ZOLA: THE MAN AND HIS WORK

ZOLA'S name—a barbarous, explosive name, like an anarchist's bomb—has been tossed about amid hoots and yells for a quarter of a century. In every civilised country we have heard of the man who has dragged literature into the gutter, who has gone down to pick up the filth of the streets, and has put it into books for the filthy to read. And in every civilised country his books have been read by the hundred thousand, whatever judgment must be passed on the millions who have drunk of this moral sewage. But popularity failed to silence the hooting; in England, the classic land of self-righteousness, the decree went forth that this thing must be put an end to, and amid general acclamation the English publisher of such garbage was clapped into gaol. There was only a slight pause in the outcry, more a pause of stupefaction than of reconciliation, when it was known that many respected novelists in Europe and America looked up humbly to this scavenger as to a master; or again, when a metaphysician stood up in the Concord School of Philosophy and boldly classed him with Jesus and the great masters of moral irony; or once more, when the garbage-monger himself was welcomed as an honoured guest in the city which had imprisoned his publisher and prohibited his books, and when it was known that he was standing, with some hope, at the sacred portals of the French Academy.

To-day, Zola's great life-work is completed. At the same time, the uproar that it aroused has, to a large extent, fallen silent. Not that there is any general agreement as to the rank of the author of the Rougon-Macquart series; but the storms that greeted it have worn themselves out, and it is recognised that there are at least two sides to this as to other questions. Such a time is favourable to the calm discussion of Zola's precise position.

The fundamental assertion of those who, in their irreconcilable opposition to Zola, have rightly felt that abuse is not argument, has always been that Zola is no artist. The matter has usually presented itself to them as a question of Idealism *versus* Realism. Idealism, as used by the literary critic, seems to mean a careful selection of the facts of life for artistic treatment, certain facts being suited for treatment in the novel, certain other facts being not so suited; while the realist, from the literary critic's point of view, is one who flings all facts indiscriminately into his pages. I think that is a fair statement of the matter, for the literary critic does not define very clearly; still less does he ask himself how far the idealism he advocates is merely traditional, nor, usually, to what extent the manner of presentation should influence us. He does not ask himself these questions, nor need we ask him, for in the case of Zola (or, indeed, of any other so-called "realist") there is no such distinction. There is no absolute realism, merely various kinds of idealism; the only absolute realism would be a phonographic record, illustrated photographically, after the manner of Edison's kinetoscope. Zola is just as much an idealist as George Sand. It is true that he selects very largely from material things, and that he selects very profusely. But the selection remains, and where there is deliberate selection there must be art. We need not trouble ourselves here—and I doubt whether we are ever called upon to trouble ourselves—about "Realism" and "Idealism." The questions are: Has the artist selected his materials rightly? Has he selected them with due restraint?

The first question is a large one, and, in Zola's case at all events, it cannot, I think, be answered on purely æsthetic grounds; the second may be answered without difficulty. Zola has himself answered it; he admits that he has been carried away by his enthusiasm, and perhaps, also, by his extraordinary memory for recently-acquired facts (a memory like a sponge, as he has put it, quickly swollen and quickly emptied); he has sown details across his page with too profuse a hand. It is the same kind of error as Whitman made, impelled by the same kind of enthusiasm. Zola expends immense trouble to get his facts; he has told how he

ransacked the theologians to obtain body and colour for "La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret," perhaps the best of his earlier books. But he certainly spent no more preliminary labour on it than Flaubert spent on "Madame Bovary," very far less than Flaubert spent on the study of Carthage for "Salammbô." But the results are different; the one artist gets his effects by profusion and multiplicity of touches, the other by the deliberate self-restraint with which he selects and emphasises solely the salient and significant touches. The latter method seems to strike more swiftly and deeply the ends of art. Three strokes with the brush of Frans Hals are worth a thousand of Denner's. Rich and minute detail may impress us, but it irritates and wearies in the end. If a man takes his two children on to his knees, it matters little whether he places Lénore on his right knee and Henri on his left, or the other way about; the man himself may fail to know or to realise, and the more intense his feelings the less likely is he to know. When we are living deeply, the facts of our external life do not present themselves to us in elaborate detail; a very few points are focal in consciousness (to use Professor Lloyd Morgan's terminology), while the rest are marginal in subconsciousness. A few things stand out vividly at each moment of life; the rest are dim. The supreme artist is shown by the insight and boldness with which he seizes and illuminates these bright points at each stage, leaving the marginal elements in due subordination. Dramatists so unlike as Ford and Ibsen, novelists so unlike as Flaubert and Tolstoi, yet alike impress us by the simple vividness of their artistic effects. The methods adopted by Zola render such effects extremely difficult of attainment. Perhaps the best proof of Zola's remarkable art is the skill with which he has neutralised the evil effects of his ponderous method. In using the dramatic form, as in "Thérèse Raquin," the method, obviously, will not work, and Zola makes no attempt to get it to work, but is content to adopt fairly simple means to reach effects which, in their way, are certainly tremendous enough. But in his most characteristic novels, as "L'Assommoir," "Nana," "Germinal," his efforts to attain salient perspective in the mass of trivial or technical details—to build a single elaborate effect out of manifold details—are

