"THE PSYCHOLOGY OF GEORGE MEREDITH'S STYLE"

A THESIS

BY

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF GEORGE MEREDITH'S STYLE.

Style in literature has been recognized, through years of investigation and discussion, as an empirical reality, consisting of numerous clearly defined elements. Within the last century many profound thinkers and forceful writers have given great attention to this fascinating subject; the results are numberless essays on style, whose main distinctions rest upon the authors' sense of the relative importance of those elements. De Quincey writes of style particularly in the light of science and history; Flaubert sees in style but perfect accuracy in expression; Spencer finds the chief element of style in the "economy of the reader's attention." Lewes analyzes style metaphysically, Stevenson considers it aesthetically, Harrison discusses it practically. Newman, Pater, and others find the importance of style in its individual and ethical phase,—in Pater's words, "the writer's personal sense of fact." It is this personal element, in the view of these critics, which distinguishes literature from science and lifts it into the realm of art. Their contention is sound, their arguments are good, their conclusion is acceptable and tenable. Moreover, it is a matter of common experience with those who read that, as a man writes, so is he. In any work of literary value the reader soon becomes conscious of the writer's sincerity or his artificiality, his sympathy or his indifference, his keenness of vision or his want of it. This knowledge proceeds not so much from the facts presented, especially in imaginative writing, as from the
authors "personal sense of the facts", his feeling in regard to those facts, and his expression of that sense and feeling. The reader perceives that Carlyle's style is highly original, extremely abrupt, clear and vigorous; he conceives Carlyle to be a man of supreme independence, decided convictions, a man imbued with sincerity and power. This conception is entirely verified by biographical facts. "Stylus arguit virum".

The Dean of English letters at the present time, and a noble representative of the brilliant Victorian Age, is George Meredith, the poet and novelist who recently completed his eightieth year. As a poet he is little known, despite the real value of his volumes of verse and the merited praise of no lesser men than Stevenson, Swinburne and James Thomson. As a writer of imaginative prose he is just now beginning to receive the recognition which is due to him and to his work. Popularity will never be his in the future, as it has never been his in the past. With the possible exception of one or two short stories he has never written for the "multitude", nor has he followed the so-called "popular" fashion of novel writing. He has made his own literary pathway and, with scant sympathy or encourage, he has kept to it unswervingly. Those for whom he wrote,—and they must ever be few,—are coming to know him, and with the knowledge comes appreciation.

The reviewers and critics, upon the publication of his separate books, were, for the most part, hostile in the extreme; yet the most favorable criticism far outweighed the body of adverse comment, for it came from the pens of Charles Kingsley, Robert Louis Stevenson, Thomas Carlyle, and George Eliot. The world has learned that critics are not the final authority on
the worth of a man's work.

However, it was in America, where liberal education is practical and extensive, where reform is spontaneous and intelligent, that Meredith first found an appreciative audience of any size, and the fact is greatly to the credit of Americans. The English are far too conservative in thought and feeling to sympathise readily with such work as his. Within the last few years a number of books of criticism on Meredith's work as a whole have appeared, and many of them have contained a few meager facts concerning his life. But the writers have been so absorbed in the meaning of his work and the marvels of his style that the personal qualities of England's greatest living novelist have been almost wholly neglected. For Meredith's style is generally conceded to be more subtle and abstruse, more complex and intricate than that of any other modern writer. These facts, then, give us assurance of a most interesting mind and personality, well worthy of careful study through the products of his literary genius.

In such an investigation as we propose there are two methods of arriving at satisfactory results: the more obvious way is to gather up the wisps of personal thought and feeling as they are found, either directly or indirectly expressed, in any literary work; the more subtle way, and probably the surer way, is to study the author's style,—his peculiar manner of expressing that thought and feeling. Clearly the latter is the better way when qualities of thinking are sought in addition to personal characteristics. Therefore we choose this method for the present investigation, assured that in Meredith's
work we shall find a fruitful, still unbroken field for the 
study of psychology in literary style.

With all the voluminous discussions of style from the 
pens of learned men, there has never yet appeared an adequate 
expression of the idea contained in that concept. Working defi-
nitions we have in numbers--they are necessary to the rhetori-
cian. The difficulty arises from the fact that style, in its 
broader sense is as elusive in character and as bewildering in 
variety as the mind and soul of man. Symonds makes this com-
prehensive statement: "Style is a two-fold phenomenon, involv-
ing both the genius of nations exemplified in language and 
the genius of individuals who use the language". A rhetorician 
says, specifically and concisely, "Style is the expression of 
the qualities of thought in language".-Spencer's essay, "Philos-
ophy of Style", in a sentence. In Sherman's "Analytics of Lit-
erature", the author's statement is as follows: "Style, then, 
in the proper sense, is any one element or manifestation by 
which the mind potentially interprets an idealizes individuality".

In the following study style shall be considered rather as all 
such elements or manifestations, and we shall hope by means of 
them to interpret the individuality of Meredith. Since we shall 
study him particularly as a novelist, style shall be used both 
in the more specific sense as "expression" of thought, and in its 
larger aspect as "treatment" of subjects and characters.

Originality and Independence.

The attentive reader of any volume of Meredith's work 
very soon becomes aware of an absolute independence in regard 
to both thought and expression. He feels at once a force of 
an originality which shuns at all times the "malady of sameness,
our modern malady". He discerns a spontaneity that seems to disregard all possible inequality between the mental vigor of the author and that of the reader. The first indications of these characteristics are found in Meredith's vocabulary. He once wrote: "Our language is not rich in the subtleties of prose. A writer who is not servile and has insight must coin from his own mint". So far is Meredith from servility that in his independence and self-reliance he is equal to his famous contemporary, Carlyle; his insight, as we shall see, is incomparable. Hence, as often as he is unable to find a word for a particular shade of meaning, he "coins from his own mint"; the pages of his works are rich in this coinage. In "Diana of the Crossways" (221) is the word "Twi-thought", meaning almost "double" or "two-fold" thought, but not exactly either. "Am I worse than other women?" was a piercing twi-thought. Worse, would be hideous isolation. The not worse, abased her sex." Clearly a new word was needed and so it was coined. In the same book (228) a popular poet is called "a versicler"; in "Ricard Feverel" (394) we read "She must see the trahison with her eyes", referring to Richard's entanglement, but only a Latin student could guess at the meaning of the new word. Frequently we meet with such expressive coinage as "wearifulness", and "songfulness". General Ople, during the days of his torment at the hands of Lady Camper, becomes careless of his personal appearance, indifferent to the "laws of buttonment". Sometimes Meredith is in need of an adverb; since "ly" transforms an adjective into an adverb, in "Harry Richmand" (165) Roy Richmond makes the leap from the bronze horse "difficultly". This tendency to coin words so
freely leads us to a noticeable element of Meredith's originality, - his wilfulness, even perversity, which is illustrated nowhere more strikingly than in "Richard Feverel" (137) "his hugeousness seemed to increase the instant he shut his eyes". Most of his coinage is apt and forceful, sometimes it is strained and ineffectual, but all of it is peculiarly his own.

