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No. CXCVII—JULY 1893

THE 'ARTS AND CRAFTS' EXHIBITION  
AT WESTMINSTER

THE exhibition of which I write is not to be found at Earl's Court, or Olympia, or the Agricultural Hall, but in the House of Commons. The products of Art and Craft displayed therein are not of a material, but a moral, perhaps I should say an immoral, character. Yet for all that it is, from an outsider's point of view, a very interesting and instructive show. The grand old farce of 'hoodwinking the British public' is performed there nightly with unflinching success. Illustrations of the art of saying one thing and meaning another, of suggesting what is false and suppressing what is true, of confusing plain issues and conveying erroneous impressions, are given evening after evening by the most eminent of Parliamentary craftsmen.

The British public, as I am well aware, includes Home Rulers as well as Unionists, Liberals equally with Conservatives. I am not going, in what I have to say, to discuss the advantages or disadvantages of Home Rule. I have never contended, in what I have written on this subject, that Home Rule is an untenable proposition or one that cannot be supported by reasons which may commend themselves to thoughtful and honest men. The balance of argument seems to my mind decisive against Home Rule, but I am ready to admit that it may not seem so to other minds equally capable with my own of forming an opinion. There is a strong plea to make out for the repeal of the Union; and I have sometimes flattered myself that if I had been retained for the defence I could have made out a better



In any case, the question was far less whether the alienation of the old endowments and the diversion of them into a new channel of usefulness was defensible, than whether there was not some danger of this being carried too far in favour of the new order.

What, then, is the attitude which it behoves us all to adopt when a senseless and ignorant cry has been raised for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England? Surely our first business is to press for an answer to the question, What do these men mean who take it as their shibboleth?

If they mean nothing more and nothing less than indiscriminate pillage, ending in a scramble for the spoils; if they mean stripping the clergy of their incomes, driving them out from their homes, and leaving the poor of the land to find religious teachers and pastors for themselves—then their object is to bring about an incomparable national calamity. The inevitable consequence of such a catastrophe would be that in the domain of morals and religious sentiment, where our nobler emotions and spiritual aspirations and gentler sympathies are appealed to, there the forces of disintegration would have their full play, unchecked, uncontrolled—chaos would come again. But that cry may be changed for a better cry; it may, in God's providence, be taught to take another form, and it may then express the conviction of the people that the time has come for making a step, not backwards into darkness and religious anarchy, but forwards upon the road of intelligent reform. Whatever it may mean, it is the utmost madness and stupidity to attempt to raise against it a louder but scarcely less misleading and mischievous cry, because one which is in its essence an *assumptio falsi*.

Base the title of the Established Church to her endowments upon considerations of the highest political expediency, and you choose ground from which it will be difficult to be dislodged. Appeal to the gratitude of our countrymen, and teach them what the Anglican clergy have been and have done for their ancestors and their fatherland in the past, and you will not appeal in vain. Nay, appeal to the hopes and fears of the future if you will, and, rightly instructed, the nation will no longer surrender themselves to those who would 'make a desert and call it peace.' But beware how you rashly and stubbornly insist that the formulæ, the ritual, the discipline, the general regimen of the Church as by law established, are each and all equally and indubitably of Divine origin, and that to alienate one jot or tittle of her property is to 'rob GOD'!

AUGUSTUS JESSOPP.

## CHARLES BAUDELAIRE AND EDGAR POE: A LITERARY AFFINITY

WE shall hardly be contradicted when we affirm that in England Edgar Poe's fame has always stood on a very rickety pedestal. As a nation we have never been able to make up our minds whether we ought to admire him most as a poet, as a critic, or as a prose writer, or whether he rose to no great height in any of these three branches of literature. The John Bull section of society settled the matter very happily by pointing to the manner of his death, which proved to them that his literary work was worthless; and the man of letters, who saw no connection between literature and personal merit or demerit, did not altogether convince himself that fame could be attained by one poem, *The Raven*, or by one tale, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, nor yet by the sledge-hammer of Poe's criticism, wielded to crush some unknown scribbler in an unknown journal. Edgar Poe is one of those writers whose worth must be tested by that mysterious consensus of opinion which Time alone collects, and, on the whole, collects judiciously. Time, we think, is proving that Edgar Poe's name will live, and that the sad short life which burnt its candle at both ends will not have been lived in vain. The taper is still alight, and we shall place it amongst others in our literary shrine, as we sing the praise of those who loved Beauty for its own sake, and Art because they had a true vocation for it.

This uncertainty about literary fame is, however, no unusual fate, and one which hardly needs comment; but what is strange, and what it may be interesting to consider, is that the young writer, half American, half English, whose style was strong and nervous, whose imagination was so fantastic and so purely original, who was scorned in England and not appreciated at his true worth in America, found in France a passionate admirer, who spared no pains to procure each story as it came out, and who, himself a true genius, was possessed with the idea that in that unknown writer, separated from him by the great Atlantic, he had found a literary affinity to whom he was bound to consecrate his life. They were never to meet, for Edgar Poe died in 1849, and Charles Baudelaire only began to read some few of Poe's fragments in 1846 or 1847; but the passion

grew, and when Poe's stories were collected in volume form, his French affinity was ready to devote himself to the task of translating them—and what admirable translations they are, combining beauty, finish, and truth! Turning aside from his own special field of literature, Baudelaire talked and wrote to make the name of Edgar Poe famous; and he was successful, for, as a Frenchman has himself certified, 'It was through the labour and genius of Baudelaire that Edgar Poe's tales have become so well known in France, and are now regarded as classical models.' Further, it should be noticed that Edgar Poe is the only American writer who has become popular in that land where the literature of the nineteenth century has reached a perfection which after-ages will certainly record and admire.