often admirably conducted. Take, for instance, the Voreux, the coal-pit which may almost be said to be the hero of "Germinal" rather than any of the persons in the book. The details are not interesting, but they are carefully worked up, and the Voreux is finally symbolised as a stupendous idol, sated with human blood, crouching in its mysterious sanctuary. Whenever Zola wishes to bring the Voreux before us, this formula is repeated. And it is the same, in a slighter degree, with the other material personalities of the book. Sometimes, in the case of a crowd, this formula is simply a cry. It is so with the Parisian mob who yell "À Berlin!" in the highly-wrought conclusion to "Nana"; it is so with the crowd of strikers in "Germinal" who shout for bread. It is more than the tricky repetition of a word or a gesture, overdone by Dickens and others; it is the artful manipulation of a carefully-elaborated, significant phrase. Zola seems to have been the first who has, deliberately and systematically, introduced this sort of *leit-motiv* into literature as a method of summarising a complex mass of details, and bringing the impression of them before the reader. In this way he contrives to minimise the defects of his method, and to render his complex detail focal. He sometimes attains poignantly simple effects by the mere repetition of a *leit-motiv* at the right moment. And he is able at times, also, to throw aside his detailed method altogether, and to reach effects of tragic intensity. The mutilation of Maigrat's corpse is a scene which can scarcely have been described in a novel before. Given the subject, Zola's treatment of it has the strength, brevity, and certainty of touch which only belong to great masters of art. That Zola is a great master of his art, "L'Assommoir" and "Germinal"—which, so far as I have read Zola, seem his two finest works—are enough to prove. Such works are related to the ordinary novel much as Wagner's music-dramas are related to the ordinary Italian opera. Wagner reaches a loftier height of art than Zola; he had a more complete grasp of all the elements he took in hand to unite. Zola has not seen with sufficient clearness the point of view of science, and its capacity for harmonising with fiction; nor has he, with perfect sureness of vision, always realised the ends of art. He has left far too much of the scaffolding standing amid his huge literary structures; there is

too much mere brute fact which has not been wrought into art. But, if Zola is not among the world's greatest artists, I do not think we can finally deny that he is a great artist.

To look at Zola from the purely artistic standpoint, however, is scarcely to see him at all. His significance for the world generally, and even for literature, lies less in a certain method of using his material—as it may be said to lie, for example, in the case of the Goncourts—than in the material itself, and the impulses and ideas that prompted his selection of that material. These growing piles of large books are the volcanic ejecta of an original and exuberant temperament. To understand them we must investigate this temperament.

A considerable and confused amount of racial energy was stored up in Zola. At once French, Italian and Greek—with a mother from the central Beauce country of France, more fruitful in corn than in intellect, and a father of mixed foreign race, a mechanical genius in his way, with enthusiastic energies and large schemes—he presents a curious combination of potential forces, perhaps not altogether a very promising combination. One notes that the mechanical engineer in the father seems to have persisted in the son, not necessarily by heredity, but perhaps by early familiarity and association. Young Zola was by no means a brilliant schoolboy, though he once won a prize for memory; such ability as he showed was in the direction of science; he had no literary aptitudes. He seems to have adopted literature chiefly because pen and ink come handiest to the eager energies of a poor clerk. It is scarcely fanciful to detect the mechanical aptitudes still. Just as all Huxley's natural instincts were towards mechanics, and in physiology he always sought for the "go" of the organism, so Zola, however imperfect his scientific equipment may be, has always sought for the "go" of the social organism. The history of the Rougon-Macquart family is a study in social mathematics: given certain family strains, what is the dynamic hereditary outcome of their contact?