Moreover, he never hesitates to use ordinary words in unusual places or to use them figuratively so that they seem to have entirely new meanings. All the women of his novels who are graceful and buoyant invariably "swim" instead of walking. At Richard's and Lucy's first meeting, "the sweet heavenbird shivered out his song", and indeed the verb is peculiarly expressive of the trilling notes of the lark. Diana was deeply moved by the story of Redworth's silent love and "her dark eyes showered "; the verb in this unusual connotation readily conveys the sense of the tenderness of Diana's emotion. On the first page of "Rhoda Fleming" is a detailed description of Queen Ann's farm-house, up whose sides the ivy grew, "tepping the roof in triumphant lumps". The last noun is an instance of a homely word of humble origin in an exalted place, invested with a rugged expressiveness characteristic of the writer.

In the matter of phrasing, as well as in his choice of words, Meredith usually avoids the conventional; his readers look in vain for a stereotyped phrase or a common place sentence. He often refers, humorously to the affected phraseology of the earlier novelists; in "The Egiast" (200) Willoughby fancies seeing Clara in old age, "'enshrined in memory, a divine recollection' to him, as his popular romances would say, and have said for years." One of the greatest in reading Meredith
is this constant surprise in the manner of expressing the simplest of thoughts. In "The Egoist", after the breaking of the vase, "Horace de Craye" crowed cordially", instead of "laughing heartily" at Clara's sarcasm. In "Harry Richmond" when he wishes to describe and confusion of fancies and emotions, he says, "It all tossed the mind in my head like hay on a pitchfork."

Thus the well-trodden road of trite expression, over which the reader is wont to hasten with the merest effort of thought, is entirely missing; a newly broken path is offered, and he must think his way through, even to a common-place idea. In "Evan Harrington" we read of "the little happy stream," "the weary deep breath;" in "The Tragic Comedians" of "the young fresh morning." In "Diana of the Crossways" (39) is this sentence: "The rain it rained, and hats were formless." The "egoist" had confessed to his betrothed that he possessed one characteristic a little less noble than the others. "'It must be pride,' he said, in a reverie superinduced by her thoughtfulness over the revelation, and glorying in the black flames demoniacal wherewith he crowned himself". Could any other phrasing reveal so clearly and so forcibly the innate artificiality of Sir Willoughby?

Again, in "The Egoist", the bachelor is describing, in twenty sparkling lines, how wedded life appears to him. "As soon as possible she's away to the ladies and he puts on his club". The phrasing of the latter thought is Meredith's own, and a more effective one would be difficult to find. The forcefulness to be gained by the constant use of such unusual expression can be appreciated only by reading such a book as "The Egoist" or "Diana of the Crossways".

To these peculiarities of style are partially due the
frequent accusations of obscurity and lack of polish; another reason for the latter charge may be found in the occasional carelessly constructed sentences. As a rule the sentences are short and remarkably clear; when a sentence prolonged the author is prone to display little care in its structure. Meredith is truly indifferent toward his "audience"; it would seem that he wrote his sentences as they occurred to him, and the readers might get the meaning as they could. It is this occasional tendency which adds to the elements of originality and independence. The following sentence, from "The Tragic Comedians" affords excellent evidence of this apparent indifference: "With the usual dose for such a patient of cajoleries and threats, the general begged her to comply, pulling the hands he squeezed in a way to strongly emphasize his affectionate entreaty." Yet the sentence as a whole is not a weak one. "Richard Feverel" (419) contains this sentence: "Choking she said to him, 'Read this,' and thrust a leather bound pocket-book trembling in his hand." Here are two words suspiciously resembling a dislocated participle and an erring preposition. His conditional sentences are often phrased after the peculiar fashion of this sentence from "Rhoda Fleming" (11) : "The passions, do but watch them, are all more or less intermittent." Sometimes a sentence contains one or more parentheses, often in themselves involved, or the author indulges in anacoluthon, so that it requires more than one careful reading before the meaning is quite clear. An example is found in "Diana of the Crossways" (123), a sentence of eight and one-half lines, very loosely constructed. In "Rhoda Fleming" (246) are two sentences in succession having a tendency to obscurity because of these faults. "The value of the letter lies
in the exhibition it presents of a rather markworthy young man, who has passed through the hands of a --(what I must call her; and in doing so, I ask pardon of all the Jack Cades of Letters, who in the absense of a grammatical king and a government, sit as lords upon the English tongue) a crucible-woman. She may be inexcusable herself; but you - for you to be base, for you to be cowardly, even to betray a weakness, though it be on her behalf, - though you can plead that all you have done is for her, yea, was partly instigated by her, --it will cause her to dismiss you with the inexorable contempt of Nature, when she has tried one of her creatures and found him wanting."

Other elements which indicate his independence and indifference to criticism are his frequent use of conversational idioms and colloquialisms instead of "book-language" and his occasional lapses in syntax. For instance, an embrace is usually a "hug" or "squeeze", if not a matter of mere form. In "Richard Feverel" (395) we read, "A-hm!" went the Honorable Peter," and the verb is used with that colloquial meaning in many places.

Moreover Meredith's solecisms, though few, are gross enough to bring a groan from the most indifferent grammarian. In "Harry Richmond", one of his earlier novels, we find within a few pages these two sentences, one spoken by a character who, with this exception, uses excellent English, the second spoken by the author: "You are younger than me", "Only one, a girl about a year older than me refused to eat or drink." On another page of the same book is the sentence, "The cheese tasted excellently." He invariably uses the nominative case after the preposition "but," as in "Diana of the Crossways" (93), "Who but I?" In the matter
of prepositions, too, Meredith manifest his independence, frequently using "in" where usage requires "into", as: "A light was thrust in the tent." Again he exhibits his perversity in occasional hypallage, or change of grammatical construction, as in "Harry Richmand," when he writes, "My father bowed her and smiled her."

Of all the elements of originality in Meredith's work there are none so wonderful and so impressive as the great number and brilliancy of his epigrams, the profusion and effectiveness of his tropes and figures of speech. It is here that his independence of thought and expression is supreme. He is a "maker of phrases," even "an artist in phrases." Opening various volumes at random, we find, in "The Egoist", referring to a handsome face lacking intelligence, "a nothing picked by the vultures and bleached by the desert;" in "Diana of the Crossways," "Gossip is a beast of prey that does not wait for the death of the creature it devours," and, "A witty woman is a treasure; a witty Beaty is a power;" in "Evan Harrington," "Rare as an epic song is the man who is thorough in what he does;" in "Richard Feverel", "Culture is half-way to heaven." The thoughts are not new; as he phrases it, "Our new thoughts have thrilled dead bosoms;" but the spirit and style are always refreshingly novel. As for figures of speech, every page overflows with them. Sometimes they are apt and striking; often subtle and thought-inducing. Usually they are peculiarly effective, but sometimes we find them laborious and forced. Always they are his own. Simile and metaphor, synecdoche and personification, irony and innuendo, all of them sparkle through his verses and chapters. His similes and metaphors are the most remarkably original as
well as the most frequent of his figures; the reader will remember many of them long after the stories are forgotten. In "Diana of the Crossways", within a few pages we find these two novel metaphors: "A little mouse of a thought scampere out of one of the chambers of his head and darted along the passages, fetching a sweat to his brows"; "the doors of her understanding swung wide to the entry of a great wonderment". In "The Egoist", when Clara is hesitating between two plans of action, he perceives, "a feminine shuttle of indecision at work in her head". In respect to positive uniqueness, it is doubtful if the following sentences, also from "The Egoist", have a parallel outside of Meredith's novels: "He found the man he sought there", [himsel in Laetitia's eyes], "Squeezed him passionately and let her go"; and, "the being dragged around the walls of his egoism and having her head knocked against the corners alarmed her with sensations of sickness". In "Rhoda Fleming", Robert, who has been wounded, tries in vain to get upon his feet, "patient as an insect imprisoned in a circle". Not one of the long-used, well-worn standards of patience is more true to the mark than this, after it has been thought out. In "Richard Feverel", instead of a long elaborated description of the coming of darkness, he writes simply, "The pale eye of twilight was shut, and you are immediately in sympathy with Richard's tender mood. Merely the figures of speech gathered from one volume would be overwhelming evidence of the author's wonderful versatility and resourcefulness. In the qualities of Meredith's style that have been considered, then,- his coinage of new words and the unusual use of old words, his unconventional phrasing and sentence-structure, his amazing power in figure and epigram,- we perceive a man of
extraordinary independence and established convictions, a writer highly endowed with wisdom, knowledge, and insight.

