

ALFRED de VIGNY  
and  
THE REVUE DES DEUX MONDES

by

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A thesis presented to the Faculty of the  
Graduate School, Marquette University,  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Re-  
quirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts.

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

August, 1947.

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to give a partial survey of the relationships between the Revue des Deux Mondes and Alfred de Vigny. This relationship is a direct and an indirect one. The direct connection of the poet with the Revue dates from its founding in 1829. By direct relationship is understood his personal and literary contribution to the Revue and to its editor, its contributors, and its reading public. After having made a study of all available contributions, I find that the consideration of even those which I have discovered would constitute a far too extensive treatise if a full significance of their content were developed.

It is clear that there was little attempt to furnish an adequate index of the contents of the Revue during its early years, and the index itself has not been revised since it was originally compiled. It consists of five small volumes. The first volume includes the titles of works published between 1831 and 1874. Alfred de Vigny died in 1863, and since only one of his poems was published posthumously, all collaboration during his lifetime is listed in this volume. Until the year 1832, the month in which contributions were published is not given. The first part of the novel Stello, one essay on the modern theatre, an historical and critical essay on Algiers, and an article entitled Scènes du Désert, were published in 1831. A poem entitled "Les Amans (1) de  

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1. Alfred de Vigny's Spelling of the word "Amants."

Montmorency" is the first of Alfred de Vigny's contributions to the Revue, which bears a date in the index. It is of January 1, 1832. This thesis includes a chronological list of all Alfred de Vigny's contributions, both in prose and in poetry, and also the titles of twenty articles about the life and work of Alfred de Vigny, which were published in the Revue between the years 1832 and 1934. None of the articles about the writer has been systematically indexed in the Revue. It was necessary to go through the titles of all critical essays on French literature in order to find those which dealt with Alfred de Vigny during his lifetime. The International Index which was started in 1907 includes titles of essays published about the writer since that time. It does not include the years which Alfred de Vigny contributed to the Revue, nor does it include articles of French literary criticism published during the Romantic Period. The two-volume index by Lanson does not list critical essays about Alfred de Vigny under his name. The critical edition of Alfred de Vigny by F. Baldensberger (2) contains no bibliography, nor index to its contents. The most illuminating guide to a study of Alfred de Vigny has been furnished by Edmond Estève (3). The Notes Biographiques, which are included in his critical edition on the life and work of the writer, indicate titles which were published in all the French literary reviews and in some of the foreign publications. This bibliography

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(2) F. Baldensberger: Alfred de Vigny, Contribution à sa Biographie Intellectuelle.  
 (3) Edmond Estève: Alfred de Vigny, Sa Pensée et Son Art.



furnishes an acceptable guide to a study of the relationship of Alfred de Vigny and the Revue des Deux Mondes. In the critical edition by Ernest Dupuy (4) there are thirty references to the Revue des Deux Mondes listed in the Index des Noms Propres. Many of them refer to the publications of friends and associates of Alfred de Vigny. There are no references to Alfred de Vigny in relation to the Revue after the writer's death.

The Milwaukee Public Library does not have a foreign index of periodicals. The library has acquired copies of the Revue beginning with Volume 17, in 1847, and continuing through 1941. The John Crerar Memorial Library in Chicago contains all of the volumes published from 1829 until 1941. Histories of English and German periodicals are available in our Public Library. No history of French periodicals is to be found there. Poole's Index furnishes the titles of two articles (5) about the Revue des Deux Mondes. The dictionary by Larousse (6) gives a history of the Revue from 1831 to 1875.

This thesis depends primarily upon the poetry of Alfred de Vigny which was published in the Revue des Deux Mondes and twenty articles taken from the Revue. The poems include "Les Amans de Montmorency", "La Poésie des Nombres", and "Les Poèmes Philosophiques", which began to appear in 1843, and which,

(4) Ernst Dupuy: Alfred de Vigny, Amitiés, Rôle Littéraire

(5) Louis Pollens: "A Great French Review", Critic,  
November 7, 1896. 275-277

(6) Th. Bentzon: "Revue des Deux Mondes," McClures Magazine, June, 1897. 710-716.

Pierre Larousse: Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX Siècle, Paris 1875.

together with some unpublished poems, were in 1864 collected under the title, Les Destinées.

The indirect relationships of Alfred de Vigny may be interpreted in more ways than one, but it is clear that this relationship should include the articles and reviews written about Alfred de Vigny after his death and all posthumous literary work and personal correspondence published in the Revue. This relationship would not be properly understood unless the policy of the Revue and the social groups which it sought to serve were taken into account.

It would be interesting though quite beyond the possible scope of this paper to investigate to what extent the policy of the Revue was reflected in such articles, reviews and controversies as the one which appeared between Sainte-Beuve and Brunetiere after the death of Alfred de Vigny. The reason that it might go quite beyond the scope of this thesis lies obviously in the changes of literary criticism which are in themselves due to the changes in the general philosophy of life. Romanticism in its various aspects produced, as is well known, a literary criticism altogether different from that of Classicism, and the philosophy underlying the periods of both Romanticism and Classicism underwent a radical change during the periods of Realism and Naturalism, so that the implications of our thesis would become all too difficult and too numerous to settle within the proposed scope of an M. A. thesis.

I wish to point out that from the beginning to the end

of the relationships between Alfred de Vigny and the Revue, the idea prevailed that the author held an unique place in the esteem of his associates. This thesis does not include literal translations of articles in their entirety, but an effort was made to achieve a unified and coherent literary digest in translation. The development of the articles by the authors has been followed from beginning to end rather than an attempt to tell the readers what the article contains. This method has not always produced a coherent result in English, but it has seemed the best one to use in dealing with an author whose personality furnishes the subject of discussion. In addition, this method will give the reader a clearer idea of the policy and standards of the Revue des Deux Mondes. It might be said that the prevailing opinion was and remains that the independence of thought, especially in the poems, was occasioned by personal experiences which produced these attitudes. The home life of Alfred de Vigny included the attentive care of an invalid wife for almost thirty years. His mother, who made her home with the author, was confined as a paralytic for many years before her death. The author himself never enjoyed excellent health. It is true that the poet was unduly critical of God and of the universe. His philosophical ideas are not justifiable on the basis of scientific evidence. Alfred de Vigny does not appear to be a profound thinker, but he was an independent thinker. This independence of thought and action was respected by the Revue des Deux Mondes throughout his entire association with

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the editors, if we may credit the sincerity of the articles in which his name appears.

There is little doubt that the content of the thought in the poetry of Alfred de Vigny proves him superior to both Lamartine and Victor Hugo. Most critical essays dealing with the discussion of poetry during the Romantic Period point to this conclusion, especially the critical editions of Ernest Dupuy and F. Baldensperger and the articles which F. Brunetière published in the Revue des Deux Mondes while he was editor. However, the purpose of this thesis is not to raise an issue regarding the comparative merits of Alfred de Vigny and other poets of the Romantic Period, but to shed some additional light upon the relationship of Alfred de Vigny with his associates.