But we ask ourselves, Is this result due to the exquisite style Baudelaire employed in his translation? and would his magic pen have endowed any foreign author, however unworthy, with fame? Did the strange influence lie in the rich fancy of the American author or in the richer setting given to it by the Frenchman? Baudelaire must evidently have known English well; but did he, whilst reading it, simultaneously clothe the English words in his own French dress, or did English style and New World fancy win his admiration? These questions are difficult to answer. Baudelaire's explanation does not altogether clear up the difficulty. 'Believe me or not, as you like,' he says, 'but I discovered in Edgar Poe's works, poems and stories which had been lying dormant in my own brain, vague, confused, ill-assorted, whilst he had known how to combine, to transcribe, and to bring them to perfection.' Here was, according to the French poet, the secret of his success. He had discovered his affinity; he had but to collect his own floating ideas, finding no difficulty in the setting, for all was clear to him. The two authors were of one mind, and the result was this gift of classic work to France, created with alien thought.

Some will affirm that this idea of mental affinity was, of course, purely imaginary; but is it because we so easily accept the far greater miracle of infinite variety of minds that we are staggered by the idea of two brains and two characters bearing a close and striking resemblance? Whether true or not, the fact remains that, imbued with this idea, Baudelaire determined to translate *all* Edgar Poe's works; that the first one he undertook was entitled *Magnetic Revelation*, clearly pointing to this impression; and that for seventeen years the poet laboured unceasingly at his self-imposed task. The excitement of politics, the constant fight with poverty and debt, the calls of publishers—none of these things deterred him from his work, death alone putting an end, as far as this life is concerned, to this strange affinity.

During his lifetime Edgar Poe had preached, through the medium of his weird tales, the doctrine of the power of mind over matter, of

thought and feeling being imperishable even after death, and at times conquering the mortal parts of man. As if to prove his words, at his own death the one man perhaps capable of understanding him and his work, though of another tongue and nation, was moved to preach the same doctrine, not because he had evolved the thought, but because he declared himself to be in full sympathy with the ideas he so ably translated. Surely no such instance as this has occurred before, and the knowledge of it fills the life-sketch of these two men with new interest. Baudelaire never carried out the intention expressed in *Mon Cœur mis à nu* of explaining to us fully why he undertook the translations of Poe's stories, but he has left us two deeply interesting notices of his literary affinity, to whom he further ascribes his own power of close reasoning. So enthusiastic was Baudelaire's biographical notice of Poe that a critic in *Le Journal d'Alençon* said it was to be feared the translator would come to the same end as his model!

Strangely enough, the story of both lives is infinitely sad: both were brought up luxuriously; both felt that literature could alone be their vocation; both loved passionately the woman they called mother; both threw off the authority of their adopted father; both were faithful as lovers—one to his wife, the other to his unworthy mistress; both fell hopelessly foul of the Public—that judge they would neither of them acknowledge or bow down to; both were, in consequence, literary outcasts; both sought by deleterious means to drown sordid reality and to invoke dreams of unattainable beauty; both sought diligently for the choice word, the rare feeling, the rare sensation, both looked upon the commonplace as a mortal enemy; both strove, when they found themselves plunged into an abyss of misery, to retrieve their mistake, and both succumbed to the fatal wish to soar into regions too elevated for poor humanity—that humanity whose mental capacity fails before visions which cannot be expressed, causing only the delicate brain-machinery to fall into ruins after it has endeavoured to weave too rich materials, fit only for spirit unclogged by clay.

All this the ordinary world rarely takes into consideration. If a man fails to win riches and honour by his genius, his contemporaries invariably say that the genius is wanting. Edgar Poe and Baudelaire were no exception to the rule, and for their funeral oration both were plentifully bespattered with mud, both were scorned by a too righteous world of sinners; and even to this day Baudelaire's name is, for self-satisfied critics, the subject of controversy, and his genius the subject of doubt. Time, however, will avenge, and has partly avenged, their literary memory, and for the rest, surely it should be left for the next genius of equal merit to throw the stones; our part is to collect the precious gems which they scattered so lavishly, and for

which they asked in return only for a little sympathy and appreciation, failing utterly during their life to obtain them.

We would willingly say nothing about their personal history, were it not that without a slight sketch of their lives it would be impossible to demonstrate the strange affinity of spirit which we claim for them. As Edgar Poe died so soon after Baudelaire's discovery of his work, it is doubtful whether the former ever heard the name of, or read the works of the latter; had he done so, he would certainly have been capable and worthy of appreciating them; but he has in Baudelaire a perfect chronicler, one who could place the facts simply before us and find a reason for the failures, forcing us to recognise what M. Byvanck has well expressed in his little book on literary Paris: 'I have at times suffered cruelly when I have considered the dreadful problem of ruined lives, and at times it has filled me with indignation; but after a while I have found for all these problems some moral justification.'

