PROSE OF
THE VICTORIAN AGE
MISCELLANEOUS PROSE WRITERS

Q. 31. Give an account of the main works of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881).

Ans. Thomas Carlyle was the dominant figure of the Victorian period. He was one of the most leading personalities of the age. He started his literary career by writing a few pamphlets and later on harnessed his pen to the production of many monumental works which made him immortal in the history of English Literature. The main works Carlyle are: Sartor Resartus, French Revolution, Heroes and Hero-worship, Past and Present, Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, Life of John Sterling, The History of Fredrick the Great and Letters and Reminiscences. We will briefly deal with each of his works.

(1) Sartor Resartus (1833-34).

Sartor Resartus is Carlyle's first creative work and is rightly regarded as the quintessence of his philosophical thoughts. In this book Carlyle seeks to present the views and opinions of a German philosopher at the university of Weissnichtwo. The name of the professor is Her Diogenes Teufelsdrockh. Carlyle only works as an editor, editing the old Professor’s manuscripts which are supposed to consist of numerous sheets packed into twelve paper bags, each labeled with the sign of zodiac. Carlyle seeks to be “an expositor of this weltering mass of words, endeavouring desperately to extract order out of chaos, and to lighten the dark and mystic abysses of the German professor’s thoughts.” Though the aims and opinions set forth in these volumes are those of the old German professor yet they are really speaking the views of the author himself. In fact, Carlyle sets forth his own dreams and ideals under the guise of the German professor. Albert rightly
says, “It is an extraordinary book, pretending to contain the opinions of a German professor; but under a thin veil of fiction Carlyle discloses his own spiritual struggles during his early troubled years. The style is violent and exclamatory, and the meaning is frequently obscured in a torrent of words, but it has an energy and a rapturous ecstasy of revolt that quite take the breath away.”*

In this monumental work Carlyle expounds “clothes-philosophy.” In the first place clothes stand for shams and pretences, hollow rank, hollow officialism and hollow customs. All these are designated as clothes because they hide the real form of society. These clothes must be burnt for they have outlived their utility. These clothes are mechanical in character and cannot have any place in a society set upon spiritual progress. Later on the ‘clothes-philosophy’ is applied to the universe at large. Just as clothes hide the real society, similarly time and space, which are no better than clothes, hide the spiritual essence of the universe. This spiritual philosophy of the universe is developed with great force and is couched in a style which is picturesque enough at places incoherent and confused. Many of the passages in this book read like poetry and the reader’s attention is particularly directed to such chapters as the ‘Everlasting No,’ ‘The Everlasting Yes’ ‘Reminiscences’ and ‘Natural Supernaturalism.’

(2) The French Revolution (1837)

Carlyle’s French Revolution is a prose epic of the great cataclysm that shook Europe and ushered in a new way of life. Carlyle’s aim in writing the history of the French Revolution is not to be a record of the dry-as-dust events that are generally presented by a historian. Instead of being the historian of the French Revolution, Carlyle chooses to be its poet and in a fascinating and picturesque style he presents the events and the great personages of the French Revolution. “The French Revolution is not a history; indeed Carlyle had not the makings, for his vision is not panoramic. He never seeks to retell the story of the past, but to explain the significance of the past, and this he does in a series of pictures, rather than the physical appearances.”**

---

** Compton Rickett: A History of English Literature.
Carlyle's response to the experience of history of the French Revolution is more akin to that of a painter rather than to a thinker. He portrays the events and figures of the French Revolution in the language of visual or audible sensation than in the logical speech of scientific thought or reason. Carlyle throws flash lights upon men in dramatic situations, and brings out the striking scenes of French history and French heroes in a picturesque and colourful style, aglow with zest and enthusiasm. As we go through the pages of this prose poem or dramatic poem, we feel that we are reading a great piece of literature rather than a dry record of history. The book appears to us a series of word pictures rather than sober history and we feel hypnotised with the wealth of the colour and the richness of imagery, with which the events are unfolded by the great author. There is no exaggeration in L. P. Smith's observation that Carlyle's "great prose-poem on the French Revolution is not only a great gallery of scenes and portraits depicted in the smoke and glare of that volcanic outburst, but it is a great tone-poem as well, a rushing vociferous piece of orchestral music, resonant with trumpets and battle-cries, with salvoes of artillery and wild peals of tocsin-bells ringing from all steeples."

Carlyle's moral vigour comes out in this stirring narrative of stormy events and personages. He emphasises the working of moral justice in human affairs and draws our attention to the nemises that must over-take the wrong-doers. "He is here the preacher rather than the historian, his text is the eternal justice; and his message is that all wrong doing is inevitably followed by vengeance."* 

(3) Heroes and Hero-worship. (1841)

This book was originally delivered in the form of lectures on heroes and hero-worship and was printed in 1841. Carlyle was a great hero-worshipper and burnt incense at the altar of heroes whom he considered to be the real rulers of the world. Carlyle had no faith in democracy, which was for him the last word of political unwisdom. He was never weary of insisting that the great masses of people needed the guidance and leadership of the hero-able men. The salvation of the world lay in recognising

* W. J. Long: English Literature.
the leadership of the heroes and acting according to their dictates. "Great men," he wrote in Sartor Resartus, "are the inspired Texts of the Divine Book of Revelation where of a chapter is compiled from epoch to epoch and by some named History." In Carlyle's opinion the best way to arrive at the truth of history was to study the biography of the great men "for universal history is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here."

In Heroes and Hero-worship Carlyle directs our attention to heroes drawn from six branches of life. He presents six types of heroes (1) The Hero as Divinity, having for its general subject Odin, "the type Norseman" who had been later on deified by his countrymen, (2) The hero as Prophet, dealing with Mahomet and the rise of Islam, (3) The Hero as Poet, in which Dante and Shakespeare are chosen as models, (4) The Hero as priest or religious leader, in which Luther stands out as the Hero of the Reformation and Knox as the hero of Puritanism, (5) The Hero as Man of Letters concentrating on Johnson, Rousseau and Burns. (6) The Hero as king in which Cromwell and Napoleon figure prominently. "It is needless to say that Heroes is not a book of history; neither is it scientifically written in the manner of Gibbon. The book abounds in errors; but they are the errors of carelessness and are perhaps of small consequence. With the modern idea of history as the growth of freedom among all classes, he has no sympathy. At certain periods, according to Carlyle, God sends us geniuses, sometimes as priests or poets, sometimes as soldiers or statesmen, but in whatever guise they appear, they are our real rulers. The book abounds in startling ideas, expressed with originality and power and is pervaded throughout by an atmosphere of intense moral earnestness."

Carlyle's style in this book is comparatively easier than in his other works and the colloquial tone of the author can be felt almost throughout the work. Still here and there we have "insistent, teasing, rubbing-the-reader's-nose-in-it style which is the mark of all that Carlyle writes."**

(4) Past and Present. (1843)

This book is the most penetrating and influential of all the

* W. J. Long: English Literature
** David Daiches: A Critical History of English Literature, Volume II.
many books which were inspired by the critical, social and industrial conditions prevalent during the Victorian Age. Carlyle completely repudiated the spirit of contemporary England in this monumental work. "It is", he wrote to John Sterling, "a moral, political, historical and a most questionable red-hot indignant thing for my heart is sick to look at the things now going on in England." A medieval monastic community governed by Abbot Samson is chosen as an ideal society for the materialistic people of the Victorian Age. Carlyle presents, with all the impassioned zeal of a Hebrew prophet, his denunciation of the many evils rising out of the worship of the "mud-gods of modern civilisation." Here, Carlyle denounces scientific materialism and utilitarianism which went along with it. In fact all sinister isms such as dilettantism, mammonism, hedonism, utilitarianism, imperialism meet hammer-blows at his powerful hands.

(5) Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches (1845)

Cromwell was Carlyle's hero and in this work he seeks to present the greatness of the Puritan leader who exercised great influence on the life of the English people for a number of years in the seventeenth century. Cromwell had been a subject of great controversy and many historians had denounced him in rabid terms. Carlyle comes to the rescue of Cromwell in this book and salvages the lost reputation of the great lord protector who raised the prestige of England in foreign countries, though his greatness at home was a mere shadow of his greatness abroad.

(6) The Life of Sterling (1851)

*Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* won popular applause and gave him an incentive to write *The Life of Sterling*. "It is a fine biography recounting the life of Sterling who had exercised a great influence on Carlyle's spiritual and moral fierce worship or hot intensity that inform most of Carlyle's works. There is an atmosphere of spiritual calm, curiously unlike the prevalent mood of the writer."

(7) History of Fredrick the Great. (1858-65)

Carlyle's interest in German thought brought him to the study of Fredrick the Great, one of the greatest historical figures of Germany for all times to come. Carlyle went over to Germany

to study first-hand details connected with the great Prussian king. He produced a detailed history of Fredrick the Great in six volumes. It is the greatest intellectual feat performed by Carlyle. "The book severely taxed Carlyle's powers as we may believe when we consider its scope and content; and it is one of hardest to construe of the author's writings, largely because Carlyle's mannerisms of style are nowhere more abundant."

(8) Letters and Reminiscences.

Carlyle's Letters and Reminiscences are of great importance since they throw a flood of light on his life and character. His literary essays on Burns, Scott, Goethe, Byron reveal him as a critic. Carlyle's opinions on English men of letters are expressed from a personal point of view and are often one-sided and prejudiced. They are more valuable as a revelation of Carlyle himself than as an objective study of the author under consideration.

Q. 32. Give your estimate of Thomas Carlyle as a literary artist.

Ans. Thomas Carlyle, the many-sided genius, is well-reflected in his works. He comes before the readers in various capacities; as a literary artist, a critic of literature, as a seer, as a prophet, as a political thinker and finally as an historian. We shall discuss Carlyle primarily as a literary artist in this question.

As a Literary Artist.

Carlyle did not have a high opinion of art and spoke contemptuously of art, as art. He had no patience with the merely bookish side of literature nor with the glorification of beauty and art for its own sake. Though Carlyle had no high opinion of art such as was held by the Pre-Raphaelites, yet he was in his own way one of the greatest literary artists that England had produced during the Victorian Age. Carlyle liked to be considered as a moralist rather than as an artist, but posterity has come to fix its attention not on the moralist in Carlyle but on the great unconscious artist beneath his garbs as a prophet.

As a literary artist Carlyle stands very high in the portrayal of graphic, vivid and clear pictures. He is a pictorial artist, and the pictures that he has left behind in prose are more colourful and picturesque than many of the paintings bequeathed to posterity
by painters in colour. Henry James saw deeper into the matter and said that “Carlyle was in essence not a moralist at all but an artist; picturesqueness in men and nature was what he cared for in all the things. He was, in fact, a painter who followed the good and evil of the world as a painter does his pigments for the opportunities they give for the display of his pictorial powers.” Carlyle’s art in pictorial painting of landscape and hill-side is as well marked out as his portrayal of human character. His pictures of the hills and the rivers are as picturesque as those of men whom he had known. Here are a few examples. “The hills stand snow-powdered, pale, bright. The black hailstorm awakens in them, rushes down like a black swift ocean tide; valley answering valley, and again the sun blinks out, and the poor sower is casting his grain into the furrow, hopeful he that the Zodiaces and far Heavenly Horologes have not faltered; that these will be yet another summer added for us and another harvest.”

His pictures of men are no less revealing. Like a skilled jeweller in words he presents Danton, Robespierre, Bacon, Shakespeare, Coleridge and a great many other figures whom he knew intimately. The following felicities of expression exhibit the art of a skilled jeweller in words, “Bacon sees—Shakespeare sees through.” “Swift carried sarcasm to an epic pitch.” “Coleridge was like an engine of a hundred horse power with the boiler burst.” “Carlyle’s vivid power of expression enables us to accompany his sonorous personality through a long period of the nineteenth century; and the incomparable keenness of the vision of his all-devouring eyes catches for us in lightning flashes, or depicts in finished portraits, the great figures of his age.”

Carlyle’s Style.

Carlyle’s early crude and rugged prose-style stands contrasted with the richness and resonance of his latter style and the difference is mainly due to the immense vocabulary he had acquired and the most farfetched phrases of remote allusions that he had come to command with the passage of time. In his later years Carlyle had a complete command of the English languages. Language was a play-thing in his hands and he toyed with his ideas in the manner he liked. Like Sir Thomas Browne and Jermy Taylor, the great prose-writers of the seventeenth century, Carlyle cultivated a
prose-style in which splendour, music and resonance played an important part. Like these seventeenth century writers his prose had much of the splendour and music which makes English imaginative prose a magnificent organ of expression. The enormous wealth of vocabulary employed by Carlyle in constructing sentences sometimes short, sometimes long, marked with breaks and abrupt turns, apostrophies and exclamations, is unique in prose literature. At places such a style gives the impression of uncouthness and roughness but it cannot be disassociated with Carlyle for it is his habitual manner of writing. The habit of writing in a peculiarly controverted style with a rhapsody of denunciation, vituperation, scoffs and jeers, pathos and self-mockery and rabieslusion touches is something unique with the man and has not been cultivated by any other writer in the English language.

Carlyle cultivated different kinds of style suiting his subject-matter. In the French Revolution he cultivated a highly picturesque and poetic style marked with vividness and flashing light of colour. The jostling metaphors are not merely picturesque but energetic and convey a sense of the cataclysm that shook Europe with a thundering force. In this book Carlyle employs a symphony of musical sounds so that we hear a rushing vociferous piece of orchestral music, resonant with trumpets and battle cries. In Sartar Resartus there is the presence of a highly philosophical style marked with complexities of thought and ruggedness of expression, sometimes confused and sometimes suffering from Grammatical lapses. The style becomes peculiarly Carlylesse—“a disturbing, bewildering and often exasperating style”; “a style full of un-English idiom, of violent inversions, startling pauses, and sharp angularities—a style which he employed to rouse the attention of his reader by a series of electric shocks.”

In the ‘Life of Sterling’ and ‘Fredrick the Great’ Carlyle wielded a style at once matured and restrained, proceeding with absolute certainty of touch.

On the whole, Carlyle’s style is picturesque and he is rightly considered the Rambrandt of English prose. No other writer of the Victorian age wrote with that picturesqueness and force which Carlyle employed in the expression of his philosophical, literary
and economic thoughts. His descriptive power and power of characterisation are really remarkable. The way in which he employed sarcasm, irony, invective, rhetoric and exhortation, sometimes in a conversational manner and sometimes in a pedagogic fashion, make him a great creator of an English prose style which few could imitate, for few writers had the intense moral fervour, and depth of feeling which Carlyle experienced when he gave expression to his thoughts.

