

the second, of these he compares the impression made upon Alfred de Vigny by Royer-Collard, in the visit he made to him as candidate for a vacant chair in the Academy, when the old philosopher and statesman wounded the vanity of the younger writer so deeply by his celebrated reply: "A mon âge je ne lis plus, je relis," with that which he received himself in a similar visit, when the old man did him the honor to talk of his own life and not of his visitor's writings. A delicate and charming portrait of M. Nisard, by E. Abot, and a reproduction of one of Royer-Collard, in the costume of the *incroyables* of his earlier life, illustrate this portion of the article and add to its value. Comte Armand de Pontmartin, who has also reached the age when everything is tinged with recollections of the past, gives a little sketch which hovers between fiction and reality: "La véritable auberge des Adrets." Baron d'Estournelles de Constant recalls "Un promenade autour de Tunis avant les embellissements du Protectorat." M. Maurice Tournoux, with his usual conciseness and clearness, and with that perfection in the selection and arrangement of materials with which he is gifted, has made of the long and serious article, "La Fédération du 14 Juillet 1790," not only the most important, but also the most interesting, paper of the number. Among the numerous documents of the period of which M. Tournoux makes use, is a certain "Avis aux confédérés," by a most unexpected patriot and moralist, the famous, or ill-famed, Restif de la Bretonne. This pamphlet of the moment, of which the general good sense is as applicable to the present time as it was to the days of universal peace and good-will a hundred years ago when it appeared, M. Tournoux calls, with justice, one of the most curious pages of "l'œuvre informe et parfois prodigieuse" of its author. He also speaks of it as not mentioned by any of the recent biographers of Restif. There is a charming little poem, by M. Armand Silvestre, "Floraison"; and M. Pierre d'Igny, in his serial, takes his young countess to London in June.

—The brilliant article of the number, however, is "L'Archipel," by M. Gaston Bergeret, in which this charming writer relates, with the delicacy and grace of his always subdued sarcasm, the conquest, the pacification, and the organization of a colony in the Indian Ocean. All that relates to the Governor of the islands and to the *commissaire général* who supplanted him, and especially to the delightful savage tribes, the Niazous, is exquisitely indicated, with the lightest of touches. The only exaggeration is in the really charming Miss Dolly Simpson, the daughter of the English missionary; but she is caricatured with such delicacy, there is such an exquisite vagueness about the real meaning of her not too idiomatic French, that it all passes without opposition, and the final situation is so supremely comic that the reader turns the last page in the most complete good understanding with the author, and gratitude to him for a half hour spent with such cheerful gaiety.

—It is evident from the onslaught made on Prof. Friedrich Delitzsch, in the London *Academy* of July 23, in a review of the first fascicle of his 'Assyrian Dictionary,' that his recent veering around on what Orientalists call the Sumero-Accadian question has keenly nettled some of the orthodox students of the so-called pro-Chaldean, or pro-Semitic, cuneiform literary remains. We can imagine what the feelings of François Lenormant, author of the 'Études Accadiennes' and 'La Langue Primitive de la Chaldée,' would be if he had lived to see the most brilliant and most diligent Assyriologist of Germany deserting the camp of the Sumero-Accadists, and reinforcing the hitherto almost solitary post of the Frenchman's Parisian opponent, the "anti-Accadist,"

Joseph Halévy. And we are anxious to see what the impetuous Fritz Hommel, who, in his 'Die Semitischen Völker und Sprachen,' has poured out so much presumptuous learning and hair-splitting ingenuity on the "vorsemitische Kultur" of Babylonia, will have to say on this untoward turn in the Leipzig professor's Assyriological evolution. The story of this turn, gradually foreshadowed in various recent contributions to Assyriology, and now almost completed, is told in a very interesting way by Prof. Lyon of Cambridge in an extensive notice of the 'Assyrian Dictionary,' read before the American Oriental Society at its meeting in Boston in May last, and just published in its *Journal*. Some two years ago Delitzsch, after some guarded advances in the new direction, seized an opportunity "to recognize openly," as he wrote, "the high services of Halévy relating to the Sumero-Accadian question, above all to the question as to the existence of original Sumero-Accadian texts." It seemed to him "necessary to test anew, unbiassed in all details, this fundamentally important 'tradition' which has been delivered to us younger Assyriologists." Numerous remarks of the Dictionary show that, after doing a great deal of fresh testing, he is only one step removed from Halévy's tenet that the civilization of Mesopotamia was from its beginning distinctively Semitic—not borrowed, with its cuneiform system of writing, from a primitive race, Turanian or other, which preceded the Chaldeans; and that what was held by the Sumero-Accadists to be pro-Semitic literary remains, is only a hieratic way of writing Assyrian. It is needless to add that by the new accession Halévy's view, though considerably strengthened, is far from having become victorious, and that the old contest will only wax hotter. What is clearly shown is how shaky the ground is still on which the lofty Assyriological constructions of our time are being reared, and how much Delitzsch himself will have to revise and correct of what he has already announced as discovered and proved.

