THE EARTHLY PARADISE

1868-70

Volume I (consisting of Parts 1 and 2) appeared in 1868, Volume II (Part 3) in December 1869 (dated 1870), and Volume III (Part 4) in December 1870. Some of the reviews are therefore of parts of the poem; many of them also discuss Morris’s earlier poems. For discussion, see Introduction, pp. 9-12.

12. Walter Pater, unsigned review, Westminster Review

October 1868, xc, 369-12

Walter Pater (1839-94) was a Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, and was to become the foremost English exponent of the aesthetic attitude. His review is of great interest both for its discussion of Morris’s poems in the context of Romanticism, and for its expression of Pater’s own preoccupations. The final section of the review is better known in its later use as the ‘Conclusion’ to The Renaissance (1873)—withdrawn from the second edition as likely to mislead the young, but later restored. Its form in the Morris review is rather more subversive of orthodox Victorian morality.

Pater published a revised form of the review, without the concluding section, as ‘Aesthetic Poetry’, in the first edition of Appreciations (1889), but it does not appear in later editions.

This poetry is neither a mere reproduction of Greek or mediæval life or poetry, nor a disguised reflex of modern sentiment. The atmosphere on which its effect depends belongs to no actual form of life or simple form of poetry. Greek poetry, mediæval or modern poetry, projects
above the realities of its time a world in which the forms of things are transfigured. Of that world this new poetry takes possession, and sublimates beyond it another still fainter and more spectral, which is literally an artificial or 'earthly paradise.' It is a finer ideal, extracted from what in relation to any actual world is already an ideal. Like some strange second flowering after date, it renews on a more delicate type the poetry of a past age, but must not be confounded with it. The secret of the enjoyment of it is that inversion of home-sickness known to some, that incurable thirst for the sense of escape, which no actual form of life satisfies, no poetry even, if it be merely simple and spontaneous. It is this which in these poems defines the temperament or personality of the workman.

The writings of the romantic school mark a transition not so much from the pagan to the mediæval ideal, as from a lower to a higher degree of passion in literature. The end of the eighteenth century, swept by vast disturbing currents, experienced an excitement of spirit of which one note was a reaction against an outworn classicism severer not more from nature than from the genuine motives of ancient art; and a return to true Hellenism was as much a part of this reaction as the sudden pre-occupation with things mediæval. The mediæval tendency is in Goethe's Goetz von Berlichingen, the Hellenic in his Iphigenie. At first this mediævalism was superficial. Adventure, romance in the poorest sense, grotesque individualism—that is one element in mediæval poetry, and with it alone Scott and Goethe dealt. Beyond them were the two other elements of the mediæval spirit; its mystic religion at its apex in Dante and Saint Louis, and its mystic passion, passing here and there into the great romantic loves of rebellious flesh, of Lancelot and Abelard. That stricter, imaginative mediævalism which recreates the mind of the middle age, so that the form, the presentiment grows outward from within, came later with Victor Hugo in France, with Heine in Germany.

The Defence of Guenevere: and Other Poems, published ten years ago, are a refinement upon this later, profounder mediævalism. The poem which gives its name to the volume is a thing tormented and awry with passion, like the body of Guenevere defending herself from the charge of adultery, and the accent falls in strange, unwonted places with the effect of a great cry. These Arthurian legends, pre-Christian in their origin, yield all their sweetness only in a Christian atmosphere. What is characteristic in them is the strange suggestion of a deliberate choice between Christ and a rival lover. That religion shades into
sensuous love, and sensuous love into religion, has been often seen; it is the experience of Rousseau as well as of the Christian mystics. The Christianity of the middle age made way among a people whose loss was in the life of the senses only by the possession of an idol, the beautiful idol of the Latin hymn-writers, who for one moral or spiritual sentiment have a hundred sensuous images. Only by the inflaming influence of such idols can any religion compete with the presence of the fleshly lover. And so in these imaginative loves, in their highest expression the Provençal poetry, it is a rival religion with a new rival cultus that we see. Coloured through and through with Christian sentiment, they are rebels against it. The rejection of one idolatry for the other is never lost sight of. The jealousy of that other lover, for whom these words and images and strange ways of sentiment were first devised, is the secret here of a triumphant colour and heat. It is the mood of the cloister taking a new direction, and winning so a later space of life it never anticipated. Who knows whether, when the simple belief in them has faded away, the most cherished sacred writings may not for the first time exercise their highest influence as the most delicate amorous poetry in the world?

