

sympathy. Later she astonished everybody by marrying John Walter Cross, much younger than herself, who is known as her biographer. "Deep down below there is a river of sadness, but . . . I am able to enjoy my newly re-opened life," writes this woman of sixty, who, ever since she was the girl whom we know as Maggie Tulliver, must always have some one to love and to depend upon. Her new interest in life lasted but a few months, for she died in December of the same year (1880). One of the best indications of her strength and her limitations is her portrait, with its strong masculine features, suggesting both by resemblance and by contrast that wonderful portrait of Savonarola which hangs over his old desk in the monastery at Florence.

Works of George Eliot. These are conveniently divided into three groups, corresponding to the three periods of her life. The first group includes all her early essays and miscellaneous work, from her translation of Strauss's *Leben Jesu*, in 1846, to her union with Lewes in 1854. The second group includes *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede*, *Mill on the Floss*, and *Silas Marner*, all published between 1858 and 1861. These four novels of the middle period are founded on the author's own life and experience; their scenes are laid in the country, and their characters are taken from the stolid people of the Midlands, with whom George Eliot had been familiar since childhood. They are probably the author's most enduring works. They have a naturalness, a spontaneity, at times a flash of real humor, which are lacking in her later novels; and they show a rapid development of literary power which reaches a climax in *Silas Marner*.

The novel of Italian life, *Romola* (1862-1863), marks a transition to the third group, which includes three more novels,—*Felix Holt* (1866), *Middlemarch* (1871-1872), *Daniel Deronda* (1876),—the ambitious dramatic poem *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868), and a collection of miscellaneous essays called *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879). The general impression of these works is not so favorable as that produced by the novels of the middle period. They are more labored

and less interesting; they contain much deep reflection and analysis of character, but less observation, less delight in picturing country life as it is, and very little of what we call inspiration. We must add, however, that this does not express a unanimous literary judgment, for critics are not wanting who assert that *Daniel Deronda* is the highest expression of the author's genius.

The general character of all these novels may be described, in the author's own term, as psychologic realism. This means that George Eliot sought to do in her novels what Browning attempted in his poetry; that is, to represent the inner struggle of a soul, and to reveal the motives, impulses, and hereditary influences which govern human action. Browning generally stops when he tells his story, and either lets you draw your own conclusion or else gives you his in a few striking lines. But George Eliot is not content until she has minutely explained the motives of her characters and the moral lesson to be learned from them. Moreover, it is the development of a soul, the slow growth or decline of moral power, which chiefly interests her. Her heroes and heroines differ radically from those of Dickens and Thackeray in this respect,—that when we meet the men and women of the latter novelists, their characters are already formed, and we are reasonably sure what they will do under given circumstances. In George Eliot's novels the characters develop gradually as we come to know them. They go from weakness to strength, or from strength to weakness, according to the works that they do and the thoughts that they cherish. In *Romola*, for instance, Tito, as we first meet him, may be either good or bad, and we know not whether he will finally turn to the right hand or to the left. As time passes, we see him degenerate steadily because he follows his selfish impulses, while *Romola*, whose character is at first only faintly indicated, grows into beauty and strength with every act of self-renunciation.

In these two characters, Tito and Romola, we have an epitome of our author's moral teaching. The principle of law was in the air during the Victorian era, and we **Moral Teaching** have already noted how deeply Tennyson was influenced by it. With George Eliot law is like fate; it overwhelms personal freedom and inclination. Moral law was to her as inevitable, as automatic, as gravitation. Tito's degeneration, and the sad failure of Dorothea and Lydgate in *Middlemarch*, may be explained as simply as the fall of an apple, or as a bruised knee when a man loses his balance. A certain act produces a definite moral effect on the individual; and character is the added sum of all the acts of a man's life, — just as the weight of a body is the sum of the weights of many different atoms which constitute it. The matter of rewards and punishments, therefore, needs no final judge or judgment, since these things take care of themselves automatically in a world of inviolable moral law.

Perhaps one thing more should be added to the general characteristics of George Eliot's novels, — they are all rather depressing. The gladness of life, the sunshine of smiles and laughter, is denied her. It is said that once, when her husband remarked that her novels were all essentially sad, she wept, and answered that she must describe life as she had found it.