## CHAPTER I

### HISTORY OF THE REVUE DES DEUX MONDES

The Revue des Deux Mondes was founded in 1829 by M. Segur-Dupeyron and M. Mauroy. This Revue was purchased by M. Auffrey after the periodical had ceased operations for a year. M. François Buloz became its first editor. He occupied this position until his death in 1877. The preface to the first issue which appeared in July, 1829, proposed an apparently overambitious literary scope. The subject matter was to include Fine Arts, Archeology, Religion, Philosophy, Science, Public Instruction, Politics, Continental History, Legislation, Political Economy, Agriculture, Finance, Commerce, Industry, Military Arts, Ethnography, and Travel.

Although this statement was made over fifty years ago, it might be equally well made today. "Of all the reviews published outside of France, none can quite compare with the Revue des Deux Mondes. One might say that La Revue de Paris or the Nouvelle Revue better represents French literature in its national form, but no one Italian, German, English, or American periodical has so fully represented the best literary work of those nations as the Revue. Although it is true that many minds have contributed to present the general largeness of resources and products, yet in most instances one mind, one heart, one will dominated the whole and deserves credit for the success achieved during the first fifty years." (1) That mind was François Buloz.

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(1) Louis Pollens: "A Great French Review", The Critic, November 7, 1896. 275.

Fortunately the five men who served as editors-in-chief during the first century of the Revue were gifted with the unique qualifications necessary for the editing and managing of such a periodical. François Buloz, the founder of the Revue, was not a noted writer. He had no fetish of his own or others to worship. He was an educated man, but above all a man of wisdom and practical sense. His faith in the idea of the Revue and the principles which it was to uphold was unswervable. He had almost unerring logical and rhetorical sense, tact, and taste. Within two years he had secured as contributors Alfred de Vigny, Alexander Dumas, and Balzac (who later quarreled with him and left the Revue), Charles Nodier, Hugo, Musset, and Sainte-Beuve.

The Revue did not represent any political party; it belonged to no clique of any sort. Sainte-Beuve could truly say, "There is in our day a certain number of studious and intelligent minds who have a presentiment of a new order, but they do not think it is within the scope of one formula to bring it about. These minds have a part to play in a common effort." (2)

The Revue followed closely upon the Revolution of 1830 and coincided with the burst of talent that made the decades from 1830 to 1850 so remarkable in literature. The pains taken by Buloz to choose wisely and surely, from the abundance of literary material that came to the Revue seems incredible. All proofs were read by him at least twice; this reading was not only close but critical. Buloz was never

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(2) Ibid., 276

narrow. The contributors to the Revue were as different in their views on important subjects as their modes of treatment and their style. However, the Revue was not open to all opinions. Those that seemed dangerous to social order and good government were not admitted. Buloz refused to publish George Sand's ultra-radical utterances, even though she had become one of his most valuable contributors.

The Revolution of 1848 proved a great opportunity for the Revue. That which might have killed the Revue, had the editor taken any previous political stand, saved it at this moment. The Revue rallied all the disarrayed political parties, the monarchists and the alarmed business interests. At the same time, it kept itself on the defensive proclaiming more and more its constitutional tendencies and its liberal aspirations. This procedure assured the Revue the support of the rich, the only ones who were at that time able to support such a high-priced publication (fifty francs per year).

Although the Revue fought for liberalism at all times, it was opposed to excesses of all sorts, especially those in line with state socialism. It held its position against all foes and brought back many of its old friends who had been carried away by the promises of Napoleon III. After the Coup d'Etat of 1851, the Revue assumed an attitude of calm protest. It never accepted Napoleonism. Understanding that silence was the only practical course, it protested eloquently through what it refused to publish. Yet, when the honor of the nation or the progress of civilization was

at stake, it did not hesitate to support France in the person of Napoleon III, as it did in the Crimean War and the campaign in Italy in 1859. The Government was not satisfied with this attitude, and not daring to suspend the *Revue*, endeavored, by bribes or threats, to prevent many prominent writers from contributing to it. The struggle became so intense that Buloz often considered taking his periodical to a foreign country. One thing discouraged Buloz far more than the hostilities of the Government and that was the lowering of the intellectual and moral level of France. "None but a Frenchman can feel what havoc the first years of the Third Empire brought to France", said Buloz. (3) When the Franco-Prussian War came, all criticism of the Government was out of the question. The periodical devoted itself to helping in the cause of National Defense and, when the war ended, to reconstruction and revival. M. Buloz was ill at this time. His wife, Madame Buloz, became the "heart and head" of the great periodical.

Gaining strength through two revolutions, the first literary and the second political, it was due to the diplomatic strategy of the editor that all sides were enlisted to support him. When M. Buloz reorganized the policy of the Revue des Deux Mondes, he limited its contents to literature, philosophy, and science. Political history and political questions were discussed after 1833, although the *Revue* supported no political party. In an issue of 1849 an anonymous article of the *Revue* appeals to all the forces of re-

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(3) *Ibid.*, 277



sistance and "conservation". The writer states that, in the name of the Revue, he and his associates will consent to submit to the new institutions. The defense of liberal ideas, the discussion of useful reform, and a profound study of social questions, were inspired by a sincere interest in the progress of France, and endeavored to represent in France a universal civilization, and to the outside world a progressive France. (4) M. Buloz attempted to edit his Revue in a spirit of moderation. However, his exclusions, as well as his preferences, show an exaggerated rigorism. He welcomed the collaboration of the younger writers, especially of Vigny, Musset, and George Sand, together with many others "Who were young and who still are so, because of an intelligence and a heart which was always young". (5)

Although Buloz limited the type of article which might be published, he allowed the freest criticism of articles that had appeared in the Revue. In an enumeration of the collaborators, many literary luminaries are missing. Balzac waged a bitter war against the Revue. Victor Hugo never forgave its editor for the criticism which Gustave Planche launched against the poet's work. M. Buloz was accused of trying to stifle the originality of young writers. "The review of M. Buloz", said M. Charles Asselineau, "monopolizes certain writers by attributing to itself the exclusive right to publish their work". (6) Larousse laments the scant compensation which the Revue paid its collaborators,

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(4) Pierre Larousse: Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX Siècle; 1131.  
 (5) Ibid., 1131.  
 (6) Ibid., 1132.

the distress and poverty in which two of its staff, Gustave Planche and P. Scudo, died. Collaboration was paid on a basis of each "feuille" contributed to the Revue. In this connection it is noticeable that the works contributed by Alfred de Vigny were long ones, especially the novel Stello.

The Revue des Deux Mondes had only five editors during more than one hundred years. After the death of François Buloz in 1877, Charles Buloz became the editor. When the second Buloz resigned in 1893, Ferdinand Brunetière was appointed editor. Francis Charmes served as editor from 1907 until 1916, when René Doumic became the fifth editor. M. Brunetière had collaborated with the Revue since 1875, and had served as assistant editor before his appointment as editor. He was the well-known critic who led the campaign against the school of Zola, and who never ceased to defend moral standards, and to maintain the rules of good taste. (7) M. Doumic continued independently in the best traditions of literary French criticism. As a lecturer at the Sorbonne he had gained wide applause. He knew how to unite psychological moral sense and taste. His Histoire de la Littérature Française is well known. (8)

Little history of the policy and early years of the Revue is to be found in available articles about the Revue. Of the articles concerning the Revue which appear in the index of the Revue itself, two are testimonials given at a dinner to welcome a new editor. Eight are eulogies written

(7) Firmin Roz: Vue Générale de la Littérature Française, 271  
 (8) Bedier - Hazard: Histoire de la Littérature Française, 285

to commemorate the centenary of the Revue. Only one deals with the relationship between the first editor and Alfred de Vigny. (9) This article will be considered in a later chapter which deals with Alfred de Vigny and his associates.

