "Saturday Review" (78/1) is of the opinion that it
"contains some of his most charming effusions". C.Vaughan in
the "British Quarterly Review" (85/1) refers to the grace and
delicacy of the poems in this volume.

In the year 1885, the year of Hugo's death, there was
naturally an outburst of articles on the great French poet,
from some of which we are able to glean what was the general
opinion of this work twenty years after publication. From
W.E.Henley, never very enthusiastic when dealing with the
works of Hugo, we hardly expect any great praise, and are
not surprised to find this work described as a "string of
variations not always intelligible, and of caprices not always
pleasant. Although a miracle of virtuosity the work is a
disappointment." (85/3)
G. Barnett Smith in his "Life of Hugo" (85/10) regrets that some reviewers had no ears for its music or its more delicate undertones.

James Cappon (85/18) passes favourable comment upon the delicate and curious workmanship of this volume, its piquant phrases and happy caprices, the quaint suggestiveness of its speech, the comic liberties it takes with the French language, the ludicrous yet profound sallies of thought, the union of profundity and lightness which is only found when a great master, in the fulness of his power and experience, makes a gambol in his art. This work, says Mr. Cappon, has not the musty odour of the empty amphora, but is a smiling return which a healthy old age may make upon the time of its youth.

"The morose old sage seems to have forgotten his apocalyptic visions and to have transported himself to some charming suburban wood where he tunes his pipe to Suzon and Annette dancing on the green."

What chiefly appealed to Swinburne in "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois" was the miraculous dexterity of touch, the dazzling mystery of metre, the infinite fertility of variations on the same air of frolic and thoughtful fancy. He quotes the prologue as "a superb example of Hugo's power of seizing on some old symbol or image which may have been in poetic use ever since verse dawned upon the brain of man,
and informing it again as with life, and transforming it anew
as by fire." He makes special mention of "A la belle
impérieuse" which "none but a great poet of passion, a master
of imaginative style, could have written", and "Souvenir des-
vieilles guerres", "one of Hugo's most pathetic and charac-
teristic studies of homely and heroic life."

Francis Paul, writing in the "National Review" (87/1)
on Brunetièrre's criticism of Victor Hugo, states it as his
opinion that with "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois"came the
beginning of Hugo's decadence. From this point, Francis Paul
maintains, his facility and richness of verbal invention began
to leave him.

F. T. Marzials (88/1) devotes little space to this work,
contenting himself with describing it as the most juvenile of
the books written by Hugo after he was out of his teens. Like
other critics he receives a slight impression of incongruity
when reading the work.

James Pringle Nichol in his book "Victor Hugo; a sketch
of his life and work" (93/4) refers to the poems of "Les Chan-
sons des Rues et des Bois" as "little master-pieces of dainty
grace." They proved, he maintains, that Hugo's fancy was as
delicately graceful as his imagination was mighty.

"In this volume he rests from his labours in
granite and becomes a mosaic worker."
Elsewhere in the same book J.P. Nichol singles out "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois" as the only poetical work after the period 1829-1831 which was not a mere variant on motives already handled during that period.

Esme Stuart in the "Scottish Review" (96/1) includes "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois" among Hugo's four best volumes of poetry, the others being "La Légende des Siècles", "L'Année Terrible", and "L'Art d'être Grand-père".

As in the case of "La Légende des Siècles" a chronological study of articles of criticism on "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois" seems to show that time was a determining factor in the ability to appreciate the work of Hugo. Whether the nonsense and triviality which G.H. Lewes found so rife in this volume was anything more than his own inability to discover the hidden meaning of some of Hugo's more daring images, or whether the later critics, dazzled by the enormous range and output of this inexhaustive poet, were prepared to gloss over his deficiencies, is difficult to say. The fact remains that here again we find a growing sympathy for, and understanding of the work as time elapses. The nonsense and triviality recede into the background giving place to grace and beauty.

What G.H. Lewes had thought but a meaningless muddle was to J.P. Nichol a mosaic.
The only reference to this work is to be found in Swinburne's "Study of Victor Hugo" (86/9), where it is referred to as "a glorious little poem". It was translated into English by Edwin Arnold in 1869 under the title of "Montana", which was the subject of the poem.
"L'Année Terrible" attracted more attention than its predecessor "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois" and was, on the whole, more favourably received. Within a short time of the publication of the work articles appeared by Sidney Colvin in "Macmillan's Magazine", Robert Buchanan in "St. Paul's", A.C. Swinburne in the "Fortnightly Review", and Edward Dowden in the "Contemporary Review", all of them tending rather to appreciation than to captious criticism.

Sidney Colvin (72/1), who was by no means insensitive to Hugo's failings, to the sense of absurdity and his eloquence and imaginative fertility, to his blind patriotism, which could only denounce the barbarism of France's enemies while leaving unrebuked the depravations of his own country, makes effective answer to some of Hugo's critics. After commending Hugo's optimism and courage, his tenderness and power, his pompous imagery and passionate declamation, Colvin says:

It is easy for Englishmen and Germans to laugh at Hugo. His extravagances and perversions should not be allowed to stand in the way (as they do with many foreign judges) of the almost unbounded estimation which everyone knows is his due. Not even Milton has struck so deeply into the life and struggles of his time and country, politics, social philosophy and religion. No book represents him more completely in these matters.
than 'L'Année Terrible'."

Two aspects of Hugo interest Sidney Colvin more especially, his theism and his patriotism. He writes thus:

"Hugo is a theist in his thoughts about the other world, a patriot in his thoughts about this world. His theism and patriotism run together into a lyric religion."

And later in the same article:

"He has never hurled all the resources of literature with greater power than in his indignant outburst in reply to the priest calling him 'atheist'."

Of his patriotism, to which we have already referred, Colvin writes:

"Ardent philanthropist and democrat as he is, love of country comes first, and love of mankind second. But his philosophy is by no means a thing of nought."

"When he pours forth cry upon cry on behalf of justice, mercy, reason, against the wanton butchery of women and children, we have one of the most poignant and terrible pieces of historical reading."

While admitting Hugo's lack of wit and of the sense of the ridiculous, Sidney Colvin attributes to him an unequalled power of sarcasm and invective, an august and surging sense of the Infinite, a vocabulary of inconceivable range and
majesty. He concludes with these words:—

"If you cannot trust him as a prophet, honour the master-singer, the preacher of humanity, the transcendent genius."

Of the poems dealing with Hugo’s grand-children he writes:—

"The loveliest passages are those about his grand-children. Lyrical perfection cannot go beyond it."

Swinburne (72/2) describes "L'Année Terrible" as "a book full of light and music, but a book written in tears and blood and characters of flame, and adds:—

"We cannot but rejoice that it has been written, and grieve that ever it could have been."