Hereon, as before in the cloister, so now in the chateau, the reign of reverie set in. The idolatry of the cloister knew that mood thoroughly, and had sounded all its stops. For in that idolatry the idol was absent or veiled, not limited to one supreme plastic form like Zeus at Olympia or Athena in the Acropolis, but distracted, as in a fever dream, into a thousand symbols and reflections. Quite in the way of one who handles the older sorceries, the Church has a thousand charms to make the absent near. Like the woman in the idyll of Theocritus—

.... έλεω το τήνον ἐμον ἃτι δόμα τον ἄνθρωπον, ¹

is the cry of all her bizarre rites. Into this kingdom of reverie, and with it into a paradise of ambitious refinements, the earthly love enters, and becomes a prolonged somnambulism. Of religion it learns the art of directing towards an imaginary object sentiments whose natural direction is towards objects of sense. Hence a love defined by the absence of the beloved, choosing to be without hope, protesting against all lower uses of love, barren, extravagant, antinomian. It is the love which is incompatible with marriage, for the chevalier who never comes, of the serf for the chatelaine, the rose for the nightingale, of

¹ Draw home to me that man of mine. Idyll, ii, 17.
Rudel for the Lady of Tripoli. Another element of extravagance came in with the feudal spirit: Provencal love is full of the very forms of vassalage. To be the servant of love, to have offended, to taste the subtle luxury of chastisement, of reconciliation—the religious spirit, too, knows that, and meets just there, as in Rousseau, the delicacies of the earthly love. Here, under this strange complex of conditions, as in some medicated air, exotic flowers of sentiment expand, the impression of this delirium been conveyed as by Victor Hugo in *Notre Dame de Paris*. The strangest creations of sleep seem here, by some appalling licence, to cross the limit of the dawn. The English poet too has learned the secret. He has diffused through ‘King Arthur’s Tomb’ the maddening white glare of the sun, and tyranny of the moon, not tender and far-off, but close down—the sorcerer’s moon, large and feverish. The colouring is intricate and delirious, as of ‘scarlet lilies.’ The influence of summer is like a poison in one’s blood, with a sudden bewildered sickening of life and all things. In ‘Galahad: a Mystery,’ the frost of Christmas night on the chapel stones acts as a strong narcotic; a sudden shrill ringing pierces through the numbness; a voice proclaims that the Grail has gone forth through the great forest. It is in the ‘Blue Closet’ that this delirium reaches its height with a singular beauty, reserved perhaps for the enjoyment of the few:

*How long ago was it, how long ago,*
*He came to this tower with hands full of snow?*
*Kneel down, O love Louise, kneel down,* he said,
*And sprinkled the dusty snow over my head.*
*He watch’d the snow melting, it ran through my hair,*
*Ran over my shoulders, white shoulders, and bare.*
*I cannot weep for thee, poor love Louise,*
*For my tears are all hidden deep under the seas,*
*In a gold and blue casket she keeps all my tears;*
*But my eyes are no longer blue, as in old years,*
*For they grow grey with time, grow small and dry—*
*I am so feeble now, would I might die.*
*Will he come back again, or is he dead?*
*O! is he sleeping, my scarf round his head?*
*Or did they strangle him as he lay there,*
*With the long scarlet scarf I used to wear?*
*Only I pray thee, Lord, let him come here!*
*Both his soul and his body to me are most dear.*
*Dear Lord, that loves me, I wait to receive*
*Either body or spirit this wild Christmas-eve.*
A passion of which the outlets are sealed, begets a tension of nerve, in which the sensible world comes to one with a reinforced brilliance and relief—all redness is turned into blood, all water into tears. Hence a wild, convulsed sensuousness in the poetry of the middle age, in which the things of nature begin to play a strange delirious part. Of the things of nature the mediaeval mind had a deep sense; but its sense of them was not objective, no real escape to the world without one. The aspects and motions of nature only reinforced its prevailing mood, and were in conspiracy with one’s own brain against one. A single sentiment invaded the world; everything was infused with a motive drawn from the soul. The amorous poetry of Provence, making the starling and the swallow its messengers, illustrates the whole attitude of nature in this electric atmosphere, bent as by miracle or magic to the service of human passion.