What to Read. George Eliot's first stories are in some respects her best, though her literary power increases during her second period, culminating in *Silas Marner*, and her psychological analysis is more evident in *Daniel Deronda*. On the whole, it is an excellent way to begin with the freshness and inspiration of the *Scenes of Clerical Life* and read her books in the order in which they were written. In the first group of novels *Adam Bede* is the most natural, and probably interests more readers than all the others combined. *The Mill on the Floss* has a larger personal interest, because it reflects much of George Eliot's history and the scenes and the friends

of her early life. The lack of proportion in this story, which gives rather too much space to the girl-and-boy experiences, is naturally explained by the tendency in every man and woman to linger over early memories.

Silas Marner is artistically the most perfect of George Eliot's novels, and we venture to analyze it as typical of her ideals and methods. We note first the style, which **Silas Marner** is heavy and a little self-conscious, lacking the vigor and picturesqueness of Dickens, and the grace and naturalness of Thackeray. The characters are the common people of the Midlands, the hero being a linen weaver, a lonely outcast who hoards and gloats over his hard-earned money, is robbed, thrown into utter despair, and brought back to life and happiness by the coming of an abandoned child to his fire. In the development of her story the author shows herself, first, a realist, by the naturalness of her characters and the minute accuracy with which she reproduces their ways and even the accents of their speech; second, a psychologist, by the continual analysis and explanation of motives; third, a moralist, by showing in each individual the action and reaction of universal moral forces, and especially by making every evil act bring inevitable punishment to the man who does it. Tragedy, therefore, plays a large part in the story; for, according to George Eliot, tragedy and suffering walk close behind us, or lurk at every turn in the road of life. Like all her novels, *Silas Marner* is depressing. We turn away from even the wedding of Eppie — which is just as it should be — with a sense of sadness and incompleteness. Finally, as we close the book, we are conscious of a powerful and enduring impression of reality. Silas, the poor weaver; Godfrey Cass, the well-meaning, selfish man; Mr. Macey, the garrulous and observant parish clerk; Dolly Winthrop, the kind-hearted country-woman who cannot understand the mysteries of religion and so interprets God in terms of human love, — these are real people, whom having once met we can never forget.

Romola has the same general moral theme as the English novels; but the scenes are entirely different, and opinion is divided as to the comparative merit of the work. It is a study, a very profound study of moral development in one character and of moral degeneracy in another. Its characters and its scenes are both Italian, and the action takes place during a critical period of the Renaissance movement, when Savonarola was at the height of his power in Florence. Here is a magnificent theme and a superb background for a great novel, and George Eliot read and studied till she felt sure that she understood the place, the time, and the people of her story. *Romola* is therefore interesting reading, in many respects the most interesting of her works. It has been called one of our greatest historical novels; but as such it has one grievous fault. It is not quite true to the people or even to the locality which it endeavors to represent. One who reads it here, in a new and different land, thinks only of the story and of the novelist's power; but one who reads it on the spot which it describes, and amidst the life which it pictures, is continually haunted by the suggestion that George Eliot understood neither Italy nor the Italians. It is this lack of harmony with Italian life itself which caused Morris and Rossetti and even Browning, with all his admiration for the author, to lay aside the book, unable to read it with pleasure or profit. In a word, *Romola* is a great moral study and a very interesting book; but the characters are not Italian, and the novel as a whole lacks the strong reality which marks George Eliot's English studies.

MINOR NOVELISTS OF THE VICTORIAN AGE

In the three great novelists just considered we have an epitome of the fiction of the age, Dickens using the novel to solve social problems, Thackeray to paint the life of society as he saw it, and George Eliot to teach the fundamental principles of morality. The influence of these three writers is

reflected in all the minor novelists of the Victorian Age. Thus, Dickens is reflected in Charles Reade, Thackeray in Anthony Trollope and the Brontë sisters, and George Eliot's psychology finds artistic expression in George Meredith. To these social and moral and realistic studies we should add the element of romance, from which few of our modern novelists can long escape. The nineteenth century, which began with the romanticism of Walter Scott, returns to its first love, like a man glad to be home, in its delight over Blackmore's *Lorna Doone* and the romances of Robert Louis Stevenson.

