THE

FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW.

No. CCXCIV. New Series.—June 1, 1891.

THE BRITISH ARMY IN 1891.

Early in March the Council of the Royal United Service Institution invited me to deliver a lecture on Friday, 8th May, at 3 P.M., before the members and their friends on "Our Military Administration." I felt honoured by the request and I at once consented. A little later, I was written to as to the choice of chairman, and a day was named on which the paper was to be sent in. Later again I was asked to change the title to "The British Army in 1891," and consented. When, however, the Council read the paper they pronounced it "too political." To prevent any misconception, let me add that nothing could have been more perfect than the courtesy which I met with from the Chairman of the Council, General Sir F. Stephenson, on whom fell the duty of stating the objections to the paper which the Council entertained. I now print the paper with all its imperfections.

Charles W. Dilke.

THE BRITISH ARMY IN 1891.

Apology is needed from a civilian who ventures to lecture on any subject at the Royal United Service Institution. When he appears there to read a paper on such a topic as "The British Army in 1891," or "Our Military Administration," to use the title first suggested by the Council, apology is doubly due. When he is not only a civilian but a politician, of opinions unpopular among soldiers and naval men, he cannot but feel that possibly he has been invited in order that he may be devoured. At the same time there is ground for civilians, and even for Radical civilians, beginning to interest themselves in the question. I have no claim even to the experience of a volunteer. If I was once an inefficient lance-corporal in a badly-drilled battalion, and once a still more inefficient private in a better one; if I have seen as a spectator a great deal of modern war, it is not as a

these leaders of progress that a stranger will experience the freest and pleasantest hospitality, a mixture of the desert welcome of the Bedouin with the comfort and refinement of Europe. The pity is that there are so few of them. The majority of the population of Belgrade appear to pass their lives in the innumerable cafés which line the streets, going from one to the other at stated times, and with such regularity that it is much surer to seek an individual at his favourite haunt than at his office or his home. As a logical consequence it may be imagined that the vice of drunkenness is very rife. In Bulgaria no one is allowed to intoxicate himself till entering upon old age, and any young man who should transgress this tradition would be seriously disgraced. As a matter of fact it is only once a week, after market, that one may find a few old peasants incapable on the high roads, whereas the streets of Belgrade resound with shouts and brawling every evening up till midnight; and as long as the offenders are Serbs, and not foreigners, the police are extremely indulgent. For the latter, however, no pity is shown if he is in the wrong, and scant sympathy if he has cause of complaint. Indeed, it is scarcely advisable for him to go abroad alone at night, or to resort to any place of public amusement except in company of friends. Should he attempt it, the exuberant patriotism of the Serbs would be tolerably sure to find vent in insulting epithets, if not in more active aggression.

Time, however, and a little more friction with the rest of the world will smooth down many of the angularities of these young nations which are apt to strike a visitor with unpleasant and, perhaps, undue force. On the whole, if the reader never carries away more disagreeable recollections from the places of his sojourn than does the writer from the Balkans, he may be congratulated on his good fortune.

A. Hulme-Beaman.

BAUDELAIRE; THE MAN.

". . . Nous traînions tristement nos ennuis, accroupis
Et voûtés sous le ciel carré des solitudes
Où l'enfant boit, dix ans, l'âpre lait des études. . . ."

Thus sang Baudelaire in his earliest piece. His college days, evidently, were no "happy seed-time" for the author of the *Fleurs du Mal*.

Next came those six months which Baudelaire spent in the East, and which coloured so profoundly and for all the rest of his life his thought, feeling, and consequently verse. None of Baudelaire's later associates could ever learn the exact truth concerning this mysterious voyage; for Baudelaire was essentially one of those who "embroider." Other people, of the kind who couldn't embroider if they would, are eager to denounce such embroiderers as liars. Liars they are not—but, it may be, persons who dislike the bare simplicity of the letter.