Q 33. Give your estimate of Carlyle as a literary critic and a Prophet of his age.

Ans. Carlyle was not a great critic of literature and the few observations that he has made about English men of letters are one-sided, and exhibit his personal likes and dislikes. He was obsessed by the biographical stand-point, and judged works of art and literary value from this standard. In his view there was nothing better than a good biography and he considered that, "there is no heroic poem in the world but is at bottom a biography," and conversely "there is no life of man, faithfully recorded, but is a heroic poem of its sort rhymed or unrhymed."*

This conviction deeply influenced Carlyle's criticism. He judged an author in relation to the exhibition of the inner spirit in his work. He always sought the Man behind his work. He had words of great admiration and applause for those authors who revealed themselves in their works and brought out the light of the spirit in their master creations. His critical essays are, in fact, an attempt to get at the Man beneath his literary trappings whether it be Richtor or Burns or Scott or Johnson.

Carlyle could reach the heart of the subject and present the real truth about an author by his penetrative insight into his works. His penetration and reach were no doubt very great, and he could strike at the root of the matter in a trenchant and telling phrase. We can appreciate the reach of his observations in his remarks on Bacon, Swift and Coleridge. How pregnant are his observations, can be judged by his following remarks:

(1) Bacon sees, Shakespeare sees through. (2) Swift carried sar-

* Carlyle's Essay on Sir Walter Scott.
casm to an epic pitch. (3) Coleridge was a steam engine of a hundred horse-power with the boiler-burst. (4) Goethe is the greatest genius that has lived for a century and the greatest ass that has lived for three.

Greater than a literary critic is Carlyle's work as a critic of his age. He was the prophet of his age, and viewed the social, economic and political life of his times from the viewpoint of a seer and a philosopher. He seemed to be dissatisfied with the material glory, power and pelf of the rich capitalists of his time. As a critic of his age we find Carlyle condemning the so-called material progress of the age and the insistence of the people on the mechanical view of life. He poured the vials of his wrath upon the easy-going optimism which had been bred by rapidly developing commercial prosperity of the age and denounced with the impassioned zeal of a Hebrew prophet the idolatorous worship of the mud-gods of modern civilisation. He attacked "the mechanical view of life, mechanical education, mechanical government, mechanical religion and preached, now with drollery and paradox, now with fiery earnestness and prophetic possession, a return to sincerity in all things."*

It was Carlyle's aim as a critic of Victorian society to expose the shams and hypocrisies of the Memnon-worshippers of the age and subject their idols of life to the hammer-blow of his fiery denunciation. Throughout the Past and Present and Sartor Resartus Carlyle's dissatisfaction with his age, particularly with the social, political and economic values upheld by the philistines, is clearly brought out, and one cannot fail to be impressed by the earnestness and sincerity of the author who attacked them mercilessly with the vigour of a saint, a prophet and a preacher.

Not only was Carlyle a critic of his age, but he was also a reformer, a preacher and a sage with a definite programme for bringing about the moral elevation of the Memnon-worshippers of the age. He preached throughout his life the lessons of morality, sincerity, truthfulness and virtue. He exhorted the people of his times to rise above material power and pelf and realise the spiritual value of noble ideals of virtue and dignity of labour. With great sincerity, he exhorted the people of his times to lay aside:

---

* Moody-Lovett: A History of English Literature
hypocrisy and to think and speak and live for the ideal of truth. He preached God and spiritual freedom of the only life-giving truths. He gave his advice at the top of his voice, sometimes with more emphasis than was needed and popularly came to be known as the ‘shouting prophet’. Carlyle spoke disturbingly, if not always luminously to the troubled Victorian conscience. He could not indeed turn back the currents of his age inspite of his moral earnestness and sincerity of purpose. “Carlyle’s failure to impose his narrow, rigoristic, moralistic, joyless Annandale view of the world upon the world, added an element of tragedy to his deeply tragic sense of life. He suffered also the deeper tragedy of those who attempt to deify the universe; who personify it as a God to find that they have made a Devil of it. Their cosmic piety plunges them into such abysses of moral contradiction that it becomes, as many believe it became with Carlyle, a mask of atheism and dark despair.”

Q. 34. Write a note on Carlyle as a political thinker and an historian.

Ans. As a political thinker Carlyle was opposed to liberalism and the growing tide of democracy. He had no faith in democracy which was for him the best word of political unwisdom. He was never weary of insisting that the great masses of the people needed the guidance and leadership of the hero or able men. Carlyle cultivated the personality cult and laid emphasis more on obedience to men of authority and heroic mettle rather than struggle fruitlessly for rights in a democratic society. Carlyle considered democracy as a government of the fools. He believed in the gospel of might and the strong man. In his view the strong man was one who had spiritual convictions and strength of mind and soul. He had no belief in physical strength and applauded strength of character and mind. Those who were strong in character and spiritual convictions were worthy to be the rulers of our society. Carlyle had faith in heroes and geniuses rather than the democratic masses governed by passion and hysterical emotions.

As an historian Carlyle was not interested in recording the

dry-as-dust facts of history in a systematic manner. He was not a historian who cared for meticulous accuracy in the presentation of historical facts and in bringing out all the dust and scum that gathered round historical events. Carlyle was interested not so much in the events of history as in the heroes who gave them their vital significance. For him history was an interesting record of soul-stirring events manipulated by men of strength and character. His historical method was to concentrate mainly on the biographical details of great souls for in his view it was by studying the lives of great heroes, who moulded the destinies of a nation, that a better idea of history could be secured. Albert directs our attention to the basic facts about Carlyle's treatment of history in the following words. "Carlyle's method was essentially biographical—he sought out the 'hero', the superman who could benevolently dominate his followers, and compel them to do better. Such were his Cromwell and his Fredrick. His other aim was to make history alive. He denounced the 'Dry-as-dust' who killed the recorded infinite detail of life and opinion and by means of his masculine imagination and pithy style he brought the subject vividly to his reader's eye."

Q. 35. Give a brief account of the main works of John Ruskin (1819-1900).

Ans. John Ruskin was one of the greatest thinkers and writers of the Victorian Age. He was "a man of high moral principles, of splendid though ill co-ordinated intellectual power, of luxuriant imagination, all of which qualities he turned on to a rich variety of subject matter." He produced works of lasting value on a variety of subjects such as art, music, education and literature. Ruskin's works are voluminous and threading through them is like passing through a luxuriant garden, rich in fruit and flowers emanating fine fragrance from all quarters in such an over- cloying measure that one is likely to be detained by the loveliness of the first flower, the first blossoming tree in its vernal beauty, rather than proceed ahead to enjoy greater beauties at the farther end. Ruskin's works on art, social and political economy, literature and education are worthy of great consideration and will be treated one by one under the following heads:
(1) Works on Art.

Among Ruskin’s works on art, the most significant are: Modern Painters (1843-60), Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849), Stones of Venice (1851-53).

Modern Painters (1843-60).

Ruskin began as an art critic with the publication of five volumes of Modern Painters between 1843-60. The genesis of this famous work was Ruskin’s desire to uphold Turner’s paintings against the bitter attacks on his splendid works. Originally the work was a defence of Turner and an attack on his critics, but it developed into a comprehensive discussion of the principles of painting, especially landscape painting. “Ruskin is more eloquent and more charming when he is dealing with landscapes and describing the ways in which the imagination can respond to the subtle details of colour and form in the natural world than in endeavouring to make a direct connection between art and morality.”* The first volume was published in 1843, the second in 1846, the third and fourth in 1856 and the fifth in 1860. In these five volumes Ruskin presented his views about European painters and dealt with theories of art and different orders of landscape painters such as Heroic (Titian), Classical (Poussin), Astoral (Cuyp), Contemplative (Turner). The study of these volumes brings out Ruskin’s attitude towards art and its relation to morality. Here are to be noticed his insistence on beauty, imitation of nature and the moral values of art. Ruskin also discussed the relation of painting with history, religion and social conditions. Nothing in the book, however, was so praiseworthy as his style. The descriptions of Alpine scenery, the appreciation of great paintings such as Turner’s Slave-ship and Tintoretto’s Crucifixion represent Ruskin’s command of the English language particularly in its rhetorical side. The caustic denunciation of bad art, such as the analysis of Wonnerman’s ‘Landscape with a Hunting Party’ is trenchant, forceful and vigorous and exhibits the author’s utmost dislike for slipshod work and work of bad art. Here and there are a few digression in the book, for example the chapter on ‘Vulgarity’ and the suggestive discussion of ‘Pathetic Fallacy’ but these digressions

are interesting in-as-much-as they reveal Ruskin's finest critical manner.

Seven Lamps of Architecture.

In the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* Ruskin deals with the leading principles of architecture. The seven lamps are those of Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory and Obedience. It is one of the least ornate of Ruskin's book, but it is one of the best reasoned. In this work Ruskin puts up a spirited defence of Gothic as the noblest and the finest style of architecture, and labours to relate art and morality. "The amount of sheer patient recording and cataloguing that has gone into his work on architecture reveals an immense tenacity of purpose: a quality which is not particularly rare, but one which can easily become mechanical. What is extremely rare is to find it allied with perpetual vitality and sensitiveness"*

Stones of Venice.

In *Stones of Venice* Ruskin explains the rise and virtue of the Gothic in terms of the moral virtues of the society that produced it and attributes its decline to the disappearance of that virtue. Throughout this work we find the author glorifying Gothic architecture and denouncing the pestelential art of the Renaissance, and advocating the demolition of the remnants of the Renaissance art.

The *Stones of Venice* is rich in passages of beautiful description, particularly about Venice and its panoramic surroundings. The description of St. Mark's Cathedral is one of the finest passages of loveliness and beauty in English prose.

From art Ruskin drifted to social and political subjects and his works on political economy are worthy of close examination.

Unto This Last (1860-62).

This work was first contributed to Cornhill Magazine in the form of articles, but so great was the outcry at the novel economic views of the author that Thackeray, the editor of the Magazine, had to discontinue the publication of Ruskin's papers. It was later on published by a daring publisher after its appearance in *Fraser's Magazine* edited by Froude. The work consists of four

* Graham Hough: *The Last Romantics.*
essays: (1) The roots of Honour, (2) The veins of wealth, (3) Qui
Judicates Terram (4) Ad Valorem. In these essays Ruskin deals
with the problem of wages, the relation of the employers and the
labourers and the true nature of wealth consisting not in material
products but in, “the producing of as many as possible full-
breathed, bright-eyed and happy hearted human creatures.” The
entire work is, in fact, an attack on the prevalent system of politi-
cal economy. The main aim of the author is to expose the
materialism of the age and to draw the attention of the industrial-
ist and the leaders of the state to give more attention to the
spiritual side of man’s life than merely to his physical needs.

Ruskin’s Unto This Last was considered at the time of its
publication as the beautiful vapouring of an impractical idealist.
To the materialists of the age interested in money earning the
work seemed certainly impractical, but the latter socialists found a
hard core of wisdom in the book and worked out its tenets in
actual practice. Much of what Ruskin had set out to propound
is now an accomplished fact and in socialistic countries the
message of Unto This Last has been imbibed in the fullest
measure possible. It is increasingly recognised that machines tend
demoralise and dehumanise man and that means must be sought
to make man the master and not the servant of the machines.

The great value of this work lies mainly in the direction of
labour reform. Ruskin chalks out a full programme for improv-
ing the conditions of labourers and their relationships with the
capitalists. The author stresses the need of establishing training
schools for labourers and pleads for the eradication of unemploy-
ment from the ranks of the workers by providing them opportu-
nities for work. For the old and infirm workers Ruskin advocates
the establishment of comfortable homes where they may be able
to receive proper attention. All this has to be done in justice and
not in charity because “the labour serves his country as truly as
does soldier or statesman and a pension should be no more dis-
graceful in one case than in the other.”

Munera Pulveris (1862-63)

This work consists of a series of articles on political economy
published in Fraser’s Magazine (1862-63), the remainder of which
was suppressed by popular clamour. The work was published in book
form in 1872. It purports to be an ‘accurate analysis of the laws of political Economy’, and the prevailing conceptions about wealth of Ruskin attacks the conceptions of wealth which were held dear by orthodox economists. He condemns and criticises the outmoded theories of political economists and suggests that true political economy ought to be a branch of sociology because ultimately there is no wealth but life. In a sense Munera Pulveris is an elaboration of the principles, generally negative, laid down in Unto this Last.

Time and Tide (1867).

Time and Tide is mainly in the form of letters addressed to one Dixon, a working wood-cutter. The author lays emphasis on social regeneration rather than mere political reform such as was brought about by the second Reform Bill. In this book Ruskin seeks to point out that the condition of England in its social and economic side was a matter of greater attention and concern than merely giving political rights and establishing constituencies and ballot boxes. The work principally deals with the problem of poverty and its removal from society.

The Crown of Wild Olive (1866).

The work consists of four lectures delivered in 1866—the first On War, delivered at the Royal Military Academic; the second on the Future of England at the Royal Artillery Institute, the third On Work to a working men’s institute; the fourth in the Bredford Town-hall on Traffic, in the sense of buying and selling. In the lecture On War Ruskin exhibits the importance of war and its relation to the development of art. All great art is developed during a period of war and is ruined in a state of peace. In the Future of England the voice of the prophet is heard. In this work he exhorts the labourers to realise the dignity of labour and pleasingly admonishes the capitalists to be considerate towards their workers. In Traffic he deals with the problem of architecture. Ruskin had been invited to talk about the New Exchange building that the capitalists were about to build. Inviting the author the industrialists had hoped that he would give advice on the latest style of architecture. Instead of gratifying his hosts by praising their scheme and eulogising the architecture they were intending to set up, Ruskin in a satirical manner attacked the
materialism of the industrialists and replied to their welcome address that a style of architecture grew out of a way of life and could not be delivered by a visiting expert. Though the tone of the lecture is friendly yet it is marked with bitter irony. Ruskin pointed out that all good architecture was the expression of national life and character, and was produced by prevalent and eager national taste or desire for beauty. He elaborated his viewpoint by stating that only noble and good persons of virtue were capable of producing good works of architecture. He illustrated his point by condemning the evil Renaissance art because it was based on luxury, and eulogised Gothic architecture because it was the product of individual workers who were noble and good at heart. Ruskin’s viewpoint is not upheld today and it is seriously doubted whether he was at all justified in making a sweeping generalisation about morality and its relationship to architecture.

Sesame and Lilies (1885).

