

violence when the flesh was being cooked. So far from contradicting the Levitical law, the passage testifies—(1) to a “right” or “due” of the priests from the people, (2) to the fact that portions were assigned them from the sacrifices, and (3) to a law requiring them to burn the fat before doing anything else. There was certainly no Levitical law entitling them to neglect or postpone the burning of the fat.

It looks as if the existence of the ritual laws, instead of being overthrown, was very clearly established.



### Keble as Poet.

BY THE REV. I. GREGORY SMITH, M.A., HON. LL.D.

IT is barely half a century since the grave closed over the author of the “Christian Year,” in a village churchyard near Winchester. But a transformation so marvellous in many ways has passed over England in this interval, that the critic to-day stands quite far enough away from what he is looking at. Arnold of Rugby, writing to a friend just after the appearance of the book, speaks of “John Keble’s Hymns.” It is a misnomer. The poems have not the “*élan*”—the swing of hymns; they are not obvious enough. In fact, it is not easy even to get good hymns out of them. They are lyrical, like the odes, say, of Gray, Collins, Horace, and they must be judged as such.

One of the most interesting of many attempts to appreciate Keble as poet is by Mr. A. C. Benson in an essay, which came out in the *Contemporary Review*, and afterwards in a volume of miscellaneous essays.<sup>1</sup> Many of his criticisms, whether in praise or blame, are acute and discriminative, not lightly to be set aside. If I venture to demur sometimes, it is not where some minor canon of the art is concerned, but where the larger and deeper

<sup>1</sup> Macmillan, 1896.

principles are at stake, which underlie all excellence in poetry. For the question of Keble's rightful place in literature is of course a literary question, to be determined apart from the devotional merits of his poetry. To Keble's far-reaching influence for good as a devotional poet the critic does full justice. Is he quite fair, also, to the poet from a literary standpoint?

An author, especially a poet, must be judged by his best work, not by his worst. It would be absurd to measure Virgil by his "Culex," or Wordsworth by his lines about Farmer Blake. The poem also must be judged by the best bits in it, not by the worst. Even in Shakespeare there is hardly a page without a prosy line. Above all, there must be in the reader something of sympathy, of congruity, a predisposition to understand—by no means the same thing as a prejudice; there must be no aloofness, no set aversion, else he will be as one deaf, though the voice charm ever so well.

" I never sing that song, Sir Knight,  
Save to those who sail with me,"

sings the mariner in the Spanish ballad. Just as admiration for Keble's saintliness may blind a critic to the faults of Keble's poetry, and may exaggerate the merits of it, so, a difference in standpoint, antipathy to things spiritual or indifference to them, may hinder one from finding anything to admire in "Paradise Regained." A Quaker could not be expected to care for the war-songs of Tyrtæus, or for Macaulay's "Battle of Ivry."

It would be sheer waste of time to put into the pillory Keble's literary lapses. Few poets so eminent as he fall short so often of what might be the achievement. Many instances might easily be cited of this provoking anti-climax more glaring than the line which Mr. Benson cites: "Tracked by the blue mist well." If there is in Tennyson too much evidence of the file, there is far too little in Keble. And yet this, surely, might have corrected many a bathos and many of the obscurities which made Bishop Blomfield call the "Christian Year" his "Sunday puzzle." This studied neglect, as it seems, of "technique,"

could not be mere laziness, mere carelessness, in one like Keble, who took life so seriously. Was it an under-estimate of the value of what he did? Was it an over-aiming (and this was a trait of early Tractarianism) at the spontaneity and simplicity which shrink from display and artificiality? Sometimes, no doubt, the false rhyme or the false accent is due to Keble's unmusical ear.

While according praise to the fine stanzas, "Go up and watch the little rill," the critic objects to "Monarchs at the helm," and to "A sister Nymph far away, reclining beside her urn." But Keble wrote at a date when English poetry had not lost the old aroma of Greece and Rome, and when Sir Robert Peel was quoting Virgil in the House of Commons. Keble, as Mr. Benson rightly notices, is, poetically, much more nearly akin to Gray than to George Herbert; and Gray is steeped in classicalisms. Indeed, Keble's fine lines on a November sunset, "Red o'er the forest peers the setting sun," etc., might be part of the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard."

"There is a want," we are told, "of fire and intensity." Mr. Benson, one may be sure, is not desiderating the fire and fury which passed too often for poetry, when it was the fashion—a very morbid one—to pose *à la* Byron. This would put out of court true poets—not a few—from "the calm depth" of Sophocles to our own Lake poet. "The gods approve the depth, and not the tumult, of the soul." There is more "intensity" in the suppressed glow of heated iron than in the explosive vivacity of fireworks.

"Woe to the wayward heart,  
That gladlier turns to eye the shuddering start  
Of passion in her might,  
Than marks the silent growth of grace and light,  
Pleased in the cheerless tomb  
To linger, while the morning rays illumine  
Green lake and cedar tuft and spicy glade,  
Shaking their dewy tresses now the storm is laid."<sup>1</sup>

*Christian Year.*

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<sup>1</sup> See, also, the poem for Palm Sunday.