In Swinburne’s opinion Hugo’s hand has never been firmer, his note more clear, and "in these bitter and tragic pages there is a sweetness surpassing that of love-songs or songs of music."

Of the prelude, full of noble scorn and nobler pity, he writes:

"It is such as it is given but to one man in an age to write, and that by no means in every age."

Of the poems dealing with the siege he says:—

"From overture to epilogue the various and continuous harmony flows forward through light and shadow, with bursts of thunder and tempest and interludes of sunshine and sweet air. In this tragic range of poems there is an echo of all
emotions in turn that the great spirit of a patriot and a poet could suffer and express by translation of suffering into song; the bitter cry of invective and satire, the clever trumpet-call to defence, the triumphal wail of those who fell for France. The fiery love and faith of the patriot find again and ever again some fresh glory of speech, some new splendour of song in which to array themselves for everlasting; words of hatred and horror for the greed and ravin of the enemy and his princes, words of wrath and scorn for the renegade friends who had no word of comfort and no hand for help in the hour of passion of France crucified, words of living fire and light for love of the mother-land despised and rejected of men.

So much for Hugo the patriot. But Hugo the children's friend drawsforth from this inexhaustible Hugolater another spate of eulogy.

"For perfect delight and strong charm of loveliness we return at each reading to the domestic poems as to the crowning splendour of this great book. We are compelled to recognise in Victor Hugo the most perfect poet of children."

This unbridled torrent of praise continues, but one can only quote representative passages. To do more would be to
bring into undue prominence the unbalanced opinions of a man blind to all Hugo's imperfections and who loses himself in an avalanche of words.

"Circumstances have given to these present poems colour and pathos, a gentle glory and luminous tenderness which only such a framework, time and place could give."

"With the one exception of Shakespeare what other poet has ever strewn the intervals of tragedy with blossoms of such breath and colour? The very verse seems a thing of flower-like and childlike growth, the very body of the song a piece of living nature, like any bud that bursts, or young life that comes forth in spring."

From these poems Swinburne selects as worthy of special mention the one beginning "Sur une barricade au milieu des pavés". It "stands up with the light of a great deed on it, relieved against the rest in a glory as of sunrise." (It is the poem which places on everlasting record the heroism of a child of twelve, condemned to be shot after all his companions who asked leave to go first and take his watch home to his mother, promising to come back in time to die in his turn).

Yet even Swinburne could wish that Hugo had been a little more sensitive of the former shortcomings of the French nation and had paid some tribute to the virtues of the German empire.

"Yet in reading these ardent and profuse invocations
of France as prophetess and benefactress, fountain of
light and symbol of right, we must feel now and then that
some recognition of past wrong-doing, some acknowledgement
of treason and violence done against the right and light of
the world, would have added weight and force to the ex-
pression of a patriotism which, in default of it, may be
open to the enemy's charge of vulgar and uncandid partisans-
ship, of blind and one-sided provinciality. From these,
as from all other charges of narrowness or shallowness,
want of culture, of judgment, and of temperance, we would
fain see the nobler ardour and loving passion of his faith
as demonstrably clear in all men's eyes as in the main it
is at bottom to those who can read it aright."

"With this, and with some implies admission of those
good as well as evil elements in the composition of the
German empire and army which gave his enemies their str-
ength, the intellectual and historical aspect of the poem
would be complete and unassailable. From all other points
of view it stands out in perfect unity of relief, as an
absolute type of what poetry can do with a tragic or epic
subject of the poet's own time."

Swinburne thinks that the claim of "L'Année Terrible"
to the reverent study and thankful admiration of man is
not based on its political and social principles, but on its artistic price and poetic greatness, and recognises that it must always hold a high place in the mighty roll of his works. Here, says Swinburne, his intense moral passion, which elsewhere tended to overflow the bounds of drama or romance, has a full vent in its proper sphere, and whereas partisanship is the imperfection of a play, it is the perfection of a war-song or other national lyric.

Swinburne does not seem to have found it necessary to revise his opinion of this work in later years, for in his "Study of Victor Hugo", written in 1886, he speaks thus of "L'Année Terrible":

"More sublime wisdom, more compassionate equity, more loyal self-devotion, never found expression in verse of more varied and impassioned and pathetic magnificence."

This notwithstanding, in 1889, in an article in the "Fortnightly Review" (89/1), he compares this work with "Les Châtiments", to its detriment.

"'L'Année Terrible' is full of unflagging energy and unfading beauty, but its poetic beauties and energies are fainter and less fervent than those of 'Les Châtiments'."

The article on Victor Hugo's new poem in "St. Paul's" is signed "S.S." but is undoubtedly the work of
Robert Buchanan for it is almost identical with an article on the same subject in "A Poet's Sketch Book" (1883) by that author. Robert Buchanan cannot quite make up his mind about Hugo. After a few introductory paragraphs in which he extols Hugo as the "noblest name on the roll of contemporary creators" and whose "insolence and profanity providing vulgar entertainment for a crowd of gaping pleasure-seekers," he proceeds to discuss "L'Année Terrible," which, he says, "fails to fill us with a due sense of the magnitude of events." Yet he believes it to be written on the side of Truth and Humanity and nowhere does he find that Hugo's imagination leads him into the region of Lies. He commends Hugo's courage.

"He reaches straight at the throat of every public fallacy which bars his path."

and it is seldom that we find Hugo praised for his "natural piety."

Buchanan selects for special mention the poem to Hugo's little grand-child (A Petite Jeanne") which is "in his best and simplest style—far superior to his ordinary invective", the final address to Germany which is "one of the finest things in the book", the powerful and eloquent poem on "Progress" and "A qui la faute", one of the simplest and best. The verses on the death of Hugo's son Charles ("Le Deuil" and "O Charles") Robert Buchanan finds rather
theatrical, and he has little to say in favour of "Le Plot", which he describes as "tautological in ideas, theatrical in manner, thin in philosophy and quite below the level of Hugo's best." He terminates the article by describing Hugo as "a man who in nobility has no superior, in glowing magnificence of imagery no rival, in sheer spontaneous poetic eloquence no equal." It should be added that in a later article, written in 1887, he describes "L'Année Terrible" as one of Hugo's finest poems.

Passing to the article which Edward Dowden contributed in the following year (1873) to the "Contemporary Review" (73/1), and which deals not specifically with "L'Année Terrible" but with Hugo's poetry in general, we find a charitable condoning of the extravagance of the poet's love and devotion to France and of his scorn and hatred of the invader, and a willing recognition of the wisdom, charity and moderation of many poems in this volume, and of the freedom of the poet from mere party spirit.