Realism and Idealism

These stylistic elements which we have just illustrated bear witness to Meredith's unusual originality of thought and to a spontaneity arising, it would seem, from an excess of intellectuality; sometimes, even to a supreme self-confidence which, however, never degenerates into egotism. More than this, they indicate a spirit of naturalism, a sort of philosophic realism, which is confirmed by his treatment of subjects and characters. Whatever is, is of intrinsic worth to Meredith. All phases of our social life, every important detail in the physical as well as the spiritual life, are treated by him with delicate frankness and sincerity. For he holds the "grossly material" as sacred, because of its close kinship with the spiritual in the scheme of the world. "Our souls are hideously subject to the conditions of our animal nature".

For the most part his men and women are not ideal types, the conventional heroes and heroines, vixens and villains; usually they are human beings, endowed with peculiar mental and moral traits, living their lives and working out their destinies according to those characteristics. Not one is entirely or hopelessly bad, and the best has his human faults and weaknesses.

Even the uncouth Tom Bakewell, in "Richard Feverel" (45) is found to be something more than a coarse rustic lout. "There lay Tom; hobnail Tom! a bacon-munching, reckless, beer-swilling animal! and yet a man; a dear brave human heart notwithstanding; capable of devotion and unselfishness". In "Rhoda Fleming" our
sympathetic interest is centered, not in Rhoda with her Puritanical severity and her want of insight and judgment, but in her erring sister, Dahlia, whose innate purity and terrible suffering largely stem for her lack of moral strength. And Robert, who, by all the canons of romance-writing, should be the hero without rival, is forced to share the role with that interesting combination of strength and weakness, Edward Blanchard, "the hero and villain". Every character is intensely human and each, by his own acts or lack of active force, evolves a plausible destiny. They establish their creator's belief, that "the Fates that mould us, always work from the mainspring". Inborn instincts and inherited characteristics count for much, but the power of the human will counts for vastly more, in Meredith's philosophy. No other novelist, perhaps, shows so marked a respect for the individual and for the will, "the mainspring" of his character. Like Beowulf, he has all confidence that" Fate aids the undoomed man, if his courage holds out". With Meredith, courage is the chiefest of the virtues. Action is to him the source of man's destiny and of his immortality. "Our deathlessness is in what we do, not in what we are". Thus Meredith can conceive no passive goodness. The truly good man must develop all his powers by using them and must make the most of his physical life as well as of the intellectual and spiritual faculties.

Intermingled with this obvious realism, this appreciation of "Reality's infinite sweetness", there is a strongly marked vein of idealism. This is distinctly perceptible in his treatment of nature and of many of his characters. Of nature he says, in "Richard Feverel" (173):"Nature is not all dust, but a living portion of the spheres. In aspiration it is our error to despise her, forgetting that through Nature only can we ascend."
Cherished, trained, and purified, she is then partly worthy of the divine mate who is to make her wholly so. St. Simeon saw the Hog in Nature, and took Nature for the Hog. Meredith's descriptions of nature are highly ideal, and intensely sympathetic. That unparalleled chapter, "Nature Speaks", describing the regeneration of Richard Feverel, reveals in the writer a man who combines in his thought the elements of realism and of idealism into a unit of wholesome pantheism, a man believing devoutly in the reality of the spiritual and in the ideality of nature and man's physical life. In that chapter, Richard wanders, accompanied only by a little dog, out into a forest in the midst of a gathering tempest, thinking of his wife, Lucy, and seeing his past life in a new perspective, because of the baby son of whose existence he has just learned. "The breathless silence was significant, yet the moon shone in a broad blue heaven. Tongue out of mouth trotted the little dog after him; couched panting when he stopped an instant; rose wearily when he started afresh. Now and then a large white night-moth flitted through the dusk of the forest. Sprinkled at his feet were emerald lights; hundreds of glow-worms studded the dark dry ground. He sat as a part of the ruins, and the moon turned his shadow Westward from the South. Overhead, as she declined, longs ripples of silver cloud were imperceptibly stealing toward her. They were the van of a tempest. He did not observe them, or the leaves beginning to chatter. Then the tempest bursts upon him. "Up started the whole forest in violet fire. The lightning seemed as the eye of heaven, and the thunder as the tongue of heaven, each alternately addressing the nature evoked was present in the matter of mere words he
him; filling him with awful rapture. Alone there—sole human creature among the grandeur and mysteries of storm—he felt the representative of his kind, and his spirit rose, and marched and exulted, let it be glory, let it be ruin!" His struggle with the elements, his kindly protection of the tiny, half-drowned leveret and its instinctive gratitude, and his view of the Virgin and her Child in the little forest-chapel, complete his reformation. "He was in other hands. Vivid as lightning the Spirit of Life illumined him. He felt in his heart the cry of his child, his darling's touch. With shut eyes he saw them both. They drew him from the depths; they led him a blind and tottering man. And as they led him he had a sense of purification so sweet he shuddered again and again. When he looked out from his trance on the breathing world, the small birds hopped and chirped: warm fresh sunlight was over all the hills. He was on the edge of the forest, entering a plain clothed with ripe corn under a spacious morning sky".

**Truth and Sincerity.**

The qualities of Meredith's thought and expression which we have already considered,—his originality, his independence, his mingled realism and idealism,—lead us easily to a perception of other allied, but even more worthy, characteristics—his perfect sincerity and his invincible love of truth. In "Diana of the Crossways" (121) he exclaims, "It is a terrible decree, that all must act who would prevail; and the more extended the audience the greater need for the mask and buskin."

