HENRI FRÉDÉRIC AMIEL

AMIEL'S JOURNAL

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Amiel's Journal: The Journal Intime of Henri-Frédéric Amiel:

Содержание

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In this second edition of the English translation of Amiel's "Journal Intime," I have inserted a good many new passages, taken from the last French edition (*Cinquiéme édition, revue et augmentée*.) But I have not translated all the fresh material to be found in that edition nor have I omitted certain sections of the Journal which in these two recent volumes have been omitted by their French editors. It would be of no interest to give my reasons for these variations at length. They depend upon certain differences between the English and the French public, which are more readily felt than explained. Some of the passages which I have left untranslated seemed to me to overweight the introspective side of the Journal, already so full—to overweight it, at any rate, for English readers. Others which I have retained, though they often relate to local names and books, more or less

unfamiliar to the general public, yet seemed to me valuable as supplying some of that surrounding detail, that setting, which helps one to understand a life. Besides, we English are in many ways more akin to Protestant and Puritan Geneva than the French readers to whom the original Journal primarily addresses itself, and some of the entries I have kept have probably, by the nature of things, more savor for us than for them.

M. A. W.

PREFACE

This translation of Amiel's "Journal Intime" is primarily addressed to those whose knowledge of French, while it may be sufficient to carry them with more or less complete understanding through a novel or a newspaper, is yet not enough to allow them to understand and appreciate a book containing subtle and complicated forms of expression. I believe there are many such to be found among the reading public, and among those who would naturally take a strong interest in such a life and mind as Amiel's, were it not for the barrier of language. It is, at any rate, in the hope that a certain number of additional readers may be thereby attracted to the "Journal Intime" that this translation of it has been undertaken.

The difficulties of the translation have been sometimes considerable, owing, first of all, to those elliptical modes of speech which a man naturally employs when he is writing for himself and not for the public, but which a translator at all events is bound in some degree to expand. Every here and there Amiel expresses himself in a kind of shorthand, perfectly intelligible to a Frenchman, but for which an English equivalent, at once terse and clear, is hard to find. Another difficulty has been his constant use of a technical philosophical language, which, according to his French critics, is not French—even philosophical French—but German. Very often it has been impossible to give any other than

a literal rendering of such passages, if the thought of the original was to be preserved; but in those cases where a choice was open to me, I have preferred the more literary to the more technical expression; and I have been encouraged to do so by the fact that Amiel, when he came to prepare for publication a certain number of "Pensées," extracted from the Journal, and printed at the end of a volume of poems published in 1853, frequently softened his phrases, so that sentences which survive in the Journal in a more technical form are to be found in a more literary form in the "Grains de Mil."

In two or three cases—not more, I think—I have allowed myself to transpose a sentence bodily, and in a few instances I have added some explanatory words to the text, which wherever the addition was of any importance, are indicated by square brackets.

My warmest thanks are due to my friend and critic, M. Edmond Scherer, from whose valuable and interesting study, prefixed to the French Journal, as well as from certain materials in his possession which he has very kindly allowed me to make use of, I have drawn by far the greater part of the biographical material embodied in the Introduction. M. Scherer has also given me help and advice through the whole process of translation —advice which his scholarly knowledge of English has made especially worth having.

In the translation of the more technical philosophical passages I have been greatly helped by another friend, Mr. Bernard

Bosanquet, Fellow of University College, Oxford, the translator of Lotze, of whose care and pains in the matter I cherish a grateful remembrance.

But with all the help that has been so freely given me, not only by these friends but by others, I confide the little book to the public with many a misgiving! May it at least win a few more friends and readers here and there for one who lived alone, and died sadly persuaded that his life had been a barren mistake; whereas, all the while—such is the irony of things—he had been in reality working out the mission assigned him in the spiritual economy, and faithfully obeying the secret mandate which had impressed itself upon his youthful consciousness: "*Let the living live; and you, gather together your thoughts, leave behind you a legacy of feeling and ideas; you will be most useful so.*"

MARY A. WARD.

INTRODUCTION

It was in the last days of December, 1882, that the first volume of Henri Frédéric Amiel's "Journal Intime" was published at Geneva. The book, of which the general literary world knew nothing prior to its appearance, contained a long and remarkable Introduction from the pen of M. Edmond Scherer, the well-known French critic, who had been for many years one of Amiel's most valued friends, and it was prefaced also by a little *Avertissement*, in which the "Editors"—that is to say, the Genevese friends to whom the care and publication of the Journal had been in the first instance entrusted—described in a few reserved and sober words the genesis and objects of the publication. Some thousands of sheets of Journal, covering a period of more than thirty years, had come into the hands of Amiel's literary heirs. "They were written," said the *Avertissement*, "with several ends in view. Amiel recorded in them his various occupations, and the incidents of each day. He preserved in them his psychological observations, and the impressions produced on him by books. But his Journal was, above all, the confidant of his most private and intimate thoughts; a means whereby the thinker became conscious of his own inner life; a safe shelter wherein his questionings of fate and the future, the voice of grief, of self-examination and confession, the soul's cry for inward peace, might make themselves freely heard.

"… In the directions concerning his papers which he left behind him, Amiel expressed the wish that his literary executors should publish those parts of the Journal which might seem to them to possess either interest as thought or value as experience. The publication of this volume is the fulfillment of this desire. The reader will find in it, *not a volume of Memoirs*, but the confidences of a solitary thinker, the meditations of a philosopher for whom the things of the soul were the sovereign realities of existence."

Thus modestly announced, the little volume made its quiet *début*. It contained nothing, or almost nothing, of ordinary biographical material. M. Scherer's Introduction supplied such facts as were absolutely necessary to the understanding of Amiel's intellectual history, but nothing more. Everything of a local or private character that could be excluded was excluded. The object of the editors in their choice of passages for publication was declared to be simply "the reproduction of the moral and intellectual physiognomy of their friend," while M. Scherer expressly disclaimed any biographical intentions, and limited his Introduction as far as possible to "a study of the character and thought of Amiel." The contents of the volume, then, were purely literary and philosophical; its prevailing tone was a tone of introspection, and the public which can admit the claims and overlook the inherent defects of introspective literature has always been a small one. The writer of the Journal had been during his lifetime wholly unknown to the general

European public. In Geneva itself he had been commonly regarded as a man who had signally disappointed the hopes and expectations of his friends, whose reserve and indecision of character had in many respects spoiled his life, and alienated the society around him; while his professional lectures were generally pronounced dry and unattractive, and the few volumes of poems which represented almost his only contributions to literature had nowhere met with any real cordiality of reception. Those concerned, therefore, in the publication of the first volume of the Journal can hardly have had much expectation of a wide success. Geneva is not a favorable starting-point for a French book, and it may well have seemed that not even the support of M. Scherer's name would be likely to carry the volume beyond a small local circle.

But "wisdom is justified of her children!" It is now nearly three years since the first volume of the "Journal Intime" appeared; the impression made by it was deepened and extended by the publication of the second volume in 1884; and it is now not too much to say that this remarkable record of a life has made its way to what promises to be a permanent place in literature. Among those who think and read it is beginning to be generally recognized that another book has been added to the books which live—not to those, perhaps, which live in the public view, much discussed, much praised, the objects of feeling and of struggle, but to those in which a germ of permanent life has been deposited silently, almost secretly, which compel no homage and

excite no rivalry, and which owe the place that the world half-unconsciously yields to them to nothing but that indestructible sympathy of man with man, that eternal answering of feeling to feeling, which is one of the great principles, perhaps the greatest principle, at the root of literature. M. Scherer naturally was the first among the recognized guides of opinion to attempt the placing of his friend's Journal. "The man who, during his lifetime, was incapable of giving us any deliberate or conscious work worthy of his powers, has now left us, after his death, a book which will not die. For the secret of Amiel's malady is sublime, and the expression of it wonderful." So ran one of the last paragraphs of the Introduction, and one may see in the sentences another instance of that courage, that reasoned rashness, which distinguishes the good from the mediocre critic. For it is as true now as it was in the days when La Bruyère rated the critics of his time for their incapacity to praise, and praise at once, that "the surest test of a man's critical power is his judgment of contemporaries." M. Renan, I think, with that exquisite literary sense of his, was the next among the authorities to mention Amiel's name with the emphasis it deserved. He quoted a passage from the Journal in his Preface to the "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse," describing it as the saying "*d'un penseur distingué, M. Amiel de Genève*." Since then M. Renan has devoted two curious articles to the completed Journal in the *Journal des Desbats*. The first object of these reviews, no doubt, was not so much the critical appreciation

of Amiel as the development of certain paradoxes which have been haunting various corners of M. Renan's mind for several years past, and to which it is to be hoped he has now given expression with sufficient emphasis and *brusquerie* to satisfy even his passion for intellectual adventure. Still, the rank of the book was fully recognized, and the first article especially contained some remarkable criticisms, to which we shall find occasion to recur. "In these two volumes of *pensées*," said M. Renan, "without any sacrifice of truth to artistic effect, we have both the perfect mirror of a modern mind of the best type, matured by the best modern culture, and also a striking picture of the sufferings which beset the sterility of genius. These two volumes may certainly be reckoned among the most interesting philosophical writings which have appeared of late years."

M. Caro's article on the first volume of the Journal, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for February, 1883, may perhaps count as the first introduction of the book to the general cultivated public. He gave a careful analysis of the first half of the Journal —resumed eighteen months later in the same periodical on the appearance of the second volume—and, while protesting against what he conceived to be the general tendency and effect of Amiel's mental story, he showed himself fully conscious of the rare and delicate qualities of the new writer. "*La rêverie a réussi à notre auteur*," he says, a little reluctantly—for M. Caro has his doubts as to the legitimacy of *rêverie*; "*Il en aufait une oeuvure qui restera*." The same final judgment, accompanied by a very

different series of comments, was pronounced on the Journal a year later by M. Paul Bourget, a young and rising writer, whose article is perhaps chiefly interesting as showing the kind of effect produced by Amiel's thought on minds of a type essentially alien from his own. There is a leaven of something positive and austere, of something which, for want of a better name, one calls Puritanism, in Amiel, which escapes the author of "Une Cruelle Enigme." But whether he has understood Amiel or no, M. Bourget is fully alive to the mark which the Journal is likely to make among modern records of mental history. He, too, insists that the book is already famous and will remain so; in the first place, because of its inexorable realism and sincerity; in the second, because it is the most perfect example available of a certain variety of the modern mind.

Among ourselves, although the Journal has attracted the attention of all who keep a vigilant eye on the progress of foreign literature, and although one or two appreciative articles have appeared on it in the magazines, the book has still to become generally known. One remarkable English testimony to it, however, must be quoted. Six months after the publication of the first volume, the late Mark Pattison, who since then has himself bequeathed to literature a strange and memorable fragment of autobiography, addressed a letter to M. Scherer as the editor of the "Journal Intime," which M. Scherer has since published, nearly a year after the death of the writer. The words have a strong and melancholy interest for all who knew Mark

Pattison; and they certainly deserve a place in any attempt to estimate the impression already made on contemporary thought by the "Journal Intime."

"I wish to convey to you, sir," writes the rector of Lincoln, "the thanks of one at least of the public for giving the light to this precious record of a unique experience. I say unique, but I can vouch that there is in existence at least one other soul which has lived through the same struggles, mental and moral, as Amiel. In your pathetic description of the *volonté qui voudrait vouloir, mais impuissante à se fournir à elle-même des motifs*—of the repugnance for all action—the soul petrified by the sentiment of the infinite, in all this I recognize myself. *Celui qui a déchiffré le secret de la vie finie, qui en a lu le mot, est sorti du monde des vivants, il est mort de fait*. I can feel forcibly the truth of this, as it applies to myself!

"It is not, however, with the view of thrusting my egotism upon you that I have ventured upon addressing you. As I cannot suppose that so peculiar a psychological revelation will enjoy a wide popularity, I think it a duty to the editor to assure him that there are persons in the world whose souls respond, in the depths of their inmost nature, to the cry of anguish which makes itself heard in the pages of these remarkable confessions."

So much for the place which the Journal—the fruit of so many years of painful thought and disappointed effort; seems to be at last securing for its author among those contemporaries who in his lifetime knew nothing of him. It is a natural consequence of

the success of the book that the more it penetrates, the greater desire there is to know something more than its original editors and M. Scherer have yet told us about the personal history of the man who wrote it—about his education, his habits, and his friends. Perhaps some day this wish may find its satisfaction. It is an innocent one, and the public may even be said to have a kind of right to know as much as can be told it of the personalities which move and stir it. At present the biographical material available is extremely scanty, and if it were not for the kindness of M. Scherer, who has allowed the present writer access to certain manuscript material in his possession, even the sketch which follows, vague and imperfect as it necessarily is, would have been impossible.

[Footnote: Four or five articles on the subject of Amiel's life have been contributed to the *Révue Internationale* by Mdlle. Berthe Vadier during the passage of the present book through the press. My knowledge of them, however, came too late to enable me to make use of them for the purposes of the present introduction.]

Henri Frédéric Amiel was born at Geneva in September, 1821. He belonged to one of the emigrant families, of which a more or less steady supply had enriched the little republic during the three centuries following the Reformation. Amiel's ancestors, like those of Sismondi, left Languedoc for Geneva after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. His father must have been a youth at the time when Geneva passed into the power

of the French republic, and would seem to have married and settled in the halcyon days following the restoration of Genevese independence in 1814. Amiel was born when the prosperity of Geneva was at its height, when the little state was administered by men of European reputation, and Genevese society had power to attract distinguished visitors and admirers from all parts. The veteran Bonstetten, who had been the friend of Gray and the associate of Voltaire, was still talking and enjoying life in his *appartement* overlooking the woods of La Bâtie. Rossi and Sismondi were busy lecturing to the Genevese youth, or taking part in Genevese legislation; an active scientific group, headed by the Pictets, De la Rive, and the botanist Auguste-Pyrame de Candolle, kept the country abreast of European thought and speculation, while the mixed nationality of the place—the blending in it of French keenness with Protestant enthusiasms and Protestant solidity—was beginning to find inimitable and characteristic expression in the stories of Töpffer. The country was governed by an aristocracy, which was not so much an aristocracy of birth as one of merit and intellect, and the moderate constitutional ideas which represented the Liberalism of the post-Waterloo period were nowhere more warmly embraced or more intelligently carried out than in Geneva.

During the years, however, which immediately followed Amiel's birth, some signs of decadence began to be visible in this brilliant Genevese society. The generation which had waited for,

prepared, and controlled, the Restoration of 1814, was falling into the background, and the younger generation, with all its respectability, wanted energy, above all, wanted leaders. The revolutionary forces in the state, which had made themselves violently felt during the civil turmoils of the period preceding the assembly of the French States General, and had afterward produced the miniature Terror which forced Sismondi into exile, had been for awhile laid to sleep by the events of 1814. But the slumber was a short one at Geneva as elsewhere, and when Rossi quitted the republic for France in 1833, he did so with a mind full of misgivings as to the political future of the little state which had given him—an exile and a Catholic—so generous a welcome in 1819. The ideas of 1830 were shaking the fabric and disturbing the equilibrium of the Swiss Confederation as a whole, and of many of the cantons composing it. Geneva was still apparently tranquil while her neighbors were disturbed, but no one looking back on the history of the republic, and able to measure the strength of the Radical force in Europe after the fall of Charles X., could have felt much doubt but that a few more years would bring Geneva also into the whirlpool of political change.

In the same year—1833—that M. Rossi had left Geneva, Henri Frédéric Amiel, at twelve years old, was left orphaned of both his parents. They had died comparatively young—his mother was only just over thirty, and his father cannot have been much older. On the death of the mother the little family was broken up, the boy passing into the care of one relative, his

two sisters into that of another. Certain notes in M. Scherer's possession throw a little light here and there upon a childhood and youth which must necessarily have been a little bare and forlorn. They show us a sensitive, impressionable boy, of health rather delicate than robust, already disposed to a more or less melancholy and dreamy view of life, and showing a deep interest in those religious problems and ideas in which the air of Geneva has been steeped since the days of Calvin. The religious teaching which a Genevese lad undergoes prior to his admission to full church membership, made a deep impression on him, and certain mystical elements of character, which remained strong in him to the end, showed themselves very early. At the college or public school of Geneva, and at the académie, he would seem to have done only moderately as far as prizes and honors were concerned. We are told, however, that he read enormously, and that he was, generally speaking, inclined rather to make friends with men older than himself than with his contemporaries. He fell specially under the influence of Adolphe Pictet, a brilliant philologist and man of letters belonging to a well-known Genevese family, and in later life he was able, while reviewing one of M. Pictet's books, to give grateful expression to his sense of obligation.

Writing in 1856 he describes the effect produced in Geneva by M. Pictet's Lectures on Aesthetics in 1840—the first ever delivered in a town in which the Beautiful had been for centuries regarded as the rival and enemy of the True. "He who is now writing," says Amiel, "was then among M. Pictet's youngest

hearers. Since then twenty experiences of the same kind have followed each other in his intellectual experience, yet none has effaced the deep impression made upon him by these lectures. Coming as they did at a favorable moment, and answering many a positive question and many a vague aspiration of youth, they exercised a decisive influence over his thought; they were to him an important step in that continuous initiation which we call life, they filled him with fresh intuitions, they brought near to him the horizons of his dreams. And, as always happens with a first-rate man, what struck him even more than the teaching was the teacher. So that this memory of 1840 is still dear and precious to him, and for this double service, which is not of the kind one forgets, the student of those days delights in expressing to the professor of 1840 his sincere and filial gratitude."

Amiel's first literary production, or practically his first, seems to have been the result partly of these lectures, and partly of a visit to Italy which began in November, 1841. In 1842, a year which was spent entirely in Italy and Sicily, he contributed three articles on M. Rio's book, "L'Art Chrétien," to the *Bibliothèque Universelle de Genève*. We see in them the young student conscientiously writing his first review—writing it at inordinate length, as young reviewers are apt to do, and treating the subject *ab ovo* in a grave, pontifical way, which is a little naïve and inexperienced indeed, but still promising, as all seriousness of work and purpose is promising. All that is individual in it is first of all the strong Christian feeling

which much of it shows, and secondly, the tone of melancholy which already makes itself felt here and there, especially in one rather remarkable passage. As to the Christian feeling, we find M. Rio described as belonging to "that noble school of men who are striving to rekindle the dead beliefs of France, to rescue Frenchmen from the camp of materialistic or pantheistic ideas, and rally them round that Christian banner which is the banner of true progress and true civilization." The Renaissance is treated as a disastrous but inevitable crisis, in which the idealism of the Middle Ages was dethroned by the naturalism of modern times—"The Renaissance perhaps robbed us of more than it gave us"—and so on. The tone of criticism is instructive enough to the student of Amiel's mind, but the product itself has no particular savor of its own. The occasional note of depression and discouragement, however, is a different thing; here, for those who know the "Journal Intime," there is already something characteristic, something which foretells the future. For instance, after dwelling with evident zest on the nature of the metaphysical problems lying at the root of art in general, and Christian art in particular, the writer goes on to set the difficulty of M. Rio's task against its attractiveness, to insist on the intricacy of the investigations involved, and on the impossibility of making the two instruments on which their success depends—the imaginative and the analytical faculty—work harmoniously and effectively together. And supposing the goal achieved, supposing a man by insight and patience has

succeeded in forcing his way farther than any previous explorer into the recesses of the Beautiful or the True, there still remains the enormous, the insuperable difficulty of expression, of fit and adequate communication from mind to mind; there still remains the question whether, after all, "he who discovers a new world in the depths of the invisible would not do wisely to plant on it a flag known to himself alone, and, like Achilles, 'devour his heart in secret;' whether the greatest problems which have ever been guessed on earth had not better have remained buried in the brain which had found the key to them, and whether the deepest thinkers—those whose hand has been boldest in drawing aside the veil, and their eye keenest in fathoming the mysteries beyond it—had not better, like the prophetess of Ilion, have kept for heaven, and heaven only, secrets and mysteries which human tongue cannot truly express, nor human intelligence conceive."

Curious words for a beginner of twenty-one! There is a touch, no doubt, of youth and fatuity in the passage; one feels how much the vague sonorous phrases have pleased the writer's immature literary sense; but there is something else too—there is a breath of that same speculative passion which burns in the Journal, and one hears, as it were, the first accents of a melancholy, the first expression of a mood of mind, which became in after years the fixed characteristic of the writer. "At twenty he was already proud, timid, and melancholy," writes an old friend; and a little farther on, "Discouragement took possession of him *very early*."

