

SAINTE-BEUVE'S TREATMENT OF ENGLISH WRITERS  
IN THE CAUSERIES DU LUNDI

A THESIS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to show Sainte-Beuve's ideas of certain English authors as indicated by his treatment of them in the Causeries du lundi. The Causeries du lundi are the articles published every Monday in the periodicals, Constitutionnel and the Moniteur, from the years 1861 to 1872. These later were published in sixteen volumes in which Sainte-Beuve criticises and depicts various phases of literature and national affairs.

The facts that Sainte-Beuve's grandmother on his mother's side was an Englishwoman<sup>1</sup> and that his friendships with Englishmen were many, no doubt created a sympathetic feeling toward the English and their literature. Three of his best friends were Charles Neate, his schoolmate at the Collège Bourbon and at the Pension Landry; Matthew Arnold, whose works Sainte-Beuve brought to the attention of Europe; and William Little Hughes who helped Sainte-Beuve in his English studies.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Sainte-Beuve was acquainted with English literature and read and enjoyed it, with and without recourse to translation.

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Freeman Mott, Sainte-Beuve (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1925), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> E. Margaret Phillips, "English Friendships of Sainte-Beuve." The Modern Humanities Research Association, I (April, 1927), 17.

This study should throw additional light on the opinions and attitudes of one of the greatest French critics of the nineteenth century towards the English people and their literature.

The various periods of English literature are divided in this study as follows: (1) the Elizabethan age and the early seventeenth century; (2) the period from the Restoration (1660) to the beginning of the nineteenth century; (3) writers of the early nineteenth century.

## CHAPTER II

### SAINTE-BEUVE

Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve was born in 1804 at Boulogne-sur-Mer. His mother and father were married quite late in life, his father being fifty-two and his mother forty years old. At that time the father, who was in moderate circumstances, was in charge of the tax office at Boulogne. Sainte-Beuve was brought up by his mother and aunt since his father died a few months before his birth. By his mother he was taught to be methodical and orderly and from her he received a strong physique. Sainte-Beuve inherited his intellectual qualities from his father. In the margins of his father's books were found notes which gave Sainte-Beuve some insight into his father's dislike of the excesses of the French Revolution and his respect for the Latin authors, especially Horace and Virgil.<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Beuve was educated in Paris at the Collège Charlemagne and the Collège Bourbon where he was considered an excellent scholar and won many prizes in history and in Latin verses. Later he entered a medical school and practiced medicine for a short time. His study of medicine may have contributed to the exactness and the care for detail shown in his writings.

Sainte-Beuve's character shows a combination of human greatness and frailties. He was retiring by nature. Although he was honest in his

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Freeman Mott, Sainte-Beuve (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1925), p. 3.



writings, he was considered very changeable and false as a friend. He would become intimately acquainted with people and then have nothing to do with them.<sup>2</sup> His relation with Victor Hugo illustrates this. For ten years he was a great friend of Victor Hugo and his wife and then their friendship became strained because of Sainte-Beuve's affection for Hugo's wife. Sainte-Beuve was fond of gossip but in his writings confined it to foot-notes. Sainte-Beuve and Bayle are alike in this respect. The great critic was always studying himself and when he found defects in others he looked for the same faults in himself. Sainte-Beuve was not noted for high qualities of heart and soul but in a subtle way incited the reader against the immoral and vulgar.<sup>3</sup> He would not tolerate atheistic ideas in literature but always seemed to have a lofty ideal as his goal. Émile Faguet<sup>4</sup> writes of him:

C'est un homme laid, sensuel, très curieux et extrêmement intelligent. Il ne tient pas tout entier dans cette définition mais ces quatre traits sont essentiels et le résumant dans la plupart de ses aspects et de ses démarches.

These four adjectives summarize well both the weaknesses and the strength of Sainte-Beuve's character.

Sainte-Beuve's style of writing is accurate and unusual. He was very curious and believed in finding out every detail about the person

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis Freeman Mott, op. cit., preface, p. vi.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 352-57.

<sup>4</sup> Émile Faguet, Politiques et Moralistes du XIX siècle (Paris: Société française, 1900), III, 185.

of thing he was describing. Professor Fortier summarizes the depth and accuracy of Sainte-Beuve's scholarship thus:

Il semble avoir tout lu et tout approfondi et ses ouvrages sont un guide sûr et intéressant pour l'étude de presque toutes les littératures, mais surtout de la littérature française. Il raconte la vie de l'écrivain, décrit le milieu où il se trouve et parle de ses ouvrages avec l'autorité d'un maître.<sup>5</sup>

Sainte-Beuve says about himself:

J'ai fait beaucoup de biographies et je n'en ai fait aucune sans y mettre le soin qu'elle mérite, c'est-à-dire sans interroger et m'informer.<sup>6</sup>

His accuracy is very well described by Schérer, a French critic of the nineteenth century, who wrote:

Il faut avoir connu Sainte-Beuve pour savoir l'importance presque maladroite qu'il attachait à l'orthographe d'un nom propre, à un renseignement, à une date. Il voulait tout voir de ses propres yeux, tout vérifier.<sup>7</sup>

All three of these quotations emphasize the exactness of detail and thorough knowledge with which Sainte-Beuve treated his subject matter.

His style was unusual in that he had such a variety of subjects and introduced new ideas or treated the old in a new way. In comparing him with Voltaire and Matthew Arnold, it is said he has more ideas than the former and more knowledge and insight than the latter.<sup>8</sup> His style

<sup>5</sup> Alcée Fortier, Littérature française (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1893), p. 337.

<sup>6</sup> Charles-Augustine Sainte-Beuve, Les grands écrivains français: études des Lundis et des Portraits classées selon un ordre nouveau et annotées par Maurice Allem. XIX siècle: Les poètes... (Paris, Garnier Frères, 1932), p. 58.

<sup>7</sup> Edmund Schérer, Études IV Sur la Littérature contemporaine, (Paris, Michel Lévy Frères, Éditeurs, 1873), p. 107.

<sup>8</sup> William A. Nitze and E. Preston Dargan, A History of French Literature (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1926), p. 644.

of writing shows careful judgment since he knew exactly what points were important and vital and how to emphasize them.

Sainte-Beuve's writings are varied but the most important are his criticisms. He wrote poems, novels, histories, biographies and criticisms. In 1824, he became an editor of the Globe, a periodical founded by M. Dubois, a former professor of Sainte-Beuve at the Collège Charlemagne. In 1827, he was asked to write a review of the Odes et Ballades of Victor Hugo. Later this review was printed in the Globe. Goethe took notice of it. Hugo himself came to thank him for what he had written, but did not meet him until a few days later. When Hugo and Sainte-Beuve met, Sainte-Beuve seemed very modest. The two men soon became the best of friends and at this time began Sainte-Beuve's connection with the Romantic school. At Hugo's home he met many prominent men, some of whom formed the group called the général. This group consisted of writers, painters and sculptors, among whom were Alexandre Dumas père, Alfred de Vigny and Alfred de Musset. These men who were very friendly felt free to write and read verses and to discuss any questions they wished.<sup>9</sup> In 1828 and 1829 the great critic wrote the Tableau de la poésie française au XVI siècle and Joseph Delorme. His Consolations, romantic verses dedicated to Victor Hugo, told of his affection and love for Hugo and his wife. They were published in 1830. From 1831 to 1834, he wrote for the periodical National political articles, book reviews and reports which

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<sup>9</sup> H. Van Laun, History of French Literature (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901), p. 323.

he later regretted as they were too sharp, partial and personal. In 1831, Sainte-Beuve joined the staff of the Revue des deux mondes. His articles written for this periodical and the Revue de Paris were later collected in the Portraits contemporains (1864-71) and the Portraits littéraires (1862-64).

Sainte-Beuve's Cahiers, which remind one of a diary and which give his exact and unbiased opinion of himself and others, are interesting notes that he has jotted down so that he might remember them later. They contain his philosophy, innermost thoughts and even bitter experiences. He writes about himself in his Cahiers<sup>10</sup> as follows:

En littérature, je suis un grand reconnaisseur de terres nouvelles. Je passe en vue, je les signale, quelquefois j'y débarque, rarement je m'y établis.

From this it would seem that Sainte-Beuve was interested in all kinds of writings and that he chose various types of subjects.