"*Instabilité profonde*," is, according to one critic, the chief moral characteristic of Charles Baudelaire—as of quicksands. It should, however, be remembered that none found Baudelaire more "unstable," more untrustworthy, than did Baudelaire himself, who suffered considerably in consequence. A certain charlatan fondness for singularity in dress, speech and manner has also been made a subject of reproach to this poet. No doubt a dash of charlatanism was a necessary ingredient of Baudelaire's temperament, without which, perhaps, we should not now have Baudelaire's art.

"Untrustworthy" Baudelaire may have been, but charming, seductive, interesting he certainly was in an extraordinary degree. And never more so than on his first coming to Paris, as a returned Oriental traveller, a critic, a poet, a dandy, and a capitalist, just turned twenty-one. Baudelaire was of a good height and had a lithe feline figure. His high white brow, searching luminous brown eyes, nose of noticeable size and shape (*nez de priseur*, he called it, with the open palpitating nostril, sure mark of pride and of power), lip sensual at once and sensitive, chin short, somewhat rounded, and stamped with the central cleft denoting amiability akin to weakness, and jaw—a feline jaw—strong, square, and large: all these were features composing a countenance more than handsome, singular.

Brummel's principles of attire were Baudelaire's, for just so long as Baudelaire could afford fine raiment. In garments of sober hue and anxious rectitude of cut, with snow-white linen and glittering lacquered boots, he was often to be seen in the old brooding torpid streets within sound of the bells of Notre-Dame half-a-century ago. In his hotel-rooms in the Latin Quarter at first he

caused the lower panes of his windows to be ground, so that he might be relieved from the view of adjacent roofs and upper storeys. Soon, however, no aspect of the life of towns was unwelcome to the spirit of the author of the *Fleurs du Mal*. Coming in an age when all is artificial, amid a state of society which from top to bottom is artifice, recalling nothing so much as those agglomerations of tables and chairs maintained in equilibrium by Japanese jugglers upon the extreme tip of their nose ("le monde ne marche que par le malentendu. . . . C'est par le malentendu universel que tout le monde s'accorde," wrote Baudelaire), it was but natural that Baudelaire should be artificial. Through the force of exterior circumstances, a sentence was passed on him of artificiality for life. He could not have helped being artificial, had he ever so much desired it. And thus it is that we find him falling under the apparently puerile spell of "dandyism;" thus, that we see him experimenting upon some of the most recondite varieties of sensation; thus, that we perceive him seeking and finding the deep poetic interest which underlies existence in great cities, as distinguished from the idyllic charm of fields and hills; and thus, finally, that we find him elaborating some of the most bizarrely beautiful and most singularly, strangely significant verse and "poetic prose."

Baudelaire, personally, had all the peculiar charm of the artificial. The account in Gautier's famous sketch of Baudelaire's careful, measured diction, in conversation scarcely less chastened than in writing, with the secret suggestive emphasis laid upon particular syllables and words, is interesting as characteristic of the man. The subtle magic enclosed in words, viewed merely as collocations of letters, must early have been disclosed to a sense of such acuity and a taste of such exceeding delicacy as were Baudelaire's. Then the peculiar mode of enunciation, whereby each piece becomes in a manner assimilated to a musical composition: that would have been invented by Baudelaire, had he not found it in the atmosphere of his time, and on the lips of men like Gautier and Hugo. Baudelaire's own verse is not melodious,—it is harmonic; as much finer and rarer than mere verbal music, as harmony is more powerful and profound than melody. In excerpts such as these, chosen haphazard from among five score, how intense is the harmony:—

> "O douleur! ô douleur! le Temps mange la vie,
> Et l'obscur Ennemi qui nous ronge le cœur
> Du sang que nous perdons croît et se fortifie!"

And again:—

> "Pouvons-nous étouffer le vieux, le long Remords
> Qui vit, s'agite et se tortille,
> Et se nourrit de nous comme le ver des morts,
> Comme du chêne la chenille?
> Pouvons-nous étouffer l'implacable Remords?"