To the making of Zola there went, therefore, this curious racial blend, as a soil ready to be fertilised by any new seed, and a certain almost instinctive tendency to look at things from the mechanical and material point

of view. To these, in very early life, a third factor was added of the first importance. During long years after his father's death, Zola, as a child and youth, suffered from poverty, poverty almost amounting to actual starvation, the terrible poverty of respectability. The whole temper of his work and his outlook on the world are clearly conditioned by this prolonged starvation of adolescence. The timid and reserved youth—for such, it is said, has been Zola's character both in youth and manhood—was shut up with his fresh energies in a garret while the panorama of the Paris world was unfolded below him. Forced by circumstances or by temperament to practise the strictest chastity and sobriety, there was but one indulgence left open to him, an orgy of vision. Of this, as we read his books, we cannot doubt that he fully availed himself, for each volume of the Rougon-Macquart series is an orgy of material vision.*

Zola is still said to be chaste, and he is still sober—though we are told that his melancholy morose face lights up like a gourmet's at dinner-time—but this early eagerness to absorb the sights as well as the sounds, and one may add the smells, of the external world, has at length become moulded into a routine method. To take some corner of life, and to catalogue every detail of it, to place a living person in it, and to describe every sight and smell and sound around him, although he himself may be quite unconscious of them—that, in the simplest form, is the recipe for making a *roman expérimental*. The method, I wish to insist, was rooted in the author's experience of the world. Life only came to him as the sights, sounds, smells, that reached his garret window. His soul seems to have been starved at the centre, and to have encamped at the sensory periphery. He never tasted deep of life, he

* "Mes souvenirs," he told a psychological interviewer, "ont une puissance, un relief extraordinaire; ma mémoire est énorme, prodigieuse, elle me gêne; quand j'évoque les objets que j'ai vus, je les revois tels qu'ils sont réellement avec leurs lignes, leurs formes, leurs couleurs, leurs odeurs, leurs sons; *c'est une matérialisation à outrance;* le soleil qui les éclairait m'éblouit presque; l'odeur me suffoque, les détails s'accrochent à moi et m'empêchent de voir l'ensemble. Aussi pour le ressaisir me faut il attendre un certain temps. Cette possibilité d'évocation ne dure pas très longtemps; le relief de l'image est d'une exactitude, d'une intensité inouïes, puis l'image s'efface, disparaît, cela s'en va." This description suggests myopia, and it is a fact that Zola has been short-sighted from youth; he first realised it at nineteen. His other senses, especially smell, are very keen.

stored up none of those wells of purely personal emotion from which great artists have hoisted up the precious fluid which makes the bright, living blood of their creations. How different he is in this respect from the other great novelist of our day, who has also been a volcanic force of world-wide significance! Tolstoi comes before us as a man who has himself lived deeply, a man who has had an intense thirst for life, and who has satisfied that thirst. He has craved to know life, to know women, the joy of wine, the fury of battle, the taste of the ploughman's sweat in the field. He has known all these things, not as material to make books, but as the slaking of instinctive personal passions. And in knowing them he has stored up a wealth of experience from which he drew as he came to make books, and which bear about them that peculiar haunting fragrance only yielded by the things which have been lived through, personally, in the far past. Zola's method has been quite otherwise: when he wished to describe a great house he sat outside the palatial residence of M. Menier, the chocolate manufacturer, and imagined for himself the luxurious fittings inside, discovering in after years that his description had come far short of the reality; before writing "Nana," he obtained an introduction to a courtesan, with whom he was privileged to lunch; his laborious preparation for the wonderful account of the war of 1870, in "La Débâcle," was purely one of books, documents, and second-hand experiences; when he wished to write of labour he went to the mines and to the fields, but never appears to have done a day's manual work. Zola's literary methods are those of the *parvenu* who has tried to thrust himself in from outside, who has never been seated at the table of life, who has never really lived. That is their weakness. It is also their virtue. There is no sense of satiety in Zola's work as there is in Tolstoi's. One can understand how it is that, although their methods are so unlike, Tolstoi himself regards Zola as the one French novelist of the day who is really alive. The starved lad, whose eyes were concentrated with longing on the visible world, has reaped a certain reward from his intellectual chastity; he has preserved his clearness of vision for material things, an eager, insatiable, impartial vision. He is a zealot in his devotion to life, to the smallest details of life. He has

fought like the doughtiest knight of old-world romance for his lady's honour, and has suffered more contumely than they all. "On barde de fer nos urinoirs!" he shouts in a fury of indignation in one of his essays; it is a curious instance of the fanatic's austere determination that no barrier shall be set up to shut out the sights and smells of the external world. The virgin freshness of his thirst for life gives its swelling, youthful vigour to his work, its irrepressible energy.