The Revue des Deux Mondes is published twice each month. An Annuaire Historique is added each year. M. Buloz felt that this supplement would attest to the fact that it was more than a review. In the course of its existence, the Revue has annexed three other periodicals. Recent statistics of the circulation of the Revue are unattainable. It is estimated that twenty-five thousand copies were circulated at the close of the nineteenth century. This statement was found in an article published in 1897. (10)

Concerning the format of the periodical, a definite plan is followed in all issues. The proportions may be changed, but the make-up is uniform. Each number contains at least one story or an instalment of a serial novel, one or two historical articles, one or more geographical or travel articles, one political, sociological, or politico-economical article, one literary study, infrequently an essay on some question of art, and very infrequently poetry. The "Chronique de la Quinzaine" reviews politics and literature, and there is a financial article.

Many reproaches to the Revue are justifiable according to the dictionary of Pierre Larousse. (11) It comprises

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- (9) Marie-Louise Pailleron, "Buloz and His Friends," Revue des Deux Mondes; Feb. 15, 1918, 721-760.  
 (10) Th. Bentzon: "Revue des Deux Mondes," McClures Magazine, June, 1897. 715.  
 (11) Pierre Larousse, Le Dictionnaire Universel, 1131.  
 (Author of the article not given)

too many series and divisions which defy research; it does not reprint certain numbers which have been considered important and which are almost not to be found. It does not possess an adequate index or table of contents which should close each decade. Vague, ambitious and complex titles are said to hide the content of the article. Preambles out of all proportion block the apparent purpose of the article and spoil it by making it appear dogmatic. Questions often lose their normal significance in the complexity of their presentation. L. Veillot compares the Revue to an "engrenage qui broie, divise, triture, peigne, et carde pour transformer le tout en étoupe." (12)

Charles Buloz, a son of François, carried on the traditions of his father and of the Revue until 1893. Times had changed when Brunetière took over the editorship of the Revue in 1893. He did not have the same task as François Buloz, who was obliged to curb the feverish imaginations of the Romantic Period. Brunetière composed admirably. His faultless logic and earnest convictions had great usefulness and a "wholesome and beneficent influence upon the Revue". (13) Following the lecture tour of Brunetière through the United States in 1897, Th. Bentzon, a member of the staff of the Revue, wrote an article describing the first years of its founder in his struggle to keep the Revue in existence. In the enumeration of its noted contributors, Alfred de Vigny heads the list which Th. Bentzon made of the early collaborators. Vigny holds the same place among the early collaborators

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(12) Ibid., 1132.

(13) Des Granges, Histoire Illustrée de la Littérature Française, 813.



named by Louis Pollens.

The Revue des Deux Mondes is not merely a magazine; it is an institution, an annex to the Académie Française. The Forty Immortals of the Academy are very frequently recruited among its contributors. It was the Revue that recommended the name of Alfred de Vigny for candidacy to the Academy, following the publication of his Poèmes Philosophiques.

The longevity of the Revue, sustained for more than a century in a country sometimes said to be the home of caprice and inconstancy, is almost miraculous. It was still vigorous at the beginning of World War II. Th. Bentzon has described the fear and trembling which he experienced when he entered the school of M. Buloz in the Rue St. Benoit. With his single seeing eye, the editor impressed the young writer as an imperious colossus. Once admitted, Mr. Bentzon never dissociated himself from M. Buloz. "This was the general rule; one belonged to the Revue body and soul, once and for all". (14)

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(14) Th. Bentzon, "Revue des Deux Mondes", McClures Magazine, June 1897. 716.

## CHAPTER II

## LIFE OF ALFRED DE VIGNY

## COLLABORATION WITH THE REVUE DES DEUX MONDES

Alfred de Vigny was born at Lèches, France, on March 27, 1797. His father, Léon Pierre de Vigny, a former officer in the army of King Louis XVI, had passed sixty when Alfred was born. His mother, Amélie de Baraudin, was nearly forty. They had lost three children, born before Alfred. Perhaps the poet exaggerated the remote origins of his nobility when he wrote, (1) "Two noble strains, the one on my father's side, pure French of Beauce, the very center of our old Gallic cities, and the other of Roman and Sardinian origin, these two lineages have been united in my veins to die there!" Vigny has said that he often felt the conflicting ardors of two races within him, the vigorous nerves of his northern father and the burning blood of his southern mother. The nobility of the father goes back to François de Vigny who was knighted by Charles IX in 1570. On his mother's side an Emmanuel Baraudin, secretary of the Duke of Savoy, had received letters of nobility from the duke in 1512. These were confirmed by Francis I, in 1542, when Baraudin became a French citizen. Except for the revolutions, the dissipation of the Vigny fortune, if there ever was one, remains an unaccounted-for legend. (2)

(1) Bédier-- Hazard, Histoire de la Littérature Française, 191.

(2) Ibid., 190-194. (Biographical facts concerning the life of Alfred de Vigny).

The care and education of Alfred de Vigny, the "chef d'oeuvre et aboutissement" of these two provincial noble families, were confided to his mother. His father of sixty, knotted with rheumatism, brought on by the Seven-Years War, seldom budged from his armchair.

At school, Alfred found the diet repugnant, and the discipline brutal. Instinctive aristocracy can be a fatal endowment, particularly when one is not rich. Alfred's keen sensibilities were shocked by the vulgarity of his companions. His school years left him with many frightful memories. When he was fifteen, he begged his parents to allow him to study at home. They granted his request. Alfred hastened to return to the armchair conversation of his father, and of the morose old men who, with lamentations, regretted the passing of the "ancien régime". Alone, Alfred started to prepare himself for entrance to the Polytechnic School of Paris. Later a tutor was engaged to assist him with his studies. The stories of military exploits told by his father and the prestige which was accorded to the Napoleonic legend influenced Alfred to choose a military career. The return of the Bourbons barred all previous obstacles for his entrance into service. On July 6, 1814, Vigny became a guard of the King in the very aristocratic "Compagnies rouges". When these were disbanded in January 1816, Alfred de Vigny was transferred to the Royal Guard, which served first at Courbevoie, then at Vincennes, then at Rouen. In this garrison life, where Vigny anticipated from day to day a war which never came, he worked to dispel gloom. He read, meditated, and wrote. The publication of the

works of André Chénier in 1819 and the encouragement of his friend Victor Hugo are said to have directed him toward poetry. (3) In March 1822, Vigny published anonymously his first collection of poetry. This volume of fifty-eight pages contained "Hélène", an epic in three cantos, three poems inspired by antiquity, three poems of biblical origin, and three modern poems. At this time the Revue des Deux Mondes had not been founded, and Vigny was writing exclusively for La Muse Française. (4)

"Éloa" appeared in 1824. In 1826 a new edition of Vigny's poetry contained all the poems of 1822, except "Hélène", and in addition six new poems: "Le Déluge", "Moïse", "Dolorida", "Le Trappiste", "La Neige", and "Le Cor". In this and in all subsequent editions, each poem was followed by the date of composition, and the name of the author accompanied the editions. The edition of 1829 included the preceding poems and "Mme. de Soubise", "Le Bain d'une Dame Romaine", and the "Frégate Sérieuse". "Les Amans de Montmorency" bring these panoramic visions of antiquity and Christianity to the very gates of modern Paris.