"He is a Frenchman throughout, not a man of the Commune, nor a man of Versailles."

Edward Dowden is impressed by the completeness of the transition from "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois" to "L'Année Terrible". "The holiday in the woods is indeed over, and all laughter and sportive ways. The fields are trampled
by the steady battalions of invaders. The streets have a grave and anxious air."

He describes the work as "a record from the imagination, complete in every important particular, of the history of Paris from August 1870 to July 1871; and with the life of Paris the personal life of the poet is intertwined inseparably and for ever." He discusses the feeling of joy and hope which, despite the dark days, permeates the volume.

"Great joy, the joy of an exile restored to his people, the joy of a patriot who has witnessed the overthrow of a corrupt and enervating despotism, and who is proud of the heroic attitude of the besieged city - such joy is mingled with the great sorrow of his country's defeat and dismemberment."

And again:

"He is sustained by his confidence in the future and in the ultimate victory of the democratic ideas which form his faith, though once or twice this confidence seems shaken by the rude assaults of facts."

Like other critics of Hugo Dowden finds that the most precious poems are not those which concern themselves with ideas but those which keep close to facts.

In contrast with the foregoing sympathetic estimate we find F.W.H. Myers in the "Nineteenth Century" (79/2) describing "L'Année Terrible" as a "crude and violent
expression of the heated feelings of the time", and contrasting it with Renan's writings of the same date, which show the patriot who is above all a philosopher rather than the patriot who is above all a rhetorician.

The "New Monthly Magazine" (81/5), on the other hand, recognises in "L'Année Terrible" a certain grandeur and poetry, an infinite tenderness and pathos, and again "A petite Jeanne" is given special mention.

The Hon. Roden Noel, writing in the "British Quarterly Review" (78/3), and later in "Essays on Poetry and Poets" (86/7), describes much of "L'Année Terrible" as "merely declamatory and rhetorical." The critic of the "Saturday Review" is reminded by its vigour of Agrippa d'Aubigné's "Tragiques". For James Cappon the work is "that wonderful record of a dark year", full of profound and detailed studies of popular instincts comparable with those which find a place in some of Shakespeare's plays, while the "Scottish Review" (96/1) includes it among Hugo's best volumes of poems.
Most critics agree in regarding this as one of Hugo's most charming works and in claiming that when Hugo is dealing with childhood he is at his best. The two most quoted poems in the volume are "Le Poème du Jardin des Plantes", and "L'Épopée du Lion".

Contemporary criticism is to be found in the "Athenaeum" (77/5) and the "Saturday Review" (77/6). The writer in the former can think only of Dickens and Mrs. Browning to put before Hugo in rendering the pathos of childhood, especially of childhood in distress. He calls "L'Épopée du Lion" a real epic, bearing the stamp of truth upon every incident. Forestalling a criticism which appeared later in the "London Quarterly Review" the writer adds:

"If it is nonsense it is very charming nonsense, for it takes us into the fairyland of childhood."

While this critic does not go so far as to say that the melody of Hugo's verse has abated in this volume he is, nevertheless, of the opinion that the nature of the subjects does not seem to call forth those masterly varieties of pause and movement which give the French hexameter in Hugo's hands something between the billowy monotony of the Homeric line and the contrapuntal harmonies of English blank-verse.

The "Saturday Review" (77/6) also is impressed by the fact
that although Hugo is getting on in years there is as yet no sign of failing strength. His genius remains ever young and his powers of wedding words to thoughts are unimpaired. The critic then proceeds to make an interesting comparison between Hugo and the English mystic, William Blake, a comparison often made also by Swinburne. There is, says the writer, the same tenderness, excentricity and extravagance. But, he adds, however extravagant Hugo may be he is rational compared with Blake. The grasp of Hugo is more definite and certain than that of Blake. The religious element is present in both; the irreverent element more strongly marked in Hugo than in Blake. The only regret expressed by the writer in the "Saturday Review" is that Hugo sometimes descends to the coarsest buffoonery, though he readily admits at the same time the presence of delicate touches of humour. He selects "Le Poème du Jardin des Plantes" and "L'Épopée du Lion" as being the finest in the volume.

Of the remaining articles devoted to this work we will deal first with those which appeared shortly after the death of Hugo. W.E.Henley (85/3) thinks it a volume of delightful verse and the most human and sincere of Hugo's later works. The "Spectator" (85/4) describes "Choses du Soir", "Laetitia Rorum" and "Jeanne au Pain Sec" as perfect poems. Mrs. Olyphant calls it a delightful volume full of scenes more exquisite than anything we can compare with them. (85/13)
Lady Pollock writes:—

"It is a mixture of smiles and tears, anguish and hope. Infancy has never before been so deliciously described." (85/17)

The "London Quarterly Review" (86/1) is a little less polite. It finds some "turgid stuff" among the many beautiful touches and describes "L'Epopée du Lion" as "a mere nursery tale in bombastic verse". The writer does however add that it contains passages whose sweetness and beauty atone for all shortcomings, and recommends those who want to form a fair idea of Hugo and yet have only patience to read one book, to take up "L'Art d'être Grand-père".

"The most absolutely and adorably beautiful book ever written" is Swinburne's description of the work (86/8). It continues:—

"There is not a page which is not above all possible culogy and thanksgiving. Nothing ever conceived is more perfect than "Un Manque", "La Cieste de Jeanne", "Choses du Soir", "Ce que dit le Public" etc. Every word of the thirty-eight lines which compose "La Cieste de Jeanne" will be treasured tenderly by generations remote from the writer. There is subtle tenderness and union of perfect grace with living passion. Even William Blake and Christina Rossetti are distanced in the race of song on their own
sweet ground. It contains lines which may be taken as tests of the utmost beauty, the extreme perfection, the supreme capacity and charm to which the language of man can attain."

In an earlier article in the "Fortnightly Review" (80/2) Swinburne had described this work as "a gift too precious in its loveliness for estimate of human speech."

Let us look now at the opinions expressed towards the end of the century, when the author of this notable work had been dead several years. J. Pringle Nichol (93/4) writing in 1893, thought that this work surpassed all that Hugo had up to that time achieved in dealing with this subject.

"He studies childhood from without and understands it from within. He can talk of children like a grown-up person who lovingly meditates their mystery. He can talk WITH children like a mother, or like one of themselves."

"There was never such a poet of childhood as Victor Hugo. He can translate their ideas no matter what their mood. He can think as they think." This is the opinion of Esme Stuart as expressed in the "Scottish Review" (96/1). He finds in this work satire, idyll and philosophy and selects for special mention "La Siesta de Jeanne" and the poem on the visit to the Jardin des Plantes.