The most popular and gracious form of Provencal poetry was the nocturn, sung by the lover at night at the door or under the window of his mistress. These songs were of different kinds, according to the hour at which they were intended to be sung. Some were to be sung at midnight—songs inviting to sleep, the serena, or serenade; others at break of day—waking songs, the aube, or aubade.* This waking song is put sometimes into the mouth of a comrade of the lover, who plays sentinel during the night, to watch for and announce the dawn; sometimes into the mouth of one of the lovers, who are about to separate. A modification of it is familiar to us all in Romeo and Juliet, where the lovers debate whether the song they hear is of the nightingale or the lark; the aubade, with the two other great forms of love-poetry then floating in the world, the sonnet and the epithalamium, being here refined, heightened, and inwoven into the structure of the play. Those, in whom what Rousseau calls les frayeurs nocturnes† are constitutional, know what splendour they give to the things of the morning; and how there comes something of relief from physical pain with the first white film in the sky. The middle age knew those terrors in all their forms; and these songs of the morning win hence a strange tenderness and effect. The crown of the English poet’s book is one of these songs of the dawn:—

Pray but one prayer for me ‘twixt thy closed lips,
Think but one thought of me up in the stars.

* Faurel’s Histoire de la Poésie Provençale. Tome 2, ch. xviii.
† Nocturnal fears.
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The summer-night waneth, the morning light slips,
Faint and grey 'twixt the leaves of the aspen,
 betwixt the cloud-bars,
 That are patiently waiting there for the dawn:
 Patient and colourless, though Heaven's gold
 Waits to float through them along with the sun.
 Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,
 The heavy elms wait, and restless and cold
 The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;
 Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn,
 Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.
 Speak but one word to me over the corn,
 Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn.

It is the very soul of the bridegroom which goes forth to the bride;
inanimate things are longing with him; all the sweetness of the
imaginative loves of the middle age, with a superadded spirituality of
touch all its own, is in that!

The Defence of Guenevere was published in 1858; the Life and Death of
Jason in 1867; and the change of manner wrought in the interval is
entire, it is almost a revolt. Here there is no delirium or illusion, no
experiences of mere soul while the body and the bodily senses sleep or
wake with convulsed intensity at the prompting of imaginative love;
but rather the great primary passions under broad daylight as of the
pagan Veronese. This simplification interests us not merely for the
sake of an individual poet—full of charm as he is—but chiefly because
it explains through him a transition which, under many forms, is one
law of the life of the human spirit, and of which what we call the
Renaissance is only a supreme instance. Just so the monk in his cloister,
through the 'open vision,' open only to the spirit, divined, aspired to
and at last apprehended a better daylight, but earthly, open only to
the senses. Complex and subtle interests, which the mind spins for
itself may occupy art and poetry or our own spirits for a time; but
sooner or later they come back with a sharp rebound to the simple
elementary passions—anger, desire, regret, pity and fear—and what
corresponds to them in the sensuous world—bare, abstract fire, water,
air, tears, sleep, silence—and what De Quincey has called the 'glory of
motion.'

This reaction from dreamlight to daylight gives, as always happens,
a strange power in dealing with morning and the things of the morn-
ing. Think of this most lovely waking with the rain on one's face—
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(Iris comes to Argus as he sleeps; a rainbow, when he wakes, is to be the pledge she has been present:—)

Then he, awaking in the morning cold,
A sprinkle of fine rain fell on his face,
And leaping to his feet, in that wild place,
Looked round and saw the morning sunlight throw
Across the world the many-coloured bow,
And trembling knew that the high gods, indeed,
Had sent the messenger unto their need.