Charles Reade. In his fondness for stage effects, for picturing the romantic side of common life, and for using the novel as the instrument of social reform, there is a strong suggestion of Dickens in the work of Charles Reade (1814-1884). Thus his *Peg Woffington* is a study of stage life from behind the scenes; *A Terrible Temptation* is a study of social reforms and reformers; and *Put yourself in his Place* is the picture of a workingman who struggles against the injustice of the trades unions. His masterpiece, *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861), one of our best historical novels, is a somewhat laborious study of student and vagabond life in Europe in the days of the German Renaissance. It has small resemblance to George Eliot's *Romola*, whose scene is laid in Italy during the same period; but the two works may well be read in succession, as the efforts of two very different novelists of the same period to restore the life of an age long past.

Anthony Trollope. In his realism, and especially in his conception of the novel as the entertainment of an idle hour, Trollope (1815-1882) is a reflection of Thackeray. It would be hard to find a better duplicate of Becky Sharp, the heroine of *Vanity Fair*, for instance, than is found in Lizzie Eustace, the heroine of *The Eustace Diamonds*. Trollope was the most industrious and systematic of modern novelists, writing a definite amount each day, and the wide range of his characters suggests the *Human Comedy* of Balzac. His masterpiece is

Barchester Towers (1857). This is a study of life in a cathedral town, and is remarkable for its minute pictures of bishops and clergymen, with their families and dependents. It would be well to read this novel in connection with *The Warden* (1855), *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867), and other novels of the same series, since the scenes and characters are the same in all these books, and they are undoubtedly the best expression of the author's genius. Hawthorne says of his novels: "They precisely suit my taste, — solid and substantial, and . . . just as real as if some giant had hewn a great lump out of the earth and put it under a glass case, with all the inhabitants going about their daily business and not suspecting that they were being made a show of."

Charlotte Brontë. We have another suggestion of Thackeray in the work of Charlotte Brontë (1816–1855). She aimed to make her novels a realistic picture of society, but she added to Thackeray's realism the element of passionate and somewhat unbalanced romanticism. The latter element was partly the expression of Miss Brontë's own nature, and partly the result of her lonely and grief-stricken life, which was darkened by a succession of family tragedies. It will help us to understand her work if we remember that both Charlotte Brontë and her sister Emily¹ turned to literature because they found their work as governess and teacher unendurable, and sought to relieve the loneliness and sadness of their own lot by creating a new world of the imagination. In this new world, however, the sadness of the old remains, and all the Brontë novels have behind them an aching heart. Charlotte Brontë's best known work is *Jane Eyre* (1847), which, with all its faults, is a powerful and fascinating study of elemental love and hate, reminding us vaguely of one of Marlowe's

¹ Emily Brontë (1818–1848) was only a little less gifted than her famous sister. Her best known work is *Wuthering Heights* (1847), a strong but morbid novel of love and suffering. Matthew Arnold said of her that, "for the portrayal of passion, vehemence, and grief," Emily Brontë had no equal save Byron. An exquisite picture of Emily is given in Charlotte Brontë's novel *Shirley*.

tragedies. This work won instant favor with the public, and the author was placed in the front rank of living novelists. Aside from its value as a novel, it is interesting, in many of its early passages, as the reflection of the author's own life and experience. *Shirley* (1849) and *Villette* (1853) make up the trio of novels by which this gifted woman is generally remembered.

Bulwer Lytton. Edward Bulwer Lytton (1803–1873) was an extremely versatile writer, who tried almost every kind of novel known to the nineteenth century. In his early life he wrote poems and dramas, under the influence of Byron; but his first notable work, *Pelham* (1828), one of the best of his novels, was a kind of burlesque on the Byronic type of gentleman. As a study of contemporary manners in high society, *Pelham* has a suggestion of Thackeray, and the resemblance is more noticeable in other novels of the same type, such as *Ernest Maltravers* (1837), *The Caxtons* (1848–1849), *My Novel* (1853), and *Kenelm Chillingly* (1873). We have a suggestion of Dickens in at least two of Lytton's novels, *Paul Clifford* and *Eugene Aram*, the heroes of which are criminals, pictured as the victims rather than as the oppressors of society. Lytton essayed also, with considerable popular success, the romantic novel in *The Pilgrims of the Rhine* and *Zanoni*, and tried the ghost story in *The Haunted and the Haunters*. His fame at the present day rests largely upon his historical novels, in imitation of Walter Scott, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), *Rienzi* (1835), and *Harold* (1848), the last being his most ambitious attempt to make the novel the supplement of history. In all his novels Lytton is inclined to sentimentalism and sensationalism, and his works, though generally interesting, seem hardly worthy of a high place in the history of fiction.