Yet another critic, William Canton, writing in the
"Sunday Magazine" (99/1) makes special reference to "Le Poème du Jardin des Plantes" and "L'Épopée du Lion".

"The poem of the Zoological Gardens is a charming and piquant piece of work with its play of humour, its satire and its flashes of serious thought."

To illustrate the charming way in which Hugo deals with children, William Canton quotes from Sir Edwin Arnold's able translation of "L'Épopée du Lion", which he calls "Hugo's most magnificent tribute to childhood."
LE PAPE (1873)

Again we find that the "Athenaeum" and the "Saturday Review" are the only two journals which devoted any serious attention to the work of Hugo on its appearance in 1873. The "Athenaeum" (73/4) was struck by its benevolence.

"This work paints Hugo as a good man rather than as a man of genius, and speaks for the quality of his heart rather than for the quality of his intellect."

Later in the same article this poem is described as the "topmost stone of the pedestal on which stands the great Poet of Benevolence." Simplicity is another quality of "Le Pape" which excited the admiration of the critic of the "Athenaeum"

"His simplicity is so great that it makes us half forget what a genius, what a master of poetic art he is."

He is compared with Marlowe for his barbarity but is capable when speaking of children of "beautiful, unmanly in the best sense, womanish and tender lines, such as no one else could have delivered." This critic is less impressed with the apparent profundity of some of Hugo's utterances, and says:

"Just as there is nothing so grotesque but he will offer it as sublime, so there is nothing so hackneyed but he will give it forth
as profound."
The "Athenaeum" finds also a certain lack of appropriateness in the words which Hugo puts into the mouth of some of the creatures which are the fiction of his own imagination."

"Lines which, uttered by the poet in his own person are noble, may become grotesque when put into the mouth of a person born of the poet's imagination, and still more so in the mouth of a person born of the poet's mere fancy, as hero"; and he makes rather sarcastic comments on the utterances of the sleeping Pope. Nevertheless this work is, says the writer, beyond all praise.

The "Saturday Review" (78/5), which finds Hugo's poetical fertility unimpaired by the lapse of years, criticises "Le Pape" for being too declamatory, rhetorical and epigrammatic.

"'Le Pape' is, in general, tiresome and declamatory. The manipulation of thought and phrases is wonderfully skilful, but rhetorical tricks have no bearing on the problems of legislation and government. The reasons for punishment by death or imprisonment are untouched by Hugo's sentimental epigrams."

The writer takes great exception to Hugo's comparison of the hangman to the murderer, and remains unimpressed by Hugo's
theological reasoning which is coloured by sentimental associations of his youth. Notwithstanding all this he asserts that Hugo's poetry still deserves to be studied on its own account and acclaims him the chief of the few living poets of Europe.

Swinburne, writing in the "Fortnightly Review" (86/3) describes the work as "a vision of Christ evoked before Christendom, more sweet than the sweetest music, more bitter than the bitterest tears." In his "Study of Victor Hugo" (86/3) Swinburne speaks of the "sublime simplicity of its conception" and the "sovereign accomplishment of its design." In splendour of changeful music and imperial magnificence of illustration he puts this work beside its successor "La Pitié Suprême", as unsurpassed for ever.

Francis Paul, writing the following year in the "National Review" (87/1) prophesied that his descendants would marvel that "Le Pape" and "L'Art d'être Grand-père" had appeared to Mr. Swinburne as "gifts too precious for estimate of human speech". In this castigation Francis Paul includes also "Marion Delorme", "Ruy Blas", "L'Homme qui rit" and "L'Ane".

W.E. Henley dismisses "Le Pape" summarily. It exemplifies, he says, most of the author's faults and is distinguished by few of his peculiar merits.

Joseph Forster (91/1) in his book "Some French and Spanish men of genius" devotes thirty rambling pages to Hugo
during the course of which he describes "Le Pape" as "one of
the most profoundly beautiful and religious poems ever written.
It embraces the essence of the Christian religion, truth,
justice and mercy." The address which the Pope delivers to the
people as he leaves the Vatican Forster calls "sublime".

J.P.Nichol (93/4) does not think that any of the four
works"Le Pape", "La Pitié Suprême", "Religions et Religion"
and "L'Ané" can be considered fully worthy of Hugo's powers,
but they each, he adds, contain many striking lines.
We must rely for contemporary opinion of this book, which
does not seem to have provoked much comment in the English
press, on the "Athenaeum" (79/1), which has a very high opinion
of the work as a whole, and is particularly impressed by Hugo's
adroit handling of the French Alexandrine, which he has, says
the writer, exalted to a higher place than it ever held before.
The article traces the development of Hugo's power over this
medium from his rather more tentative flights before the
appearance of "Les Châtiments" to its perfection in "La Légende
des Siècles".

"Hugo's earlier Alexandrines, fine as they
are, are of a different stamp. Only during his
exile did he fully discover the secret which,
before him, had been caught only in brief snatches
by Agrippa d'Aubigné and Corneille."

It will perhaps be remembered that the name of d'Aubigné
was mentioned by a writer in the "Saturday Review" in speaking
of "L'Année Terrible".

The critic then continues his eulogy of the technical
dexterity displayed by Hugo in "La Pitié Suprême".

"In hardly any of Hugo's works is the power
more obvious, more sustained. The reader is
transported by the pure magic of poetical art,
apart from assent to or dissent from the opinions so eloquently expressed. Hugo has got out of a language less varied in accent than almost any other European tongue, the maximum of varied harmony and melodious change. Concentration on variety of cadence with comparative indifference to anything but sonority in the rhyme is the secret of the strength of Victor Hugo's Alexandrine."

And again:

"It is such verse as no other living writer can give us and such as, in its own language, no writer living or dead has ever given."

This is high praise indeed.

Swinburne describes the work in the "Fortnightly Review" (80/2) as "the final note of heavenly mercy", and in his "Study of Victor Hugo" (86/3) as "the supreme utterance" surpassing in "the glory of pure pathos" its predecessor "Le Pape".

