

Carlisle and Mr. Mills, who have voted for free silver, now wish the question not to be an issue.

To continue the parallel further would lead us into the domain of prophecy, which we must not enter. The situation during the two periods, forty-eight years apart, has been shown to be strikingly similar, and it now remains for the next few months to reveal whether the parallel is to be complete to the end. What must happen to complete it? A sudden blazing up of excitement in the Democratic party, and the hardening of

a resolution that one who is not with the Southern wing of his party on the silver question must not be nominated; the defeat not only of Cleveland, but of Hill; the nomination of a "dark horse," — Senator Gorman, Governor Boies, or some one else who favors free coinage for silver; the nomination of Blaine by the Republicans; the election of a Democratic nobody whose strength is derived from his obscurity. All very improbable, you say? Yes. Sometimes the expected happens in politics; sometimes the unexpected.

RECENT FRENCH ESSAYS.

THREE centuries — the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth — find their representatives in the latest volume¹ of M. Brunetière's *Critical Essays on the History of French Literature*; but the larger proportion of space is given to the seventeenth century, and the most interesting essays are those on the Provinciales of Pascal, on Jansenism and Cartesianism, and on the Philosophy of Molière.

The faith of Pascal has almost as many apologists, in France at least, as the Christian religion; and the slender rivulet of his text meanders, at this date, through a meadow of marginal notes, in a ratio of author to commentator which is not far from Shakespearean. The task of deciphering the real meaning of an author is, by St. Augustine, very aptly declared to be a more difficult, or rather a more impossible one, than the discovery of truth itself. "But which of us shall, among those so many truths, which occur to inquirers in those words, as they are differently understood, so discover that one meaning as to affirm, 'This

¹ *Études Critiques sur l'Histoire de la Littérature Française*. Par FERDINAND BRUNETIÈRE. Quatrième Série. Paris: Hachette et Cie. 1891. Boston: Carl Schoenhof.

Moses thought,' and 'This would he have understood in that history,' with the same confidence as he would affirm respecting a self-evident truth, 'This is true,' whether Moses thought this or that?" For he cannot, he goes on to say, see into the mind of Moses to discern his intention in writing as clearly as he can perceive the certainty of an abstract truth. And finding, by rare critical insight, in this very obscurity an element of vitality and duration in a work, he exclaims: "I should have desired, verily, had I then been Moses (for we all come from the same lump, and *what is man, save as Thou art mindful of him?*), and been enjoined by Thee to write the book of Genesis, such a power of expression and such a style to be given me that neither they who cannot yet understand how God created might reject the sayings as beyond their capacity, and they who had attained thereto might find what true opinion soever they had by thought arrived at not passed over in those few words of Thy servant; and should AN-

other man, by the light of truth, have discovered another, neither should that fail of being discoverable in those same words."

Many truths are to be found in the works of Pascal, to say nothing of the verities or errors which may have been sown as well as reaped there by his critics. There are two circumstances that give rise to this variety of interpretation; one being the narrow and accidental origin of his writings, the other the wide scope of his thought. The *Lettres Provinciales* is a polemical work, written in response to the immediate demands of a violent controversy. Its very title requires an explanatory note. The works which it answers are forgotten, or remembered only by the answers; it remains the one active fire in a region of extinct volcanoes. The *Pensées* is a handful of fragments intended to go toward an apology for the Christian religion; how far representative of any such work, or how far only of the author's mood and the thought uppermost in his mind at the moment, is, of course, not wholly determinable. Hence the textual difficulties. Now, men have believed or doubted in divers ways and from various impellent motives, — some led by reason and the logical faculty, others by sentiment and intuition, others by suffering; but Pascal both reasoned and divined, affirmed, doubted, and suffered, affording to intelligences variously predisposed different points of contact, of sympathy or repulsion. Hence the differences in critical interpretation.

As part of a theological discussion, the *Provinciales* was not only assailed on its first appearance, but has marked a line of separation between two theological parties ever since. The questions stirred by Pascal are not, however, merely technical or dialectic; they are universal and profound. His work has long stood outside of circumstance, as one of the great contributions to human thought, but, being controversial and

apologetic in character, it has always been placed under fire; for Jansenist and Jesuit stand for two elements of human life, and their quarrel is not confined to the Church.