The critic cannot mean this; but he disparages—what was indeed Keble's "motif"—the *vis medicatrix* (Mr. Benson calls it the *vis medica*) of poetry. There are two ways of facing the ills of life: with a shout of angry defiance or with the stiller tones of thoughtful resignation. Keble's way was the latter.

That his life was uneventful, that he was not ambitious, all this has nothing to do with Keble's poetry, and is as true of Virgil ("Flumina amem sylvasque inglorius") or of Wordsworth as of him. Keble's appreciation of Nature is censured on two counts: he is too optimistic and he is inexact. Gazing at the landscape Keble says: "All true, all faultless, all in tune." No, replies his critic; a great deal is sadly, terribly out of tune. *Ça dépend*. Of course, the critic is right from one point of view. The "sweet bells" are "jangled" and "out of tune." But a wider, deeper insight into things can correct this first impression. Keble's trust in the omnipotence of love and in the final triumph of good over evil, his consciousness that he himself, at any rate, needed a stern disciplinary probation, his belief that the life now is only a rehearsal, make the discords in the music conducive to a richer harmony. His sadness is not the dreamy sadness of the "mild-eyed melancholy Lotus-eaters"; it springs from the sense of his own shortcomings. His serenity comes from his predominating trust in God. The apparent paradox meets one continually in a life striving after holiness.

But is the other censure true? It is allowed generally, that Keble is minutely accurate in describing places in Palestine—for instance, the oleanders fringing the Lake of Galilee:<sup>1</sup>

"All through the summer night,  
Those blossoms red and bright  
Spread their soft breasts unheeding to the breeze."

But exception is taken to Keble's descriptions nearer home. Curiously, the instance cited, "Through her gray veil the leafless grove," etc., occurs in a poem on the mystery of things, where photographic accuracy would be out of place. Anyone familiar

<sup>1</sup> See, particularly, Stanley's "Palestine," *ad loc.*

with the "Christian Year" can easily recall many descriptive passages, individualistic and particular enough to make the scene vivid and sensuous. The wake of the boat "glistening" in the "scattered moonbeams"—"the lonely woodland road Beneath the moonlit sky," where "festal warblings flowed," etc.—the bardlike prophet on the wild hills of Moab—the level rays of sunset shining through "the last shower" "stealing down," are only a few out of many instances, that Keble tried, not in vain, to be as loyal to material truth as to spiritual.

"Keble is not imaginative." These words sum up the critic's verdict; and if that verdict is just, they settle the question at once and for ever. For imagination is the very essence of poetry.<sup>1</sup> Prose is poetry, even without the adornments of rhyme or metre, if instinct with imagination. Without imagination the adroitest metrical skill only produces prose. "The poet," like the lover and the lunatic, "Is of imagination all compact." To please the ear, to charm the eye, even to set the machinery of thought in motion—all this is not enough without that synthesis of understanding and emotion, of brain and heart, which we call imagination. The "primrose on the river's brim" may be pictured to the eye, the ripple of the stream may soothe the ear, but unless the poet apprehends with the brain the world of meaning in the flower and in the stream, and vibrates to the touch of this inner meaning in his heart, he is only writing prose, not poetry. Is Keble unimaginative? If the passages already culled from his "Christian Year" have not refuted the charge; three lines out of his "Installation Ode" to the hero of Waterloo may suffice:

"Where hoary cliffs of Lusitane,  
Like aged men, stand waiting on the shore,  
And watch the setting sun and hear the Atlantic roar."

It is like one of Turner's landscapes.

It happens sometimes, when you have wished to make two

<sup>1</sup> Imagination is the synthesis of intellect and emotion. So is fancy. But in fancy, as in wit, the intellect predominates; in imagination, as in humour, the emotive element.

of your friends known to one another, the disappointment, that somehow they do not coalesce. Something of the same sort happens in literature. There is sometimes an incompatibility, a "je ne sais quoi," between the critic and his poet. Mr. Benson admires Keble's "simplicity," "gravity," "propriety" (good taste). But is this all? To those who know the poet's personality, even to those who have only seen him in the elder Richmond's portraiture, it seems preposterous to be told that he was "a stern Puritan," priggish with children, deficient in the sense of beauty, or, strangest of all, that anything else than love was the keynote of his song.



### Notes on Hebrew Religion.—I.

By HAROLD M. WIENER, M.A., LL.B.

THE recent appearance of a popular book<sup>1</sup> on Hebrew religion by Mr. Addis suggests the desirability of reviewing some of the principal theories that have gained acceptance in the critical schools. Such a course is the more necessary because we are told in the preface that the volume "is simply an attempt to provide the general reader with a *clear statement of fact*<sup>2</sup> on the history of Hebrew religion down to the middle of the fifth century B.C." Not only so, but honesty and sincerity are stamped in the clearest characters on every page of Mr. Addis's work. If the book does not carry conviction, the failure will assuredly not be due to any doubt of the author's purpose. It must not be thought that in saying this I am indulging in any conventional expressions of courtesy. On the contrary, I have no intention of suppressing any point that ought to be made for the purpose of showing that the book is unreliable. But if Mr. Addis's work influences others as it does

<sup>1</sup> "Hebrew Religion, to the Establishment of Judaism under Ezra," by W. E. Addis. Williams and Norgate, 1906. This will be cited as "H. R."

<sup>2</sup> My italics.