Volupté which was published in 1834 is an idealized account of Sainte-Beuve's love affair with Hugo's wife. It also expresses his innermost feelings and his moral views. It consists of two volumes. This novel was read and even reviewed and commended by many writers of the time. This same year Hugo terminated his friendship with Sainte-Beuve. Sainte-Beuve had withdrawn from the romantic group three or four years earlier. In 1840, Sainte-Beuve was made one of five curators of the Bibliothèque Mazarine by M. Cousin, Minister of Public Instruction under

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<sup>10</sup> Charles-Augustine Sainte-Beuve, "Cahiers," Revue des deux mondes, XXX (November and December, 1925), 785.

Thiers, but later quarreled with him as Cousin had appropriated some material Sainte-Beuve expected to use in his *Port-Royal*.<sup>11</sup>

One of the great events in Sainte-Beuve's life was the occasion when he became a member of the French Academy in 1844.<sup>12</sup> Victor Hugo had been elected in 1841 and Sainte-Beuve hoped to become a member within the next few years. Balloting was done at two meetings of the Academy and in the second vote Sainte-Beuve won over his opponents by a majority of five. Victor Hugo did not vote for Sainte-Beuve but, as Director, it was his duty to receive him into the Academy. On that day both men delivered excellent speeches which were a treat for the audience which had expected a battle of words between the two men.

In 1848, Sainte-Beuve gave lectures on Chateaubriand and French literature at the University de Liège, in Belgium, three times a week. Sainte-Beuve thoroughly enjoyed these lectures. His work for the Constitutionnel began in 1849 and in 1851 he started to write his Causeries du lundi. He spent eleven years in writing these articles. The lundis are part of Sainte-Beuve's critical works, of which there are about fifty volumes.

Professor Dargen divides Sainte-Beuve's activity into three periods: (1) 1824-1840, the Romantic period in which he wrote the Tableau de la poésie française au XVI siècle and the collection of articles

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<sup>11</sup> Lewis Freeman Mott, op. cit., p. 278.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 259-60.

written for the Globe which were later called the Premiers lundis, and part of the Portraits littéraires; (2) 1835-1848, a more stable and neutral period, which includes the volumes of Portraits; and (3) 1848-1869, the period in which Sainte-Beuve appeared as a judicial critic and historian and in which the Causeries du lundi and Nouveaux lundis were written.<sup>13</sup>

The Causeries du lundi were interesting personal talks written for the Monday editions of the Constitutionnel for three years and later for the Moniteur for eight years. In the Causeries du lundi and the Nouveaux lundis there are six hundred forty essays, which contain biographical, historical and literary matters.<sup>14</sup> In the lundis Sainte-Beuve tries to be fair and impartial to everyone. He judges people from all angles. Sometimes he uses an introduction to his essays but as a rule his subject is introduced at once and a short biography given. When he began writing the Causeries du lundi, Sainte-Beuve never presented the same subject any two successive Mondays. These subjects were suggested by newly published books, current happenings or taken from his studies.<sup>15</sup> Early in the week Sainte-Beuve chose his subject, mapped out his work and consulted his secretary and librarians for suitable material on the subject. After the article was written Sainte-Beuve read three proofs of it to make sure that

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<sup>13</sup> William A. Nitze and E. Preston Dargan, op. cit., pp. 636-38.

<sup>14</sup> Lander MacGlintock, Sainte-Beuve's Critical Theory and Practice after 1849 (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, University of Chicago, 1920), p. 109.

<sup>15</sup> Louis Freeman Mott, op. cit., p. 340.

everything was correct. These articles kept the critic very busy and testify to his perseverance in his studies and writings.

In 1854, Sainte-Beuve was appointed professor of Latin poetry at the Collège de France but soon resigned because of political trouble. The material collected by him for those lectures was later published in a volume called the Étude sur Virgile. In 1859 the critic completed Port-Royal, a history of Jansenism, in six volumes. In 1862 was formed the Magy group in which Sainte-Beuve participated and at which general topics were discussed. Among its members were the Goncourts, Gautier, Taine, Schérer and Flaubert. In 1865 Sainte-Beuve was made a senator and became "a sort of official representative of literature in government."<sup>16</sup> After a lingering illness Sainte-Beuve died October 13, 1869.

Sainte-Beuve's entire life was a literary one as he began to write while a student and accomplished wonders during his last few years in spite of illness. His writings are many and varied but he is chiefly noted for his criticisms as he always gives a fair, clear, and accurate account of whatever he undertakes.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 477.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ELIZABETHAN AGE AND THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The writers considered in this chapter are Bacon, Shakespeare and Milton.

#### Sir Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon, the greatest man of the Elizabethan age, with the exception of Shakespeare, did more than anyone else to free the mind from old ideas and to direct it to a new way of studying facts. He is the first English philosopher and "the pioneer of modern philosophy in all countries."<sup>1</sup> Most of his writings were in Latin, with the exception of the Essays, The History of Henry VII and part of The New Atlantis which were written in English.

One may get an idea of what the French thought of Bacon from remarks of various writers. Voltaire named Bacon with Locke and Newton in his twelfth letter of the Lettres Philosophiques.<sup>2</sup> D'Alembert in his Discours préliminaire de l'Encyclopédie called Bacon "le plus grand, le plus universel et le plus éloquent des philosophes."<sup>3</sup> Taine described Bacon as "le plus compréhensif, le plus sensé, le plus novateur des

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<sup>1</sup> Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, A History of English Literature (New edition, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire, Lettres philosophiques (Paris, édition critique, par G. Lanson, 1909), I, 153.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Schinz, Eighteenth Century French Readings (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1924), p. 450.



esprits du siècle."<sup>4</sup> Emile Legouis in the History of English Literature says that Bacon, especially in his Essays, is curt, impersonal and not speculative; that he uses maxims and argumentation and writes for statesmen and men of the court; that his thoughts and expressions are compact and have a prophetic tone.

Bacon is discussed very briefly by Sainte-Beuve in his Causeries du lundi. In his account of Charles Ferrault, Sainte Beuve remarks that that which Descartes has done in philosophy, Ferrault and Fontenelle have done in literature:

En ce sens, Ferrault applique expressément la méthode de Descartes à l'examen de la littérature et des arts.

Sainte-Beuve also says that Ferrault thought he himself was the first one to experiment in this way but the critic adds that Bacon had said many of the same things before and in a much better way.<sup>6</sup> In discussing Philippe de Comynes, Sainte-Beuve calls attention to the fact that Comynes and Bacon were alike in that they had a weakness for riches and loved them too well.<sup>7</sup> Bacon, Pascal, Fontenelle and Turgot, a philosopher of the eighteenth century, had the same idea; namely that there is no reason why humanity, which may be compared to a man who has lived through

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<sup>4</sup> H. Taine, Littérature anglaise (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1892), I, 389-90.

<sup>5</sup> Legouis and Casanjan, op. cit., pp. 384-85.

<sup>6</sup> C.-A. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du lundi (Paris: Librairie Garnier Frères), V, p. 269. (C. l. will be used hereafter as an abbreviation for Causeries du lundi)

<sup>7</sup> C. l. I, 258.

childhood and youth and has reached maturity, cannot be strong in maturity since it inherits the results of the past ages and continually adds new things.<sup>8</sup>

Sainte-Beuve gives the view of Saint-Martin in regard to Bacon and Condillac, two names that are often seen together. Saint-Martin was a writer of philosophy and literature in the eighteenth century. He protested against the current ideas of the time, worshipped the divine and opposed the materialistic doctrines. Saint-Martin thinks Bacon is far above Condillac and should be placed on the throne of science. In philosophy, he places Condillac next to Bacon. To him Bacon's works do not repel but rather attract. Even though Bacon leaves many things unsaid, nevertheless Saint-Martin classes him a hundred degrees above Condillac.<sup>9</sup>

Although Sainte-Beuve does not discuss Bacon as much as his reputation in France would seem to warrant, he regarded him as a great moralist and philosopher.

William Shakespeare

Nicolas Clément, a librarian in France is said to have been the first to write a criticism of Shakespeare in the form of a note which was attached to a copy of the Second Folio, found in the Royal Library not later than 1675. Clément remarked about Shakespeare's natural thoughts

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<sup>8</sup> C. 1. III, 344.