In his own age Pascal was persecuted as the exponent of the strictest of theological schools. Voltaire's attacks were directed against him for his superstition. It was reserved for Cousin and the nineteenth century to brand him as a skeptic, and to write books and articles upon his Pyrrhonism in place of discussions of his credulity. This accusation, founded upon Pascal's denial of the worth of reason, together with his accumulation of reasons, seems to have been formulated on the plan of the celebrated refutation of Schopenhauer's pessimism, which argues that, if everything is bad, Schopenhauer's philosophy must be bad; and if this be the case, the world, which is proved bad by a bad philosophy, may, after all, be a very good one. Joseph de Maistre found Pascal guilty of skepticism, but on a different indictment, namely, his concessions in argument to the unbelief of others, and his apology for Christianity, which, according to De Maistre, could make no concessions and needed no apology.

In fact, the history of Pascalian criticism would in itself afford suggestive material for study, so strongly does it bring into relief not alone the opinions, but the individuality of his critics; and nearly every man of note in French critical literature has had somewhat to say of him. Sainte-Beuve, discarding any ideas of Pascal's skepticism, and looking upon him as "a reservoir of high thought," especially needed for refreshment and inspiration in an age when the tenor of his thought has become obsolete, speaks of his books as having brought about the result which their author would least have aimed at, in helping to establish, through their tone of anti-scholasticism, that reflection of Christianity in the world which he terms the "*morale des honnêtes gens.*"

Edmond Scherer comprehended the positive nature of Pascal's faith, his "reasons of the heart that the reason knows not," through personal experience as well as critical insight. In truth, the arguments against the Pyrrhonism of Pascal must by this time have equaled in number, as well as surpassed in weight, the accusations; and M. Brunetière, though he lifts his voice as one crying in the wilderness, is not as solitary in his convictions as his phraseology would sometimes lead us to suppose.

What his book gives us is a careful study of the influence, in their own day and later, of Jansenism and Cartesianism. With a thorough knowledge of the epochs of which he treats, and an historical sense which is a just perception of the relation of one fact to another, and of the dependence of thought on thought, rather than a formulated theory of mediums, he seeks to disentangle the two threads of thought in the seventeenth century (we might say three, for Jesuitism also is taken account of), and to show their relative success and failure, and the nature of their hold upon France. He considers that the influence of Descartes upon his own century has been greatly exaggerated, the classical spirit of the Renaissance having been opposed to a philosophy which would lessen the authority of the past, as the religious pessimism of Pascal and the Jansenists was against the doctrine of the sovereignty of human reason. The date fixed by M. Brunetière as that of the apotheosis of Cartesianism is that moment in the eighteenth century when Descartes's name was still held in slight esteem as that of a "visionary," but when his ideas of the solidarity and unity of science and the sovereignty of reason, his belief in universal progress, had become the predominating thought of the day. Descartes is therefore held responsible by M. Brunetière alike for the materialism of Diderot and the sentimentalism of Jean Jacques. M. Brune-

tière leaves Cartesianism at this point, making no attempt to follow it into the optimistic science worship of the present day, or that scientific pessimism, in which its influence is no less clearly traceable, physiological automatism. Pascal also grants to Descartes his automatic theory,—we are automaton as well as mind, in recognition of the dependence of thought upon custom; but he will have the automaton treated as such, and the individual impose a religion upon his habits of thought as the Church imposes one upon the ignorant masses.

In regard to the relations of Pascal to Cartesianism, M. Brunetière not only finds the tenor of the *Pensées* antagonistic to that philosophy, quoting the note in the manuscript in which Pascal expressed his intention of refuting it, but he traces further in the book a categorical refutation of all the fundamental Cartesian ideas, and is inclined to think that Pascal had in his mind, as he wrote, a Cartesian interlocutor as well as a *libertin*. Possibly criticism has insisted a little too strongly on the fragmentary character of the *Pensées*; but we doubt if the intended edifice can be reconstructed from the plans quite so completely as this.

In the personality and moral teaching of Pascal, what Sainte-Beuve most dwelt upon was his holiness, his spirit of love toward God and man. Edmond Scherer saw most vividly the anguish of doubt and passionate need of belief struggling together toward an unshakable conviction. M. Brunetière takes Pascal's Jansenism, his conception of the depraved nature of man and the necessity of grace, together with his insistence upon conduct, as the central feature of his study. He points out that Jansenism and Port Royal should be sacred to students of French thought as having, for a period of more than fifty years, incarnated the French conscience, and helped it to make, "against the natural frivolity of the race, the greatest

effort that it had made since the early days of the Reformation and Calvinism." Far from agreeing with Sainte-Beuve that the writings of Pascal have led to the establishment of a "morale des honnêtes gens," M. Brunetière holds that, if such a standard of morality exists, in regard to which he seems needlessly skeptical, it has been brought about by the triumph of Pascal's enemies and the spread of Jesuitism; for the influence of Jansenism, preponderant in the seventeenth century, was, he considers, overcome first by the visible triumph of Cartesianism in the eighteenth, and later by the sure, gradual progress of the spirit of accommodation and religious worldliness.