Not less is this Hellenist of the middle age master of dreams, of sleep and the desire of sleep—sleep in which no one walks, restorer of childhood to men—dreams, not like Galahad’s or Guenevere’s, but full of happy, childish wonder as in the earlier world. It is a world in which the centaur and the ram with the fleece of gold are conceivable. The song sung always claims to be sung for the first time. There are hints at a language common to birds and beasts and men. Everywhere there is an impression of surprise, as of people first waking from the golden age, at fire, snow, wine, the touch of water as one swims, the salt taste of the sea. And this simplicity at first hand is a strange contrast to the sought-out simplicity of Wordsworth. Desire here is towards the body of nature for its own sake, not because a soul is divined through it.

And yet it is one of the charming anachronisms of a poet, who, while he handles an ancient subject, never becomes an antiquarian, but vitalizes his subject by keeping it always close to himself, that between whiles we have a sense of English scenery as from an eye well purified under Wordsworth’s influence, in the song of the brown river-bird among the willows, the casement half opened on summer-nights, the

Noise of bells, such as in moonlight lanes
Rings from the grey team on the market night.

Nowhere but in England is there such a nation of birds, the fern-owl, the water-hen, the thrush in a hundred sweet variations, the gerr-falcon, the kestrel, the starling, the pea-fowl; birds heard from the field by the townsmen down in the streets at dawn; doves everywhere, pink-footed, grey-winged, flitting about the temple, troubled by the temple incense, trapped in the snow. The sea-touches are not less sharp and firm, surest of effect in places where river and sea, salt and fresh waves, conflict.
All this is in that wonderful fourteenth book, the book of the Syrens. The power of an artist will sometimes remain inactive over us, the spirit of his work, however much one sees of it, be veiled, till on a sudden we are found by one revealing example of it which makes all he did precious. It is so with this fourteenth book of Jason. There is a tranquil level of perfection in the poem, by which in certain moods, or for certain minds, the charm of it might escape. For such the book of the Syrens is a revealing example of the poet’s work. The book opens with a glimpse of white bodies, crowned and girt with gold, moving far-off on the sand of a little bay. It comes to men nearing home, yet so longing for rest that they might well lie down before they reach it. So the wise Medea prompts Orpheus to plead with the Argonauts against the Syrens,—

Sweetly they sang, and still the answer came
Piercing and clear from him, as bursts the flame
From out the furnace in the moonless night;
Yet, as their words are no more known aright
Through lapse of many ages, and no man
Can any more across the waters wan,
Behold those singing women of the sea,
Once more I pray you all to pardon me,
If with my feeble voice and harsh I sing
From what dim memories may chance to cling
About men’s hearts, of lovely things once sung
Beside the sea, while yet the world was young.

Then literally like an echo from the Greek world, heard across so great a distance only as through some miraculous calm, subdued in colour and cadence, the ghosts of passionate song, come those matchless lyrics.

In handling a subject of Greek legend, anything in the way of an actual revival must always be impossible. Such vain antiquarianism is a waste of the poet’s power. The composite experience of all the ages is part of each one of us; to deduct from that experience, to obliterate any part of it, to come face to face with the people of a past age, as if the middle age, the Renaissance, the eighteenth century had not been, is as impossible as to become a little child, or enter again into the womb and be born. But though it is not possible to repress a single phase of that humanity, which, because we live and move and have our being in the life of humanity, makes us what we are; it is possible
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to isolate such a phase, to throw it into relief, to be divided against ourselves in zeal for it, as we may hark back to some choice space of our own individual life. We cannot conceive the age; we can conceive the element it has contributed to our culture; we can treat the subjects of the age bringing that into relief. Such an attitude towards Greece, aspiring to but never actually reaching its way of conceiving life, is what is possible for art.