J.P. Nichol considers that, though it is inspired by excellent humanitarian sentiments "La Pitié Suprême" is one of Hugo's poorest works, an opinion very far removed from that of the "Athenaeum" which is quoted at the beginning of this chapter.
"Were it not for the amazing mastery over the poetic form of the French language", wrote the critic of the "Athenaeum" (80/1) "this book might have been written by a young man of twenty-one, so full is it of naïf enthusiasm, so free from that knowingness and subtlety which comes with middle-age, so alien from that 'philosophic mind' which the years bring." But, says the same critic, if Hugo had learnt nothing he had lost nothing with the passing of years. There is no failing of the fire, though the critic still discerns the same lack of judgment and warns the reader not to mistake a poem full of the loveliest sayings and the most noble aspirations for a valuable treatise on theology and philosophy. He does not concede that Hugo is competent to discuss the difference, which, he asserts, is by no means one of Hugo's own discoveries, between religions and religion, and admonishes the French critics for claiming Hugo to have the faculty of pure thought, a faculty which is possessed he maintains, by only a few of the greatest poets, among whom he mentions Lucretius, Shakespeare and Goethe, "with any of whom, as an intelligence, the most servile admirer would not compare him." "Do the French critics", he asks, "mistake these pretty little sayings for serious thoughts, or for thought at all?"; and adds that the word "Infini" has become intolerable to Hugo's readers and is, like the word "Dieu" merely a
figure of rhetoric and means nothing. He closes the article, however, by expressing his gratification when he turns from Hugo the polemic to Hugo the inspired poet and exponent of noble sentiments and emotions, and claims for him the gift of song unmatched among living men, and the still higher gifts of love, benevolence and sympathy.

Swinburne in the "Fortnightly Review" (80/2) describes the work as "an impeachment of all mere materialism."

"No thinker of the past ever brought sharper weapons from the armory of reason, from the panoply of truth, to bear upon the monstrous absurdities of his day than here has Victor Hugo in our own. Cardinal Newman's "Grammar of Assent" is not a more powerful protest in favour of atheistic nihilism than is this book on behalf of the opposite creed."

It is, says Swinburne, "a loftier liturgy than ever was chanted in any temple or cathedral where man worshipped otherwise than in spirit and in truth."

From any critic other than Swinburne we should register surprise at the description of Hugo as "the most Christ-like of living poets", though much can be found in his works to justify this claim provided that the word "Christ-like" is interpreted in its widest and most embracing sense. In this, his wittiest and keenest impeachment of Christianity he "neither
expresses nor implies", says Swinburne, "any contumelious animadversion on the divine humanity of the man once murdered by the malignity, and ever since maligned by the adoration of priests."

We are not surprised to find in an article published in "The Month" (55/13), a Catholic Magazine and Review, the statement that "Religions et Religion" is a work which Hugo had better never have written, and a condemnation of the work as being conceived in an "uncontrolled spirit of mockery" which is, says the writer, a proof of want of depth and earnestness and a sign of petty vanity. The bitterness evinced in this article at Hugo's non-acceptance of the Catholic faith, and at his burial in the Panthéon, and the narrow religious viewpoint from which it is written, discount any value the criticism might otherwise have. A person who can see in Hugo's honourable interment in the national mausoleum "God hunted out to make room for Hugo's bones" is not one on whose judgment one could feel disposed to rely.

Francis Paul (57/1), who has but a poor opinion of Hugo and thinks that degeneration set in long before Hugo's death, quotes "Religions et Religion" as "one of those monuments of his decadence over which time must draw the veil." As, however, he includes among the works of Hugo which he can scarcely tolerate "Marion Delorme", "Ruy Blas" and "L'Art d'etre Grand-père" we are not surprised that "Religions et Religion" proved a little more than he could swallow.
L'ANE (1880)

The only journal which thought this poem worthy of remark was the "Athenaeum" (80/4) which, though it admits that Hugo's genius is beyond cavil and that the work itself is full of poetry, brilliance, eloquence, tenderness and all kinds of beauty, yet pronounces it a failure on the grounds that the faculties requisite for this kind of satire are quite un-French and are exactly the opposite of those for which Hugo has become justly famous. The critic continues:

"As anything other than a purely local satirist he is perhaps the most unsuccessful writer of satire: not owing to lack of intellectual power and brilliance but because as a satirist he is born out of his time. Scolding has ceased to be a satirical weapon. Outside France the people of the nineteenth century have become too knowing for the ingenuous scoldings of Hugo to rouse in them anything deeper than a smile. Remembering as we do the nobility of the man and the splendour of the poet, it is pathetic to see the earnestness with which he belabours the air with what he takes to be a formidable club, whereas all that the reader can see is a giant brandishing a flail."
The writer attacks the inappropriateness of making the ass the mouthpiece of attack on Kant and the society of Hugo's day.

"The conception of the poem is an illustration of that obtuseness to the ridiculous which makes Hugo a phenomenon in literature. Where is the force of symbolising unsophisticated man by the creature who has been for ages considered the type of stupidity? This is just the kind of mistake into which falls the man who, without the gift of humour, tries to be humourous. Hugo has somehow apprehended the fact that incongruity is at the bottom of humour. Serious and savage invective gains no humour and loses emphasis by being put into the mouth of an ass. Hugo does not understand the requirements of the form of satire he has adopted."
"Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit" attracted more attention in England than any volume of Hugo's poems since "L'Art d'être grand-père". Although Professor Saintsbury in the "Fortnightly Review" and an anonymous writer (judging by the style and sentiments expressed almost certainly G. Barnett Smith) in the "Athenaeum" were the only two English critics who devoted articles to it on its appearance in 1881, it received mention and honourable mention, in most of the general articles written about Hugo from the time of his death until the end of the century.

Mr. George Saintsbury begins his article by stating that a good deal of the poetical work of Hugo issued since the second volume of "La Légende des Siècles" (i.e. since 1877) has been not altogether up to the author's high water-mark. He adds, however, :-

"The present volumes show us yet another spring-tide of poetry."

The professor remarks on the way in which Hugo is able to carry his readers off with him, and on the impetuous indifference with which he attacks every subject, and favourably compares some of the poems in this volume with "Le Chasseur Noir" and "Les Aventuriers de la Mer".

Professor Saintsbury thinks that the first division
(Le Livre Satirique) is by far the weakest because satire is not Hugo's forte owing to his insufficient sense of humour and incapacity to appreciate the proportions of things. Moreover the satirist has no need of the vague and vast, the special regions in which this poet's genius delights to expatiate. He must be cool, dispassionate, and Victor Hugo is never dispassionate; able to guard himself at all points while he attacks others, and Victor Hugo is always laying his flanks open to the archers. The professor regrets that the "greatest poet of the last half-century" should continue to harp on "the trumpery Brussels business, when a few dozen ragamuffins threw a handful of pebbles at his windows"; but even in this, the only unsatisfactory part of the work, he can discern "the splendid and imperishable literary workmanship which makes Victor Hugo what he is".

The second division (Le Livre Dramatique) reveals to Professor Saintsbury a "new facet of that wonderful gem, the literary faculty of Victor Hugo." The English critic greatly admires the exquisite pathos and admirable character-painting contained in the book, and thinks that the scene in which Gallus tries to put Junich off the scent of his real feelings is, for actual dramatic excellence, equal to anything in the literature of the present century.