It has, indeed, happened with this unsatisfied energy as it will happen with such energies; it has retained its robustness at the sacrifice of the sweetness it might otherwise have gained. There is a certain bitterness in Zola's fury of vision, as there is also in his gospel of "Work! work! work!" One is conscious of a savage assault on a citadel which, the assailant now well knows, can never be scaled. Life cannot be reached by the senses alone; there is always something that cannot be caught by the utmost tension of eyes and ears and nose; a well-balanced soul is built up, not alone on sensory memories, but also on the harmonious satisfaction of the motor and emotional energies. That cardinal fact must be faced even when we are attempting to define the fruitful and positive element in Zola's activity.

The chief service which Zola has rendered to his fellow artists and successors, the reason of the immense stimulus he supplies, seems to lie in the proofs he has brought of the latent artistic uses of the rough, neglected details of life. The Rougon-Macquart series has been to his weaker brethren like that great sheet knit at the four corners, let down from Heaven full of four-footed beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air, and bearing in it the demonstration that to the artist as to the moralist nothing can be called common or unclean. It has henceforth become possible for other novelists to find inspiration where before they could never have turned, to touch life with a vigour and audacity of phrase which, without Zola's example, they would have trembled to use, while they still remain free to bring to their work the simplicity, precision, and inner experience which he has never possessed. Zola has enlarged the field of the novel. He has brought the modern material world into fiction in a more definite and thorough manner than it

has ever been brought before, just as Richardson brought the modern emotional world into fiction; such an achievement necessarily marks an epoch. In spite of all his blunders, Zola has given the novel new power and directness, a vigour of fibre which was hard indeed to attain, but which, once attained, we may chasten as we will. And in doing this he has put out of court, perhaps for ever, those unwholesome devotees of the novelist's art who, worked out of their vacuity, have neither inner nor outer world to tell of.

Zola's delight in exuberant detail, it is true, is open to severe criticism. When, however, we look at his work, not as a great art but as an important moment in the evolution of the novel, this exuberance is amply justified. Such furious energy in hammering home this demonstration of the artistic utility of the whole visible modern world may detract from the demonstrator's reputation for skill; it has certainly added to the force of the demonstration. Zola's luxuriance of detail has extended impartially to every aspect of life he has investigated, to the working of a mine, to the vegetation of the Paradou, to the ritual of the Catholic Church. But it is not on the details of inanimate life, or the elaborate description of the industrial and religious functions of men, that the rage of Zola's adversaries has chiefly been spent. It is rather on his use of the language of the common people and on his descriptions of the sexual and digestive functions of humanity. Zola has used slang—the *argot* of the populace—copiously, chiefly indeed in "L'Assommoir" which is professedly a study of low life, but to a less extent in his other books. A considerable part of the power of "L'Assommoir," in many respects Zola's most perfect work, lies in the skill with which he uses the language of the people he is dealing with; the reader is bathed throughout in an atmosphere of picturesque, vigorous, often coarse *argot*. There is, no doubt, a lack of critical sobriety in the profusion and reiteration of vulgarisms, of coarse oaths, of the varied common synonyms for common things. But they achieve the end that Zola sought, and so justify themselves.

They are of even greater interest as a protest against the exaggerated purism which has ruled the French language for nearly three centuries, and while rendering it a more delicate and precise instrument for scientific purposes, has caused it to become rather bloodless and colourless for the

artist's purposes, as compared with the speech used by Rabelais, Montaigne, and even Molière, the great classics who have chiefly influenced Zola. The romantic movement of the present century, it is true, added colour to the language, but scarcely blood; it was an exotic, feverish colour which has not permanently enriched French speech. A language rendered anæmic by over-clarification cannot be fed by exotic luxuries but by an increase in the vigorous staples of speech, and Zola was on the right track when he went to the people's common speech, which is often classic in the true sense and always robust. Doubtless he has been indiscriminate and even inaccurate in his use of *argot*, sometimes giving undue place to what is of merely temporary growth. But the main thing was to give literary place and prestige to words and phrases which had fallen so low in general estimate, in spite of their admirable expressiveness, that only a writer of the first rank and of unequalled audacity could venture to lift them from the mire. This Zola has done; and those who follow him may easily exercise the judgment and discretion in which he has been lacking.