No doubt he had already felt the bitter truth of that statement, yet he insists upon frankness and sincerity at the expense of the "more extended audience". In the matter of mere words he
avoids all affectation and scornfully quotes writers who do not. In "Diana of the Crossways" (7) he mentions the Diarist of an earlier period who has written of Diana's "delicate extremities", and remarks, "The writer was created for popularity had he chosen to bring his art into our literary market." Such a phrase as the one quoted will not be found in Meredith's work. In this sentence from "The Egoist" (77), a single apparently unimportant detail of action and its unaffected phrasing give a clear perception of the two natures and the feeling existing between them: "She laid two fingers on his arm, and they dropped when he attempted to press them to his rib". The words are frank to the point of bluntness; the result is amazingly effective. Writers of romance would have used "side" instead of "rib", if they had found place for such a detail, and would have lost the forceful truth which the sentence conveys. The reader is at one struck by the refined sensuality of Sir Willoughby, and by the sensiveness and refulsion of feeling on the part of his prospective bride. (378), "the Old Dog". During the dinner-party a peculiarity of Meredith's phrasing must be noted here—his so-called "pathological mode of description". The same critic suggests that Meredith has found the "seat of the emotions in the eyelid". The reader of any one of his novels will notice the frequent mention of the eyelids or the eyeballs where we expect to read "eyes". For example, in "Rhoda Fleming" (441) he speaks of Dahlia, after her wasting illness, looking from "the round of her thin eyelids". In "Richard Feverel" (390), he says of "the enchantress", "Those witch underlids were working brightly"; and again (378), when this woman is speaking, with feigned coyness, "'But', modest eyelids were drooped, 'other
people do,' struggling eyes were raised. Harry Richmond tells of the Princess Ottilia "summoning to her beautiful clear eyes the recollections of her first desire to see my country". These are not unusual expressions. Are they the result of a perverse whimsy on the part of the writer, or is there a deeper truth underlying? We are accustomed to use "eyes" indiscriminately referring to expressions produced either by the pupil or iris, by the raising or the lowering of eyelids or eyebrows. Meredith keeps the distinctions clear, and we have truthful rather than partially truthful or indefinite description.

With the keenest insight into a person's real nature as well as strictest truth in presentation, he seizes upon a predominant moral or physical trait and makes it a name. In "Richard Feverel" alone are numerous instances. Ripton Thompson, "a boy without a character", possesses in a great degree the virtue of faithfulness; therefore, because of his "humble, unassuming worship" of Lucy Feverel, his mute and vigilant devotion, the author names him "the Old Dog". During the dinner-party at Richmond, "Ripton found himself under the lee of a dame with a bosom". Her coarseness and vulgarity are apparent in every word and act; throughout the episode she bears no name but is simply called "the bosom". Mrs. Mount has a servant who has no characteristics of importance save those of footman, and the author writes, "John footman entered to clear the table". Benson, the butler in the Feverel household, is "the saurian eye", while Richard's simple-hearted old nurse Mrs. Berry, is "the bunch of black satin". Mrs. Doria, with more truth than delicacy, is called "the practical animal".

None but a mind extremely susceptible to the internal
truth of things and an insight keenly penetrative would be able to produce the number of subtle and forcible similes and metaphors found in Meredith's work. He finds analogies in the most unexpected places; the result is unusual figures, often bold and humorous, even grotesque, but always full of truth and power. Redworth, while telling Diana Warwick of his years of silent, patient love says, with convincing force: "I taught this old watch-dog of a heart to keep guard and bury the bones you tossed him". Referring to Sir Willoughby, and again to "the egoist" in relation to Clara Middleton, the author writes: "His good qualities were drenched in his first person singular"; "Her individuality as a woman was a thing he had to bow to. It was impossible to roll her up in the sex and bestow a kick on the travelling bundle". From "Harry Richmond" (145) comes this comment on the German language, and one cannot doubt the absolute sincerity of the author any more than the exceeding frankness of expression: "What we heard sounded like a language of the rocks and caves, and roots plucked up, a language of gluttons feasting; the word 'ja' was like a door always on the hinge in every mouth. One (German) gave us lessons in the expression of the vowels, with the softening of three of them, which seemed like a regulation drill movement for taking an egg into the mouth and showing repentance of the act." In the same book (231) there is a descriptive simile, strangely beautiful and effective; he pictures the beach, and beyond it "the pale flat land level with shore, looking like a dead sister of the sea".

Meredith's "hatred of the sham decent" and his "derision
of sentimentalism" are quite as apparent in his treatment of
subjects and characters as in his mode of expression. This
hatred and this derision we are all to share when at last we
have attained to philosophy, which alone can cancel extremes
and give us Truth. "Philosophy bids us to see that we are not
so pretty as rose-pink, not so repulsive as dirty drab." These
two extremes belong to sentimentalists, who" fiddle harmonics
on the strings of sensualism". Indeed, you may get to philosophy
by the "sentimental route", but sentimentalism"springs from
the grossly material, merely and badly aping the spiritual".
Therefore, the journey will take an infinite time, "whereas a
single flight of brains will reach and embrace divine philosophy".
So, true to these feeling and convictions, Meredith scorns the
"sham decent" and sentimentalism, and gives us truth and phi-
losophy.

No "wooden puppetry" dances on a string in his novels
and poems; they are inhabited by men and women animated with
the "fires of positive brainstuff". Truth to nature he strives
for, but not for that alone in all its baldness. Else how could
he produce poetry and novels of intense interest and feeling?
"To demand of us truth to nature, excluding philosophy, is
really to bid a pumpkin caper. As much as legs are wanted for the
dance philosophy is required to make our human nature credible
and acceptable". So we have pages of psychological analysis and
paragraphs of philosophical comment on the part of the author.
Many trivial matters of fact may be omitted or merely suggested
in passing but never a detail of motive or emotion is neglected.
Every shade of thought, every fluctuation of feeling which has
any relation to the development or degeneration of a character is carefully revealed and analyzed. No doubt this habit of subtle analysis (which is but the conscientious portrayal of the human soul by a man of superior insight) is the foundation of a common accusation of his critics, that Meredith's people do not live, are not natural. We are not privileged, in life, to look into a man's mind and read his inmost thoughts, or to search his soul for its deepest emotions; we cannot know what spiritual conflicts may have preceded certain actions. We are obliged to judge our fellow-creatures by the external details of speech and action. Thus it happens that when all the mental and spiritual elements are laid bare before us, the character may easily seem too thoughtful or too soulful to coincide with our very finite experience. Many times within one novel the reader comes upon the accurate expression of some thought or feeling which he remembers in his own experience and which he has thought was peculiarly his own. Here he finds it for the first time in words. Such insight indicates in the author an almost inconceivable power of introspection. Perhaps those who find Meredith's people unnatural have not yet attained to the knowledge, or at least the appreciation, of that philosophy which makes "our human nature credible and acceptable".

His impartial delineation of human strength and frailty not only gives to his works an air of verisimilitude but is also a test of Meredith's own sincerity of purpose. Again consider Edward Blancon, the "hero and Villain" of "Rhoda Fleming", the cause of so much distress, who tries, with what strength he possesses, to make right his great wrong when it is too late. Evan Harrington, the youthful hero of the book bearing his name,
is so lamentably weak at times that his creator feels the need of an apology. "Are you impatient with this young man? He has little character for the moment. Most youths are like Pope's women; they have no character at all. And indeed a character that does not wait for circumstances to shape it, is of small worth in the race which must be run. "Dahlia Fleming is a strange, yet appealing, combination of contradictions, of weakness and strength; she stands out distinctly in the memory of Meredith's readers as a living, loving, erring, suffering woman. Even Sir Willoughby Pattern, the "egotist", that "compendium of the Personal in man," is nevertheless a man and not merely a psychological abstraction. The inequalities of character, the inconsistencies of plot and of detail are the inequalities of humanity, the inconsistencies of life as we know it. Meredith uses few devices of verisimilitude; when he does they are effective. Upon reading the first chapter of "Diana of the Crossways" we are quite convinced that our knowledge of early nineteenth-century diarists is defective and that Mrs. Warwick, the "witty Beauty", was truly an historical personage of great importance. In "Richard Feverel", "The Pilgrim's Scrip", of which Sir Austin Feverel is the alleged author, lends the likeness of truth to the story and incidentally affords an excellent place for many of the writer's finest epigrams. His freedom from the conventional in vocabulary and phrasing, his scrupulous frankness of expression, his forceful analogy, his minute analysis and impartial delineation of mental and spiritual life--all these qualities of Meredith's style impart to his novels a freshness of interest and a semblance of reality; more than that, they reveal a writer whose marvelously clear and penetrating
insight into the "eternal verities" is equalled only by his love of truth and sincerity of purpose.