However, in spite of this inbred tendency, which was probably

hereditary and inevitable, the years which followed these articles, from 1842 to Christmas, 1848, were years of happiness and steady intellectual expansion. They were Amiel's *Wanderjahre*, spent in a free, wandering student life, which left deep marks on his intellectual development. During four years, from 1844 to 1848, his headquarters were at Berlin; but every vacation saw him exploring some new country or fresh intellectual center—Scandinavia in 1845, Holland in 1846, Vienna, Munich, and Tübingen in 1848, while Paris had already attracted him in 1841, and he was to make acquaintance with London ten years later, in 1851. No circumstances could have been more favorable, one would have thought, to the development of such a nature. With his extraordinary power of "throwing himself into the object"—of effacing himself and his own personality in the presence of the thing to be understood and absorbed—he must have passed these years of travel and acquisition in a state of continuous intellectual energy and excitement. It is in no spirit of conceit that he says in 1857, comparing himself with Maine de Biran, "This nature is, as it were, only one of the men which exist in me. My horizon is vaster; I have seen much more of men, things, countries, peoples, books; I have a greater mass of experiences." This fact, indeed, of a wide and varied personal experience, must never be forgotten in any critical estimate of Amiel as a man or writer. We may so easily conceive him as a sedentary professor, with the ordinary professorial knowledge, or rather ignorance, of men and the world, falling into introspection under the pressure of

circumstance, and for want, as it were, of something else to think about. Not at all. The man who has left us these microscopic analyses of his own moods and feelings, had penetrated more or less into the social and intellectual life of half a dozen European countries, and was familiar not only with the books, but, to a large extent also, with the men of his generation. The meditative and introspective gift was in him, not the product, but the mistress of circumstance. It took from the outer world what that world had to give, and then made the stuff so gained subservient to its own ends.

Of these years of travel, however, the four years spent at Berlin were by far the most important. "It was at Heidelberg and Berlin," says M. Scherer, "that the world of science and speculation first opened on the dazzled eyes of the young man. He was accustomed to speak of his four years at Berlin as 'his intellectual phase,' and one felt that he inclined to regard them as the happiest period of his life. The spell which Berlin laid upon him lasted long." Probably his happiness in Germany was partly owing to a sense of reaction against Geneva. There are signs that he had felt himself somewhat isolated at school and college, and that in the German world his special individuality, with its dreaminess and its melancholy, found congenial surroundings far more readily than had been the case in the drier and harsher atmosphere of the Protestant Rome. However this may be, it is certain that German thought took possession of him, that he became steeped not only in German methods of speculation, but

in German modes of expression, in German forms of sentiment, which clung to him through life, and vitally affected both his opinions and his style. M. Renan and M. Bourget shake their heads over the Germanisms, which, according to the latter, give a certain "barbarous" air to many passages of the Journal. But both admit that Amiel's individuality owes a great part of its penetrating force to that intermingling of German with French elements, of which there are such abundant traces in the "Journal Intime." Amiel, in fact, is one more typical product of a movement which is certainly of enormous importance in the history of modern thought, even though we may not be prepared to assent to all the sweeping terms in which a writer like M. Taine describes it. "From 1780 to 1830," says M. Taine, "Germany produced all the ideas of our historical age, and during another half-century, perhaps another century, *notre grande affaire sera de les repenser*." He is inclined to compare the influence of German ideas on the modern world to the ferment of the Renaissance. No spiritual force "more original, more universal, more fruitful in consequences of every sort and bearing, more capable of transforming and remaking everything presented to it, has arisen during the last three hundred years. Like the spirit of the Renaissance and of the classical age, it attracts into its orbit all the great works of contemporary intelligence." Quinet, pursuing a somewhat different line of thought, regards the worship of German ideas inaugurated in France by Madame de Staël as the natural result of reaction from the eighteenth

century and all its ways. “German systems, German hypotheses, beliefs, and poetry, all were eagerly welcomed as a cure for hearts crushed by the mockery of Candide and the materialism of the Revolution.... Under the Restoration France continued to study German philosophy and poetry with profound veneration and submission. We imitated, translated, compiled, and then again we compiled, translated, imitated.” The importance of the part played by German influence in French Romanticism has indeed been much disputed, but the debt of French metaphysics, French philology, and French historical study, to German methods and German research during the last half-century is beyond dispute. And the movement to-day is as strong as ever. A modern critic like M. Darmstetter regards it as a misfortune that the artificial stimulus given by the war to the study of German has, to some extent, checked the study of English in France. He thinks that the French have more to gain from our literature—taking literature in its general and popular sense—than from German literature. But he raises no question as to the inevitable subjection of the French to the German mind in matters of exact thought and knowledge. “To study philology, mythology, history, without reading German,” he is as ready to confess as any one else, “is to condemn one’s self to remain in every department twenty years behind the progress of science.”

Of this great movement, already so productive, Amiel is then a fresh and remarkable instance. Having caught from the Germans not only their love of exact knowledge but also their love of

vast horizons, their insatiable curiosity as to the whence and whither of all things, their sense of mystery and immensity in the universe, he then brings those elements in him which belong to his French inheritance—and something individual besides, which is not French but Genevese—to bear on his new acquisitions, and the result is of the highest literary interest and value. Not that he succeeds altogether in the task of fusion. For one who was to write and think in French, he was perhaps too long in Germany; he had drunk too deeply of German thought; he had been too much dazzled by the spectacle of Berlin and its imposing intellectual activities. "As to his *literary* talent," says M. Scherer, after dwelling on the rapid growth of his intellectual powers under German influence, "the profit which Amiel derived from his stay at Berlin is more doubtful. Too long contact with the German mind had led to the development in him of certain strangenesses of style which he had afterward to get rid of, and even perhaps of some habits of thought which he afterward felt the need of checking and correcting." This is very true. Amiel is no doubt often guilty, as M. Caro puts it, of attempts "to write German in French," and there are in his thought itself veins of mysticism, elements of *Schwärmerei*, here and there, of which a good deal must be laid to the account of his German training.

M. Renan regrets that after Geneva and after Berlin he never came to Paris. Paris, he thinks, would have counteracted the Hegelian influences brought to hear upon him at Berlin,

[Footnote: See a not, however, on the subject of Amiel's philosophical relationships, printed as an Appendix to the present volume.] would have taught him cheerfulness, and taught him also the art of writing, not beautiful fragments, but a book. Possibly—but how much we should have lost! Instead of the Amiel we know, we should have had one accomplished French critic the more. Instead of the spiritual drama of the "Journal Intime," some further additions to French *belles lettres*; instead of something to love, something to admire! No, there is no wishing the German element in Amiel away. Its invading, troubling effect upon his thought and temperament goes far to explain the interest and suggestiveness of his mental history. The language he speaks is the language of that French criticism which—we have Sainte-Beuve's authority for it—is best described by the motto of Montaigne, "*Un peu de chaque chose et rien de l'ensemble, à la française*," and the thought he tries to express in it is thought torn and strained by the constant effort to reach the All, the totality of things: "What I desire is the sum of all desires, and what I seek to know is the sum of all different kinds of knowledge. Always the complete, the absolute, the *teres atque rotundum*." And it was this antagonism, or rather this fusion of traditions in him, which went far to make him original, which opened to him, that is to say, so many new lights on old paths, and stirred in him such capacities of fresh and individual expression.

We have been carried forward, however, a little too far by this general discussion of Amiel's debts to Germany. Let

us take up the biographical thread again. In 1848 his Berlin apprenticeship came to an end, and he returned to Geneva. "How many places, how many impressions, observations, thoughts —how many forms of men and things—have passed before me and in me since April, 1843," he writes in the Journal, two or three months after his return. "The last seven years have been the most important of my life; they have been the novitiate of my intelligence, the initiation of my being into being." The first literary evidence of his matured powers is to be found in two extremely interesting papers on Berlin, which he contributed to the *Bibliothèque Universelle* in 1848, apparently just before he left Germany. Here for the first time we have the Amiel of the "Journal Intime." The young man who five years before had written his painstaking review of M. Rio is now in his turn a master. He speaks with dignity and authority, he has a graphic, vigorous prose at command, the form of expression is condensed and epigrammatic, and there is a mixture of enthusiasm and criticism in his description of the powerful intellectual machine then working in the Prussian capital which represents a permanent note of character, a lasting attitude of mind. A great deal, of course, in the two papers is technical and statistic, but what there is of general comment and criticism is so good that one is tempted to make some melancholy comparisons between them and another article in the *Bibliothèque*, that on Adolphe Pictet, written in 1856, and from which we have already quoted. In 1848 Amiel was for awhile

master of his powers and his knowledge; no fatal divorce had yet taken place in him between the accumulating and producing faculties; he writes readily even for the public, without labor, without affectations. Eight years later the reflective faculty has outgrown his control; composition, which represents the practical side of the intellectual life, has become difficult and painful to him, and he has developed what he himself calls "a wavering manner, born of doubt and scruple."

How few could have foreseen the failure in public and practical life which lay before him at the moment of his reappearance at Geneva in 1848! "My first meeting with him in 1849 is still vividly present to me," says M. Scherer. "He was twenty-eight, and he had just come from Germany laden with science, but he wore his knowledge lightly, his looks were attractive, his conversation animated, and no affectation spoiled the favorable impression he made on the bystander—the whole effect, indeed, was of something brilliant and striking. In his young alertness Amiel seemed to be entering upon life as a conqueror; one would have said the future was all his own."

His return, moreover, was marked by a success which seemed to secure him at once an important position in his native town. After a public competition he was appointed, in 1849, professor of esthetics and French literature at the Academy of Geneva, a post which he held for four years, exchanging it for the professorship of moral philosophy in 1854. Thus at twenty-eight, without any struggle to succeed, he had gained, it would

have seemed, that safe foothold in life which should be all the philosopher or the critic wants to secure the full and fruitful development of his gifts. Unfortunately the appointment, instead of the foundation and support, was to be the stumbling block of his career. Geneva at the time was in a state of social and political ferment. After a long struggle, beginning with the revolutionary outbreak of November, 1841, the Radical party, led by James Fazy, had succeeded in ousting the Conservatives —that is to say, the governing class, which had ruled the republic since the Restoration—from power. And with the advent of the democratic constitution of 1846, and the exclusion of the old Genevese families from the administration they had so long monopolized, a number of subsidiary changes were effected, not less important to the ultimate success of Radicalism than the change in political machinery introduced by the new constitution. Among them was the disappearance of almost the whole existing staff of the academy, then and now the center of Genevese education, and up to 1847 the stronghold of the moderate ideas of 1814, followed by the appointment of new men less likely to hamper the Radical order of things.

Of these new men Amiel was one. He had been absent from Geneva during the years of conflict which had preceded Fazy's triumph; he seems to have had no family or party connections with the leaders of the defeated side, and as M. Scherer points out, he could accept a non-political post at the hands of the new government, two years after the violent measures which had

marked its accession, without breaking any pledges or sacrificing any convictions. But none the less the step was a fatal one. M. Renan is so far in the right. If any timely friend had at that moment succeeded in tempting Amiel to Paris, as Guizot tempted Rossi in 1833, there can be little question that the young professor's after life would have been happier and saner. As it was, Amiel threw himself into the competition for the chair, was appointed professor, and then found himself in a hopelessly false position, placed on the threshold of life, in relations and surroundings for which he was radically unfitted, and cut off by no fault of his own from the *milieu* to which he rightly belonged, and in which his sensitive individuality might have expanded normally and freely. For the defeated upper class very naturally shut their doors on the nominees of the new *régime*, and as this class represented at that moment almost everything that was intellectually distinguished in Geneva, as it was the guardian, broadly speaking, of the scientific and literary traditions of the little state, we can easily imagine how galling such a social ostracism must have been to the young professor, accustomed to the stimulating atmosphere, the common intellectual interests of Berlin, and tormented with perhaps more than the ordinary craving of youth for sympathy and for affection. In a great city, containing within it a number of different circles of life, Amiel would easily have found his own circle, nor could political discords have affected his social comfort to anything like the same extent. But in a town not much larger than Oxford, and

in which the cultured class had hitherto formed a more or less homogeneous and united whole, it was almost impossible for Amiel to escape from his grievance and establish a sufficient barrier of friendly interests between himself and the society which ignored him. There can be no doubt that he suffered, both in mind and character, from the struggle the position involved. He had no natural sympathy with radicalism. His taste, which was extremely fastidious, his judgment, his passionate respect for truth, were all offended by the noise, the narrowness, the dogmatism of the triumphant democracy. So that there was no making up on the one side for what he had lost on the other, and he proudly resigned himself to an isolation and a reserve which, reinforcing, as they did, certain native weaknesses of character, had the most unfortunate effect upon his life.

In a passage of the Journal written nearly thirty years after his election he allows himself a few pathetic words, half of accusation, half of self-reproach, which make us realize how deeply this untowardness of social circumstance had affected him. He is discussing one of Madame de Staël's favorite words, the word *consideration*. "What is *consideration*?" he asks. "How does a man obtain it? how does it differ from fame, esteem, admiration?" And then he turns upon himself. "It is curious, but the idea of consideration has been to me so little of a motive that I have not even been conscious of such an idea. But ought I not to have been conscious of it?" he asks himself anxiously—"ought I not to have been more careful to win

the good opinion of others, more determined to conquer their hostility or indifference? It would have been a joy to me to be smiled upon, loved, encouraged, welcomed, and to obtain what I was so ready to give, kindness and goodwill. But to hunt down consideration and reputation—to force the esteem of others—seemed to me an effort unworthy of myself, almost a degradation. A struggle with unfavorable opinion has seemed to me beneath me, for all the while my heart has been full of sadness and disappointment, and I have known and felt that I have been systematically and deliberately isolated. Untimely despair and the deepest discouragement have been my constant portion. Incapable of taking any interest in my talents for their own sake, I let everything slip as soon as the hope of being loved for them and by them had forsaken me. A hermit against my will, I have not even found peace in solitude, because my inmost conscience has not been any better satisfied than my heart."

Still one may no doubt easily exaggerate this loneliness of Amiel's. His social difficulties represent rather a dull discomfort in his life, which in course of time, and in combination with a good many other causes, produced certain unfavorable results on his temperament and on his public career, than anything very tragic and acute. They were real, and he, being what he was, was specially unfitted to cope with and conquer them. But he had his friends, his pleasures, and even to some extent his successes, like other men. "He had an elasticity of mind," says M. Scherer, speaking of him as he knew him in youth, "which reacted against

vexations from without, and his cheerfulness was readily restored by conversation and the society of a few kindred spirits. We were accustomed, two or three friends and I, to walk every Thursday to the Salève, Lamartine's *Salève aux flancs azurés*; we dined there, and did not return till nightfall." They were days devoted to *débauches platoniciennes*, to "the free exchange of ideas, the free play of fancy and of gayety. Amiel was not one of the original members of these Thursday parties; but whenever he joined us we regarded it as a fête-day. In serious discussion he was a master of the unexpected, and his energy, his *entrain*, affected us all. If his grammatical questions, his discussions of rhymes and synonyms, astonished us at times, how often, on the other hand, did he not give us cause to admire the variety of his knowledge, the precision of his ideas, the charm of his quick intelligence! We found him always, besides, kindly and amiable, a nature one might trust and lean upon with perfect security. He awakened in us but one regret; *we could not understand how it was a man so richly gifted produced nothing, or only trivialities*."

In these last words of M. Scherer's we have come across the determining fact of Amiel's life in its relation to the outer world —that "sterility of genius," of which he was the victim. For social ostracism and political anxiety would have mattered to him comparatively little if he could but have lost himself in the fruitful activities of thought, in the struggles and the victories of composition and creation. A German professor of Amiel's knowledge would have wanted nothing beyond his *Fach*, and

nine men out of ten in his circumstances would have made themselves the slave of a *magnum opus*, and forgotten the vexations of everyday life in the "*douces joies de la science*." But there were certain characteristics in Amiel which made it impossible—which neutralized his powers, his knowledge, his intelligence, and condemned him, so far as his public performance was concerned, to barrenness and failure. What were these characteristics, this element of unsoundness and disease, which M. Caro calls "*la maladie de l'idéal*?"

Before we can answer the question we must go back a little and try to realize the intellectual and moral equipment of the young man of twenty-eight, who seemed to M. Scherer to have the world at his feet. What were the chief qualities of mind and heart which Amiel brought back with him from Berlin? In the first place, an omnivorous desire to know: "Amiel," says M. Scherer, "read everything." In the second, an extraordinary power of sustained and concentrated thought, and a passionate, almost a religious, delight in the exercise of his power. Knowledge, science, stirred in him no mere sense of curiosity or cold critical instinct—"he came to his desk as to an altar." "A friend who knew him well," says M. Scherer, "remembers having heard him speak with deep emotion of that lofty serenity of mood which he had experienced during his years in Germany whenever, in the early morning before dawn, with his reading-lamp beside him, he had found himself penetrating once more into the region of pure thought, 'conversing with ideas, enjoying the inmost life

of things.'" "Thought," he says somewhere in the Journal, "is like opium. It can intoxicate us and yet leave us broad awake." To this intoxication of thought he seems to have been always specially liable, and his German experience—unbalanced, as such an experience generally is with a young man, by family life, or by any healthy commonplace interests and pleasures—developed the intellectual passion in him to an abnormal degree. For four years he had devoted himself to the alternate excitement and satisfaction of this passion. He had read enormously, thought enormously, and in the absence of any imperative claim on the practical side of him, the accumulative, reflective faculties had grown out of all proportion to the rest of the personality. Nor had any special subject the power to fix him. Had he been in France, what Sainte-Beuve calls the French "*imagination de détail*" would probably have attracted his pliant, responsive nature, and he would have found happy occupation in some one of the innumerable departments of research on which the French have been patiently spending their analytical gift since that general widening of horizons which accompanied and gave value to the Romantic movement. But instead he was at Berlin, in the center of that speculative ferment which followed the death of Hegel and the break-up of the Hegelian idea into a number of different and conflicting sections of philosophical opinion. He was under the spell of German synthesis, of that traditional, involuntary effort which the German mind makes, generation after generation, to find the unity of experience, to range its

accumulations from life and thought under a more and more perfect, a more and more exhaustive, formula. Not this study or that study, not this detail or that, but the whole of things, the sum of Knowledge, the Infinite, the Absolute, alone had value or reality. In his own words: "There is no repose for the mind except in the absolute; for feeling except in the infinite; for the soul except in the divine. Nothing finite is true, is interesting, is worthy to fix my attention. All that is particular is exclusive, and all that is exclusive repels me. There is nothing non-exclusive but the All; my end is communion with Being through the whole of Being."

It was not, indeed, that he neglected the study of detail; he had a strong natural aptitude for it, and his knowledge was wide and real; but detail was ultimately valuable to him, not in itself, but as food for a speculative hunger, for which, after all, there is no real satisfaction. All the pleasant paths which traverse the kingdom of Knowledge, in which so many of us find shelter and life-long means of happiness, led Amiel straight into the wilderness of abstract speculation. And the longer he lingered in the wilderness, unchecked by any sense of intellectual responsibility, and far from the sounds of human life, the stranger and the weirder grew the hallucinations of thought. The Journal gives marvelous expression to them: "I can find no words for what I feel. My consciousness is withdrawn into itself; I hear my heart beating, and my life passing. It seems to me that I have become a statue on the banks of the river of time, that I am the spectator of

some mystery, and shall issue from it old, or no longer capable of age." Or again: "I am a spectator, so to speak, of the molecular whirlwind which men call individual life; I am conscious of an incessant metamorphosis, an irresistible movement of existence, which is going on within me—and this phenomenology of myself serves as a window opened upon the mystery of the world. I am, or rather my sensible consciousness is, concentrated upon this ideal standing-point, this invisible threshold, as it were, whence one hears the impetuous passage of time, rushing and foaming as it flows out into the changeless ocean of eternity. After all the bewildering distractions of life—after having drowned myself in a multiplicity of trifles and in the caprices of this fugitive existence, yet without ever attaining to self-intoxication or self-delusion—I come again upon the fathomless abyss, the silent and melancholy cavern, where dwell '*Die Mütter*,' where sleeps that which neither lives nor dies, which has neither movement nor change, nor extension, nor form, and which lasts when all else passes away."

Wonderful sentences! "*Prodiges de la pensée speculative, décrits dans une langue non moins prodigieuse*," as M. Scherer says of the innumerable passages which describe either this intoxication of the infinite, or the various forms and consequences of that deadening of personality which the abstract processes of thought tend to produce. But it is easy to understand that a man in whom experiences of this kind become habitual is likely to lose his hold upon the normal interests of life.