The third division (Le Livre Lyrique) is, for the Professor, almost all "gold and gems", some of which go back to "Les Feuilles d'Automne", but most of which recall the tone
of "Les Contemplations". He makes special mention, as do others, of "En marchant la nuit dans un bois" and "Chanson d'autrefois" and "Chanson d'aujourd'hui". Of the first he writes:

"The sombre horror of the colouring and the accompanying mystery of verbal music are matched and shaded in a way bewildering."

In the fourth and last division, (Le Livre Épique) Professor Saintsbury selects "La Revolution" as being "equal in execution to anything Hugo has done."

"It is impossible to praise too highly the execution of this somewhat hazardous design. One false step would have changed the level to that of the ridiculous. There is no false step. The natural framework is always changing in detail and yet always maintaining its sombre sublimity. The behaviour and language of the statues is always harmonious; the fantastic and horrible never passes into the merely grotesque. In spite of digressions the reader never loses the sense of the main picture; the sombre night and the ghostly statues still fill the foreground; the adjuncts are complementary not distracting. The author seems, despite the temptations of his grandiose and shadowy subject, to exercise a stricter control over his language than is sometimes the case. He has resisted the temptation into
his proficiency in the 'science des noms' sometimes leads him. On the total impression theory hardly any work of his, and certainly no recent work of any other living poet, comes out so well."

After insisting that it is as a poet that we should enjoy Victor Hugo, and chastising those who too readily accept the challenge of his frequently aggressive matter, Professor Saintsbury rounds off his article with a tribute to Hugo's mastery over the Alexandrine.

"Too few English people give themselves the trouble to master the secret of his style. It is almost inconceivable that any ear should be deaf to the magnificent music of the Alexandrine as here discoursed. I know no book which better illustrates the different capacities of the Alexandrine narrative, descriptive, dramatic and satirical.

The critic of the "Athenaeum" (81/3) also expresses the common opinion that as a satirist Hugo leaves much to be desired. His satires, he says, lack subtlety and delicacy. But no praise is too high for Hugo the lyric poet as exemplified in "Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit".

"In this collection the lyrics are so exquisite that to over-praise them would be an impossibility."

"These four volumes contain poetry which
is essentially lyrical from the first line to the last. Not for a moment does Hugo permit the reader to forget the artist in the subject. In pure lyrics his extraordinary gifts are seen at their best. For rhythmical power Hugo has rarely equalled the poem beginning "Un hymne harmonieux sort des feuilles du tremble". (Here follows the poem in full).

"The quality of these volumes is sufficient for the fame of any lyrical poet. Yet had Hugo ceased to write twenty years before the production of these volumes he would have gone down to posterity as the most splendid lyrical poet of his century."

The epic section of the poem is, says the "Athenaeum", based upon a fanciful instead of an imaginative motif.

"Here is exemplified the most striking infirmity of Hugo's method. While other writers adopt a fanciful motif from an instinctive feeling that they have not sufficient imaginative force to actualize a truly imaginative situation, and require the 'prop of allegory', Victor Hugo, with the most splendid lyrical vision of any man in Europe, is not content to rely upon this vision, but goes out of his way in quest of allegorical motifs such as second rate men can find more readily than he, and for
which he has no genius whatsoever."

The dramatic section, writes the same critic, "lacks that large freedom of natural growth which characterises the work of all great masters of purely representative art,"

"The situations which Hugo considers dramatic are often simply theatrical. There is a considerable amount of that kind of poetry which, in the atmosphere of the theatre, seems genuine but which in the closet seems merely footlight poetry."

The critic grants, however, that this section is full of astonishing beauty, and cites the scene between two lovers which, he says, may rank with anything the world has ever produced in the shape of a love-idyll.

The other two poems singled out by this critic for special mention are the two upon which fell also the choice of Professor Saintsbury, viz. "La Revolution" and "En marchant la nuit dans un Bois". He is deeply impressed by the enthusiasm and noble writing of the poem, an enthusiasm which so often subsides with the subsidence of poetic youth, and the latter he describes as "the crowning triumph of these volumes", and adds:--

"As a rendering through verbal music of the witchery of Nature it stands alone in French poetry and can only be compared with the choicest productions of Coleridge and Shelley."
The "Saturday Review" (85/3) finds nothing Hugo has ever written to excel the first part of "Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit" and quotes the 'marvellous lines' beginning, "Je suis fait d'ombre et de marbre". The "Spectator" (85/4) thinks that in this production Hugo attains the zenith of his poetic power, and that this poem is freer from the extravagances which defaced some of his earlier works, and shows an increase rather than a diminution of power. Amongst the nobler examples the writer quotes "Littérature", in which "a note of hope and joy is struck seldom heard in Hugo's poetry; "Aux Oiseaux et aux Nuages", a "glorious ode", and "Les Deux Trouvailles de Gallus".

In his "Life of Victor Hugo" (85/10) G. Barnett Smith expresses precisely the same opinions in precisely the same words as those quoted above from the "Athenaeum" (81/3). We can only therefore conclude that the article above quoted is from his pen.

James Cappon (85/18) is of the opinion that the satirical Book of "Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit" contains some of Hugo's finest satire on the corrupt elements in contemporary society, although he agrees that for a satirist his perception of character is not sufficiently delicate, nor his analysis able to get at the real structure of the subject. He continues:

"But in a more general sort of satire - satire directed against a whole class of things or persons - such works as "Les Quatre Vents de
l'Esprit" and "Religions et Religion" are unequalled for a certain comprehensive depth of thought and sincerity of speech."

Later in the same book James Cappon, commenting on the development of Hugo's poetical powers with the passing of years, and contrasting it with the degeneration of his prose, quotes the work under consideration as one of the highest achievements of his poetic career.

"While his prose has become more laden with antithesis, climaxes and exaggerations, his poetry, notwithstanding some audacities———has grown steadily in real simplicity and directness till in the works of these later years, e.g. "Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit" and 'Religions et Religion', his line has the quiet and unassuming but profoundly subtle art which we find in an Epistle of Horace."

All four divisions of the work, even the first, the Satirical Book, met with the warm approval of Swinburne (86/8). The "Livre Satirique" is, he says, "full of keen sense, wise wrath, brilliant reason, merciful equity." The lyric book is "a casket of jewels rich enough to outweigh the whole wealth of many a poet." The epic book is "the most tragic and terrible of all existing poems of its kind."

