

THE POETICAL WORK OF GEORGE BARLOW

A STUDY

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Poetry is itself a thing of God ;
He made His prophets poets : and the more
We feel of poesie do we become
Like God in love and power,—under-makers.
FESTUS.

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NOTE

TWENTY-EIGHT years ago the writer of these pages was introduced to the poetry of Mr. Barlow through the volume published in 1875, with the title of "Under the Dawn." Shortly afterwards he made Mr. Barlow's personal acquaintance. At different times during the long interval which has elapsed, and as volume after volume was given to the world from Mr. Barlow's pen, it has been an ideal with the writer to make a collection of those poems which seemed to him to be the cream of Mr. Barlow's work. Difficulties of various kinds stood in the way of its realisation. When this series of ten volumes was announced, it occurred to the writer that a somewhat extended notice of them, rather more than an ordinary review, would to a large extent carry out his object. Hence these pages, the purpose of which will be answered if they aid in extending a knowledge of Mr. Barlow's work as a poet. It is quite certain that such extended knowledge will result in increased appreciation of his genius.

E. T. B.

JULY, 1903.

THE STUDY—IN OUTLINE

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George Barlow—Poet

They err who find the Poet wrong,
And poesy an idle art ;
God never gave the gift of song
Unto the base in heart.
The Poet is the true High Priest—
Interpreter of things Divine,
The ruler at the sacred feast
Dispensing Spirit-Wine.

KATHARINE BARLAND.

“THE Poetical Works of George Barlow in Ten Volumes.” The announcement, some months ago, of this Series, edited by the Author himself, sent a thrill of interest and of anticipated pleasure through many who were more or less familiar with the work which Mr. Barlow has given to the world, at irregular intervals, and in varying external form, during the last thirty years. These ten volumes may be taken as representing his mature judgment on the work of a lifetime. Much of that work has been recognised as of a high order, as belonging to that kingdom of real poetry which possesses immortal life. Much of it bears the mark of being the fruit of deep and varied experience, both sweet and bitter. It has received some of that reward which good work never fails to obtain sooner or later. On the other hand, criticism, at times

severe and unsparing, has been elicited. This has been partly due to the inability of the critic to take a sufficiently broad view of certain phases of thought and art, and also to a want of appreciation of the mystical meaning which the writer intended to be the chief note. That the author ever intended to lay himself open to some of the charges which have been brought against him, is not for one moment to be believed. He has always been absolutely free from any desire of pandering to what he believed to be the lower, the vicious, or the degrading. It is, however, the case that a mind or soul capable of being inspired by the Muse of Song, is also, from its very nature, susceptible, above the mass of mankind, to diverse influences, and is liable to be led away, or to descend into depths, from which things may be seen as with a distorted vision. All Poets have probably passed through such seasons. Hence one great value of a revision by a Poet of his own work. It would be impossible for any two critics entirely to agree in the details of selection and revision. Yet we believe that these ten volumes will be welcomed and appreciated by old friends, and that they will also be the means of widely extending the number of those who will enjoy Mr. Barlow's writings.

This leads up to the question—What is the position of Mr. Barlow as a Poet? We mean as a modern Poet. To assist in forming a judgment, we must look back over the development of poetry during the past century. It is less than one hundred years since any real appreciation of the sublime in scenery dawned upon the human mind. The idea of the grandeur of a mountain, especially of a snow-clad peak, rising up as the source of rivers of ice filling the surrounding

valleys with glaciers, scarcely existed a century ago. The idea of the grandeur of the ocean, with its infinite variety of motion, of light and shade, and of its rocky shores, had hardly been conceived until after the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was the fierceness, and the terror, and the danger, of both sea and land when they no longer presented a level uniformity of surface, that alone appealed to the mind of earlier times. This new sensation, almost we might say, this new sense, found its first expression in poetry. Many passages in "Childe Harold" were either one cause of the rapid development of this change, or were a result of its evolution.

Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends.
Where roll'd the ocean, thereon was his home.

This was a new experience.

Nature never did betray the heart that loved her.

* * * * *

For she can so inform the mind that is within us,
So impress with quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts . . .

This was also new, but in a different key, and was an indication from another poet of the same change in the attitude towards natural scenery. There had been plenty of simple pastoral poetry ages before, but no appreciation of the sublime and spiritual side of scenery, of its soul, so to speak, such as is manifested in the following fragments :—

And Jura answered from her misty shroud
Back to the joyous Alps who called to her aloud.

Even as the trees
 That whisper round a temple, become soon
 Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
 The passion poesy, glories infinite,
 Haunt us until they become a cheering light
 Unto our souls.

Far, far around shall those wild-clustered trees
 Fledge the wild ridged mountains steep by steep.

With mountain winds, and babbling springs
 And mountain seas, that are the voice
 Of these inexplicable things
 Thou didst hold commune.

“As the mountains are round about” Zermatt would never have excited the enthusiasm of an ancient Prophet or Poet. Such scenes would have recalled only the “thunders of Sinai.” “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,” was simply the outcome of a feeling of the protection of the surrounding hills. We shall endeavour to show farther on the extent to which George Barlow's poetry exhibits this appreciation of natural beauty.

To the realisation of the spiritual side of the higher forms of the beauty of Nature, succeeded a mystical development. Not religion, still less theology, but the expression of the consciousness of the nearness of another world. There are a few traces of this in Byron, many in Keats, more in Shelley; little in Wordsworth, apart from “Intimations of Immortality”; much in Tennyson, reaching its height in Elizabeth Barrett Browning, especially in “The Drama of Exile.” But between the “mystical” world and the “real” world, there was still a “great gulf fixed.” There was no unity of Life, Love, and Aspiration.

This pure door of opal
God hath shut between us.

We venture to claim for George Barlow that he has bridged this gulf, that he has opened this door of opal ; or rather that he has done more towards bridging the gulf, and opening the door, than any other Poet. We submit that herein lies his chief mission, and his unique position. This also we will endeavour to illustrate further on.

To carry out the foregoing argument, it may be interesting to look at Mr. Barlow's work in four aspects :—

- I.—Love—The Immortal Theme of Poets.
- II.—Nature—A Picture Gallery in the Ideal.
- III.—The True Spiritualism, or, the Humanity of Spiritualism.
- IV.—The Mystical Kingdom.

I

LOVE

O Love ! Who to the hearts of wandering men
Art as the calm to Ocean's weary waves.

SHELLEY.

Love on, love on, Humanity, love on.
Through Love at last shall be deliverance won.

ANON.

Strong Son of God—Immortal Love.

TENNYSON.

THE everlasting theme of Poets is Love. But what is Love ? Nearly all the Poets can tell us. Mr. Barlow can tell us. And he has told us. But how often has the fair image been distorted ! How often has the mirror been blurred ! How often have idols, not only of gold and silver, but of iron and clay, been set up in place of the Divinity, and men have been invited to worship them ! So many who have the gift of poesy have been thus beguiled ! Passion in varied forms has been set up and idealised instead of Love. Hence, confusion, perplexity, and distress, both to writer and reader. Hence the introduction of that which can have no place in the realm of poetry—even with the mystical meaning which its authors may attach to it. As originally placed before the public, Mr. Barlow's work laid itself open to much criticism of this kind.