With Cartesianism and Jesuitism both victorious, what becomes of the influence of Jansenism? Did it belong entirely to one period? The highest tides of thought are rare, and human conduct scarcely maintains itself long in a whole society at a high level. M. Brunetière finds in the humanitarian and socialistic tendencies of to-day, in realism, altruism, naturalism, even, the elements most nearly corresponding in later French thought to the Jansenism of Pascal, — the elements of renunciation, of sacrifice, of individualism, and something corresponding to Pascal's pessimism; for this pessimism, consisting as it does in a sense of the nothingness of man, the loneliness of space, and the failure of unassisted human effort, constitutes, to him, a part of Pascal's religion which is no more to be regretted than his use of irony and logic as weapons of religious argument is to be deprecated. The vein of irony has penetrated so far into French life and into all modern life, its action upon faith and vigor of thought has been so corroding, that the more earnest of the younger French writers turn from it altogether, as disintegrating and belittling to the mind. It is well to be reminded that the greatest of French religious writers used it, as other great religious

thinkers have done, as a scourge, and that there is a vast distinction between irony of this sort and that which chains men's minds to the trivial and ignoble aspects of life.

In his essay on the philosophy of Molière M. Brunetière gives the results of a systematic investigation into the nature of that philosophy which has always been discerned as a flavor in the plays of Molière, and reconstructs, both from the plays themselves and from the influences amid which they were produced, a systematic philosophy of nature, in obedience to the dictates of which *Tartuffe* would appear to have been written, not only as a satire of hypocrisy, but as an attack upon religion, and all that in the religious ideal opposes the natural current of life. Here, again, we suspect a little too much critical zeal, and, what is of more consequence, we fail to find in M. Brunetière's essay an adequate appreciation of that unformulated philosophy which makes Molière a perennial delight to the soul.

M. Brunetière is by no means an easy or graceful writer, and he is often a dry one. In intelligence and in conscientiousness he stands nearer to Edmond Scherer than to any other critic, and, like Scherer, he has a literary standard which is an intellectual one as well. He is at his best in the discrimination of influences of thought and the characterization of historical epochs; he has clearness of argument and a fund of good sense. If he is less distinctly clever than M. Faguet, as he certainly is, he is also less paradoxical; in fact, now and then he seems to have a special mission in bringing criticism back from its excursions into the region of paradox, for instance, from its assertions of the skepticism of Pascal to the starting-point of good sense and the obvious, and he sometimes displays a little of that courage in making evident statements on which Edmond Scherer congratulated M. Nisard.

M. Édouard Rod has produced a very well written book on Stendhal,¹ a book which serves excellently the purpose of the series for which it was written; giving in a small compass, with great clearness and proportion, a sketch of the life of an author, a study of his work, and a sufficient account of the judgments upon him of his contemporaries and successors to mark the extent of his influence and his place in literature. The making of such a book calls for judgment and independence of thought, and affords room for sincere and tolerably extensive analysis, while at the same time it is not an independent work, and a too arbitrary or too personal criticism would be out of place in it. M. Rod has kept this balance, on the whole, very well. He has depicted Stendhal carefully after the document, and if the conception of his personality and writings on which he has proceeded is a personal one, it is not aggressively so, and is carefully compared with the judgments of others as well as with the facts. The book gives very distinctly M. Rod's impression of Stendhal, but the reader may gain from it a clear idea of the subject without necessarily sharing the impression.

M. Rod cannot be accused of overstating the case in Stendhal's favor. In estimating his work he never quite grasps the qualities which have made that work an inspiration and an influence; he is not himself under the spell, and he shows no indication of having felt its potency to the degree to which a critic ought to feel, or at the very least to have felt, his author, in order to comprehend rightly even his fallacies. It is not that M. Rod's criticism is incorrect so much that it is incomplete. He measures out all the qualities of Stendhal, but he does not feel them sufficiently to make them felt. He considers that M. Bourget read into his author the charm which he cele-

brates in those glowing pages of the *Psychologie Contemporaine*, that he was intoxicated with his own idea of Stendhal, whereas it would perhaps have been more just to say that M. Bourget had felt the effect of the wine, but exaggerated its quality. "But after all," asks M. Rod, "are authors greater by the absolute merit of their work or by the interpretations of which they are susceptible, by their power of execution or by their power of suggestion?" We would answer the question only by the remark that the latter trait is as fully their own and as much to be accredited to them as the former.