The individual pieces which Swinburne thinks worthy of particular remark coincide, for the most part, with those select-
ed by other critics. They include "Chanson d'autrefois" and "Chanson d'aujourd'hui" which, says Swinburne, are unsurpassed for outward and inward sweetness: "En marchant la nuit dans un bois", a general favourite, which he describes as unequalled for sensible and spiritual terror; and "Exil", a "divine song of yearning".

Cecilia E. Meetkerke, who writes on Victor Hugo's lyrics in the "Gentleman's Magazine" (91/2), is in agreement with those who think that the greatest charm of "Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit" lies in the lyric book, but she finds in the "Livre Épique" the grandest and most characteristic of Hugo's works, "Les Statues" in "La Révolution".

J.P. Nichol (93/4) thinks that the second and third divisions of this work (dramatic and lyric) "hold matter which is worthy of Hugo at its best" and finds particular pleasure in "Jamais elle ne ralîte" (Chanson d'Autrefois) and "Les Deux Trouvailles de Gallus", a dramatic poem "which has a note of genuine emotion and experience rarer with Hugo than with Musset".
"La Fin de Satan" was not published until 1886 though it had been written many years previously, and the only critic to herald its appearance in England was the ever-faithful and indomitable Hugolatre, Swinburne whose article on it, contributed to the "Athenaeum" (86/9), although unstinting in its praise, was a little less laudatory than usual. That the work was not unknown to English critics previous to 1886 is proved by the existence of a reference to "that appalling 'Fin de Satan' " in the "Athenaeum" of March 1877, during the course of an article on the Second Series of "La Légende des Siècles".

Swinburne credits Hugo with having, in "La Fin de Satan" done for the nineteenth century what was done for the thirteenth by the "Divine Comedy", and for the seventeenth by "Paradise Lost". The work is described in the course of the article as "the fullest, clearest, loftiest exposition of his personal faith", the "greatest mythical invention of the greatest of modern poets."

"In sharpness of outline and precision of touch it is Dantesque rather than Miltonic; in sustained magnificence of rolling music, in epic stateliness and splendour of imagery it is Miltonic rather than Dantesque."
Comparisons with Milton and Dante are common in this article.

"The flight of the fallen archangel towards the dying sun through chaos is comparable to Dante."

"Neither Milton nor Byron has equalled the description of the deluge."

"The magnificent poem on the Passion of Christ is the finest part of this supernatural and spiritual epic. The only other poem comparable to it is 'Paradise Regained'."

"For sublimity it cannot be compared with the first and second books of 'Paradise Lost'. The tendency to push invention beyond the limit of permissible possibility disfigures the poem and precludes it from attaining such complete hold on the reader's imaginative belief, such entire command of his deepest and most sympathetic emotion as is achieved by the Satan of Milton."

It will be seen from some of the foregoing quotations that Swinburne did not invariably find this work worthy of his complete commendation. Indeed we are surprised, and secretly gratified to find so ardent an admirer of Hugo and one who hitherto had showered upon the French poet nothing but unmitigated admiration, taking a rather saner and more bridled view. We meet with relief such a passage as the following:--
"The materialism of Hugo's invention is so self-contradictory, so inconsistent in its accumulation of incompatible impossibilities, that we cannot accept it despite its magic harmony and inexhaustible imagery."

But it is only fair to say that, in the end, the balance is always weighted in favour of Hugo, as the following extracts will show.

"His matchless mastery of language and incomparable command of radiant symbol and rolling music make the work acceptable to a western student."

"No panegyric could express the quality of inspiration which animates the description of the outcast fire-worshipper, the magical charm and inexpressible melody of the canticle which follows, the splendid sweetness and simplicity of narrative which paints the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem, the deep and burning pathos of Mary Magdalene's appeal to the Virgin Mother."

Another incident in the poem which commands the complete admiration of Swinburne is that of Barabbas at the foot of the cross.

"In all the world of imaginative creation it would be impossible to find a conception more august, an invention more sublime than that which..."
brings the released Barabbas to the foot of the cross. The imagination is so magnificent that nothing less than Hugo's incomparable power of style could have shaped it into speech and transmused it into song."

And again:─

"There is nothing in the poem to equal in direct intensity of impression the picture of Barabbas at the cross."

And the conclusion of the article:─

"The most incomparable passage is that of the anguish of Barabbas at the foot of the cross of Christ."

Other parts of the work which Swinburne singles out for special comment are the opening picture of the world under Tiberius, which is "as vigorous and as new as though the poet had never done any work of the sort before," the portraits of Herod the Tetrarch and Caiaphas, which "displays the same breadth of handling and precision of touch"; the prayer of thanksgiving of the outcast leper for the happiness of that humankind which has cast him out, an interlude of "profound and exquisite beauty" the divine tenderness and sweetness of which relieves the "wild enormities of the first book"; the verses which describe the character and the works of Christ, remarkable for their "condensed sweetness and exquisite purity"; the magnificent harangue
delivered by the Doctor of the Law, in which "all the centuries of consecrated carnage and sacrificial massacre in honour of the Almighty are invoked"; the soliloquy of the prophetess, remarkable for its "verbal and metrical quality and its superb command of every resource possible to language"; the prelude of the third book, which is "one of the sublimest poems which compose the mythical or symbolic part of the poet's work", every line of which is "laden with significant loveliness and alive with vivid emotion"; and the splendid fragment on the Bastille, a "superb and terrible piece of unfinished workmanship".

The only other reference to this work that we can trace is one in an article on "Victor Hugo's Correspondence" in the "Saturday Review" (93/1) in which the writer describes the work as "spirited", but adds that we could do without it.
As with "La Fin de Satan" Swinburne was the only English critic to devote any time or space to "Toute la Lyre". He devoted two articles to it in the "Fortnightly Review" (89/1) opening with the rather out-warm statement that this work "would of itself suffice to secure for the giver a place among the greatest poets of all nations and all times." He describes Hugo as "the sweetest singer of his age" and as "the most inexhaustible and indefatigable in sympathy with all noble emotion and in the presentation of all chivalrous loyalty." He notes the "peculiar majesty of melody which no other poet can emulate or imitate. Its changes and modulations are infinite. Even when used to repeat or reinforce some lesson there is always some fresh note, some new grace of expression, some new fervour of inspiration in the delivery of the preacher if not in the subject-matter of his gospel." Swinburne goes on to say that it is not the preacher and evangelist who commands our attention throughout, but the great poet, who nevertheless is not only the greatest of elegiac poets but no less great as a didactic poet of the simplest and homeliest morality. Nor is it only the darker side of nature which attracts the imaginative sympathy of the great poet who could translate it into such accurate and tragic harmony of lyrical expression. Swinburne acknowledges also "the comfort, refresh-
ment and reassurance of natural beauty." The tragic visionary of "Les Contemplations" seems to have given way to "the preacher of trust and hope, the apostle of love and charity." The brighter and lighter poems of this "many-voiced and many-coloured book" are not less full of "spontaneous grace and native strength" than those which deal with meditation and mourning. All the joy of a great poet in his art, all the pleasure of a great artist in his work, find utterance here and there in it, as likewise does all the scorn of a great man for pedants, of a good man for unbelievers in goodness."