Concentration and Intensity of Thought.

Almost noteworthy quality of Meredith's style, in itself amounting to positive genius, is his remarkable power of compression of thought and of conciseness of expression. Phrases and short sentences there are beyond number, so freighted with imagery and truth as to be marvels of literary art. This is so generally true of his work that one sentence may not be omitted in reading without real loss to the reader. The careless or the uninitiated may attempt to read Meredith's novels as rapidly as those of a mere story-writer. The unusually rich, tough food is crammed down with but with the ordinary amount of mastication. The result is a fancied obscurity in the style of the writer; in reality the reader is suffering from an acute attack of mental dyspepsia. Above all things Meredith requires of his readers thought: philosophic thought for the keen analysis of character, critical thought for plot-structure and personal comment, and even his comedy must "awaken thoughtful laughter".

As the first indications of this power of compression, entire phrases and clauses are constantly being condensed into single noun or compound words. In "Richard Feverel", within a few lines we read of the birds' "breakfast-flight" and the "night-talk of the trees". It would seem that Meredith never uses a descriptive relative clause if he is able to coin a participial adjective to take its place. From "Diana of the Crossways" are the condensed phrases, "solitarily-faring ladies" and "the
flat-minded"; from "Richard Feverel", "The blush-persecuted youth" and "the sole-lying beauty"; from "The Egoist", "the paternal pat-back order of pity" and "the poor man melancholy-wounded". The same tendency is found to prevail in his sentence-structure. Even the indifferent reader will soon note the continual use of the short sentence; often the successive sentences have a close connection in meaning but are without a conjoining word or mark of punctuation. To Meredith, generally, the subordinate relation of a thought does not exist as such. Cause and effect, purpose and result, are of equal import, and each has a separate sentence. "Alvan opened his eyes. He perceived in his deep sagaciousness woman at the bottom of her remark", (The Tragic Comedians, 193) "Harry Richmond" (469) Ottilia says, "I have offended my father. I have written to him; he will take me away". Adverbs, conjunctions, adversatives, and other hinges and props of sentence structure are omitted unless they are indispensable; Meredith finds little use for external aid to expression. His sentences stand firm by reason of their inherent strength; they are never weak or obscure for want of a "since" or "therefore". The result of this inordinate desire for compression is sometimes a sentence little short of fantastic. From "Harry Richmond" (193) comes this curious sentence: "The squire pursued, not hearing me with his eyes". Expanded and freely translated it might run: "The squire pursued, hearing me but not comprehending, as I saw by his eyes".

A few examples from the myriads which exist will suffice to illustrate the wonders of Meredith's sentence-description. In "The Tragic Comedians" (164) is this word-picture: "The mountains were in dusty sunlight". "The Shaving of Shagpat", that
matchless mosaic of Oriental imagery and poetry in prose form, contains this poet-view of dawn: "A glow of light ran up the sky, and the edge of a cloud was fired"; and on the same page is this description of mood and atmosphere: "Almeryl stretched his arm to the lattice, and drew it open, letting in the soft night-wind, and the sound of the fountain and the bulbul, and the beam of the stars". One sentence vividly characterises the deceased husband of Mrs. Lovell, in "Rhoda Fleming": "He perished on the field, critically admiring the stroke to which he owed his death". No more effective sentence is to be found than this concerning Mrs. Mount, the "enchantress" of Richard Feverel, revealing with a flash the woman's character and intent: "A lurid splendor glanced about her like lights from the pit". A mood of Richard's cousin Clare, too deeply emotional for words, is thus described: "A joyless dimple hung in one pale cheek and she drew long even breaths". Both character and mood are clearly revealed in this peculiar sentence, descriptive of Mrs. Mount making her final attempt to ensnare the youthful Richard: "Her nearest eye, setting a dimple of her cheek in motion, slid to the corner toward her ear, as she sat with her head sideways to him, listening". Finally, from "Evan Harrington" comes this exquisite sentence, so wonderfully expressive of the young love of Evan and Rose, who, each with heart full of the other, have met by chance at night near the little stream: "Not a chirp was heard, nor any thing save the cool and endless carol of the happy waters, whose voices are the spirits of silence".

Upon every page that Meredith has written are sentences filled to overflowing with wisdom of life, wisdom far deeper, often, than the average man is able or willing to penetrate.
Sir Austin Feverel, the man of larger brain than heart, says, apparently with profound truth: "Poetry, love, and such-like, are the drugs earth has to offer to high natures, as she offers to low ones debauchery"; again, "Who rises from prayer a better man his prayer is answered", and, "For this reason so many fall from God who have attained to Him, that they cling to Him with their Weakness, not with their Strength". Sir Austin's friend, Lady Blandish, with a feminine intuitive wisdom so characteristic of Meredith himself, asks suggestively; "When a wise man makes a false step, will he not go farther than a fool?" Into a single epigram or figure of speech a wealth of thought is magically moulded. Clara Middleton's despairing thought is, "We women are nailed to our sex". Also from "The Egoist" are these sentences: "There is no dire disaster in love than the death of imagination"; and, "Cynicism is intellectual dandyism without the coxcomb's feathers". In "Richard Feverel" we read, "Love of any human object is the soul's ordeal". Diana of the Crossways experiences an "an antagonism of race, the shrinking of the skin from the burr"; and elsewhere her "chronicler" tells us, with delicate irony, that "cleverness is the attribute of the selecter missionary lieutenants of satan".

The qualities of still exemplified in all these quotations may be summed up as unusual strength and condensation of expression. They afford unmistakable evidence of the predominant quality of Meredith's mind,—the peculiar intensity of thought power, unceasing in its tireless activity. None but a writer having the concrete vision of the artist and poet, the insight of the philosopher and seer, and the intellectuality of a transcendent mind, is capable of producing such marvellous landscapes,
such complete characterizations, and such wondrously rich nuggets of truth and wisdom, each in the narrow compass of a phrase or sentence.

**Energy and Rapidity of Mind.**

The stylistic qualities last considered revealed intensity of intellectual power; they also suggested that the mind of Meredith within its weight of thought, is not ponderous and slow but ever vigorous and active. The subtlety of his transitions from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph often leads the reader into a hopeless confusion of ideas. The first chapter of "Diana of the Crossways", which Mr. Le Gallienne has said is "the hardest nut to crack in literature", requires for a complete assimilation an amount of thinking energy that would fully digest dozens of "popular" novels. Again, there are abrupt transitions upon which the reader comes with a bound; if his thinking is not as vigorous and rapid as should be, he will fail to make a successful leap. At the beginning of the concluding paragraph of "Rhoda Fleming", there is this cruelly abrupt statement, for which the sluggish and expectant reader has had scant preparation: "There were joy-bells for Robert and Rhoda, but none for Dahlia and Edward".