Zola's treatment of the sexual and the digestive functions, as I pointed out, has chiefly aroused his critics. If you think of it, these two functions are precisely the central functions of life, the two poles of hunger and love around which the world revolves. It is natural that it should be precisely these fundamental aspects of life which in the superficial contact of ordinary social intercourse we are for ever trying more and more to refine away and ignore. They are subjected to an ever-encroaching process of attenuation and circumlocution, and as a social tendency this influence is possibly harmless or even beneficial. But it is constantly extending to literature also, and here it is disastrous. It is true that a few great authors—classics of the first rank—have gone to extremes in their resistance to this tendency. These extremes are of two kinds: the first issuing in a sort of coprolalia, or inclination to dwell on excrement, which we find to a slight extent in Rabelais and to a marked extent in the half-mad Swift; in its fully-developed shape this coprolalia is an uncontrollable instinct found in some forms of insanity. The other extreme is that of pruriency, or the perpetual itch to circle round sexual matters, accompanied by a timidity

which makes it impossible to come right up to them; this sort of impotent fumbling in women's placket-holes finds its supreme literary exponent in Sterne. Like coprolalia, when uncontrolled, prurience is a well-recognised characteristic of the insane, leading them to find a vague eroticism everywhere. But both these extreme tendencies have not been found incompatible with the highest literary art. And, moreover, their most pronounced exponents have been clerics, the conventional representatives of the Almighty. However far Zola might go in these directions, he would still be in what is universally recognised as very good company. He has in these respects by no means come up with Father Rabelais and Dean Swift and the Rev. Laurence Sterne; but there can be little doubt that, along both lines, he has gone farther than a perfectly well-balanced artist would go. On the one hand he over-emphasises what is repulsive in the nutritive side of life, and on the other hand, with the timid obsession of chastity, he over-emphasises the nakedness of flesh. In so doing, he has revealed a certain flabbiness in his art, although he has by no means diminished his service in widening the horizon of literary speech and subject. Bearing in mind that many crowned kings of literature have approached these subjects quite as closely as Zola, and far less seriously, it does not seem necessary to enter any severer judgment here.

To enlarge the sphere of language is an unthankful task, but in the long run literature owes an immense debt to the writers who courageously add to the stock of strong and simple words. Our own literature during the last two centuries has been terribly hampered by the social tendency of life to slur expression, and to paraphrase or suppress all forceful and poignant words. If we go back to Chaucer, or even to Shakespeare, we realise what power of expression we have lost. It is enough, indeed, to turn to our English Bible. The literary power of the English Bible is largely due to the unconscious instinct for style which happened to be in the air when it was chiefly moulded, to the simple, direct, unashamed vigour of its speech. If some of the stories of the Old Testament were presented to us under some trifling disguise on week-days we should declare that they were filthier than the filthiest things in Zola; and, certainly, if the discovery

of the Bible had been left for us to make, any English translation would have to be issued at a high price by some esoteric society for fear lest it should fall into the hands of the British matron. It is our British love of compromise, we say, that makes it possible for a spade to be called a spade on one day of the week, but on no other; our neighbours, whose minds are more logically constituted, call it *le cant Britannique*. But our mental compartments remain very water-tight, and on the whole we are even worse off than the French who have no Bible. For instance, we have almost lost the indispensable words "belly" and "bowels," both used so often and with such admirable effect in the Psalms; we talk of the "stomach," a word which is not only an incorrect equivalent, but at best totally inapt for serious or poetic uses. Anyone who is acquainted with our old literature, or with the familiar speech of the common folk, will recall numberless similar instances of simple, powerful expressions which are lost or vanishing from literary language, leaving no available substitute behind. In modern literary language, indeed, man scarcely exists save in his extremities. For we take the pubes as a centre, and we thence describe a circle with a radius of some eighteen inches—in America the radius is rather longer—and we forbid any reference to any organ within that circle, save that maid-of-all-work the "stomach"; in other words, we make it impossible to say anything to the point concerning the central functions of life. It is a question how far any real vital literature can be produced under such conditions.