The reason of M. Rod's want of sympathy with Stendhal is that Stendhal was an ironical writer, — an ironist, if we may attempt to define thus his adaptation of that mode of viewing life; and M. Rod is one of the writers, of whom we have spoken above, to whom irony is repellent. It not only offends his earnestness, it wounds his sentimentalism; and he is a sentimentalist as well as an idealist, though he has done some good analytical and critical work. Stendhal had prophesied to the moment the date on which posterity would place the laurel upon his work. "I shall be appreciated," he said, "in 1880;" and the writers of the last decade have obeyed the summons, and have, with few exceptions, whether grudgingly like M. Zola, or loyally like M. Bourget, proclaimed him their master. In this movement M. Rod perceives the fact that, under M. Zola's demand for a larger geniality, and M. Bourget's "phrases garlanded with idealism," there is the same indication that "dryness and irony are at their highest quotation." There is much truth in this; nevertheless let us give merit its due, and acknowledge that, amid all the aridity of Stendhal's mind, his worldliness of tone, there existed an imagination, and that this imagination gave to the *Chartreuse de Parme* a certain breadth and inspiration, and made

¹ *Stendhal*. Par ÉDOUARD ROD. (Les Grands Écrivains Français.) Paris: Hachette et Cie. 1892. Boston: Carl Schoenhof.

the mordant and disintegrating ideas of *Le Rouge et le Noir* kindling to the imaginations of others, perhaps because they had their origin in divination rather than in observation of life, and were thus imaginative products.

No, we do not agree with M. Faguet that Stendhal lacked imagination, but we would unhesitatingly subscribe to his assertion that he was essentially an intellectual writer, with no power of generalization. The weakest point of M. Rod's psychological anatomy, in his generally excellent analysis of his author, and it is a very common looseness of thought, is his defining him as a man whose will was early paralyzed by his intellect, rendering him, with all his sensibility and imagination, incapable of any achievement adequate to his powers. Was not the result due rather to his enormous self-consciousness, and would not a greater intellectual force have assisted Stendhal in freeing himself from that dilettantism and dryness of mind which M. Rod depicts; from those narrow lines of thought which he engraved with such force and precision, and kept to with such monotony; from that chain which bound him to self as a prisoner to his pillar? Stendhal generalized directly from his impressions, and these were purely and intensely personal. A resentment was elaborated by him into a system; a pleasure became a cult. He was not intellectual, but he was clever; and when he turned this exaggerated vividness of personal impression to the purposes of fiction, joining to it the results of his minute self-analysis and his acuteness of observation, he produced something that was interesting as a psychological document, if not as an achievement of psychology.

French electors and critics have often found M. Jules Simon a somewhat difficult subject to handle and define, not so much on account of any violent changes in his views as by reason of subtle modifications which they have undergone in

passing through the medium of his oratory, or in obedience to the dictates of circumstance. It must be acknowledged that the difficulties have been coped with, and all the supple, insinuating traits of M. Simon's statesmanship and oratory have been often and impartially recorded. The fact of his having succeeded M. Guizot at the French Academy was only an accidental excuse for parallels which would hardly have failed to be drawn between the two men, yet in which the resemblances to be discovered belonged rather to circumstances than to nature, and were less important than the differences. M. Simon is not a second Guizot, governed and governing by a formulated programme of ideas, although he has been in a certain obvious way the successor to that *politique du juste milieu* which M. Faguet notes as the peculiar invention of M. Guizot. We should be more inclined to define M. Simon as a statesman after the order of Mr. Gladstone. The analogy is more difficult to trace, consisting, as it does, not in the general career or avowed sources of inspiration, but in what we may call political temperament, and in a certain habit of mind. Both base their political influence upon an elevated and clearly proclaimed public morality, an adroit political piety, not too lofty in its standard to be a popular cult, which the political and moral philosophy of M. Guizot, though it had nothing transcendental in it, was not. Both are hard workers, zealous for the welfare of the public, especially so for its moral and educational welfare, bringing gifts of persuasion and pose to the reinforcement of their patient activity and of their zeal.

That each bears the stamp of his race strongly marked upon the methods and the details of his achievement is another trait of resemblance. M. Simon has greater dexterity of mind and ingenuity of phrase, and has had more occasion to use such weapons, than Mr. Gladstone;

while, the advertisement being less supreme in France than in England, his opportunities in the employment of that tool have been necessarily more limited.