The short sentence is a pronounced characteristic of Meredith's prose, and often the mind must travel with unusual speed to follow him, especially in the conversations, the most brilliant in modern fiction. Clara Middleton and Horace de Craye, give us excellent illustrations, in their witty dialogues, of this tendency of the author. De Craye is the bachelor friend of the "egoist", and is a guest at Patterne Hall for the approaching wedding of Clara and Sir Willoughby. During a morning ride,
Honace attempts to divert the unhappy girl.

"I have written half an essay on honeymoons, Miss Middleton."

"Is that the same as a half-written essay, Colonel de Craye?"

"Just the same, with the difference that it's a whole essay written all on one side."

"On which side?"

"The bachelors."

"Why does he trouble himself with such topics?"

"To warm himself for being left out in the cold."

"Does he feel envy?"

"He has to confess it."

"He has liberty."

"A commodity he can't tell the value of if there's no one to buy."

"Why should he wish to sell?"

"He's bent on completing his essay."

"To make the reading dull."

In highly emotional scenes also the extremely short, rapid sentences are predominant, and with greatest effect. In the final scene between Diana Warwick and Percy Dacier, of one-hundred periods the average is approximately eight words. Moreover, Meredith's prose, as no other fiction, contains an astonishing number of remarkably short paragraphs, consisting of one or two sentences. It is not unusual to count on one page three or four paragraphs of one short sentence each, exclusive of direct discourse.

Two other peculiarities of expression are to be noted
here as witnessing something more than Meredith's concentration of thought. First, his frequent use of asyndeton, as in "Diana of the Cross ways" (43) : "And Redworth had approved of his retirement, had a contempt for soldiering". Allied with this is his constant omission of pronouns, relatives, or even nouns and verbs, when not deemed essential for full expression of thought or feeling. Of Richard Feverel, during his voluntary exile the author says (437) : "Often wretchedly he watches the young men of his own age trooping to their work. Not cloud-work theirs! Work solid, unambitious, fruitful". Again, when Redworth has spoken to Diana of her beloved Ireland, the author writes: "He could not have said sweeter to her ears or more touching".

Even in the matter of punctuation this inordinate rapidity is apparent; in a long breathless series of attributive adjectives there may be no indication of pause, especially if their meanings are much alike. Harry Richmond says, "I was deemed a remarkably quiet sober thoughtful young man".

The second peculiarity is his habit of condensing all or part of a direct quotation into an indirect statement. Thus, in "Rhoda Fleming" (377) we read, "A reply that presumed she would sleep appeared to her as bitterly unfriendly", and in "Richard Feverel" (379), "He repelled the insinuation. 'Because I know it, Bella'".

Meredith presupposes and demands of his readers swiftness of comprehension as well as depth of thinking. Among his characteristics of style, then, are the abrupt and subtle transitions, the rapid flow of short full sentences and paragraphs, the docking of unessential words and pauses, and the compression of direct quotations, all of which indicate on the part of
the author, as they also require of the intelligent reader, an unusually alert mind, an untiring energy and ceaseless rapidity of mental processes.

**Wit and Humor.**

Intensity of thought, alertness of mind, and rapidity of mental action— the resultant of three such forces is surely a high degree of wit. Consider still others of Meredith's countless epigrams and figures. From "Richard Feverel" are these sentences: "The ways of women which are Involution, and their practices which are Opposition, are generall best hit upon by guess-work and a bold word"; "In action, Wisdom goes by majorities"; "When nature has made us right for love, it seldom occurs that the Fates are behindhand in furnishing a temple for the flame". In "Evan Harrington" (341) the author notes a couple dancing, and refers to the woman as "Creation's second effort, almost occupying the place of a rib". The pious old ship-captain attempts to warn Harry Richmond and his friend by telling them the story of the Prodigal Son; him the author calls "the worn out old fellow who has gone in harness to tracts ever since he ate the fatted calf". Diana Warwick names the disturbers of unescorted women "Cupid's footpads", and from her own experience offers us this clever parody, "Banality, thy name is marriage!" In the same story is this whimsical metaphor: "Westlake betray'd an inflammable composition, and had to be put out, and smoked sullenly". From "Rhoda Fleming" (248) comes this pregnant figure, "the brief Caesarian tongue of the telegraph"; and from "Richard Feverel" (438), this ludicrous simile, this unexpected leap from pathos to bathos; "Who has
not wept for Italy? I see the aspirations of a world arise for her, thick and frequent as the puffs of smoke from cigars of Pannonian sentries!"

Satire abounds in Meredith's novels, but it is ever free from scorn and malice; it is the satire of the seer and prophet, who sees clearly into the soul of man and sympathises with his follies and inconsistencies. His is "the thinker's laugh, the laugh of self-criticism". Through the character of Sir Austin Feverel he exclaims: "Which is the coward among us? He who sneers at the failings of Humanity!" While "The Egoist" as a whole is, in one sense, a satire, the author's attitude toward the character he portrays is clearly conveyed in the frequent repetition of the simple words, "Sir Willoughby was anything but obtuse", after the particularly striking instances of his denseness; and again in the egoist's ideal of a wife: "She points to her husband like the sun-flower; her love illuminates him; she lives in him, for him; she testifies to his worth; she drags the world to his feet; she leads the chorus of his praises; she justifies him in his own esteem. Surely there is not on earth such beauty". From the same book is this bit of humor and satire: "She had money and health and beauty, the triune of perfect starriness which makes all men astronomers".

"Evan Harrington" is as delicious a piece of social satire as our modern fiction contains. The tribulations of the Harrington family, brought about through the humiliating fact that their father was a tailor, and the generalship of the Countess, whose genius for strategy and equivocation is nothing short of marvellous, give rise to many humorous and effective situations.
The novel is brimful of satiric comment and conversation. After an incident of the Countess' diplomacy among the men of the company, the author observes, "A woman who shows a marked depression in the presence of her own sex will be thought very superior by ours; that is, supposing she is clever and agreeable. Manhood distinguishes what flatters it". In the same interesting novel two guests at Beckley Court are discussing a bit of open scandal.

"'You don't believe, then?' suggested Mrs Shorne.

'Miss Current replied: 'I always wait for a thing to happen first.'

'But haven't you seen, my dear?'

'I never see anything, my dear.'

'Then you must be blind, my dear.'

'On the contrary, that's how I keep my sight, my dear.'

'I don't understand you,' said Mrs. Shorne.

'It's a part of the science of optics, and requires study.'"

Two characters—almost, if not quite, caricatures— in "Evan Harrington", would seem to have escaped from one of Dickens's novels,— Tom Cogglesby, "the Eccentric", and Jack Raikes, own cousin to Dick Swiveller. Very seldom Meredith's humor becomes extremely broad, as when Jack Raikes, to employ his abundant leisure, makes a bet with himself that the dog sleeping nearby will not wag his tail for ten minutes.

These random figures and epigrams, these satirically humorous comments, conversations, and characterisations, give conclusive evidence of the resultant which we sought. Wit indeed Meredith has: a wit so subtle that it is sometimes lost even upon the careful thinker, and so brilliant that it often dazzles
the reader and becomes almost ineffectual. More than this, it is the wit of a profound student and frank critic of individual and social life, whose satiric utterances are so filled with sympathy and the "spirit of sunny malice" that they cannot sting. Meredith's really effective humor, as well as his sparkling wit, is far beyond the capability of a true Englishman, and we are gratified to find our conclusion verified by biographical facts—his father was Welsh, his mother, Irish.