Again:—

> "Ma Douleur, donne-moi la main; viens par ici
> Loin d'eux; vois se pencher les défuntes Années
> Sur les balcons du ciel, en robes surannées;
> Surgir du fond des eaux le Regret soupirant;
> Le soleil moribond s'endormir sous une arche,
> Et comme un long linceul trainant à l'orient,
> Entends, ma chère, entends la douce Nuit qui marche."

And, to my taste, finer still:—

> "J'ai vu parfois au fond d'un théâtre banal
> Qu'enflammait l'orchestre sonore,
> Une fée allumer dans un ciel infernal
> Une miraculeuse aurore;
>
> J'ai vu parfois au fond d'un théâtre banal
> Un être, qui n'était que lumière, or et gaze,
> Terrasser l'énorme Satan;
> Mais mon cœur que jamais ne visite l'extase,
>
> Est un théâtre où l'on attend
> Toujours, toujours en vain l'Etre aux ailes de gaze."

Is there not, herein, a resonance as of bronze smitten and vibrating, together with the density of substance, definiteness of contour, smoothness of surface, brilliancy of polish, and sombre richness of hue which distinguish some admirable antique? Rigid perfection of form, thrilling significance of tone, are the twin qualities of all Charles Baudelaire's best art.

One can see him and hear him intoning a piece like his "Mendiante Rousse" for the benefit of a circle of youthful poets like his friends Prarond, Levavasseur and others in a room at that celebrated Hôtel Pimodan, where Gautier afterwards dwelt. They eyed Baudelaire a little askance, did these worthy young *littérateurs*, whose names now never occur save perchance in connection with his. They deemed him "singular"—as probably he was, seeing what the proportion is of men of undoubted genius amongst the mass of humankind.

So much has been said and written concerning Baudelaire's bad traits—supposed or real—that something ought in fairness to be said concerning his undoubtedly good qualities. He was an ardent admirer and a most devoted friend. From the first he was a worshipper of Hugo, Gautier, Balzac, Banville, Flaubert, Stendhal and Leconte de Lisle. To Delacroix:—

> "Delacroix, lac de sang hanté des mauvais anges . . ."

he was loyal with discrimination throughout the painter's life, and always after his death. Wagner he fairly discovered; speaking with regard to Paris, where at that time the German Titan was being simply laughed and whistled off the stage. Baudelaire placed

Sainte-Beuve upon a pedestal, whereas Sainte-Beuve, the smaller man of the two, viewed Baudelaire always rather doubtfully, according to his constant tendency in all things and regarding all people. Gautier could truly write of Baudelaire: "Ce poète avait l'amour et l'admiration au plus haut degré."

In behalf of how many writers, poets, painters, draughtsmen of his day, did Baudelaire willingly and warmly manifest the vivacity of his sympathies and the acuteness of his appreciation? Pétrus Borel, Paul Dupont, Barbier, Mürger, Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, Daumier, Corot, Manet, and a score of others (to say nothing of Edgar Poe, whom Baudelaire, according to his early promise, succeeded in rendering "un grand homme pour la France"): all these he brought into light and notice through the medium of perhaps the most admirable literary criticism that has ever yet been known.

It should be noted, moreover, that Baudelaire was not attracted only towards what is fine, grand and distinguished. That which is too delicate, too rare, too tender and slight to stand much chance of winning the material prizes of success, appealed no less forcibly to his spirit: "le poète se sent irrésistiblement entraîné vers tout ce qui est faible, ruiné, contristé, orphelin." Only the contentedly mediocre, the complacently vulgar, did Baudelaire violently detest and vehemently denounce. In this doubtless he was wrong. Even mediocrity, even vulgarity, even Philistinism, we should school ourselves to endure: for are not these, too, human?