The Love which is to wandering hearts as the calm to the weary waves of ocean, the Love through which at last the Deliverance of Humanity shall be won, the Immortal Love which is a Son of God, is the theme of many of Mr. Barlow's finest poems. Would that he had never allowed himself to extol any lower meaning of the sacred word above what seems to us its rightful place ! The love of Man and Woman need not by any means be thus excluded. To take an example from Robert Burns, over a century ago.

Thou lingering star with lessening ray
 That lov'st to greet the early morn,
 Again thou usherest in the day
 My Mary from my soul was torn.
 Oh, Mary ! dear departed shade !
 Where is thy place of blissful rest ?
 See'st thou thy lover lowly laid ?
 Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

This is simple—pathetic—perhaps has little claim to poetry at all. It is pure, clear, and elevating, but it may of course be said to be in the supersensual realm.

It seems needful to enlarge a little on this theme.

The body is not vile, men make it so.

ANON.

If we choose carnal pleasures before intellectual, we sin : if intellectual before mystical, still we sin.

HENRY S. SUTTON.

Sense is the lower, yet at times
 It rules the soul with iron power
 As weeds will sometimes choke the flower
 In fairest climes.
 KATHARINE BARLAND.

Mr. Barlow would no doubt say that from his point of view "sense" is not the lower, but that it is the

only method open to us of expressing the sensations of the soul. As he has said—"The emotions of an Archangel must still be expressed through sense."

In a recent letter to the writer of these pages, Mr. Barlow says with regard to his mission and work :—

"I had, as I believe, a task to do which has not yet been committed to any Poet. It is a task of inconceivable difficulty—the spiritualisation, in an entirely new sense, of human love and passion. We have had spiritual passion. We have had human passion. But the absolute combination of soul and body, we have not yet had. Christ and Apollo have not yet joined hands. . . . There is a spiritual body (as Paul and Swedenborg believed) of which our visible body is only the external covering, and every organ of the body has its spiritual (*i.e.*, material, but more finely material) counterpart, and must therefore be regarded as potentially holy."

Is there not some confusion of thought in this,—or rather, in the application intended to be made of it? There are whole classes of subjects, material, intellectual, and spiritual, which are legitimate subjects of research, but which lie wholly outside the realm of Art and of Poetry. We do not bring the processes and results of our rough material work into our homes. We do not describe the details of whole classes of subjects in books intended to lie on our drawing-room tables. There are many matters, physiological, social, moral, which are not adapted for treatment as subjects of high art, either of Poetry or Painting. If Apollo means all that Mr. Barlow, in some of his work, appears to include, Christ and Apollo can never shake hands. The weeds of sense are in danger of choking

the roses and the lilies, even in fairest climes. They must be pulled up and destroyed, or overcome. They have their place, but it is not in the Garden of the Soul.

It is only fair to say that the author, on reading the above, wrote : " Possibly I did not make my meaning quite clear. I referred of course only to pure 'love and passion.' I believe that, as Laurence Oliphant seems to have surmised, it is possible so to alter the atomic conditions of the actual human organism, that the soul-body at times practically almost displaces the ordinary body. I believe it is possible for love upon earth to become so refined that the soul-body and soul-organs are already operating. I had some such idea in my mind when I wrote the two sonnets entitled 'The Astral Body' which appear in Vol. IX." These remarks aid greatly in enabling us to understand Mr. Barlow's real position, and bear out what is said in the opening paragraph of this Essay.

The confusion of thought is, we think, due to the different meanings attached to the word "Sense." In "sense is the lower" it is the corporeal sense which is meant, the enjoyment of what, in the previous quotation, are called "carnal pleasures." Not that any sensations are sinful in themselves ; but they have a relative place. Even here, our imperfect language introduces confusion. "Corporeal sense" is a misnomer. The body has no senses, as is evident when it is "dead." Sense belongs to the mind, or to the soul. That which is at enmity with God and goodness, is, as Paul says, the carnal mind. It is of course true that it is only by "sense," in its widest acceptation, that ideas come into the soul. In a later section,

under the heading of "The True Spiritualism," this matter will have to be referred to again.

Near the end of the last volume of the series there is a fine mystical sonnet, under the title of "The Divine Feminine"—No. XXI. of the 1902 sonnets, and therefore one of Mr. Barlow's latest utterances—which puts his position in a clear light, greatly assisting in the interpretation of many things he has written, and which should mitigate adverse criticism.

Rightly to appreciate Mr. Barlow's treatment of the whole theme, three aspects of love must be recognised :—

- (1) Personal—one individual towards another—the love between Man and Woman.
- (2) Social—embracing the community—the whole of Humanity in its widest sense.
- (3) Divine—Immortal.

The three mottoes at the commencement of this Section, illustrate the threefold character of Love, the interpretation of which Mr. Barlow, as we have seen, regards as his chief mission. He says—

I sing of Love, Love, Love. I give the world for token
The message that strong Love with sweetness never broken
Himself has given to me.

Vol. v. p. 153.

He has however himself entered a remonstrance against a too largely prevailing note in his own poetry. Of woman he says—

Weary she is of love that in the same old fashion
Sings of her lips and hair, with musical soft passion
And words that thrill her heart.

* * * * *

She asks no more the praise of lips and eyes and tresses :

* * * * *

But asks that love may seek the table-land of duty
And not the valleys dim.

VOL. ix. pp. 50, 51.

We must confess to a sympathy with this "weariness," though much of the language is so beautiful and musical. The ideal figure of the true relationship between Man and Woman remains to be :—

Till at the last she set herself to him
Like perfect music unto noble words.

At the same time it cannot be denied that one of the greatest charms of Mr. Barlow's poetry is the endless variety in the way in which even this phase of love is treated. Hundreds of beautiful passages might be quoted. A few fragments must suffice to illustrate the whole subject, and these we will select where the personal element rises imperceptibly into a higher kingdom, where the mortal desire ascends into a region which only immortality can satisfy. Several of the series of sonnets—especially "Through Death to Life," "To Beatrice," and "To Gertrude in the Spirit World"—contain many such passages, for instance :—

What are the unions of the present ?—poor
And pallid, mere forlorn sick shades of love.
When Beatrice kissed Dante from above
Then first their joy shone, glorious to endure.

* * * * *

When first a union is for endless time,
Then first it passionate is,—then first sublime.

VOL. ii. p. 65.

There are a pair of beautiful poems in Vol. IV., entitled "Sunrise" and "Sunset." The two following stanzas are from the latter :—

For ever it is the soul that gives all joy to passion :—
 The slightest gift is sweet
 If given in soulful holy virginal pure fashion ;
 The red lips need not even meet.

* * * * *

Yet still I say that this, the love of soul, prevaieth,
 And no love else at last :
 Is all afire with joy when every faint love paleth,—
 Wins, when all lesser loves are past.

Vol. iv. pp. 39, 40.

From a poem entitled "Death," most pathetically written, the first four and last six lines run thus :—

The mantle of a vast exceeding peace
 Over the lonely wandering poet fell :
 The noises of the worldly war did cease,
 And all was well.

* * * * *

But still, where over him the grey stone leans,
 This woman wept.

They found her there one summer morning dead
 Beneath the solemn marriage-sealing sun,
 To his live endless deathless spirit wed,—
 So these were one.

Vol. iii. p. 103.

"Love's Silence" strikes another note, not often enough heard :—

There is a love so deep it travels far
 Beyond the reach of words. E'en love-songs jar
 When the great depths are stirred.

* * * * *

There is a love so full of silent peace
That even solemn stately love-chants cease
Or are not heard of men.

Vol. v. p. 306.