Edgar Poe was born in 1809. His parents were well connected, his father, David Poe, being the son of a general, whilst his maternal grandfather had claimed the friendship of Lafayette. David fell in love with a pretty English actress, Elizabeth Arnold, who was also well connected, and the light-hearted pair played out their brief happiness on the stage, then died, leaving Edgar to be adopted by Mr. Allan, a rich American; hence the addition of this name to his own, which graft brought him very doubtful advantages and one inestimable benefit—a first-rate education—partly in England (his English school is described in *William Wilson*) and partly in America. Handsome, clever, small in build but strong of limb, young Edgar seemed at this time to be destined for a spoilt child of fortune; but a wild restless disposition and an early love of gambling caused the first breach with his adopted father. The quarrel turned Edgar's mind towards fighting for the oppressed Greeks, and he suddenly left America with this chivalrous intention! Two years of wandering follow, but we hear of no fighting with the oppressors, and no geographer has traced a map of these travels. We next find him at St. Petersburg, the hero of some scrape, and he has to be helped to return home by the American Consul. Reconciliation with Mr. Allan and a nomination to West Point Military College appeared once more to be setting Edgar in the right road, but two years of freedom had not prepared him for discipline. In less than a twelvemonth he was dismissed by the college authorities, and his adopted father, having married again, discovered that he was tired of the prodigal. The inevitable result followed: a passionate scene took place between them, then the Allan doors were shut for ever against him.

Edgar Poe now found himself penniless and thrown upon the world with nothing but his talents between him and starvation. Then began the struggle with poverty, a struggle which a biographer finds

quite natural in the life of young genius, but which as often as not ruins the health and mental balance of the individual. Suddenly the happy chance of winning a prize offered by a newspaper for the best story and the best poem cleared his encumbered path, and revealed his talent to those who were ready to turn it into hard cash. Still it cannot be said that the young genius had no chance. Mr. Thomas White, proprietor of *The Southern Literary Messenger*, offered him the post of editor to this paper, and the man and the occupation seemed exactly fitted for each other. His advent on the staff was like a meteor flashing into sight upon a dull sky; his strange, weird, fascinating stories began to appear with welcome regularity, and the paper quadrupled its sale. For his share of the profits Edgar found himself the possessor of 100*l.* a year, and, much to the horror of the wise, immediately married his cousin, the beautiful but penniless Virginia Clemm.

For two years the editor managed to attend to his duties, or rather he managed not to break out too often, for his gambling propensity had been followed by fits of craving for drink. Now Mr. Thomas White knew how to manage the financial part of his paper, but he was not at all endowed with imagination. He could not fathom the mind of a young man who was giving his life-blood for 100*l.* a year, but did not always keep sober, so he dismissed him, and the disgraced editor began his wandering life again, seeking work, and doing it here, there, and everywhere, always brilliant, always original, but always writing under the terrible pressure of poverty and mental agony. His idolised wife fell ill, and his brilliant, impressionable brain seemed to lose its balance. Virginia's devoted mother was then the guardian angel of the house, and never a complaint did she utter, but, taking her courage in her two hands, she would go round to editors and publishers and plead for work. She would offer Edgar's tales and articles for sale in a gentle deprecating manner, the attitude of a humble suppliant. Perhaps she alone, besides Baudelaire, knew the secret of that poor brain. It could work only under strong excitement, so excitement it was forced to have in order to give daily food to his Virginia. The heart was always in its right place. She and Virginia knew it, whatever others might say; but it was too sensitive, too easily impressed, and the agony of seeing his wife's sufferings seemed to snap the remaining brain-connecting links which we call self-restraint. The story is well known, but perhaps only Baudelaire has found the excuse, perhaps only he *from personal experience* understood the whole truth. He notes down the fact that Edgar Poe's work never suffered from his excesses, and that his best writings were either preceded or followed by one of his drinking fits. Very little sufficed to turn the subtle brain. 'Drink,' says Baudelaire, 'seemed to excite and to rest him;' in fact, to some natures stimulants, alcohol or morphia, produce series of vivid visionary dreams, some



dreadful, some beautiful, but all continuous only when the dreamer is under this special influence, unfolding for his delight exquisite hallucinations deemed by him to be necessary, and perhaps really necessary, for his creative genius. 'One part of that which now gives us pleasure is what killed him,' pathetically remarks his chronicler. 'No one has written with a more magical touch than Edgar Poe the exceptional in life and nature. He analyses all that is most fugitive, he weighs the immeasurable, and describes in his minute and scientific manner all those imaginary sensations which surround the highly sensitive man and often lead him on to his destruction.' Later on Baudelaire adds, 'In his poetry is to be found his insatiable craving for the Beautiful, which is his title of honour among the poets.' Strange beauty, too near to which man may not approach with safety; which, as we think of it, makes us hear again down the long line of ages an echo of the words, 'Thou canst not see my face, for man shall not see me and live.'

