

are of the simplest kind, it is not to favor a theory of Mr. Yeats's, but merely because the composers of these tunes knew no more elaborate music. It cannot be too strongly urged that the real successors of the singing poets are Schubert and Mozart and Wagner—the great song-writers and opera-composers. Whenever poetry needs the enhancement of music, the composers will claim it for their own. The example of Richard Strauss's elaborate recitative compositions will hardly encourage them to revive among us "the traditional Irish singing."

Like many other well-intentioned movements, this revival of "speaking to music" is merely an amusing bit of archaism, which cavalierly disregards the reasons for things as they are. When poetry filled a large social function, was recited before audiences, and was practically never read, it naturally required the aid of music. Now that poetry has become an individual enjoyment—a matter chiefly for the closet—it has largely dispensed with melody. Meanwhile long generations of refined social intercourse have probably greatly improved the speaking voice; and in our own time, in the case of Booth at least, and in Bernhardt before her mannerisms overtook her, we have heard a declamation so varied, so subtle and harmonious, that beside it any form of intonation—anything, in fact, but the most perfect melody—must have seemed crude and inartistic. We are no longer a singing people, and the fact is to be deplored; but our regeneration lies along the lines of perfected music and of intelligent declamation, not along those of an archaistic return to outworn musical modes. Cantilation, at least, will not win us back from prose to poetry.

#### BRET HARTE.

An interesting and unusual circumstance to be noted in reviewing the literary career of the late Bret Harte is the survival of his fame in spite of his indifference about writing up to it; indeed, in the face of what sometimes seemed a reckless impulse to write it down. His work easily divides itself into two periods—a short one, during which he wrote a score or so of tales whose freshness, force, and vivacity have never been excelled; and a long, prolific one, during which he does not appear to have received a new impression, or to have made a new observation on life, or to have profited for reflection by the varied experience of the passing years that should bring wisdom.

The quality of his creative faculty was similar to that of a highly concentrated essence, good to produce marvellous effects in a short time, but losing its efficacy through constant use. We may plausibly infer from the subjects and title of his last volume, 'Openings in the Old Trail' (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), his own recognition that, in all his life, he had had a clear vision of but one trail—the steep

trail leading from the world beyond down the Sierras to the river turbid with golden sands. As discoverer of the trail, no one may dispute his claim. He struck it, blazed it, exploited it; it was and must ever remain absolutely, brilliantly, his own.

His actual discovery was Nature in an aspect always grand, sometimes awful, at a moment when her primeval solitude was invaded by a host that had cast human relationships behind, and came surging towards an unknown land, all under the sway of a devouring passion—the thirst for gold. Following the line of literary tradition, such an inspiration should have provoked rather splendid romance. So far, however, as any manifestation of the human mind is original, Bret Harte's use of his situation was original; and it is by this originality, which defied precedent and dared failure, that he won an immediate success and permanent high rank in American literature. He used the most romantic stuff literally—that is, as a realist. He presented the fact, humorously, ironically, pathetically, cynically, and always for its own sake, apparently without any desire to idealize, or any perception of symbolical value. This is not to say that his work was a plain statement of facts, but that almost nothing beyond or beneath the external fact came within the range of his impressionability. He was not a contemplative man; he had no curiosity about things invisible to the natural eye; he was not interested in pointing a way to higher things. He accepted the world as he saw it, and sought to reveal it in the most effective manner, unconcerned to censure or to praise. He was not, in fact, a great man, and therefore could not be a great writer. To be original in literature, consciously to owe little to predecessors, is to be remarkable, to be memorable, to make for one's self a place conspicuous and apart; but it is not to be great. Greatness in letters implies possession not so much of qualities that are different from the common, and dazzling, as of those which humanity has long agreed to regard as the most enviable.

Bret Harte was, for his time, different and is still dazzling. In the early seventies the American public had a taste in fiction of confirmed respectability. Vice was tolerated only to defeat itself and by way of enhancing the virtue of being virtuous. When half a dozen tales concerning a community of ruffians (thieves, gamblers, and prostitutes) dwelling beyond the Rockies were introduced to the reading East, literary conventions were demoralized, and the claims of virtue to exclusive representation in fiction were, so to speak, knocked into a cocked hat. The author, in his own person, shared the indifference as to morals that distinguished his characters. Like his Colonel Starbottle of Siskiyou, he seemed to assume personal responsibility. At all events he made no attempt to evade it by interpolated sermons or by a plea that he described the immoral for the purpose of being moral. "Cherokee Sal's" baby (father unknown) is born in Roaring Camp. Outside the door, groups of men, of imperturbable demeanor, apparently passionless, grimly ironical, make bets, two to five, that Sal will pull through. But when the door was opened by "Stumpy,"

Sal "had climbed, as it were, that rugged road that led to the stars, and so passed out of Roaring Camp, its sin and shame; for ever." The narrator of the incident makes no effort to improve the occasion. The chances were all against Sal; so, in a perfectly natural way, she died. That is the tale; take it or leave it as you please. Thus peremptorily he appears as a rejector of the didactic motive, and his rejection goes to show his instinct for story-telling, and allies him with such ancient masters of his craft as Boccaccio and the narrator of the adventures of Aladdin.