Kingsley. Entirely different in spirit are the novels of the scholarly clergyman, Charles Kingsley (1819–1875). His works naturally divide themselves into three classes. In the

first are his social studies and problem novels, such as *Alton Locke* (1850), having for its hero a London tailor and poet, and *Yeast* (1848), which deals with the problem of the agricultural laborer. In the second class are his historical novels, *Hereward the Wake*, *Hypatia*, and *Westward Ho!* *Hypatia* is a dramatic story of Christianity in contact with paganism, having its scene laid in Alexandria at the beginning of the fifth century. *Westward Ho!* (1855), his best known work, is a stirring tale of English conquest by land and sea in the days of Elizabeth. In the third class are his various miscellaneous works, not the least of which is *Water-Babies*, a fascinating story of a chimney sweep, which mothers read to their children at bedtime, — to the great delight of the round-eyed little listeners under the counterpane.

Mrs. Gaskell. Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–1865) began, like Kingsley, with the idea of making the novel the instrument of social reform. As the wife of a clergyman in Manchester, she had come in close contact with the struggles and ideals of the industrial poor of a great city, and she reflected her sympathy as well as her observation in *Mary Barton* (1848) and in *North and South* (1855). Between these two problem novels she published her masterpiece, *Cranford*, in 1853. The original of this country village, which is given over to spinsters, is undoubtedly Knutsford, in Cheshire, where Mrs. Gaskell had spent her childhood. The sympathy, the keen observation, and the gentle humor with which the small affairs of a country village are described make *Cranford* one of the most delightful stories in the English language. We are indebted to Mrs. Gaskell also for the *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, which is one of our best biographies.

Blackmore. Richard Doddridge Blackmore (1825–1900) was a prolific writer, but he owes his fame almost entirely to one splendid novel, *Lorna Doone*, which was published in 1869. The scene of this fascinating romance is laid in Exmoor in the seventeenth century. The story abounds in romantic

scenes and incidents; its descriptions of natural scenery are unsurpassed; the rhythmic language is at times almost equal to poetry; and the whole tone of the book is wholesome and refreshing. Altogether it would be hard to find a more delightful romance in any language, and it well deserves the place it has won as one of the classics of our literature. Other works of Blackmore which will repay the reader are *Clara Vaughan* (1864), his first novel, *The Maid of Sker* (1872), *Springhaven* (1887), *Perlycross* (1894), and *Tales from the Telling House* (1896); but none of these, though he counted them his best work, has met with the same favor as *Lorna Doone*.

Meredith. So much does George Meredith (1828–1909) belong to our own day that it is difficult to think of him as one of the Victorian novelists. His first notable work, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, was published in 1859, the same year as George Eliot's *Adam Bede*; but it was not till the publication of *Diana of the Crossways*, in 1885, that his power as a novelist was widely recognized. He resembles Browning not only in his condensed style, packed with thought, but also in this respect, — that he labored for years in obscurity, and after much of his best work was published and apparently forgotten he slowly won the leading place in English fiction. We are still too near him to speak of the permanence of his work, but a casual reading of any of his novels suggests a comparison and a contrast with George Eliot. Like her, he is a realist and a psychologist; but while George Eliot uses tragedy to teach a moral lesson, Meredith depends more upon comedy, making vice not terrible but ridiculous. For the hero or heroine of her novel George Eliot invariably takes an individual, and shows in each one the play of universal moral forces. Meredith constructs a type-man as a hero, and makes this type express his purpose and meaning. So his characters seldom speak naturally, as George Eliot's do; they are more like Browning's characters in packing a whole paragraph into

a single sentence or an exclamation. On account of his enigmatic style and his psychology, Meredith will never be popular; but by thoughtful men and women he will probably be ranked among our greatest writers of fiction. The simplest and easiest of his novels for a beginner is *The Adventures of Henry Richmond* (1871). Among the best of his works, besides the two mentioned above, are *Beauchamp's Career* (1876) and *The Egoist* (1879). The latter is, in our personal judgment, one of the strongest and most convincing novels of the Victorian Age.