Alfred de Vigny had married, left the army, and moved to Paris by 1826. These events were followed by a period of romantic fervor which lasted until 1830. Vigny was an active member of the reunion of the Arsenal, the Cenacle, and of all the salons where, with the enthusiasm of a fraternity, a new renaissance of art was being prepared. Alfred and Victor Hugo

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(3) René Canat, Alfred de Vigny, 15.

(4) M. Barthou, "Unedited Letters to Victor Hugo", Revue des Deux Mondes, February 1, 1925.



having become inseparable, their tenderness overflowed in juvenile effusions. These appear to have been the happiest days of Vigny's life.

The Revolution of 1830 scattered the members of the Cenacle, that fraternity of the arts of which Sainte-Beuve sang so lustily in his early days as a critic. The pretext of political difference was added to other disagreements, which often result from intimacy. After breaking with Hugo, Vigny experienced a confused desolation. The cowardice of the Bourbons was an added disillusion. In following the current which was sweeping many writers toward social action, and in obeying also a sincere feeling of pity for human misery, Vigny started to preach his version of a gospel of the new freedom. He pleaded the cause of the poet-martyr in society. He was little heeded, but he was generously applauded. The novel Stello attempted to show the misery of the poet, whose genius so astounded the other members of society that he sensed only indifferent and hostile reactions. The first part of the novel Stello was published in the Revue in 1831. For his description of the sacred mission of a poet and the misery attending his ostracism from society, Vigny chose as characters the poet Gilbert, who had died in destitution during the reign of Louis XV, the English poet Chatterton, who died in an attic in London as a result of the coldness of the English bourgeoisie, and André Chénier, a victim of the French Revolution. Stello was organized around the deaths of the three poets. Of this novel Buloz wrote to Vigny that, when a review reached the point

of publishing a work of such high literary quality, it was the best review in the world.

Apparently Alfred de Vigny became tired of admiration and misunderstanding. The public was indifferent to his pleading for noble causes. In 1837 Vigny's mother died. This loss brought on an acute moral crisis from which the poet never recovered. About this time Vigny severed relations with Madame Dorval, the heroine of Chatterton, and retired to Maine-Giraud. This is the period which Sainte-Beuve characterized with the phrase "the ivory tower". Vigny called it his "sainte solitude". He left the sickroom where his wife lay ill only to find the "sadness and hostility of a wider horizon which lay beyond". (5) To distract himself he spent the night covering a quantity of little papers with his regular and angular handwriting. Most of them were crammed into drawers of his writing desk. Some of them were re-written and sent to the ever-demanding M. Buloz, according to his correspondence with Madame d'Agoult. (6)

This period of comparative silence was broken when Vigny returned to Paris in 1852. Although he continued to lead the life of a Benedict, there were many faithful friends to contribute to the little joy which his physical condition permitted during his last years. The last "sign of his slavery to this life was the servitude of death," (7) the acute suffering accompanying his last illness. Alfred de Vigny died from a cancer of the stomach, a disease from

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(5) Robert de Trag: Alfred de Vigny, 88.

(6) Revue des Deux Mondes, November 1934

(7) Léon Séché, Alfred de Vigny, Vol. I, Chap. 4

which he had suffered during the two years preceding his death. Before he died he looked at the crucifix with respect and having fulfilled his Christian duties, he expired silently. On the interesting question of his religious conviction at the time of his death, it is the opinion of M. Séché that Alfred de Vigny was sincerely converted to Christianity. (8) The poet is buried in the cemetery Montmartre in Paris.

Much could be said concerning the relations of Alfred de Vigny with the poets Lamartine and Victor Hugo. Vigny met Lamartine in the salon of Mme. Montcalm, sister of the Duke of Richelieu. Lamartine did not like the theme of Cinq Mars. (9) Concerning the poems of Alfred de Vigny which appeared in the Revue des Deux Mondes, Lamartine never uttered a word of praise or criticism. (10) Concerning the relations of Vigny and Victor Hugo, it appears that Vigny admired Hugo until 1837, the year during which Vigny broke with Mme. Dorval. Hugo is said to have been instrumental in separating Vigny and the great tragedienne. (11) Ten years after the breaking up of the Cenacle group, Sainte-Beuve wrote an article in the Revue. He called it "Ten Years Later." (12) It is clear that Vigny did not associate intimately with the older members of the Romantic School after 1830. However, he continued to exert a decided influence upon the younger poets.

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(8) Ibid.

(9) Ernest Dupuy, Alfred de Vigny, 316

(10) Ibid., 317.

(11) Ibid., 254.

(12) Ibid., 334.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF WORKS BY ALFRED DE VIGNY  
AND ARTICLES CONCERNING HIS LIFE AND WORK PUB-  
LISHED IN THE REVUE DES DEUX MONDES

- Vol. I, Vol. II, 1831, Alfred de Vigny, Scènes du Désert  
fragment of "L'Almèh"  
Vol. I, II.  
1831, Alfred de Vigny, Stello, (première  
consultation)
- Consultation de Docteur Noir, Stello ou les Diables bleus:  
I. Gilbert II Chatterton Vol. III, IV. 1831, III André  
Chénier April 1, 1832.
- Vol. I, Vol. II, 1831, Alfred de Vigny, Lettre sur le  
Théâtre-moderne à  
propos d'Anthony.
- Vol. III, Vol. IV, 1831, Alfred de Vigny, Anecdotes histor-  
iques of politiques  
sur Algiers
- January 1, 1832, Alfred de Vigny, Les Amans de  
Montmorency
- August 1, 1832, G. Planche, Alfred de Vigny,  
Critique littéraire
- March 1, 1833, Alfred de Vigny, Laurette et le  
Cachet rouge
- June 1, 1833, Alfred de Vigny, Quitte pour la Peur
- April 1, 1834, Alfred de Vigny, La Veillée de  
Vincennes
- September 1, 1835, G. Planche, Chatterton, Critique  
dramatique.
- September 1, 1835, Alfred de Vigny, Lettre à M. le  
Directeur au sujet  
de Chatterton
- September 1, 1835 François Buloz, Réponse au sujet  
de Chatterton
- October 15, 1835, Sainte-Beuve, Alfred de Vigny
- October 15, 1835, Alfred de Vigny, La vie et la mort de  
Capitaine Renaud
- January 15, 1841, Alfred de Vigny, Mlle Sedaine et de  
la Propriété littéraire



May 1	1841, Alfred de Vigny,	La Poésie des Nombres
January 15,	1843, Alfred de Vigny,	La Sauvage
February 1,	1843, Alfred de Vigny,	La Mort de Loup
March 15,	1843, Alfred de Vigny,	La Flûte
June 1,	1844, Alfred de Vigny,	Le Mont des Oliviers
July 1,	1844, Alfred de Vigny,	La Maison du Berger
February 1,	1854, Alfred de Vigny,	La Bouteille à la Mer
February 1,	1846, Sainte-Beuve,	Réception d'Alfred de Vigny à l'Académie Française
January 15,	1864, Alfred de Vigny,	La Colère de Samson (poème posthume)
April 15,	1864, Sainte-Beuve	Alfred de Vigny
May 15,	1874, E. Caro	Poètes et Romanciers modernes de l'Ecole philosophique
December 1,	1891, F. Brunetière,	Critique d'Alfred de Vigny par M. Paléologue
January 1,	1897, F. Brunetière,	Lettres inédites d'Alfred de Vigny
April 15,	1907, R. Doumic,	La Pathologie des Romantiques
March 15,	1910, E. Dupuy,	La Famille et la Jeunesse d'Alfred de Vigny
September 15,	1910, E. Dupuy,	Alfred de Vigny et Auguste Brizeux
February 15,	1918, Marie-Louise Pailleron,	Buloz et ses Amis
December 15,	1920, Fernand Gregh,	Journal d'un Poète, fragments inédits.
February 1,	1925, M. Barthou,	Lettres inédites à Victor Hugo