What are politics or literature to such a mind but fragments without real importance—dwarfed reflections of ideal truths for which neither language nor institutions provide any adequate expression! How is it possible to take seriously what is so manifestly relative and temporary as the various existing forms of human activity? Above all, how is it possible to take one's self seriously, to spend one's thought on the petty interests of a petty individuality, when the beatific vision of universal knowledge, of absolute being, has once dawned on the dazzled beholder? The charm and the savor of everything relative and phenomenal is gone. A man may go on talking, teaching, writing—but the spring of personal action is broken; his actions are like the actions of a somnambulist.

No doubt to some extent this mood is familiar to all minds endowed with the true speculative genius. The philosopher has always tended to become unfit for practical life; his unfitness, indeed, is one of the comic motives, so to speak, of literature. But a mood which, in the great majority of thinkers, is intermittent, and is easily kept within bounds by the practical needs, the mere physical instincts of life, was in Amiel almost constant, and the natural impulse of the human animal toward healthy movement and a normal play of function, never very strong in him, was gradually weakened and destroyed by an untoward combination of circumstances. The low health from which he suffered more or less from his boyhood, and then the depressing influences of the social difficulties we have described, made it more and more

difficult for the rest of the organism to react against the tyranny of the brain. And as the normal human motives lost their force, what he calls "the Buddhist tendency in me" gathered strength year by year, until, like some strange misgrowth, it had absorbed the whole energies and drained the innermost life-blood of the personality which had developed it. And the result is another soul's tragedy, another story of conflict and failure, which throws fresh light on the mysterious capacities of human nature, and warns us, as the letters of Obermann in their day warned the generation of George Sand, that with the rise of new intellectual perceptions new spiritual dangers come into being, and that across the path of continuous evolution which the modern mind is traversing there lies many a *selva oscura*, many a lonely and desolate tract, in which loss and pain await it. The story of the "Journal Intime" is a story to make us think, to make us anxious; but at the same time, in the case of a nature like Amiel's, there is so much high poetry thrown off from the long process of conflict, the power of vision and of reproduction which the intellect gains at the expense of the rest of the personality is in many respects so real and so splendid, and produces results so stirring often to the heart and imagination of the listener, that in the end we put down the record not so much with a throb of pity as with an impulse of gratitude. The individual error and suffering is almost forgotten; all that we can realize is the enrichment of human feeling, the quickened sense of spiritual reality bequeathed to us by the baffled and solitary thinker whose *via dolorosa* is before

us.

The manner in which this intellectual idiosyncrasy we have been describing gradually affected Amiel's life supplies abundant proof of its actuality and sincerity. It is a pitiful story. Amiel might have been saved from despair by love and marriage, by paternity, by strenuous and successful literary production; and this mental habit of his—this tyranny of ideal conceptions, helped by the natural accompaniment of such a tyranny, a critical sense of abnormal acuteness—stood between him and everything healing and restoring. "I am afraid of an imperfect, a faulty synthesis, and I linger in the provisional, from timidity and from loyalty." "As soon as a thing attracts me I turn away from it; or rather, I cannot either be content with the second-best, or discover anything which satisfies my aspiration. The real disgusts me, and I cannot find the ideal." And so one thing after another is put away. Family life attracted him perpetually. "I cannot escape," he writes, "from the ideal of it. A companion, of my life, of my work, of my thoughts, of my hopes; within a common worship—toward the world outside kindness and beneficence; education to undertake; the thousand and one moral relations which develop round the first—all these ideas intoxicate me sometimes." But in vain. "Reality, the present, the irreparable, the necessary, repel and even terrify me. I have too much imagination, conscience, and penetration and not enough character. *The life of thought alone seems to me to have enough elasticity and immensity, to be free enough from the irreparable;*

practical life makes me afraid. I am distrustful of myself and of happiness because I know myself. The ideal poisons for me all imperfect possession. And I abhor useless regrets and repentance."

It is the same, at bottom, with his professional work. He protects the intellectual freedom, as it were, of his students with the same jealousy as he protects his own. There shall be no oratorical device, no persuading, no cajoling of the mind this way or that. "A professor is the priest of his subject, and should do the honors of it gravely and with dignity." And so the man who in his private Journal is master of an eloquence and a poetry, capable of illuminating the most difficult and abstract of subjects, becomes in the lecture-room a dry compendium of universal knowledge. "Led by his passion for the whole," says M. Scherer, "Amiel offered his hearers, not so much a series of positive teachings, as an index of subjects, a framework—what the Germans call a *Schematismus*. The skeleton was admirably put together, and excellent of its kind, and lent itself admirably to a certain kind of analysis and demonstration; but it was a skeleton—flesh, body, and life were wanting."

So that as a professor he made no mark. He was conscientiousness itself in whatever he conceived to be his duty. But with all the critical and philosophical power which, as we know from the Journal, he might have lavished on his teaching, had the conditions been other than they were, the study of literature, and the study of philosophy as such, owe him nothing.

But for the Journal his years of training and his years of teaching would have left equally little record behind them. "His pupils at Geneva," writes one who was himself among the number, [Footnote: M. Alphonse Rivier, now Professor of International Law at the University of Brussels.] "never learned to appreciate him at his true worth. We did justice no doubt to a knowledge as varied as it was wide, to his vast stores of reading, to that cosmopolitanism of the best kind which he had brought back with him from his travels; we liked him for his indulgence, his kindly wit. But I look back without any sense of pleasure to his lectures."

Many a student, however, has shrunk from the burden and risks of family life, and has found himself incapable of teaching effectively what he knows, and has yet redeemed all other incapacities in the field of literary production. And here indeed we come to the strangest feature in Amiel's career—his literary sterility. That he possessed literary power of the highest order is abundantly proved by the "Journal Intime." Knowledge, insight, eloquence, critical power—all were his. And the impulse to produce, which is the natural, though by no means the invariable, accompaniment of the literary gift, must have been fairly strong in him also. For the "Journal Intime" runs to 17,000 folio pages of MS., and his half dozen volumes of poems, though the actual quantity is not large, represent an amount of labor which would have more than carried him through some serious piece of critical or philosophical work, and so enabled him to content

the just expectations of his world. He began to write early, as is proved by the fact that at twenty he was a contributor to the best literary periodical which Geneva possessed. He was a charming correspondent, and in spite of his passion for abstract thought, his intellectual interest, at any rate, in all the activities of the day—politics, religious organizations, literature, art—was of the keenest kind. And yet at the time of his death all that this fine critic and profound thinker had given to the world, after a life entirely spent in the pursuit of letters, was, in the first place, a few volumes of poems which had had no effect except on a small number of sympathetic friends; a few pages of *pensées* intermingled with the poems, and, as we now know, extracted from the Journal; and four or five scattered essays, the length of magazine articles, on Mme. de Staël, Rousseau, the history of the Academy of Geneva, the literature of French-speaking Switzerland, and so on! And more than this, the production, such as it was, had been a production born of effort and difficulty; and the labor squandered on poetical forms, on metrical experiments and intricate problems of translation, as well as the occasional affectations of the prose style, might well have convinced the critical bystander that the mind of which these things were the offspring could have no real importance, no profitable message, for the world.

The whole "Journal Intime" is in some sense Amiel's explanation of these facts. In it he has made full and bitter confession of his weakness, his failure; he has endeavored, with

an acuteness of analysis no other hand can rival, to make the reasons of his failure and isolation clear both to himself and others. “To love, to dream, to feel, to learn, to understand—all these are possible to me if only I may be dispensed from willing—I have a sort of primitive horror of ambition, of struggle, of hatred, of all which dissipates the soul and makes it dependent on external things and aims. The joy of becoming once more conscious of myself, of listening to the passage of time and the flow of the universal life, is sometimes enough to make me forget every desire and to quench in me both the wish to produce and the power to execute.” It is the result of what he himself calls *“l’éblouissement de l’infini*.” He no sooner makes a step toward production, toward action and the realization of himself, than a vague sense of peril overtakes him. The inner life, with its boundless horizons and its indescribable exaltations, seems endangered. Is he not about to place between himself and the forms of speculative truth some barrier of sense and matter—to give up the real for the apparent, the substance for the shadow? One is reminded of Clough’s cry under a somewhat similar experience:

> “If this pure solace should desert my mind,
> What were all else? I dare not risk the loss.
> To the old paths, my soul!”

And in close combination with the speculative sense, with the tendency which carries a man toward the contemplative study of

life and nature as a whole, is the critical sense—the tendency which, in the realm of action and concrete performance, carries him, as Amiel expresses it, *"droit au défaut,"* and makes him conscious at once of the weak point, the germ of failure in a project or an action. It is another aspect of the same idiosyncrasy. "The point I have reached seems to be explained by a too restless search for perfection, by the abuse of the critical faculty, and by an unreasonable distrust of first impulses, first thoughts, first words. Confidence and spontaneity of life are drifting out of my reach, and this is why I can no longer act." For abuse of the critical faculty brings with it its natural consequences—timidity of soul, paralysis of the will, complete self-distrust. "To know is enough for me; expression seems to me often a profanity. What I lack is character, will, individuality." "By what mystery," he writes to M. Scherer, "do others expect much from me? whereas I feel myself to be incapable of anything serious or important." *Défiance* and *impuissance* are the words constantly on his lips. "My friends see what I might have been; I see what I am."

And yet the literary instinct remains, and must in some way be satisfied. And so he takes refuge in what he himself calls scales, exercises, *tours de force* in verse-translation of the most laborious and difficult kind, in ingenious *vers d'occasion*, in metrical experiments and other literary trifling, as his friends think it, of the same sort. "I am afraid of greatness. I am not afraid of ingenuity; all my published literary essays are little else than studies, games, exercises, for the purpose of testing

myself. I play scales, as it were; I run up and down my instrument. I train my hand and make sure of its capacity and skill. But the work itself remains unachieved. I am always preparing and never accomplishing, and my energy is swallowed up in a kind of barren curiosity."

Not that he surrenders himself to the nature which is stronger than he all at once. His sense of duty rebels, his conscience suffers, and he makes resolution after resolution to shake himself free from the mental tradition which had taken such hold upon him—to write, to produce, to satisfy his friends. In 1861, a year after M. Scherer had left Geneva, Amiel wrote to him, describing his difficulties and his discouragements, and asking, as one may ask an old friend of one's youth, for help and counsel. M. Scherer, much touched by the appeal, answered it plainly and frankly—described the feeling of those who knew him as they watched his life slipping away unmarked by any of the achievements of which his youth had given promise, and pointed out various literary openings in which, if he were to put out his powers, he could not but succeed. To begin with, he urged him to join the *Revue Germanique,* then being started by Charles Dollfus, Renan, Littré, and others. Amiel left the letter for three months unanswered and then wrote a reply which M. Scherer probably received with a sigh of impatience. For, rightly interpreted, it meant that old habits were too strong, and that the momentary impulse had died away. When, a little later, "Les Etrangères," a collection of verse-translations, came out, it was dedicated to

M. Scherer, who did not, however, pretend to give it any very cordial reception. Amiel took his friend's coolness in very good part, calling him his "dear Rhadamanthus." "How little I knew!" cries M. Scherer. "What I regret is to have discovered too late by means of the Journal, the key to a problem which seemed to me hardly serious, and which I now feel to have been tragic. A kind of remorse seizes me that I was not able to understand my friend better, and to soothe his suffering by a sympathy which would have been a mixture of pity and admiration."

Was it that all the while Amiel felt himself sure of his *revanche* that he knew the value of all those sheets of Journal which were slowly accumulating under his hand? Did he say to himself sometimes: "My friends are wrong; my gifts and my knowledge are not lost; I have given expression to them in the only way possible to me, and when I die it will be found that I too, like other men, have performed the task appointed me, and contributed my quota to the human store?" It is clear that very early he began to regard it as possible that portions of the Journal should be published after his death, and, as we have seen, he left certain "literary instructions," dated seven years before his last illness, in which his executors were directed to publish such parts of it as might seem to them to possess any general interest. But it is clear also that the Journal was not, in any sense, written for publication. "These pages," say the Geneva editors, "written *au courant de la plume*—sometimes in the morning, but more often at the end of the day, without any idea of composition or publicity

—are marked by the repetition, the *lacunae*, the carelessness, inherent in this kind of monologue. The thoughts and sentiments expressed have no other aim than sincerity of rendering."

And his estimate of the value of the record thus produced was, in general, a low one, especially during the depression and discouragement of his later years. "This Journal of mine," he writes in 1876, "represents the material of a good many volumes; what prodigious waste of time, of thought, of strength! It will be useful to nobody, and even for myself—it has rather helped me to shirk life than to practice it." And again: "Is everything I have produced, taken together—my correspondence, these thousands of Journal pages, my lectures, my articles, my poems, my notes of different kinds—anything better than withered leaves? To whom and to what have I been useful? Will my name survive me a single day, and will it ever mean anything to anybody? A life of no account! When all is added up—nothing!" In passages like these there is no anticipation of any posthumous triumph over the disapproval of his friends and the criticism of his fellow-citizens. The Journal was a relief, the means of satisfying a need of expression which otherwise could find no outlet; "a grief-cheating device," but nothing more. It did not still the sense of remorse for wasted gifts and opportunities which followed poor Amiel through the painful months of his last illness. Like Keats, he passed away, feeling that all was over, and the great game of life lost forever.

It still remains for us to gather up a few facts and impressions

of a different kind from those which we have been dwelling on, which may serve to complete and correct the picture we have so far drawn of the author of the Journal. For Amiel is full of contradictions and surprises, which, are indeed one great source of his attractiveness. Had he only been the thinker, the critic, the idealist we have been describing, he would never have touched our feeling as he now does; what makes him so interesting is that there was in him a *fond* of heredity, a temperament and disposition, which were perpetually reacting against the oppression of the intellect and its accumulations. In his hours of intellectual concentration he freed himself from all trammels of country or society, or even, as he insists, from all sense of personality. But at other times he was the dutiful son of a country which he loved, taking a warm interest in everything Genevese, especially in everything that represented the older life of the town. When it was a question of separating the Genevese state from the church, which had been the center of the national life during three centuries of honorable history, Amiel the philosopher, the cosmopolitan, threw himself ardently on to the side of the opponents of separation, and rejoiced in their victory. A large proportion of his poems deal with national subjects. He was one of the first members of "*L'Institut Genevois*," founded in 1853, and he took a warm interest in the movement started by M. Eugene Rambert toward 1870, for the improvement of secondary education throughout French-speaking Switzerland. One of his friends dwells with emphasis

on his "*sens profond des nationalités, des langues, des villes*"—on his love for local characteristics, for everything deep-rooted in the past, and helping to sustain the present. He is convinced that no state can live and thrive without a certain number of national prejudices, without *à priori* beliefs and traditions. It pleases him to see that there is a force in the Genevese nationality which resists the leveling influences of a crude radicalism; it rejoices him that Geneva "has not yet become a mere copy of anything, and that she is still capable of deciding for herself. Those who say to her, 'Do as they do at New York, at Paris, at Rome, at Berlin,' are still in the minority. The *doctrinaires* who would split her up and destroy her unity waste their breath upon her. She divines the snare laid for her, and turns away. I like this proof of vitality."

His love of traveling never left him. Paris attracted him, as it attracts all who cling to letters, and he gained at one time or another a certain amount of acquaintance with French literary men. In 1852 we find him for a time brought into contact with Thierry, Lamennais, Béranger, Mignet, etc., as well as with Romantics like Alfred de Vigny and Théophile Gautier. There are poems addressed to De Vigny and Gautier in his first published volume of 1854. He revisited Italy and his old haunts and friends in Germany more than once, and in general kept the current of his life fresh and vigorous by his openness to impressions and additions from without.

He was, as we have said, a delightful correspondent, "taking pains with the smallest note," and within a small circle of friends

much liked. His was not a nature to be generally appreciated at its true value; the motives which governed his life were too remote from the ordinary motives of human conduct, and his characteristics just those which have always excited the distrust, if not the scorn, of the more practical and vigorous order of minds. Probably, too—especially in his later years—there was a certain amount of self-consciousness and artificiality in his attitude toward the outer world, which was the result partly of the social difficulties we have described, partly of his own sense of difference from his surroundings, and partly again of that timidity of nature, that self-distrust, which is revealed to us in the Journal. So that he was by no means generally popular, and the great success of the Journal is still a mystery to the majority of those who knew him merely as a fellow-citizen and acquaintance. But his friends loved him and believed in him, and the reserved student, whose manners were thought affected in general society, could and did make himself delightful to those who understood him, or those who looked to him for affection. "According to my remembrance of him," writes M. Scherer, "he was bright, sociable, a charming companion. Others who knew him better and longer than I say the same. The mobility of his disposition counteracted his tendency to exaggerations of feeling. In spite of his fits of melancholy, his natural turn of mind was cheerful; up to the end he was young, a child even, amused by mere nothings; and whoever had heard him laugh his hearty student's laugh would have found it difficult to identify him with the author of so

many somber pages." M. Rivier, his old pupil, remembers him as "strong and active, still handsome, delightful in conversation, ready to amuse and be amused." Indeed, if the photographs of him are to be trusted, there must have been something specially attractive in the sensitive, expressive face, with its lofty brow, fine eyes, and kindly mouth. It is the face of a poet rather than of a student, and makes one understand certain other little points which his friends lay stress on—for instance, his love for and popularity with children.

In his poems, or at any rate in the earlier ones, this lighter side finds more expression, proportionally, than in the Journal. In the volume called "Grains de Mil," published in 1854, and containing verse written between the ages of eighteen and thirty, there are poems addressed, now to his sister, now to old Genevese friends, and now to famous men of other countries whom he had seen and made friends with in passing, which, read side by side with the "Journal Intime," bring a certain gleam and sparkle into an otherwise somber picture. Amiel was never a master of poetical form; his verse, compared to his prose, is tame and fettered; it never reaches the glow and splendor of expression which mark the finest passages of the Journal. It has ability, thought—beauty even, of a certain kind, but no plastic power, none of the incommunicable magic which a George Eliot seeks for in vain, while it comes unasked, to deck with imperishable charm the commonplace metaphysic and the simpler emotions of a Tennyson or a Burns. Still as Amiel's work, his poetry has an

interest for those who are interested in him. Sincerity is written in every line of it. Most of the thoughts and experiences with which one grows familiar in the Journal are repeated in it; the same joys, the same aspirations, the same sorrows are visible throughout it, so that in reading it one is more and more impressed with the force and reality of the inner life which has left behind it so definite an image of itself. And every now and then the poems add a detail, a new impression, which seems by contrast to give fresh value to the fine-spun speculations, the lofty despairs, of the Journal. Take these verses, written at twenty-one, to his younger sister:

> "Treize ans! et sur ton front aucun baiser de mère
> Ne viendra, pauvre enfant, invoquer le bonheur;
> Treize ans! et dans ce jour mil regard de ton père
> Ne fera d'allégresse épanouir ton coeur.
>
> "Orpheline, c'est là le nom dont tu t'appelles,
> Oiseau né dans un nid que la foudre a brisé;
> De la couvée, hélas! seuls, trois petits, sans ailes
> Furent lancés au vent, loin du reste écrasé.
>
> "Et, semés par l'éclair sur les monts, dans les plaines,
> Un même toit encor n'a pu les abriter,
> Et du foyer natal, malgré leurs plaintes vaines
> Dieu, peut-être longtemps, voudra les écarter.
>
> "Pourtant console-toi! pense, dans tes alarmes,

Qu'un double bien te reste, espoir et souvenir;
Une main dans le ciel pour essuyer tes larmes;
Une main ici-bas, enfant, pour te bénir."

The last stanza is especially poor, and in none of them is there much poetical promise. But the pathetic image of a forlorn and orphaned childhood, "*un nid que la foudre a brisé*," which it calls up, and the tone of brotherly affection, linger in one's memory. And through much of the volume of 1863, in the verses to "My Godson," or in the charming poem to Loulou, the little girl who at five years old, daisy in hand, had sworn him eternal friendship over Gretchen's game of "*Er liebt mich—liebt mich nicht*," one hears the same tender note.

"Merci, prophétique fleurette,
Corolle à l'oracle vainqueur,
Car voilà trois ans, paquerette,
Que tu m'ouvris un petit coeur.

"Et depuis trois hivers, ma belle,
L'enfant aux grands yeux de velours
Maintient son petit coeur fidèle,
Fidèle comme aux premiers jours."