COLVIN'S KEATS.

Keats. By Sidney Colvin. [English Men of Letters Series.] Harper & Bros. 1887.

THE circumstances and general character of the life of Keats are already well known; the criticism of his works and of his temperament is abundant; little more remained for Mr. Colvin to do than to set down the result in a brief continuous narrative and to harmonize the features of the portrait. But each new writer brings something of his own, and in the case of one so individualized, so refined, and so self-confident as Mr. Colvin, this personal element in the work is bound to be very prominent. It first shows itself in a contemptuous reference to Leigh Hunt, and this tone of half-mocking, half-patronizing depreciation of that "writer of amiable memory and second-rate powers" is maintained throughout. It is much easier, no doubt, to tolerate Hunt's faults than to admit his merits, and to a later day the literary fashion of his cloth offers marks for ridicule, as is usual with fashions of all kinds once they are out of date; but he was the "man of taste" of his time, just as Mr. Colvin is of ours; one cannot help perceiving the points of resemblance in the literary type, though of course Mr. Colvin's taste is far purer, higher, and more exacting, in proportion as the culture of the time it is developed out of is richer and finer than that of the late Georgian age. This similarity, not between their characters and talents, but in their literary habit, points in certain ways the revolutions of "taste." There is a strain in Leigh Hunt, and in others besides Keats among his associates, of weakness, almost of pulpiness, which

all the world is ready enough to condemn now. Thus, Mr. Colvin remarks of Hunt's "Rimini" that it has some "agreeable passages," but "for the rest the pleasant creature does but exaggerate in this poem the chief foible of his prose, redoubling his vivacious airs where they are least in place, and handling the great passions of the theme with a tea-party manner and vocabulary that are intolerable." A little later he goes on: "In matters of poetic feeling and fancy Keats and Hunt had not a little in common; both alike were given to 'luxuriating' somewhat effusively and fondly over the 'deliciousness' of whatever they liked in art, books, or nature." This is true, certainly, and hits off by emphasis the initial weakness of Keats, though it is somewhat too subtle a stroke to condemn it in Hunt rather than in the hero of the biography; and in the midst of the satiric and belittling sentences one remembers that "luxuriating over deliciousness" not unaptly describes the style of the æsthetic school now reigning about Oxford, and that in certain art criticisms Mr. Colvin himself is not altogether guiltless of it. Mr. Lowell went out of his way to say a good word for Hunt not long ago. Apart from his patriotic services and his books, not yet altogether dead, he had the distinction of pleasing through a long life an extraordinary variety of men of genius, and of being kindly regarded by them, from Shelley to Carlyle; and a biographer of Keats, whom he befriended, might fitly have spared the ridicule of him which is perhaps the most marked thing in this volume and the most inexcusable.

To come to Keats, the poetical legend about him is now fairly dissipated. He was not the bard killed by the reviewer. He was an English boy of the middle class, with much physical pugnacity and warm friendliness, and with courage and self-respect enough to make him ready to fight his way and take his fate. He was thoroughly ambitious, thoroughly sensitive, and he felt the weight of hostile criticism probably more than he confessed, and he seems to have shrunk into himself from the coldness of public indifference to his first works; but he had no thought of dying from the "article." Hereditary consumption seized him and killed him. A second part of the legend about him is less easily destroyed, but it is now fairly on the way to extinction—namely, the characterization of him as a sensuous poet without ideas. He had strong senses, of course; but he had also a growing mind, and was getting hold of the realities of thought and life with a strength and a width of vision in which alone is there any excuse for calling him, as Mr. Colvin does, "Shaksperian." There is little justice in the adjective, and it belongs to him only potentially, if at all; but in the thoughts of his letters there is often a maturity as marvellous as their felicity of phrase, and in "Hyperion" and in some of the odes there is more than the promise of intellectual power. His sense of style and his feeling for the color of words, together with his physical sensibility, count for much; but his clear and shining imagination, and that intellectual fire which is the centre of great poetry, were the prophecy of his immortality even then. No large portion of his verse is of the first order, but that third of it which really constitutes his fame, and is in its realm unique and perfect, gives, on analysis, imagination and thought as its constituent elements, equally with sensuousness of remarkable purity. Acquaintance and study only deepen the impression—which Mr. Colvin states, though he does not argue for it with anything like the total strength of his case—that in Keats English literature lost a poet of the life of man rather than of the shows of things. The growth and tendency of his mind and the bending of his conscious aim towards that issue are clear; whether the creative vision and the executive skill would