February 15,

1925, A. Praviel,

Les Fêtes de Pau,  
Alfred de Vigny

August 15,

1925, P. Moreau,

La Pensée et l'Art  
d'Alfred de Vigny

November 1,

1934, D. Olivier,

Lettrès à la Comtesse  
d'Agoult

POEMS OF ALFRED DE VIGNY  
WHICH APPEARED IN THE  
REVUE DES DEUX MONDES

"Les Amans de Montmorency" is the first of the poems by Alfred de Vigny to be published in the Revue des Deux Mondes. (13) It is the story in verse of two lovers, who, by their youth and tenderness, resemble the characters of the journalist and his wife Laurette in the Cachet Rouge. They have registered at a small inn. They leave the inn to walk in the woods where they spend two days. All nature seems to sing their love, the light song of the wind, the flame of the setting sun, the perfume of the flowers are like so many caresses. Nothing appears to cloud their joy together. However, it is to die together that they have come to the forest. Why? What were the reasons that prompted this decision? Who dies first? What did the other one think? None of these questions were answered. Their bodies were found by the innkeepers and buried near the inn. This piece of realistic poetry announces distantly the "years of Coppée." It was suggested to Vigny, perhaps by the "Poésies de Joseph Delorme" of Sainte-Beuve. (14) The thought quality of the poem is vague, but its ardent lyricism, its martial design, and its elaborate landscape painting made it acceptable at the time. Vigny concludes the poem with a line which appears also in his Journal of 1833.

"Et Dieu? - Tel est le siècle, ils n'y pensèrent pas." (15)

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- (13) Revue des Deux Mondes, January 1, 1832  
(14) René Canat, Alfred de Vigny, 483  
(15) Revue des Deux Mondes, January 1, 1832.

"La Poésie des Nombres" is the second poem by Alfred de Vigny, published during the first decade of the *Revue*. Buloz has added an editorial comment. Vigny wrote the poem after listening to Henry Mondeux, a child prodigy who alone and unknown in the field of mathematics, had succeeded in solving problems of the theory of equations without knowing the names of the numbers. He was a shepherd and while tending his sheep studied the problems of numbers through the stars. Vigny was so impressed with the boy's intuition that he composed this poem of twenty verses in different meters. It is not included in the complete poetic work of Vigny. The curious meter and the thought it contains make it worth quoting in part. Its symbolic quality is quite apparent.

"Va, c'est la Poésie encore qui dans ton âme  
 Peint l'algèbre infailible en symboles de flamme  
 Et t'emplèt tout entier du divin élément  
 Car le poète voit sans règle  
 Le mot secret de tous les sphinx,  
 Pour le ciel, il a l'oeil de l'aigle.  
 Et pour la terre l'oeil du lynx." (16)

"Quitte pour la Peur," is a dramatic "proverbe." It was written for the actress Mme. Dorval, as a vehicle for her dramatic talent.

"La Sauvage" (17) relates an episode of American life. An Indian girl, lost in the woods, arrives at a clearing which has been made by the English. She enters the house of the English family and finds the father reading piously to his wife and his children. He welcomes the stranger, explains to her that it is Christmas Eve and that he is reading the story of the birth of Christ. He urges her

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(16) *Ibid.*, May 1, 1841.

(17) Revue des Deux Mondes, January 15, 1843.



to make her home with his family, in the hope that some future day will find her a Christian, reading the Bible with her children on Christmas Eve.

Vigny has painted a detailed picture of an American forest in winter time. It is possible that he has found his inspiration for this detail in the "Voyage en Amérique" of Chateaubriand. The leather mocassins worn by the stranger, the details of the English household with its English food, and the customs of the early life in the American colonies are depicted in this poem.

"La Mort du Loup" (18) portrays the silent and stoical death of a wolf trapped by hunters. It teaches a lesson of suffering and silence to man. From a philosophical point of view, it is quite the opposite of "La Sauvage" where the benefits of civilization were praised. Here, like Rousseau and Chateaubriand, Vigny defends the state of nature against the civilized state. This poem is not one of the best of Alfred de Vigny. The imitations are numerous, the illusions are obscure, and the verse is considered prosaic. (19)

"Seul le silence est grand; tout le reste est faiblesse."

This verse is justly celebrated, and has become sort of a proverb of melancholy. Here Vigny seems to make stoicism the objective to be obtained in life. However, when his mother died the poet's reactions in the face of death were quite different. His heart overflowed with grief which he recorded in his Journal. (20)

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(18) Revue des Deux Mondes, February 1, 1843.

(19) René Canat, Alfred de Vigny, 497.

(20) Journal d'un Poète, December 22, 1837.

"La Flûte" (21) is the story of Alfred de Vigny's encounter with an old vagabond during the poet's walk along a country lane. The old man, seated on a marble slab, and finishing his last crust of hard bread, looks pensively toward the footsteps and the paths which lead into the distance. If he had arrived when someone was passing, he might have received an alms sufficient to pay for a poor bed and a supper. While musing thus, he joins together the three parts of a flute which he carries. He tries to produce music, but no sound will come. Vigny approaches him, tips his old artist's cap and sits down. The poor man tells Vigny the story of a life saddened by foolish ambitions. He had dreamed with pride of becoming a Bonaparte or a Byron, a poet or a legislator, but he had never been more than a poor and unsuccessful journalist and dramatist. Vigny attempts to reassure him, saying that the courageous weak are as worthy as the courageous who possess strong minds and bodies. It is because we have been given such poor tools (our weak bodies) that we can never hope to achieve the perfection toward which we aspire. When we are called upon to join the pure celestial spirits, our bodies will no longer hinder the equilibrium necessary to the spirit. The vagabond is seized with an unexpected joy. He studies his flute with another attitude. Now the instrument responds to his effort. Inspired, he plays the "Salvé Régina."

This poem repeats a familiar philosophical idea.

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(21) Revue des Deux Mondes, March 15, 1843.

The human soul linked to its feeble prison has at its disposition only the most inadequate means of expressing its dreams and its ideas. According to Sainte-Beuve, this poem reveals a sentiment of humility and fraternity which is most uncommon in Alfred de Vigny. (22)

"Le Mont des Oliviers" (23) is based upon the gospel which relates Christ's agony in the garden the night before His death. Christ is on His knees on the rock of Gethsemane, the disciples are sleeping, and Judas is approaching furtively. Jesus asks God that the bitter death which faces him be not in vain, that half of his innocent blood be cast upon those guilty ones who in the future will say, "It is permissible for all (perhaps Vigny means governments) to kill the innocent." He prays, too, that after He has left this earth, two angels who walked in Paradise, Certitude and Hope, be left to replace the angels of Evil and Doubt who have caused so much misery since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. Only a glance from God the Father would alleviate the misery of earth, and illuminate man concerning the dreadful question of his destiny. But God's will must be done, so the Son is led to suffer death, and the unseeing human world struggles on without a beacon to guide it and without hope of dawn. The conclusion to this poem was not published in 1844, for it was not written until a few months before the poet's death. It is called "Silence" and is said to sum up the irreligious philosophy of Alfred de Vigny, for God the Father answers the plea of the Son with a cold

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(22) Revue des Deux Mondes, April 15, 1864.