The following two stanzas, the first and last, of a
“Hymn,” ought perhaps to be placed later, but we
prefer introducing them here :—

Lift me far beyond the region
Where frail earthly loves abound :
Rose-sweet lips on earth are legion,—
Myriad flowers star earthly ground,—
Lift me, God, to thine own dwelling
Where thy ceaseless love is welling
Forth, and thy great peace is found.

* * * * *

Far beyond the earth's green places,
Haunts of flowers and women fair,
Rose-flushed cheeks and wondrous faces,
Set me 'mid thine icy air :
Give me thine own love immortal ;
Open thou the sky's blue portal ;
Let me pass, and find thee there !

Vol. iii. p. 86.

Mr. Barlow cannot be called a Philanthropist or
a Missionary or a Social Reformer, in the ordinary
acceptation of the words. But in a sense, the true Poet
is above all these, and combines them. The love of
Humanity as a whole was never more beautifully and
completely expressed than in four stanzas under the
title of “The Right to Love” :—

And is not love enough ? To give, and give for ever,—
As God spreads light of day
O'er field and flaming hill and forest green and river
And blue soft-laughing bay !

To have the right to love. O man, is not that ample ?
 To have the right to wake
 The soul in woman's eyes : the soul that weak fools trample ;
 The heart that proud fools break.

To have the right to *give* love infinite ;—a treasure
 That cannot pass or fade.
 What Fate can hinder me from loving beyond measure,—
 From giving strength and aid ?

What Fate can e'er forbid the deep soul of its boundless
 Eternal passionate stores
 To give, with streams of love that flow, strong, quiet, soundless,
 Round loveless needy shores ?

Vol. v. p. 8.

We cannot help also quoting two stanzas from another poem in the same connection :—

On those who held the Frontier-Post
 And held it through the night
 What of divine new light
 Shall break when morning shows the golden coast
 And the new cliffs in sight ?

On those who gave their lives away
 For very Love's own sake
 What wondrous dawn shall break
 Rose-flushed and splendid through the parting grey ?
 What dead hopes shall awake ?

Vol. v. p. 302.

To illustrate the third phase of Love—Divine, Immortal—the difficulty would be to keep quotation within moderate limits, and yet to give any adequate idea of what may be found scattered abundantly through the ten volumes. Then again no clear dividing line can be drawn between Love, as immortal and divine, and that kingdom of mystical poetry which we defer for later consideration.

There is a beautiful short poem entitled "Love and Death," which we must, however, be allowed to quote as a whole, because we want to refer to it again when saying something of the artistic side of Mr. Barlow's poetry.

LOVE AND DEATH.

An angel watched the world rejoicing :
 The flowers sang in the morning light ;
 The blue sea sang its tender love-song
 To golden-girdled stars at night.
 All seemed so full of peace and gladness—
 Till lo ! a sudden ice-cold breath
 Passed over hill and wave and meadow :
 A stern voice whispered, " I am Death ! "

Alas ! in all that angel's dreaming
 His loving heart had never dreamed
 That only for one single moment
 The fairy blossoms sang and gleamed.
 He turned, and in despairing sadness
 Would have resought the heavens above,
 When, softly sounding through the shadows,
 A sweet voice whispered, " I am Love ! "

And then the angel saw that fairer
 Than heaven with all its strifeless calm
 Is earth, for Love makes sorrow lovely,
 And plucks from grief the victor's palm.
 Aye, Love with its undying sweetness
 Can soothe the weary, cheer the lone :
 If Death's voice threatens through the darkness,
 Love whispers, " Death is overthrown ! "

Vol. vi. p. 298.

II

NATURE—A PICTURE GALLERY IN THE IDEAL

THE reader is asked to picture to himself a gallery in the ideal—to visualise the following lines and stanzas, after the style of Turner, Peter Graham, G. F. Watts, and others who might be named, and to imagine an appropriate room hung round with the paintings, singly or in pairs, with ample space between. There will be plenty of material left for each reader to construct other picture galleries for himself. Some idea would thus be gained of Mr. Barlow's marvellous power of description. Our own "hanging Committee" has selected twenty,—quite as many as can be properly seen at one time.

I.—THE WHITE WAVES.

Again the long waves, wonderful in whiteness,
Shall storm the shore.

Vol. i. p. 187.

II.—A GOLDEN SUNSET.

I dreamed I stood beneath a golden sunset,
With idle breakers leaping on the sand
In silver irresistible slow onset.

Vol. ii. p. 52.

III.—THE MAIDEN MOON.

Bathed in the silver fountains of the night,
We watched the maiden moon's unfolded might
Stream over the illimitable sea.

Vol. ii. p. 43.

IV.—THE TIDES.

When I behold the tides for ever surging, breaking,
Against the granite walls that guard with base unshaking
 The wind-swept Cornish shore,
I long for thee to see with me the vast Atlantic
As the great waves with leap delirious and gigantic
 Charge upward,—and foam backward evermore.

VOL. v. p. 143.

V.—A SUNSET.

I watched a sunset,—and I noted down
 The cosmic river of colours as they came.
 First golden splendour: then clear crimson flame:
Then one pale-blue pure sky-spot like a crown.
But the wind saw me writing with a frown
 And drove new clouds across the heavens so fast
 That new tints shone before I seized the last,—
Green, lemon-colour, lilac, purple-brown.

VOL. v. p. 105.

VI.—THE SILVER MOON.

And the fair silver moon is full of light, and tender,
And all along the shore the white waves' olden splendour
 Breaks with the same large sound.

VOL. v. p. 156.

VII.—DRIFTING.

 Drifting, drifting alone
O'er the wild waste of waters, while the day
Sinks swallowed in a haze of sullen grey
That hides cliff, shore, and down and creek and bay.
 No sound save waves that wail and winds that moan:
 Drifting, drifting, drifting,
 Drifting on alone!

VOL. ix. p. 36.

VIII.—THE SOLEMN HILLS.

I see beyond the plain the solemn hills ascending
Height beyond awful height, with black crags never ending
 And snow-capped vast indomitable towers.

VOL. v. p. 210.

IX.—THE SUNSET-REGION.

The fiery vast superb broad-meadowed sunset-region
Needs flowers of crimson clouds and many a vaporous legion
 And fleecy coronets and golden bars.

VOL. v. p. 160.

X.—NEW SUNSETS.

Each evening on the ethereal canvas wide
 I paint new sunsets, colouring all the air.
 When Turner failed and flung his brush aside,
 I touched the heaven,—the longed-for tint was there.
 VOL. vi. p. 185.

XI.—“VENUS AND THE EVANGELISTS.”

VOL. vii. p. 94.

[This picture should be placed in the centre of the wall, opposite the visitor entering the gallery—the figures as large as, or larger than life.]

XII. & XIII. (A Pair.)—CALM.

The blue sea with soft ripples ringeth
 To-day, and hardly one cloud wingeth
 Above the waves its way ;

STORM. At night the black storm's evil warning
 Scowls in the West,—grim tides next morning
 Scour all the sands for prey.

VOL. i. p. 214.

XIV. & XV. (A Pair.)—LAND AND SEA.

Like turning heart and glance no longer foamward, seaward,
 But up some valley-glen
 Full of gold gorse and grass and gentle pink-belled heather,
 Full of the sense of sun and windless summer weather,—
 Then, strengthened, meeting the grey waves again.

VOL. v. p. 215.