Hardy. Thomas Hardy (1840—) seems, like Meredith, to belong to the present rather than to a past age, and an interesting comparison may be drawn between these two novelists. In style, Meredith is obscure and difficult, while Hardy is direct and simple, aiming at realism in all things. Meredith makes man the most important phenomenon in the universe; and the struggles of men are brightened by the hope of victory. Hardy makes man an insignificant part of the world, struggling against powers greater than himself, — sometimes against systems which he cannot reach or influence, sometimes against a kind of grim world-spirit who delights in making human affairs go wrong. He is, therefore, hardly a realist, but rather a man blinded by pessimism; and his novels, though generally powerful and sometimes fascinating, are not pleasant or wholesome reading. From the reader's view point some of his earlier works, like the idyllic love story *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) and *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), are the most interesting. Hardy became noted, however, when he published *Far from the Madding Crowd*, a book which, when it appeared anonymously in the *Cornhill Magazine* (1874), was generally attributed to George Eliot, for the simple reason that no other novelist was supposed to be capable of writing it. *The Return of the Native* (1878) and *The Woodlanders* are generally regarded as Hardy's masterpieces; but two novels of our own day, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891)

and *Jude the Obscure* (1895), are better expressions of Hardy's literary art and of his gloomy philosophy.

Stevenson. In pleasing contrast with Hardy is Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), a brave, cheery, wholesome spirit, who has made us all braver and cheerier by what he has written. Aside from their intrinsic value, Stevenson's novels are interesting in this respect, — that they mark a return to the pure romanticism of Walter Scott. The novel of the nineteenth century had, as we have shown, a very definite purpose. It aimed not only to represent life but to correct it, and to offer a solution to pressing moral and social problems. At the end of the century Hardy's gloom in the face of modern social conditions became oppressive, and Stevenson broke away from it into that land of delightful romance in which youth finds an answer to all its questions. Problems differ, but youth is ever the same, and therefore Stevenson will probably be regarded by future generations as one of our most enduring writers. To his life, with its "heroically happy" struggle, first against poverty, then against physical illness, it is impossible to do justice in a short article. Even a longer biography is inadequate, for Stevenson's spirit, not the incidents of his life, is the important thing; and the spirit has no biographer. Though he had written much better work earlier, he first gained fame by his *Treasure Island* (1883), an absorbing story of pirates and of a hunt for buried gold. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) is a profound ethical parable, in which, however, Stevenson leaves the psychology and the minute analysis of character to his readers, and makes the story the chief thing in his novel. *Kidnapped* (1886), *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), and *David Balfour* (1893) are novels of adventure, giving us vivid pictures of Scotch life. Two romances left unfinished by his early death in Samoa are *The Weir of Hermiston* and *St. Ives*. The latter was finished by Quiller-Couch in 1897; the former is happily just as Stevenson left it, and though unfinished is generally

regarded as his masterpiece. In addition to these novels, Stevenson wrote a large number of essays, the best of which are collected in *Virginibus Puerisque*, *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*, and *Memories and Portraits*. Delightful sketches of his travels are found in *An Inland Voyage* (1878), *Travels with a Donkey* (1879), *Across the Plains* (1892), and *The Amateur Emigrant* (1894). *Underwoods* (1887) is an exquisite little volume of poetry, and *A Child's Garden of Verses* is one of the books that mothers will always keep to read to their children.

In all his books Stevenson gives the impression of a man at play rather than at work, and the reader soon shares in the happy spirit of the author. Because of his beautiful personality, and because of the love and admiration he awakened for himself in multitudes of readers, we are naturally inclined to exaggerate his importance as a writer. However that may be, a study of his works shows him to be a consummate literary artist. His style is always simple, often perfect, and both in his manner and in his matter he exercises a profound influence on the writers of the present generation.