The modern poet or artist who treats in this way a classical story comes very near, if not to the Hellenism of Homer, yet to that of the middle age, the Hellenism of Chaucer. No writer on the Renaissance has hitherto cared much for this exquisite early light of it. Afterwards the Renaissance takes its side, becomes exaggerated and facile. But the choice life of the human spirit is always under mixed lights, and in mixed situations; when it is not too sure of itself, is still expectant, girt up to leap forward to the promise. Such a situation there was in that earliest return from the overwrought spiritualities of the middle age to the earlier, more ancient life of the senses; and for us the most attractive form of classical story is the monk’s conception of it, when he escapes from the sombre legend of his cloister to that true light. The fruits of this mood, which, divining more than it understands, infuses into the figures of the Christian legend some subtle reminiscence of older gods, or into the story of Cupid and Psyche that passionate stress of spirit which the world owes to Christianity, have still to be gathered up when the time comes.

And so, before we leave Jason, a word must be said about its mediaevalisms, delicate inconsistencies which, coming in a Greek poem, bring into this white dawn thoughts of the delirious night just over and make one’s sense of relief deeper. The opening of the fourth book describes the embarkation of the Argonauts; as in a dream the scene shifts and we go down from Iolchos to the sea through a pageant of the fourteenth century in some French or Italian town. The gilded vanes on the spires, the bells ringing in the towers, the trellis of roses at the window, the close planted with apple-trees, the grotesque undercroft with its close-set pillars, change by a single touch the air of these Greek cities and we are at Glastonbury by the tomb of Arthur. The nymph in furred raiment who seduces Hylas is conceived frankly in the spirit of Teutonic romance; her song is of a garden enclosed, such as that with which the glass-stainer of the middle ages surrounds the mystic bride of the song of songs. Medea herself has a hundred touches of the mediaeval sorceress, the sorceress of the Streckelberg or the

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Blocksberg: her mystic changes are Christabel's. Here again is an incident straight out of the middle age,—

But, when all hushed and still the palace grew,
She put her gold robes off, and on her drew
A dusky gown, and with a wallet small
And cutting wood-knife girt herself withal,
And from her dainty chamber softly passed
Through stairs and corridors, until at last
She came down to a gilded watergate,
Which with a golden key she opened straight,
And swiftly stept into a little boat,
And, pushing off from shore, began to float
Adown the stream, and with her tender bands
And half-bared arms, the wonder of all lands,
Rowed strongly through the starlit gusty night.

It is precisely this effect, this grace of Hellenism relieved against the sorrow of the middle age, which forms the chief motive of The Earthly Paradise, with an exquisite dexterity the two threads of sentiment are here interwoven and contrasted. A band of adventurers sets out from Norway, most northerly of northern lands, where the plague is raging, and the host-bell is continually ringing as they carry the sacrament to the sick. Even in Mr. Morris's earliest poems snatches of the sweet French tongue had always come with something of Hellenic blitheness and grace. And now it is below the very coast of France, through the fleet of Edward III., among the painted sails of the middle age, that we pass to a reserved fragment of Greece, which by some θεῖα τέχνη ¹ lingers on in the Western Sea into the middle age. There the stories of The Earthly Paradise are told, Greek story and romantic alternating; and for the crew of the 'Rose Garland' coming across the sins of the earlier world with the sign of the cross and drinking Rhine wine in Greece, the two worlds of sentiment are confronted.

We have become so used to austerity and concentration in some noble types of modern poetry, that it is easy to mistake the lengthiness of this new poem. Yet here mere mass is itself the first condition of an art which deals with broad atmospheric effects. The water is not less medicinal, not less gifted with virtues, because a few drops of it are without effect; it is water to bathe and swim in. The songs 'The Apology to the Reader,' the month-interludes, especially those of April and May, which are worthy of Shakespeare, detach themselves by their

¹ Divine chance.
concentrated sweetness from the rest of the book. Partly because in
perfect story-telling like this the manner rises and falls with the story
itself, 'Atalanta's Race,' 'The Man born to be King,' 'The Story of
Cupid and Psyche,' and in 'The Doom of King Acrisius,' the episode
of Danae and the shower of gold, have in a pre-eminent degree what
is characteristic of the whole book, the loveliness of things newly
washed with fresh water; and this clarity and chasteness, mere qualities
here of an exquisite art, remind one that the effectual preserver of all
purity is perfect taste.