have been his in the grand proportion necessary for a great poet in that sphere, is hardly more than matter of speculation. But as it is a gain to character to know that he was not "snuffed out" by Lockhart, it is a still greater gain to find in him not the puerile idol of a sentimental sensuality, but a manly, natural fellow, in whom truth as well as beauty was a passion, and who was inspired poet enough to put man at the centre of all things.

Mr. Colvin, as has been said, presents this view of him, though he might have supported it better than he does. In point of the character to be ascribed to Keats, no one would find this biography lacking in essentials. He adopts, however, too broadly the theory of Arnold that Keats in his love was "passion's slave." One feels that Mr. Arnold objected to that less because of the fact, than because in his love-letters Keats expressed himself in what eminent respectability considers an "underbred" way. The subject, with all its limiting and mitigating circumstances, need not detain us. In the criticism of Keats's works Mr. Colvin is less fortunate. Of general and illuminating criticism there is none at all. What there is of the minute kind, as, for example, the fault he finds in the "Ode to a Nightingale": "By a breach of logic which is also, I think, a flaw in the poetry, he contrasts the transitoriness of human life, meaning the life of the individual, with the permanence of the song-bird's life, meaning the life of a type." This is just one of those plausible criticisms which are inapplicable because the magic of the poem keeps it outside of the mind while the poem is being read; and that is not really a fault in a poem which cannot be felt as a fault when it is being read. So, too, in the criticism with regard to the town that will be for ever "emptied of its folk," which readers will remember is one of the most charming passages of the "Ode on a Grecian Urn"—"In these lines there seems a dissonance, inasmuch as they speak of the arrest of life as though it were an infliction in the sphere of reality, and not merely, like the instances of such arrest given further back, a necessary condition in the sphere of art, having in that sphere its own compensations"; this is irrefragable, but it amounts to nothing. In other cases, as where he says:

"Neither is Milton a match for Keats in work like this:

"Throughout all the Isle—
There was no covert, no retired cave
Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves,
Though scarcely heard in many a green recess";

or where he condemns the lips that

"poesied with hers in dewy rhyme"

as "an effusively false touch in the sugared taste not infrequent in his earliest verses"; or where he cites the fine lines,

"Only the dreamer venoms all his days,
Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve,"

as "a cry of the spirit vanquished by the flesh"—in all such cases we can only put a note of exclamation in the margin. The whole treatment of the works is too piecemeal and over-refined; the criticism lacks body, mass, comprehension, and is always pottering about the superficialities of the poetry, the minor touches, the finish, the accidents of its imagery and movement, to the neglect of its substance.

On the whole, we are constrained to think that, bad as Leigh Hunt's poetry was at its worst, he was a better poetical critic than even Mr. Colvin. The latter's work in this branch of his subject by no means takes the place of the studies of others; one feels lacunæ in it everywhere. The sonnets, for example, are as inadequately represented in the total criticism as the wonderfully good letters in the biography itself. In the way of minute criticism, one point is made against Mr. Gosse which is worth mention. The latter has traced

in "Endymion" the influence of the "Pharonmida" of Chamberlayne, upon which suggestion Mr. Colvin remarks that "there is nothing in his treatment of the measure for which precedent may not be found in the work of almost every poet who employed it during the half-century that followed its brilliant revival for the purposes of narrative poetry by Marlowe; . . . and to seek affinities for him among the tedious byways of provincial seventeenth-century verse seems quite superfluous." So it is, but "superfluity" is a characteristic of much literary criticism in our time.

This Life, as is apparent, we cannot regard as a great success. It is much too good to be flawed as it is, and its excellent qualities only make one more irritated at its slips and failures. Owing to the shortness of Keats's life, the difficulty of writing it was great, and there seem to have been added difficulties due to ill-health. In all ways there is much to be pleaded in excuse; but the blemishes which have been dwelt upon do not seem to depend on any accidental circumstances surrounding its composition, or on the inherent slightness of the subject. It is, with all its faults, serviceable to the memory and truer understanding of Keats, and as such one welcomes it to a shelf where, among its companions of the same able series, it must be thought to hold a lower rank.

THE CONFEDERATE STATES NAVY.

History of the Confederate States Navy. By J. Thomas Scharf, A.M., LL.D. Rogers & Sherwood.