III. ESSAYISTS OF THE VICTORIAN AGE

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY (1800-1859)

Macaulay is one of the most typical figures of the nineteenth century. Though not a great writer, if we compare him with Browning or Thackeray, he was more closely associated than any of his literary contemporaries with the social and political struggles of the age. While Carlyle was proclaiming the gospel of labor, and Dickens writing novels to better the condition of the poor, Macaulay went vigorously to work on what he thought to be the most important task of the hour, and by his brilliant speeches did perhaps more than any other single man to force the passage of the famous Reform Bill. Like many of the Elizabethans, he was a practical

man of affairs rather than a literary man, and though we miss in his writings the imagination and the spiritual insight which stamp the literary genius, we have the impression always of a keen, practical, honest mind, which looks at present problems in the light of past experience. Moreover, the man himself, with his marvelous mind, his happy spirit, and his absolute integrity of character, is an inspiration to better living.

Life. Macaulay was born at Rothley Temple, Leicestershire, in 1800. His father, of Scotch descent, was at one time governor of the Sierra Leone colony for liberated negroes, and devoted a large part of his life to the abolition of the slave trade. His mother, of Quaker parentage, was a brilliant, sensitive woman, whose character is reflected in that of her son. The influence of these two, and the son's loyal devotion to his family, can best be read in Trevelyan's interesting biography.

As a child, Macaulay is strongly suggestive of Coleridge. At three years of age he began to read eagerly; at five he "talked like a book"; at ten he had written a compendium of universal history, besides various hymns, verse romances, arguments for Christianity, and one ambitious epic poem. The habit of rapid reading, begun in childhood, continued throughout his life, and the number and variety of books which he read is almost incredible. His memory was phenomenal. He could repeat long poems and essays after a single reading; he could quote not only passages but the greater part of many books, including *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Paradise Lost*, and various novels like *Clarissa*. Once, to test his memory, he recited two newspaper poems which he had read in a coffeehouse forty years before, and which he had never thought of in the interval.

At twelve years of age this remarkable boy was sent to a private school at Little Shelford, and at eighteen he entered Trinity College, Cambridge. Here he made a reputation as a classical scholar and a brilliant talker, but made a failure of his mathematics. In a letter to his mother he wrote: "Oh for words to express my abomination of that science. . . . Discipline of the mind! Say rather starvation, confinement, torture, annihilation!" We quote this as a commentary on Macaulay's later writings, which are frequently lacking in the exactness and the logical sequence of the science which he detested.

After his college course Macaulay studied law, was admitted to the bar, devoted himself largely to politics, entered Parliament in 1830, and almost immediately won a reputation as the best debater and the most eloquent speaker of the Liberal or Whig party. Gladstone says of him: "Whenever he arose to speak it was a summons like a trumpet call to fill the benches." At the time of his election he was poor, and the loss of his father's property threw upon him the support of his brothers and sisters; but he took up the burden with cheerful courage, and by his own efforts soon placed himself and his family in comfort. His political progress was rapid, and was due not to favoritism or intrigue, but to his ability, his hard work, and his sterling character. He was several times elected to Parliament, was



THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

legal adviser to the Supreme Council of India, was a member of the cabinet, and declined many offices for which other men labor a lifetime. In 1857 his great ability and services to his country were recognized by his being raised to the peerage with the title of Baron Macaulay of Rothley. Macaulay's literary work began in college with the contribution of various ballads and essays to the magazines. In his later life practical affairs claimed the greater part of his time, and his brilliant essays were written in the early morning or late at night. His famous *Essay on Milton* appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1825. It created a sensation, and Macaulay, having gained the ear of the public, never once lost it during the twenty years in which he was a contributor to the magazines. His *Lays of Ancient Rome* appeared in 1842, and in the following year three volumes of his collected *Essays*. In 1847 he lost his seat in Parliament, temporarily, through his zealous efforts in behalf of religious toleration; and the loss was most fortunate, since it gave him opportunity to begin his *History of England*, — a monumental work which he had been planning for many years. The first two volumes appeared in 1848, and their success can be compared only to that of the most popular novels. The third and fourth volumes of the *History* (1855) were even more successful, and Macaulay was hard at work on the remaining

volumes when he died, quite suddenly, in 1859. He was buried, near Addison, in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey. A paragraph from one of his letters, written at the height of his fame and influence, may give us an insight into his life and work:

I can truly say that I have not, for many years, been so happy as I am at present. . . . I am free. I am independent. I am in Parliament, as honorably seated as man can be. My family is comfortably off. I have leisure for literature, yet I am not reduced to the necessity of writing for money. If I had to choose a lot from all that there are in human life, I am not sure that I should prefer any to that which has fallen to me. I am sincerely and thoroughly contented.

Works of Macaulay. Macaulay is famous in literature for his essays, for his martial ballads, and for his *History of England*. His first important work, the *Essay on Milton* (1825), is worthy of study not only for itself, as a critical estimate of the Puritan poet, but as a key to all Macaulay's writings. Here, first of all, is an interesting work, which, however much we differ from the author's opinion, holds our attention and generally makes us regret that the end comes so soon. The second thing to note is the historical flavor of the essay. We study not only Milton, but also the times in which he lived, and the great movements of which he was a part. History and literature properly belong together, and Macaulay was one of the first writers to explain the historical conditions which partly account for a writer's work and influence. The third thing to note is Macaulay's enthusiasm for his subject, — an enthusiasm which is often partisan, but which we gladly share for the moment as we follow the breathless narrative. Macaulay generally makes a hero of his man, shows him battling against odds, and the heroic side of our own nature awakens and responds to the author's plea. The fourth, and perhaps most characteristic thing in the essay is the style, which is remarkably clear, forceful, and convincing. Jeffrey, the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, wrote enthusiastically when he received the manuscript, "The more I think, the less I can conceive where you

picked up that style." We still share in the editor's wonder; but the more we think, the less we conceive that such a style could be picked up. It was partly the result of a well-stored mind, partly of unconscious imitation of other writers, and partly of that natural talent for clear speaking and writing which is manifest in all Macaulay's work.

In the remaining essays we find the same general qualities which characterize Macaulay's first attempt. They cover a wide range of subjects, but they may be divided into two general classes, the literary or critical, and the historical. Of the literary essays the best are those on Milton, Addison, Goldsmith, Byron, Dryden, Leigh Hunt, Bunyan, Bacon, and Johnson. Among the best known of the historical essays are those on Lord Clive, Chatham, Warren Hastings, Hallam's Constitutional History, Von Ranke's History of the Papacy, Frederick the Great, Horace Walpole, William Pitt, Sir William Temple, Machiavelli, and Mirabeau. Most of these were produced in the vigor of young manhood, between 1825 and 1845, while the writer was busy with practical affairs of state. They are often one-sided and inaccurate, but always interesting, and from them a large number of busy people have derived their first knowledge of history and literature.

The best of Macaulay's poetical work is found in the *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842), a collection of ballads in the style of Scott, which sing of the old heroic days of the Roman republic. The ballad does not require much thought or emotion. It demands clearness, vigor, enthusiasm, action; and it suited Macaulay's genius perfectly. He was, however, much more careful than other ballad writers in making his narrative true to tradition. The stirring martial spirit of these ballads, their fine workmanship, and their appeal to courage and patriotism made them instantly popular. Even to-day, after more than fifty years, such ballads as those on Virginius and Horatius at the Bridge are favorite pieces in many school readers.

The *History of England*, Macaulay's masterpiece, is still one of the most popular historical works in the English language. Originally it was intended to cover the period from the accession of James II, in 1685, to the death of George IV, in 1830. Only five volumes of the work were finished, and so thoroughly did Macaulay go into details that these five volumes cover only sixteen years. It has been estimated that to complete the work on the same scale would require some fifty volumes and the labor of one man for over a century.

In his historical method Macaulay suggests Gibbon. His own knowledge of history was very great, but before writing he read numberless pages, consulted original documents, and visited the scenes which he intended to describe. Thackeray's remark, that "Macaulay reads twenty books to write a sentence and travels one hundred miles to make a line of description," is, in view of his industry, a well-warranted exaggeration.