<sup>9</sup> C. 1. I, 269.

and fine expression but deplored the immaturité in his comedies. In 1717, De la Roche<sup>10</sup> wrote an article in the Journal littéraire on English poetry and drama, and included several of Shakespeare's plays in his study. His chief criticism was that Shakespeare wrote without definite rules. The French became really interested in Shakespeare after the publication of Voltaire's Lettres philosophiques in 1734. Voltaire, who claims to be the first to introduce Shakespeare into France, became interested in Shakespeare during his stay in England from 1726 to 1729. Voltaire,<sup>11</sup> who praised Shakespeare very highly at first, says that Shakespeare lacked art but this lack was caused by the ignorance of Shakespeare's audiences; that his plays covered too much time and contained most absurd things. Voltaire knew much more about Shakespeare than most other Frenchmen, but his knowledge was scant and inaccurate. He praises certain passages and scenes in Shakespeare's plays and claims that the French disliked Shakespeare's dramas taken as a whole and so missed the great beauties in certain parts. In 1761, Voltaire<sup>12</sup> published his Appel à toutes les Nations de l'Europe which contained an attack upon Shakespeare because he did not write according to the classic rules. Voltaire felt that Shakespeare was gaining in popularity and wished the French to choose between Shakespeare and the French writers.

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G. M. Haines, Shakespeare in France (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 6.

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Ibid., pp. 11-13.

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Ibid., p. 37.

The Lettres philosophiques had called attention to Shakespeare and caused other writers to comment on his work. Three of these were Abbé Prévost, the Abbé Le Blanc and Pierre de la Place. Prévost, in his Mémoires et Aventures d'un Homme de qualité (1738), made favorable comments on Shakespeare's plays, affirming that they were equal to the Greek and French plays.<sup>13</sup> The Abbé Le Blanc, in Lettres d'un Français (1745) claimed that Shakespeare excelled in style; that his imagination was rich and powerful but that he lacked taste and selection.<sup>14</sup> Pierre de la Place<sup>15</sup> helped to interest the French in Shakespeare. From 1746 to 1749 he wrote eight volumes which gave synopses of many English plays among which were ten of Shakespeare's. The most important scenes were translated as La Place thought that the French, even though they disliked Shakespeare, ought to become acquainted with such an important author. In 1776 Pierre Le Tourneur<sup>16</sup> and two other men published the first translation of Shakespeare but they made many changes in the plays. One great change was the introduction of special songs. From 1778 to 1821 Mme de Staël and Chateaubriand were the two most important critics. Mme de Staël<sup>17</sup> in De L'Allemagne (1810) emphasized the beauties of Shakespeare's writings,

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<sup>13</sup> Augustus Halli, History of Shakespearean Criticism (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), I, 36.

<sup>14</sup> George R. Havens, "The Abbé Le Blanc and English Literature." Modern Philology, XVIII, 441.

<sup>15</sup> C. W. Haines, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>17</sup> Augustus Halli, op. cit., p. 229.

his portrayal of pity and terror and his knowledge of human nature. She places him below the Greek writers in perfection of art. Chateaubriand<sup>18</sup> recognized Shakespeare's great insight into human nature and life but said he lacked unity, art and form in his dramas. Thirty years later Chateaubriand withdrew his adverse criticism as he claimed he had not understood Shakespeare. In 1821, Guizot, de Barante and Amedée Pichot published a complete *édition* of Shakespeare's works.<sup>19</sup> To this, Guizot added his essay Shakespeare et son Temps. Guizot points out that Shakespeare's faults were coarseness, confusion and undramatic reflection. He calls Shakespeare a genius but says he cannot be taken as a model of art. Victor Hugo,<sup>20</sup> in Préface de Cromwell (1827), perhaps established Shakespeare's fame in France when he said that there were three stages to art, (1) the ode exemplified by Genesis; (2) that of the epic by Homer and (3) that of the drama by Shakespeare. Victor Hugo admires in Shakespeare's plays the combination of the grotesque and beautiful, of grandeur and truth. He calls Shakespeare the god of the theatre.<sup>21</sup> By 1827 Shakespeare's influence increased greatly. French historical plays were patterned after his plays, and dramas of a more excitable nature were demanded by the French. France acknowledged that Shakespeare was one of the greatest writers and that he had stood the test of time but she claimed that Shakespeare had his faults. The prevalent idea of Shakespeare was

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<sup>18</sup> G. M. Haines, *op. cit.*, p. 97 and p. 147.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>20</sup> Victor Hugo, Cromwell (Paris: Librairie Charpentier et Fasquelle, no date), p. 15.

<sup>21</sup> Augustus Ralli, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

that he excelled in le génie, but the French writers surpassed him in le goût.<sup>22</sup>

Sainte-Beuve calls Shakespeare a classicist, that is, an author who has enriched the human mind; who has discovered a moral truth; who has expressed his ideas and observations in a great, sensible and beautiful form and who uses a style of writing suitable to all times.<sup>23</sup> Sainte-Beuve thinks that Shakespeare's writings are great in spite of his violation of rules, so he calls him, "le plus libre des génies créateurs et le plus grand des classiques sans le savoir."<sup>24</sup> Sainte-Beuve claims that Dante, Shakespeare and Milton in spite of all obstacles, have reached the highest pinnacle and have produced works that will never perish.<sup>25</sup> The great critic speaks of Shakespeare as being moderate, gentle, noble and most human; as the most wonderful poet since Homer; as one who has a creative imagination and can paint so well kings, heroes, inn-keepers and peasants that if human nature were destroyed and his writings only survived, generations later could tell from his writings what men were like.<sup>26</sup> So Sainte-Beuve praises Shakespeare and pictures him as a man of noble traits, moderate, sensible in speech, who has been of service to mankind and whose writings will last through the ages.

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<sup>22</sup> M. Miller, English Influence In The Choix des anciens Mercurus et des autres Journeux (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, University of Chicago, 1928, Chicago), p. 112.

<sup>23</sup> C. I. III, 42.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>26</sup> C. I. XV, 366.

Sainte-Beuve had made no extensive study of Shakespeare, but his knowledge of English drama comes mostly through Shakespeare. He spoke more of his tragedies than of his comedies. Sainte-Beuve tells us that Ducis translated into French the Shakespearian plays: Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, King Lear, Macbeth and Othello. Ducis was reproached for imitating Shakespeare and not for imitating him badly.<sup>27</sup> From a catalogue of Sainte-Beuve's books published after his death, it is known that he owned copies of two translations of Shakespeare, those of Guizot and of Montégut.<sup>28</sup>

In his Causeries du Lundi, Sainte-Beuve gives us the opinions of various persons regarding Shakespeare. Fontenelle spoke against the worshippers of the ancients in favor of the moderns; he pleaded for Molière on knowing him and for Shakespeare without knowing him.<sup>29</sup> President Bénédict wondered why French history was not written in plays as Shakespeare had written English history.<sup>30</sup> Voltaire did not like the idea of the French abandoning Racine for Shakespeare.<sup>31</sup> Mme du Deffand, whom Horace Walpole induced to study Shakespeare, said that she hardly knew how to express her feelings after reading Shakespeare. She seemed to be revived, to have found a new world and a new life. Sainte-Beuve mentions especially

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<sup>27</sup> C. I. VI, 461.

<sup>28</sup> E. Margaret Phillips, "Sainte-Beuve's Criticism of English Poetry," The French Quarterly (IX-X, 1928, 1929), pp. 207-08.

<sup>29</sup> C. I. III, 331.

<sup>30</sup> C. I. XI, 224.

<sup>31</sup> C. I. XIII, 36.

her reading of Othello, Henry VI and Hamlet.<sup>32</sup> The Cardinal de Bernis, a clergyman of the eighteenth century, says Sainte-Bauve, thought that Julius Caesar was a pleasure to read and that he preferred it to "les froides éloges de nos tragiques médiocres."<sup>33</sup> Grimm, a German writer of the eighteenth century, author of a Correspondance littéraire, did not advise the French to change their style of writing and imitate others. He said that although their writings did not have the great beauty that is seen in Shakespeare still they lack the coarseness and faults found in his writings. Sainte-Bauve states Grimm's opinions of Shakespeare by saying that Shakespeare is of the first order in the handling of people, in power of action and is unequalled in portraying characters and making them life-like. Grimm says:<sup>34</sup>

Quel génie a pénétré jamais plus profondément dans tous  
les caractères et dans toutes les passions de la nature  
humaine!