Both are primarily men of action, and secondarily of letters, although M. Simon began his career as a professor, and laid the foundations of his philosophical popularity before achieving his political successes. He has not yet been elected reader in chief of the new novels, though if the number of French critics were smaller, and if the blessing of statesmen and other notabilities were in France essential to the circulation of novels and of soap, there could be no better candidate for the position than M. Simon, and no one more admirably qualified to deal with the philosophical aspects of new books, and to bestow justice upon the work of the sex which, in the department of fiction, is not always the weaker one.

In *La Femme du Vingtième Siècle*¹ M. Simon seeks to define the nature of the place which women are fitted to occupy, the number of employments open to them, and the probabilities of their success in each. He considers that women have not only no practice in political affairs, but no natural aptitude for politics; pointing out that in the one department of this science which has always been open to them, political writing, Madame de Staël is the only one who has achieved success, "and her politics are above all a philosophy," as indeed the politics of thinkers are apt to be, and perhaps are better for being, outside

¹ *La Femme du Vingtième Siècle.* PAR JULES SIMON, de l'Académie Française, et GUSTAVE

the arena of active affairs. In philosophy, on the other hand, M. Simon recognizes a distinct natural gift on the part of the female sex, a superior subtlety of intelligence, but an intelligence which succeeds rather in comprehending ideas than in weighing or originating them. Women are discouraged from attempting law, notwithstanding the prowess in argument conceded to them, by the example of a lady who made her husband's life a burden to him by her legal attainments. The chapter is a very creditable novelette, showing the danger of a little knowledge, and the inconvenience of mere brightness usurping the place of power.

All sorts of questions of administration which bear in any way upon the position of women are treated in the book, — education, public worship, laws of marriage and divorce; and the collaboration of M. Gustave Simon allows the able discussion of these points to be supplemented by a number of details in relation to food, medicine, and the physical conduct of life, making the work a complete manual of the public and private aspects of the woman question. It is an appeal to the women of this century so to order their lives and those of their offspring that the women of the next century (and incidentally, we hope, the men) may be better and happier; and if the sex were, to a woman, thirsting for improvement and amenable to advice, it could hardly find for its guidance a more compact or safer collection of precepts than in the volume of MM. Simon.

SIMON, Docteur en Médecine. Paris: Calmann Lévy. 1892. Boston: Carl Schoenhof.

THE FIGURE OF COLUMBUS.

NEARLY a score of years ago the study of American history received a singular impetus through the series of centennial celebrations which then began. There can be no question that not only were popular conceptions of the men and events connected with the War for Independence readjusted and greatly enriched, but the scientific pursuit of American history, especially the history of institutions, received an emphatic impulse. It is easy to believe that the same sort of influence is now at work to quicken the interest of the American people in the general subject of Spanish discovery and settlement, and in the particular subject of the character and career of Columbus. If it be said that in the case of the War for Independence we were dealing with a subject more closely connected with our historic consciousness, and not so far removed but that a moderately lively imagination could compass it, and that the series of anniversaries extended over a long enough time and had a sufficiently varied character to make the impression thorough and abiding, while we are called on now to celebrate a single event, four hundred years distant, and centring about persons of another race, whose influence over our destiny has not been continuous, it will not do to be hasty in concluding that this new anniversary will have insignificant influence upon our scientific and popular historical studies. On the contrary, we are disposed to think the present opportunity one of profounder significance.

We have the very great advantage of the training which both students and the general public have received through the researches and discussions of the past twenty years. If we were to sum the results in a single sentence, we should say that Americans had been emancipated

from the crude belief that American civilization was a plant of absolutely native growth, and had also come into a larger freedom of belief regarding the stability of that civilization. We are not likely to overlook the Teutonic origin of much of this civilization, and we understand far more clearly the development which has taken place upon American soil and under the impulse of civic freedom. But an intelligent perception of the relation of the United States to England and Germany, historically, is but one step in that world knowledge which this nation must apprehend if it is to rise consciously to the dignity of its great inheritance. One further step is needed, and we are on the threshold.

It may be that we shall have to reëstablish our connection with Latin Christianity in all its forms through the sharp teaching of war, but that is not a means to be sought. Whether through war or through the more amiable ways of commerce and social intercourse, it is clear to most observers that the United States is to renew with Spain on this side of the Atlantic a connection which was broken off between England and Spain on the other side of the Atlantic more than three centuries ago, largely through the discovery and settlement of this continent. The era of industrial possession of our own domain has not closed, but the era of continental relations has opened, and this nation is destined to be affected strongly in its future development, not merely by entering into relations with the rest of America, but by the extension of its relations through this medium with contemporaneous Europe, and by contact in the realm of the spirit with ideas which are neither Anglican nor Teutonic.

It is for this reason, and because the four hundredth anniversary of the land-