As in his literary essays, he is fond of making heroes, and he throws himself so heartily into the spirit of the scene he is describing that his word pictures almost startle us by their vivid reality. The story of Monmouth's rebellion, for instance, or the trial of the seven bishops, is as fascinating as the best chapters of Scott's historical novels.

While Macaulay's search for original sources of information suggests the scientific historian, his use of his material is much more like that of a novelist or playwright. In his essay on Machiavelli he writes: "The best portraits are perhaps those in which there is a slight mixture of caricature, and we are not certain that the best histories are not those in which a little of the exaggeration of fictitious narrative is judiciously employed. Something is lost in accuracy, but much is gained in effect."¹ Whether this estimate of historical writing be true or false, Macaulay employed it in his own

¹ *Essays*, Riverside edition, I, 318.

work and made his narrative as absorbing as a novel. To all his characters he gives the reality of flesh and blood, and in his own words he "shows us over their houses and seats us at their tables." All that is excellent, but it has its disadvantages. In his admiration for heroism, Macaulay makes some of his characters too good and others too bad. In his zeal for details he misses the importance of great movements, and of great leaders who are accustomed to ignore details; and in his joy of describing events he often loses sight of underlying causes. In a word, he is without historical insight, and his work, though fascinating, is seldom placed among the reliable histories of England.

General Characteristics. To the reader who studies Macaulay's brilliant essays and a few chosen chapters of his *History*, three things soon become manifest. First, Macaulay's art is that of a public speaker rather than that of a literary man. He has a wonderful command of language, and he makes his meaning clear by striking phrases, vigorous antitheses, anecdotes, and illustrations. His style is so clear that "he who runs may read," and from beginning to end he never loses the attention of his readers. Second, Macaulay's good spirits and enthusiasm are contagious. As he said himself, he wrote "out of a full head," chiefly for his own pleasure or recreation; and one who writes joyously generally awakens a sense of pleasure in his readers. Third, Macaulay has "the defect of his qualities." He reads and remembers so much that he has no time to think or to form settled opinions. As Gladstone said, Macaulay is "always conversing or recollecting or reading or composing, but reflecting never." So he wrote his brilliant *Essay on Milton*, which took all England by storm, and said of it afterward that it contained "scarcely a paragraph which his mature judgment approved." Whether he speaks or writes, he has always before him an eager audience, and he feels within him the born orator's power to hold and fascinate. So he gives loose rein to his enthusiasm, quotes

from a hundred books, and in his delight at entertaining us forgets that the first quality of a critical or historical work is to be accurate, and the second to be interesting.

THOMAS CARLYLE (1795-1881)

In marked contrast with Macaulay, the brilliant and cheerful essayist, is Thomas Carlyle, the prophet and censor of the nineteenth century. Macaulay is the practical man of affairs, helping and rejoicing in the progress of his beloved England. Carlyle lives apart from all practical interests, looks with distrust on the progress of his age, and tells men that truth, justice, and immortality are the only worthy objects of human endeavor. Macaulay is delighted with material comforts; he is most at home in brilliant and fashionable company; and he writes, even when ill and suffering, with unflinching hopefulness and good nature. Carlyle is like a Hebrew prophet just in from the desert, and the burden of his message is, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!" Both men are, in different ways, typical of the century, and somewhere between the two extremes—the practical, helpful activity of Macaulay and the spiritual agony and conflict of Carlyle—we shall find the measure of an age which has left the deepest impress upon our own.

Life of Carlyle. Carlyle was born at Ecclefechan, Dumfriesshire, in 1795, a few months before Burns's death, and before Scott had published his first work. Like Burns, he came of peasant stock,—strong, simple, God-fearing folk, whose influence in Carlyle's later life is beyond calculation. Of his mother he says, "She was too mild and peaceful for the planet she lived in"; and of his father, a stone mason, he writes, "Could I write my books as he built his houses, walk my way so manfully through this shadow world, and leave it with so little blame, it were more than all my hopes."

Of Carlyle's early school life we have some interesting glimpses in *Sartor Resartus*. At nine years he entered the Annan grammar school, where he was bullied by the older boys, who nicknamed him