When Gibbon lived in Lausanne, he seemed to have acquired the traits of a Frenchman. After seeing Voltaire act in person at Lausanne his taste for the French theatre increased and his admiration for Shakespeare, whom he had been taught to honor from childhood, decreased.<sup>35</sup> Sainte-Bauve quotes Goethe as saying that Byron, who was so great in writing poetry, feared

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<sup>32</sup> C. I. I, 424.

<sup>33</sup> C. I. VII, 54.

<sup>34</sup> C. I. VII, 312-13.

<sup>35</sup> C. I. VIII, 442.



Shakespeare because he was more powerful than he in the creating of characters and in putting them into action. This caused Byron to be jealous and uneasy; if it had not been for Shakespeare, Byron would have been classed as a great writer.<sup>36</sup>

The French, although slow in accepting Shakespeare at first, came to consider him a great writer but criticized him for his coarseness of speech and lack of rules. Sainte-Beuve most probably read Shakespeare's works from translations. He seems to have a high opinion of Shakespeare since he calls him a classicist, a most human writer and one whose writings will live forever. Sainte-Beuve in his Causeries du lundi gives the opinions of various writers, all of whom agree that Shakespeare in spite of his faults was a great genius.

#### John Milton

Milton and Shakespeare are often associated as being the two greatest poets of England. Milton is especially noted for his loftiness and greatness of mind. Milton was admired by only a few outside of England as it is necessary to understand the English language thoroughly in order to appreciate Milton.<sup>37</sup> His popularity in England may be judged by the sale of his work. Three thousand copies of Paradise Lost (1667) were sold in ten years after its publication and six editions were made before the eighteenth century.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> C. 1. III, 48.

<sup>37</sup> Cambridge History of English Literature, VII, 157.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

It was through Milton's political writings that France first became acquainted with him. The English people were interested in politics and religion and Milton wrote for religion and against monarchy. Milton is considered a poet who successfully combined the idea of the Renaissance and the Reformation. Dupré de Saint Maur was the first to translate Paradise Lost into French (1727). In 1754-55 Louis Racine translated the same poem. Milton was perhaps even more appreciated during the period of Romanticism, especially by such a writer as Chateaubriand.

Taine gives as Milton's strong points, "la science immense, la logique serrée et la passion grandiose, voilà son fond." He says, "Il est passionné, dévoué, religieux, héroïque. On a vu rarement un tel mélange."<sup>39</sup> Professor Casamian speaks of Milton as being far above others of his time. He says no other poet was so religious and artistic at the same time, as Milton.<sup>40</sup>

Although it is probable Sainte-Beuve only knew Milton's works from translation nevertheless in his estimation, Milton ranks very high as a poet. He writes, "Tout ce qui est beau de Milton est hors de pair; on y sent l'habitude tranquille des hautes régions et la continuité dans la puissance."<sup>41</sup> The time in which Sainte-Beuve came in contact with Milton's work was the period when he wrote Fort-Royal. In this, he compares the

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<sup>39</sup> H. Taine, op. cit., II, 412-14.

<sup>40</sup> Emile Legouis and Louis Casamian, op. cit., pp. 589-90.

<sup>41</sup> G. I. I, 308.

beliefs of Jansen with those of Milton in Paradise Lost.<sup>42</sup>

Sainte-Beuve speaks especially of Paradise Lost, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso. He calls the love of Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost ideal and adds that the spirit of chivalry produced politeness in society but did not create happiness as ideal love did.<sup>43</sup> L'Allegro and Il Penseroso he compares to Musset's Huiss. The latter have sentiment and harmony and are more wordly, colorful and full of inspiration. Sainte-Beuve writes of Milton's works as follows:<sup>44</sup>

Mais, dans ces compositions de suprême et un peu froide beauté, le poète n'a pas la passion en lui; il attend le mouvement du dehors; il reçoit successivement ses impressions de la nature; il se contente d'y porter une disposition grave, noble, sensible, mais calme, comme un miroir légèrement ému.

Sainte-Beuve compares Il Penseroso to a great crater "où la pière par degrés monte lentement vers l'Éternel."<sup>45</sup> The great critic rather apologizes for comparing the colors with which Milton paints his happy couple in Eden to the colors which Alfred de Musset uses in describing Don Juan in his poem Namouna.<sup>46</sup>

Sainte-Beuve says that when Buffon in his Histoire naturelle (1749) describes the first man and his thoughts on the day of creation he became

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<sup>42</sup> E. Margaret Phillips, "Sainte-Beuve's Criticism of English Poetry." The French Quarterly, IX-X (1928 and 1929), 202.

<sup>43</sup> C. I. XI, 130.

<sup>44</sup> C. I. I, 302.

<sup>45</sup> C. I. I, 303.

<sup>46</sup> Ebid., p. 299.

"l'émule de Milton lui-même, un Milton physicien, moins la religion et l'adoration."<sup>47</sup> Sainte-Beuve connects the name of Cowper and Milton when he writes: "Cowper, c'est à bien des égards le Milton de la vie privée."<sup>48</sup> He also says that Cowper revealed himself as "un disciple énergique de Milton" when he wrote La Chêne de Yardley in his last years.<sup>49</sup>

Sainte-Beuve seems to have little knowledge of Milton except as he quotes from other writers, but his remarks are highly favorable.

In spite of the faults of the writers of this period Sainte-Beuve classes Bacon, Shakespeare and Milton as truly great writers. Bacon, he calls a moralist, Shakespeare a classicist and Milton a sublime poet.

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<sup>47</sup> C. 1. IV, 359.

<sup>48</sup> C. 1. XI, 135.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

## CHAPTER IV

### WRITERS FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE OPENING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In this chapter will be considered writers from the time of the Restoration (1660) to the opening of the nineteenth century. Some are discussed very briefly, others at length.

John Locke

John Locke, the great English philosopher, expressed his ideas freely. His doctrine was that our knowledge comes through our senses. He is shrewd and wise and explains all in a simple, clear language. The Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1670), which was Locke's best-known work, was translated into Latin, French and German and became very popular. By the eighteenth century, thirteen editions had been published and by 1890 over forty editions had been made. <sup>1</sup>

Voltaire and Montesquieu were influenced by Locke in their philosophy. Voltaire compliments Locke in his Lettres philosophiques (XIII) thus:<sup>2</sup>

Jamais il ne fut peut-être in esprit plus sage,  
plus méthodique, un Logicien plus exact que Mr. Locke.

Taine<sup>3</sup> seemed to think Locke was rather hesitant, guessed a great deal.

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E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, A History of English Literature (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), p. 725.

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire, Lettres philosophiques (édition critique, par G. Lanson; Paris: Edouard Cornely et Cie Editeurs, 1909), I, 166.

<sup>3</sup> H. Taine, English Literature (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1874), II, 70.

doubted and started an opinion, then withdrew it and in the end never finished nor exhausted his idea.

Locke is briefly mentioned by Sainte-Beuve. In writing about Frederick the Great, Sainte-Beuve states that Locke and Bayle were esteemed by Frederick.<sup>4</sup> In his Causeries du lundi, written concerning Franklin, Sainte-Beuve shows how ambitious Franklin was when he was an apprentice in a print shop. At the noon hour Franklin ate his lunch hurriedly and then studied arithmetic and geometry and read books, especially Locke's Human Understanding.<sup>5</sup>

#### Isaac Newton

Voltaire claims the honor of making Newton popular in France. Montesquieu and Fontenelle and a few other French writers had written about Newton earlier, but Voltaire by his clear and simple style appealed more to the public. He placed Newton above Descartes.

In the Causeries du lundi Sainte-Beuve quotes what others say of Newton. He gives Montesquieu's<sup>6</sup> comparison of Newton and the common man:

Celui qui ne saura pas faire un système comme Newton fera une observation avec laquelle il mettra à la torture ce grand philosophe. Cependant Newton sera toujours Newton, c'est-à-dire le successeur de Descartes, et l'autre un homme commun, un vil artiste, qui a vu une fois et n'a peut-être jamais pensé.

From this we may assume that Sainte-Beuve agreed with Montesquieu in writing that Newton was a keen observer and deep thinker.

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<sup>4</sup> G. 1. III, 194.

<sup>5</sup> G. 1. VII, 130.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

Sainte-Beuve gives a statement which Voltaire made about Newton:<sup>7</sup>

Je voudrais que Newton eût fait des vaudevilles, je l'en estimerais davantage. Celui qui n'a qu'un talent peut être grand génie; celui qui en a plusieurs est plus aimable.