This great work deals with the study of books and the position of women in society. The sub-titles of the work are Of King’s Treasuries and Of Queen’s Garden. In the first part of King’s Treasuries Ruskin takes us to the realm of books and considers them to be ‘King’s Treasuries’. He examines ‘books of the Hour’ and ‘books of all times’, and exhorts the reader to study books of all times” for they contain the precious life-blood of an author. In the second part ‘Of Queen’s Garden,’ he considers the question of woman’s place and education which Tennyson had attempted to answer in The Princess. Ruskin’s theory is that the purpose of all education is to acquire power to bless and to redeem human society; and that in this noble work woman must always play the leading part. Ruskin is always at his best in writing of women or for women, and the lofty idealism of this essay, together with its rare beauty of expression, makes it, on the whole, the most delightful and inspiring of his works.

To these two lectures Ruskin had added The Mystery of Life. It is a personal essay dealing with his own failures. The tone of this essay is pessimistic and sad, and differs from the spirit of the two lectures. On the whole, the work is penned in a masterly
manner and is the one single example of the author's mastery over the manifold chords of prose expression. 

**Praeteritia (1885-89).**

Ruskin's last work *Praeteritia* is an unfinished autobiography. It was published during 1885-89. Ruskin presents glimpses of his boyhood days, his early training and a few sketches of his life as a school-boy. He portrays delightful pictures of his father, mother, aunts and even servants. As a revelation of the inner life of the author it is in the same line as Rousseau's *Confessions*.

---

**Q. 36. Give your estimate of John Ruskin as a critic of art and literature.**

**Ans.** Ruskin began his career as a critic of art embracing in his sweep the study of painting and architecture in a special way and all other arts in a general way. In the *Seven Lamps of Architecture, Stones of Venice*, and the lecture on *Traffic* in the *Crown of Wild Olive* he dealt with the problems of architecture and its relation to morality and human life. He emphasised that good architecture was produced by men of noble and awakened conscience. Only in a highly virtuous society could good works of architecture be produced. He upheld Gothic architecture as the noblest and the finest example of good and virtuous builders of the past and condemned the architecture of the Renaissance and the commercial architecture of his own times. Ruskin's view point has not been upheld by modern thinkers, and it is stated that "the history of art can show periods of splendour when there was abundant moral depravity. Ruskin over-emphasises the correspondence between art and morality."*

It was in the field of painting that Ruskin exhibited his originality of conception and novelty of approach. He introduced the *principle of Naturalism* in judging works of Art, particularly painting. The success of the artist lay in faithfully representing Nature. "The more I think of it," he says, "I find this conclusion more impressed upon me—that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in plain way." Judged by this principle of Naturalism, he found Turner, Tinteret, Verenose, as supreme artists for in

---

* Compton-Rickett: *A History of English Literature.*
their paintings there was the representation of Truth and fidelity to Nature. "Ruskin's value as an art critic lay chiefly in the impulse he gave to his generation to appreciate the beauty of natural phenomena; he showed them the absurdity of confounding the grandeur of Nature merely with her big scenic effects, when a blade of grass or an ordinary cloud could reveal as richly the possibilities of beauty."*

Ruskin approached Painting from another aspect as well. He showed "that painting should be something more than an ingenious arrangement of pigments." It was not merely the arrangement of colour that gave to painting its real worth. Sincerity and truthfulness to the representation of Nature were to be valued more than the splashing of colour.

No amount of technical skill exhibited by an artist in painting or in architecture satisfied Ruskin. He was no appreciator of technical excellence and in his view the worth of painting was judged not by its craftsmanship, but by its general impression of goodness left on the reader's mind. Here is Ruskin himself stating his view in an unmistakable language. "Taste for any pictures or statues is not a moral quality, but taste for good ones is. Only here again we have to define the word "good". I don't mean by "good" clever, or learned—difficult in the doing. Take a picture by Teniers, of sots quarrelling over their dice: it is an entirely clever picture; so clever that nothing in its kind has ever been done equal to it; but is also an entirely base and evil picture. It is an expression of delight in the prolonged contemplation of a wild thing and delight in that is an "unmannered", or "immoral" quality. It is 'bad taste in the profoundest sense—it is the taste of the devils.'"

—Technically perfect, clever, even unsurpassable; but not worth Ruskin's appreciation.

"On the other hand," says Ruskin, "a picture of Titian's, or a Greek statue, or a Greek coin or a Turner landscape, expresses delight in the perpetual contemplation of a good and perfect thing. That is an entirely moral quality—it is the taste of the angels."

As a critic of Art in general, Ruskin, like Plato, allied Art

* Ibid.
to Morality and disfavoured the theory of art for art's sake. He gave to Art an ethical significance. "He believed that the springs of art lay far deeper into the moral nature of the artist and in the moral temper of the age and nation which produced it."* "He was the first to judge work of art as if they were human actions, having moral and intellectual qualities, as well as the aesthetic; and he saw their total effect as the result of all those qualities and of the condition of the society in which they were produced."**

Ruskin was opposed to the theory of art for art's sake. He believed that art and morality were closely allied and were varying manifestations of the same divine impulse; beauty being a consecrated revelation of God in the same measure as the expressions of morality in spiritually advanced souls.

To sum up, Ruskin's view of art and its relation to human society is based on the following four principles (as pointed out by R. P. McCutcheon and W. H. Vam)—

(1) The object of art, as of every other human endeavour, is to find and to express the truth.

(2) Art, in order to be true, must break away from conventionalities and copy nature.

(3) Morality is closely allied with art, and that a careful study of any art reveals the moral strength, or weakness of the people that produced it.

(4) The main purpose of art is not to delight a few cultured people but to serve the daily uses of common life.

Ruskin was not a great critic of literature like Matthew Arnold. His literary criticisms are sporadic and unsystematic. He adjudged authors by the same principle of Naturalism and morality that he applied to Art. He expressed his opinion on Homer, Shakespeare and Scott. In the field of literary criticism he suffered from the same short coming of 'excessive self-confidence' which marred his criticism of Art. He was often full of prejudice and presented one-sided pictures. Yet his criticism has its own place and Hugh Walker in the *Literature of the Victorian Era*, appraises it properly in the following words—"We may think his praise of Scott excessive, his appreciation of Shelley

---


**Arthur Clutton Brock: Ruskin.
Inadequate. We may think the colours lurid in which he paints Dickens and the other novelists who represent 'foul fiction'. We may differ from him in a thousand ways; but the fact remains that his criticism is always stimulating and that we learn more from him even when he is most wrong-headed than we do from multitudes of criticisms to which no exception can be taken, but which lack the vitalising quality of Ruskin.*

Q. 37. Write a note on John Ruskin as a literary artist and his prose style.

Ans. Ruskin was a great literary artist and his soul was stirred at the sight of beauty. He was moved to ecstasy at the sight of grandeur and loveliness in nature. He presented graphic and pictorial pictures of nature which rivalled the paintings of Pre-Raphaelites. He had been endowed with unerring perception of a meticulous artist, and God had given him the gift of building a whole picture, stroke by stroke, till the edifice reared by him seemed to be a monument of perfection and exquisite beauty. He cultivated the qualities of truth and sincerity in his artistic representations of nature and presented pictures which have not been rivalled by other word painters except, perhaps, by a few Pre Raphaelite poets like Rossetti and Morris.

Ruskin's Prose Style.

Ruskin was a superb master of the English language and he handled it with perfect ease, yielding a style in complete conformity and harmony with his needs. Generally speaking, his prose is in the tradition of poetic prose practised by De Quincey. In his prose works we come across super-abundance of figures of speech, excessiveness of imagery, ornateness, melody, grandeur and loftiness of expression. "His passages abound in purple passages, which are marked by sentences of immense length, carefully punctuated by a gorgeous march of image and epithet, and by a sumptuous rhythm that sometimes grows into actual blank verse capable of scansion."**

Ruskin abounds in the other harmonies of prose and though

* Hugh Walker: The Literature of the Victorian Era.
** Essays from Fredrick Harrison.
Cyril Connoly criticised his sonorous, ornate and polyphonic style in *The Enemies of Promise*, yet it cannot be denied that the criticism appears to be wide of the mark in case with Ruskin whose lofty thoughts and dignified constructive programmes needed a dignified vesture which he fitly employed for the expression of his thoughts. Ruskin provides a nice escape for readers who seem to be bored by English prose written in a dull, matter of fact and pedestrian style. Ruskin’s sonorous, dignified poetic prose comes as a welcome relief after going through the prosaic writings of many dull authors.

Ruskin’s place, in fact, is not among the writers of dull prose, but among those great masters who had given to English prose its emotional and poetic qualities. Ruskin is among the romantic renovators of English prose and is in the same line as Gibbon, Burke and De Quincey. Whatever could be effected by a gorgeous embroidery of words, whatever could be achieved by a lyrical effusion of passion, whatever was possible to a painter, with his command of dazzling colour; whatever music could be produced by a symphony of sound, was within the competence of Ruskin. In his prose, for the first time, we come across a happy blend of the eye of the landscape painter and the trained ear of a musician.

Ruskin was at heart a prophet and prophets do not generally speak or write the language that ordinary human beings employ in the expression of their commonplace thoughts. The Oracle of Delphi did not speak like the common citizens of Greece. Ruskin was a man of very sensitive nature and his soul was stirred to the innermost recess by the nobility of his subjects. He naturally employed the language of Biblical earnestness and exquisite beauty in the expression of his noble and profound thoughts. His style could be consciously poetic with an accumulation of clauses in a periodic sentence ending with a calculated close. Ruskin could also achieve lyric simplicity and fine directness in some passages of *Praeteria* and *Fors Clavigera*.

In short, Ruskin as a prose writer, “improved upon the example set by Landor, De Quincey, and the Romantic renovators of English prose; he still increased the range of its effects, by adding to harmony and animation the resources of the richest
imagination and colouring. Always poetic, his style is not always in perfect taste; it shows at times oratorical cadences, a superabundant wealth of words, and superfluous ornaments. The impression of a too continuous and pressing eloquence, which it leaves with the reader is bound up with the very sincerity of a zeal which is never half in earnest, whatever convictions it may adopt. This rhetoric and this monotony do not, however, take away their charm to their overpowering force force from Ruskin's magnificent evocations, from his grand landscapes, transfused with the spirit of the highest pantheistic sublimity, nor even from his passages of masterly analysis, with all their picturesque precision of touch, their energy in the handling of detail. Through this exuberance of rhythmic and sonorous language there runs a more familiar, more spontaneous vein where the artist most happily reconciles forcefulness with simplicity like the Fors Clavigera."

Q. 38. Write a note on Ruskin as a social reformer and a critic of the society of his times.

Ans. Ruskin's early career was mainly devoted to the criticism of Arts, and he was a 'singularly erratic art critic.'** He co-related arts to society, and it was his deepseated conviction that the arts should be regarded as the expression of the social milieu. At about forty, Ruskin shifted his interest from Arts to society and became a critic of the society of his times. Ruskin gave up criticism of art for criticism of society "because no one could go on painting pictures in a burning house." "For my own part" wrote Ruskin, "I have seceded from the study not only of architecture, but nearly of all art, and have given myself, as I would in a besieged city, to seek the best modes of getting bread and water for the multitudes, there remaining no question, it seems to me, of other than such grave business for the time." From 1860 onwards he produced books dealing mainly with the problems of his age. The period to which he is to be related as a social critic was the period when industrialism was at the height of its power. His social tirades were against the mid-years of the golden age of British

** G. C Leroy : John Ruskin.
capitalism. Ruskin was one of the many Victorians who turned with a new seriousness to social questions when they found the beliefs of religion failing them in the turmoil of economic uproar in the country.

In Ruskin’s social criticisms we not only notice the concern of the reformer for the outer maladies of the age, but also an expression of the inner tensions and neurosis of his own soul. “The fact is that in his social criticism Ruskin was often not dealing primarily with outer reality, but was resolving tensions and releasing aggressions of his own subconscious nature.”* His was a pathological case in many ways, and it was all good for England’s social life. “The tone, the emotional power, and to a great extent the ideas of Ruskin’s social criticism are to be explained, then, in terms of his neurotic nature.”**

Like Carlyle, Ruskin was horrified and disgusted with the sweeping tide of materialism and industrialism, and the sight of mills and factories’ emitting out foul smoke and spoiling the charm of the countryside pained him intensely and deeply. Hence the first thing that Ruskin did was to direct the attention of the Victorians to the evils of industrialism and to win them back to the life of simplicity and glorification of nature. The strength of Ruskin’s social criticism lay in the clarity and force with which he vigorously assailed the irrationalities of the industrial system and the debasement of human nature brought about by the poisonous fumes of the machine system of production.

As a social reformer Ruskin sought to remove the evils of unemployment and low wages. He made heroic efforts to bring about healthy reforms in the living conditions of the labourers engaged in the monotonous task of tending machines. He exhorted the capitalists to improve the conditions of labourers working in their factories, and provide them all possible amenities of life. He made attempts to exorcize the spectre of poverty and disease stalking through the land. He laid emphasis on social justice and fair distribution of wealth.

Ruskin pleaded fervently for improving the lot of children who were sometimes subjected to inhuman practices. He protested

* Gaylord C. Leroy: John Ruskin

** Ibid.
against the employment of children in factories, and appealed to
sentiments of pity and sympathy among the philanthropists
of the age.

Comparing the Victorian spectacle of poverty amid plenty,
Ruskin came out with a thundering tone against the capitalist
ridden society where every plus sign of wealth was balanced by a
minus sign of poverty, but where the pluses “make a very positive
and venerable appearance in the world,” while the minuses have,
on the other hand, a tendency to retire into back streets, and other
places of shade,—or even to get themselves out of sight into
gaves.” 1 “Though England is deafened with spinning wheels” he
exclaims, “her people have not clothes—though she is black with
digging fuel, they die of cold—and though she has sold her soul
for gain, they die of hunger.” Comparing the ethics of the
new society based on self-interest and selfishness, he denounced
the “thrice accursed, thrice impious doctrine of the modern
economist that to do the best for yourself, is finally to do the best
for others.” 2 “So far as I know” he says, “there is not in
history record of anything so disgraceful to the human intellect
as the modern idea that the commercial text, ‘Buy in the
cheapest market and sell in the dearest’. He reminds the
people of his age that the pursuit of material gain, which is
considered by many economists as the foundation of national
welfare, “is for Christianity the root of all evil.” “Your religion.”
he says, exhorted you to love your neighbour, but “you have
founded entire science of political economy, or what you have
stated to be the constant instinct of man—the desire to defraud his
neighbour.” 3 You “mock Heaven and its Powers, by pretending
belief in a revelation which asserts the love of money to be the
the root of all evil, and declaring, at the same time, that you
are actuated in all chief deeds and measures by no other love.”
“I know no previous instance” he says in Unto This Last, “in

1 Ruskin: Unto This Last,
2 Ruskin: Lectures on Art.
4 Ruskin: Unto This Last.
5 Ruskin: Fors Clavigera.
history, of a nation’s establishing a systematic disobedience to the first principles of its professed religion.”