(23) Ibid., June 1, 1844.

silence, the silence of Divinity. The poem teaches one of the great lessons given by Christ, but "there are other lessons in the Bible besides that of brotherly love." (24)

Vigny is so carried away by the social gospel, that he seems not to be capable of envisioning the eternal value of suffering.

Since he is convinced that man is condemned to suffer without the mystery of his destiny being revealed, he counsels him to suffer with dignity. Let him die like the wolf in "La Mort du Loup," without uttering a cry, for "to groan and pray and to weep are cowardly." (25)

"La Maison du Berger" (26) is addressed to a woman whom the poet calls Eva. "Who is Eva?" is a question upon which critics have been unable to agree. Ernest Dupuy believes that several details of landscape apply to the country surrounding the home of the Countess d'Agoult at Nohant. (27) Sainte-Beuve insinuated that Eva could personify any of the young "inconnues" with whom Vigny was associated, but that it might be a young English girl with whom he engaged in long conversation. (28) The "maison" in question is one of the portable huts used by the shepherds as a protection against the weather. Like the shepherd in his little prison, we drag our bodies over the unfriendly earth, which according to Vigny, never smiles upon us nor senses our misery. The poet begs Eva not to leave him to

- (24) Sainte-Beuve, "Alfred de Vigny," Revue des Deux Mondes, April 15, 1864.  
 (25) Bédier-Hazard, Histoire de la Littérature Française, 193.  
 (26) Revue des Deux Mondes, July 1, 1844.  
 (27) Ernest Dupuy, Alfred de Vigny, 364  
 (28) Sainte-Beuve, "Alfred de Vigny" April 15, 1864.



suffer the hostility of Nature, but to stay with him in his solitude. A diatribe against railroads which go too fast for Vigny is awkwardly inserted. The railroad appears to symbolize all of modern science which draws the world together in conquest. The meaning here is obscure. A woman, who is also the Muse of Pity listens to the poet's rehearsal of the woes of the earth, its poor political systems, and its inadequate philosophies. Then the poet begs Eva not to withdraw her pure hand from his tired heart, for Nature has been and will continue to be too cruel. She is only the impassive theatre where a continuous human comedy is enacted. "I roll with disdain without seeing or hearing. I am called a mother, but in reality I am a tomb." Vigny concludes the poem with this line: "J'aime la majesté des souffrances humaines."

This melancholy end conforms well to the general theme sustained throughout. Each part of the poem is built upon an antithesis, reverie against silence, poetry against politics, and love against nature. We must love the "majesty of human suffering." This is the keynote to all of de Vigny, to his life, philosophy and his work. He has said so over and over. As a pure spirit in the world, he tells us also in "L'Esprit pur" that this is his kingdom. "La Maison du Berger" considered one of the best poems of Alfred de Vigny, because of the composition and the floating lyrical quality of its verse. (29)

"La Bouteille à la Mer" (30) is a poem of counsel to an unknown youth. Vigny advises the listener to forget the Chattertons and the Gilberts, and to find courage in the tale to which he begs the youth to listen. A mariner saw that his ship was sinking. During the voyage he had kept a faithful log of his dangerous course. He recorded the fatal shipwreck. The family crest on the paper where the log had been recorded brought back memories of his home and family. However, there was no time to become lost in reverie and grief for the ship was fast sinking. After casting overboard a bottle containing the record of his voyage, he was swallowed into the depths of the sea. The bottle was tossed from sea to sea, and finally it was cast upon the shores of France. The contents of the bottle symbolize the thoughts of genius, whose author has sacrificed and lost everything in order that his discoveries might fall into worthy hands. Like the bottle which in the end reached its port of destiny, Vigny is confident that the work of a great writer will finally be read and appreciated understandingly and sympathetically. The imagery is twisted, but this defect disappears in the magnificence of its act of faith, which is directed toward the reign of the pure spirit. It has been said that the heroine of the poem is symbolized by the poor little "bouteille," who carries science to suffering humanity. (31)

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(30) Revue des Deux Mondes, February 1, 1854.

(31) R. Baldensperger, Alfred de Vigny, 134.

## CHAPTER III

RELATIONSHIP OF ALFRED DE VIGNY WITH  
THE EDITORS AND ASSOCIATES OF THE REVUE  
DES DEUX MONDES DURING THE POET'S LIFE

So many legends have been recounted concerning the foundation of the Revue des Deux Mondes, that its true history and the true character of its founder, François Buloz, remained obscure for almost a century. In 1845, Buloz said to Alexander Dumas père, "If the history of the founding of the Review be written some day, I will have to do it, and with the help of my correspondence." Buloz never had time to undertake the task. Seventy-three years after François Buloz made this statement, his grand-daughter, Madame Pailleron, wrote a series of articles concerning the first editor and his early collaborators, and published them in the Revue des Deux Mondes. (1) The first installment of this history includes an article on the life and early struggle of the grandfather of Madame Pailleron. A second article concerns the relations of Alfred de Vigny with the Revue. Both articles are reviewed in this chapter.

François Buloz studied in the Lycée Louis de Grand for seven years. When lack of money forced him to leave this school at the age of eighteen, he continued private study at night. In 1828, Buloz became proof-reader at the printing establishment, Everat. There his contact with men of letters was frequent. Among those contacts, he found a former schoolmate, M. Auffrey, who, impressed by the profes-

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(1) Marie-Louise Pailleron, "Buloz and His Friends," Revue des Deux Mondes, Feb. 15, 1918, p. 721-760.

sional competence of the young Buloz, proposed an association in which the two would direct a review. This publication was the Revue des Deux Mondes, Journal des Voyages. Founded some months before, it was dying fast when M. Auffray came to its rescue. On February 1831, a contract was drawn. It stipulated that F. Buloz would be editor-in-chief of the Revue des Deux Mondes, with an annuity of twelve hundred francs and an additional two francs for each subscription.

Books and paper were expensive at that time. Madame Pailleron cites the struggle and demise of some of the reviews of the day. However, the young Savoyard, a galley-slave for work, determined to realize his dream and to save the journal. With little money and few subscribers, he set out to find talent in youth.

The Revolution of July had brought hope and peace and had rendered to literature many minds previously occupied with politics. In 1844, Ste. Beuve wrote of the beginning of the Revue, "When it began thirteen years ago, it had rather the appearance of a magazine. Naturally, it had to appeal to young men--to men who consigned to it their 'more or less' claim to celebrity." M. Hugo, M. de Vigny, soon M. Alfred de Musset, George Sand and in the midst of all that M. de Balzac, M. Dumas and "others who didn't mind being named beside them," were called upon, even begged to contribute their pen to the common endeavor.