In the Gauseries du lundi, Sainte-Beuve does not give his own opinion but only quotes other writers, such as Voltaire and Montesquieu.

#### Jonathan Swift

Jonathan Swift was known and appreciated in France during his lifetime. Many of his writings were translated into French and became popular. Two of these were A Tale of a Tub and Gulliver's Travels. His style is clear and precise. He never lacked words in expressing himself and his sentences, which were not always grammatically correct, were forceful.<sup>8</sup>

Swift "satirique et sceptique, mais croyant"<sup>9</sup> was greatly admired by Voltaire, says Lanson. Voltaire knew him personally while in England and corresponded with him. Taine<sup>10</sup> says that Swift's surroundings and nature, which have kept him from happiness and power, "l'ont élevé, dans cet âge d'imitation française et de modération classique, à une hauteur extraordinaire, où, par l'originalité et la puissance de son invention, il se trouve l'égal de Byron, de Milton et de Shakespeare, et manifeste en haut relief le caractère et l'esprit de sa nation." This is indeed high praise of the English writer. Professor Gazamian<sup>11</sup> in his History of

<sup>7</sup> C. 1. II, 216.

<sup>8</sup> Cambridge History of English Literature, IX, 143.

<sup>9</sup> Gustave Lanson, Histoire de la Littérature française (Hachette et Cie, Paris, 1916), II, 77.

<sup>10</sup> H. Taine, op. cit., IV, 81-82.

<sup>11</sup> E. Legouis and L. Gazamian, op. cit., pp. 740-87.

English Literature describes Swift as king where moral philosophy, criticism, satire, history and politics are concerned. He is noted for his freedom of thought and deep thinking but not for form and art. His personality is disclosed in his writings which are thoughtful and forceful. They are exact, decisive and yet of a simple nature. Swift did not believe much in science and the theory of gravitation. He considered these as playthings of thought.

In the Causeries du lundi Sainte-Beuve does not express his own idea of Swift so much as he gives other writers' opinions. Sainte-Beuve expresses Pope's opinion of Swift as follows:<sup>12</sup>

Je m' imagine que si nous passions tous trois seulement trois années ensemble, il pourrait en résulter quelque avantage pour notre siècle.

and he criticizes Voltaire for placing Swift above Rabelais.<sup>13</sup> Later Voltaire makes amends for this statement.

L'abbé Sieyès, who was prominent in politics at the time of the Revolution is compared with Swift by Sainte-Beuve. In irony, egoism and contempt they are somewhat alike, he says, but Swift "exprimait sa misanthropie sous forme satirique et humoristique, l'autre sous forme de réflexion morale directe."<sup>14</sup> Sainte-Beuve writes that Swift and Addison used reason and independence in their writings. He says that Gibbon read Swift and Addison to become acquainted with the English idioms and to develop his talent since these two authors added reason and in-

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<sup>12</sup> G. 1. III, 47.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> G. 1. V, 212.



dependance to the purity of their language.<sup>15</sup> Sainte-Beuve brings out Swift's peculiar way of expressing himself when he quotes Swift who<sup>16</sup> describes Prior, his co-worker on the Examiner and a great talker:

Le moyen de vivre avec M. Prior? il occupe seul tout l'espace et il n'en laisse point pour remuer seulement les coudes.

It would seem that Swift was more important in the eighteenth century than in the nineteenth century. Sainte-Beuve gives the idea that Swift not only used irony, satire and humor in his writings but also good sense and independence.

#### Alexander Pope

With Pope, English classical poetry reached its highest point. Not only was his influence great in England where he was noted for his perfection and style but also in Germany and especially in France where he was greatly admired for his sharp, clear expression of thought. Pope could read English, French, Latin and Greek.<sup>17</sup> Many of his writings were translated into French; Windsor Forest by M. de Boisjolin (1731), Eloisa to Abelard by Colardeau (1758) and by others, the Essay on Man by Silhouette (1736) and by Fontanes (1783) and others.<sup>18</sup>

Voltaire was acquainted with Pope while in England and admired him greatly. It was partly through the influence of Pope that Voltaire became

<sup>15</sup> C. I. VIII, 445.

<sup>16</sup> C. I. XI, 471.

<sup>17</sup> E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, op. cit., pp. 744-47.

<sup>18</sup> Grace Sproul, La Harpe as a Critic of English Literature (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1927), pp. 21-25.

acquainted with Shakespeare's works.<sup>19</sup> Taine<sup>20</sup> laments that he cannot admire Pope but to him Pope's writings are tiresome. To Taine, Pope's ideas are mediocre but he does praise him for his manner of expressing his ideas, his effective words and condensed style. In comparing Dryden's and Pope's style, Taine says Dryden's is exact and simple and not filled with affectations and ornaments as Pope's is. In speaking of Byron and Pope, Taine says that Byron loved Pope whom he considered the most correct and formal of men. Lanson<sup>21</sup> classifies Addison, Pope and Dryden as classical writers in that they have the idea of order, method and reason and fellow nature. He adds, "Addison, Pope, Otway n'effaroucheront pas nos Français amateurs d'élégance et de bonne tenue." La Harpe, a writer of the eighteenth century, finds that Pope's writings in general are not interesting, varied, and humorous with the exceptions of the Essay on Criticism and the Essay on Man.<sup>22</sup>

Sainte-Beuve gives his opinion of Pope in the Nouveaux lundis (vol. VIII) which deals chiefly with Taine's idea of Pope.<sup>23</sup> Sainte-Beuve feels that neither Taine nor most of the critics of the time do justice to Pope. Pope's name does not appear among the English writers

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<sup>19</sup> J. J. Jusserand, Shakespeare in France (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899), pp. 200-07.

<sup>20</sup> H. A. Taine, op. cit., pp. 187-227, and 279.

<sup>21</sup> Gustave Lanson, op. cit., II, 169.

<sup>22</sup> Grace Sproul, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Lander MacClintock, "Sainte-Beuve and Pope," Publication of the Modern Language Association of America, XLI, (June, 1926), 445.

whom Sainte-Beuve read first and in Léon Séché's account of Sainte-Beuve's library only a copy of Fontanes' translation of the Essay on Man is named.<sup>24</sup> Therefore it seems that Sainte-Beuve read Pope in the French and not in the English. To form a great critic, if there could be one, Sainte-Beuve would unite the historical sense of a Taine, the exquisite literary taste of a Pope to the good sense and authority of a Johnson.<sup>25</sup>

Doctor Lander MacClintock<sup>26</sup> in his dissertation on Sainte-Beuve's Critical Theory and Practice After 1849 says Sainte-Beuve was greatly influenced by Pope's critical thought. In Pope's Essay on Criticism Sainte-Beuve finds his ideal portrait of a critic; namely, a man who can give an unbiased opinion, who can show faults to a friend and praise the merits of a foe; and one who can be generous and reasonable in his praise.

In his Causeries du lundi, Sainte-Beuve speaks of the originality of Pope. In discussing Villemain, a critic of the nineteenth century, Sainte-Beuve writes that Villemain was unique in pointing out hidden originalities such as the originality of Pope.<sup>27</sup> Sainte-Beuve asserts that Pope's writings have lived through the ages and that Pope and his followers are most agreeable writers as they give charm to life.<sup>28</sup> In classifying Pope, Sainte-Beuve says he was a classicist of the first order

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<sup>24</sup> Léon Séché, Études à l'histoire romantique: Sainte-Beuve, I (cited by L. MacClintock in Sainte-Beuve and Pope).

<sup>25</sup> E. Margaret Phillips, "Sainte-Beuve's Criticism of English Prose" The French Quarterly, (September, 1931), p. 117.

<sup>26</sup> Lander MacClintock, Sainte-Beuve's Critical Theory and Practice after 1849 (unpublished Doctor's thesis, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1920), p. 69.

<sup>27</sup> C. 1. I, 110.

<sup>28</sup> C. 1. III, 47.

during his life-time and right after his death but later he became a classicist of the second order.<sup>29</sup> Byron never renounced Pope as he did Shakespeare because he did not fear him.<sup>30</sup> Sainte-Beuve thinks that the physical qualities of a man influence greatly his mental faculties. Pope suffered because of his small stature. Sainte-Beuve says:<sup>31</sup>

Les hommes sont ainsi faits: le ton qu'on passe aisément à un homme de haute taille, on ne le pardonne pas de même à un petit. Pope, en son temps, en sut quelque chose.