Ruskin not only became a critic of his society in its economic and social aspects, but also directed his attention to the political conditions of his age. He was as much opposed as Carlyle to the sweeping tide of democracy and a clamour for rights and privileges. He advocated a hierarchy of society in which each man gave orders to those below him and in turn carried out in obedience the wishes of captain, leader, bishop, or king. He criticized those political leaders who preached, “Stand up for your rights—get your division of living—be sure that you are well off as others, and have what they have I don’t let any man dictate to you—have not you all a right to your opinion? are you not all as good as everybody else?” Ruskin stood against this ideal of liberty and stated in *Fors Clavigera*, “My own teaching has been that Liberty, whether in the body, soul or political state of man, is only another word for Death, and the final issue of Death, putrefaction.” Ruskin believed in discipline rather than licence, authority rather than defiance. The dominant point in his political criticism is authoritarian one and this is primarily responsible for his failure as a constructive critic. Ruskin proved to be a severe critic of the society of his times, but his voice failed to have much effect on the mammon-worshippers of the age. The deepest impression made by Ruskin’s social criticism as a whole, “is one of the pathos of an immense and tragic failure. It was a failure of which he himself was keenly aware. Unable either to shelve or to solve the problems of his age, he fell victim, he told Charles Eliot Norton, to a “daily maddening rage.”* He gives way to “the unmeasured anger against human stupidity” which can often be, as John Morley finely says, “one of the most provoking forms of that stupidity.”** He rages at the “money theory” of modern times, which “corrupts the Church, corrupts the household, destroys honour, beauty and life throughout the universe. It is the death incarnate of Modernism and the so-called science of its pursuit is the most cretinous, speechless,

---

* Letters to Norton.
** Morley: Life of Cobden.
paralyzing plague that has yet touched the brains of mankind." He takes the preachers to task for giving support to Mill and to Mammon. He lashes at his countrymen for letting "the destinies of twenty myriads of human souls" be determined by "the chances of an enlarged or diminished interest in trade." His invectives become increasingly violent until they reach the point of hysteria: "We English; as a nation, know not, and care not to know, a single broad or basic principle of human justice. We have only our instincts to guide us. We, will, hit anybody who hits us. We will take care of our own families and our own pockets; and we are characterized in our present phase of enlightenment mainly by rage in speculation, lavish expenditure on suspicion or panic, generosity whereon generosity is useless, anxiety for the souls of savages, regardlessness of those of civilized nations, enthusiasm for, liberation of blacks, apathy to enslavement of whites, proper horror of regicide, polite respect for populicide, sympathy with those whom we can no longer serve, and reverence for the dead, whom we have ourselves delivered to death." Sometimes the invective turns into a shriek of loathing for "this yelping, carnivorous crowd, mad for money and lust, tearing each other to pieces, and starving each other to death, and leaving heaps of their dung and ponds of their spittle on every palace floor and altar stone." When we read Ruskin we are often made to feel, as Leslie Stephen said, that we are "listening to the cries of a man of genius, placed in a pillory to be pelted by a thick-skinned mob, and urged by a sense of his helplessness to utter the bitterest taunts he can invent."

---

1 Cook: Letter to Dr. John Brown.
2 Fora Clavigera.
3 Letter to the Scotsman August 6, 1859.
4 Works XVIII, 225 (Arrows of the Chase).
5 Works VIII, Letter XLV11 (Fora Clavigera).
6 Leslie Stephen: Mr. Ruskin’s Recent Writings” Fraser’s Magazine June 1874.
Q. 30 Write a note on Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) as an Essayist and an Historian.

Ans. Thomas Babington Macaulay was one of the leading personalities of the Victorian age. He was the main trumpeter of the material progress and industrial advancement that England had achieved during his time. He was a man of optimistic temperament and viewed every form of progress with an eye of appreciation and admiration. He was also a voracious reader, and spent his days and nights in the pursuit of learning and knowledge. He had gathered a rich store of information by his patient application to history and literature, and used his knowledge to his advantage both in his Essays and History. He was gifted with a remarkable memory. He could retain facts and reproduce them with flaming vividness and accuracy. He remembered many literary classics, like Paradise Lost by heart, and for literature 'as the imaginative exploration of the paradoxes of experience', he had a warm love. "Macaulay's passion for reading, and his marvellous retentive memory are the two characteristics that affect his work the most. Both as an historian and essayist his range of knowledge and faculty of vivid presentiment are always in evidence.'"

Macaulay comes before his readers in several capacities—as an Essayist, as an historian, as a politician, as a lawgiver, and above all as a Victorian figure. We are mainly concerned here with Macaulay as an Essayist and as an Historian.

As an Essayist.

The essays of Macaulay cover a wide field, but they can broadly be divided into two classes, the literary or critical, and the historical. Most of the essays of Macaulay were in the first instance contributed to magazines and seemed to have only six-weeks life. But soon they were lifted out of the ephemeral pages of current periodicals, and were presented to the reading public in book form. They have survived to-day as the monumental works of his life and will gaily pass on to the next generation.

The famous literary and critical essays of Macaulay are on Milton, Addison, Goldsmith, Dryden, Leigh Hunt, and others.
Byron, Bacon, Bunyan, Boswell, Southey and Dr. Johnson. Among the popularly well known historical essays the most vividly and picturesquely written are those on Lord Clive, Warren Hastings, Chatham, Marlborough, Fredrick the Great, Horace Walpole, William Pitt, and Sir William Temple. Most of these essays were written in the prime of life and were published between 1825 and 1845. He made good use of all the available matter on the subject and penned his essays with the object of providing delight to his readers. Macaulay wrote all his essays, literary as well as historical, from the historical point of view, rather than from the stand point of a critic. ‘I am nothing’ he says, ‘if not historical.’ If we take away the historical element from Macaulay’s essays they lose all their charm. “Take away the historical element from them” says Hugh Walker, “and there is scarcely anything left.” Macaulay loves to evade the task of literary analysis and treats the subject from the historian’s point of view instead.

In the essays of Macaulay we need not search for accuracy of facts. “They are often one-sided and inaccurate” says W. J. Long. “His opinions” observes Albert, “were often one-sided and his great parade of knowledge was often flamed with actual error or distorted by his craving for antithesis and epigram.” His judgments on Hastings, Marlborough, Boswell and Milton are faulty and have not been upheld by later critics. They betray ignorance of facts and proper evaluation of character. “Evidently Macaulay had not in the highest degree the power to comprehend character. In the description of externals he was admirable and to a certain degree he could penetrate motives but he had not that intuitive insight which give life to the historical figures of Shakespeare, Scott, and Carlyle.”

Macaulay’s essays are wanting in depth and philosophical reflection. He could not impart any reflective and philosophical vein to his writings. Gladstone’s observation that Macaulay is “always conversing or reading or composing, but reflecting never” is applicable to most of his writings.

Whatever may be the shortcomings of the Essays from the point of view of matter and judgment, it cannot be denied that

---

* Hugh Walker: The Literature of the Victorian Era.
they are extremely pleasant in reading, and owe their popularity to their immense readability. "The difficulty with him is not, as with same others (the uncongenial Freeman, for example), to take him up, but to put him down: the eye races through those exciting, easy pages, fearful lest the chapter or the essay come to an end too soon. And the Essays, though not up to the standard Macaulay reached in the History, reveal this particular quality at its highest.*

The Essays of Macaulay are indispensable for young people who are on the threshold of intellectual advancement and are just starting to take an interest in things of the mind. "How many people owe their first intellectual stimulus to the Essays. Arthur Balfour, in his Autobiography, has expressed the obligation of those hundreds of people, with minds worth speaking of, for whom the Essays opened a door to higher things."**

On the technical side, the popularity of the essays is to be found in the wonderful style in which they have been penned. More important and delightful than the matter is the picturesque, oratorical, conversational, and debating style in which Macaulay presents his observations in his writings, particularly his Essays. "The quiet purity of Goldsmith, the severe perfection of Landor, the long harmonies of Ruskin are outside the range of Macaulay" says Hugh Walker, "but all the same he wins us by his eloquence, rhetoric, picturesqueness, clarity, vigour, and mastery of vivid description and racy narration." The debating qualities of his essays have been recognised by all critics. "Macaulay conducts his argument, like a debater rather than like a philosopher: his style might be called the apotheosis of thes debating style. His debater's style, with its sharp contrasts and deft balances and comparisons, its exaggerations and simplifications and its rhetorical black and-white surface is for all its obvious weaknesses, a noble prose style, always full of life and energy, never languid or merely exhibitionist or self consciously sophisticated. It is a style admirably suited to Macaulay's temperament and to the tone and mood and purposes of his writing."†

---

* A. L. Rowe: Macaulay's Essays.
** Ibid.
Macaulay as an Historian

Macaulay originally planned to write a history of England from the accession of James II in 1685, to the death of George IV in 1830 “in a manner so concrete, picturesque, and dramatic that his narrative of actual events should have the fascination of romance,” and as he himself desired, should have the “power to supersede the last fashionable novel upon the dressing table of young ladies.” What Macaulay really intended to do was not to present a dry-as-dust account of the events of history. He sought to bring the colour of his lively imagination and the richness of his majestic style to the narration of historical events and the portrayal of historical characters. He strove to leave behind Sir Walter Scott in the creation of vivid history without much of fiction in it. Even if a little admixture of exaggeration was needed, Macaulay had no objection to that, for in his view, “The best portraits are perhaps those in which there is a slight mixture of caricature, and we are not certain that the best histories are not those in which a little on the exaggeration of fictitious narrative is judiciously employed. Something is lost in accuracy but much is gained in effect.”

Macaulay could not complete the History according to his plan. Only five volumes covering a history of sixteen years were published during his life time. “It has been estimated” says Long, “that to complete the work on the same scale would require some fifty volumes and the labour of one man for over a century.”

Macaulay’s aim was to provide a detailed and graphic picture of the history of the period for which he had a special liking. Before penning down his thoughts, Macaulay “read numberless pages, consulted original documents and visited the scenes which he intended to describe.” Thackeray made the significant remark which savours of exaggeration that “Macaulay reads twenty books to write a sentence and travels one hundred miles to make a line of description.”

Macaulay’s History is a pageant of pictures, a panorama of visual history, unfolding the events and portraying the historical characters with vividness and realism. Macaulay makes his History as engrossingly captivating and interesting as a novel of Sir Walter
Scott. He gives to his characters the reality of flesh and blood. His narration is more picturesque than a picture book presenting scenes of History. He gives a "broad and luminous canvas covered with firmly delineated pictures, which change before our eyes into new groupings, and give place to other spectacles as in a magic."

"The merits and defects of Essays are repeated in The History of England, the former heightened and the latter subdued by the greater labour bestowed. The style is essentially the same, but is more chastened. There are the same tricks and mannerisms, the same brilliant colouring, the same tendency to exaggeration, the same fondness for antithesis. At first the reader is probably swept away by admiration of its rapid facility, its rush and brilliancy, its fertility of illustration, its strength and effectiveness. Afterwards he may gradually become conscious of those defects which are suggested by the adjective "metallic" which Arnold applies in censure to Macaulay's prose and Mrs. Browning by way of praise to his verse."* Lord Houghton calls Macaulay "a great historical orator and oratorical historian," and R. E. Jebb, one of the ablest of his critics, endorses this view. Macaulay was nothing if not oratorical and his style is almost the perfection of rhetorical excellence.

"His energetic and persuasive style, his adroit manipulation of illustrative facts, and artful alternation between generalization and detail, combine to make him one of the most readable of extended histories."**

Macaulay's History in spite of the vividness and picturesqueness of details is deficient in many ways. Compton-Rickett pinpoints the defects of Macaulay's History. "In the first place, Macaulay's imagination is panoramic, not stereoscopic. He can see with force and clearness the outlines of his pictures; but he rarely sees beyond the outline. He sees, but does not see through. His pages present us with a wonderfully varied and extensive surface of life. But it is only surface. He has scarcely anything of Carlyle's insight into character—that quality which gives stereoscopic body to The French Revolution."

* Hugh Walker: The Literature of the Victorian Era.
** David Daiches: A Critical History of English Literature, Volume II.
"In the second place, there is no philosophy in Macaulay's outlook.* The world for him is a brilliant pageant; and admittedly the aspects of peasantry are worth nothing. But it is something more than a pageant, it is a play of elemental forces kept in fitful leash by the hand of civilization and breaking away at times with dramatic violence. Macaulay saw nothing of this; or if he did, it had no interest for him."

Macaulay had been the victim of prejudices. He had bias which is not a virtue but a demerit in a historian. He looked at history from a coloured glass. He magnified the virtues of those heroes whom he liked and condemned others who were not his liking. "He was apt to see through a magnifying-glass what was in their favour, and to look through the wrong end of the telescope at whatever milited against them." Macaulay eulogised Whig heroes. "His heroes are more estimable but infinitely more commonplace." They do not impress us as the heroes of Carlyle. "Neither, it must be admitted, was there anything very attractive in the objects of his admiration. The English Whigs were a useful class of people, but they were neither intellectually great nor morally inspiring. They were the apopthesis of the commonplace, and the selection of them as heroes proves that there was some foundation for the charge of Philistinism which was brought against the historian."**

What is Macaulay's place among the Historians of the world? He is assured of a high place at least among the Historians of England. If Macaulay is inferior to the greatest historians, he is inferior to them alone, but among the historians of his country, he has a place of pride. "He had not the breadth and range of Gibbon; he has not the vivid poetic gift of Carlyle or his wonderful power of penetrating character. He is no rival to Thucydides in the art of tracing the sequence of cause and effect in human history, or to Tacitus in the keen and terse wisdom of his utterances. But he is a consummate master

---

* "We do not find in Macaulay a profound view of underlying causes: that large intellectual interpretation of events which constitute the Philosophy of history" (Moody-Lovett).

** Hugh Walker: The Literature of the Victorian Era.
of narrative, and in this respect is probably surpassed only by Herodotus."