Few men have had more quarrels and lawsuits than M. Buloz. Called the "bear" of the Revue, he was dreaded and often caricatured. A solid character, he had "des amis



délicieux" whom he guarded jealously. Alfred de Vigny appears to be among the closest.

Independent of spirit, Buloz had one obsession. It was the Revue, and in regard to this, any attempt to change his policy was futile. An anecdote concerning an article on Kant by Cousin is amusingly revealing. The article had been read at the Academy of Moral Sciences and an announcement of its publication in the Revue had been made. Buloz refused to publish the article. "But this is a treatise of the first order," declared the astonished Jules Simon who had delivered the article. "I don't doubt it," replied Buloz, "but it isn't for Cousin that I publish my Revue, it is for people of average intelligence. I have read the article from beginning to end, and I don't understand a word of it, and I shall never publish an article which I do not understand."

"No one before him," said Brunetière, "has done what he has done." Even the English reviews were still in the hands of political parties serving first the interests of the party, and then that of literature. Few men have held the place of Buloz in French literature, a littérateur who has written almost nothing. Beginning with three hundred subscriptions, the circulation of the Revue had reached twenty-five thousand by 1868.

In their modest facilities on the rue des Beaux Arts, a close bond was soon formed between the editor of the Revue and his collaborators. From the beginning, the name of Alfred de Vigny appears in the summary, first accompanying

the "Scènes du Désert," then the "Consultations du Docteur Noir." Concerning the last book, Buloz wrote to Vigny, "I must see you to tell you the great pleasure and admiration I have experienced in reading Stello." When a review has reached the point of publishing such beautiful things, it is the first in the world. It is to you that I owe all this." Relations between F. Buloz and Alfred de Vigny were always cordial, and they remained sincere in spite of Sainte-Beuve and Gustave Planche, the first whose idolatry for Hugo was excessive, and the second whose inexorable criticism just missed the point of separating the founder of the Revue and his collaborator.

Comparison seems to be a French obsession, and for a time there appeared to be widespread delight among literary men in opposing Hugo and Vigny. This rivalry was disheartening to Vigny. Concerning the Feuilles d'Automne and the Rois'amuse, Sainte Beuve took the occasion to write in the Revue: "At hardly thirty, he (Hugo) has made an unique place for himself in our literature--drama, novel, poetry. This writer excels in all." Wounded, Vigny complained to Buloz, demanding a note of rectification in the Revue. Buloz was not disposed to comply, but he could take no chances with Vigny. In the chronicle of November 15, 1832, the editor pointed out that the poet (Hugo) would be the last to push such a claim, for, he continued, "les Lamartines, les Vignys, les Merimées, all excelled in their own direction." Vigny was more offended by the rectification than by the article of Sainte Beuve. Long after this, Buloz wrote to

George Sand, "Do you recall that notice in the Revue of '31 or '32 which began "Tout relève de Victor Hugo, drame, roman, poésie?" He continued, "I still remember the storm which arose on one side and the raillery on the other. I promised myself then never more to be duped by such charlatanism."

In 1833, Vigny gave his charming "Quitte pour la Peur" to the Revue. Concerning this, M. Buloz wrote to M. Bucage, "Alfred doesn't seem to be satisfied with five hundred francs for his proverb. It is good recompense. I don't doubt that we will get it (the play), but I would like to cut short his hesitation. I'm counting on you to say 'two words' to Madame Dorval. I pray you, my friend, don't neglect this."

The novel "Laurette et le Cachet Rouge" was the cause of the first lawsuit by Buloz for the Revue. It was directed against the Petit Courier des Dames, which changed Vigny's story somewhat, gave it a new title, and published it in four installments. Two thousand francs was the suit; the result was a fine of one hundred and sixty francs to the delinquent and one hundred francs damages to the Revue. An insignificant event, but the newspapers played it up, especially a phrase used by the attorney for the Revue, "La prose de M. de Vigny est hors de prix." Vigny was offended and demanded a letter from the attorney, stating that he had falsely declared in the name of Buloz that the price of the manuscripts of M. de Vigny was excessive.

Following a regular schedule Vigny worked at night

and went out at dawn. His arrival at the Revue wearing a romantic cloak was always a sensation. Concerning this romanesque garment Paul de Molenes wrote, "M. de Vigny wears the cloak to hide his wings."

The day following the first night of Chatterton, M. Planche wrote disparagingly of the play. However, Buloz inserted a note in the same issue, "We hope that the popularity of Chatterton will redound gloriously to the credit of our collaborator. Vigny was offended. "You have refuted nothing in your comment," he wrote to the editor. In the Revue of March 1, 1834, the editor commented in flattering terms upon the great success of Chatterton in spite of the judgment of the critic (M. Planche). Alfred de Musset expressed a similar thought in a nonsensical sonnet which he dictated one evening to George Sand. For several reasons, Musset, too, hated Planche. After his rupture with G. Sand, Musset wrote to Buloz begging him to get the sonnet and to burn it. Buloz obtained the satire, so unlike the verse with which we characterize Musset. It appears in Mme Pailleron's article, in the Revue.

Though he may have only partially succeeded, Buloz was always trying to pacify Alfred de Vigny. In another section, I have quoted the poet's letter to the editor on the subject of Chatterton and the editor's conciliatory remarks.

At that time it was the style for ladies to collect poetic thought of literary men in personal insertions in their albums. A letter from Vigny to Buloz expresses regret



that the poet was not at home when the editor called with the album of Madame Buloz. "I am not sending my poem with this letter," wrote the poet in 1836, "because I want you to call for it personally." The same poem, written for the mid-Lenten festival of 1836 was published for the benefit of the poor.

In 1843 Vigny published four of his philosophical poems in the Revue. Before giving to it the "Maison du Berger," which appeared the following year, he wrote to his friend E. de la Grange: "I am writing other poems, but whether they are printed or not, doesn't make any difference. My heart is relieved a bit when they are written. There are so many things which oppress me and about which I never speak. It did me good to write "La Mort du Loup."

After 1844 Vigny was silent for ten years. However, Buloz solicited the collaboration of the poet continuously. In 1849 the poet wrote, "You keep on talking to me about a second consultation of Docteur Noir. If you ever have it, it will be the third, for I have burned the second one. It might have given new authority to a seducing, but dangerous idea (suicide perhaps as in Chatterton.) I'm not sorry that it wasn't published. I've not given up the idea of a continuation of Stello. However, I believe that this isn't the time to publish it."

In 1850, Vigny fell seriously ill. Buloz, not knowing of the poet's illness, wrote to him concerning something

for the Revue. The poet answered, "For several days I have been in danger. I believe that you, like the others, did not know it. I have volumes of letters from you reminding me of this second consultation. Far from reproaching you, I thank you, for I have looked upon this insistence as a mark of esteem, and even of attachment. I am far from forgetful of the Revue, for three months never pass without my refusing to contribute elsewhere. The reason that I give is that the Revue des Deux Mondes, of which I am one of the first founders, has always been and always will be my literary organ. Come to see me on Friday or Saturday or Sunday!"

In 1854, Buloz obtained the Bouteille à la Mer. It appeared on February 1 of that year. Two years later Vigny wrote that he could no longer leave his house on account of his own suffering and his wife 's illness.