Horace, Boileau and Pope, say Sainte-Beuve, never permitted good verse to be made against them or without them. If they did not write the verses themselves, they helped others make them.<sup>32</sup> Sainte-Beuve places Horace, Pope and Boileau in the school of master critics.<sup>33</sup>

Sainte-Beuve classifies Pope as a writer of wit, exactness and exquisite literary taste. He speaks of his originality and charm but does not rank him among the greatest writers.

#### Lord Chesterfield

Lord Chesterfield, who was famous for his Letters to his Son, wrote in English, Latin and French. He wrote very freely in French. He was well known to the French as he had traveled on the Continent and was ambassador at the Hague from 1728 to 1732. He was a friend of Fontenelle,

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<sup>29</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>30</sup> C. I. III, 48.

<sup>31</sup> C. I. V, 127.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>33</sup> C. I. VII, 310.

Montesquieu and Voltaire. The latter two he introduced in England.

Mme de Tencin was among his correspondents.

To be fashionable and to have good manners meant everything to Lord Chesterfield, so he sent his son to the French salons to be instructed as he thought that examples were better than precepts. Taine said that the English, not even Chesterfield nor Walpole, mastered the true tone of the salon.<sup>34</sup>

Sainte-Beuve devotes his Gausseries du Lundi<sup>35</sup> of June 24, 1850, to the Lettres de Lord Chesterfield à son Fils. According to Sainte-Beuve these letters are especially interesting because they were confidential and not to be used as a model but because he wished to "former un excellent élève dans l'intimité." Sainte-Beuve compares the letters of Cicero and Lord Chesterfield; the former are.... "un traité des Devoirs," while the latter are letters of a light, frivolous nature combined with the serious graces. At the beginning of this lundi, Sainte-Beuve explains the nature of Lord Chesterfield's life. Chesterfield liked France and when a Frenchman said, "Monsieur, vous êtes tout comme nous," he considered it one of the greatest compliments that could be paid to himself. Sainte-Beuve says that Chesterfield united the good qualities of the two nations.

Sainte-Beuve quotes Montesquieu on Chesterfield: "rien ne

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<sup>34</sup> H. A. Taine, op. cit., (translation) II, 203.

<sup>35</sup> O. I. II, 226-46.

n'instruirait mieux que ses observations et sa critique." The critic also quotes Chesterfield as saying that Lord Bolingbroke taught him how to read history and that Voltaire taught him how it should be written.<sup>36</sup> Although Chesterfield was charmed with Voltaire, still he disapproved of his imprudences, says Sainte-Beuve.

Even though Chesterfield's writings were of a cold, elegant nature, yet the French liked his clear style and language of ease and naturalness. Sainte-Beuve considered him a well-informed man, one of fine distinguished nature. He calls Chesterfield's letters "un livre riche." Sainte-Beuve says that with the exception of parts of Chesterfield's work, which are objectionable because of their morals, his writings have been received with favor by the French people.

#### Samuel Johnson

Although Samuel Johnson could read French he did not speak the language. In the late years of his life he traveled in France and could use only a few idioms.<sup>37</sup> The French were astonished at Johnson's crude manners. The English did not require so much in manners and politeness. To the French his solemn, pompous style seemed dull and unattractive<sup>38</sup> but in spite of this many of his writings were translated into French. Taine<sup>39</sup> calls Johnson "le La Harpe et le Boileau de son siècle."

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>37</sup> Cambridge History of English Literature, X, 179.

<sup>38</sup> H. A. Taine, op. cit., IV, 232.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 222.

Professor Cazamian says that Johnson's character and personality have more influence than his literary work; that he followed the ancients in his mode of writing and distrusted new things in literature; that his personal authority helped to make literature firm in a changing period.<sup>40</sup>

French Sainte-Beuve classes Malherbe, Boileau, Johnson, La Harpe and Fontanes as the great critics as they judged matters of taste "avec vivacité, avec trop d'exclusion peut-être, mais enfin avec un sentiment net, décisif et irresistible."<sup>41</sup> In the case of Chesterfield,<sup>42</sup> Sainte-Beuve says Johnson judged too severely when he said Chesterfield's letters taught the morals of a courtesan and the manners of a dancing teacher. Sainte-Beuve defends Chesterfield by saying perhaps the other phases of his son's education had been taken care of and that if Horace had had a son he would very likely have spoken in the same way as Chesterfield. When the journals and reviews were criticising Cowper's first volume rather severely, Sainte-Beuve says that Johnson kept quiet and Cowper congratulated himself.<sup>43</sup>

Although Sainte-Beuve speaks of Johnson as a stern critic and tyrant, still he considered him a man who had good judgment and the authority needed to make this judgment worth while.

#### Thomas Gray

To the French, Gray was noted for his soberness, melancholy, and

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<sup>40</sup> E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, *op. cit.*, pp. 827-39.

<sup>41</sup> C. I. I, 113.

<sup>42</sup> C. I. II, 234-35.

<sup>43</sup> C. I. XI, 165.

perfection of form. Taine<sup>44</sup> speaks of him as "le solitaire morose de Cambridge," an imitator of Greek poetry, while Cazamian<sup>45</sup> calls him a "scrupulous artist, conscientious and delicate to the extreme." Gray appreciated the French classics and is said to have eagerly read the best French writers. He was especially interested in Montesquieu's Esprit des Lois, and the writings of Buffon and the Encyclopedists. He did not care for Voltaire nor for Rousseau, with the exception of Emile. Froissart was one of his favorite authors; Sully, Madame de Maintenon and Madame de Staël Delaunay were also studied by him.<sup>46</sup>

Sainte-Beuve expresses his opinion of Gray by comparing him with other writers in his Causeries du lundi. In speaking of Jamin, an early nineteenth-century poet of Gascony, Sainte-Beuve places him in the same school as Horace and Gray and "de tous ces charmants génies studieux qui visent dans chaque oeuvre à la perfection."<sup>47</sup> In comparing Paul-Louis Courier, a writer of the early nineteenth century, with Gray, Sainte-Beuve says he was.... "une espèce de Gray plus robuste et plus hardi, mais également distingué, fin et difficile."<sup>48</sup>

Sainte-Beuve was especially fond of memoirs and he gives Gray's idea of them. Gray says if a writer expressed exactly what he had seen,

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<sup>44</sup> H. A. Taine, op. cit., IV, 229.

<sup>45</sup> E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, op. cit., pp. 863-66.

<sup>46</sup> Cambridge History of English Literature, I, 133-53.

<sup>47</sup> C. I., IV, 312.

<sup>48</sup> C. I., VI, 339.



without beautifying or shading it by his imagination and ideas, one would fail to have real memoirs..<sup>49</sup>

Bonstetten,<sup>50</sup> a French author of the eighteenth century, says Sainte-Beuve, became acquainted with Gray while at Cambridge. To him Gray was the most accomplished gentleman he had ever seen. While at Cambridge, Gray lived in a cloister and Bonstetten thought these surroundings gave Gray's poetry a melancholy atmosphere so that later Gray disliked his own poems. Part of Gray's melancholy, Bonstetten attributed to the fact that Gray had never loved. Sainte-Beuve hardly knew whether to approve of this idea but thought his melancholy might be traced to.... "la stérilité d'un talent poétique si distingué; si rare, mais si avare." Sainte-Beuve says that, at a certain age, some poets become silent and seem to be exhausted so that they grieve and refuse to be consoled. Gray was one of these.

In spite of his melancholy tone, Sainte-Beuve considered Gray one of the studious finished writers of his time.

#### Horace Walpole

Horace Walpole,<sup>51</sup> who was especially noted for his letters because of their number and high literary quality, knew French literature well but spoke the French language very poorly. He imitated the French style, was a polished writer and gave a lively and complete picture of English life.

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<sup>49</sup> C. I., I, 446.

<sup>50</sup> C. I., XIV, 431-32.

<sup>51</sup> E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, *op. cit.*, pp. 934-35.

Walpole visited the French salons and was a favorite of Mme du Deffand but he never mastered the true tone of the salon.<sup>52</sup> The ease and phrasing of his work reminds one of Voltaire but he was not so quick nor so brilliant.