Q. 40. Write an essay on Cardinal Newman (1801-1890) and the Oxford Movement.

Ans. Cardinal Newman was one of the greatest Victorian writers and the greatest figure in the Oxford Movement. He was at heart a religious man, a man of deep faith and conscience, and it pained him much to view the forces of industrialism and scientific advancement making strong dents on the faith of the religious-minded men and women of the age. Newman, with a faithful band of followers, strove hard to stem the tide of advancing materialism and keep away from the fold of Roman Catholic church the vices that had crept into the church of England. Newman and his followers started, what is known in Church history as the Oxford Movement, with the deliberate object of keeping alive the ritualism and faith of Roman Catholic religion, against the popular views of liberal Christians like Thomas Arnold, who fastened on the ethical significance of Christianity and minimised the importance of ritual, of "theological Articles of opinion" "and all this stuff about the true Church." The Oxford Movement stood against too much insistence on reason and proof in religious matters, and sought to revive the faith, rituals and dogmas of Roman Catholic religion. It aimed "at the restoration of the poetry, the mystic symbolism, the spiritual power, and the beauty of the architecture, ritual and service which had characterised the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages."* Just as the Romanticists had infused life into literature by turning their gaze to the Middle Ages, similarly the leaders of this movement—Newman, Keble and Pusey, looked to the past for inspiration, and Newman himself asserted that his movement had owed much to Scott, who turned men's minds in the direction of the Middle Ages.

As the leader of the Oxford Movement Newman repudiated Protestant individualism and bibliolatry, nineteenth-century liberal Christianity, and the eighteenth century deistical argument

---
from design. He upheld devotion, faith, rituals, dogmas in preference to reason and proof, and wrote with vigour in defence of his view point—"After all man is not a reasoning animal, he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal. Life is not long enough for a religion of inferences, we shall never have done beginning, if we determine to begin with proof."* In fact, the whole Oxford Movement was a romantic rebellion against the perfunctory, imaginative routine into which the Church of England had fallen, and aimed at the revival of true Roman Catholic faith in an age of machinery.

The Oxford Movement failed to have any influence on the psychological life of the day, and its impact on the growth of literature was not substantial. It could win the allegiance of a few Pre-Raphaelite poets and had some effect on the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

Cardinal Newman's conversion to Roman Catholicism became an object of severe criticism and Charles Kingsley charged him of insincerity and duplicity in changing from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism, and propagating the Oxford Movement. To vindicate his position as a Roman Catholic and his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church, Newman had to come out with a spirited defence in his famous book Apologia Pro Vita Sua. The whole book is a vigorous reply to Kingsley's charge of wanton dishonesty on the part of Newman in making propaganda in favour of Roman Catholicism. Newman's standpoint is clear and comprehensible. He traces the history of his religious beliefs and comes to the conclusion "that his conversion was only the final step in a course he had been following since boyhood." "As a revelation of a soul's history" says W. J. Long, "and as a model of pure, simple, unaffected English, this book, entirely apart from its doctrinal teaching, deserves a high place in our prose literature." Newman had the better of the argument. His defence is still read while Kingsley's attack is forgotten. Cardinal Newman's other religious works are Via Media Callista and the Grammar of Assent. They are not of much interest to a student of literature.

More interesting and valuable than the theological writings

* Newman: Apologia Pro Vita Sua.
of Newman is his educational and inspiring book *The Idea of University*, which provides to the modern University leaders the basic principles concerning the site of the University, the aim of University education, and the qualifications of the University teachers. The most significant part of the book is mainly concerned with the propagation of the ideals of liberal knowledge and intellectual advancement in University circles. The primary aim of the University in Newman's view is not to prepare students for professional courses, but to impart them liberal education and make them gentlemen and ladies in life. Newman's views are anti-Baconian and he condemns the utilitarian view of education. He is quite clear in his mind that liberal education, "which stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel, expects no compliments, refuses to be informed by any end."* It can alone bring about the salvation of the intelligensia of the country.

Cardinal Newman employed a classical way of writing in the expression of his thoughts. His prose style is characterised by lucidity, transparency, restraint and balance. Newman's style is indeed, "a beautiful style not beautiful with the rhythmic opulence of Ruskin, nor with the graceful urbanity of Arnold; nor with the fantastic suggestiveness of De Quincey; but beautiful with a limpid lucidity, a chastened eloquence, a gentle persuasiveness."**

The diction employed by Newman has strength, elegance and suppleness. He knows how to make the use of irony in an effective manner. He is also a debater and a polemical writer, capable of driving a nervous and pressing offensive in a rhetorical and oratorical style.

"In the main Newman is a representative of that perfected plain style which has been more than once indicated as the best for all purposes in English. It is in him refined still further by an extra dose of classical and academic correctness, flavoured with quaint though never over-mannered turns of phrase, and shot in every direction with a quintessential individuality, rarely attempting, though never failing when it does attempt, the purely

* Newman: *Idea of a University*.
** Arthur Compton Rickett: *A History of English Literature*. 
rhetorical, but instinct with a strange quiver of religious and poetical spirit."*

Q. 41. Give your estimate of Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) as a Critic and as a Prose-Writer.

Ans. Matthew Arnold was not only a great poet but also a great critic and prose writer of the Victorian age. He was a critic of literature as well as a critic of the social, economic and religious life of his times. For Arnold, a critic of literature was inevitably intertwined with social criticism, for criticism is a comprehensive term, its object being to focus attention on all aspects of human life and society. Arnold defined criticism as, "the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science to see the object as in itself it really is." Arnold comes before his readers as a critic of society as well as a critic of literature, and in both these fields he sheds a new light and opens new avenues and channels for his followers like T. S. Eliot, Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More.

Formative Influences on Matthew Arnold.

In order to understand the full significance of Arnold's work in criticism it will be necessary to examine the formative influences on his mind and art as a critic of literature and society. The greatest influence on Arnold was undoubtedly that of the classics. He had a great admiration for Greek thought and culture, and burnt incense at the altar of Greek masters in the field of drama, prose, and poetry. He said, "it is time for us to Hellenise and to praise knowing, for we have Habraised too much and over valued doing". Arnold had a great respect for the 'sanity' of Greek literature, and sought to introduce the simplicity, balance, lucidity, method, and precision of Greek writers in English literature and criticism.

Next to the Greeks, Arnold was influenced by Goethe, the German writer of great eminence and fame during the nineteenth century. He regarded Goethe "as Europe's sagest head, and the physician of the Iron Age." His love of self-culture and discipline of thoughts, was mainly derived from Goethe. From Goethe, Matthew Arnold learnt the importance

* George Saintsbury: A Short History of English Literature.
of *objective poetry* and *great action* in poetic composition. Goethe had remarked, "Poetry of the highest type manifests itself as altogether objective, when once it withdraws itself from the external world to become subjective it begins to degenerate. So long as the poet gives utterance merely to his subjective feelings, he has no right to the title." These words of Goethe had a great influence on Matthew Arnold and gave a twist to his insistence on the objective standpoint in the appreciation of poetry.

Among the French masters of art and criticism Arnold was mainly influenced by Sainte-Beuve and Senancour. Arnold had met Sainte-Beuve at Paris in 1859, and ever since that historic meeting the influence of the French critic became palpable in his critical writings. "Sainte-Beuve's influence" says William Robbins, "was mainly in the field of literary criticism, a matter of 'method,' to use Arnold's own world. His tact, his humanistic standards, the objectivity and *curiosity* which made of him a 'naturalist' in literary and other criticism, above all the balance struck with unerring precision these were what Arnold admired and tried to emulate."* From Sainte-Beuve Arnold learnt the lesson of disinterestedness and detachment in judging a work of art. Arnold's statement that criticism is, "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world" is an echo from an essay of Sainte-Beuve where the French master had spoken of the critic's task of *introducing, 'Un certain souffle de disinteressement.'* Sainte-Beuve's *Portrait Litteraire* is the structural model for Arnoldian essay in criticism. From Sainte-Beuve Arnold also picked up the necessity of co-relating the biographical details of an artist with his creative work, and judging his creative production in the light of his biographical facts. Sainte-Beuve had stated, "Literature is not for me distinct or at least separable from the rest of man and human organisation; I can taste a work, but it is difficult for me to judge it independently of my knowledge of the man himself." Arnold accepted this view of the French critic, and his own observations of Romantic poets in *Essays in Criticism* are governed by this

* William Robbins: *The Ethical Idealism of Matthew Arnold.*
principle of judging an author in the light of his life's achievements and endeavours.

Another great Frenchman who left a lasting impression on Arnold's critical thought was Senancour, whose Obermann considerably influenced his way of life and thought. Arnold paid him his warm tribute in two long poems Obermann and Obermann Once More. Arnold was considerably influenced by Senancour's profound inwardness, austere sincerity, the delicate feeling for nature, and the melancholy eloquence of his writings.

Having examined the formative influences on Arnold's critical and literary theories, let us now switch on to an examination of his critical canons—and his critical observations about literary productions.

Arnold's Canons of Criticism.

The first great principle of criticism enunciated by Arnold is that of disinterestedness or detachment which can be practised by 'keeping aloof from what is called the practical view of things.' Disinterestedness on the part of the critic implies freedom from all prejudices, personal or historical. A critic should be impersonal, detached and disinterested. He should be above prejudice, bias and favouratism. He should not favour this or that opinion, this or that form of art, but should judge all works of art and authors from the standard of 'disinterested objectivity.' A critic should not be swayed by personal views and opinions about art, religion, politics, and philosophy. He should keep his 'aloofness', for criticism is a "disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world."*

Disinterestedness then is the first great principle of criticism. The disinterested critic should acquire a store house of knowledge, and "equip himself with the knowledge of the best that has been thought and said in the world." A critic's functions in Arnold's view are threefold "First, there is the critic's duty to learn and understand, he must see things as they really are. Thus equipped his second task is to hand on his ideas to others,

* Matthew Arnold: Functions of Criticism.
to convert the world to make the best ideas, prevail. His work in this respect is that of a missionary. He is also preparing an atmosphere favourable for the creative genius of the future-promoting a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power."

Arnold wanted criticism to be lifted from provincialism and limitation of time and space. The critic was a universal figure like a creative artist, and he was as good a mouthpiece of humanity as the literary artist. Criticism should rise above considerations of time, space, politics, and narrow insular feelings. It should be cosmopolitan rather than parochial. "I wish to decide nothing of my own authority" said Arnold, "the great art of criticism is to get oneself out of the way and to let humanity decide." This provinciality can be avoided by adopting the **comparative method** of treatment in critical evaluation of a work of art. "The critic must know the best that has been thought and said, both in ancient and in modern times, not only in his own language, but in the languages from which his native literature is derived, and in those which are producing literature concurrently. It is thus, by the comparative method, by seeing how others do, what we also are impelled to attempt that provinciality is avoided."

Arnold advocated the comparative method rather than historical method for the critic. Criticising the historical method Arnold says, "The method of historical criticism, is the great and famous power in the present day. The advice to study the character of an author and the circumstances in which he has lived, in order to account to oneself for his work, is excellent. But it is a perilous doctrine that from such a study the right understanding of his work will spontaneously issue." Arnold discarded the grandiose theories of Taine concerning 'race, milieu, moment,' and concentrated on the comparative study of great masters of criticism in all ages and climes.

Coming to actual literary composition, Arnold laid emphasis on the principle of suitable _Action_ for the drama or poetry. "All depends upon the subject. Choose a fitting action, penetrate yourself with the feeling of its situations: this done, everything else will follow." In this respect Arnold followed
Aristotle rather than Dryden, for it was the Greek critic who had laid greater emphasis on plot or the fable. Like Aristotle, Arnold also believed that the action should command gravity, seriousness, and sublimity. A work of art wanting in serious action was not a great work, and it was the duty of an artist to choose suitable action for his composition."

Matthew Arnold believed that good action ought to be presented in a good style, the grand style. He had his own views about the grand style. He stated that grand style, "arises in poetry when a noble nature poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or severity a serious subject."

Matthew Arnold allied literature to society and stated that, "poetry is a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty." Poetry in Arnold's views had the noble function of shedding light on the conditions of life and ennobled them by keeping aloft the higher principles of morality and ethical life.

The above stated critical principles of Matthew Arnold have been subjected to a searching examination by Saintsbury in his History of English Criticism. He has not accepted all the critical canons of Arnold, and has taken exception to his remarks on the Grand Style and its application of Milton and Shakespeare. Arnold's insistence that poetry is a criticism of life has been considered a commonplace remark because, "all literature is the application of ideas to life: and to say that poetry is the application of ideas to life, under the conditions fixed for poetry, is simply a vain repetition." *

Matthew Arnold's chief critical works.

Arnold's main critical works are on The Preface To The Poems of 1853, On Translating Homer, The Study of Celtic Literature, and Essays in Criticism. We will discuss the contents and value of each of them one by one.

The Preface.

Arnold made his first appearance as a critic in the Preface to the poems of 1853. It was in this preface that Arnold listed the works.

stress on the importance of the subject—"the great action"—and the study of the ancients. He also elaborated his view of the grand style and its proper handling by the creative artist.

On Translating Homer 1861.

In this work Arnold, "applies himself to the appreciation of actual literature, and to the giving of reasons for his appreciation, in a way new, delightful and invaluable."* He defines criticism as, "The endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science to see the object as in itself it really is." The definition of criticism, outlined in this work forms the basis of Arnold's later work and gives a pip to his comprehensive view of criticism. Arnold also presents his views about the grand style in a more emphatic way than he had done earlier in the Preface. He says, "The grand style arises in poetry when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or severity a serious subject." The grand style in Arnold's view is applicable only to Homer, Dante, and Milton, and cannot be applied to Shakespeare, Spenser or Shelley. Saintsbury does not agree with Arnold's limitation of the grand style to a few limited poets, and says, "For my part, I will not loose the fragile boat or incur the danger of the roof—speaking in Pickwickian Horatian manner—with any one who denies the grand style to Donne or to Dryden to Spenser or to Shelley. The grand is the transcendent and it is blasphemy against the spirit of poetry to limit the fashions and the conditions of transcendency."**

The Study of Celtic Literature.

In this book Arnold makes a study of Celtic literature. He finds in this literature, the dominant characteristics of 'melancholy', 'natural magic', and 'vagueness', and he comes to the conclusion that the presence of these qualities in the poetry of the Romantic poets is due to the influence of Celtic literature on them. Arnold's assumptions are not based on facts, for neither Shakespeare nor Keats had the faintest evidence of Celtic blood or Celtic influence. Saintsbury takes Arnold to task for

** Ibid
offering remarks which cannot be proved by actual facts. His criticism of this book is worth quoting, "where melancholy, and natural magic and the vague do strongly and especially, if not exclusively, appear in Celtic poetry, I do not deny, because I do not know; that Mr. Arnold's evidence is not sufficient to establish their special if not exclusive prevalence, I deny, because I do not know. That there is melancholy, natural magic, the vague in Shakespeare and Keats, I admit, because I know; that Mr. Arnold has any valid argument showing that their presence is due to Celtic influence, I do not admit, because I know that he has produced none. With bricks of ignorance and mortar of assumption you can build no critical house."