One characteristic of the pagan spirit these new poems have which is
on their surface—the continual suggestion, pensive or passionate, of
the shortness of life; this is contrasted with the bloom of the world and
gives new seduction to it; the sense of death and the desire of the
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The modern world is in possession of truths; what but a passing
smile can it have for a kind of poetry which, assuming artistic beauty of
form to be an end in itself, passes by those truths and the living in-
terests which are connected with them, to spend a thousand years in
spending once more these pagan tales as if it had but to choose
more and more beauty? It is a strange transition the
Earthly paradise to the sad-coloured world of abstract philosophy. But
let us accept the challenge; let us see what modern philosophy, when
it is sincere, really does say about human life and the truth we can
attain in it, and the relation of this to the desire of beauty.

To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or
fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought.
Let us begin with that which is without,—our physical life. Fix upon
it in one of its more exquisite intervals—the moment, for instance, of
delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat. What is the
whole physical life in that moment but a combination of natural
principles to which science gives their names? But those elements,
phosphorus and lime, and delicate fibres, are present not in the human
body alone; we detect them in places most remote from it. Our
physical life is a perpetual motion of them—the passage of the blood,
the wasting and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the modification
of the tissues of the brain by every ray of light and sound—processes
which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces. Like the
elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends
beyond us; it rusts iron and ripens corn. Far out on every side of us, these elements are broadcast, driven by many forces; and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few out of ten thousand resulting combinations. That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours under which we group them—a design in a web the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. This at least of flame-like our life has, that it is but the concurrence renewed from moment to moment of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.

Or if we begin with the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring. There it is no longer the gradual darkening of the eye and fading of colour from the wall, the movement of the shore side, where the water flows down indeed, though in apparent rest, but the race of the midstream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought.

At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp, impertunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But when reflection begins to act upon these objects they are dissipated under its influence, the cohesive force is suspended like a trick of magic, each object is loosed into a group of impressions, colour, odour, texture, in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn, and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further, the whole scope of observation is dwarfed to the narrow chamber of the individual mind. Experience, already reduced to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that, which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of an individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world.

Analysis goes a step further still, and tells us that those impressions of the individual to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also, all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than it is. To such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming
itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with the movement, the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off, that continual vanishing away, that strange perpetual weaving and unwrapping of ourselves.

Such thoughts seem desolate at first; at times all the bitterness of life seems concentrated in them. They bring the image of one washed out beyond the bar in a sea at ebb, losing even his personality, as the elements of which he is composed pass into new combinations. Struggling, as he must, to save himself, it is himself that he loses at every moment.

Philosophiren, says Novalis, ist dephlegmatisiren, vivificiren. The service of philosophy, and of religion and culture as well, to the human spirit, is to startle it into a sharp and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive for us for that moment: only. Not the fruit of experience but experience itself is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How can we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

To burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. Failure is to form habits; for habit is relative to a stereotyped world; meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two things, persons, situations—seem alike. While all melts under our feet, we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange flowers and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us and in the brilliance of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is on this short day of frost and sun to sleep before evening. With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have to do is

1 To philosophize is to get rid of apathy, to bring to life.
to be forever curiously testing opinion and courting new impressions: never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte or of Hegel or of our own. Theories, religious or philosophical ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us to gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us. 'La philosophie,' says Victor Hugo, 'c'est le microscope de la pensée.' The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract morality we have not identified with ourselves, or what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.

One of the most beautiful places in the writings of Rousseau is that in the sixth book of the Confessions, where he describes the awakening in him of the literary sense. An undefinable taint of death had always clung about him, and now in early manhood he believed himself stricken by mortal disease. He asked himself how he might make as much as possible of the interval that remained; and he was not biassed by anything in his previous life when he decided that it must be by intellectual excitement, which he found in the clear, fresh writings of Voltaire. Well, we are all condamnés, as Victor Hugo somewhere says: we have an interval and then we cease to be. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest in art and song. For our one chance is in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. High passions give one this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, political or religious enthusiasm, or the 'enthusiasm of humanity.' Only, be sure it is passion, that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake, has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.

1 Philosophy is the microscope of thought.
2 Condemned (to death).