**Classical Knowledge and Learning.**

Readers of Meredith who have not Latin or French, who know not the sages of Greece or the gods of Rome, who have not a fair knowledge of their own tongue's history and literature, will soon become impatient with the author or else will deplore their own want of scholarship. Not only does Meredith employ many unusual words derived either directly or indirectly from Latin or Greek roots— as aegis, trahison, ephemerioe, and the like—but he frequently uses Latin, French, or Italian phrases and sentences without translation or explanation. Of literary, historical, and mythological references from the most widely diverse sources there are countless numbers. The "egadist" is called "Laocoon of his own serpents"; Sir Austin Feverel, in his severity of judgment, is "this cold Rhadamantus", and Mrs. Mount is young Richard's "Bellona". In the beautiful idyll of Richard's and Lucy's first meeting the young lovers are "Ferdinand and Miranda". A too clever bit of Diana's brilliant wit contains this recondite allusion: "Men may have rounded Seraglio Point; they have not yet doubled Cape Turk".

In his prose, rather than in his verse, examples are
found of rhetorical figures common to the poetry of Greece and Rome. In "Richard Feverel" alone are several sentences more or less perfectly modeled after the chiasmus, the figure of the Greek X, so frequently and effectively employed by Virgil in the "Aeneid". Here are two of the more perfect sentences: "Her eyes had a haughty sparkle when she pleased, and when she pleased a soft languor encircled them"; "The bird of Winter sang from the budding tree; in the blue sky sang the bird of Summer".

Especially in his earlier works then, we perceive an interested and careful student of classic language and literature. His allusions are always apt and forceful. Moreover, Meredith's freedom from pedantry, his extreme sincerity and naturalism, precludes the idea of his ever using dictionaries and hand-books. Therefore we are assured of a great fondness for literature and history, for the Latin and Romance languages, and, above all, of a prodigious memory, both tenacious and spontaneous.

Love of Nature.

Nature is a vital, breathing element throughout Meredith's work, in his prose quite as much as in his poems. His heroes are all fond of sports: they ride and play at cricket, they swim, row, and yacht. The choicest of his heroines are buoyant active women, like Diana Warwick, Clara Middleton, and Janet Ilchester, who ride, and drive, and have a wholesome love of the open. Cricket matches, yacht-races, and regattas are introduced and described by the author with great relish. Everywhere there is evidence of the nature-fondness of a strong rugged
man, who finds hearty, wholesome enjoyment in all forms of out-door life.

No modern imaginative writer has made more extensive or more effective use of nature-description than Meredith. Whether it is a landscape painted in a few magic words, or a paragraph of concrete description, it is always graceful, always artistic. Diana and Emma go for a drive "on one of those high mornings of the bared bosom of June when distances are given to our eyes, and a soft air fondles leaf and grass-blade, and beauty and peace are overhead reflected, if we will. Rain had fallen in the night. Here and there hung a milkwhite cloud with folded sail. The young beech-leaves glittered, pools of rainwater made the roadways laugh, the grass-banks under hedges rolled their interwoven weeds in cascades of many-shaded green to right and left of the pair of dappled ponies, and a squirrel crossed ahead, a lark went up a little way to ease his heart, closing his wings when the burst was over, startled black-birds, darting with a clamor like a broken cockcrow, looped the wayside wood from hazel to oak-scrub; short flights, quick spirits everywhere, steady sunshine above". Often, indeed, his word-paintings contain emotional and poetical elements which give them a lyric charm. In the love scenes of the earlier novels, especially, this lyrical quality is prominent. From the twenty-third chapter of "Evan Harrington", so full of love and beauty, is this exquisite bit of nature by night:"The water curved, and dimpled, and flowed flat, and the whole body of it rushed into the spaces of sad splendor. The clustered trees stood like temples of darkness; their shadows lengthened supernaturally and a pale gloom crept between them on the sward". The same
quality is particularly prominent in the many beautiful nature-descriptions in "Richard Feverel".

Nature, in all her forms, is the chiefeist source of Meredith's host of striking similitudes. The boy, Harry Richmond, says of his state of sad perplexity: "My mind became like a driving sky, with glimpses of my father and Heriot bursting through". Diana Warwick, being reproached by her friend Emma, "had to hug herself under the stripes, and felt as if alone at sea, with her dear heavens pelting". Of Diana in one of her happy moods the author writes, "A linnet sang in her breast, an eagle lifted her feet". In "Beauchamp's Career" the author writes of Renée: "Her features had the soft irregularities which run to rarities of beauty, as the ripple rocks the light". One of the lyrics in the "Shaving of Shagpat" begins with these simple, beautiful lines:

"My life was midnight on the mountain-side,
Cold stars were on the heights".

In Meredith's treatment of subjects and characters we recognize a man who has a healthy physical delight in Earth and all she offers. The number and beauty of his nature scenes and similitudes indicate the keen and careful observer of natural phenomena, while the exquisite life and feeling breathing through them all reveal a true passionate lover of Nature's beauty and inherent spirit.

Love of Music and Art.

It is not necessary, as we have found previously, to turn to Meredith's poetry for musical sentences. In "The Shaving of Shagpat" and in the more emotional chapters of his earlier
novels there are not only random sentences but whole paragraphs filled with rhythm and musical charm. "Golden lie the meadows; golden run the streams; red gold is on the pine-stems. The sun is coming down to earth and walks the fields and the waters. Out in the world there, on the skirts of the woodland, a sheep-boy pipes to meditative eve on a penny-whistle". Indeed this entire twentieth chapter of "Richard Feverel", called "A Diversion on a Penny-whistle", is a pastoral of youth and love whose every sentence is perfect harmony. When Richard reads Clare's diary, after her death, he is deeply moved by her name and his written together. "Clare Doria Forey! He knew the music of that name. He had heard it somewhere. It sounded faint and mellow now behind the hills of death." This musical quality is invariably present in passages of deep emotion and in his nature description. Among his poems are beautiful ballads and lyrics, but not the least musical of his verse are the frequent stanzas interspersed through "The Shaving of Shagpat". A little love-ballad from the "Story of Bhanavar" is a tuneful song without notes.

The last stanza runs:

"Even's star yonder

Comes like a crown on us,
Larger and fonder
Grows its orb down on us;
So, love, my love for thee
Blossoms increasingly;
So sinks it in the sea,
Waxing unceasingly."

Meredith has, perhaps, never drawn with pencil or crayon, never painted with oil or water-colors; but his writings abound
in pictures vividly presented to the mind's eye; landscapes and sea-views of incomparable beauty, pictures rich with color and with life. Many of these have been quoted in earlier paragraphs. From "Farina", his pretty legend of mediaeval Germany, is this exquisite night scene: "Bright with maiden splendor shone the moon, and the old rocks, cherished in her beams, put up their horns to blue heaven once more". In one of the best of his poems, "Love in the Valley", there is this picture of sunset:

"Large and smoky red the sun's cold disk drops,
Clipped by naked hills, on violet shaded snow."

Much of his imagery also reveals his artistic taste in color, in light and shadow. When Harry Richmond is wandering about in a London fog, he likens a street-lamp, shining through the heavy mist, to "the head of an old saint on a smoky canvas", adding that it was a painting of light rather than light. From "Diana of the Crossways" (206) comes this single sentence, combining poetry, music, and art: "Thoughts that are bare dark outlines, colored by some old passion of the soul, like towers of a distant city seen in the funeral waste of day".