That, possessing such unrivalled critical powers, Baudelaire should not have secured for himself the post, the profits and prestige of a professed and professional critic—that he should not, for example, have rivalled and surpassed herein his lukewarm friend Sainte-Beuve—appears at first sight unaccountable. Baudelaire's *Art Romantique*, that collection of the most searching and suggestive, most brilliant and profound studies in the very best literature of his day; his *Salons* and other articles on painting (as far superior to Diderot's *Salons* as diamonds to cut glass) these writings, which form hardly the matter of a volume, place beyond doubt the fact that Baudelaire was the keenest *esthéticien* of the century in France. But the explanation of Baudelaire's comparative inefficacy in the more ordinary spheres of criticism must be sought for in his devotion to the pure poetic principle. Baudelaire's verse was exacting, in proportion to its perfection. He early felt and believed that the highest, nay the sole condition of all lasting art is intensity; whence all other necessary conditions must naturally and of themselves proceed. But how difficult, how trying, how exhaustive and all-absorbing, the effort to clothe the intensity of one's feeling with corresponding intensity of expression! Disregarding all considerations of expediency, popularity, profit and personal ease, and in the midst of pecuniary circumstances growing yearly more

distressing, Baudelaire still adhered to the single-minded, steadfast artistic purpose, which alone could render possible such artistic effects as his. His art to him, as to every great and true artist, was more than all the rest of the world. The result, all who run may read. The *Fleurs du Mal*, one small volume, comprises the sum total of Baudelaire's verse. But those few hundreds of lines represent perhaps a greater poetic output than all Byron and Lamartine rolled into one. Consequently the few hundreds of lines shall live, when many scores of thousands of others shall have passed for ever from the memory of men. Where other poets were content, with so much less trouble and toil, to present a mere dilution, Baudelaire by dint of ceaseless effort and endeavour produced a powerful quintessence, one drop of which will still pervade the mind, whilst a river of the other species of verse may refresh, indeed, and flatter the sense as it flows, but *will* flow and leave no trace behind. What other latter-day poet, English or French, has such a number of lines that haunt the memory? Nothing more curious to observe, than the power of expansion in all work of the type of *Les Fleurs du Mal*. . . With the years, it grows, it quickens instead of fading—"*Les Fleurs du Mal*, livre oublié! Ceci est trop bête. . . On les demande toujours. On commencera peut-être à les comprendre dans quelques années." So wrote Baudelaire, most justly, in response to the remark of some "friend" who (doubtless by way of encouraging the admirable poet in his struggle against the unappreciative stupidity of mankind) had informed him that *Les Fleurs du Mal* were beginning to be forgotten.

To all who themselves possess a fondness for art, Asselineau's account of the covert pride and joy with which Baudelaire, shortly after 1848, showed his future biographer the entire MS. of the *Fleurs* beautifully copied out and stitched into a neat binding, is not without its pathos. So much, these verses were to the poet, and so little—then—in the estimation of any one else! . . . They might, indeed, those hapless "flowers," have never appeared in book form at all had it not been for the happy and unusual chance of a man of literary taste, the memorable Poulet-Malassis, setting up as a publisher and at once bringing out works by Gautier, Banville, Baudelaire and Leconte de Lisle. Needless to say that eventually the greatly daring Malassis became a bankrupt. Proper punishment for a man who had actually tried to foist on the public productions of the highest literary art, instead of novels by Alexandre Dumas *père*, Octave Feuillet, or Eugène Sue!

In connection with 1848, it may be remarked in passing that persons who delight in discreditable reports concerning men of letters—whether false or true makes little matter — have read with pleasure in the biography of Baudelaire by M. E. Crépet, published not long since in Paris, how the poet played a not

very admirable part amidst the general agitation of the revolutionary period. Was it rationally to be expected, that a man, a writer, a poet, who for years previously, through the strain of his art no less than the circumstances of his life, had taxed to the utmost a nervous system naturally delicate and irritable, would upon an occasion of sudden, unforeseen excitement display all the soldier-like calm of a Wellington on the field of battle? Had Wellington been placed abruptly in the position of having to write half a dozen pieces of the *Fleurs du Mal* or a series of *Petits Poèmes en Prose*, it is probable that he, too, would have cut a somewhat sorry figure. But of course, to exact grapes from thorns and figs from oak-trees will, one supposes, remain a favourite amusement of humanity in the future as it always has been in the past.