His last poetical volume, "Jour à Jour," published in 1880, is far more uniformly melancholy and didactic in tone than the two earlier collections from which we have been quoting. But though the dominant note is one of pain and austerity, of

philosophy touched with emotion, and the general tone more purely introspective, there are many traces in it of the younger Amiel, dear, for very ordinary human reasons, to his sisters and his friends. And, in general, the pathetic interest of the book for all whose sympathy answers to what George Sand calls "*les tragédies que la pensée aperçoit et que l'oeil ne voit point*" is very great. Amiel published it a year before his death, and the struggle with failing power which the Journal reveals to us in its saddest and most intimate reality, is here expressed in more reserved and measured form. Faith, doubt, submission, tenderness of feeling, infinite aspiration, moral passion, that straining hope of something beyond, which is the life of the religious soul—they are all here, and the *Dernier Mot* with which the sad little volume ends is poor Amiel's epitaph on himself, his conscious farewell to that more public aspect of his life in which he had suffered much and achieved comparatively so little.

"Nous avons à plaisir compliqué le bonheur,
Et par un idéal frivole et suborneur
  Attaché nos coeurs à la terre;
Dupes des faux dehors tenus pour l'important,
Mille choses pour nous ont du prix … et pourtant
  Une seule était nécessaire.

"Sans fin nous prodiguons calculs, efforts, travaux;
Cependant, au milieu des succès, des bravos
En nous quelque chose soupire;

Multipliant nos pas et nos soins de fourmis,
Nous vondrions nous faire une foule d'amis....
Pourtant un seul pouvait suffire.

"Victime des désirs, esclave des regrets,
L'homme s'agite, et s'use, et vieillit sans progrès
Sur sa toile de Pénélope;
Comme un sage mourant, puissions-nous dire en paix
J'ai trop longtemps erré, cherché; je me trompais;
Tout est bien, mon Dieu m'enveloppe."

Upon the small remains of Amiel's prose outside the Journal there is no occasion to dwell. The two essays on Madame de Staël and Rousseau contain much fine critical remark, and might find a place perhaps as an appendix to some future edition of the Journal; and some of the "Pensées," published in the latter half of the volume containing the "Grains de Mils," are worthy of preservation. But in general, whatever he himself published was inferior to what might justly have been expected of him, and no one was more conscious of the fact than himself.

The story of his fatal illness, of the weary struggle for health which filled the last seven years of his life, is abundantly told in the Journal—we must not repeat it here. He had never been a strong man, and at fifty-three he received, at his doctor's hands, his *arrêt de mort*. We are told that what killed him was "heart disease, complicated by disease of the larynx," and that he suffered "much and long." He was buried in the cemetery of

Clarens, not far from his great contemporary Alexander Vinet; and the affection of a sculptor friend provided the monument which now marks his resting-place.

We have thus exhausted all the biographical material which is at present available for the description of Amiel's life and relations toward the outside world. It is to be hoped that the friends to whom the charge of his memory has been specially committed may see their way in the future, if not to a formal biography, which is very likely better left unattempted, at least to a volume of Letters, which would complete the "Journal Intime," as Joubert's "Correspondence" completes the "Pensées." There must be ample material for it; and Amiel's letters would probably supply us with more of that literary and critical reflection which his mind produced so freely and so well, as long as there was no question of publication, but which is at present somewhat overweighted in the "Journal Intime."

But whether biography or correspondence is ever forthcoming or not, the Journal remains—and the Journal is the important matter. We shall read the Letters if they appear, as we now read the Poems, for the Journal's sake. The man himself, as poet, teacher, and *littérateur*, produced no appreciable effect on his generation; but the posthumous record of his inner life has stirred the hearts of readers all over Europe, and won him a niche in the House of Fame. What are the reasons for this striking transformation of a man's position—a transformation which, as M. Scherer says, will rank among the curiosities of literary

history? In other words, what has given the "Journal Intime" its sudden and unexpected success?

In the first place, no doubt, its poetical quality, its beauty of manner—that fine literary expression in which Amiel has been able to clothe the subtler processes of thought, no less than the secrets of religious feeling, or the aspects of natural scenery. Style is what gives value and currency to thought, and Amiel, in spite of all his Germanisms, has style of the best kind. He possesses in prose that indispensable magic which he lacks in poetry.

His style, indeed, is by no means always in harmony with the central French tradition. Probably a Frenchman will be inclined to apply Sainte-Beuve's remarks on Amiel's elder countryman, Rodolphe Töpffer, to Amiel himself: "*C'est ainsi qu'on écrit dans les littératures qui n'ont point de capitale, de quartier général classique, ou d'Académie; c'est ainsi qu'un Allemand, qu'un Américain, ou même un Anglais, use à son gré de sa langue. En France au contraire, où il y a une Académie Française … on doit trouver qu'un tel style est une très-grande nouveauté et le succés qu'il a obtenu un evènement: il a fallu bien des circonstances pour y préparer*." No doubt the preparatory circumstance in Amiel's case has been just that Germanization of the French mind on which M. Taine and M. Bourget dwell with so much emphasis. But, be this as it may, there is no mistaking the enthusiasm with which some of the best living writers of French have hailed these pages—instinct, as one declares, "with a strange and marvelous

poetry;" full of phrases "*d'une intense suggestion de beauté*;" according to another. Not that the whole of the Journal flows with the same ease, the same felicity. There are a certain number of passages where Amiel ceases to be the writer, and becomes the technical philosopher; there are others, though not many, into which a certain German heaviness and diffuseness has crept, dulling the edge of the sentences, and retarding the development of the thought. When all deductions have been made, however, Amiel's claim is still first and foremost, the claim of the poet and the artist; of the man whose thought uses at will the harmonies and resources of speech, and who has attained, in words of his own, "to the full and masterly expression of himself."

Then to the poetical beauty of manner which first helped the book to penetrate, *faire sa trouée*, as the French say, we must add its extraordinary psychological interest. Both as poet and as psychologist, Amiel makes another link in a special tradition; he adds another name to the list of those who have won a hearing from their fellows as interpreters of the inner life, as the revealers of man to himself. He is the successor of St. Augustine and Dante; he is the brother of Obermann and Maurice de Guérin. What others have done for the spiritual life of other generations he has done for the spiritual life of this, and the wealth of poetical, scientific, and psychological faculty which he has brought to the analysis of human feeling and human perceptions places him—so far as the present century is concerned—at the head of the small and delicately-gifted

class to which he belongs. For beside his spiritual experience Obermann's is superficial, and Maurice de Guérin's a passing trouble, a mere quick outburst of passionate feeling. Amiel indeed has neither the continuous romantic beauty nor the rich descriptive wealth of Senancour. The Dent du Midi, with its untrodden solitude, its primeval silences and its hovering eagles, the Swiss landscape described in the "Fragment on the Ranz des Vaches," the summer moonlight on the Lake of Neufchâtel—these various pictures are the work of one of the most finished artists in words that literature has produced. But how true George Sand's criticism is! "*Chez Obermann la sensibilité est active, l'intelligence est paresseuse ou insuffisante.*" He has a certain antique power of making the truisms of life splendid and impressive. No one can write more poetical exercises than he on the old text of *pulvis et umbra sumus*, but beyond this his philosophical power fails him. As soon as he leaves the region of romantic description how wearisome the pages are apt to grow! Instead of a poet, "*un ergoteur Voltairien*;" instead of the explorer of fresh secrets of the heart, a Parisian talking a cheap cynicism! Intellectually, the ground gives way; there is no solidity of knowledge, no range of thought. Above all, the scientific idea in our sense is almost absent; so that while Amiel represents the modern mind at its keenest and best, dealing at will with the vast additions to knowledge which the last fifty years have brought forth, Senancour is still in the eighteenth-century stage, talking like Rousseau of a return to primitive manners, and discussing

Christianity in the tone of the "Encyclopédie."

Maurice de Guérin, again, is the inventor of new terms in the language of feeling, a poet as Amiel and Senancour are. His love of nature, the earth-passion which breathes in his letters and journal, has a strange savor, a force and flame which is all his own. Beside his actual sense of community with the visible world, Amiel's love of landscape has a tame, didactic air. The Swiss thinker is too ready to make nature a mere vehicle of moral or philosophical thought; Maurice de Guérin loves her for herself alone, and has found words to describe her influence over him of extraordinary individuality and power. But for the rest the story of his inner life has but small value in the history of thought. His difficulties do not go deep enough; his struggle is intellectually not serious enough—we see in it only a common incident of modern experience poetically told; it throws no light on the genesis and progress of the great forces which are molding and renovating the thought of the present—it tells us nothing for the future.

No—there is much more in the "Journal Intime" than the imagination or the poetical glow which Amiel shares with his immediate predecessors in the art of confession-writing. His book is representative of human experience in its more intimate and personal forms to an extent hardly equaled since Rousseau. For his study of himself is only a means to an end. "What interests me in myself," he declares, "is that I find in my own case a genuine example of human nature, and therefore a specimen

of general value." It is the human consciousness of to-day, of the modern world, in its two-fold relation—its relation toward the infinite and the unknowable, and its relation toward the visible universe which conditions it—which is the real subject of the "Journal Intime." There are few elements of our present life which, in a greater or less degree, are not made vocal in these pages. Amiel's intellectual interest is untiring. Philosophy, science, letters, art—he has penetrated the spirit of them all; there is nothing, or almost nothing, within the wide range of modern activities which he has not at one time or other felt the attraction of, and learned in some sense to understand. "Amiel," says M. Renan, "has his defects, but he was certainly one of the strongest speculative heads who, during the period from 1845 to 1880, have reflected on the nature of things." And, although a certain fatal spiritual weakness debarred him to a great extent from the world of practical life, his sympathy with action, whether it was the action of the politician or the social reformer, or merely that steady half-conscious performance of its daily duty which keeps humanity sweet and living, was unfailing. His horizon was not bounded by his own "prison-cell," or by that dream-world which he has described with so much subtle beauty; rather the energies which should have found their natural expression in literary or family life, pent up within the mind itself, excited in it a perpetual eagerness for intellectual discovery, and new powers of sympathy with whatever crossed its field of vision.

So that the thinker, the historian, the critic, will find himself at home with Amiel. The power of organizing his thought, the art of writing a book, *monumentum aere perennius*, was indeed denied him—he laments it bitterly; but, on the other hand, he is receptivity itself, responsive to all the great forces which move the time, catching and reflecting on the mobile mirror of his mind whatever winds are blowing from the hills of thought.

And if the thinker is at home with him, so too are the religious minds, the natures for whom God and duty are the foundation of existence. Here, indeed, we come to the innermost secret of Amiel's charm, the fact which probably goes farther than any other to explain his fascination for a large and growing class of readers. For, while he represents all the intellectual complexities of a time bewildered by the range and number of its own acquisitions, the religious instinct in him is as strong and tenacious as in any of the representative exponents of the life of faith. The intellect is clear and unwavering; but the heart clings to old traditions, and steadies itself on the rock of duty. His Calvinistic training lingers long in him; and what detaches him from the Hegelian school, with which he has much in common, is his own stronger sense of personal need, his preoccupation with the idea of "sin." "He speaks," says M. Renan contemptuously, "of sin, of salvation, of redemption, and conversion, as if these things were realities. He asks me 'What does M. Renan make of sin?' *Eh bien, je crois que je le supprime*." But it is just because Amiel is profoundly sensitive to the problems of evil

and responsibility, and M. Renan dismisses them with this half-tolerant, half-skeptical smile, that M. Renan's "Souvenirs" inform and entertain us, while the "Journal Intime" makes a deep impression on that moral sense which is at the root of individual and national life.

The Journal is full, indeed, of this note of personal religion. Religion, Amiel declares again and again, cannot be replaced by philosophy. The redemption of the intelligence is not the redemption of the heart. The philosopher and critic may succeed in demonstrating that the various definite forms into which the religious thought of man has thrown itself throughout history are not absolute truth, but only the temporary creations of a need which gradually and surely outgrows them all. "The Trinity, the life to come, paradise and hell, may cease to be dogmas and spiritual realities, the form and the letter may vanish away —the question of humanity remains: What is it which saves?" Amiel's answer to the question will recall to a wide English circle the method and spirit of an English teacher, whose dear memory lives to-day in many a heart, and is guiding many an effort in the cause of good—the method and spirit of the late Professor Green of Balliol. In many respects there was a gulf of difference between the two men. The one had all the will and force of personality which the other lacked. But the ultimate creed of both, the way in which both interpret the facts of nature and consciousness, is practically the same. In Amiel's case, we have to gather it through all the variations and inevitable

contradictions of a Journal which is the reflection of a life, not the systematic expression of a series of ideas, but the main results are clear enough. Man is saved by love and duty, and by the hope which springs from duty, or rather from the moral facts of consciousness, as a flower springs from the soil. Conscience and the moral progress of the race—these are his points of departure. Faith in the reality of the moral law is what he clings to when his inherited creed has yielded to the pressure of the intellect, and after all the storms of pessimism and necessitarianism have passed over him. The reconciliation of the two certitudes, the two methods, the scientific and the religious, "is to be sought for in that moral law which is also a fact, and every step of which requires for its explanation another cosmos than the cosmos of necessity." "Nature is the virtuality of mind, the soul the fruit of life, and liberty the flower of necessity." Consciousness is the one fixed point in this boundless and bottomless gulf of things, and the soul's inward law, as it has been painfully elaborated by human history, the only revelation of God.

The only but the sufficient revelation! For this first article of a reasonable creed is the key to all else—the clue which leads the mind safely through the labyrinth of doubt into the presence of the Eternal. Without attempting to define the indefinable, the soul rises from the belief in the reality of love and duty to the belief in "a holy will at the root of nature and destiny"—for "if man is capable of conceiving goodness, the general principle of things, which cannot be inferior to man, must be good." And then

the religious consciousness seizes on this intellectual deduction, and clothes it in language of the heart, in the tender and beautiful language of faith. "There is but one thing needful—to possess God. All our senses, all our powers of mind and soul, are so many ways of approaching the Divine, so many modes of tasting and adoring God. Religion is not a method; it is a life—a higher and supernatural life, mystical in its root and practical in its fruits; a communion with God, a calm and deep enthusiasm, a love which radiates, a force which acts, a happiness which overflows." And the faith of his youth and his maturity bears the shock of suffering, and supports him through his last hours. He writes a few months before the end: "The animal expires; man surrenders his soul to the author of the soul." … "We dream alone, we suffer alone, we die alone, we inhabit the last resting-place alone. But there is nothing to prevent us from opening our solitude to God. And so what was an austere monologue becomes dialogue, reluctance becomes docility, renunciation passes into peace, and the sense of painful defeat is lost in the sense of recovered liberty"—*"Tout est bien, mon Dieu m'enveloppe."*

Nor is this all. It is not only that Amiel's inmost thought and affections are stayed on this conception of "a holy will at the root of nature and destiny"—in a certain very real sense he is a Christian. No one is more sensitive than he to the contribution which Christianity has made to the religious wealth of mankind; no one more penetrated than he with the truth of its essential doctrine "death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness."

"The religion of sin, of repentance and reconciliation," he cries, "the religion of the new birth and of eternal life, is not a religion to be ashamed of." The world has found inspiration and guidance for eighteen centuries in the religious consciousness of Jesus. "The gospel has modified the world and consoled mankind," and so "we may hold aloof from the churches and yet bow ourselves before Jesus. We may be suspicious of the clergy and refuse to have anything to do with catechisms, and yet love the Holy and the Just who came to save and not to curse." And in fact Amiel's whole life and thought are steeped in Christianity. He is the spiritual descendant of one of the intensest and most individual forms of Christian belief, and traces of his religious ancestry are visible in him at every step. Protestantism of the sincerer and nobler kind leaves an indelible impression on the nature which has once surrounded itself to the austere and penetrating influences flowing from the religion of sin and grace; and so far as feeling and temperament are concerned, Amiel retained throughout his life the marks of Calvinism and Geneva.

And yet how clear the intellect remains, through all the anxieties of thought, and in the face of the soul's dearest memories and most passionate needs! Amiel, as soon as his reasoning faculty has once reached its maturity, never deceives himself as to the special claims of the religion which by instinct and inheritance he loves; he makes no compromise with dogma or with miracle. Beyond the religions of the present he sees always the essential religion which lasts when all local forms

and marvels have passed away; and as years go on, with more and more clearness of conviction, he learns to regard all special beliefs and systems as "prejudices, useful in practice, but still narrownesses of the mind;" misgrowths of thought, necessary in their time and place, but still of no absolute value, and having no final claim on the thought of man.

And it is just here—in this mixture of the faith which clings and aspires, with the intellectual pliancy which allows the mind to sway freely under the pressure of life and experience, and the deep respect for truth, which will allow nothing to interfere between thought and its appointed tasks—that Amiel's special claim upon us lies. It is this balance of forces in him which makes him so widely representative of the modern mind—of its doubts, its convictions, its hopes. He speaks for the life of to-day as no other single voice has yet spoken for it; in his contradictions, his fears, his despairs, and yet in the constant straining toward the unseen and the ideal which gives a fundamental unity to his inner life, he is the type of a generation universally touched with doubt, and yet as sensitive to the need of faith as any that have gone before it; more widely conscious than its predecessors of the limitations of the human mind, and of the iron pressure of man's physical environment; but at the same time—paradox as it may seem—more conscious of man's greatness, more deeply thrilled by the spectacle of the nobility and beauty interwoven with the universe.

And he plays this part of his so modestly, with so much

hesitation, so much doubt of his thought and of himself! He is no preacher, like Emerson and Carlyle, with whom, as poet and idealist, he has so much in common; there is little resemblance between him and the men who speak, as it were, from a height to the crowd beneath, sure always of themselves and what they have to say. And here again he represents the present and foreshadows the future. For the age of the preachers is passing those who speak with authority on the riddles of life and nature as the priests of this or that all-explaining dogma, are becoming less important as knowledge spreads, and the complexity of experience is made evident to a wider range of minds. The force of things is against *the certain people*. Again and again truth escapes from the prisons made for her by mortal hands, and as humanity carries on the endless pursuit she will pay more and more respectful heed to voices like this voice of the lonely Genevese thinker—with its pathetic alterations of hope and fear, and the moral steadfastness which is the inmost note of it—to these meditative lives, which, through all the ebb and flow of thought, and in the dim ways of doubt and suffering, rich in knowledge, and yet rich in faith, grasp in new forms, and proclaim to us in new words,

> "The mighty hopes which make us men."

AMIEL'S JOURNAL

[Where no other name is mentioned, Geneva is to be understood as the author's place of residence.]

BERLIN, July 16. 1848.—There is but one thing needful—to possess God. All our senses, all our powers of mind and soul, all our external resources, are so many ways of approaching the divinity, so many modes of tasting and of adoring God. We must learn to detach ourselves from all that is capable of being lost, to bind ourselves absolutely only to what is absolute and eternal, and to enjoy the rest as a loan, a usufruct.... To adore, to understand, to receive, to feel, to give, to act: there is my law my duty, my happiness, my heaven. Let come what come will—even death. Only be at peace with self, live in the presence of God, in communion with Him, and leave the guidance of existence to those universal powers against whom thou canst do nothing! If death gives me time, so much the better. If its summons is near, so much the better still; if a half-death overtake me, still so much the better, for so the path of success is closed to me only that I may find opening before me the path of heroism, of moral greatness and resignation. Every life has its potentiality of greatness, and as it is impossible to be outside God, the best is consciously to dwell in Him.

BERLIN, July 20, 1848.—It gives liberty and breadth to thought, to learn to judge our own epoch from the point of view

of universal history, history from the point of view of geological periods, geology from the point of view of astronomy. When the duration of a man's life or of a people's life appears to us as microscopic as that of a fly and inversely, the life of a gnat as infinite as that of a celestial body, with all its dust of nations, we feel ourselves at once very small and very great, and we are able, as it were, to survey from the height of the spheres our own existence, and the little whirlwinds which agitate our little Europe.

At bottom there is but one subject of study: the forms and metamorphoses of mind. All other subjects may be reduced to that; all other studies bring us back to this study.

GENEVA, April 20, 1849.—It is six years [Footnote: Amiel left Geneva for Paris and Berlin in April, 1848, the preceding year, 1841-42, having been spent in Italy and Sicily.] to-day since I last left Geneva. How many journeys, how many impressions, observations, thoughts, how many forms of men and things have since then passed before me and in me! The last seven years have been the most important of my life: they have been the novitiate of my intelligence, the initiation of my being into being.