Need we finish the story? Virginia's death and Poe's despair, but a despair less agonising than when there was yet hope. Then a gleam of passing reform, a sudden belief in lectures and money-getting, a relapse, but always that loving, watching woman, Mrs. Clemm; and then the last downfall. The poor poet's still breathing body found in the street, robbed, drugged perhaps. Nothing left of the magic brain except such as is expressed by stertorous breathing in a hospital bed where he gave his last breath to earth and his spirit to God who made it. 'My conviction is,' says Baudelaire, 'that the United States were for Edgar Poe only a vast prison . . . a savage country lighted with gas; and that his inner spiritual life of poet, and even of drunkard, was but one perpetual effort to escape the influence of this antipathic atmosphere.' Then he flings his accusation against the world that could not fathom this genius, this man whom he could so well understand, his mental affinity, and ends with this sentence, which we know stirred the very depth of his being as he wrote it: 'One of these worldlings even acknowledges that it was difficult to give Edgar Poe employment, and that it was necessary to pay him less than others because he wrote in a style too much above the common!—"Quel odeur de magasin!" as Joseph de Maistre would say.' Here we feel inclined to end Poe's life with his own words, taken from *Magnetic Revelation*, which paper certainly must have been caviare to the multitude, and which therefore must have brought the author very few dollars: 'To be happy up to a certain point we must have suffered up to that point. Never to have suffered would be equivalent to never having known happiness.' If this is true—and what human being will lightly contradict it?—then we must feel that Edgar Poe had his moments of exquisite happiness, and that what we call a ruined life may one day be brought again to

our sight—spiritual or corporal—in the likeness of a star shining brightly in a deep firmament.

And now let us turn to Edgar Poe's translator. We have but touched the skirt of one mysterious life, and can do barely more for the other, leaving it to our readers to search out for themselves treasures that will repay their labours, the part of the chronicler being merely to suggest and not to teach.

Charles Baudelaire was born in 1821. At six years old he lost his father; the next year his mother married a Colonel Aupick, who, being stationed at Lyons, sent his stepson to school in that town. But the boy in no way distinguished himself, for even there, in the midst of his young companions, he began to feel solitary. In 1836 the family moved to Paris, and Charles went to the Collège Louis Grand. His stepfather seemed then to have entertained great hopes of the lad's future, but the passion for poetry had already taken hold of him, and later on he himself hints at having been expelled from college. His stepfather, now a general, wished his son to follow the military career, in which he could have procured him promotion, but, to the immense surprise and despair of his parents, Charles declared that he meant to embrace the profession of letters. The young man hated his stepfather, the reasons he gave for this hatred being that he *was* his stepfather, that he was very demonstrative, and that he knew nothing of literature! There was nothing for it but to sever the home tie, and the young man joyfully plunged into Paris life with its magic charm and its literary companionship. He struck up an acquaintance with Balzac and set up as a 'dandy.' Still all the while he was working hard, as all true poets must work; but when barely twenty years old his mother interfered, and, enforcing her legal authority, sent him to India, in order to separate him from his evil surroundings. Ten months of exile were enough for him, and, taking the law into his own hands, he hastened back to his beloved Paris. His absence must have helped to give him greater mastery over English, which language in after years was to bring him to the knowledge of Edgar Poe. When the poet's majority arrived he found himself with 3,000*l.* in his pocket, and delivered from parental authority. Then began his unfettered bachelor life. He determined, if possible, to be something—to aim at perfection—but the taste for beautiful pictures and antique furniture led him into extravagance little in accordance with his means. He fell into the hands of a dishonest dealer, and incurred debts which laid their heavy weight upon him for the rest of his life. Perhaps nothing is so strange, so ambiguous, so utterly despised by ordinary mortals as the life of a struggling poet. His elders invariably suggest that sweeping a street crossing is more honourable and more profitable; his intimates suggest alterations in his verses; and he himself must have an extraordinarily strong nature and an inextinguishable fund

of originality and resistance if his genius is not to be swamped by the unfailing tide of custom. Further, the more correct his ear, the more dainty his taste, the more he will torment himself with the *ignis fatuus* of perfection, always touching and re-touching his verses, ever consumed by the passion for style which, to the ordinary public, is merely an insane mania.

Such was Baudelaire, bound, because of his keen sense of perfection of the beautiful, to stray entirely away out of the beaten path, common to the mere scribblers of rhymes. Like Poe, he could not be paid at the ordinary rate when his style was extraordinary. It is certain that Baudelaire was a rare case of true, not affected, originality. Not only was his mind moulded in an original form, but all his tastes were out of the common. His manner of dressing, his taste in food, his friendship and his society—in fact, in everything he could not be like other people; neither were his likes and dislikes stable, being, even to himself, a mass of contradiction. One might liken him to a man lost in the Bocage, seeking a city he had heard of, but ignorant in what direction to find it—trying all ways hither and thither, backward and forward, determined only upon one thing, to find the goal without asking the way. All his tendencies were aristocratic, but for three years he affected democratic principles, and even donned a blouse! His money melted like snow in spring. He wished to work, but he could only do so when the fit seized him, all the while resolving to make up for lost time. In sixteen years he changed his lodgings more than eleven times, and even under pressure of poverty he found it most difficult to sit down to continuous labour. Besides being a true lover of his mistress, poetry, Baudelaire was passionately fond of plastic art. He began his literary career by art-criticism and reviewing. Whatever he touched he left upon it the impress of originality. At the age of twenty-five he had given proof of his genius in all branches of critical art, literature, and poetry.