Eighteen-forty-eight and the years immediately following saw a somewhat different Baudelaire, physically, from the slender Brummel-like youth with full black locks and slight half-grown black beard of 1840. Stouter, with hair cropped close, shaven cheeks, and small, somewhat snaky black moustache, the poet, sporting a white blouse and living somewhere in the outskirts of the capital, presented an appearance less poetic though perhaps more revolutionary. Baudelaire's republicanism, however, did not long endure. The Second Empire, to which he was the sooner reconciled by reason of his clear perception of, and extreme contempt for, the democratic fallacy that men in general are units equal and identical in value, aroused in him but little of Hugo's Jovian wrath. He had not, by-the-bye, any of the great poet-politician's personal motives for rage and hatred; no special reason for detesting a *régime*, whose initial crime in M. Hugo's eyes was doubtless its not having set a high enough price upon the suggested if not exactly proffered services of M. Hugo. Only in resentment of the judicial sentence passed in 1856 upon his *Fleurs du Mal*, might Baudelaire have been stimulated to launch a *Châtiments* of his own. That the six pieces of verse condemned by the Paris Courts were of a nature actually and truly immoral, none knew better than their author. . . This appears from a passage in his posthumously published diary, where he speaks of "ce livre atroce," etc. The great subject for regret must be that these six pieces were not "condemned" by Baudelaire himself ere they appeared in print. Artistically as well as morally, they are a blot upon the *ensemble* of the *Fleurs du Mal*. Conceived in a totally different spirit, they—always excepting one, that one containing the famous "fulgurous" Beethoven-like finale—are expressed in a totally different tone. Bad morality, in the last resort, and in a very different sense from that of the Philistine "moralists," who with characteristic thickness of thought are always confounding the merely unpleasant with the obscene, must be necessarily bad art. In other words, any sentiment base and turbid in itself cannot possibly take on a pure and beautiful artistic expression. All which art touches, art ennobles and refines; that which is not susceptible of being touched by art, is of itself ignoble, and remains so.

Every man of genius, on the seamy side of him, is a criminal—as every man of genius knows. The great thing is never to turn the seamy side to the world. It must regretfully be confessed, judging from both the internal evidence of his works and the not ill-meant testimony of friends, that Baudelaire's seamy side was turned out all too often. Too often he played the part of Hyde to his Dr. Jekyll. And a very lamentable Hyde it is, worn and wasted at little more than forty, the shaven haggard face wrinkled, the dark eyes feverishly shining, the neglected locks thin and long and grey, the general attire loose and shabby (shabby, the "dandy" of early days!) that we behold—dejected, sinister figure—haunting balls such as that erstwhile odious Casino in the Rue Cadet, and there conversing in cynical callous strain with professional *habituées* of the place; wishing still to produce *effets de surprise* as the man of genius unrecognised, and flying into a "neurasthenic" fit of rage when a "lady" of somewhat more literary turn than the bulk of them confesses acquaintance with but one poet, and that poet—not Baudelaire, but Baudelaire's pet abomination the elegiac Alfred de Musset. Poor Musset! Poor Baudelaire! Poor "lady!" Amazing world. . . .

Baudelaire shortly after 1860 begins to decline. Sainte-Beuve writes to him:—"You have a naturally strong constitution, but your nervous system has been overstrained." Leaving Paris, where his money difficulties threaten to swamp him, he goes to Brussels, expecting there to make large sums by delivering literary lectures. In this attempt he fails, yet does not return to France, but lingers aimlessly on in Belgium, as the stranded vessel settles deep and deeper into the ooze. Without stimulants of some sort, alcohol if opium or haschich be unobtainable, he finds he cannot possibly keep up; solemnly registering meanwhile the most stupendous vows with regard to strict temperance and unflagging labour—in the future. Gradually he becomes incapable of the slightest literary exertion, save that of scribbling rubbish in his last hysterical diary, *Mon Cœur mis à nu*, where, amongst other deplorable features, he sinks almost to the level of a Mr. Robert Buchanan by attacking in terms of the grossest abuse everybody whose methods and views happen to be at all different from his own. For Baudelaire however, there was some excuse: it is evident his brain was affected. Finally, one afternoon, the doomed man falls helpless on the flags of a Brussels church. Conveyed, a hopeless paralytic, to a hospital near Paris, he there drags out a speechless tragic twelvemonth, so altered