The Essays in Criticism

The two volumes of Essays in Criticism (1865-1888) have an important place in Arnold's prose works. The first and second series of essays are, in outlook, all of a piece: they are contrasted only in subject. In the first series Arnold deals with minor authors like Juliet, Maurice and his sister Eugenie de Guerin, or remote authors like Spinoza, Marcus Aurelius and Heine. "The list of names looks like an appeal to intellectual snobbery, and so it is these are not authors any English Critic had tackled before, and they are offered to us now as a cure for intellectual isolationism. With Arnold, indeed, snobbery enters English criticism with a vengeance, and it has never been quite eradicated since."* In the second and third series he deals with The Study of Poetry, Wordsworth, Byron, Thomas Gray, Keats, Milton, and Emerson. Arnold's observations on Wordsworth, Keats, Emerson and Byron have met with general approval, but his denunciation of Shelley as 'an ineffectual angel' has not been accepted by any critic; for the angel is very effectual and provides a tougher criticism of life than Arnold's rejection of life. But all the same the essays in criticism are remarkable intellectual feats, and not to have read them, is not to be in the swim of active intellectual life of the day. "No body after reading Essays in Criticism, has any excuse for not being a critic"** Arnold's Essays in Criticism

* George Watson: The Literary Critics.
** Herbert Paul: Matthew Arnold.
was a landmark in the history of English criticism and prose writing. The book created a stir in the literary world by virtue of its style, the novelty and confidence of its opinions and the wide and curious range of its subjects. It silenced the heresies of popular critics of the day and pierced through the armoury of self-sufficiency and provinciality in criticism.

Arnold's Social, Political and Theological Criticism.

Among the works dealing with social, political and theological criticism, the pride of place has to be given to *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). It is a work of supreme importance for the social chronicler of the age. Here Arnold attacks the Barbarians and Philistines of the age for their growing craze for materialism and their disregard for religious and spiritual values. They neither have sweetness nor light which constitute real culture. Arnold pleads for the propagation of culture and intellectual preference for the attainment of an ideal society.

Among the books dealing with political criticism are *England the Italian Question* (1859), *Mixed Essays* (1879), *Irish Essays* (1882) and *Discoveries in America* (1885),

Among the theological works of Matthew Arnold, special emphasis has to be given to *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), *God and the Bible* (1875), and *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877). On these religious works we notice Arnold as a critic of religious dogmas and stereotyped theology. He is severely opposed to the dogmatic elements in religion and is a bitter critic of creeds and blind beliefs in religious matters. His *Literature and Dogma* is a masterpiece in this direction, and rudely shakes the mistaken religions of his contemporaries. The value of Arnold’s religious criticism lies in the fact that “they face the question of possible disappearance of all existing forms of faith, and the rejection of what is called ‘supernaturalism;’ and they indicate the belief of the writer that even if theology were swept into the rubbish-heap of forgotten literature, and miracles were universally rejected, what is life-giving and sustaining in religion would still remain.”

*Hugh Walker: The Literature of the Victorian Era.*
Arnold’s limitations and merits as a critic.

The study of Arnold’s canons of criticism and his main critical works brings out his limitations as well as merits as a critic. Directing first our attention to his limitations, we are reminded of Garrod’s remark that Matthew Arnold ‘was a man of letters who became a literary critic by accident.’ “He was primarily interested in educational, religious and theological subjects, and criticism of literature was a passing phase of his life. I am not sure that it was in his heart to be a literary critic at all. Nor for the most part was Matthew Arnold’s public interested in him as a literary critic.” He gave a wider connotation to criticism and submerged literary criticism into the general criticism of society.

Arnold was not a scientific critic. He was more of a moralist and judged every work of art from the moralistic viewpoint. For him a poetry of revolt against moral ideas was a poetry of revolt against life. Modern taste is not in favour of Arnold’s moral obsession in critical matters.

Arnold sometimes offered criticism without adequate knowledge on the subject. He built his critical house on the brick of ignorance, and wanted to support it by the mortar of assumption. Prof. Saintsbury has severely taken him to task for his ignorance of Celtic literature in The Study of Celtic Literature. He deplores his lamentable ignorance, and considers Arnold unlearned as compared to Johnson, Coleridge.

Arnold failed to practise the principle of disinterestedness in his criticism of English poets. He made a lot of fuss about disinterestedness, but was swayed by personal prejudices, when he came to criticise Chaucer and Shelley. He was dogmatic in his approach particularly in dealing with the Romantics. “Arnold’s critical programme of ‘a disinterested endeavour’ to seek out and advocate the best is not only hopelessly question-begging: it is also hopelessly out of key with Arnold’s own achievements. The Essays in Criticism and the Biblical reinterpretations are not even remotely disinterested. They are works of passionate partisanship by a skilful, urbane, not always candid controversialist with a zest for opposition.

* H. W. Garrod: Poetry and Criticism of Life
Their virtues which are considerable, are essentially polemical. If Arnold had seriously tried to be 'disinterested' his career as a critic would not have happened at all."** His cult of classicism, or as Saintsbury calls it neo-tato-classicism marred much of his critical writings.

His method of hammering a point was sometimes nauseating. The way in which he 'sells poetry by the pound' in his essay on *The Study of Poetry* is not much appreciated in our times.

Arnold's dislike of the historical method of criticism is not upheld to-day. Outside the nineteenth century, the time factor did not exist for him. His insistence on the comparative method of criticism in preference to the historical method has not been upheld in modern criticism. "It shows how untypical a Victorian critic he was."**

Arnold was guilty of tautology and repetition, incoherence and vacuous statements in his critical observations. Here is a passage from *The Study of Poetry* bringing out the defects of his critical approach pointed above.

"In poetry, as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find its consolation and stay: But the consolation and stay will be of power in proportion to the power of the criticism of life. And the criticism of life will be of power in proportion as the poetry conveying it is excellent than inferior, sound rather than unsound or half sound, true rather than untrue or half true."

Does this really mean more than that all things considered, good poems are better than bad poems. Arnold's egoism as a critic stands in the way of his excellence as a critic. He obtrudes his personality in his critical observations and departs from his standard of disinterested objectivity. "His way of writing compels attention, but that attention is directed, not on his object, but on himself and his object together. In the essay on *Amiel* he stands like an unyielding rock washed round by the waves of Amiel. His essays are monologues. We cannot imagine him

George Watson: *The Literary Critics.

* bid.
employing, as Dryden did, the dialogue form. Arnold’s egotism accounts for the high-pitched conversational tone, the ripple of inspired extemporisation. It all makes away from criticism because you cannot show off and be disinterested at the same time.”*

Matthew Arnold has also been charged with snobbery and false display of learning. “With Arnold indeed, snobbery enters English criticism with a vengeance and it has never been quite eradicated since.”**

“There seems no good reason now for accepting Arnold’s claims to greatness as a critic. Those who see in Arnold’s essay evidence of a major critical intelligence should set themselves to consider, the following objections. Where first in the entire Corpus of Arnold’s criticism, do we see the ‘great critical effort’ at work upon any English text—upon a single play of Shakespeare or poem of Milton, Wordsworth or Keats?”***

In the foregoing pages we have pin-pointed the shortcomings and defects of Mathew Arnold’s criticism. The defects need not detract from his merits as a critic. He was indeed a colossus in the history of English criticism. Before Arnold English criticism was in a state of chaos. It was Arnold who gave coherence and system, and taught people how to criticise books and authors. “Criticism in England might be said to have started and ended with Matthew Arnold; before him there was a chaos after him a multitudinous sea.”†

What were the positive services rendered by Matthew Arnold to English Criticism. Saintsbury, the severe critic of Arnold, has to recognise the merits and services of Arnold as a critic in the following lines taken from his A History of English Criticism.

“His services, therefore, to English Criticism, whether as a ‘preceptist’ as or an actual craftsman cannot possibly be overestimated. In the first respect, he was, if not the absolute

* Tillotson: Criticism and the Nineteenth Century.
** George Watson: The Literary Critics.
*** Ibid.
† Philip M. Jones: Introduction to Twentieth Century Critical Essays (World Classics).
reformer, the leader in reform, of the slovenly and disorganised condition into which Romantic criticism had fallen. In the second, the things which he had not, as well as those which he had, combined to give him a place among the very first. He had not the sublime and ever new inspired inconsistency of Dryden. Dryden, in Mr. Arnold's place, might have begun by cursing Shelley a little, but would have ended by blessing him all but wholly. He had not the robustness of Johnson, the supreme critical reason of Coleridge; scarcely the exquisite, if fitful, appreciation of Lamb, or the full-blooded and passionate appreciation of Hazlitt. But he had an exacter knowledge than Dryden's; the fineness of his judgment shows finer beside Johnson's bluntness, he could not wool-gather like Coleridge; his range was far wider than Lamb's; his scholarship and his delicacy alike gave him an advantage over Hazlitt. Systematic without being hidebound, well read (if not exactly learned) without pedantry; delicate and subtle without weakness or dilettantism; Catholic without eclecticism; enthusiastic without indiscriminateness,—Mr. Arnold is one of the best and most precious of teachers on his own side. And when at those moments which are, but should not be, rare, the Goddess of Criticism descends Like Cambwa and her lion team into the lists, and with her Nepen the makes man forget sides and sects in common love of literature, then he is one of the best and most precious of critics.”

“No English or American critic since Coleridge has had a more extensive influence than Mr. Arnold. For his influence has operated in at least three ways. He was, in one sense, something of a spokesman for nineteenth-century poetic taste. Secondly, through Arnold, more cosmopolitan ideas became readily accessible to English speaking critics and readers. After becoming current, these have passed unobtrusively into much of the criticism of the past forty years, including that which now looks on Arnold himself is either academically ineffectual or else as an evil spirit representing, “romantic tastes” in style. Lastly much of the modern defence of the central educational value of literature rests—where the defence is impressive—on classical
premises resurrected and popularized, however vaguely and sketchily by Arnold.”

Arnold’s Prose Style.

Matthew Arnold’s prose style was considerably influenced by the example of French masters of prose like Sainte-Beuve and Renan, and it was his endeavour to introduce the same method, precision, proportion and arrangement in his prose writings as was found in the works of the French writers. Arnold succeeded in his mission, and his prose style is characterised by all those qualities dear to a classical writer of English prose. Arnold was considerably influenced by the example of Addison and Steele, and it was his effort to make English prose free from the vices of the provincial, Corinthian, and the Asiatic styles of Newman, Macaulay, and Kingslake.

Arnold’s prose is mainly characterised by lucidity and clarity. He is clear and precise in his expression. His prose is transparent and crystal clear like a limpid stream. Suavity and serenity are the other hallmarks of his style. He is never loud or violent, and rarely allows himself to be swept away by the gush of powerful rhetoric.

Arnold’s prose bears the stamp of his poetic afflatus, and his sentences are coloured by his poetic feelings. “It would do wrong” says Oliver Elton “to Matthew Arnold to sever his prose which is often that of a poet, from his verse into which the thought and temper of his prose continually find their way.” His criticism of Shelley as “a beautiful and ineffectual angel beating his luminous wings in the void in vain” exhibits his poetic way of exposing Shelley’s idealism. But generally speaking we do not come across a super abundance of polyphonic words in his prose writings, and he has no special flair for rhythmic and musical words like Pater and Symons. His is not a beaded style whose thoughts are lost in its garniture. It has glitter and gusto, but not an exuberance of these qualities. Arnold’s symmetry and proportion have a greater appeal to us than his poetic touches. His sentence construction is based on the Greek and Latin principles of balance, and proportion,

* Walter Jackson Bates: Matthew Arnold. (From Criticism: The Major Texts).
harmony, precision and symmetry.

"Arnold was a propagandist for culture, and in his propagandist books and essays he developed a style admirably suited to his purposes. He projects his own temper of sweet reasonableness by a variety of artful devices, and at the same time, by his ingenious use of pet terms and phrases deliberately repeated in different contexts, he can express irony, contempt, impatience or schoolmasterly reproval. He is brilliant in his handling of personalities, succeeding in giving a tone of hectoring unreason to his opponents by the way he quotes them and the use he makes of his quotations. He can make his opponents appear ridiculous by gently but firmly repeating and repeating their remarks in a perfectly controlled context of ever-growing irony, until in the end even the courtesy with which he invariably treats them becomes a device for destroying them. He can build up the mood until even his thoroughly polite mentioning of the proper name of an opponent makes the man appear silly. He has nothing of Carlyle's prophetic violence or Ruskin's poetic eloquence; his quieter rhetoric has spoken more cogently to later generations."*

Arnold's prose style is sometimes boring particularly when he repeats his point, in different forms, and obtrudes his personality in an egotistical manner. Rightly Herbert Paul points out that "it would have been well if Arnold had applied the critical pruning knife to the exuberant mannerisms which sometimes disfigure his style."**

Q. 42. Give your estimate of Walter Horatio Pater (1839-1894) as a critic and prose writer of the Victorian Age.
Ans. Walter Pater was one of the greatest critics and prose writers of the Victorian Age. He was at heart a lover of art, beauty, and melody, and belonged to the aesthetic movement sponsored and spearheaded by the Pre-Raphaelite poets. Art for Art's sake was Walter Pater's ideal, and all his prose works and works of criticism are saturated with the spirit of aestheticism. He carried forward the style and message of Flaubert, the French

* David Daiches: A Critical History of English Literature, Volume II
** Herbert Paul: Matthew Arnold.
critic and artist, in his literary and critical works and laid emphasis on the glorification of art for its own sake. He brought the subjective and the impressionistic method into full play in his works, and gave an artistic touch to every thought he expressed in his poetic style.

**Pater's Works**

Walter Pater began his literary career by contributing an essay on Coleridge to a magazine in 1856. His approach to Coleridge was much appreciated and the author was inspired by public acclamation to produce works of art and criticism. Pater’s first volume was *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873). In approaching the Renaissance Pater did not set out to do the works of the excavator or the professional critic. He did not present the whole story of the Renaissance but concentrated his attention on the evaluation of the works of artists like Leonardo de Vinci, Sandro Baticelli and Du-Bellay. He meditated with conscious artfulness over Renaissance art and life in an endeavour to illustrate and implement his view that, “in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one’s objects as it really is, is to know one’s own impressions as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly.”