XVI. & XVII. (A Pair.)—MOUNTAIN AND SEA.

He watched the sunset on cold mountains dying ;
 He watched the hopeless foam on sunless seas.

VOL. ix. p. 102.

XVIII.—A GREEN ARCADE.

My spirit revelled in a green arcade
 And felt the motion and the bloom of flowers,—
 The feathery cool despondence of the shade,
 The joy of rivulets in summer showers.

VOL. ii. p. 128.

XIX.—THE RAPTURE AND THE GLORY.

Ours is the rapture of the lonely beach
When the white breakers surge tumultuously,
And ours the glory of the pine-clad lea ;
The mountains and the ocean chant to each.

Vol. iii. p. 41.

XX.—THE LAST RIDGE.

Close to the end of battle now I stand,
Holding my conquest almost in mine hand,—
With Beatrice almost before my eyes ;—
My spirit clears itself triumphantly
And climbs to the last ridge, whence now I see
Death's sunset, which to me is Life's sunrise.

Vol. ii. p. 84.

III

THE TRUE SPIRITUALISM, OR, THE HUMANITY OF SPIRITUALISM

THE word "Spiritualism" is here used with great reluctance. But it seems unavoidable. There is no other word available. It is not intended to refer especially to the so-called spiritualistic movement which arose in the United States about the middle of last century. The word is here used to indicate that great change in thought and in the conception of the human race, living in this and in an other state of existence, as one great family or community of intelligent beings. This conception has been gradually developing during the last fifty years. Of this great change what is called the spiritualistic movement may have been a cause, or one of its signs and symptoms. That is not now the question.

To make what is meant clearer, let us look at poetry in relation to the next world, or rather to another world. Poets have always been believers in another world, and they have always peopled it with intelligent beings, varying orders of angelic life, and generally also with the spirits of mortals enjoying, or otherwise, varying conditions of life, "according to the deeds done in the body." But there has been a "great gulf fixed," crossed by no messages of love and sympathy—no

communication either way, no Atlantic cable, no wireless telegraphy. There was nothing that appealed with practical effect to the feelings and interests of everyday life. Hence faith in another world became nebulous and weak. To illustrate what we mean there is no need to go beyond the English poets of the nineteenth century. Not in Wordsworth—not even in “Intimations of Immortality”—not in Shelley, not in Keats, do we think any trace can be found of a belief in one rational intelligent human family, partly here and partly there. Coming down a little later, there are but few traces in Tennyson, even in “In Memoriam,” few in Robert Browning, or even in Elizabeth Barrett Browning, with all her beautiful other-world mysticism. The idea is absent from “The Drama of Exile,” where it might so easily have been introduced. Even Shelley said—

So is it in the world of living men.
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare, and veiling heaven, and when
It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night.

ADONAIS.

In this sense George Barlow is the Poet of spiritualism. To him the Human Race is one Family—some here, some there—all living. Between the two there is no gulf of absolute separation. The voices of those who are there call to those who are here. The hands of those who are there beckon on those who are still here.

And more than this. The mind is unable to form any conception of intelligent life, except in a world adapted to that life, and under conditions external to it. A spirit can only be conceived as living in a world and amid surroundings less spiritual than its own

nature. There must always be something which to the consciousness of a spirit corresponds to an external, material, objective world. This is not "materialism" in the ordinary vulgar sense, but we think it will be found to be a view which is inevitably thrust upon us. This explains the necessity of using material imagery in attempts to describe another world which it is not really correct to term a spiritual one. In that wonderful poem called "The Path of Death," some lines from which are quoted below, the idea of the poet can only be expressed by introducing "ferns" and "flowers" and natural objects known to our outward senses.

The poetry of George Barlow carries the human element of this world on to another, and brings back the human element of another world to this. There have been occasional expressions of the idea in the fugitive poetry of recent years. And though George Barlow may not have preached this gospel in all its fulness, he appears to us to stand alone, and to occupy a unique position, and one well worthy of the opening years of a new century.

We have said above that herein seems to us to lie Mr. Barlow's unique mission as a Poet. We must therefore ask to be allowed to attempt to justify this position by more copious extracts than would otherwise be needful, which we trust will inspire the reader who is attracted by this subject to make himself acquainted with the poems themselves, and with many others which might be referred to in support of the view for which we are contending.

To use a modern phrase, the "solidarity" of the Human Family—There, as well as Here—is powerfully portrayed in eleven poems to which we would specially

ask the attention of the reader. A few lines are quoted from each :—

We shall not lonely be :
The breakers of death's sea
Fringe with their white line no inhuman shore.

* * * * *

We need not doubt nor dread :
The armies of the dead
Beckon us on with many a living hand.
The lonelier we are here
The less we have to fear
For on the other side more dear ones stand.

VOL. ix. p. 74.

The dead are with us through our nights and days ;
They have not journeyed far.

* * * * *

They nearest are, just when we need them most.
They help with loving hands ;
* * * * *
They watch and heed ;
Their legions fill the air ;
They never speed
Beyond the cry of pain, or reach of prayer.

VOL. vi. p. 296.

The dead work for our good with love beyond
The love they here attained :
Their spirits bid our spirits not despond ;
They bid us climb the hill-tops they have gained.

* * * * *

They rest. But this their rest—to love us more,
To guard us till we meet :
The hearts whose loss our faithless souls deplore
Were never quite so close, nor half so sweet.

VOL. vii. p. 219.

“A Messenger” is a charming short poem in this connection. After watching for “two years within the

lonely room"—during which "no sweet ghost came"—"one winter night" there came "a form with beauty crowned and light." "She gazed at me and said :— 'Behold ! the living and the dead are one. . . . I come to comfort and to greet ; I come to tell thy spirit that all is well.' "

VOL. x, p. 111.

The heavenly hosts are ever marching
 Upon their eager way
 To reach the abodes of mortal anguish :
 They march both night and day.

* * * * *

Never was human soul encompassed
 By dark foes crowding round
 Without the tramp of heavenly legions,
 Without their trumpets' sound.

VOL. vii, p. 276.

It may perhaps be said that the "heavenly hosts" in this last extract are beings of a different "order" to the human race. That may be so, but the poem teaches in fine language the spiritual connection between this world and another.

The next two extracts refer to the progression of the individual soul from this life to another, but the poems are in full harmony with the teaching that life here and life there are but successive natural stages of one greater Life :—

As we grow older, life grows more divine :
 Slow word by word and tedious line by line
 We learn the next world's lore.
 Then all our hearts are changed, the temporal ends ;
 We bid farewell to old, we make new friends
 Upon the eternal shore.

* * * * *

So we pass onward, till we stand at last
 With every struggle, each love, in the past ;
 Our soul surmounts its throne.
 Then the large deathless rapture through us thrills :
 We turn from human hearts, and flowers and hills,
 And meet God's eyes, alone.

Vol. ix. p. 24.

“The Right to Die,” from which the following lines are taken, is a remarkable poem :—

To have the right to die !—Yes : it will come,—the pleasure
 Of drawing one long breath, sweet, deep, beyond all measure.

* * * * *

And so it is with us. One day along our serried
 Calm lines where faces grim with lifelong deep hopes buried
 Gleam pale and stern and set and still,
 Will ring from the lips of God the joyful awful order—
 “The time has come. Advance.” Death is the great rewarder
 To many a heart no gift of life could fill.

* * * * *

. . . The eternal gift of freedom bringing,
 And thy one deathless gift,—the right to die.