The year 1848 interrupted his fitful labours, and the revolution fired his impressionable brain; but it was only a firework, and soon extinguished. Once more he returned to pure literature, failing utterly when he tried journalism, for he was ever striving for that perfection which fugitive journalism almost precludes and usually excludes. Then began the dawn of his literary passion for Edgar Poe, and soon after the *Revue des Deux Mondes* opened its pages, not without apology, to his collection of poems entitled *Fleurs du Mal*, which singular and unattractive title, chosen by a friend, helped to draw down upon him the moral reproof of the law. Baudelaire protested fiercely against this public prosecution. As well prosecute an actor for portraying a murderer as an author for depicting strange mental diseases or visions of fallen nature. The prosecution, of course, only served to make his name more known; even Victor

Hugo, stooping from his pinnacle, congratulated him. 'Art,' said he, 'is like the azure—it is an infinite field, and you have just proved it.'

His poems were bees in the carcass of the lion; and out of the strong came forth sweetness, for Baudelaire once more unfolded Samson's riddle, finding that in things evil there was still an essence of the beautiful, which essence cannot be evil. As Edgar Poe has ably put it, 'just as conscience, or the moral sense, recognises duty; just as the intellect deals with truth; so it is the part of taste alone to inform us of beauty. And Poesy is the handmaiden but of Taste.'

Or, again: 'We thus clearly deduce the *novelty*, the *originality*, the *invention*, the *imagination*, or, lastly, the *creation* of Beauty (for the terms are here employed as synonymous) as the essence of all Poesy.' Now, no one has ever accused Baudelaire of failing in the beauty of his verse; then why deny him the essence of Beauty, which is the opposite of evil? for Victor Hugo could thus greet him, compressing much meaning into few words, 'Je crie Bravo! Je vous serre la main, poète.'

The fact of the prosecution seemed to rouse Baudelaire. He worked harder and with more diligence. His intense appreciation of Edgar Poe forced him on with the translations; and besides these he published some finished studies on Flaubert and Théophile Gautier. His friend and editor, Poulet Malassis, hoped great things from him; and now and then Charles could escape to his mother's house at Harfleur—his stepfather being dead—and breathe divine air by the sea. After her son's death, Madame Aupick told a friend how, many a time, he would stretch forth his arms towards the sea, and exclaim, 'Oh, if I had no debts, how happy I should be!' But, though he was prosecuted, shunned, spoken against, his conscience was by no means that of the hardened sinner. Such a one would have laughed his debts to scorn, and would have sunk into lower depths; but Baudelaire still struggled against the rising flood. He tried to pacify his creditors by remittances, hiding from them when he had none to give, but always pursued by those black nightmares, bills overdue. To make matters worse, in 1861 his publisher, who had already advanced money to him, failed; Baudelaire seemed then to touch the bottom of the pit, and then the poor hunted poet penned these words: 'For some time I have been on the verge of suicide.' His review of Richard Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, a superb piece of writing, was, like Poe's work, too good to be paid for highly. The receipt of a letter from the great composer might gratify him, but could not pay his debts. Besides his debts his public prosecution hung another load about his neck. All the editors fought shy of condemned genius, but the fund of obstinacy in him was strong. All the world might be against him, but he would not write one line to soften the verdict. He would be himself in spite of the shattered



health which the awful struggle against fate had brought upon him. In his private journal, *Mon Cœur mis à nu*, we find this terrible sentence: 'Imbecility's wing has fanned me as it passed.' He could be met wandering at night in out-of-the-way places, looking worn, wan, and shabby, an outcast from the class to which he belonged, but which only claims those who can keep up an appearance. No wonder that more than ever Edgar Poe seemed to him his twin-brother of misfortune. Like him, he had recourse at last increasingly to stimulants, in order to drown reality; and, despair seizing him, he fled from Paris, hoping at Brussels to regain some strength and to find peace and leisure. Alas! poor poet, he could not fly from himself. Then, doubtless with Poe in his mind, he determined to give lectures, and by this means to get money. He meant to speak at Bruges, Liège, Ghent, and other places; but even this project failed, for barely had he begun, when illness laid a still deadlier hand upon him. Soon after his arrival he had projected a book about Belgium: he would portray the country as he saw it, rich in art but poor in men of imagination, unable to appreciate genius from lack of models. In spite of grinding poverty, a goodly portion of the work was finished in five months, but then his mind revolted against the sombre country. He writes to a friend and bemoans himself thus: 'Think what I suffer in a place where the trees are black and the flowers are without scent, and where no conversation worth the name can be heard. You might go all over Belgium and not find a soul that speaks.' The people attracted to his first lecture by the notoriety of his prosecution expected to see a monster, and, finding a polished, aristocratic gentleman, concluded, he says ironically, that he was not the author of his own book. 'I want to get back to Harfleur, to my room, and to my mother—my mother who takes such care not to reproach me.' In truth, she was another Mrs. Clemm, and the sick man, remembering his childhood, longed for her care and sympathy.

Much, however, as he longed to get back, he would not, and perhaps could not, do so. He was almost penniless, living on rare remittances from his mother and his friends. In Brussels he had but two friends—his former editor, Poulet Malassis, again starting business in the foreign town, and Rops, the famous etcher. Like Edgar Poe, Baudelaire wanted to retrieve the past; he did not want to go back to France till he had 'achieved victory and fulfilled his set duties.'