In considering Zola, we are constantly brought back to the fact that most of the things that he has tried to do have been better done by more accomplished artists. The Goncourts have extended the sphere of language even in the direction of slang, and have faced many of the matters that Zola has faced, and with far more delicate, though usually more shadowy, art; Balzac has created as large and vivid a world of people, though drawing more of it from his own imagination; Huysmans has greater skill in stamping the vision of strange or sordid things on the brain; Tolstoi gives a deeper realisation of life; Flaubert is as audaciously naturalistic, and has, as well, that perfect self-control which should always accompany audacity. And in Flaubert, too, we find something of the same irony as in Zola.

This irony, however, is a personal and characteristic feature of Zola's work. It is irony alone which gives it distinction and poignant incisiveness. Irony may be called the soul of Zola's work, the embodiment of his moral attitude towards life. It has its source, doubtless, like so much else that is characteristic, in his early days of poverty and aloofness from the experiences of life. There is a fierce impartiality—the impartiality of one who is outside and shut off—in this manner of presenting the brutalities and egoisms and pettinesses of men. The fury of his irony is here equalled by his self-restraint. He concentrates it into a word, a smile, a gesture. Zola believes, undoubtedly, in a reformed, even perhaps a revolutionised, future of society, but he has no illusions. He sets down things as he sees them. He has no tendernesses for the working-classes, no pictures of rough diamonds. We may see this very clearly in "Germinal." Here every side of the problem of modern capitalism is presented: the gentle-natured shareholding class unable to realise a state of society in which people should not live on dividends and give charity; the official class with their correct authoritative views, very sure that they will always be needed to control labour and maintain social order; and the workers, some brutalised, some suffering like dumb beasts, some cringing to the bosses, some rebelling madly, a few striving blindly for justice.

There is no loophole in Zola's impartiality; the gradual development of the seeming hero of "Germinal," Étienne Lantier, the agitator, honest in his revolt against oppression, but with an unconscious bourgeois ideal at his heart, seems unerringly right. All are the victims of an evil social system, as Zola sees the world, the enslaved workers as much as the overfed masters; the only logical outcome is a clean sweep—the burning up of the chaff and straw, the fresh furrowing of the earth, the new spring of a sweet and vigorous race. That is the logical outcome of Zola's attitude, the attitude of an optimist, or at all events a meliorist, who regards our present society as a thoroughly vicious circle. His pity for men and women is boundless; his disdain is equally boundless. It is only towards animals that his tenderness is untouched by contempt; some of his most memorable passages are concerned with the sufferings of animals. The New Jerusalem may be fitted

up, but the Montsou miners will never reach it; they will fight for the first small, stuffy, middle-class villa they meet on the way. And Zola pours out the stream of his pitiful, pitiless irony on the weak, helpless, erring children of men. It is this moral energy, combined with his volcanic exuberance, which lifts him to a position of influence above the greater artists with whom we may compare him.

It is by no means probable that the world will continue to read Zola much longer. His work is already done; but when the nineteenth century is well past it may be that he will still have his interest. There will be plenty of material, especially in the newspapers, for the future historian to reconstruct the social life of the latter half of the nineteenth century. But the material is so vast that these historians will possibly be even more biassed and one-sided than our own. For a vivid, impartial picture—on the whole a faithful picture—of certain of the most characteristic aspects of this period, seen indeed from the outside, but drawn by a contemporary in all its intimate and even repulsive details, the reader of a future age can best go to Zola. What would we not give for a thirteenth century Zola! We should read with painful, absorbed interest a narrative of the Black Death as exact as that of nineteenth century alcoholism in "L'Assommoir." The story of how the serf lived, as fully told as in "La Terre," would be of incomparable value. The early merchant and usurer would be a less dim figure if "L'Argent" had been written about him. The abbeys and churches of those days have in part come down to us, but no "Germinal" remains to tell of the lives and thoughts of the men who hewed those stones, and piled them, and carved them. How precious such record would have been we may realise when we recall the incomparable charm of Chaucer's prologue to "The Canterbury Tales." But our children's children, with the same passions alive at their hearts under incalculably different circumstances, will in the pages of the Rougon-Macquart series find themselves back again among all the strange, remote details of a vanished world. What a fantastic and terrible page of old-world romance!

HAVELOCK ELLIS.