Vol. iv. p. 33.

“A Death-Song” contains some fine thoughts and imagery :—

No rest I crave,
 No quiet grave,
 But ceaseless passionate life,—yea, this for ever ;
 A living spirit high
 I would not stoop to die
 Or cease the old songful turbulent endeavour.

Vol. x. p. 46.

In “Love, the Teacher” we are told :—

Not by standing at their graves and weeping
 Win we audience of the ghostly throng :

* * * * *

Death may claim, and for one moment blinds them—
 As he blinds us with his sudden hand.
 Then the unconquered glance of morning finds them,
 As it finds the slumbering sea and land.

The Poet asks, "How did I discern it?" The answer is :—

By sweet love within his soul renewing
 All the strength that vanished when a tomb
 Closed against his maddened step pursuing
 Sunless doors of iron, gates of gloom.

By the knowledge, daily growing stronger,
 That the love of woman hath no end :
 By hope's fountain from the dark rock flowing
 Through the love and sweet help of a friend.

VOL. x. p. 82.

The "Rapture of Love" is a poem which might have been alluded to either in Section I., or here. It combines the highest love with a belief in the continuing closeness and friendship of those who have already "advanced." Two stanzas run thus :—

This is the glory of Love : this is the true possession ;
 When the clear soul-eyes meet.
 When the strong soul leaps forth, at last from Time's oppression
 Freed,—and first tastes its triumph large and full and sweet.

* * * * *

Ah ! we are not alone. The countless dead are near us :
 Their warm strong hands we feel.
 For fifty living souls, ten thousand dead souls hear us
 And answer with their love our passionate appeal !

VOL. v. p. 6.

The last poem we shall allude to in this connection, is "The Path of Death," one of the most original in the whole series of volumes. The opening lines are :—

At last the sacred path is opening out before me :
Its mists and dews of night and scents of flowers fold o'er me
Ceaseless and sudden wings.

Further on we read :—

We deemed the path of death was terrible. We tread it,
And lo ! that moment cease, for ever cease, to dread it ;
And even its terrors wax exceeding sweet.

The last verse is :—

And I, —I think of thee. No road that thou wilt travel,
Though o'er it mists and fogs their wild wet locks unravel,
Can deadly or dangerous be.
If thou must one day pass along the road, it follows
That Love dreads not the path's dim darkest deepest hollows
More than sea-birds the green gulfs of the sea.

VOL. v. p. 119.

Of course there is a sense, and there always will be a sense, in which the image of "The Valley of the Shadow of Death" represents a truth, but it belongs rather to a Pagan and Materialistic age when this life was looked upon as a real life, and another life as a dream life. It is almost out of place now when it is every day more and more realised that, as William Law said many years ago, "The greatest part of mankind—nay, of Christians, may be said to be asleep; and that particular way of life which takes up each man's mind, thoughts and actions, may very well be called his particular dream. . . . A man . . . comes into this world on no other errand, but to rise out of the vanity of time into the riches of eternity."¹ Those who have seen much of deathbeds must have been struck with the look of strange majesty and joyful

¹ "The Spirit of Prayer."

surprise, which the features frequently assume after life has departed. This often happens when circumstances and character afford no special reason for anticipating it, according to our ordinary standards of judgment. Is it not possible that the explanation may be a realisation of the "Path of Death" which the man or the woman is entering upon, in the sense of the poem we have been quoting, and that this is reflected on the outward form which is being left behind?

Enough has we think been said to justify the position taken above, in regard to George Barlow's mission as a Poet. We would suggest that the poems from which the extracts in this chapter are made be looked out and read aloud in the order in which we have selected them. Many other similar ones may also be found. Their beauty and the uniqueness and power of their teaching would then be appreciated. And we think it would be conceded that no other poet has thus foreshadowed what we believe to be *THE Gospel of the near future.*

IV

THE MYSTICAL KINGDOM

But when shall we see the Immortals? Believe me—whenever ye will.

They are near us, around us, within us, awaiting our wish and our word.

More than thy dreams ever pictured, more than thy heart ever dreamed,

Will pour in increasing abundance on him who has freedom and faith ;

Freedom from meanness and harshness—faith in the Godhood within—

The ore lies before us in mountains—we've power to change it to gold :—

Be to thyself what thou lovest, and others will be unto thee

What thou wilt. When in God thou believest, near God thou wilt certainly be.

C. G. LELAND.

Fortunately it is not needful to say much here. The mystical kingdom is not one to be explained or reasoned about. It can only be seen, felt, perceived. A few quotations must suffice to give the reader a partial idea of this branch of Mr. Barlow's work. The keynote to Mr. Barlow's mysticism may be found in the following sonnet, one of many which embody the same idea in varied imagery.

Yes, this is our reward.—Not life's fair dreams,
 But the new-wakened and majestic sense
 That after silent years of pain intense
 Light, marvellous light, behind the hill-top gleams.
 Not by life's pleasant blossom-bordered streams
 To find our long-delayed large recompence,
 But in soul-thrilling joy that through the dense
 Dark worldly clogging air with golden beams
 Darts on a sudden downward :—the wild hope
 That not much longer shall this pain endure,—
 This agony of fierce desire to cope
 With all love's foes in wrestle close and sure ;
 That Fate shall free, ere long, our long-leashed breath
 For the great charge along the slopes of death.

VOL. iv. p. 243.

In the following lines, the spirits of the dead are
 supposed to be addressing a blind Poet :—

“Thou shalt see heavenly stars,” they said ;
 “Thou shalt breathe heavenly air ;
 Thou shalt know rapture 'mid the dead,
 Who, living, knewest despair :

“Follow.”—He listened to the voice,
 And left us here in gloom.
 Yet has he made the wiser choice :
 He has left his darkened room.

VOL. vi. p. 55.

These three verses are from a poem entitled “The
 Lonely Yearning.”

And dost thou feel, O bard, that in thine heart
 There are strange powers
 Unshared of men ;
 That in thine Art
 Is something cognate to the fields of flowers
 Or clouds that storm the granite-bouldered glen ?

* * * * *

Then, if thou feelest this,
 If unto thee
 There is a marvel in the sunset-air
 And in the swoop of swift or song of bee,—
 In the sea's kiss
 A glory that thy fellows may not share ;

* * * * *

 Then strive thou to excel
 Those unto whom thy vision is not given :
 If they live nobly, well !
 But strive thou after even a lordlier heaven.
 Sink not below the rest. Let blind folk be !
 Climb thou the mountains thy dream-glances see.

Vol. ix. p. 40.

“Two Spirits”—this is so short and perfect that
 it must be given entire.

Two spirits, mixing, blending,
 Went swiftly upward tending
 To the skies :
 Their golden course no power
 Could stay—sweet hour on hour
 They uprise.

In heaven's holy night
 These spirits glad and bright,
 Became
 One perfect spirit-being,
 Far, far beyond death seeing,
 Earth's pale dominions fleeing
 Like a flame.

But back in the sad morn
 To earthland they were borne
 On slow faint wings—
 Slowly, slowly weeping ;
 But still the chant that sleeping,
 They heard, around them rings.

Vol. ii. p. 198.

A “lonely leader” and the “army” behind him are

powerfully depicted in a sonnet, of which the last lines are :—

“ . . . The lonely man is lost,” I said :
 “ The universe is armed his soul to slay.”
 God touched my eyes, and I awoke from sleep
 And saw the spirit-hosts that leader led
 Filling all time and space, and night and day.