In 1885, Arnold produced a long novel *Marius the Epicurean*. The story of this novel is set in the second century A.D. in the age of the Antonines. Marius, a young Roman lad is first brought up in the old Roman religion as it lingered on in country places, and then later on he embraces the new Christianity, and cultivates a few Christian friendships. He sacrifices his life for the sake of a Christian friend and presents an ideal of heroic self-sacrifice. Through Marius, Pater seeks to “spiritualise the search for pleasure as far as sacrifice pure and simple.”

“Slowly moving, interlarded with philosophic meditations and discussions, with Latin and Greek phrases woven at intervals into the elaborate English prose, inset Socratic dialogues, carefully wrought reconstructions of places and atmospheres, a retelling of the story of Cupid and Psyche, and continual echoes of late Roman lyric poetry, and of both pagan and early Christian liturgical literature, the book almost sinks under its own weight. If read as a novel it would indeed sink, but it
remains afloat as an extended exploration of the relation between art, religion, philosophy and experience and how this relation can affect the sensibility.”

Imaginary Portraits (1887).

In Imaginary Portraits Pater introduces four characters drawn from different countries and climes. A Prince of Court Painters is the story of Antony Watteau, the famous French painter; Sebastian Van Storck is the picture of young Hollander, Duke Carl of Rosemold is a young German nobleman; Apollo in Picardy reveals a new aspect of Pater's character. To these portraits are added two stories Emerald Uthwart and The Child in the House. They are marked with a wistful charm, and haunting melody.

In 1889 Pater produced his masterpiece Appreciations, a volume containing his views about Charles Lamb, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Sir Thomas Browne, and D.G. Rossetti, with the opening essay on Style wherein Pater expounds his views on style and the search for the exact and precise word in the expression of the 'sense of fact' after the example and practice of Flaubert, the French artist. His criticism is generally discursive, interspersed with biographical and general comments and with philosophical observations as when he breaks into his discussion of Coleridge to defend "the relative spirit" against the tendency "to turn the relative spirit, by its constant dwelling on the more fugitive conditions or circumstances of things, breaking through a thousand rough and brutal classifications, and giving elasticity to inflexible principles."

Pater's interest in classical studies was well reflected in Plato and Platonism (1889) and Greek Studies (1895). His last work is Goston de Labour. It is an unfinished romance concerning his own life.

In all these literary and critical works the stamp of Pater's personality can be palpably felt by the reader. "The mirror which Pater holds up to nature is one which can reflect only himself. There is nothing in the last degree objective in his work; it is

nearly too much to say that the whole of it, whether intentionally or not is autobiographic”

Walter Pater as a Critic.

Walter Pater was an important English critic of the last generation of the nineteenth century, and he stood to the generation in a relation resembling those of Coleridge to the first and Arnold to the latter part of the second. He did not belong to the category of formal and professional critics and whatever literary criticism flowed from his pen was more in the nature of subjective appreciation of a literary work than a judgment on it from an objective standpoint. Aldington is very much to the point when he states in the introduction to the selected works of Walter Pater that, “fundamentally Pater was neither Prose-Poet nor critic, but something in between the two, with the critic or at any rate the man of letters predominating.”

As a critic, it was Pater’s object to bring about the fusion of classical and romantic qualities and cultivate the virtues of both in a manner harmonious, without betraying any discordance in their union. He was gifted with a penetrating insight and he could discover the romantic qualities and aspects of classical life and art, and the classical elements in romantic periods. He had a particular liking for the Renaissance period because it presented a meeting-point of the classical and the romantic spirit. For Pater romanticism centred in ‘curiosity and a love of beauty’, and classicism in a ‘comely order.’ It was Pater’s job as a critic to harmonise these two currents, and this he admirably does in his essay on Romantic and Classic elements in literature. “The true function of Pater is to make the romantic ones more classical, to superimpose the comely order upon beauty, and in doing so inevitably to reduce the strangeness. This he does almost inspite of himself, and yet with the approval of his own judgment.”

As a critic, Pater adopted the subjective or the impressionistic method, which was poles apart from Matthew Arnold’s disinterested pursuit of literature and objective standpoint in approaching a work of art. Pater’s Appreciations are primarily

Hugh Walker: The Literature of the Victorian Era.

** ibid.
from the subjective standpoint and he records his own impressions of their work. "Pater's critical writing then must be regarded mainly as a series of impressions; and if we were to call it impressionist criticism the suggested parallel with impressionist painting would not be wholly inapt. In both there is the formal allegiance to science, but behind it an essentially lyric mood the same neglect of structure and definition in pursuit of delicate evanescent effects that are felt to be more real and more important became more immediate."* Pater is at his best in judging poets and artists who shared his own introspective aesthetic and brooding nature. Browne and Coleridge are given a fair treatment for they were to his liking.

If Pater had chosen to write on Keats he would have produced a nice critical essay on Keats, the romantic lover of beauty and art belonged to his own class and school. Pater would not have succeeded in his criticism of a genius of the free and objective type like Shakespeare. At best Pater is a subjective artist and critic and his method is that of impressionism which Lamb and Hazlitt had brilliantly illuminated.

Pater's interest as a critic was not limited merely to the evaluation of authors, but also to their styles. He was as critical of thought as the style in which the thought was couched. He was sensitive to the colour and gradation of shade in words, and, "there is an amazing delicacy and subtlety in the critical nuances by which he endeavoured to actualise for the reader the object of his criticism. Only one has to read the Essays on Lamb and Rossetti to appreciate."** Pater's advice to literary artists as regards the use of proper style was, "say what you have to say, what you have a will to say, in the simplest, the most direct and exact manner possible, with no surplus age—there is the justification of the sentence so fortunately born, 'entire, smooth and round', that it needs no punctuation, and also (that is the point) of the most elaborate period if it be light in its elaboration."

As a critic of Art, Pater placed music on a much higher pedestal than other fine arts. In one of his essays he pleads

---

* Graham Hough: The Last Romantics.
† Pater's Essay on Style.
fervently for music for here is a fusion of sound and sense, and for him architecture and sculpture are but harmonies and rhythm in stone—music stately expressed. For Pater the ideal is complete union of form and content," and this is best achieved in music. That is the reason why he holds music in high esteem and regards it as the finest of the fine arts. In this respect Pater's own words are characteristic—"If music be the ideal of all art whatever, precisely because in music it is impossible to distinguish the form from the substance or matter, the subject from the expression, then literature, by finding its specific excellence in the absolute correspondence of the term to its import, will be but a filling the condition of all artistic quality in things everywhere of all good art."

Pater makes a difference between good art and great art in his essay on style. Good art is not necessarily great art, for great art must also have something impressive in "the quality of the matter it informs or controls." It is on this, on "its compass, its variety, its alliance to great ends, or the depth of the note of revolt, or the largeness of hope in it, that the greatness of the literary art depends."

Pater's criticism suffers from certain drawbacks. His egoism and subjectivism sometime become nauseating. He lacks a definite four-square originality, and fresh air. "The want of fresh air is the great deficiency in Walter Pater, and a source of the discomfort which he causes to most readers unless they are like himself."**

Inspite of the few defects in Pater's criticism, "he is our greatest critic since Coleridge. He left behind him a little creative writing, and sheaf of what he called Appreciations. Time has little dulled or worn that fabric; it is dyed too fast. What Pater may have lost by his esoteric and not wholly healthy habit of mind, and his indifference to the broad energies of mankind, he more than recovers by his delicacy of sense and his unimpeded concentration. His influence stole out from a narrow circle. It has never reached the larger public, but it has never retreated.***

* Oliver Elton: A Survey of English Literature.
** Ibid.
***
Pater's Prose Style.

Pater's views on Style are embodied in his essay On Style the opening essay in his book Appreciations. Pater laid emphasis on colour, music, and harmony in the expression of thought. He advocated a consciously artistic prose where all superfluities should be eliminated and where the words should be chosen with jealous and loving care, so as to express clearly and precisely the underlying thoughts.

True to what he championed, Pater cultivated a prose style full of colour and melody, marked with ornateness and exquisite polish. "His prose is a skilful music, nervous like that of recent composers, blending the more distant elements of nature and the soul into a harmony."

In Pater's prose we hear echoes of Charles Lamb, De Quincey, Newman, and Ruskin. He was akin to Charles Lamb in the delicacy of touch and the subtle flavour of language. He had a certain nearness to De Quincey in the impassioned autobiographical tendency and a fondness for retrospect and speculative fancy. He was very much in the line of Newman in respect of the restraint, the economy of effect, and the perfect suavity of his work. We have in Pater the suggestiveness of Ruskin, though he often parted company with the great Victorian artist and turned aside in the direction of repression rather than volubility, of severity rather than prodigality.

"The essence of his attempt was to produce prose that has never before been contemplated in English, full of colour and melody, serious, exquisite, ornate. He devoted equal pains both to construction and ornamentation. His object was that every sentence should be weighed, charged with music, haunted with echoes: that it should charm and suggest rather than convince or state. The triumph of his art is to be metrical without metre, rhythmical without monotony. There will, of course, always be those whom this honeyed, laboured cadence will affect painfully with a sense of something stifling and over-perfumed. But to such as can apprehend, feel enjoy, there is the pleasure of perfected art of language, of calculated effect, of realisation with a supreme felicity of the intention of the writer."

* A. C. Benson: Walter Pater.
What is after all the effect of all this highly wrought prose of Walter Pater? The impression it leaves upon us is one of decadence. His prose is not for daily use. "The high wrought English of Pater is indeed beautiful, but the beauty is artificial and the sense it leaves is not a sense of happiness."*

"It is the fashion now to look down on Pater and to abominate his prose; but his interpretation of his criticism has illuminating moments, and if his prose is languorous, it is with the languor of an athlete at rest. He is the conscious prose-artist of the period; he had a good ear, and a respect for words, and though he is not a model to be followed, there is much to be learnt from him." In his prose works we hear echoes of "inexhaustible discontent, languor, and homesickness, the chords of which ring all through our modern literature."

Q. 43. In what ways does Walter Pater stand distinguished from Matthew Arnold as a critic of art, literature and society?

Ans. Matthew Arnold and Walter Pater were the great critics of the later nineteenth century. They were stawlwarts of criticism, but differed in their aims and objectives as critics of art, literature and society.

Matthew Arnold took a comprehensive view of criticism, and included in it not only the criticism of literature and art, but also the criticism of society. In his opinion criticism is an endeavour, in all branches of knowledge— theology, philosophy, history, art, science to see the object as in itself it really is. He advocated 'disinterested objectivity' in approaching a work of art and literature. He favoured detachment and aloofness on the part of the critic. It was the duty of the critic to examine works of art from an objective standpoint without bringing in the critic's own personality in the judgment. This is what should mean by disinterested pursuit on the part of the critic.

Walter Pater upheld a narrow view of criticism. He confined criticism to art and literature, rather than to all other vital concerns of society. His view of criticism is limited in its

scope. Further Pater upheld the subjective approach to a work of art and literature. In his opinion criticism of literature and art was a matter of impressionism and analysis. It was the critic's job to examine the work of an artist from the subjective standpoint. The critic was required to record one's sense of fact as distinguished from mere fact itself.

The difference between Arnold's and Pater's theories, therefore, is very clear and evident. Whereas Pater believed in subjective interpretation of a work of art, Matthew Arnold considered this subjective interpretation as suicidal and fatal to 'the dispassionate consideration of a work of art'. He was against all caprice, waywardness, and whimsicality on the part of the critic. He was above individuality and provinciality and maintained cosmopolitanism in critical evaluations. To him 'the personal element was of little justification in any critical estimate'. He said, "the great art of criticism is to get oneself out of the way and let humanity decide" Walter Pater had no sympathy with such an objective standpoint in criticism, and his Appreciations completely disapprove of Arnold's insistence on objectivity and disinterested approach to a poet or an artist. To Pater individual impressions count a lot in judging a work of art. He directs our attention to the way a critic should judge a piece of art: "What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or book to me? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? And if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? All this means that a piece of art should be judged subjectively." "To Arnold the object lay in the external world sharply clear to for anybody, who had not blinded himself with insular or provincial zeal, for Pater it had no existence save among the thoughts it had stimulated." For Pater the necessary preliminary is to know one's own impression as it really is, rather than worry about the object as in itself it really is.

Arnold discarded the historical method of approaching a work of art. He ignored the importance and validity of the age and the time in which the poet lived. To him historical approach was futile, for a work of art was to be judged not by the standards of the time in which it was produced, but from the
standards which had been laid down by the great master in all ages and climes. Arnold attached no importance to personal or historical background.

Pater, in this respect, stands contrasted with Matthew Arnold. He laid emphasis on the historical aspect of criticism and was well aware of the significance of the broader historical perspective. He took into account the age and the circumstances in which a work of art was produced.

Matthew Arnold upheld the moralistic approach to poetry and art. He considered that a poetry of revolt against moral ideas was a poetry of revolt against life, and a poetry of thoughtful considerations and good moral action was something to be prized in life. Walter Pater disapproved of the moralistic stand in judging poets and artists, and laid stress on the aesthetic way of judging an author.

Arnold’s judgments are dogmatic and expressed in a style that is precise and exact. His critical style is based on the great ideal of balance and sanity. It lacks artistic beauty and exhilaration of spirit. Pater’s style of criticism is artistic, melodic and picturesque. His manner is poetic, and he sways us by his artistic style.

On the whole Arnold’s position as a critic is sounder than Pater’s. “Pater’s remarks are for the most part capricious, always highly personal and therefore, unacceptable to a great majority of scholars. They are very often unprincipled, and lack solidity and definiteness. He is less weighty, less sound, less principled, and less authoritative than A old.” He represents more than Coleridge “that inexhaustible discontent, languor, and homesickness......the chords of which ring all through our modern literature.”

Q. 44 What is the significance of the work of John Addington Symonds and Oscar Wilde in the aesthetic movement of the Victorian Age?

Ans. John Addington Symonds (1840-1893).

Symonds is an important member of the decadent school. He is known by his The Renaissance Of Italy and Shakespeare’s
Predecessors in the English Drama. He is inferior to Pater both as a critic and as a stylist. His style is florid and flowery and is marred by verbose prolixity. "As a stylist he is attractive and pictureque, but overornate, and his diffuseness and lack of method compare unfavourably with Pater’s concentrative lucidity."*

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900).