Reading one of the letters written at this time concerning his mother, we seem to see reproduced the mind of the American poet. 'My mother has written me a letter full of wisdom. What patience, what confidence she has in me! She has been ill, but she suddenly recovered; happily I received both the good and the bad news at the same time.' He was trying to sell his copyrights among Brussels

publishers; but a poor author there had even less chance than at Paris of finding a man far-sighted enough to believe in the future of his fame, and to give him hard cash for it. They all made such ridiculous propositions to him that even the proud Baudelaire tried to argue with them, to prove to them that he had a future and that his work would live. 'People are always asking for my books,' he told them, 'and in a few years perhaps they will understand them.'

At last he began to feel hopelessly discouraged. Still he tried to keep up to his ideal standard, saying, 'Only one thing matters, to be a hero and a saint in one's own estimation.' But his poor brain was slowly giving way; not only did the wings of Imbecility touch him, but they were now beginning to enfold him entirely. He suffered from agonising fits of neuralgia, during which, in spite of good resolutions, he had recourse to spirits and opium—anything to stop the awful pain and giddiness he experienced. The doctor ordered him all kinds of drugs and Vichy water, but the poet was too poor even to buy these remedies, and dared not acknowledge this fact to the medical man. Yet he must work; and to his friends he repeats his entreaties that on no account should they let his mother know his state of misery.

At last, one day, whilst going round a church with two of his friends, a sudden and worse seizure felled him to the ground, and the next day the illness declared itself. Brain paralysis had set in; he could no longer find words to express his wishes—the connection between mind and speech was giving way and the nervous system was shattered, the breakdown perhaps hastened by drink. 'When he came to see me I had to place stimulants out of his reach, his craving for them being so irresistible,' says Poulet Malassis. This was in the spring of 1866. They brought him back to Paris, and for over a year he endured a living death—a horrible speechless existence, interesting to doctors as a strange case, but extremely painful for his friends to witness. All was done now that could be done, and his devoted mother watched him unceasingly, hoping always for his recovery, and overjoyed when he could say two words that appeared to have some meaning. In comparison, Edgar Poe's sudden end seems a precious boon, whilst his affinity, the man who had worked so hard for his posthumous fame, was to suffer this living entombment for over a twelvemonth.

When the end came, there must have been only the loving, devoted mother who could regret that all was over.

My poor son, the son I idolised, is no more (she writes to one of her friends). He had become so gentle at last and so resigned. I called him a thousand endearing names, persuaded that, in spite of his state of prostration, he could understand me and could answer me. I hope God will let me enjoy the beautiful reputation he leaves and the glory of some of his fame. You have lost a friend who loved you very tenderly. Keep his memory green, for he was worthy of it.

Might it not be Mrs. Clemm again, writing as she did write that

no one was to say a word against her Edgar? If, as has been said, God will but ratify women's judgments of their men kind, then these two poets, these two poor tortured brains, these two erring though tender-hearted men, will in the end not be altogether condemned, for the mothers' verdict will be all-powerful.

We must close the pages of this short life, and turn to some of the work which filled the poet's mind. The time which he foretold has come: his craving for perfection is at last understood, though his poems are a delight for the few, and his character is a target for the many; but even lately a storm was raging round his name, and the camp was divided on the question whether Baudelaire should have a statue raised in his memory, or whether the author of *Fleurs du Mal* was too much of an outcast to be publicly recognised. Few poets and men of letters have left so little work behind them as Baudelaire. His collected writings, as published by Lemerre, are comprised in eight volumes, four of which are consecrated to Edgar Poe's works. In M. Eugène Crépet's life of Baudelaire (the best and most complete) we find a few more scattered papers, some letters, and *Mon Cœur mis à nu*, his diary, if this word can be applied to it. This is all he gives to the world as his passport to fame, but we might call these volumes quintessence of literature. Théophile Gautier, whom Baudelaire called *le poète impeccable*, speaks of his *Petits poèmes en prose* in this manner:—

In these prose poems a phrase, a word, merely one perhaps, singularly well placed and chosen, calls up for us a host of forgotten fancies, once dear friends, now ancient dim memories of long passed existence. We are aware of a choir of mysterious and faded thoughts pressing around us and murmuring to us from among the phantoms which are constantly detaching themselves from reality. Other sentences, full of sad tenderness, seem to us like faint music of sympathy offered to unrecognised sorrow and infinite despair.

The charms of the poet's words are thus aptly described, but Baudelaire could express the same idea with more originality, likening a solitary poet to an albatross, that prince of clouds who, when once descended to earth, finds that its mighty wings serve only to impede its progress.

Le poète est semblable au prince des nuées,  
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;  
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,  
Ses ailes de géants l'empêchent de marcher.

Such an impediment had been his own poet's wings, his own flights of fancy, his own longings for the unattainable; and we cannot refrain from copying his first prose poem, which well expresses this feeling.

*L'étranger.*

Qui aimes-tu le mieux, homme énigmatique, dis? ton père, ta mère, ta sœur, ou ton frère?

Je n'ai ni père, ni mère, ni sœur, ni frère.

Tes amis?  
Vous vous servez là d'une parole dont le sens m'est resté jusqu'à ce jour inconnu.  
Ta patrie?  
J'ignore sous quelle latitude elle est située.  
La beauté?  
Je l'aimerais volontiers, déesse et immortelle.  
L'or?  
Je le hais comme vous haïssez Dieu.  
Eh! qu'aimes-tu donc, extraordinaire étranger?  
J'aime les nuages . . . les nuages qui passent . . . là-bas . . . les merveilleux nuages!