VOL. v. p. 305.

“ The Immortal and the Mortal,” the concluding stanzas of which we quote, is a fine poem.

Oh, at the point where God and Man are one,
 Meet me, thou God ; flame on me like the sun ;
 I would be part
 Of thine own heart,
 That by my hands thy love-deeds may be done :
 That by my hands thy love-truths may be shown
 And far lands know me for thy very own ;
 That I may bring
 The dead world spring :—
 The flowers awake, Lord, at thy word alone.
 Oh, to the point where man and God unite,
 Raise me, thou God ; transfuse me with thy light ;
 Where I would go
 Thou, God, dost know ;
 For thy sake I will face the starless night.
 The night is barren, black, devoid of bloom,
 Scentless and waste, a wide appalling tomb ;
 Dark foes surround
 The soul discrowned
 And strange shapes lower and threaten through the gloom.
 But where thou art with me thy mortal, one,
 God, mine immortal, my death-conquering sun,
 Meet me and show
 What path to go
 Till the last work of deathless love be done.

VOL. i. p. 167.

A Mystical Poem of a very different character is
 "A Song of the Sea." A few lines will give some idea
 of it.

Virgin ever, unexhausted, are the great sea's loving arms.
 Who hath ever wholly won her, who hath numbered all her charms?
 Who hath said "I am her bridegroom, she for me alone is fair,"
 Lifting star by star her jewels from the midnight of her hair?

Who hath said, when all the meadows fling their blossoms at his
 feet,

"There is fragrance more seductive and a flowerless air more
 sweet"?

Who hath murmured, tempted softly by some mortal maid's
 embrace,

"I have mingled with the immortal, seen the eternal face to face"?

Human spirit cannot venture : When we pass into the night,
 When a century's singing closes, still with amorous arms and white
 Will the ocean seek new lovers, still their noblest chant will be
 Caught in rapture from the rapture of the wild lips of the sea.

Vol. ix. p. 147.

There are several "Hymns" scattered through the
 Volumes, which should be favourites with many. The
 following lines are from one of them.

Along the blood-stained road that Christ's foot trod
 We follow hard,—
 Watching the sweet eyes of the Son of God
 And his brow scarred.

* * * * *

If any man will watch throughout the night,
 Though wild winds roam
 And on the savage beach the only light
 Is light of foam,

He shall partake the deathless crown that he
 The Christ-king wore :
 An honoured guest at his high table be
 For evermore.

* * * * *

And each upon his special cross must hang,
 True till the end ;
 Each pierced by his own individual pang,—
 Without one friend.

Then shall the morning that beheld Christ free
 See us too rise,—
 Pure as the white air, strenuous as the sea,
 With deathless eyes.

Vol. iii. p. 152.

This section shall be closed with a reference to a group of five poems which should be read together. We should be disposed to place them in the following order :—

Man and God	vii. 340.
God and Man	vii. 345.
The Eternal Death . .	vii. 338.
To the Universe-God . .	viii. 269.
The Eternal Life	vii. 214.

The two first are a poetical essay on Fate and Free-will. In "The Eternal Death" occurs the line :—

Wrong-doing is death, and this alone is death.

Then we read, after speaking of what is ordinarily called death :—

But fear not him, but his similitude—
 The death more deep
 Than ever mortal dreamed, the death more rude
 Than deathlike sleep.

The death we, and we only, can create ;
The death we bring
By fraud and selfishness, and wrath and hate
And misdoing.

This is the eternal death. The other death
Is just a change,
A sudden dreamlike passage underneath
A process strange.

“To the Universe-God ” is a long poem, with many grand passages—a combination in a far higher style of Pope’s “Universal Prayer” and Byron’s “Prayer of Nature.”

From “The Eternal Life,” which we look upon as one of the most finely conceived of Mr. Barlow’s poems, we quote five stanzas.

And so with God. Behind the lying sphere
Of the unjust grim god who rules us here
Another Godhead dwells :
A God whose eyes can pierce beyond the feasts
Of Churches,—past the idols of the priests,
Past all their heavens and hells.

To him the poets, one by one, appeal.
When shines the sunlight of his face, they feel
That hell’s flame dies away :
That darkling lands wherever chaos reigned,
Where captives in murk dungeons pined and plained,
Are crimsoned with the day.

To him, past God and God, the poets reach.
Him they believe in ; him their hearts beseech ;
His eyes and his alone
They seek. Their spirits search behind the stars,
Making away with every mist that bars
The sky-way to his throne.

All souls who come between they hurl aside,
 Whether they be by centuries deified
 Or for one instant strong.
 The same swift inspiration through them flows
 Whence Jewish prophets' fiery speech arose
 And David's eager song.

Behind the souls that hate, the Gods that slay,
 Ephemeral dying Gods of yesterday
 Whose thrones one moment gleam,
 The changeless just Eternal One abides :
 And past him all the ages' movement glides
 Like an unending dream.

These stanzas seem to require a note of explanation to avoid serious misunderstanding of their meaning. The word "God" is used as it frequently is in the Old Testament. It is not by any means synonymous with the title "Lord God," first employed in the second Chapter of Genesis, and which the Jews considered far more sacred. The poem as a whole we understand to be aimed at that presentation of religion which drove Shelley to what was called Atheism, and which is to a large extent responsible for the Theism—the barren Theism—of Charles Voysey. The "God" of Moses and the "God" of David cannot be the same being as the "God" of the Prophets, or of the New Testament, or of the orthodox Churches of Christendom. From this point of view the idea of the poem seems to us to be a magnificent and a true one, nobly and graphically expressed. It has been said by a modern writer, that the essence of idolatry consists in the investing of any outward act, rite, or ceremony, or the belief in any dogma, with a spiritual efficacy. For instance, a belief in the saving-efficacy of water-baptism, or in salvation by any outward sacrifice, is of the nature of

idolatry, and leads to priestcraft. This test is always applicable to distinguish false Gods from the true one. From this point of view what a grand verse is the first of the five quoted! What a fine motto for the true religious Reformer is the fourth verse! If Charles Voysey had been a Poet instead of a preacher he might have expressed himself in something like the language of the last verse.

From the "Partial Index" which is appended, it will be seen how large a place "Mystical Poetry" occupies in Mr. Barlow's writing.

THE SONNETS

A STUDY of the Poetry of George Barlow would be incomplete without a special reference to the Sonnets. Over 500 are included in the ten volumes. Probably Mr. Barlow has written over 1000, a far greater number doubtless than any other poet. With regard to the merits of the sonnet as an embodiment of poetic thought it is not our province to speak. It is necessarily cramped compared with lyrical poetry, which is to our mind the most beautiful form in which the poetic gift can be manifested. Most of Mr. Barlow's sonnets are in groups, which may be looked upon as poems in the form of a series of sonnets, and should be read consecutively. Such are "To Gertrude in the Spirit World," 36 ; "Through Death to Life," 100. The latter are arranged in three smaller groups : "Earth," which is subdivided into "Earth Gladdened," 22, and "Earth Darkened," 10; "Heaven," 48 ; and "Heaven on Earth," 20. "Time's Whisperings" forms another sequence of sonnets, intermixed with a small number of lyrical poems.