In the first five sections, with which Swinburne deals in the January number of the "Fortnightly Review" (89/1), the poems which commend themselves most strongly to him are "Gros Temps la Nuit" (Bk.2 No.17) a "superb translation of that peculiar action of the sea, unattainable by any other man." "What poet," asks Swinburne, "of any time or nation has put more passionate and vivid imagery into more perfect metaphor with more sublime fidelity?" The verses on the valley of Cauterets (Bk.3 No.6), the "contemplative sublimity and visionary passion of which is not less remarkable than the solemn sweetness of Tennyson's majestic verses on the same subject; the vision of the dream of the stone lions in the wilderness, the supernatural realism of which surpasses the more imaginative work of Shelley and recalls that of Coleridge; the lyrical elegy on l'ame. de Girardin, remarkable for the magnificent fascination of its
metrical quality; the poem describing the author's visit to Jersey, twenty years after his first arrival there, which stands out as though invested with a special sublimity of pathos: the sonnet "Ave Dea, moriturus te salutat", which may be ranked among the grandest and most graceful in the world; the verses on dawn in a churchyard, which strike an even finer note; and those written in anticipation of death, which have even a deeper and loftier music than these."

Just as the earlier sections of this work contained verse worthy of a place in "L'Art d'être grand-père" so the sixth section has something of "Les Contemplations", but more of "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois". In grace of strength and expression it is worthy of comparison with either. Swinburne is especially moved by "Ce que dit celle qui n'a pas parlé" which he describes as a more absolutely perfect piece of work than was ever wrought by human hand.

"Its tender simplicity, its translucent depth of pathos, its sweetness and truthfulness may be felt on a first reading; but its marvellous quality of execution, the subtle magic of its style, the incomparable and instinctive choice of phrase which makes a miracle of every line, can only be appreciated after longer study."

Swinburne selects also for mention "La Blanche Amiante", "the
last two stanzas of which prove that the mastery of the master’s hand was as infallible in such metrical sports and whimsies as in the Gravest and loftiest forms of verse"; and "Le Prince Fainéant" with its swelling and rolling music. As an exquisite example of the poet’s lighter style Swinburne quotes the poem addressed to a little Chinese beauty.

The poems of childish emotions or experiences, continues Swinburne, belong to a class that is not represented in the poet’s earlier volumes.

"Their mixture of emotion with observation of ideal with physical imagination or experience, seems to challenge contrast rather than comparison with the more seriously contemplative style which denotes an earlier stage in the thoughts of the writer."

Or again:–

"Grace of expression and charm of humour animate the more fanciful poems expressive of boyish impulse or dreamy adolescence."

Swinburne finds in this work, as in the earliest work of Hugo, that same "exuberance of inspiration, inexhaustible and joyous energy of song." He is impressed also by its fidelity to truth, which is not impaired by those touches of romantic or imaginative suggestion which relieve the realism of his studies.

Swinburne finds less to say in favour of the eighth
book, in which, in spite of its splendid and sonorous verses, the uninterrupted inspiration seems sometimes to default, and much of its rhetoric he describes as mere "Gavrocherie". These posthumous poems, he claims, are as inferior to the average of "L'Année Terrible" as those seem to "Les Châtiments", and he winds up the article by a paragraph which tones down considerably the praise lavished upon the work elsewhere.

"Hugo's reputation would not have suffered by the snapping of this additional 'string of brass'. There is too much jingoism in this volume - too much belief in the sacredness of things that are an advantage and convenience to France - too much ludicrous incompatibility of brotherly unselfishness and glorious evidence of disloyalty and greed - too many illogical pretentions about equality (on the assumption that no nation may claim equality with France)."

Notwithstanding all these weaknesses and shortcomings the book is, says Swinburne, "an addition of indisputable importance to creative literature".

A further series of poems entitled "Toute la Lyre" was published in 1893, and again we have to rely solely on Swinburne for our impressions. We find that he has returned to the panegyric which a work of Hugo inevitably draws from him. He apologises for the monotony of his repeated praises but
declares his inability to do otherwise. He finds the same
sovereign hand on every page.

"The majestic 'Vision of the Mountains'
might have found a place in the last series of
the 'Légende des siècles'. The landscapes in the
second section must be hung beside those which
were first exhibited in the youth and early man-

hood of the artist."

All the poems are full of "plastic life, chapeliness and colour".

Various moods find a place there, tender and severe, meditative
and passionate, moods of indignation and aspiration, of charity
and pity. The polemical section is a great improve-

ment on that

of the first series of this magnificent poetic miscellany which
was hardly up to the mark set by Hugo in his earlier works on
the same line. "The editors", says Swinburne, "have kept the
best wine for the last course" for "the noblest poems among
those headed 'Les Années Fânées' (1852-70) are worthy of a
place in the volume of 1853." Swinburne quotes the "Death of
St. Arnaud" with its matchless picture of a fleet under sail
for battle; the "massacre of Mentana" with its sublime picture
of dawn; and the closing poem which is beyond and above all
commentary.

"The passionate splendour of contemplative
indignation makes every stanza a living and
vibrating flame of persistent music."
The 564 deathless lines of five syllables - a metrical form far removed from ordinary association with anything serious or sublime - reveal "a sublime liberty of expression, and a supreme perfection of utterance."

The only other reference to "Toute la Lyre" is to be found in the "Saturday Review" (93/1) which contained in it nothing but the old chords, and some of them very strained.
In this work, says Swinburne in the "Fortnightly Review" (92/1), we have the "intellect of a sovereign thinker rather displayed than disguised by the genius of a supreme poet."

Not for the first time in the criticism of Hugo by Swinburne do we find comparisons between Tennyson and Blake on the one hand and Hugo on the other. This work reminds Swinburne of Tennyson because of certain "coincidences of thought and expression", and of Blake because of "the passionate utterances of horror and hope, of anguish and faith", and he adds:--

"To Blake as to Hugo, these problems were insoluble except by faith."

J.P. Nichol (93/4) describes the work as the "most powerful of Hugo's lengthier attempts to express in verse the philosophical faith of his mature and declining years", and finds in it, together with a wealth of versification and imagery, a great deal of confusing symbolism.

The "Saturday Review" (98/1) finds "Dieu" "hardly convincing".