These marvellous clouds could not bear up the earthly clay, but to men of like aspirations these words will express their visionary longings; whilst those who cannot take in his mystic meaning can still turn to his art criticism, or to his life sketches, even to his advice to young authors, with pleasure and profit. We are, indeed, sometimes inclined to smile when we see modern English authors thrust their hands into the Baudelaire mine and dig out his thoughts, presenting them to us unacknowledged and clothed in English garb. But it needs care to steal from Baudelaire. At one time he will tell you he worships Art for art's sake and Beauty for itself; at another, he will flatly contradict himself and praise a didactic purpose. His friends are not taken in by his apparent contradictions—they know his mind too well for that; they are inclined to say with Emerson, 'With consistency a great soul has nothing to do,' and further to describe him in his own words spoken in praise of Théophile Gautier.

L'égal des plus grands dans le passé, un modèle pour ceux qui viendront, un diamant de plus en plus rare dans une époque ivre d'ignorance et de matière, c'est-à-dire un parfait homme de lettres.

How many quotations we might make with pleasure from his work! For instance, this one in his review of *Les Misérables*: 'Un sourire et une larme dans le visage d'un colosse, c'est une originalité presque divine.' Did Victor Hugo ever before or since receive so much praise in so few words? Of Wagner, whom he dared to praise when it was the fashion to abuse him, he writes: 'En effet, sans poésie, la musique de Wagner serait encore une œuvre poétique, étant douée de toutes les qualités qui constituent une poésie bien faite.' Time has proved the prophet true; but when he wrote he was without honour in France, and his words without weight among the multitude.

In his *Fusées*, or *Mon Cœur mis à nu*, we find more private opinion. 'It is not specially through political institutions that universal ruin or universal progress will manifest itself—the name matters little—rather it will be through *l'avilissement des cœurs*—Il y a dans la prière une opération magique. La prière est une des grandes forces de la dynamique intellectuelle. Il y a là comme une récurrence électrique.

Il n'y a d'intéressant sur la terre que les religions.—Toute idée est par elle-même, douée d'une vie immortelle, comme une personne.—Sois toujours poète même en prose.'

Later on in his diary we come upon pathetic sentences, showing the depths of the man's feeling and the higher aspirations which he had no strength to bring to perfection. 'Mes humiliations ont été des grâces de Dieu.—Ma phase d'égoïsme est-elle finie?—Tout est réparable, il est encore temps.—Je n'ai pas encore connu le plaisir d'un plan réalisé.'

Then comes the last utterance of his poor heart laid bare :—

I swear to myself henceforth to adopt the following rules as the everlasting rules of my life . . . To pray every morning to God, the Fountain of all strength and of all justice; to my father, to Mariette, and to Poe. [These titular saints of Baudelaire make us inclined to smile, as well as to weep, for one was the father he had lost at six years old, and the other his affinity, the poor American outcast!] To pray to them to give me necessary strength to accomplish all my tasks, and to grant my mother a life long enough to enjoy my reformation. To work all day, or at least as long as my strength lasts. To trust to God—that is to say, to Justice itself—for the success of my projects. To pray again every evening to God to ask Him for life and strength, for my mother and myself. To divide all my earnings into four parts—one for my daily expenses, one for my creditors, one for my friends, and one for my mother. To keep to principles of strict sobriety, and to banish all and every stimulant.

Here these acts of faith and good resolutions break off, with what result we already know. Not many of his countrymen took the trouble to come to Baudelaire's funeral; a few poets carried him to his grave. The indignant poet Banville read the funeral oration to a sprinkling of people, and only the thunder applauded; but among the witnesses another great outcast poet, still amongst us, watched the last scene, already, perhaps, fashioning in his dreamy style the beautiful lines of his own confession—

Voici mon cœur qui n'a battu qu'en vain,  
Pour palpiter aux ronces du Calvaire,  
Voici mon cœur qui n'a battu qu'en vain.

Vous Dieu de paix, de joie et de bonheur,  
Toutes mes peurs, toutes mes ignorances,  
Vous Dieu de paix, de joie et de bonheur.

Vous connaissez tout cela, tout cela,  
Et que je suis plus pauvre que personne.

It needs a poet to understand such poetry, a merciful Judge to answer such aspirations as are found in Baudelaire's resolution and Verlaine's confession.

It may not be without interest to the reader to place side by side a sentence from one of Edgar Poe's pages and its translation by Baudelaire. Only those who have attempted such work know its diffi-

culties; but it is certainly wonderful that the translator was able to grasp the full meaning of the English and to turn it into a French classic accepted as such by his countrymen. We shall note that the disciple has not altered the master's words; they were a sacred trust and must not be tampered with. The passage selected is from *Silence*.

The waters of the river have a saffron and a sickly hue; and they flow not onward to the sea but palpitate for ever beneath the red eye of the sun with a tumultuous and convulsive motion. For many miles on either side of the river's oozy bed is a pale desert of gigantic water-lilies. They sigh one unto the other in that solitude, and stretch towards the heaven their long and ghastly necks, and nod to and fro their everlasting heads. And there is an indistinct murmur which cometh out from among them, like the rushing of subterranean water. And they sigh one unto the other.