In carrying out this use of the sonnet Mr. Barlow, it must, we think, be admitted, has far excelled any other poet. The only other works of this kind, so far as we know, admitting of comparison with Mr. Barlow's, are the volume which Dr. Richard Garnett has

placed before the English reader, in his translation of the sonnets of Dante, Petrarch, and Camoens, 124 in all ; and—which, being modern, compares better—Elizabeth Barrett Browning's series of "Sonnets from the Portuguese." If asked to select the three finest sonnets in the language, apart from Mr. Barlow's, we think they would be "Mysterious Night" (Blanco White), "The World is too much with us," and "Methought I saw the footsteps of a Throne" (Wordsworth). It is a difficult task to make comparisons, especially among living poets. Some few of Mr. Barlow's sonnets haunt the mind almost in the same way as the sonnets named above do. Are there any other poets whose sonnets possess, to an equal extent, the same magical charm? Even Mr. Swinburne's seem to us to be far excelled. If "Through Death to Life" and "Time's Whisperings" are carefully studied, the beauty of the series cannot fail to grow upon the reader.

There are a number of sonnets of a remarkable character, entirely different to any of the earlier ones, in the latter part of Vol. X. Several are political, others touch various hotly controversial social questions with a vigorous hand. All are in the direction of "the Advanced Reformer." The possibility of the leadership of the nation being entrusted

To the pert cap and bells of Chamberlain

is looked upon with horror. "War and Peace" is a forcible contrast of the words of a warlike Bishop, a "Man of God," and of the Soldier who with one stern word struck aside "the swords the hasty Bishop blest" (an episode in the South African War). "Nemesis"

is a sonnet on the Concentration Camps. "Ireland" concludes with the two lines :—

Peace ! "Never Peace, never," so Ireland saith,
"Till wrong is slain by England's own right arm."

A sonnet on the Education Bill is a strong protest against the renewed attack on Freedom by Priestcraft. Two consecutive sonnets are entitled "The Sons of Science" and "Christ's Method." The first might be quoted by the most ardent Anti-Vivisectionist. And the second expounds the highest form of that curious subject called "Christian Science." We cannot refrain from quoting the last six lines :—

Learn ye, whose chosen office is to heal,
That all disease is subject to the power
Of Love,—that Love is as a river sweet
Pouring with silvery ripples of appeal
Gifts pure and priceless at our foolish feet :
Health is Love's fruit and Sympathy's white flower.

These sonnets, Mr. Barlow's latest work, reveal a new and interesting side of his mind, and a new phase of his muse.

SOME LONGER POEMS

Two long poems form the greater part of Vol. VIII. They are entitled "A Lost Mother," and "The Story of the Life of Caleb Smith, the Methodist Minister, told by himself." The nature of the first disarms criticism. It is of the character of "In Memoriam," and portrays the strong bond of affection between the son and the mother, and the sense of irreparable loss. In Vol. IX. there is a short poem entitled "Kensal Green," on the same theme. It concludes with these two lines :—

So I pondered. Since I pondered, I have seen a living face arise ;
Seen a face from out death's darkness flash with still unchanged and
loving eyes.

We could have wished that the longer poem contained more of this note of consolation and triumph.

The "Caleb Smith" poem could not present a greater contrast. Many of its descriptive passages are most effective and vivid. There are those who will be disposed to think that this poem contains some of Mr. Barlow's best work as regards execution. As to the subject of the poem, its teaching and its tendency, it is a great help to be able to quote Mr. Barlow's own

words. In a prefatory note to the present edition of the poem, he says :—

“This poem—which has been much misunderstood—is simply intended as a study of the phases through which an originally religious and devoted spirit passes, who has been driven by a succession of the cruellest shocks from faith in God to pessimism, and from pessimism to sheer madness. . . . The poem is, in fact, a cry of love turned into horror, and its true moral is, Shun pessimism as you would a pestilence. Believe in God and good eternally, and fight with and for God against all that is evil and dark and impure. Greater is he that is for you than he that is against you.”

The poem occupied the chief position in a volume published in 1893 under the title “The Crucifixion of Man.” In a recent private letter the writer says : “The book was completely pessimistic. I had got quite off the track, wholly for lack of intelligent help and sympathy near me. It is a terrible book, utter starless darkness. I forgot all my previous work. . . . ‘The Crucifixion’ was written under an overwhelming sense of horror, at what looked like the failure of God’s power and goodness.”

The only other selection from that book, besides a dedication, included in the present series, are four poems at the end, one of which, “The Universe-God,” is very grandly conceived. It seems almost incredible that the same intelligent mind should have produced these two poems almost at the same time.

We fear that the intended “moral” as indicated above by Mr. Barlow himself will not be apparent to the reader. Considering his present views with regard to

it we cannot but regret its inclusion in this series of volumes. The following four lines, which occur near the end of the poem "To the Universe-God," are in fine contrast to the pessimism of "Caleb Smith" :—

Thou dost keep divinest record : not one silent sacrifice of tears
But shall see its hope accomplished, after it may be twice a
thousand years.
Time is nought, and thou art deathless—thou on whom thou
willest canst bestow
Life on life in which to blossom, endless years in which the soul
may grow.

And the last line of the poem is :—

Yet the Ruler of the star-waste hath his temple also in the soul.

This is in fine accord with the teaching of that most magnificent sermon of Archdeacon Wilberforce's, the fifth in his recently published volume of Sermons in Westminster Abbey, entitled "The Immanence of the Logos." The preacher says : "Take man in any age, hunt him back to his deepest self, and there slumbers a ray of his Creator's life, which is the Word, the Logos, what we now know as the Christ, 'the light that lighteth every man coming into the world.'" This sermon should be read as a complement to "The Story of Caleb Smith."

Several of the other longer poems demand special notice. "The Feast of Lanterns" (Vol. VIII.) is very quaint. It is in three sections—"The Lanterns," "A Voice from the Sea," "The Day After." The rising of the storm is finely portrayed :—

The storm-wind and the sea were holding there
 Majestic parley, their wild hearts were one :—
 The lightning's fiery radiance thrilled the air,
 The midnight blackness that defies the sun.

Then the desolation of the day after is graphically described, and the question is asked :—

Must soon all bright and joyous things be dead ?
 Is nought immortal save the storm and sea ?

We are glad to see that "A Coronation Poem" (Vol. X.) is included. It rises at times to a high key, representing the "great ancestral hearts" of the past being "called to-day towards spheres we traverse, drawn again to this their well-loved star." "Deep communion with their spirits England's King and Queen to-day may hold." The poem concludes with naming the "gift undreamt-of by past queens or kings" which Time brings "to this latest English Monarch."

Two poems of great dramatic power must be named together—"King Solomon" (Vol. VIII.) and "A Man's Vengeance" (Vol. X.). Both lay themselves open to criticism, although the moral teaching of both is of a high order. The sensuous side of the King's life is vividly pictured. "But now the end has come."

Then Solomon : "O Death with gaze tremendous
 What lamp shall light me when I leave the sun ?"
 And Death, with voice than thunder more stupendous :
 "All stars I extinguish, King, save only one."

* * * * *

Then Solomon : "O bitter Death, thus leaving
 The land of plenty, what food shall I take ?"
 And Death : "Thy soul will hunger not, receiving
 Each day one loaf of memory's bread to break."

* * * * *

Then Solomon : "And how long shall I tarry
 Within the darkness that man's spirit fears,
 The gloom where bodiless souls eat not nor marry
 Nor drink nor slumber ?" Death : "Three thousand years."

During these three thousand years the King is visited
 four times by spirits of women "he once had loved."