Three snowstorms this afternoon. Poor blossoming plum-trees and peach trees! What a difference from six years ago, when the cherry-trees, adorned in their green spring dress and laden with their bridal flowers, smiled at my departure along the Vaudois fields, and the lilacs of Burgundy threw great gusts of perfume into my face!…

May 3, 1849.—I have never felt any inward assurance of genius, or any presentiment of glory or of happiness. I have never seen myself in imagination great or famous, or even a husband, a father, an influential citizen. This indifference to the future, this absolute self-distrust, are, no doubt, to be taken as signs. What dreams I have are all vague and indefinite; I ought not to live, for I am now scarcely capable of living. Recognize your place; let the living live; and you, gather together your thoughts, leave behind you a legacy of feeling and ideas; you will be most useful so. Renounce yourself, accept the cup given you, with its honey and its gall, as it comes. Bring God down into your heart. Embalm your soul in Him now, make within you a temple for the Holy Spirit, be diligent in good works, make others happier and better.

Put personal ambition away from you, and then you will find consolation in living or in dying, whatever may happen to you.

May 27, 1849.—To be misunderstood even by those whom one loves is the cross and bitterness of life. It is the secret of that sad and melancholy smile on the lips of great men which so few understand; it is the cruelest trial reserved for self-devotion; it is what must have oftenest wrung the heart of the Son of man; and if God could suffer, it would be the wound we should be forever inflicting upon Him. He also—He above all—is the great misunderstood, the least comprehended. Alas! alas! never to tire, never to grow cold; to be patient, sympathetic, tender; to look for the budding flower and the opening heart; to hope always, like God; to love always—this is duty.

June 3, 1849.—Fresh and delicious weather. A long morning walk. Surprised the hawthorn and wild rose-trees in flower. From the fields vague and health-giving scents. The Voirons fringed with dazzling mists, and tints of exquisite softness over the Salève. Work in the fields, two delightful donkeys, one pulling greedily at a hedge of barberry. Then three little children. I felt a boundless desire to caress and play with them. To be able to enjoy such leisure, these peaceful fields, fine weather, contentment; to have my two sisters with me; to rest my eyes on balmy meadows and blossoming orchards; to listen to the life singing in the grass and on the trees; to be so calmly happy—is it not too much? is it deserved? O let me enjoy it with gratitude. The days of trouble come soon enough and are many enough. I have no presentiment of happiness. All the more let me profit by the present. Come, kind nature, smile and enchant me! Veil from me awhile my own griefs and those of others; let me see only the folds of thy queenly mantle, and hide all miserable and ignoble things from me under thy bounties and splendors!

October 1, 1849.—Yesterday, Sunday, I read through and made extracts from the gospel of St. John. It confirmed me in my belief that about Jesus we must believe no one but Himself, and that what we have to do is to discover the true image of the founder behind all the prismatic reactions through which it comes to us, and which alter it more or less. A ray of heavenly light traversing human life, the message of Christ has been broken into a thousand rainbow colors and carried in a thousand

directions. It is the historical task of Christianity to assume with every succeeding age a fresh metamorphosis, and to be forever spiritualizing more and more her understanding of the Christ and of salvation.

I am astounded at the incredible amount of Judaism and formalism which still exists nineteen centuries after the Redeemer's proclamation, "it is the letter which killeth"—after his protest against a dead symbolism. The new religion is so profound that it is not understood even now, and would seem a blasphemy to the greater number of Christians. The person of Christ is the center of it. Redemption, eternal life, divinity, humanity, propitiation, incarnation, judgment, Satan, heaven and hell—all these beliefs have been so materialized and coarsened, that with a strange irony they present to us the spectacle of things having a profound meaning and yet carnally interpreted. Christian boldness and Christian liberty must be reconquered; it is the church which is heretical, the church whose sight is troubled and her heart timid. Whether we will or no, there is an esoteric doctrine, there is a relative revelation; each man enters into God so much as God enters into him, or as Angelus, [Footnote: Angelus Silesius, otherwise Johannes Soheffler, the German seventeenth century hymn-writer, whose tender and mystical verses have been popularized in England by Miss Winkworth's translations in the *Lyra Germanica*.] I think, said, "the eye by which I see God is the same eye by which He sees me."

Christianity, if it is to triumph over pantheism, must absorb it. To our pusillanimous eyes Jesus would have borne the marks of a hateful pantheism, for he confirmed the Biblical phrase "ye are gods," and so would St. Paul, who tells us that we are of "the race of God." Our century wants a new theology—that is to say, a more profound explanation of the nature of Christ and of the light which it flashes upon heaven and upon humanity.

Heroism is the brilliant triumph of the soul over the flesh—that is to say, over fear: fear of poverty, of suffering, of calumny, of sickness, of isolation, and of death. There is no serious piety without heroism. Heroism is the dazzling and glorious concentration of courage.

Duty has the virtue of making us feel the reality of a positive world while at the same time detaching us from it.

December 30, 1850.—The relation of thought to action filled my mind on waking, and I found myself carried toward a bizarre formula, which seems to have something of the night still clinging about it: *Action is but coarsened thought*; thought become concrete, obscure, and unconscious. It seemed to me that our most trifling actions, of eating, walking, and sleeping, were the condensation of a multitude of truths and thoughts, and that the wealth of ideas involved was in direct proportion to the commonness of the action (as our dreams are the more active, the

deeper our sleep). We are hemmed round with mystery, and the greatest mysteries are contained in what we see and do every day. In all spontaneity the work of creation is reproduced in analogy. When the spontaneity is unconscious, you have simple action; when it is conscious, intelligent and moral action. At bottom this is nothing more than the proposition of Hegel: ["What is rational is real; and what is real is rational;"] but it had never seemed to me more evident, more palpable. Everything which is, is thought, but not conscious and individual thought. The human intelligence is but the consciousness of being. It is what I have formulated before: Everything is a symbol of a symbol, and a symbol of what? of mind.

… I have just been looking through the complete works of Montesquieu, and cannot yet make plain to myself the impression left on me by this singular style, with its mixture of gravity and affectation, of carelessness and precision, of strength and delicacy; so full of sly intention for all its coldness, expressing at once inquisitiveness and indifference, abrupt, piecemeal, like notes thrown together haphazard, and yet deliberate. I seem to see an intelligence naturally grave and austere donning a dress of wit for convention's sake. The author desires to entertain as much as to teach, the thinker is also a *bel-esprit*, the jurisconsult has a touch of the coxcomb, and a perfumed breath from the temple of Venus has penetrated the tribunal of Minos. Here we have austerity, as the century understood it, in philosophy or religion. In Montesquieu, the art, if there is any, lies not in the words but

in the matter. The words run freely and lightly, but the thought is self-conscious.

Each bud flowers but once and each flower has but its minute of perfect beauty; so, in the garden of the soul each feeling has, as it were, its flowering instant, its one and only moment of expansive grace and radiant kingship. Each star passes but once in the night through the meridian over our heads and shines there but an instant; so, in the heaven of the mind each thought touches its zenith but once, and in that moment all its brilliancy and all its greatness culminate. Artist, poet, or thinker, if you want to fix and immortalize your ideas or your feelings, seize them at this precise and fleeting moment, for it is their highest point. Before it, you have but vague outlines or dim presentiments of them. After it you will have only weakened reminiscence or powerless regret; that moment is the moment of your ideal.

Spite is anger which is afraid to show itself, it is an impotent fury conscious of its impotence.

Nothing resembles pride so much as discouragement.

To repel one's cross is to make it heavier.

In the conduct of life, habits count for more than maxims, because habit is a living maxim, becomes flesh and instinct. To reform one's maxims is nothing: it is but to change the title of

the book. To learn new habits is everything, for it is to reach the substance of life. Life is but a tissue of habits.

February 17, 1851.—I have been reading, for six or seven hours without stopping the *Pensées* of Joubert. I felt at first a very strong attraction toward the book, and a deep interest in it, but I have already a good deal cooled down. These scattered and fragmentary thoughts, falling upon one without a pause, like drops of light, tire, not my head, but reasoning power. The merits of Joubert consist in the grace of the style, the vivacity or *finesse* of the criticisms, the charm of the metaphors; but he starts many more problems than he solves, he notices and records more than he explains. His philosophy is merely literary and popular; his originality is only in detail and in execution. Altogether, he is a writer of reflections rather than a philosopher, a critic of remarkable gifts, endowed with exquisite sensibility, but, as an intelligence, destitute of the capacity for co-ordination. He wants concentration and continuity. It is not that he has no claims to be considered a philosopher or an artist, but rather that he is both imperfectly, for he thinks and writes marvelously, *on a small scale*. He is an entomologist, a lapidary, a jeweler, a coiner of sentences, of adages, of criticisms, of aphorisms, counsels, problems; and his book, extracted from the accumulations of his journal during fifty years of his life, is a collection of precious stones, of butterflies, coins and engraved gems. The whole, however, is more subtle than strong, more

poetical than profound, and leaves upon the reader rather the impression of a great wealth of small curiosities of value, than of a great intellectual existence and a new point of view. The place of Joubert seems to me then, below and very far from the philosophers and the true poets, but honorable among the moralists and the critics. He is one of those men who are superior to their works, and who have themselves the unity which these lack. This first judgment is, besides, indiscriminate and severe. I shall have to modify it later.

February 20th.—I have almost finished these two volumes of *Pensées* and the greater part of the *Correspondance*. This last has especially charmed me; it is remarkable for grace, delicacy, atticism, and precision. The chapters on metaphysics and philosophy are the most insignificant. All that has to do with large views with the whole of things, is very little at Joubert's command; he has no philosophy of history, no speculative intuition. He is the thinker of detail, and his proper field is psychology and matters of taste. In this sphere of the subtleties and delicacies of imagination and feeling, within the circle of personal affectation and preoccupations, of social and educational interests, he abounds in ingenuity and sagacity, in fine criticisms, in exquisite touches. It is like a bee going from flower to flower, a teasing, plundering, wayward zephyr, an Aeolian harp, a ray of furtive light stealing through the leaves. Taken as a whole, there is something impalpable and immaterial about him, which I will not venture to call effeminate, but which

is scarcely manly. He wants bone and body: timid, dreamy, and *clairvoyant*, he hovers far above reality. He is rather a soul, a breath, than a man. It is the mind of a woman in the character of a child, so that we feel for him less admiration than tenderness and gratitude.

February 27, 1851.—Read over the first book of *Emile*. I was revolted, contrary to all expectation, for I opened the book with a sort of hunger for style and beauty. I was conscious instead of an impression of heaviness and harshness, of labored, *hammering* emphasis, of something violent, passionate, and obstinate, without serenity, greatness, nobility. Both the qualities and the defects of the book produced in me a sense of lack of good manners, a blaze of talent, but no grace, no distinction, the accent of good company wanting. I understood how it is that Rousseau rouses a particular kind of repugnance, the repugnance of good taste, and I felt the danger to style involved in such a model as well as the danger to thought arising from a truth so alloyed and sophisticated. What there is of true and strong in Rousseau did not escape me, and I still admired him, but his bad sides appeared to me with a clearness relatively new.

(*Same day.*)—The *pensée*-writer is to the philosopher what the *dilettante* is to the artist. He plays with thought, and makes it produce a crowd of pretty things in detail, but he is more anxious about truths than truth, and what is essential in thought, its sequence, its unity, escapes him. He handles his instrument agreeably, but he does not possess it, still less does he create

it. He is a gardener and not a geologist; he cultivates the earth only so much as is necessary to make it produce for him flowers and fruits; he does not dig deep enough into it to understand it. In a word, the *pensée*-writer deals with what is superficial and fragmentary. He is the literary, the oratorical, the talking or writing philosopher; whereas the philosopher is the scientific *pensée*-writer. The *pensée*-writers serve to stimulate or to popularize the philosophers. They have thus a double use, besides their charm. They are the pioneers of the army of readers, the doctors of the crowd, the money-changers of thought, which they convert into current coin. The writer of *pensée* is a man of letters, though of a serious type, and therefore he is popular. The philosopher is a specialist, as far as the form of his science goes, though not in substance, and therefore he can never become popular. In France, for one philosopher (Descartes) there have been thirty writers of *pensées*; in Germany, for ten such writers there have been twenty philosophers.

March 25, 1851.—How many illustrious men whom I have known have been already reaped by death, Steffens, Marheineke, Neander, Mendelssohn, Thorwaldsen, Oelenschläger, Geijer, Tegner, Oersted, Stuhr, Lachmann; and with us, Sismondi, Töpffer, de Candolle, savants, artists, poets, musicians, historians. [Footnote: Of these Marheineke, Neander, and Lachmann had been lecturing at Berlin during Amiel's residence there. The Danish dramatic poet Oelenschläger and the Swedish writer Tegner were among the Scandinavian men of letters

with whom he made acquaintance during his tour of Sweden and Denmark in 1845. He probably came across the Swedish historian Geijer on the same occasion. Schelling and Alexander von Humboldt, mentioned a little lower down, were also still holding sway at Berlin when he was a student. There is an interesting description in one of his articles on Berlin, published in the *Bibliothèque Universelle de Genève*, of a university ceremonial there in or about 1847, and of the effect produced on the student's young imagination by the sight of half the leaders of European research gathered into a single room. He saw Schlosser, the veteran historian, at Heidelberg at the end of 1843.] The old generation is going. What will the new bring us? What shall we ourselves contribute? A few great old men —Schelling, Alexander von Humboldt, Schlosser—still link us with the glorious past. Who is preparing to bear the weight of the future? A shiver seizes us when the ranks grow thin around us, when age is stealing upon us, when we approach the zenith, and when destiny says to us: "Show what is in thee! Now is the moment, now is the hour, else fall back into nothingness! It is thy turn! Give the world thy measure, say thy word, reveal thy nullity or thy capacity. Come forth from the shade! It is no longer a question of promising, thou must perform. The time of apprenticeship is over. Servant, show us what thou hast done with thy talent. Speak now, or be silent forever." This appeal of the conscience is a solemn summons in the life of every man, solemn and awful as the trumpet of the last judgment. It cries, "Art thou

ready? Give an account. Give an account of thy years, thy leisure, thy strength, thy studies, thy talent, and thy works. Now and here is the hour of great hearts, the hour of heroism and of genius."

April 6, 1851.—Was there ever any one so vulnerable as I? If I were a father how many griefs and vexations, a child might cause me. As a husband I should have a thousand ways of suffering because my happiness demands a thousand conditions I have a heart too easily reached, a too restless imagination; despair is easy to me, and every sensation reverberates again and again within me. What might be, spoils for me what is. What ought to be consumes me with sadness. So the reality, the present, the irreparable, the necessary, repel and even terrify me. I have too much imagination, conscience and penetration, and not enough character. The life of thought alone seems to me to have enough elasticity and immensity, to be free enough from the irreparable; practical life makes me afraid.

And yet, at the same time it attracts me; I have need of it. Family life, especially, in all its delightfulness, in all its moral depth, appeals to me almost like a duty. Sometimes I cannot escape from the ideal of it. A companion of my life, of my work, of my thoughts, of my hopes; within, a common worship, toward the world outside, kindness and beneficence; educations to undertake, the thousand and one moral relations which develop round the first, all these ideas intoxicate me sometimes. But I put them aside because every hope is, as it were, an egg whence a serpent may issue instead of a dove, because every joy missed is

a stab; because every seed confided to destiny contains an ear of grief which the future may develop.

I am distrustful of myself and of happiness because I know myself. The ideal poisons for me all imperfect possession. Everything which compromises the future or destroys my inner liberty, which enslaves me to things or obliges me to be other than I could and ought to be, all which injures my idea of the perfect man, hurts me mortally, degrades and wounds me in mind, even beforehand. I abhor useless regrets and repentances. The fatality of the consequences which follow upon every human act, the leading idea of dramatic art and the most tragic element of life, arrests me more certainly than the arm of the *Commandeur*. I only act with regret, and almost by force.

To be dependent is to me terrible; but to depend upon what is irreparable, arbitrary and unforeseen, and above all to be so dependent by my fault and through my own error, to give up liberty and hope, to slay sleep and happiness, this would be hell!

All that is necessary, providential, in short, *unimputable*, I could bear, I think, with some strength of mind. But responsibility mortally envenoms grief; and as an act is essentially voluntary, therefore I act as little as possible.

Last outbreak of a rebellious and deceitful self-will, craving for repose for satisfaction, for independence! is there not some relic of selfishness in such a disinterestedness, such a fear, such idle susceptibility.

I wish to fulfill my duty, but where is it, what is it? Here

inclination comes in again and interprets the oracle. And the ultimate question is this: Does duty consist in obeying one's nature, even the best and most spiritual? or in conquering it?

Life, is it essentially the education of the mind and intelligence, or that of the will? And does will show itself in strength or in resignation? If the aim of life is to teach us renunciation, then welcome sickness, hindrances, sufferings of every kind! But if its aim is to produce the perfect man, then one must watch over one's integrity of mind and body. To court trial is to tempt God. At bottom, the God of justice veils from me the God of love. I tremble instead of trusting.

Whenever conscience speaks with a divided, uncertain, and disputed voice, it is not yet the voice of God. Descend still deeper into yourself, until you hear nothing but a clear and undivided voice, a voice which does away with doubt and brings with it persuasion, light and serenity. Happy, says the apostle, are they who are at peace with themselves, and whose heart condemneth them not in the part they take. This inner identity, this unity of conviction, is all the more difficult the more the mind analyzes, discriminates, and foresees. It is difficult, indeed, for liberty to return to the frank unity of instinct.

Alas! we must then re-climb a thousand times the peaks already scaled, and reconquer the points of view already won, we must *fight the fight*! The human heart, like kings, signs mere truces under a pretence of perpetual peace. The eternal life is eternally to be re-won. Alas, yes! peace itself is a struggle, or

rather it is struggle and activity which are the law. We only find rest in effort, as the flame only finds existence in combustion. O Heraclitus! the symbol of happiness is after all the same as that of grief; anxiety and hope, hell and heaven, are equally restless. The altar of Vesta and the sacrifice of Beelzebub burn with the same fire. Ah, yes, there you have life—life double-faced and double-edged. The fire which enlightens is also the fire which consumes; the element of the gods may become that of the accursed.

April 7, 1851.—Read a part of Ruge's [Footnote: Arnold Ruge, born in 1803, died at Brighton in 1880, principal editor of the *Hallische*, afterward the *Deutsche Jahrbücher* (1838-43), in which Strauss, Bruno Bauer, and Louis Feuerbach wrote. He was a member of the parliament of Frankfort.] volume "*Die Academie*" (1848) where the humanism of the neo-Hegelians in politics, religion, and literature is represented by correspondents or articles (Kuno Fischer, Kollach, etc). They recall the *philosophist* party of the last century, able to dissolve anything by reason and reasoning, but unable to construct anything; for construction rests upon feeling, instinct, and will. One finds them mistaking philosophic consciousness for realizing power, the redemption of the intelligence for the redemption of the heart, that is to say, the part for the whole. These papers make me understand the radical difference between morals and intellectualism. The writers of them wish to supplant religion by philosophy. Man is the principle of their religion, and intellect is the climax of man. Their religion, then,

is the religion of intellect. There you have the two worlds: Christianity brings and preaches salvation by the conversion of the will, humanism by the emancipation of the mind. One attacks the heart, the other the brain. Both wish to enable man to reach his ideal. But the ideal differs, if not by its content, at least by the disposition of its content, by the predominance and sovereignty given to this for that inner power. For one, the mind is the organ of the soul; for the other, the soul is an inferior state of the mind; the one wishes to enlighten by making better, the other to make better by enlightening. It is the difference between Socrates and Jesus.

The cardinal question is that of sin. The question of immanence or of dualism is secondary. The trinity, the life to come, paradise and hell, may cease to be dogmas, and spiritual realities, the form and the letter may vanish away, the question of humanity remains: What is it which saves? How can man be led to be truly man? Is the ultimate root of his being responsibility, yes or no? And is doing or knowing the right, acting or thinking, his ultimate end? If science does not produce love it is insufficient. Now all that science gives is the *amor intellectualis* of Spinoza, light without warmth, a resignation which is contemplative and grandiose, but inhuman, because it is scarcely transmissible and remains a privilege, one of the rarest of all. Moral love places the center of the individual in the center of being. It has at least salvation in principle, the germ of eternal life. *To love is virtually to know; to know is not virtually to love*;

there you have the relation of these two modes of man. The redemption wrought by science or by intellectual love is then inferior to the redemption wrought by will or by moral love. The first may free a man from himself, it may enfranchise him from egotism. The second drives the *ego* out of itself, makes it active and fruitful. The one is critical, purifying, negative; the other is vivifying, fertilizing, positive. Science, however spiritual and substantial it may be in itself, is still formal relatively to love. Moral force is then the vital point. And this force is only produced by moral force. Like alone acts upon like. Therefore do not amend by reasoning, but by example; approach feeling by feeling; do not hope to excite love except by love. Be what you wish others to become. Let yourself and not your words preach for you.