Les eaux de la rivière sont d'une couleur safranée et malsaine; et elles ne coulent pas vers la mer, mais palpitent éternellement, sous l'œil rouge du soleil, avec un mouvement tumultueux et convulsif. De chaque côté de cette rivière un lit vaseux s'étend, à une distance de plusieurs milles, un pâle désert de gigantesques nénuphars. Ils soupirent l'un vers l'autre dans cette solitude, et tendent vers le ciel leurs longs cous de spectres, et hochent de côté et d'autre leurs têtes sempiternelles. Et il sort d'eux un murmure confus qui ressemble à celui d'un torrent souterrain. Et ils soupirent l'un vers l'autre.

Setting aside translations, we shall notice many passages in Baudelaire's writings which seem to be the echo of some of Edgar Poe's own thoughts; indeed, he himself has said so. Further, we are inclined to attribute the appreciation of Shelley by modern Frenchmen to this same source, for Poe was a great admirer of Shelley, selecting his lines on the *Sensitive Plant* as a poem of supreme beauty; and we shall see that the same poem is often singled out by modern Frenchmen. Turning to Poe, we find, 'Man being what he is, the time could never have been in which poesy was not. Its first element is the thirst for supernal beauty, . . . the second element is the attempt to satisfy this thirst by novel combinations among those forms of beauty which already exist. . . .'

Baudelaire will tell us: 'Le but de la poésie est de répandre la lumière parmi les hommes;' and 'Gautier, c'est l'amour exclusif du beau avec toutes ses subdivisions exprimé dans le langage le mieux approprié. . . . Le principe de la poésie est strictement et simplement, l'aspiration humaine vers une Beauté supérieure, et la manifestation de ce principe est dans un enthousiasme, un enlèvement de l'âme; enthousiasme tout-à-fait indépendant de la passion, qui est l'ivresse du cœur, et la vérité, qui est la pâture de la raison.'

We might go on choosing passages on this favourite theme from both poets, but there is no need; extracts are only useful as patterns of the whole material, and cutting off short lengths should be avoided.

To make Baudelaire better understood is also to raise Edgar Poe on a higher pedestal. If we doubt where to place this latter, we know



his translator had no difficulty on the subject. The glory of both has increased with years; and if they failed on earth and among their fellow men, they must at last have joined hands in the spirit-world, and claimed from thence their rightful meed of praise.

Those who ranked Baudelaire very high (even before reading Mr. Swinburne's famous poem or Mr. Saintsbury's article) had no need of any incentive to place him anywhere but amongst a small but very choice circle of truly original immortals, even if the selection is made from some of those whom the world knoweth not. Baudelaire chose his mental affinity from the same class of genius—*déclassé*—and determined to place him higher. Though he could not gain honour for himself, though he could not keep his pathetic vows or make publishers pay him highly, he could bestow fame on another poor mortal, a poet of the nineteenth century—that age extolled not for dreams, but for its common sense and its material progress.

There was but one form of progress these two cared about, not the progress of science or of electric light, but the increased power of seeing visions and dreaming dreams. 'Et qu'aimes-tu donc, extraordinaire étranger? J'aime les nuages . . . les nuages qui passent . . . là-bas, . . . les merveilleux nuages.' That was the answer of both of them to a generation of materialists.

They were potters who fashioned their clay into exquisite moulds, and artists who cared not at all for uselessness or utility. They understood that the beauty of a Grecian urn is not impaired by its being put to vile use, and that the maker of it will not incur the blame, for, the result being achieved, his hours of toil have not been wasted, and the beauty he created must last as long as his creation exists. As Baudelaire wrote: 'La beauté est une qualité si forte qu'elle ne peut qu'ennoblir les âmes.'

ESMÉ STUART.

### THE PAN-BRITANNIC GATHERING

BEFORE attempting the task of entering somewhat into detail about the idea of a Pan-Britannic and All-Anglian gathering, which I ventilated through the pages of this Review in September last year, and which I am happy to say continues to gain in popular favour, I think, especially in these days when there is so wide a public to educate, that it might be advisable before proceeding further to call to mind what I stated was the object of this idea. I aimed, if the seed which I was sowing ever sprang to sapling and grew to a sturdy tree, to bring about, outside of existing political and commercial organisations which are sometimes of a disintegrating nature, a common periodical representative gathering, and to establish a National and Racial Festival say every fourth year. The scheme, as originally designed by me, was divided into three sections: Industrial, Intellectual, and Athletic (Amateur); and so general has been the support accorded to the idea in America, Australia, India, and South Africa that its complete realisation seems to be but a matter of time and co-operation. Committees have been formed to put the project into practice, and many of the leading Amateur Athletic bodies have already given it their hearty support, whilst it is also proposed to establish a number of scholarships in conjunction with the scheme which shall be open to the whole Empire. Such is a brief definition of the project given in *Hazell's Annual* for this year, and I think it a fair one. In the article referred to I also draw attention to the fact that the idea must not be confused with Imperial Federation, though it might help on that abstract aspiration. I aimed at the formation of something built on social lines, where people might forget their politics and commercial rivalries for a time, and where the Newlanders and the Englanders of our Ocean Commonwealth might meet now and again on a common footing, and where, as it were, the facts of a common language, free speech, the same traditions, and the blood bond for the bulk of those who inhabit English-speaking lands might be rebaptised. In the article to which I have referred I spoke with confidence, in consequence of the favour with which it had already been received, of the growth of the seeds carefully sown, and I have not been disappointed. Practical effect has been given to the