Sainte-Beuve's discussion of Walpole is given mostly in his Lundi written about Mme du Deffand.<sup>53</sup> Mme du Deffand, whom Sainte-Beuve classes as a most excellent classicist, chose Walpole, "un homme recherché, répondu," as her dearest friend even though he was twenty years younger than she. According to Sainte-Beuve she was attracted to Walpole because of his freedom of thought and judgment. Her love for him was that of a mother for her son and she regretted at times that he was not her son. She respected Walpole and said if she had her life to live over she wished she might have an instructor like Walpole. Their friendship lasted fifteen years. To Sainte-Beuve, Walpole was "un curieux, un amateur, antiquaire, bibliophile ayant toutes sortes de goûts et peut-être même quelques manies."<sup>54</sup> The fact that Walpole considered the Esprit des Lois the best book ever written gives us an idea of his taste of literature.<sup>55</sup> Walpole's taste, however, was varied as he enjoyed Shakespeare, Voltaire and Mme de Sévigné.<sup>56</sup>

Edmund Burke

Edmund Burke, philosopher and statesman, was noted for his force,

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<sup>52</sup> H. A. Waine, English Literature, II, 203.

<sup>53</sup> C. I., I, 414-30.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 427.

<sup>55</sup> C. I., VII, 73.

<sup>56</sup> C. I., I, 427.

great intellect and enthusiasm. Taste and refinement were not a part of his style and he was not influenced by French writings and ideas.

According to Taine,<sup>57</sup> Burke contrasted the English and the French at the time of the French Revolution, bringing out the idea that these nations are opposites in spirit and civilization; that which the French called renovation, the English called destruction, especially in regard to rights and religion.

Sainte-Beuve<sup>58</sup> says that the writings of Burke remained popular after the Revolution.<sup>59</sup> He states that the idea of Aristotle and Burke regarding flattery were the same, namely, "que le caractère moral du démagogue flatteur du peuple, et celui du courtisan flatteur des rois, se ressemblaient identiquement au fond." In discussing Gibbon, Sainte-Beuve says that Gibbon greatly admired Burke. He quotes Gibbon as saying that he admired Burke's eloquence, approved of his politics, adored his chivalry and was about to excuse his respect for religious institutions.<sup>60</sup> No special writings of Burke are mentioned by Sainte-Beuve in his Causeries du lundi.

#### William Cowper

William Cowper was noted for his letter writing and poetry. Taine<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> H. A. Taine, op. cit. (English), II, 83-84.

<sup>58</sup> C. I., IV, 471-72.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>60</sup> C. I., VIII, 432.

<sup>61</sup> H. A. Taine, op. cit. (French), IV, 283-87.

says he is a poet who sees beauty and harmony in the fire, in the movement of the fingers at work and even in the beds of the kitchen-gardens. He has a style of his own which eliminates rules and eloquence and which expresses his full emotions. Cazamian<sup>62</sup> mentions his sympathy, sincerity and especially his originality.

It would seem that Sainte-Beuve was greatly impressed by Cowper and his writings as he devoted three of his Causeries du lundi and part of a fourth to Cowper and his work. In the Causeries du lundi of November 13, 1854,<sup>63</sup> he discusses Cowper and other writers under the title, De la Poésie de la Nature. Cowper, he says, has his faults but he has "Le fond même de la poésie qui lui est propre: il en occupe toutes les sources pures émanées d'Eden, et il pratique tous les sentiers qui peuvent y ramener." Cowper likes to give advice, says Sainte-Beuve, and he mistrusts the eighteenth century of France, especially its scandalous books, theaters and its author, Voltaire, whom he designates as "celui qui a bâti à Dieu une église et qui a raillé son nom."

The Causeries du lundi<sup>64</sup> of November 20, 1854, has for its topic William Cowper ou de la Poésie domestique. This takes up Cowper's life and part of his writings. Here Sainte-Beuve translates Cowper's poem on his mother's portrait.

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<sup>62</sup> E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, op. cit., pp. 960-61.

<sup>63</sup> C. 1., XI, 134-38.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 139-58.

In the Causeries du lundi,<sup>65</sup> November 27, 1854, his correspondence and verses are discussed. Sainte-Beuve admires his letters which have charm mingled with queer ideas, astonishing pictures and strange comparisons. He describes Cowper's taste as being more elegant and original than certain, for he had a particular sharp way of expressing his ideas vividly. Franklin, who wished to encourage Cowper and to console him for the lack of sale of his first volume, read his writings. Sainte-Beuve describes Cowper's poetry as <sup>66</sup>

quelque chose de si nouveau dans la manière, de si aisé  
et pourtant de si correct dans le langage, de si clair à  
la fois et de si concis dans l'expression, et de si juste  
dans les sentiments.

Franklin read his work with pleasure and parts of it he reread.

In the last Causeries du lundi written about Cowper, a comparison is made of Cowper and Rousseau. Both are spoken of as writers of country and nature, but Cowper is also called the poet of the family and home.<sup>67</sup> Sainte-Beuve says that Cowper and Wordsworth most delightfully describe the joys of domestic happiness and of the home.<sup>68</sup> To the French and English, Cowper was noted for his originality, sympathy and sincerity. Edward Gibbon

Sainte-Beuve discusses Gibbon and his writings in two of his Causeries du lundi.<sup>69</sup> He has taken his facts from Gibbon's Mémoires.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 159-77.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>68</sup> C. 1., XV, 24.

<sup>69</sup> C. 1., VIII, 431-72.

Gibbon was one of the English writers who was greatly influenced by the French and who wrote some of his works in French. He wrote and spoke French with ease and to that language he owes his style and manner of writing history. From the age of sixteen to twenty-one he studied at Lausanne and during this time he acquired the habits which helped to form his literary career. Gibbon was a frequenter of the salon of Mme Geoffrin and was engaged to Mlle Curchod, later Mme Neckar, but the engagement was broken at the wish of his father. Sainte-Beuve does not class Gibbon as a genius but he says that his writings, especially the historical ones are very comprehensive; he excels in analyzing and enumerating complicated parts of his subject but does not show an especially brilliant manner in collecting these. Gibbon was acquainted with the historical writings of Voltaire and was also especially fond of the Esprit des Lois. Montesquieu's style quickened and aroused him. In 1768, he reviewed in French Horace Walpole's Historic Doubts. He began to write a history of Swiss freedom in French but gave up the idea as the first book was not well received.<sup>71</sup> As an autobiographer Gibbon is charming as he reveals himself in his writings.<sup>71</sup>

In the eighteenth century, English literature became better known and was appreciated more by the French people. Although interest in English philosophy and science had increased, Sainte-Beuve gives only a

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<sup>70</sup> Cambridge History of English Literature, X, 343.

<sup>71</sup> G. I., X, 338.

few remarks concerning Locke and Newton in the Causarum du lundi. Pope, Chesterfield, Cowper and Gibbon evidently were favorites of Sainte-Beuve as he discusses them more freely. Swift and Gray were especially known for their perfect finished style. Johnson was considered a severe critic by Sainte-Beuve but a man of worth-while judgment. Walpole was described as a man of a variety of tastes, while Burke was noted as a forceful writer of the Revolution. Goldsmith was praised for the charm and sincerity in his work. The important English writers of the eighteenth century were well known to the French.

## CHAPTER V

### WRITERS OF THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

The latter part of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth century were characterized by a changing spirit. It may be called a period of transition in which naturalness, reality, and romanticism predominate.

#### William Wordsworth

Wordsworth was noted for his simple frank style. He was not a classicist since he would not be bound by rules. He was probably influenced by the French Revolution as he came to Calais in 1790, and remained in France a year. Wordsworth sympathized with the poorer class. The French admired his lofty ideas but at the same time considered many of his writings simple and childish, such as The Kitten, Falling Leaves and The White Doe.<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth's work as a whole may be called a supplement to the Rousseau movement.<sup>2</sup>

Sainte-Beuve<sup>3</sup> speaks of Wordsworth mostly in connection with the home. He calls Cowper and Wordsworth the English poets of the hearth. He also speaks of Wordsworth as "ce grand et pacifique esprit, ce Patriarche de la muse intime." Wordsworth wrote that if people have enough genius they have the right spirit and sentiments which make them capable of seeing

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<sup>1</sup> H. A. Taine, Littérature anglaise, (Librairie Hachette et Cie, Paris, 1892), IV, 318.