Few men of this generation are cognizant of the gallant struggle that was made, during the four years of the civil war, by the officers of the Confederate Navy. They were beset by difficulties from which not only their opponents but their colleagues of the army were comparatively free. They entered upon the contest without the materials of warfare, and the state of the country was such that their deficiencies could never be properly supplied. At the outbreak of the war the United States, though far from being a great naval power, could bring into service some of the finest war ships in the world—the *Wabash* and her sister frigates, sloops like the *Hartford* and *Richmond*, and side-wheelers like the *Mississippi* and *Powhatan*; while the fleet of the Confederacy was composed of the sunken *Merrimac*, a dozen or so of schooners belonging to the revenue marine and the lighthouse service, and a few small coasting steamers and river craft. The great commercial marine which furnished the navy of the Union with four hundred vessels and with nearly sixty thousand volunteer officers and sailors, belonged almost wholly to Northern seaports. Last of all, the want of workshops and shipyards, of skilled mechanics, and even of raw materials, made it impossible for the South to carry out anything more than a fragmentary plan of construction; while the Federal Government during the whole war was turning out new sloops, gunboats, double-enders, monitors, and river-ironclads, with a rapidity and completeness unprecedented in the annals of naval war.

The Confederate Navy, then, was composed not of ships or of seamen, but simply and wholly of a body of officers who, in accordance with the political views then prevalent at the South, had left the regular navy and attached themselves to the service of their States. The volunteers who joined their ranks were without naval experience—making such entries in their logs, says Capt. Parker, as, "The moon was over the port bow, and the wind was hard-a-

starboard." They formed no material addition to the corps of regular officers. These latter carried with them the traditions of the service in which they had been bred, and of its collective ability they certainly represented a fully proportionate share. In the uncertainties of the political future, the Union officers moved at first with a hesitation that they would not have shown in a foreign war. The Southern officers, as might be expected, having once taken the revolutionary side, showed none of this uncertainty. The very desperateness of their situation seemed to arouse and stimulate all their energies.

With the imperfect means at their command, the efforts of the Confederate naval officers were necessarily confined to detached enterprises. During the whole four years they could never collect a fleet sufficient for harbor defence. Tatt-nall's flotilla at Port Royal had not even the semblance of a naval force, and that of Lynch in the North Carolina sounds was little better. The ironclads *Mississippi* and *Louisiana*, which were to have been the main elements of strength in the defence of New Orleans, could not be finished before the passage of the forts. The rams at Charleston created a twenty-four hours' flurry in the blockading fleet, but they did not succeed in raising the blockade. Gen. Beauregard's proclamation to the contrary notwithstanding. The *Albemarle* for six months occupied the Roanoke River, a small stream of no strategic importance, but was unequal to the task of clearing the sounds. At Mobile the *Tennessee* fought a gallant battle, but its disastrous result might have been predicted with certainty. The *Merrimac* at Hampton Roads, great as was the moral effect of her appearance, was checked in her career after she had only succeeded in destroying two vessels which were really unfit for purposes of war, and which should not have been in commission at all. In all these cases, the failure to accomplish greater results was traceable directly to the weakness of naval resources which compelled the officers to fight with imperfect weapons.

The officers themselves were rarely found wanting, and among them there were many whose record of bravery deserves to be rescued from the obscurity into which it has fallen. Of the whole number, perhaps the only one who achieved great distinction was Semmes, and in his case, unfortunately, the very undeserved abuse which was directed at him in the heat of the struggle has given him a reputation more akin to notoriety than to fame. It is an indisputable fact, which, however, few but professional men really recognize, that Semmes stands out as one of the most remarkable products of the naval war on either side. The unerring judgment with which the cruise of the *Alabama* was planned, and the skill and audacity with which it was conducted, give him a place almost unique among naval commanders. Of the others, the names to-day are almost forgotten. Foremost of all was Buchanan, who gave the clearest evidence of his fitness for a great command. Tatt-nall was a man of hardly less ability, though he had little opportunity of exercising it. Among the captains there were many whose daring, skill, and professional resource entitle them to eminence as naval officers. The bold dash of Brown in the *Arkansas* through the combined fleet of Farragut and Davis, like the passage of Maffitt in the *Florida* past the blockade of Mobile, was an act of the very highest professional merit; so was the capture of the *Underwriter* by John Taylor Wood, and the fight made by Kennon in the *Moore* at the battle of New Orleans. The raids made by the same Wood in the *Tallahassee*, and by Read in the *Tacony* and her prizes, were brilliant feats, only surpassed by the more ex-