Philosophy, then, to return to the subject, can never replace religion; revolutionaries are not apostles, although the apostles may have been revolutionaries. To save from the outside to the inside—and by the outside I understand also the intelligence relatively to the will—is an error and danger. The negative part of the humanist's work is good; it will strip Christianity of an outer shell, which has become superfluous; but Ruge and Feuerbach cannot save humanity. She must have her saints and her heroes to complete the work of her philosophers. Science is the power of man, and love his strength; man *becomes* man only by the intelligence, but he *is* man only by the heart. Knowledge, love, power—there is the complete life.

June 16, 1851.—This evening I walked up and down on the Pont des Bergues, under a clear, moonless heaven delighting in the freshness of the water, streaked with light from the two quays, and glimmering under the twinkling stars. Meeting all these different groups of young people, families, couples and children, who were returning to their homes, to their garrets or their drawing-rooms, singing or talking as they went, I felt a movement of sympathy for all these passers-by; my eyes and ears became those of a poet or a painter; while even one's mere kindly curiosity seems to bring with it a joy in living and in seeing others live.

August 15, 1851.—To know how to be ready, a great thing, a precious gift, and one that implies calculation, grasp and decision. To be always ready a man must be able to cut a knot, for everything cannot be untied; he must know how to disengage what is essential from the detail in which it is enwrapped, for everything cannot be equally considered; in a word, he must be able to simplify his duties, his business, and his life. To know how to be ready, is to know how to start.

It is astonishing how all of us are generally cumbered up with the thousand and one hindrances and duties which are not such, but which nevertheless wind us about with their spider threads and fetter the movement of our wings. It is the lack of order which makes us slaves; the confusion of to-day discounts the freedom of to-morrow.

Confusion is the enemy of all comfort, and confusion is born

of procrastination. To know how to be ready we must be able to finish. Nothing is done but what is finished. The things which we leave dragging behind us will start up again later on before us and harass our path. Let each day take thought for what concerns it, liquidate its own affairs and respect the day which is to follow, and then we shall be always ready. To know how to be ready is at bottom to know how to die.

September 2, 1851.—Read the work of Tocqueville ("*De la Democratie en Amérique*.") My impression is as yet a mixed one. A fine book, but I feel in it a little too much imitation of Montesquieu. This abstract, piquant, sententious style, too, is a little dry, over-refined and monotonous. It has too much cleverness and not enough imagination. It makes one think, more than it charms, and though really serious, it seems flippant. His method of splitting up a thought, of illuminating a subject by successive facets, has serious inconveniences. We see the details too clearly, to the detriment of the whole. A multitude of sparks gives but a poor light. Nevertheless, the author is evidently a ripe and penetrating intelligence, who takes a comprehensive view of his subject, while at the same time possessing a power of acute and exhaustive analysis.

September 6th.—Tocqueville's book has on the whole a calming effect upon the mind, but it leaves a certain sense of disgust behind. It makes one realize the necessity of what is happening around us and the inevitableness of the goal prepared for us; but it also makes it plain that the era of *mediocrity*

in everything is beginning, and mediocrity freezes all desire. Equality engenders uniformity, and it is by sacrificing what is excellent, remarkable, and extraordinary that we get rid of what is bad. The whole becomes less barbarous, and at the same time more vulgar.

The age of great men is going; the epoch of the ant-hill, of life in multiplicity, is beginning. The century of individualism, if abstract equality triumphs, runs a great risk of seeing no more true individuals. By continual leveling and division of labor, society will become everything and man nothing.

As the floor of valleys is raised by the denudation and washing down of the mountains, what is average will rise at the expense of what is great. The exceptional will disappear. A plateau with fewer and fewer undulations, without contrasts and without oppositions, such will be the aspect of human society. The statistician will register a growing progress, and the moralist a gradual decline: on the one hand, a progress of things; on the other, a decline of souls. The useful will take the place of the beautiful, industry of art, political economy of religion, and arithmetic of poetry. The spleen will become the malady of a leveling age.

Is this indeed the fate reserved for the democratic era? May not the general well-being be purchased too dearly at such a price? The creative force which in the beginning we see forever tending to produce and multiply differences, will it afterward retrace its steps and obliterate them one by one? And equality,

which in the dawn of existence is mere inertia, torpor, and death, is it to become at last the natural form of life? Or rather, above the economic and political equality to which the socialist and non-socialist democracy aspires, taking it too often for the term of its efforts, will there not arise a new kingdom of mind, a church of refuge, a republic of souls, in which, far beyond the region of mere right and sordid utility, beauty, devotion, holiness, heroism, enthusiasm, the extraordinary, the infinite, shall have a worship and an abiding city? Utilitarian materialism, barren well-being, the idolatry of the flesh and of the "I," of the temporal and of mammon, are they to be the goal if our efforts, the final recompense promised to the labors of our race? I do not believe it. The ideal of humanity is something different and higher.

But the animal in us must be satisfied first, and we must first banish from among us all suffering which is superfluous and has its origin in social arrangements, before we can return to spiritual goods.

September 7, 1851. (*Aix*).—It is ten o'clock at night. A strange and mystic moonlight, with a fresh breeze and a sky crossed by a few wandering clouds, makes our terrace delightful. These pale and gentle rays shed from the zenith a subdued and penetrating peace; it is like the calm joy or the pensive smile of experience, combined with a certain stoic strength. The stars shine, the leaves tremble in the silver light. Not a sound in all the landscape; great gulfs of shadow under the green alleys and at the corners of the steps. Everything is secret, solemn, mysterious.

O night hours, hours of silence and solitude! with you are grace and melancholy; you sadden and you console. You speak to us of all that has passed away, and of all that must still die, but you say to us, "courage!" and you promise us rest.

November 9, 1851. (Sunday).—At the church of St. Gervais, a second sermon from Adolphe Monod, less grandiose perhaps but almost more original, and to me more edifying than that of last Sunday. The subject was St. Paul or the active life, his former one having been St. John or the inner life, of the Christian. I felt the golden spell of eloquence: I found myself hanging on the lips of the orator, fascinated by his boldness, his grace, his energy, and his art, his sincerity, and his talent; and it was borne in upon me that for some men difficulties are a source of inspiration, so that what would make others stumble is for them the occasion of their highest triumphs. He made St. Paul *cry* during an hour and a half; he made an old nurse of him, he hunted up his old cloak, his prescriptions of water and wine to Timothy, the canvas that he mended, his friend Tychicus, in short, all that could raise a smile; and from it he drew the most unfailing pathos, the most austere and penetrating lessons. He made the whole St. Paul, martyr, apostle and man, his grief, his charities, his tenderness, live again before us, and this with a grandeur, an unction, a warmth of reality, such as I had never seen equaled.

How stirring is such an apotheosis of pain in our century of comfort, when shepherds and sheep alike sink benumbed in Capuan languors, such an apotheosis of ardent charity in a time

of coldness and indifference toward souls, such an apotheosis of a *human*, natural, inbred Christianity, in an age, when some put it, so to speak, above man, and others below man! Finally, as a peroration, he dwelt upon the necessity for a new people, for a stronger generation, if the world is to be saved from the tempests which threaten it. "People of God, awake! Sow in tears, that ye may reap in triumph!" What a study is such a sermon! I felt all the extraordinary literary skill of it, while my eyes were still dim with tears. Diction, composition, similes, all is instructive and precious to remember. I was astonished, shaken, taken hold of.

November 18, 1851.—The energetic subjectivity, which has faith in itself, which does not fear to be something particular and definite without any consciousness or shame of its subjective illusion, is unknown to me. I am, so far as the intellectual order is concerned, essentially objective, and my distinctive speciality, is to be able to place myself in all points of view, to see through all eyes, to emancipate myself, that is to say, from the individual prison. Hence aptitude for theory and irresolution in practice; hence critical talent and difficulty in spontaneous production. Hence, also, a continuous uncertainty of conviction and opinion, so long as my aptitude remained mere instinct; but now that it is conscious and possesses itself, it is able to conclude and affirm in its turn, so that, after having brought disquiet, it now brings peace. It says: "There is no repose for the mind except in the absolute; for feeling, except in the infinite; for the soul, except in the divine." Nothing finite is true, is interesting, or worthy to

fix my attention. All that is particular is exclusive, and all that is exclusive, repels me. There is nothing non-exclusive but the All; my end is communion with Being through the whole of Being. Then, in the light of the absolute, every idea becomes worth studying; in that of the infinite, every existence worth respecting; in that of the divine, every creature worth loving.

December 2, 1851.—Let mystery have its place in you; do not be always turning up your whole soil with the plowshare of self-examination, but leave a little fallow corner in your heart ready for any seed the winds may bring, and reserve a nook of shadow for the passing bird; keep a place in your heart for the unexpected guests, an altar for the unknown God. Then if a bird sing among your branches, do not be too eager to tame it. If you are conscious of something new—thought or feeling, wakening in the depths of your being—do not be in a hurry to let in light upon it, to look at it; let the springing germ have the protection of being forgotten, hedge it round with quiet, and do not break in upon its darkness; let it take shape and grow, and not a word of your happiness to any one! Sacred work of nature as it is, all conception should be enwrapped by the triple veil of modesty, silence and night.

Kindness is the principle of tact, and respect for others the first condition of *savoir-vivre*.

He who is silent is forgotten; he who abstains is taken at

his word; he who does not advance, falls back; he who stops is overwhelmed, distanced, crushed; he who ceases to grow greater becomes smaller; he who leaves off, gives up; the stationary condition is the beginning of the end—it is the terrible symptom which precedes death. To live, is to achieve a perpetual triumph; it is to assert one's self against destruction, against sickness, against the annulling and dispersion of one's physical and moral being. It is to will without ceasing, or rather to refresh one's will day by day.

It is not history which teaches conscience to be honest; it is the conscience which educates history. Fact is corrupting, it is we who correct it by the persistence of our ideal. The soul moralizes the past in order not to be demoralized by it. Like the alchemists of the middle ages, she finds in the crucible of experience only the gold that she herself has poured into it.

February 1, 1852. (Sunday).—Passed the afternoon in reading the *Monologues* of Schleiermacher. This little book made an impression on me almost as deep as it did twelve years ago, when I read it for the first time. It replunged me into the inner world, to which I return with joy whenever I may have forsaken it. I was able besides, to measure my progress since then by the transparency of all the thoughts to me, and by the freedom with which I entered into and judged the point of view.

It is great, powerful, profound, but there is still pride in it, and

even selfishness. For the center of the universe is still the self, the great *Ich* of Fichte. The tameless liberty, the divine dignity of the individual spirit, expanding till it admits neither any limit nor anything foreign to itself, and conscious of a strength instinct with creative force, such is the point of view of the *Monologues*.

The inner life in its enfranchisement from time, in its double end, the realization of the species and of the individuality, in its proud dominion over all hostile circumstances, in its prophetic certainty of the future, in its immortal youth, such is their theme. Through them we are enabled to enter into a life of monumental interest, wholly original and beyond the influence of anything exterior, an astonishing example of the autonomy of the *ego*, an imposing type of character, Zeno and Fichte in one. But still the motive power of this life is not religious; it is rather moral and philosophic. I see in it not so much a magnificent model to imitate as a precious subject of study. This ideal of a liberty, absolute, indefeasible, inviolable, respecting itself above all, disdaining the visible and the universe, and developing itself after its own laws alone, is also the ideal of Emerson, the stoic of a young America. According to it, man finds his joy in himself, and, safe in the inaccessible sanctuary, of his personal consciousness, becomes almost a god. [Footnote: Compare Clough's lines:

> "Where are the great, whom thou would'st wish to praise thee?

Where are the pure, whom thou would'st choose to love thee?
Where are the brave, to stand supreme above thee?
Whose high commands would cheer, whose chidings raise thee?
Seek, seeker, in thyself; submit to find
In the stones, bread, and life in the blank mind."]

He is himself principle, motive, and end of his own destiny; he is himself, and that is enough for him. This superb triumph of life is not far from being a sort of impiety, or at least a displacement of adoration. By the mere fact that it does away with humility, such a superhuman point of view becomes dangerous; it is the very temptation to which the first man succumbed, that of becoming his own master by becoming like unto the Elohim. Here then the heroism of the philosopher approaches temerity, and the *Monologues* are therefore open to three reproaches: Ontologically, the position of man in the spiritual universe is wrongly indicated; the individual soul, not being unique and not springing from itself, can it be conceived without God? Psychologically, the force of spontaneity in the *ego* is allowed a dominion too exclusive of any other. As a fact, it is not everything in man. Morally, evil is scarcely named, and conflict, the condition of true peace, is left out of count. So that the peace described in the *Monologues* is neither a conquest by man nor a grace from heaven; it is rather a stroke of good fortune.

February 2d.—Still the *Monologues*. Critically I defended

myself enough against them yesterday; I may abandon myself now, without scruple and without danger, to the admiration and the sympathy with which they inspire me. This life so proudly independent, this sovereign conception of human dignity, this actual possession of the universe and the infinite, this perfect emancipation from all which passes, this calm sense of strength and superiority, this invincible energy of will, this infallible clearness of self-vision, this autocracy of the consciousness which is its own master, all these decisive marks of a royal personality of a nature Olympian, profound, complete, harmonious, penetrate the mind with joy and heart with gratitude. What a life! what a man! These glimpses into the inner regions of a great soul do one good. Contact of this kind strengthens, restores, refreshes. Courage returns as we gaze; when we see what has been, we doubt no more that it can be again. At the sight of a *man* we too say to ourselves, let us also be men.

March 3, 1852.—Opinion has its value and even its power: to have it against us is painful when we are among friends, and harmful in the case of the outer world. We should neither flatter opinion nor court it; but it is better, if we can help it, not to throw it on to a false scent. The first error is a meanness; the second an imprudence. We should be ashamed of the one; we may regret the other. Look to yourself; you are much given to this last fault, and it has already done you great harm. Be ready to bend your pride; abase yourself even so far as to show yourself

ready and clever like others. This world of skillful egotisms and active ambitions, this world of men, in which one must deceive by smiles, conduct, and silence as much as by actual words, a world revolting to the proud and upright soul, it is our business to learn to live in it! Success is required in it: succeed. Only force is recognized there: be strong. Opinion seeks to impose her law upon all, instead of setting her at defiance, it would be better to struggle with her and conquer.... I understand the indignation of contempt, and the wish to crush, roused irresistibly by all that creeps, all that is tortuous, oblique, ignoble.... But I cannot maintain such a mood, which is a mood of vengeance, for long. This world is a world of men, and these men are our brothers. We must not banish from us the divine breath, we must love. Evil must be conquered by good; and before all things one must keep a pure conscience. Prudence may be preached from this point of view too. "Be ye simple as the dove and prudent as the serpent," are the words of Jesus. Be careful of your reputation, not through vanity, but that you may not harm your life's work, and out of love for truth. There is still something of self-seeking in the refined disinterestedness which will not justify itself, that it may feel itself superior to opinion. It requires ability, to make what we seem agree with what we are, and humility, to feel that we are no great things.

There, thanks to this journal, my excitement has passed away. I have just read the last book of it through again, and the morning has passed by. On the way I have been conscious of a certain

amount of monotony. It does not signify! These pages are not written to be read; they are written for my own consolation and warning. They are landmarks in my past; and some of the landmarks are funeral crosses, stone pyramids, withered stalks grown green again, white pebbles, coins—all of them helpful toward finding one's way again through the Elysian fields of the soul. The pilgrim has marked his stages in it; he is able to trace by it his thoughts, his tears, his joys. This is my traveling diary: if some passages from it may be useful to others, and if sometimes even I have communicated such passages to the public, these thousand pages as a whole are only of value to me and to those who, after me, may take some interest in the itinerary of an obscurely conditioned soul, far from the world's noise and fame. These sheets will be monotonous when my life is so; they will repeat themselves when feelings repeat themselves; truth at any rate will be always there, and truth is their only muse, their only pretext, their only duty.

April 2, 1852.—What a lovely walk! Sky clear, sun rising, all the tints bright, all the outlines sharp, save for the soft and misty infinite of the lake. A pinch of white frost, powdered the fields, lending a metallic relief to the hedges of green box, and to the whole landscape, still without leaves, an air of health and vigor, of youth and freshness. "Bathe, O disciple, thy thirsty soul in the dew of the dawn!" says Faust, to us, and he is right. The morning air breathes a new and laughing energy into veins and marrow. If every day is a repetition of life, every dawn gives signs as it

were a new contract with existence. At dawn everything is fresh, light, simple, as it is for children. At dawn spiritual truth, like the atmosphere, is more transparent, and our organs, like the young leaves, drink in the light more eagerly, breathe in more ether, and less of things earthly. If night and the starry sky speak to the meditative soul of God, of eternity and the infinite, the dawn is the time for projects, for resolutions, for the birth of action. While the silence and the "sad serenity of the azure vault," incline the soul to self-recollection, the vigor and gayety of nature spread into the heart and make it eager for life and living. Spring is upon us. Primroses and violets have already hailed her coming. Rash blooms are showing on the peach trees; the swollen buds of the pear trees and the lilacs point to the blossoming that is to be; the honeysuckles are already green.

April 26, 1852.—This evening a feeling of emptiness took possession of me; and the solemn ideas of duty, the future, solitude, pressed themselves upon me. I gave myself to meditation, a very necessary defense against the dispersion and distraction brought about by the day's work and its detail. Read a part of Krause's book "*Urbild der Menschheit*" [Footnote: Christian Frederick Krause, died 1832, Hegel's younger contemporary, and the author of a system which he called *panentheism*—Amiel alludes to it later on.] which answered marvelously to my thought and my need. This philosopher has always a beneficent effect upon me; his sweet religious serenity gains upon me and invades me. He inspires me

with a sense of peace and infinity.

Still I miss something, common worship, a positive religion, shared with other people. Ah! when will the church to which I belong in heart rise into being? I cannot like Scherer, content myself with being in the right all alone. I must have a less solitary Christianity. My religious needs are not satisfied any more than my social needs, or my needs of affection. Generally I am able to forget them and lull them to sleep. But at times they wake up with a sort of painful bitterness … I waver between languor and *ennui*, between frittering myself away on the infinitely little, and longing after what is unknown and distant. It is like the situation which French novelists are so fond of, the story of a *vie de province*; only the province is all that is not the country of the soul, every place where the heart feels itself strange, dissatisfied, restless and thirsty. Alas! well understood, this place is the earth, this country of one's dreams is heaven, and this suffering is the eternal homesickness, the thirst for happiness.

"*In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister*," says Goethe. *Mâle résignation*, this also is the motto of those who are masters of the art of life; "manly," that is to say, courageous, active, resolute, persevering, "resignation," that is to say, self-sacrifice, renunciation, limitation. Energy in resignation, there lies the wisdom of the sons of earth, the only serenity possible in this life of struggle and of combat. In it is the peace of martyrdom, in it too the promise of triumph.

April 28, 1852. (Lancy.) [Footnote: A village near Geneva.]

—Once more I feel the spring languor creeping over me, the spring air about me. This morning the poetry of the scene, the song of the birds, the tranquil sunlight, the breeze blowing over the fresh green fields, all rose into and filled my heart. Now all is silent. O silence, thou art terrible! terrible as that calm of the ocean which lets the eye penetrate the fathomless abysses below. Thou showest us in ourselves depths which make us giddy, inextinguishable needs, treasures of suffering. Welcome tempests! at least they blur and trouble the surface of these waters with their terrible secrets. Welcome the passion blasts which stir the wares of the soul, and so veil from us its bottomless gulfs! In all of us, children of dust, sons of time, eternity inspires an involuntary anguish, and the infinite, a mysterious terror. We seem to be entering a kingdom of the dead. Poor heart, thy craving is for life, for love, for illusions! And thou art right after all, for life is sacred.

In these moments of *tête-à-tête* with the infinite, how different life looks! How all that usually occupies and excites us becomes suddenly puerile, frivolous and vain. We seem to ourselves mere puppets, marionettes, strutting seriously through a fantastic show, and mistaking gewgaws for things of great price. At such moments, how everything becomes transformed, how everything changes! Berkeley and Fichte seem right, Emerson too; the world is but an allegory; the idea is more real than the fact; fairy tales, legends, are as true as natural history, and even more true, for they are emblems of greater transparency. The only

substance properly so called is the soul. What is all the rest? Mere shadow, pretext, figure, symbol, or dream. Consciousness alone is immortal, positive, perfectly real. The world is but a firework, a sublime phantasmagoria, destined to cheer and form the soul. Consciousness is a universe, and its sun is love....