<sup>2</sup> Cambridge History of English Literature, XI, 103.

<sup>3</sup> C. I., XV, 25-27.



and feeling the beauty of home ties. So in Sainte-Beuve's estimation, Wordsworth is the poet of the family and home.

Sir Walter Scott

Taine says that Sir Walter Scott, the greatest novelist of his time, was more popular in Europe than Voltaire.<sup>4</sup> E. Preston Dargan,<sup>5</sup> in Scott and the French Romantics, attributes the French interest in Scott to "his colorful revival of the past and to his feeling for traditions and old loyalties. His popularity in France is shown by the sale of his novels which amounted to 200,000 copies from the years 1820 to 1824. In 1817, Defauconpret began to translate Scott's writings and from then on the French interest in them gradually grew. A few men such as Vigny read them in the English but the majority of Frenchmen became acquainted with Scott's work through translations. Hugo, Vigny, Balzac and many other French writers were influenced by Scott in their writings. Hugo, especially, is called a great imitator of Scott."<sup>6</sup>

Sir Walter Scott has been criticised by Taine thus:<sup>7</sup>

Toutes ses peintures d'un passé lointain sont fausses. Les costumes, les paysages, les dehors sont seuls exacts; actions, discours, sentiments, tout le reste est civilisé, embelli, arrangé à la moderne.

Taine rather doubts that true history is learned from Scott's writings.

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<sup>4</sup> H. A. Taine, op. cit., (French) IV, 297.

<sup>5</sup> E. Preston Dargan, "Scott and the French Romantics," The Modern Language Association of America, XLIX (June, 1934), 601-03.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 610.

<sup>7</sup> H. A. Taine, op. cit., (French) IV, 301.

Sainte-Beuve, in comparing Sir Walter Scott and Comynes, says that Scott does not measure up to Comynes in describing the last years of Louis XI.<sup>8</sup> He considers that the great genius of Scott was an inspiration to Balzac.<sup>9</sup> Sainte-Beuve thinks that Scott was a realistic painter and cites as an example the portrayal of Marie Stuart, the prisoner, and her lovely dark brown hair, so vividly pictured that one might think the writer had seen her himself. The critic says Scott is thought to be "le plus exact des romanciers historiques."

#### Lord Byron

To the English, Byron's writings were of a impetuous temperamental nature and he lacked the finer qualities of verse.<sup>11</sup> To foreigners this lack was hardly noticeable and Byron was judged by critics outside of England to be one of the most powerful of English poets. The French romanticists especially thought his poems were great and exhilarating. His writings were an inspiration to many poets of the Continent, among whom were Lamartine, Vigny, Hugo, and Musset. Byron was bound by no restraint and artificiality in his poems.

Taine<sup>12</sup> says the English critics are unfair to Byron, from whom more true facts of his country and age are learned than from anyone else.

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<sup>8</sup> C. 1., I, 255.

<sup>9</sup> C. 1., II, 459.

<sup>10</sup> C. 1., IV, 413.

<sup>11</sup> Edmund Gosse, English Literature, (The Macmillan Company, London, 1904), IV, 111-12.

<sup>12</sup> H. A. Taine, op. cit., IV, 337.

He furnishes more of the romantic ideas than Shakespeare, as in his poems are found characters of mystery, crime, and love which serve as models for Dumas and Hugo.<sup>13</sup>

Sainte-Beuve classes Byron as one of the great forceful poets but places Shakespeare above him in rank.<sup>14</sup> He says Chateaubriand disliked the fact that Byron imitated him without naming him or giving him due honor.<sup>15</sup> Sainte-Beuve<sup>16</sup> also quotes one of Byron's letters to his editor about one of the poet's works.

Vous dites qu'il y a une moitié du Don Juan très-belle; vous vous trompez, car s'il était vrai, ce serait le plus beau poème qui existât. Où est la poésie dont une moitié vaille quelque chose?

This seems to show Byron's own high opinion of himself. In the same paragraph Sainte-Beuve quotes Byron as saying:

Je suis comme le tigre (en poésie): si je manque le premier bond, je m'en retourne grognant dans mon antre.

Sainte-Beuve says that this is true of the modern French poets, that what they have not attained at the first attempt they have lacked.

The critic describes Rousseau as being a strange person, a powerful and fascinating writer. He agrees with Byron<sup>17</sup> in saying:

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<sup>13</sup> Gustave Lanson, Histoire illustrée de la Littérature française (Librairie Hachette et Cie, Paris, 1916), II, 286.

<sup>14</sup> C. I., III, 48.

<sup>15</sup> C. I., I, 441.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 298.

<sup>17</sup> C. I., II, 81.

il (Rousseau) a su, donner à la folie l'apparence de la beauté, et recouvrir des actions ou des pensées d'erreur avec le céleste coloris des paroles.

Sainte-Beuve also thought the same as Byron did in regard to Rousseau's idea of love; namely, that it was too ideal and fantastical.<sup>18</sup>

Sainte-Beuve considered Byron a truly great poet and agreed with many of his views.

#### Madame de Tracy

It is interesting to note what Sainte-Beuve considers the English characteristics of Madame de Tracy.<sup>19</sup> She belonged to the family of the famous Newton and was born in England in 1789, but when seven months old she came to France to live and never returned to England. Madame de Tracy was a writer of essays and letters. She states that she knows nothing about her country although she is English, but Sainte-Beuve says she has more English traits than she thinks. She has a mixture of imagination and unexpected humor; she has the ability to steep herself in English literature as if at a natural source; she has originality and independence.

#### Other Writers

Lamb, Southey, Shelley, Macaulay and Thacheray are merely mentioned by Sainte-Beuve. Keats,<sup>20</sup> Sainte-Beuve says, expresses the ideal feeling of the English, their inner life, friendship, charm and honor. Sainte-Beuve translated one of Keats' poems.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>19</sup> C. I., XIII, 190.

<sup>20</sup> C. I., XI, 197.

Wordsworth, Sir Walter Scott and Byron are the three poets of the early nineteenth century who are chiefly discussed by Sainte-Beuve.

Wordsworth, the reformer of English poetry and the advocator of religion through Nature, was noted for his poetry of the home and hearth. Sir Walter Scott who shared Byron's popularity on the Continent was pictured as an excellent writer and good painter of scenes and characters; Byron, the favorite of England and France, was more popular on the Continent than at home.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to show Sainte-Beuve's attitude toward the English writers treated in the Causeries du Lundi from the time of Bacon to the early part of the nineteenth century. This attitude seems to be a sympathetic one, which may have been induced by his English ancestors and friends or French enthusiasts of England who were his co-workers on the Globe. If Sainte-Beuve had unfavorable ideas of the English writers he does not express them in the Causeries du Lundi as he seems to have only praise for the authors discussed.

He differs in this respect from some of the other French critics. Voltaire, who was changeable in his nature, seemed to praise the English authors at first and later criticised them for their coarseness and lack of rules. This especially was true of his comments on Shakespeare and Milton. Taine, as a rule, gives a favorable opinion of most of the English writers discussed here but is not slow in giving an adverse view if it is his opinion.

Of the three writers discussed by Sainte-Beuve in the Elizabethan age and in the seventeenth century, Bacon is praised for his science and philosophy, Shakespeare for his poetry and creative spirit and Milton for his lofty ideas.

Sainte-Beuve names the traits of the English as originality, independence, humor and imagination. Among the English writers from the time

of the Restoration (1660) to the early nineteenth century Sainte-Beuve mentions the originality of Pope, Chesterfield and Cowper, the independence and freedom of thought of Swift, Johnson and Walpole, the charm and sincerity of Goldsmith, the eloquence of Burke and the finished form and style of Gray and Gibbon. Very little is written by Sainte-Beuve about Locke and Newton. However, the eighteenth century seemed to be a period which interested Sainte-Beuve the most and it was in fact the period which was most influential in France.

Sainte-Beuve writes about only a few of the early nineteenth-century authors. Wordsworth he calls the nature and home poet, Walter Scott, the great novelist, and Byron, the powerful and popular poet. Such writers as Lamb, Shelley and Macaulay are hardly mentioned. Dickens, Tennyson and Browning are not discussed in the Causeries du lundi, probably because they wrote too late in period of time. Also, Sainte-Beuve liked to write about the work of authors who were not well known which may account for his discussing only a few of the nineteenth-century writers.

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