Wilde upheld the theory of ‘Art for Art’s sake,’ and carried forward the aesthetic movement to its culminating point, throwing morality out of view altogether. For Wilde, Art had no other aim save to gratify the taste of the artist. It had no bearing on social problems. It had no relation with morality. "The basis of Ruskin’s aestheticism is ethical; Wilde adopted the aestheticism, but eliminated the moral."** The artist lived in a world of his own creating pictures of beauty and love for his own delight.

Wilde tried his hand at several kinds of writing characterised by wit and display of cleverness. He wrote poems having no originality about them. In his verses, graceful, scholarly, melodious, we find an imitative artist, who successfully catches echoes of Hood, Tennyson, Arnold, Rossetti, Swinburne, without sounding any note of his own. "The bulk of his verse is over-wrought" says Hugh Walker, "and we tire of it, and long for something less sophisticated."

Wilde wrote a number of comedies in the manner of the artificial comedy of manners of the Restoration Age. Lady Windermere’s Fan (1893) is a miracle of wit; A Woman of no Importance and The Importance of being Earnest (1899) are monuments of almost exhaustless ingenuity and resource. "They are trivial comedies for serious people." In Salome, the cruelty of sensual passion is studied in a realistic manner. It is delicately shaded. The reader will find these comedies extremely light, replete with the lightest banter and wildest paradox. "His comedies have a rapid and brilliant animation; their dialogue shows the easy flow of the traditional French manner; the plots are cleverly wrought; the comic characters, mere sketches, most of them lay on claim to depth. The display of wit and verbal fencing which go beyond life, and at times overreach themselves in a sort of enthusiasm, would remind one of Congreve, were it not

** Hugh Walker: The Literature of the Victorian Era.
that undercurrent of bitter self-consciousness which is felt behind the mirth of their fanciful irony."

The Picture of Dorian Gray is a beautiful novel in which Wilde puts the best of his aestheticism. The entire work seethes with a passionate yearning for youth and beauty. A complete picture of Wilde's dilettantism is to be found in the two characters of Lord Henry and Dorian Gray. Here, besides presenting the aesthetic delight for beauty, Wilde sows seeds of antidote to his own thesis of hedonism, by depicting the inner ruin brought about by the stubborn quest for pleasure. "Filled as it is with the influence of French decadentism the book is strongly conceived, and written in a very studied style. It is, moreover, whether willingly, or unwillingly as sincere as it was in Wilde to be."

Wilde's critical work is to be found in Intentions (1891). It is "a monument of sane and subtle criticism, expressed with admirable ease and pungency."

Two works of Wilde-The Ballad of Reading Gaol (1898) and De Profundis published after his death in (1905), are works of a different character. Wilde, who had been imprisoned for two years on charges of grave immorality, wrote them in changed environment. The Ballad of Reading Gaol is appallingly real. De Profundis composed in jail is Wilde's most touching and pathetic utterance written in the prison. It is a long cry of the soul in agony. It is marked not with pose or affectation, but with perfect sincerity. His greatest literary bequest, De Profundis moses us by its deep note of pathos.

Wilde's prose style in Dorian Gray and De Profundis is that of an artist, and every line has the stamp of beauty, grace and loveliness about it. The prose style in De Profundis scales higher heights of success, and the poetic touches that bedeck it have the quality of moving us to tears. The work abounds in utterances welling out from the poet's heart, and every sentence bears the burden of an agony that Wilde had experienced during days of grief in the prison.
Q. 45. Give your estimate of Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) as an Essayist of the Victorian Age.

Ans. Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) was a man of versatile genius. He was a novelist, an essayist, a poet, a short story writer and a critic. He could make his mark in every field though it is principally as a novelist in the romantic form and as an essayist, that he is best remembered. Here we will deal with Stevenson as an Essayist.

Stevenson’s fame to-day mostly rests on his essays contained in *Virginibus Puerisque, Familiar Studies of Men and Books, Travels with a Donkey*—“Essentially a collection of essays wrought into a whole.” Since Lamb there has been no more accomplished essayist than Stevenson. Nature made him an essayist, and he co-operated with nature, developing and strengthening the gifts with which he was endowed at birth.”*

The essays of Stevenson cover a wide range of subjects. They are a reflection of the author’s reaction to the objects of his study, and embody his views and opinions about a variety of subjects. Literature, Nature, Science, child life, common human life, religion, philosophy, morality form subjects for essay and constitute the warp and woof of the essayist’s gamut. The familiar essays of Stevenson are, *Books that have influenced me, Pan’s Pipe, Child’s Play, Beggars, An Apology for Idlers, Christmas Sermons, Pulvis at Umbra, El Dorado, From a College Window* etc.

The essays of Stevenson are delightful and entertaining, marked with touches of humour, irony and satire. They are embroidered with a delicate fancy. They exhibit his playfulness and zest of life.

What impresses us most in the essays of Stevenson is their moralising tone. He was a moralist and preached lessons of virtue and good moral life. Henley’s “something of the shorter catechist” is an under statement. The ‘hum of metaphysics’ is always about Stevenson. “There was not merely something but a great deal of the shorter catechist in Stevenson; fundamentally, if we take the phrase in a generous sense, there was little else.”**


**Ibid.
philosophy limits itself to man, and in the great majority it is ethical in its nature.”

Heroism and optimism signalise Stevenson’s essays. An invalid all his life, Stevenson did not allow his spirits to be damped by thoughts of pessimism. In one of his essays we find the essayist voicing forth his determination to live well and with loveliness and animation. “It is better,” he says, “to lose health like a spendthrift than to waste it like a miser. It is better to live and be done with it, than to die daily in the sick room.”

Stevenson’s primary interest was in man rather than Nature or study of works of literature. This explains why the critical portion is not prominent in his essays. His criticism of Thoreau, Walt Whitman is not satisfactory. But his representation of human character as in the essay on ‘Beggars’ is particularly sincere and real.

Stevenson’s essays are intensely subjective. The essayist himself forms the hub of his writings revealing his likings and dislikings and chatting with the reader in a familiar way. “In their essential subjectivity, these essays bear some distant resemblance to those of Charles Lamb; less artistically wrought, less richly loaded with intentions, they make, as Elia had done, the writer’s personality the very centre of his work.” (Cazamian)

Stevenson’s style in his essays is laboured. It was a style that he picked up by playing a ‘sedulous ape’ to great masters of literature. There are echoes of Hazlitt, Lamb, De Quincey in his essays. But he succeeded in assimilating them in a mould that became his own. Despite his obvious indebtedness to greater writers, there is an individual flavour about Stevenson’s work, the flavour of an attractive personality. He cultivated writing as a craft. His skill in words concentrated itself in a sentence or phrase or even in a word. “He devoted very attentive care to the art of writing. He knew the anxious quest of the exact word, the search for a cadence, at the same time harmonious and not too markedly regular. His style is sufficiently nervous to bear such conscious filing and refining. It draws its strength from a very varied and supple vocabulary, in which the whole scale of learned shades meets with the most racy vein—popular, technical or dialectical words. At times the exquisiteness of the form seems to
exceed the just demands of the matter, and this is the single weakness of that prose.”

Q. 46. Briefly examine the works of the Historians, Biographers, Scientists and Philosophers of the Victorian Age.
Ans. Historians of the Victorian Age.

We have already dealt with the work of Macaulay as an historian. Let us now take into account the works of other prominent historians of the Victorian Age.

James Anthony Froude (1818-94).

Froude is undoubtedly the most brilliant of the Romantic school of historians. His miscellaneous work was published in four volumes called Short Studies On Great Subjects (1867-85). His History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth (1856-70) was issued in twelve volumes. His other books are The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century (1872-74), Caesar (1879), Ocuona or England and her Colonies (1886), and Irish novel The Two Chiefs of Dunboy (1889) and his controversial Biography of Carlyle.

Froude has provided us interesting glimpses of Elizabethan life and historical characters like Henry VIII and Wolsey, Anne Boylone and Queen Elizabeth. He has made the Elizabethan period live, and has revitalised the old Tudor life of the sixteenth century. His descriptions are wonderfully vivid and graphic and his insight into human character is deep and profound. His literary style is highly colourful. It is beautiful. “It is at once strong and restrained, simple and sumptuous. His periods glow with a subdued and chastened richness In place of the showy but metallic brilliance of Macaulay, we have a delicately plastic and exquisitely modulated style. It is less mannered than Arnold’s less artificial than De Quincey’s, less florid than Ruskin’s.”

Alexander William Kinlake (1809-91)

His The Invasion of the Crimea (1863-87) is a bulky work rich in details. Eothen provides an account of his Eastern travel. His style is rawdry though he captures us by his picturesque
narrative.

John Richard Green (1837-83)

Greene's *A Short History of the English People* is concerned with history of the people and rarely does the historian make excursions in the field of wars and high politics. *The Making of England* (1881) and *The Conquest of England* (1883) are his other full-length historical works.

Green has the art of making his pages live. He is graphic in his treatment of history and is akin to Macaulay and Froude in his faculty for dramatising history though he is more humanistic than either of them. "To Green, the springs of our national life lay in the history of the people at large. With his sensitive and poetic imagination he makes everything live: a date, a fragmentary record, a dull city Charter; he touches them with the same vital significance which Ruskin accorded to economic facts."

Edward Augustus Freeman (1823-92)

He wrote many works of history of which *The History of the Norman Conquest of England* and *The Reign of William Rufus and the Accession of Henry the First* (1882) are significant. "Freeman specialized in certain periods of English history, which he treated laboriously and at great length. This, as well as his arid style, makes his history unattractive to read but he did much solid and enthusiastic work for the benefit of his students and successors" (Albert).

William Hickling Prescott (1796-1859).

His best works are *The History of Ferdinand and Isabella* (1836), *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843) and *The History of the Conquest of Peru* (1847). His manner of narration is plain and simple, and his art is different from Macaulay and Froude.

Beside these historians there were many others of lesser significance. Connop Thirlwall (1797-1875) wrote the *History of Greece* (1835-47). "It was a solid column of learning, crowned by the lily-work of an attractive style."

George Grote (1794-1841) wrote the *History of Greece* in

which he eulogised Athenian democracy like an idolator. Thomas Arnold, wrote the History of Rome. Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868) wrote the History of Jews and considered them a ‘chosen race.’ William Stubbs (1825-1901) came out with The Constitutional History of England. Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862) penned The History of Civilization in two volumes. Buckle differed from Carlyle in not giving importance to individual heroes. He held that, “in the great march of human affairs, individual peculiarities count for nothing.” “Society was conditioned by the laws of its environment.” Buckle made the way for the scientific treatment of sociological problems. John Robert Seeley (1834-1895) is famous for Expansion of England (1883) and Growth of British Policy (1895). He adopted the comparative method and showed the interrelation between national and foreign politics. Edward Hartpole Lecky (1838-1903) became popular by his History of England in the Eighteenth Century and History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne (1869). The reader will find in Lecky “a cool and reasonable debater, slave to no theory—in short, an almost ideal political philosopher.” Lord Acton (1834-1902) was a scholar of great learning and wrote The History of Europe. His outlook on historical phenomena was ethical, and he was interested in the moral problems raised by history.

Biographers of the Victorian Age.

Mrs. Gaskell’s Life of Charlotte Bronte is a brilliant biography. It is noted for its sympathy, insight and tact. Mrs. Oliphant’s Life of Edward Irving exhibits the author’s skill in visualising character and portraying it with sympathy. John Forster’s biographies of Goldsmith, Swift, Lamb and Dickens are quite significant. He gives enough matter but does not vitalise it with a lively spark of genius. Trevelyan’s Life of Macaulay is a much better work than Forster’s. The biographer exhibits a ‘real sense of perspective as well as a lucid and cultured pen.’ Sidney Webb, Graham Wallas, Holland Rose, Lord Morley, James Gairdner are other important biographers of the age.

Scientists in the Victorian Age.

Among the scientists of the Victorian Age, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and Thomas Henry Huxley deserve attention.
Charles Robert Darwin. (1809-82)

The chief works of Darwin are The Voyage of the Beagle (1839), On the Origin of Species (1859), The Descent of Man (1871). He propounded the theory of Evolution which revolutionised the thought of the age. The Origin of Species proved to be an epoch-making book. It transformed the conceptions of the people regarding natural history and changed man's way of thinking on the problems of human society. His book is masterly in the exposition of facts and proving their validity by argument. The sober flow of his prose hardly betrays the slightest tremor of emotion. There is no art here but honesty.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903).

"Spencer stands in a pronounced contrast to Darwin. He is more of the philosopher than the scientist; or at least, he is more attracted to the process of generalising than to the long and meticulous research which leads up to it. He is more skilled in the handling of abstract ideas, and at the same time more able to adapt his thoughts to the embellishment of form. He has been charged with verbosity and pedantry, but the fault is to be found in the matter rather than in the style. He says what he wishes to say without any undue expense of language; and his lighter writings, as, for example, his articles on education, afford pleasant reading." * His main works are Principles of Biology (1864-1967), New Principles of Psychology (1870-72), Principles of Sociology (1876-96), Principles of Ethics (1879-93), Education (1861), Autobiography (1904).

Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1892).

Henry Huxley—"Darwin's Bull Dog"—wrote Essays on Controversial Subjects, and popularised Darwin's theory of Evolution. He attacked religion. For him "scepticism is the highest of duties, of blind faith one unpardonable sin." He was the "embodiment of the scientific conscience and reflects the buoyancy and enthusiasm which characterised the flowers of Darwin." His work is characterised by passionate integrity and idealism. His style is trenchant and forceful. "He is assertive and assured, merciless in exposing the weaknesses of his opponents. In thought and style he is as completely representative of the

values of knowing, as is Carlyle of those of conduct, and Arnold of beauty of life.”* “He had a fine, lucid, literary style, a natural aptitude for dialectics, and an impatience with the cautious peradventures and hair-splitting logic dear to many theologians.”**

**Philosophers of the Victorian Age.**

John Stuart Mill was a philosopher, political thinker and an economist of repute. As a political philosopher he defended liberty. His sympathies were with the working classes. His main works in the field of politics are *On Liberty* and *Representative Government*. In philosophy he advocated the doctrine of utilitarianism laying stress on the greatest good of the greatest number.

Alexander Bain and Henry Sidwick accepted the utilitarian standpoint to a great extent. James Martineau was another remarkable philosopher with an ethical bent. Edward Caird formulated the Hegelian philosophy with a literary flourish. Philosophical thought advanced with the same rapidity as the scientific thought of the Age.

---

** A Compton-Rickett: A History of English Literature