Four times a spirit he once had loved addressed him ;
 Four times that spirit forsook him as in scorn :
 Four times a spirit whose arms had once caressed him
 Left him in darkness, crying, "I love the morn !"

The descriptions of the successive visits contain some
 splendid imagery. At last light and hope and love
 entered again into the soul of the King.

Then Solomon arose.—The star receded ;
 Its task accomplished, that pale lamp might die :
 But in the East its lustre was not needed,
 For Love's majestic morning lit the sky.

"A Man's Vengeance" is of a very different character.
 A moral tragedy seemed impending, when sudden death
 removed the wife of the assumed author of the poem
 from the scene. He vowed vengeance on the man who
 had proved his false friend.

As I thought the matter over, as I turned it in my brain,
 Having nought but vengeance left me, nothing else to seek or gain,
 As it seemed a spirit whispered, "Let thy vengeance for a crime
 Monstrous, be more monstrous even ; let the struggle be sublime."

The spirit-voice urges him to visit the tomb.

So I sought the tomb at midnight . . .
 Something touched my hand and roused me—not a cold touch but
 a warm.

From the flowers my head I lifted. Lo ! beside me stood a form.

* * * * *

Then I raised my head and watched her, and she spoke at last and said :

"I am living and I love thee. Since I love thee, hate is dead.
Since I give thee all my sweetness, thine for ever, thy reward,
By this marble cross for ever leave thy vengeance and thy sword."

Then a vision came.

Yes ; the crosses stood unaltered,—nay, transfigured every one.

By each tomb a figure standing lifted heavenward sun-bright head.

I could see the mighty army in that golden glad sunrise.

They were there, the host immortal ; they were safe and they were glad.

Then comes the master-stroke of the poem.

I will carry out my vengeance, on myself the stroke shall fall.

You will find my body lying by the cross that crowns a tomb.

But suddenly the realisation comes, that life is higher,
though harder than death.

Still to hold fast to the vision ; to believe that love is near ;
Daily still to struggle onward, without rapture, without fear ;
To retain one's faith in sunset, when the sun has left the sky,
In gold blossoms in white winter,—this is harder than to die.

None the less, 'tis life that beckons. I'll renounce, if so God wills,
For the grander hope that quickens even the grand despair that kills :
Setting forth by strenuous labour, earnest words or heartfelt song,
That the highest noblest vengeance is to prove, and spare, the wrong.

These two poems seem to us to stand almost alone
in their graphic imagery and the terrible earnestness of
their purpose. They must be read in their entirety to
be appreciated. The few detached lines and stanzas

quoted above fail to give any adequate idea of their power.

“John Henry Newman and Victor Hugo” is the title of a poem in Vol. VIII., of about 150 lines, in which these two men, who were contemporaries through nearly the whole of the nineteenth century, are compared.

Two sunlike spirits arose—on each the doom
Of endless love, redemptive of their race :
And unto one the sweet morn’s light was gloom,
And one’s eyes looked the strong sun in the face.

Of Newman it is said :—

To one the light of morn was but a dream ;
His heart was with the ages past and dead :
The sunshine seemed a pale deceptive gleam,
And Freedom’s sword was soiled with ominous red.

* * * * *

True, noble of heart he was—all men loved well
Our English Newman, English to the last.
Rome tempted, tempted subtly, and he fell :
Yet from his heart the sweet love never passed.

Of Hugo we read :—

But on the other’s soul the morning gleamed.
Born at the century’s dawn, for him the night
Was as a far-off past whereof some dreamed
While he dreamed only of the golden light.

* * * * *

He saw man’s soul as man’s soul is to be ;
Upon the necks of kings and popes he trod :
Man’s serfs and thralls in love’s name he set free,
And broke man’s idols in the name of God.

Then as to the influence of these two minds on the new century :—

Some who love best the sunlight filtering through
 Stained glass shall seek with Newman shadowy fancies,
 And some with Hugo's spirit shall seek the blue
 Bright sun-kissed sea's illimitable plains.

* * * * *

Some souls shall worship where the wild wind reaps
 Its fruitless harvest from the fields of foam,
 And some where time is chained and progress sleeps
 Within the walls of immemorial Rome.

THE ARTISTIC SIDE

BEFORE we close a few words should be said on the artistic side of Mr. Barlow's work. The "Picture Gallery in the Ideal" has, it is hoped, given some idea of this. But there are numbers of most beautiful lines, stanzas, and imageries scattered in profusion through the volumes, and there is much artistic beauty of detail, not at once perceived and appreciated. For instance, "Love-Song" (Vol i. p. 162.). The twelve verses of the poem are in two sequences of six verses each. The corresponding verses in each sequence are in most beautiful accord. The rhymes are identical, and the imagery is parallel throughout. The only way fully to realise and enjoy the composition of some of the short poems is to quietly read them aloud. As an example, let "Love and Death" be thus read aloud, and the musical cadence of the lines will be very striking.

The poem which is placed as a Prelude to Vol. IX.—and which gave its title to the volume when separately published—is one that must be mentioned, both on account of its high meaning, and of the majestic style of its composition. This can only be appreciated by being heard.

The world must, in one sense, always be the poorer

in that Keats and Shelley left it at so early an age. May we not on the other hand rejoice that George Barlow has had so many years to give to his work. The most practical and abiding influence of his poetry will, we believe, be found in the aid it gives to the realisation of the truth that Life and Love, here and now, are most intimately associated with a larger Life and Love. Poetry and Music are two steps on a "Jacob's Ladder" from Earth to Heaven. The first poem in Vol. VIII., "To my Friend Arthur Hervey," is a eulogy on the power of Music, an Art "subject not to space or time." Mr. Barlow says :—

While music sounds, no barrier to our hope
Looms dark and threatening on the heavenward way,
For music gives the glad soul boundless scope
And points beyond the night to endless day.

The Christian Church through music scales the skies :
The humblest chapel built where wild waves foam
On Cornish rocks, or where Welsh mountains rise,
Through music conquers, even as mighty Rome.

And love through music conquers—when we hear
The haunting magic of some wondrous tune,
Lost loves on golden wings come glimmering near
And life's December is as passion's June.

Keats had a glimpse of heights beyond even Poetry and Music, when he wrote :—

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter.

And Shelley, after the departure of Keats, wrote :—

The soul of Adonais, like a star
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

And Paul said, so long ago—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared FOR THEM THAT LOVE HIM."

These pages commenced with a few lines from one poet of the last century. They may fitly conclude with a few lines from another :—

* * * * *

No, the Poet knows his mission,
Nature's lyre is all his own ;
He can sweep its strings prophetic
Till the nations sympathetic
Gather breathless to its tone.

For he knows the PEOPLE listen
When a mighty spirit speaks,
And that none can stir them duly
But the man that loves them truly
And from them his impulse seeks.

What they feel but cannot utter,
What they hope for, day and night—
These the words by which he fires them,
Prompts them, leads them, and inspires them
To do battle for the right.

* * * * *

CHARLES MACKAY.

A PARTIAL INDEX

THE following Partial Index of the contents of the ten volumes embraces those poems which seem to be the most representative of the different branches of Mr. Barlow's work. The poems quoted from in the preceding pages are included in these lists, and are marked with an asterisk. Although no attempt has been made to exhaust the mine in any one department, it would, we think, aid in the appreciation of Mr. Barlow's poetry if the selections in each branch were read consecutively. The effect of the series of the "spiritualism" poems thus brought together is very striking.

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