that he tries to bow to himself when he catches sight of himself in a mirror, and expires at forty-seven with the mother who adored him literally drinking his last breath as he passes away.

A sad, a dreadful scene to contemplate. . . A shocking "curtain" to the last act of one of the most painful of life-dramas. Nor can we doubt that Baudelaire ("*j'ai cultivé mon hystérie avec jouissance et terreur*") did much to provoke his fate. But who shall affect to preach sermons over this erring poet's corpse? Who shall come and cast stones of rhetoric upon his grave? Enough, that he lies there: a man of such gifts, such powers, such aspirations, who came to such an end.

For Charles Baudelaire's epitaph, might not one propose his delicious

"HARMONIE DU SOIR."

"Voici venir les temps où, vibrant sur sa tige,
Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;
Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir,
Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige.

Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir,
Le violon frémit comme un cœur qu'on afflige,
Valse mélancolique et douloureux vertige,
Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir.

Le violon frémit comme un cœur qu'on afflige,
Un cœur tendre qui hait le néant vaste et noir,
Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir,
Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige . . .

Un cœur tendre qui hait le néant vaste et noir
Du passé lumineux recueille tout vestige;
Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige . . .
Ton souvenir en moi luit comme un ostensoir!"

Truly, a lily among the poison-blossoms, a *fleur du bien* among the *Fleurs du Mal*.

EDWARD DELILLE.

A MODERN IDYLL.

"I CALL it real good of you, Mr. Letgood, to come and see me. Won't you be seated?"

"Thank you. It's pretty warm to-day. And as I didn't feel like reading or writing, I thought I'd come round."

"You're just too kind for anything! To come and pay me a visit when you must be tired out with yesterday's preaching! And what a sermon you gave us in the morning! I had to wink my eyes pretty hard, and pull the tears down the back way, or I should have cried right out—and Mrs. Jones watching me all the time from under that dreadful bonnet."

Mrs. Hooper said this rapidly, with a shade of nervousness in the hurried speech, while she took up a comfortable pose in the corner of the small sofa.

The Rev. John Letgood having seated himself in an armchair close to her looked at his companion intently. She was well worth looking at—this Mrs. Hooper—as she leaned back on the cushions in her cool white dress, which was so thin and soft and well-fitting that her form could be seen through it almost as clearly as through water. She seemed about eighteen years of age, and in truth was not yet twenty. At first sight one would have said of her merely "a good-looking girl"; but a practised eye on the second glance would have noticed those contradictions in her face and in her form which always bear witness to subtle complexity of nature. The features of her face were regular and well cut; the oval of it slightly round; the long, brown eyes looked out at one frankly under straight, well-defined brows; but the forehead was low, and the sinuous lips of almost too vivid a red. So, too, there was a girlish litheness in her figure, while the throat seemed to pout in its soft, white fulness.

"I'm glad you liked the sermon," said the Rev. John Letgood, with clear decision in his voice, "for it is not likely that you will hear many more from me." There was just a shade of sadness in the lower tone with which he ended the phrase. He let the sad note drift in unconsciously—by dint of long practice he had become an artist in tones.

"You don't say!" exclaimed Mrs. Hooper, sitting up straight in her excitement. "You ain't goin' to leave us, I hope?"

"Why do you pretend, Belle, to misunderstand me? You know I said three months ago that if you didn't care for me I should have to leave this place. And yesterday I told you that you must make up your mind at once, as I was daily expecting the call to Chicago.