Though the matter of his tales was revolutionary, the form was classical. He aimed at an effect of the whole, and this he achieved by the most careful selection of detail, and probably by equally scrupulous rejection. He was not insensible to physical nature, but he used it only as a background for drama or for purely rhetorical intensification. "Tennessee" makes a desperate dash for liberty, shoots right and left at the crowd surrounding the Arcade Saloon, speeds thence up Grizzly Cañon, is captured, tried, and condemned to die; and "above all this, etched on the dark firmament, rose the Sierras, remote and passionless, crowned with remoter, passionless stars." Similar imaginative sentences appear mechanically, for scenic effect, and can hardly be taken to mean that the author wishes to intimate a profound appreciation of the real insignificance of human tragedy. Still, in 'The Outcasts of Poker Flat,' such an intention is discernible, and it lends to the incident the dignity of a nobler literature.

There is every reason to believe that Bret Harte arrived instinctively at perfection of form, and that he did not proceed deliberately, in conformity with known æsthetic law. This instinct was not enough for the construction of novels or for the prolonged development of character. No more incoherent novel than 'Gabriel Conroy' was ever written. There are excellent scenes, sharply defined individuals, but, on the whole, the novel is a monument to the author's limitations and defects. The women express supremely his low and vulgar view of women and his appalling unconsciousness that the view was either low or vulgar. He emphasizes throughout his remoteness from true romance, his confusion between pathos and sentimentality, and his delight in glaring theatrical effects. He suggests, indeed, quite pitifully, that there was nothing in himself to serve as a touchstone for the representation of honorable men and decent women.

Nothing in his work has been more severely criticised than the habit of attributing to passably worthless people a single and signal virtue; but the virtue is generally a primitive one, and is rarely either inconsistent or improbable. After all, the denizens of Roaring Camp and Red Dog and One Horse Gulch (incomparable names!) were men, not brutes; and it is not ranging them with the angels to say that they stood by each other in calamity, or that one could give his life for a friend, or for a child, or even for a woman whose improprieties were flagrant. In nothing, it seems to us, was Bret Harte more successful than in saving his heroes from the heroic pose. The keynote of his characterization is concealment of emotion. Certain gamblers, it will be remembered, calmly continued their game "the day that French Pete and Kanaka Joe

shot each other to death over the bar in the front room." "Mr. John Oakhurst, going out in the snow to shoot himself; smilingly kissed the Duchess," and said he was only going as far as the Cañon. Men with a hand on their pistols, watching to get the "line," chaffed each other in miners' or gamblers' slang.

It is the privilege of creative writers whose work is based on actual social conditions, to become for posterity the historians of those conditions. No future historian of the State of California, however serious, can hope to discredit Bret Harte. Already Jack Hamlin, that lonely calculator of chances, Miggles, Colonel Starbottle, Yuba Bill, and M'liss, daughter of Old Smith, Old Bummer Smith, are historical personages. In time their story will probably crystallize into a legend—the "Legend of the Forty-Niners"—possessing authority and prestige, for ever true, as is its remote classical progenitor, the Legend of the Golden Fleece.

#### MR. BRYCE'S ROMANES LECTURE.

OXFORD, June 7, 1902.

The Sheldonian Theatre was crowded by Mr. Bryce's hearers beyond its recent wont at Romanes lectures. On the present occasion the number of American professors and college presidents, and of Americans in general, was noticeably large. Indeed, the resort of the learned and academical world of America to Oxford has been markedly on the increase of late years, so that if it is not already true, it will soon be true, to say that Oxford is an indispensable centre of the broadest intellectual life of English-speaking people the world over. No man could more fitly illustrate this state of things than Mr. James Bryce, who has done so much to promote a mutual understanding between America and England. Nor could he well have chosen a topic of more intimate and equal concern to the United States and the British Empire than "The Relations of the Advanced and the Backward Races of Mankind."

His lecture was too earnest and too thoughtful to admit of purple passages; and his tense manner, combined with the encyclopædic readiness with which he flashed the rays of his scrutiny now into the fastnesses of hill tribes in India, anon into the mining camps of the Rocky Mountains, passing from the Bushmen of South Africa to the Ainos of Japan and the tribes of the Malay archipelago, seemed to forbid demonstrations of applause. But he held the unflinching attention of his large audience to the last, and gave to his brief characterizations of the multitudinous home-countries of the several tribes and races of mankind that vivid reality which emanates from the mind only of one who speaks of what he has seen with his own eyes. In his introduction he dwelt on the fact that man has at last "all but finished" the exploration of the earth; that "a far more widespread contact" than other ages have seen has resulted from this, and that all the backward races are now placed "in a more or less complete dependence upon the more advanced." His subject he finally defined as "the phenomena that attend the contact of the civilized and uncivilized races." Racial difference he made no attempt to define. "Let us go straight to the facts," he

said, "the facts and problems which the contact of diverse races brings into being."