Already I am falling back into the objective life of thought. It delivers me from—shall I say? no, it deprives me of the intimate life of feeling. Reflection solves reverie and burns her delicate wings. This is why science does not make men, but merely entities and abstractions. Ah, let us feel and live and beware of too much analysis! Let us put spontaneity, *naïveté*, before reflection, experience before study; let us make life itself our study. Shall I then never have the heart of a woman to rest upon? a son in whom to live again, a little world where I may see flowering and blooming all that is stifled in me? I shrink and draw back, for fear of breaking my dream. I have staked so much on this card that I dare not play it. Let me dream again....

Do no violence to yourself, respect in yourself the oscillations of feeling. They are your life and your nature; One wiser than you ordained them. Do not abandon yourself altogether either to instinct or to will. Instinct is a siren, will a despot. Be neither the slave of your impulses and sensations of the moment, nor of an abstract and general plan; be open to what life brings from within and without, and welcome the unforeseen; but give to your life unity, and bring the unforeseen within the lines of your plan. Let what is natural in you raise itself to the level of the spiritual,

and let the spiritual become once more natural. Thus will your development be harmonious, and the peace of heaven will shine upon your brow; always on condition that your peace is made, and that you have climbed your Calvary.

Afternoon—Shall I ever enjoy again those marvelous reveries of past days, as, for instance, once, when I was still quite a youth, in the early dawn, sitting among the ruins of the castle of Faucigny; another time in the mountains above Lavey, under the midday sun, lying under a tree and visited by three butterflies; and again another night on the sandy shore of the North Sea, stretched full length upon the beach, my eyes wandering over the Milky Way? Will they ever return to me, those grandiose, immortal, cosmogonic dreams, in which one seems to carry the world in one's breast, to touch the stars, to possess the infinite? Divine moments, hours of ecstasy, when thought flies from world to world, penetrates the great enigma, breathes with a respiration large, tranquil, and profound, like that of the ocean, and hovers serene and boundless like the blue heaven! Visits from the muse, Urania, who traces around the foreheads of those she loves the phosphorescent nimbus of contemplative power, and who pours into their hearts the tranquil intoxication, if not the authority of genius, moments of irresistible intuition in which a man feels himself great like the universe and calm like a god! From the celestial spheres down to the shell or the moss, the whole of creation is then submitted to our gaze, lives in our breast, and accomplishes in us its eternal work with the regularity of destiny

and the passionate ardor of love. What hours, what memories! The traces which remain to us of them are enough to fill us with respect and enthusiasm, as though they had been visits of the Holy Spirit. And then, to fall back again from these heights with their boundless horizons into the muddy ruts of triviality! what a fall! Poor Moses! Thou too sawest undulating in the distance the ravishing hills of the promised land, and it was thy fate nevertheless to lay thy weary bones in a grave dug in the desert! Which of us has not his promised land, his day of ecstasy and his death in exile? What a pale counterfeit is real life of the life we see in glimpses, and how these flaming lightnings of our prophetic youth make the twilight of our dull monotonous manhood more dark and dreary!

April 29 (Lancy).—This morning the air was calm, the sky slightly veiled. I went out into the garden to see what progress the spring was making. I strolled from the irises to the lilacs, round the flower-beds, and in the shrubberies. Delightful surprise! at the corner of the walk, half hidden under a thick clump of shrubs, a small leaved *chorchorus* had flowered during the night. Gay and fresh as a bunch of bridal flowers, the little shrub glittered before me in all the attraction of its opening beauty. What springlike innocence, what soft and modest loveliness, there was in these white corollas, opening gently to the sun, like thoughts which smile upon us at waking, and perched upon their young leaves of virginal green like bees upon the wing! Mother of marvels, mysterious and tender nature, why do we not live more in thee?

The poetical *flâneurs* of Töpffer, his Charles and Jules, the friends and passionate lovers of thy secret graces, the dazzled and ravished beholders of thy beauties, rose up in my memory, at once a reproach and a lesson. A modest garden and a country rectory, the narrow horizon of a garret, contain for those who know how to look and to wait more instruction than a library, even than that of *Mon oncle*. [Footnote: The allusions in this passage are to Töpffer's best known books—"La Presbytère" and "La Bibliothèque de mon Oncle," that airy chronicle of a hundred romantic or vivacious nothings which has the young student Jules for its center.] Yes, we are too busy, too encumbered, too much occupied, too active! We read too much! The one thing needful is to throw off all one's load of cares, of preoccupations, of pedantry, and to become again young, simple, child-like, living happily and gratefully in the present hour. We must know how to put occupation aside, which does not mean that we must be idle. In an inaction which is meditative and attentive the wrinkles of the soul are smoothed away, and the soul itself spreads, unfolds, and springs afresh, and, like the trodden grass of the roadside or the bruised leaf of a plant, repairs its injuries, becomes new, spontaneous, true, and original. Reverie, like the rain of night, restores color and force to thoughts which have been blanched and wearied by the heat of the day. With gentle fertilizing power it awakens within us a thousand sleeping germs, and as though in play, gathers round us materials for the future, and images for the use of talent. *Reverie is the Sunday of thought*; and who knows

which is the more important and fruitful for man, the laborious tension of the week, or the life-giving repose of the Sabbath? The *flânerie* so exquisitely glorified and sung by Töpffer is not only delicious, but useful. It is like a bath which gives vigor and suppleness to the whole being, to the mind as to the body; it is the sign and festival of liberty, a joyous and wholesome banquet, the banquet of the butterfly wandering from flower to flower over the hills and in the fields. And remember, the soul too is a butterfly.

May 2, 1852. (Sunday) Lancy.—This morning read the epistle of St. James, the exegetical volume of Cellérier [Footnote: Jacob-Élysée Cellérier, professor of theology at the Academy of Geneva, and son of the pastor of Satigny mentioned in Madame de Staël's "L'Allemagne."] on this epistle, and a great deal of Pascal, after having first of all passed more than an hour in the garden with the children. I made them closely examine the flowers, the shrubs, the grasshoppers, the snails, in order to practice them in observation, in wonder, in kindness.

How enormously important are these first conversations of childhood! I felt it this morning with a sort of religious terror. Innocence and childhood are sacred. The sower who casts in the seed, the father or mother casting in the fruitful word are accomplishing a pontifical act and ought to perform it with religious awe, with prayer and gravity, for they are laboring at the kingdom of God. All seed-sowing is a mysterious thing, whether the seed fall into the earth or into souls. Man is a husbandman;

his whole work rightly understood is to develop life, to sow it everywhere. Such is the mission of humanity, and of this divine mission the great instrument is speech. We forget too often that language is both a seed-sowing and a revelation. The influence of a word in season, is it not incalculable? What a mystery is speech! But we are blind to it, because we are carnal and earthy. We see the stones and the trees by the road, the furniture of our houses, all that is palpable and material. We have no eyes for the invisible phalanxes of ideas which people the air and hover incessantly around each one of us.

Every life is a profession of faith, and exercises an inevitable and silent propaganda. As far as lies in its power, it tends to transform the universe and humanity into its own image. Thus we have all a cure of souls. Every man is the center of perpetual radiation like a luminous body; he is, as it were, a beacon which entices a ship upon the rocks if it does not guide it into port. Every man is a priest, even involuntarily; his conduct is an unspoken sermon, which is forever preaching to others; but there are priests of Baal, of Moloch, and of all the false gods. Such is the high importance of example. Thence comes the terrible responsibility which weighs upon us all. An evil example is a spiritual poison: it is the proclamation of a sacrilegious faith, of an impure God. Sin would be only an evil for him who commits it, were it not a crime toward the weak brethren, whom it corrupts. Therefore, it has been said: “It were better for a man not to have been born than to offend one of these little ones.”

May 6, 1852.—It is women who, like mountain flowers, mark with most characteristic precision the gradation of social zones. The hierarchy of classes is plainly visible among them; it is blurred in the other sex. With women this hierarchy has the average regularity of nature; among men we see it broken by the incalculable varieties of human freedom. The reason is that the man on the whole, makes himself by his own activity, and that the woman, is, on the whole, made by her situation; that the one modifies and shapes circumstance by his own energy, while the gentleness of the other is dominated by and reflects circumstance; so that woman, so to speak, inclines to be species, and man to be individual.

Thus, which is curious, women are at once the sex which is most constant and most variable. Most constant from the moral point of view, most variable from the social. A confraternity in the first case, a hierarchy in the second. All degrees of culture and all conditions of society are clearly marked in their outward appearance, their manners and their tastes; but the inward fraternity is traceable in their feelings, their instincts, and their desires. The feminine sex represents at the same time natural and historical inequality; it maintains the unity of the species and marks off the categories of society, it brings together and divides, it gathers and separates, it makes castes and breaks through them, according as it interprets its twofold *rôle* in the one sense or the other. At bottom, woman's mission is essentially conservative, but she is a conservative without discrimination.

On the one side, she maintains God's work in man, all that is lasting, noble, and truly human, in the race, poetry, religion, virtue, tenderness. On the other, she maintains the results of circumstance, all that is passing, local, and artificial in society; that is to say, customs, absurdities, prejudices, littlenesses. She surrounds with the same respectful and tenacious faith the serious and the frivolous, the good and the bad. Well, what then? Isolate if you can, the fire from its smoke. It is a divine law that you are tracing, and therefore good. The woman preserves; she is tradition as the man is progress. And if there is no family and no humanity without the two sexes, without these two forces there is no history.

May 14, 1852. (Lancy.)—Yesterday I was full of the philosophy of joy, of youth, of the spring, which smiles and the roses which intoxicate; I preached the doctrine of strength, and I forgot that, tried and afflicted like the two friends with whom I was walking, I should probably have reasoned and felt as they did.

Our systems, it has been said, are the expression of our character, or the theory of our situation, that is to say, we like to think of what has been given as having been acquired, we take our nature for our own work, and our lot in life for our own conquest, an illusion born of vanity and also of the craving for liberty. We are unwilling to be the product of circumstances, or the mere expansion of an inner germ. And yet we have received everything, and the part which is really ours, is small indeed, for it is mostly made up of negation, resistance, faults. We receive

everything, both life and happiness; but the *manner* in which we receive, this is what is still ours. Let us then, receive trustfully without shame or anxiety. Let us humbly accept from God even our own nature, and treat it charitably, firmly, intelligently. Not that we are called upon to accept the evil and the disease in us, but let us accept *ourselves* in spite of the evil and the disease. And let us never be afraid of innocent joy; God is good, and what He does is well done; resign yourself to everything, even to happiness; ask for the spirit of sacrifice, of detachment, of renunciation, and above all, for the spirit of joy and gratitude, that genuine and religious optimism which sees in God a father, and asks no pardon for His benefits. We must dare to be happy, and dare to confess it, regarding ourselves always as the depositaries, not as the authors of our own joy.

… This evening I saw the first glow-worm of the season in the turf beside the little winding road which descends from Lancy toward the town. It was crawling furtively under the grass, like a timid thought or a dawning talent.

June 17, 1852.—Every despotism has a specially keen and hostile instinct for whatever keeps up human dignity, and independence. And it is curious to see scientific and realist teaching used everywhere as a means of stifling all freedom of investigation as addressed to moral questions under a dead weight of facts. Materialism is the auxiliary doctrine of every tyranny, whether of the one or of the masses. To crush what

is spiritual, moral, human so to speak, in man, by specializing him; to form mere wheels of the great social machine, instead of perfect individuals; to make society and not conscience the center of life, to enslave the soul to things, to de-personalize man, this is the dominant drift of our epoch. Everywhere you may see a tendency to substitute the laws of dead matter (number, mass) for the laws of the moral nature (persuasion, adhesion, faith) equality, the principle of mediocrity, becoming a dogma; unity aimed at through uniformity; numbers doing duty for argument; negative liberty, which has no law *in itself*, and recognizes no limit except in force, everywhere taking the place of positive liberty, which means action guided by an inner law and curbed by a moral authority. Socialism *versus* individualism: this is how Vinet put the dilemma. I should say rather that it is only the eternal antagonism between letter and spirit, between form and matter, between the outward and the inward, appearance and reality, which is always present in every conception and in all ideas.

Materialism coarsens and petrifies everything; makes everything vulgar and every truth false. And there is a religious and political materialism which spoils all that it touches, liberty, equality, individuality. So that there are two ways of understanding democracy....

What is threatened to-day is moral liberty, conscience, respect for the soul, the very nobility of man. To defend the soul, its interests, its rights, its dignity, is the most pressing duty for

whoever sees the danger. What the writer, the teacher, the pastor, the philosopher, has to do, is to defend humanity in man. Man! the true man, the ideal man! Such should be their motto, their rallying cry. War to all that debases, diminishes, hinders, and degrades him; protection for all that fortifies, ennobles, and raises him. The test of every religious, political, or educational system, is the man which it forms. If a system injures the intelligence it is bad. If it injures the character it is vicious. If it injures the conscience it is criminal.

August 12, 1852. (Lancy.)—Each sphere of being tends toward a higher sphere, and has already revelations and presentiments of it. The ideal under all its forms is the anticipation and the prophetic vision of that existence, higher than his own, toward which every being perpetually aspires. And this higher and more dignified existence is more inward in character, that is to say, more spiritual. Just as volcanoes reveal to us the secrets of the interior of the globe, so enthusiasm and ecstasy are the passing explosions of this inner world of the soul; and human life is but the preparation and the means of approach to this spiritual life. The degrees of initiation are innumerable. Watch, then, disciple of life, watch and labor toward the development of the angel within thee! For the divine Odyssey is but a series of more and more ethereal metamorphoses, in which each form, the result of what goes before, is the condition of those which follow. The divine life is a series of successive deaths, in which the mind throws off its imperfections and its

symbols, and yields to the growing attraction of the ineffable center of gravitation, the sun of intelligence and love. Created spirits in the accomplishment of their destinies tend, so to speak, to form constellations and milky ways within the empyrean of the divinity; in becoming gods, they surround the throne of the sovereign with a sparkling court. In their greatness lies their homage. The divinity with which they are invested is the noblest glory of God. God is the father of spirits, and the constitution of the eternal kingdom rests on the vassalship of love.

September 27, 1852. (Lancy.)—To-day I complete my thirty-first year....

The most beautiful poem there is, is life—life which discerns its own story in the making, in which inspiration and self-consciousness go together and help each other, life which knows itself to be the world in little, a repetition in miniature of the divine universal poem. Yes, be man; that is to say, be nature, be spirit, be the image of God, be what is greatest, most beautiful, most lofty in all the spheres of being, be infinite will and idea, a reproduction of the great whole. And be everything while being nothing, effacing thyself, letting God enter into thee as the air enters an empty space, reducing the *ego* to the mere vessel which contains the divine essence. Be humble, devout, silent, that so thou mayest hear within the depths of thyself the subtle and profound voice; be spiritual and pure, that so thou mayest have communion with the pure spirit. Withdraw thyself often into the sanctuary of thy inmost consciousness; become once more point

and atom, that so thou mayest free thyself from space, time, matter, temptation, dispersion, that thou mayest escape thy very organs themselves and thine own life. That is to say, die often, and examine thyself in the presence of this death, as a preparation for the last death. He who can without shuddering confront blindness, deafness, paralysis, disease, betrayal, poverty; he who can without terror appear before the sovereign justice, he alone can call himself prepared for partial or total death. How far am I from anything of the sort, how far is my heart from any such stoicism! But at least we can try to detach ourselves from all that can be taken away from us, to accept everything as a loan and a gift, and to cling only to the imperishable—this at any rate we can attempt. To believe in a good and fatherly God, who educates us, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, who punishes only when he must, and takes away only with regret; this thought, or rather this conviction, gives courage and security. Oh, what need we have of love, of tenderness, of affection, of kindness, and how vulnerable we are, we the sons of God, we, immortal and sovereign beings! Strong as the universe or feeble as the worm, according as we represent God or only ourselves, as we lean upon infinite being, or as we stand alone.

The point of view of religion, of a religion at once active and moral, spiritual and profound, alone gives to life all the dignity and all the energy of which it is capable. Religion makes invulnerable and invincible. Earth can only be conquered in the name of heaven. All good things are given over and above to him

who desires but righteousness. To be disinterested is to be strong, and the world is at the feet of him whom it cannot tempt. Why? Because spirit is lord of matter, and the world belongs to God. "Be of good cheer," saith a heavenly voice, "I have overcome the world."

Lord, lend thy strength to those who are weak in the flesh, but willing in the spirit!

October 31, 1852. (Lancy.)—Walked for half an hour in the garden. A fine rain was falling, and the landscape was that of autumn. The sky was hung with various shades of gray, and mists hovered about the distant mountains, a melancholy nature. The leaves were falling on all sides like the last illusions of youth under the tears of irremediable grief. A brood of chattering birds were chasing each other through the Shrubberies, and playing games among the branches, like a knot of hiding schoolboys. The ground strewn with leaves, brown, yellow, and reddish; the trees half-stripped, some more, some less, and decked in ragged splendors of dark-red, scarlet, and yellow; the reddening shrubs and plantations; a few flowers still lingering behind, roses, nasturtiums, dahlias, shedding their petals round them; the bare fields, the thinned hedges; and the fir, the only green thing left, vigorous and stoical, like eternal youth braving decay; all these innumerable and marvelous symbols which forms colors, plants, and living beings, the earth and the sky, yield at all times to the eye which has learned to look for them, charmed and enthralled me. I wielded a poetic wand, and had but to touch a

phenomenon to make it render up to me its moral significance. Every landscape is, as it were, a state of the soul, and whoever penetrates into both is astonished to find how much likeness there is in each detail. True poetry is truer than science, because it is synthetic, and seizes at once what the combination of all the sciences is able at most to attain as a final result. The soul of nature is divined by the poet; the man of science, only serves to accumulate materials for its demonstration.

November 6, 1852.—I am capable of all the passions, for I bear them all within me. Like a tamer of wild beasts, I keep them caged and lassoed, but I sometimes hear them growling. I have stifled more than one nascent love. Why? Because with that prophetic certainty which belongs to moral intuition, I felt it lacking in true life, and less durable than myself. I choked it down in the name of the supreme affection to come. The loves of sense, of imagination, of sentiment, I have seen through and rejected them all; I sought the love which springs from the central profundities of being. And I still believe in it. I will have none of those passions of straw which dazzle, burn up, and wither; I invoke, I await, and I hope for the love which is great, pure and earnest, which lives and works in all the fibres and through all the powers of the soul. And even if I go lonely to the end, I would rather my hope and my dream died with me, than that my soul should content itself with any meaner union.

November 8, 1852.—Responsibility is my invisible nightmare. To suffer through one's own fault is a torment worthy

of the lost, for so grief is envenomed by ridicule, and the worst ridicule of all, that which springs from shame of one's self. I have only force and energy wherewith to meet evils coming from outside; but an irreparable evil brought about by myself, a renunciation for life of my liberty, my peace of mind, the very thought of it is maddening—I expiate my privilege indeed. My privilege is to be spectator of my life drama, to be fully conscious of the tragi-comedy of my own destiny, and, more than that, to be in the secret of the tragi-comic itself, that is to say, to be unable to take my illusions seriously, to see myself, so to speak, from the theater on the stage, or to be like a man looking from beyond the tomb into existence. I feel myself forced to feign a particular interest in my individual part, while all the time I am living in the confidence of the poet who is playing with all these agents which seem so important, and knows all that they are ignorant of. It is a strange position, and one which becomes painful as soon as grief obliges me to betake myself once more to my own little *rôle*, binding me closely to it, and warning me that I am going too far in imagining myself, because of my conversations with the poet, dispensed from taking up again my modest part of valet in the piece. Shakespeare must have experienced this feeling often, and Hamlet, I think, must express it somewhere. It is a *Doppelgängerei*, quite German in character, and which explains the disgust with reality and the repugnance to public life, so common among the thinkers of Germany. There is, as it were, a degradation a gnostic fall, in thus folding one's wings and

going back again into the vulgar shell of one's own individuality. Without grief, which is the string of this venturesome kite, man would soar too quickly and too high, and the chosen souls would be lost for the race, like balloons which, save for gravitation, would never return from the empyrean.

How, then, is one to recover courage enough for action? By striving to restore in one's self something of that unconsciousness, spontaneity, instinct, which reconciles us to earth and makes man useful and relatively happy.