Thus, it is in the rhythmic beauty of Meredith's prose, in the singing quality of his ballads and lyrics, in his impressionistic word-paintings and suggestive imagery, that the reader perceives, if not active ability, at least a native love and appreciation of music and art.

**Optimistic Philosophy.**

In a former paragraph we found in Meredith a rugged realism and a lofty idealism. Enough has already been quoted from his work to suggest a healthy wholesome spirit, a broad and hopeful outlook upon life. Looking toward his matchless imagery for further verification, these lines from "The Lark
Ascending" are sufficient:

"He rises and begins a round,
He drops the silver chain of sound
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake.

For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instills,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup,
And he the wine which overflows,
To lift us with him as he goes".

Here is Meredith's assurance that life is good and that man, with the lark, is ascending.

These convictions of Meredith, however, are to be discovered in more definite form in his treatment of characters. With his marvellously clear and comprehensive vision he has peered into the depths of human character; with perfect candor and fearlessness he reveals the soul of man in all its nakedness. But he has found that the good in humanity is predominant; the evil is not inherent, for the most part, but arises in sheer weakness of the will or blindness of the spirit. This tenet is strongly marked in the characterizations of most of his novels, particularly in "Rhoda Fleming" and "Richard Feverel". The distinctive evil in human nature, shown most clearly in "The Egoist", "the Tragic Comedians", "Harry Richmond", and "The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper", is excessive of egoism, especially in its common phases of self-pity and sentimentalism. In many of his novels it this vice particularly which deprives its possessor of happiness and brings discomfort and sorrow to others.
But, in Meredith's philosophy, evil is necessary in the present stage of our spiritual development, for "contention is the vital force". And though good may be submerged in the individual, we are assured of its ultimate triumph in humanity. We have discovered Meredith's respect for and intense interest in the individual's welfare. But this consideration is not for the sake of the individual himself; it is too selfless, too humanitarian, for that. In a private letter Meredith has said, "I think that all right use of Life and the one secret of life, is to pave the ways for the firmest footing of those who succeed us".

He teaches valiantly, in all his work, the truth of evolution in the spiritual life, both in the individual and in humanity. In "Rhoda Fleming" he has said, with positive conviction, "A human act, once set in motion, flows on forever to the great account". His theme is always the development of a soul. Earnestly he strives to show the interdependence of the spiritual and the physical life. The story of "Richard Feverel" is the masterly exposition of this thesis. Stated in his own words, "The way to spiritual life lies in the complete unfolding of the creature, not in the nipping of his passions. An outrage to nature helps to extinguish his light". Further he insists that the real object of human endeavor must be "to identify itself with the Divine purpose, to be more and more a conscious vehicle for the expression of that reason which is the will of God". Here is evidence of an optimism too exalted for the ready reach of frail humanity.

Of Meredith's particular characterizations beyond Richard Feverel, that unfortunate victim of an unnatural "system", representing the negative side of the author's optimism, only one
be considered—Diana of the Crossways. Diana Warwick is the child of his own heart, sprung like Minerva, from his brain and equipped with the armor of his spirit. She is the embodiment of his positive optimism, strong and buoyant with the joy of life. After reading his novels and poems, filled with stoic faith and high hope of humanity, one feels that it is Meredith himself speaking through the lips of Diana when she exclaims to her friend: "Who can really think and not think hopefully?" And again, when Diana, standing with Dacier in the chamber of death, is asked, "And after?" She replies with simple faith, "I trust to my Maker."

In the imagery, the character-drawing, the choice and treatment of subject in Meredith's work, there is an ever-present flow of optimistic spirit of the sanest and noblest sort. It is the vital element in the religion of a spiritual giant, a religion set upon a plane whose atmosphere is too rare for lesser spirits. Here the individual does not walk easily, with merely the load of his own salvation upon his shoulders; his back is burdened with a responsibility approaching that of the Infinite. If he fails to make the good in him supreme, he delays the highest development of humanity. If he loses his own soul, he does not rob himself: he subtracts from the good of all— the immortality of mankind.

A man of manifold powers, a style of singular complexity, these are the results of this brief investigation. George Meredith has proved to be a man of abnormal independence, strength, and sincerity. These qualities of spirit have had a most patent effect on his literary style. It is highly original, particularly in the coining of words and the dissolution of stereotyped
usual attainments. His style is colored by a profusion of classical quotations and references, a host of recondite allusions, both literary and historical, and even by the use of classical figures of rhetoric. Meredith's passionate love of nature, his wholesome enjoyment of her "visible forms" as well as his aesthetic delight in her inherent, spiritual beauty, is insistently throughout his work. His finished characters are devoted to outdoor life, have a deep appreciation of nature's charm, and are "aware of the manifestations of her spirit in the flesh".

Frequent landscape backgrounds and nature-descriptions are exceedingly beautiful and sympathetic; whether referring to character, mood or incident, a multitude of his similes and metaphors have their source in nature. His fondness for an appreciation of music and art result in a prose style characterized by rhythmic sentences and lyrical qualities, by impressionistic sketches and concrete descriptions, and by figures derived from the whole realm of art.

Meredith's supreme understanding of human character and his clear comprehension of all phases of our social and intellectual life have begotten a convincing optimism and a religion which, unorthodox as it is, possesses as much of originality, and of spiritual strength and nobility as the man himself. These more subtle qualities of the spirit have a marked influence on the style both of prose and of poetry. His similitudes as well as his treatment of nature are imbued with a buoyancy of life; his characterizations and his treatment of social and ethical problems, his frank personal comments, by the way, all these are filled with an austere morality and the spirit of a sturdy usefulness. They indicate distinctly, at times almost didac-
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tically, a profound belief in the mutability of things, especially in the continual development of humanity, and in the great responsibility of the individual.

"He at least believed in Soul, was very sure of God."

Meredith is now spending his last years in his beautiful country home amid the "pleasant hills of Surrey"; he has done what he could to "pave the ways for the firmer footing of those who succeed us". For over half a century he has striven, in his convincing novels and appealing verse, to awaken thoughtless people to the sacredness of the physical world, as well as to the reality of the intellectual and spiritual life. With the insight of a master-mind, with the courage of a valiant soul, and with the power of a virile pen, he has revealed and condemned the grievous errors in our personal, social, and political life; he has shown us in their true light the silly conventions which have established false relations between men and women. He possesses in marked degree the three essentials of the successful reformer (as interpreted by James McKechnie from the allegory of "The Shaving of Shagpat"): Insight—accurate knowledge of things as they are; Idealism—clear vision of things as they ought to be; Enthusiasm—strength to change things as they are into things as they ought to be. The conditions of to-day are attesting the prophetic character of much of his work. To a generation far in the future must be left its complete fulfillment.

Meredith's style, in spite of its imperfections, is that of an intellectual aristocrat, although his sympathies are entirely democratic. In his literary expression and treatment
there is positive evidence of "the Triad which gives a healthy utterance to wisdom—reflection, feeling and experience! Himself a man of rare wisdom and learning, of invincible hope and optimism, and of inflexible morality, his work demands, for complete understanding and appreciation, a high degree of intelligence and receptivity, a sympathy with the weakness as well as with the strength in mankind, an optimistic spirit and a well-balanced ethical sense.

"Idiota, insulsus, tristis, turpis, abeste!"