His first case was that of comparatively small aggregates of men in a backward state, or of more numerous tribes whose physique was weak. In this case the backward race quickly vanishes, not always through the fault of the stronger race. His second case was one not of destruction but of absorption. When a stronger immigrant race comes among aborigines of a race neither in a low stage of savagery nor physically feeble, these may be imperceptibly "blent with and lost among the stronger and more numerous or more prolific race." Sometimes this is "not so much by mixture of blood as by the imposition on the less civilized race of the characteristic type of the more advanced." The Slavs who entered Europe in and after the eighth century have become Greeks; and the same is true, he said, of the Albanians in Greece. The race thus absorbed may be the stronger in everything but intelligence. Strength is sometimes the undoing of a people, as the case of the red Indian so often shows. "The black man," said our lecturer most pointedly—"the black man submits and survives." Here he paused to survey the enormous change that has passed upon the population of the globe through the two cases of extinction and absorption.

By far the most complex phenomena of race-contact arose, continued Mr. Bryce, where there can be no question of absorption or of extinction; the races involved being equally matched, or nearly so. Here either there is mixture by intermarriage, or the two races "remain separate, necessarily influencing one another but not mingling their blood." In the former case, that of mixture of blood by intermarriage, he found "all the great peoples of the world": the French, the Germans, the Russians. And finally, as the result of the completest mixture on equal terms and in the most various ways, he instanced the English and the Americans in the following words:

"The original source of the largest of all civilized nations, that which inhabits the temperate parts of North America, was not only itself the product of diverse sources before it crossed the ocean, but has within the last seventy years received such enormous accretions from Ireland, Germany, Scandinavia, and the Slavs of Central Europe, that it is becoming the most mixed of all the peoples we know."

Having dealt with the extinction of the weak by contact with the stronger races, and with the less drastic but equally complete process of absorption which so frequently takes place, and having surveyed the capital instances of the formation of new races by commixture on more or less equal terms of various strong races, our lecturer addressed himself to the last case of all—cases of contact without mixture of blood or intermarriage. "What," he asked, "are the causes which favor or check intermarriage between races brought into contact?" The causes favoring it he found neither in equal civilization nor in equal endowments, physical or mental, nor in community of race or language. The cause absolutely checking it he found in physical repulsion based upon differences in color, and varying in its intensity according to the degree of those differences. Repulsion to intermarriage was most absolute between the white races and the blacks. It existed, but in a less degree, between the white races and the red men. Here a per-

sonal observation drove the point home. "I have been struck," said Mr. Bryce, "by hearing men in the Rocky Mountains who would have concealed any infusion of negro blood, mention that their mothers or grandmothers had been Indians."

A difference between the Teutonic and the South European races was here noted, the latter feeling far less repulsion to intermarriage with a colored race. "Where Americans, Englishmen, and Germans rule," he said, "there is no intermarriage with the colored races, and consequently no prospect of race-fusion." Between colored races contact brings about more intermarriage on the whole, but red men hardly intermarry with negroes more frequently than do whites. The Berbers of North Africa, on the contrary, are prone to unite with the blacks of the Sudan. Similar and more extreme is the case of Morocco. The reason for this our lecturer found chiefly in religion. Potent though religion may be, he conceived it to be less powerful than color either in favor of or against intermarriage, because it cannot create physical repulsion and it can be changed. Religion in the pre-Christian world scarcely exercised a potent influence because everybody respected his neighbor's religion. Now, our more metaphysical monotheism pronounces other faiths pernicious, and will have no dealings with their professors. A distinction in this regard was here made between Islam and Christianity. Mohammedans intermarry more freely with polytheists because in such cases the wife abjures her "false" religion. But with Christians the followers of Islam will not easily intermarry. "It is religion," our lecturer said, "that has in those regions forbidden the mixture of races, and created that apparently insoluble problem which we call 'the Eastern question.'"

Next came up for consideration those cases where, in spite of the barrier of color or that of religion, or both, there is actual mixture between the white and the colored races. A third race results; does it stand midway between the two sources from which it derives? Physically it usually does, but its mental type is much nearer to that of the advanced race. But here Mr. Bryce urged that our data are insufficient. Still more insufficient, he maintained, were our data for determining the result of race-mixture such as that in progress through the contact in America of numerous white races. "We cannot," said Mr. Bryce, "speak positively as to what the result may be on the American people, after another century, of the great stream of non-English blood which is being poured into its veins. The type may remain, yet the national character may prove to have been affected." He ventured, nevertheless, upon a general prognostication as follows: (1) Two races physiologically near would combine with advantageous results. (2) In proportion as the two elements were physiologically remote, the resulting combination failed to improve on the lower of the two stocks. He instanced, as a typical instance of (1), "the peoples formed by the blending of Celts and Teutons in western Britain (Wessex), in northeastern Ireland, in northeastern France, and in western Switzerland, and the admixture of Slavs and Teutons in northern and eastern Germany. On the other hand, mixtures of