By believing more practically in the providence which pardons and allows of reparation.

By accepting our human condition in a more simple and childlike spirit, fearing trouble less, calculating less, hoping more. For we decrease our responsibility, if we decrease our clearness of vision, and fear lessens with the lessening of responsibility.

By extracting a richer experience out of our losses and lessons.

November 9, 1852.—A few pages of the *Chrestomathie Française* and Vinet's remarkable letter at the head of the volume, have given me one or two delightful hours. As a thinker, as a Christian, and as a man, Vinet occupies a typical place. His philosophy, his theology, his esthetics, in short, his work, will be, or has been already surpassed at all points. His was a great soul and a fine talent. But neither were well enough served by circumstances. We see in him a personality worthy of all veneration, a man of singular goodness and a writer of

distinction, but not quite a great man, nor yet a great writer. Profundity and purity, these are what he possesses in a high degree, but not greatness, properly speaking. For that, he is a little too subtle and analytical, too ingenious and fine-spun; his thought is overladen with detail, and has not enough flow, eloquence, imagination, warmth, and largeness. Essentially and constantly meditative, he has not strength enough left to deal with what is outside him. The casuistries of conscience and of language, eternal self-suspicion, and self-examination, his talent lies in these things, and is limited by them. Vinet wants passion, abundance, *entraînement*, and therefore popularity. The individualism which is his title to glory is also the cause of his weakness.

We find in him always the solitary and the ascetic. His thought is, as it were, perpetually at church; it is perpetually devising trials and penances for itself. Hence the air of scruple and anxiety which characterizes it even in its bolder flights. Moral energy, balanced by a disquieting delicacy of fibre; a fine organization marred, so to speak, by low health, such is the impression it makes upon us. Is it reproach or praise to say of Vinet's mind that it seems to one a force perpetually reacting upon itself? A warmer and more self-forgetful manner; more muscles, as it were, around the nerves, more circles of intellectual and historical life around the individual circle, these are what Vinet, of all writers perhaps the one who makes us *think* most, is still lacking in. Less *reflexivity* and more plasticity, the eye more on

the object, would raise the style of Vinet, so rich in substance, so nervous, so full of ideas, and variety, into a grand style. Vinet, to sum up, is conscience personified, as man and as writer. Happy the literature and the society which is able to count at one time two or three like him, if not equal to him!

November 10, 1852.—How much have we not to learn from the Greeks, those immortal ancestors of ours! And how much better they solved their problem than we have solved ours. Their ideal man is not ours, but they understood infinitely better than we how to reverence, cultivate and ennoble the man whom they knew. In a thousand respects we are still barbarians beside them, as Béranger said to me with a sigh in 1843: barbarians in education, in eloquence, in public life, in poetry, in matters of art, etc. We must have millions of men in order to produce a few elect spirits: a thousand was enough in Greece. If the measure of a civilization is to be the number of perfected men that it produces, we are still far from this model people. The slaves are no longer below us, but they are among us. Barbarism is no longer at our frontiers; it lives side by side with us. We carry within us much greater things than they, but we ourselves are smaller. It is a strange result. Objective civilization produced great men while making no conscious effort toward such a result; subjective civilization produces a miserable and imperfect race, contrary to its mission and its earnest desire. The world grows more majestic but man diminishes. Why is this?

We have too much barbarian blood in our veins, and we

lack measure, harmony and grace. Christianity, in breaking man up into outer and inner, the world into earth and heaven, hell and paradise, has decomposed the human unity, in order, it is true, to reconstruct it more profoundly and more truly. But Christianity has not yet digested this powerful leaven. She has not yet conquered the true humanity; she is still living under the antimony of sin and grace, of here below and there above. She has not penetrated into the whole heart of Jesus. She is still in the *narthex* of penitence; she is not reconciled, and even the churches still wear the livery of service, and have none of the joy of the daughters of God, baptized of the Holy Spirit.

Then, again, there is our excessive division of labor; our bad and foolish education which does not develop the whole man; and the problem of poverty. We have abolished slavery, but without having solved the question of labor. In law there are no more slaves, in fact, there are many. And while the majority of men are not free, the free man, in the true sense of the term can neither be conceived nor realized. Here are enough causes for our inferiority.

November 12, 1852.—St. Martin's summer is still lingering, and the days all begin in mist. I ran for a quarter of an hour round the garden to get some warmth and suppleness. Nothing could be lovelier than the last rosebuds, or than the delicate gaufred edges of the strawberry leaves embroidered with hoar-frost, while above them Arachne's delicate webs hung swaying in the green branches of the pines, little ball-rooms for the fairies

carpeted with powdered pearls and kept in place by a thousand dewy strands hanging from above like the chains of a lamp and supporting them from below like the anchors of a vessel. These little airy edifices had all the fantastic lightness of the elf-world and all the vaporous freshness of dawn. They recalled to me the poetry of the north, wafting to me a breath from Caledonia or Iceland or Sweden, Frithiof and the Edda, Ossian and the Hebrides. All that world of cold and mist, of genius and of reverie, where warmth comes not from the sun but from the heart where man is more noticeable than nature—that chaste and vigorous world in which will plays a greater part than sensation and thought has more power than instinct—in short the whole romantic cycle of German and northern poetry, awoke little by little in my memory and laid claim upon my sympathy. It is a poetry of bracing quality, and acts upon one like a moral tonic. Strange charm of imagination! A twig of pine wood and a few spider-webs are enough to make countries, epochs, and nations live again before her.

December 26, 1852. (Sunday.)—If I reject many portions of our theology and of our church system, it is that I may the better reach the Christ himself. My philosophy allows me this. It does not state the dilemma as one of religion or philosophy, but as one of religion accepted or experienced, understood or not understood. For me philosophy is a manner of apprehending things, a mode of perception of reality. It does not create nature, man or God, but it finds them and seeks to understand them.

Philosophy is consciousness taking account of itself with all that it contains. Now consciousness may contain a new life—the facts of regeneration and of salvation, that is to say, Christian experience. The understanding of the Christian consciousness is an integral part of philosophy, as the Christian consciousness is a leading form of religious consciousness, and religious consciousness an essential form of consciousness.

An error is the more dangerous in proportion to the degree of truth which it contains.

Look twice, if what you want is a just conception; look once, if what you want is a sense of beauty.

A man only understands what is akin to something already existing in himself.

Common sense is the measure of the possible; it is composed of experience and prevision; it is calculation applied to life.

The wealth of each mind is proportioned to the number and to the precision of its categories and its points of view.

To feel himself freer than his neighbor is the reward of the critic.

Modesty (*pudeur*) is always the sign and safeguard of a mystery. It is explained by its contrary—profanation. Shyness

or modesty is, in truth, the half-conscious sense of a secret of nature or of the soul too intimately individual to be given or surrendered. It is *exchanged*. To surrender what is most profound and mysterious in one's being and personality at any price less than that of absolute reciprocity is profanation.

January 6, 1853.—Self-government with tenderness—here you have the condition of all authority over children. The child must discover in us no passion, no weakness of which he can make use; he must feel himself powerless to deceive or to trouble us; then he will recognize in us his natural superiors, and he will attach a special value to our kindness, because he will respect it. The child who can rouse in us anger, or impatience, or excitement, feels himself stronger than we, and a child only respects strength. The mother should consider herself as her child's sun, a changeless and ever radiant world, whither the small restless creature, quick at tears and laughter, light, fickle, passionate, full of storms, may come for fresh stores of light, warmth, and electricity, of calm and of courage. The mother represents goodness, providence, law; that is to say, the divinity, under that form of it which is accessible to childhood. If she is herself passionate, she will inculcate on her child a capricious and despotic God, or even several discordant gods. The religion of a child depends on what its mother and its father are, and not on what they say. The inner and unconscious ideal which guides their life is precisely what touches the child; their words, their remonstrances, their punishments, their bursts of feeling even,

are for him merely thunder and comedy; what they worship, this it is which his instinct divines and reflects.

The child sees what we are, behind what we wish to be. Hence his reputation as a physiognomist. He extends his power as far as he can with each of us; he is the most subtle of diplomatists. Unconsciously he passes under the influence of each person about him, and reflects it while transforming it after his own nature. He is a magnifying mirror. This is why the first principle of education is: train yourself; and the first rule to follow if you wish to possess yourself of a child's will is: master your own.

February 5, 1853 (seven o'clock in the morning).—I am always astonished at the difference between one's inward mood of the evening and that of the morning. The passions which are dominant in the evening, in the morning leave the field free for the contemplative part of the soul. Our whole being, irritated and overstrung by the nervous excitement of the day, arrives in the evening at the culminating point of its human vitality; the same being, tranquilized by the calm of sleep, is in the morning nearer heaven. We should weigh a resolution in the two balances, and examine an idea under the two lights, if we wish to minimize the chances of error by taking the average of our daily oscillations. Our inner life describes regular curves, barometical curves, as it were, independent of the accidental disturbances which the storms of sentiment and passion may raise in us. Every soul has its climate, or rather, is a climate; it has, so to speak, its own meteorology in the general meteorology

of the soul. Psychology, therefore, cannot be complete so long as the physiology of our planet is itself incomplete—that science to which we give nowadays the insufficient name of physics of the globe.

I became conscious this morning that what appears to us impossible is often an impossibility altogether subjective. Our mind, under the action of the passions, produces by a strange mirage gigantic obstacles, mountains or abysses, which stop us short. Breathe upon the passion and the phantasmagoria will vanish. This power of mirage, by which we are able to delude and fascinate ourselves, is a moral phenomenon worthy of attentive study. We make for ourselves, in truth, our own spiritual world monsters, chimeras, angels, we make objective what ferments in us. All is marvelous for the poet; all is divine for the saint; all is great for the hero; all is wretched, miserable, ugly, and bad for the base and sordid soul. The bad man creates around him a pandemonium, the artist, an Olympus, the elect soul, a paradise, which each of them sees for himself alone. We are all visionaries, and what we see is our soul in things. We reward ourselves and punish ourselves without knowing it, so that all appears to change when we change.

The soul is essentially active, and the activity of which we are conscious is but a part of our activity, and voluntary activity is but a part of our conscious activity. Here we have the basis of a whole psychology and system of morals. Man reproducing the world, surrounding himself with a nature which is the objective

rendering of his spiritual nature, rewarding and punishing himself; the universe identical with the divine nature, and the nature of the perfect spirit only becoming understood according to the measure of our perfection; intuition the recompense of inward purity; science as the result of goodness; in short, a new phenomenology more complete and more moral, in which the total soul of things becomes spirit. This shall perhaps be my subject for my summer lectures. How much is contained in it! the whole domain of inner education, all that is mysterious in our life, the relation of nature to spirit, of God and all other beings to man, the repetition in miniature of the cosmogony, mythology, theology, and history of the universe, the evolution of mind, in a word the problem of problems into which I have often plunged but from which finite things, details, minutiae, have turned me back a thousand times. I return to the brink of the great abyss with the clear perception that here lies the problem of science, that to sound it is a duty, that God hides Himself only in light and love, that He calls upon us to become spirits, to possess ourselves and to possess Him in the measure of our strength and that it is our incredulity, our spiritual cowardice, which is our infirmity and weakness.

Dante, gazing into the three worlds with their divers heavens, saw under the form of an image what I would fain seize under a purer form. But he was a poet, and I shall only be a philosopher. The poet makes himself understood by human generations and by the crowd; the philosopher addresses himself only to a few

rare minds. The day has broken. It brings with it dispersion of thought in action. I feel myself de-magnetized, pure clairvoyance gives place to study, and the ethereal depth of the heaven of contemplation vanishes before the glitter of finite things. Is it to be regretted? No. But it proves that the hours most apt for philosophical thought are those which precede the dawn.

February 10, 1853.—This afternoon I made an excursion to the Salève with my particular friends, Charles Heim, Edmond Scherer, Élie Lecoultre, and Ernest Naville. The conversation was of the most interesting kind, and prevented us from noticing the deep mud which hindered our walking. It was especially Scherer, Naville, and I who kept it alive. Liberty in God, the essence of Christianity, new publications in philosophy, these were our three subjects of conversation. The principle result for me was an excellent exercise in dialectic and in argumentation with solid champions. If I learned nothing, many of my ideas gained new confirmation, and I was able to penetrate more deeply into the minds of my friends. I am much nearer to Scherer than to Naville, but from him also I am in some degree separated.

It is a striking fact, not unlike the changing of swords in "Hamlet," that the abstract minds, those which move from ideas to facts, are always fighting on behalf of concrete reality; while the concrete minds, which move from facts to ideas, are generally the champions of abstract notions. Each pretends to that over which he has least power; each aims instinctively at what he himself lacks. It is an unconscious protest against the

incompleteness of each separate nature. We all tend toward that which we possess least of, and our point of arrival is essentially different from our point of departure. The promised land is the land where one is not. The most intellectual of natures adopts an ethical theory of mind; the most moral of natures has an intellectual theory of morals. This reflection was brought home to me in the course of our three or four hours' discussion. Nothing is more hidden from us than the illusion which lives with us day by day, and our greatest illusion is to believe that we are what we think ourselves to be.

The mathematical intelligence and the historical intelligence (the two classes of intelligences) can never understand each other. When they succeed in doing so as to words, they differ as to the things which the words mean. At the bottom of every discussion of detail between them reappears the problem of the origin of ideas. If the problem is not present to them, there is confusion; if it is present to them, there is separation. They only agree as to the goal—truth; but never as to the road, the method, and the criterion.

Heim represented the impartiality of consciousness, Naville the morality of consciousness, Lecoultre the religion of consciousness, Scherer the intelligence of consciousness, and I the consciousness of consciousness. A common ground, but differing individualities. *Discrimen ingeniorum*.

What charmed me most in this long discussion was the sense of mental freedom which it awakened in me. To be able

to set in motion the greatest subjects of thought without any sense of fatigue, to be greater than the world, to play with one's strength, this is what makes the well-being of intelligence, the Olympic festival of thought. *Habere, non haberi.* There is an equal happiness in the sense of reciprocal confidence, of friendship, and esteem in the midst of conflict; like athletes, we embrace each other before and after the combat, and the combat is but a deploying of the forces of free and equal men.

March 20, 1853.—I sat up alone; two or three times I paid a visit to the children's room. It seemed to me, young mothers, that I understood you! sleep is the mystery of life; there is a profound charm in this darkness broken by the tranquil light of the night-lamp, and in this silence measured by the rhythmic breathings of two young sleeping creatures. It was brought home to me that I was looking on at a marvelous operation of nature, and I watched it in no profane spirit. I sat silently listening, a moved and hushed spectator of this poetry of the cradle, this ancient and ever new benediction of the family, this symbol of creation, sleeping under the wing of God, of our consciousness withdrawing into the shade that it may rest from the burden of thought, and of the tomb, that divine bed, where the soul in its turn rests from life. To sleep is to strain and purify our emotions, to deposit the mud of life, to calm the fever of the soul, to return into the bosom of maternal nature, thence to re-issue, healed and strong. Sleep is a sort of innocence and purification. Blessed be He who gave it to the poor sons of men as the sure and faithful

companion of life, our daily healer and consoler.

April 27, 1853.—This evening I read the treatise by Nicole so much admired by Mme. de Sévigné: "*Des moyens de conserver la paix avec les hommes.*" Wisdom so gentle and so insinuating, so shrewd, piercing, and yet humble, which divines so well the hidden thoughts and secrets of the heart, and brings them all into the sacred bondage of love to God and man, how good and delightful a thing it is! Everything in it is smooth, even well put together, well thought out, but no display, no tinsel, no worldly ornaments of style. The moralist forgets himself and in us appeals only to the conscience. He becomes a confessor, a friend, a counsellor.

May 11, 1853.—Psychology, poetry, philosophy, history, and science, I have swept rapidly to-day on the wings of the invisible hippogriff through all these spheres of thought. But the general impression has been one of tumult and anguish, temptation and disquiet.

I love to plunge deep into the ocean of life; but it is not without losing sometimes all sense of the axis and the pole, without losing myself and feeling the consciousness of my own nature and vocation growing faint and wavering. The whirlwind of the wandering Jew carries me away, tears me from my little familiar enclosure, and makes me behold all the empires of men. In my voluntary abandonment to the generality, the universal, the infinite, my particular *ego* evaporates like a drop of water in a furnace; it only condenses itself anew at the return of

cold, after enthusiasm has died out and the sense of reality has returned. Alternate expansion and condensation, abandonment and recovery of self, the conquest of the world to be pursued on the one side, the deepening of consciousness on the other—such is the play of the inner life, the march of the microcosmic mind, the marriage of the individual soul with the universal soul, the finite with the infinite, whence springs the intellectual progress of man. Other betrothals unite the soul to God, the religious consciousness with the divine; these belong to the history of the will. And what precedes will is feeling, preceded itself by instinct. Man is only what he becomes—profound truth; but he becomes only what he is, truth still more profound. What am I? Terrible question! Problem of predestination, of birth, of liberty, there lies the abyss. And yet one must plunge into it, and I have done so. The prelude of Bach I heard this evening predisposed me to it; it paints the soul tormented and appealing and finally seizing upon God, and possessing itself of peace and the infinite with an all-prevailing fervor and passion.

May 14, 1853.—Third quartet concert. It was short. Variations for piano and violin by Beethoven, and two quartets, not more. The quartets were perfectly clear and easy to understand. One was by Mozart and the other by Beethoven, so that I could compare the two masters. Their individuality seemed to become plain to me: Mozart—grace, liberty, certainty, freedom, and precision of style, and exquisite and aristocratic beauty, serenity of soul, the health and talent of the master,

both on a level with his genius; Beethoven—more pathetic, more passionate, more torn with feeling, more intricate, more profound, less perfect, more the slave of his genius, more carried away by his fancy or his passion, more moving, and more sublime than Mozart. Mozart refreshes you, like the "Dialogues" of Plato; he respects you, reveals to you your strength, gives you freedom and balance. Beethoven seizes upon you; he is more tragic and oratorical, while Mozart is more disinterested and poetical. Mozart is more Greek, and Beethoven more Christian. One is serene, the other serious. The first is stronger than destiny, because he takes life less profoundly; the second is less strong, because he has dared to measure himself against deeper sorrows. His talent is not always equal to his genius, and pathos is his dominant feature, as perfection is that of Mozart. In Mozart the balance of the whole is perfect, and art triumphs; in Beethoven feeling governs everything and emotion troubles his art in proportion as it deepens it.

July 26, 1853.—Why do I find it easier and more satisfactory, as a writer of verse, to compose in the short metres than in the long and serious ones? Why, in general, am I better fitted for what is difficult than for what is easy? Always for the same reason. I cannot bring myself to move freely, to show myself without a veil, to act on my own account and act seriously, to believe in and assert myself, whereas a piece of badinage which diverts attention from myself to the thing in hand, from the feeling to the skill of the writer, puts me at my ease. It is

timidity which is at the bottom of it. There is another reason, too—I am afraid of greatness, I am not afraid of ingenuity, and distrustful as I am both of my gift and my instrument, I like to reassure myself by an elaborate practice of execution. All my published literary essays, therefore, are little else than studies, games, exercises for the purpose of testing myself. I play scales, as it were; I run up and down my instrument, I train my hand and make sure of its capacity and skill. But the work itself remains unachieved. My effort expires, and satisfied with the *power* to act I never arrive at the will to act. I am always preparing and never accomplishing, and my energy is swallowed up in a kind of barren curiosity. Timidity, then, and curiosity—these are the two obstacles which bar against me a literary career. Nor must procrastination be forgotten. I am always reserving for the future what is great, serious, and important, and meanwhile, I am eager to exhaust what is pretty and trifling. Sure of my devotion to things that are vast and profound, I am always lingering in their contraries lest I should neglect them. Serious at bottom, I am frivolous in appearance. A lover of thought, I seem to care above all, for expression; I keep the substance for myself, and reserve the form for others. So that the net result of my timidity is that I never treat the public seriously, and that I only show myself to it in what is amusing, enigmatical, or capricious; the result of my curiosity is that everything tempts me, the shell as well as the mountain, and that I lose myself in endless research; while the habit of procrastination keeps me forever at preliminaries and

antecedents, and production itself is never even begun.

But if that is the fact, the fact might be different. I understand myself, but I do not approve myself.

August 1, 1853.—I have just finished Pelletan's book, "Profession de foi du dix-neuvième Siècle." It is a fine book Only one thing is wanting to it—the idea of evil. It is a kind of supplement to the theory of Condorcet—indefinite perfectibility, man essentially good, *life*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.