The last letter written by the poet and appearing in the correspondence of Buloz bears the date June 24, 1857. Madame Pailleron felt sure that other letters followed. Vigny wrote, "If you would speak of other things except your dreams, I would go to see you more often, but truly you keep coming back to those castles in Spain, the collapse of which always seems to astonish you. The higher realms of art have become so obscured by recent writing that it would be a task to bring light to them. It's not easy for me to go to see that abstract being one calls the Revue, but I shall go to see you and you alone. I

have been acting as nurse all month."

After studying the correspondence between these two great souls, there is little doubt of the understanding between them. During their association, there must have been occasional differences, for Mme. Pailleron concludes her article by saying, "In spite of their incompatibility, they always ended by understanding each other." (2)

These differences revealed in Vigny's correspondence with the editor, and in his letters to another collaborator of the Revue, the poet Brizeux, and also in his correspondence with Madame d'Agould, seem to be only slight differences of temperament.

Gustave Planche was literary critic on the staff of the Revue des Deux Mondes during the first years of its existence. In a series of articles, "Poètes et Romanciers modernes de la France," one article is devoted to Alfred de Vigny. (3) Planche believes that if one were to page at length the historical biographies of the great, it would be difficult to find, either in ancient or modern times, a writer who from the beginning to the end of his literary career deviated so little from the convictions of his youth.

Although Planche feels that the biography of a writer who is still living should be approached with reserve, still he finds the presence "under the eyes" of a poet who has found in perseverance and in pity the solution of life's problem, to be ample occasion for a critical essay.

(2) Revue des Deux Mondes, February 15, 1918.

(3) Gustave Planche, "Alfred de Vigny," Revue des Deux Mondes, August 1, 1832.

M. Planche's narrative of the life of Vigny differs little from that found in other biographies. Concerning the thirteen years which Vigny spent in the army, Planche's thought is that the poet chose this career as a life of least resistance, an isolation untroubled by society where there would be time to think and to write. He credits the poet with a desire to please his parents, but he looks upon this "état dans le monde" as one in which the reproaches for an inconsequential life could be avoided by Vigny, and where he would not be called upon to participate in the petty arguments of the literary men in Paris.

Among the striking elements of the poetry of Vigny, Planche stresses its naive and spontaneous variety of content, and the seeming sense of inconsequence in the intention of his work. This lack of architectural plan does not mar the poet's work. "Éloa" rivals the most beautiful pages of Klopstock, according to M. Planche. Although the scene and the actors possess not a single element of reality, yet the "péripétie" and the "dénouement" contain the ideal and absolute truth of "Paradise Lost" and the "Messiah."

M. Planche chose only a few of the poems of Alfred de Vigny for comment. It is surprising to find the dramatic critic of the Revue des Deux Mondes so casual and apparently unstudied in his criticism of Vigny. It would seem that he chose to remain unaware of the greatness of the poet. In "Moïse," the critic admires the naturalization in French of the Hebraic verse of the prophets, and speaks of it as



a "bel emploi" which recalls "Athalie" and the "Oraisons Funèbres." In "Dolorida," M. Planche regrets the frequency of poetic paraphrase. He finds its eloquence too labored but praises the exquisite quality of the verse. The "Déluge" sins by its own confusion, and M. Planche finds little merit in this poem. "Symètha" and the "Bain d'une dame Romaine" recalled to his mind the ancient manner of André Chénier. Although the critic sees in "Othello" a work of fine versification, still he regrets that it is direct translation. He claims that Vigny's execution in style would be superior if he were concerned with an original idea. At a later date when Alfred de Vigny published his successful play, Chatterton, M. Planche seemed to have developed little appreciation of the original ideas of the poet. Apparently his conception of a dramatic critic was one who gave only negative criticism. Whatever his convictions, it is true that there was often friction between the editor of the Revue and his dramatic critic. (4) It is clear that M. Planche had little understanding of the new ideas, and if he felt any admiration for Vigny, we do not sense it in reading his article.

Although Chatterton, a drama in three acts, was written in prose, and therefore not intrinsically a part of the work of Alfred de Vigny to be considered in this paper, still it is outstanding as the first dramatic success of the Romantic School, and because it played an important role in the life of the author, and in his relationship with the Revue

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(4) François Buloz, "Réponse au sujet de Chatterton," Revue des Deux Mondes, Sept. 1, 1835.

des Deux Mondes. Chatterton appeared for the first time at the Théâtre-Français on February 12, 1835. In this play Vigny took up the theme of his novel, Stello. It was that of a poet's maladjustment to society. The episode on which the play is built is one of the three told by Docteur Noir, that of Kitty Bell and the death of the English poet, Chatterton. The poet occupies a room in the attic of the home of John Bell, husband of Kitty. Kitty pities and then loves the misunderstood writer; she hides her love because she is a good woman, mother of two children, and because of the influence of the Quaker who preaches moderation. Chatterton is accused of plagiarizing the work of a poet of the tenth century. When he reads the announcement of this discovery in the newspaper, he decides to commit suicide. He is dissuaded from action by the Quaker and Kitty Bell. Chatterton has written to the lord-mayor of London seeking financial help. Although he believes he has found a safe hiding place from his associates in the home of Kitty and John Bell, he is discovered by the lord-mayor himself. Accompanied by two dignitaries, Lord Talbot and Lord Lauderdale, he calls at the home of John Bell to offer Chatterton a position as domestic servant in his household. This humiliation is more than the sensitive poet can bear. He goes to his room and drinks poison. Kitty follows him, declares her love, and begs him not to attempt to end his life. The poet grows gradually weaker. As he is saying, "Goodbye, go away!" Kitty notices an empty vial which has

contained the poison. She dies of shock as Chatterton is drawing his last breath.

The celebrated tragedienne, Madame Dorval, for whom Alfred de Vigny had written La Maréchale d'Ancre and Quitte pour la Peur, played the part of Kitty Bell in the drama Chatterton. She played the part just as Vigny had envisioned it, while composing the play. Madame Dorval was flattered by the attention of Alfred de Vigny. (5) He treated her like a duchess, an unaccustomed role for the actress of humble origin. She led the poet to love her. When she realized that marriage with the celebrated author was impossible, she tired of his devotion and flattery, and became unfaithful. Vigny discovered her infidelity and the "ground gave way under his feet." (6) He was soon to retire from public life. Whether his "holy solitude" was the outcome of bitterness toward Madame Dorval is not certain. It is certain, however, that he wrote "Samson and Delila" shortly after his retirement in 1837.

The unparalleled success of Chatterton had its reverberations in public life. Vigny was accused of stimulating an epidemic of suicide among the youth of Paris through the suicide-theme developed in Chatterton. In a review of the play, published in the Revue des Deux Mondes (7), one of its co-editors, Gustave Planche, strengthened the current criticism by further adverse comment on the play. Alfred de Vigny wrote to Francis Buloz about the subject. M. Buloz

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(5) Robert de Traz, Alfred de Vigny; 82, 83.

(6) Ibid., 87-89.

(7) Revue des Deux Mondes, April 1, 1835.

replied in his "Chronique de la Quinzaine," an editorial section of his periodical, by publishing the complete letter of Alfred de Vigny, and by adding to it a note which supported the claims of the author in all that he maintained. The letter is so short that I have included it, as it was written in French. In it Vigny states that the intention of the play was not to stimulate a wave of suicide among young writers, but to point out the duty of society toward young poets. He affirms that suicide is a religious and a social crime, but that it was necessary to show the torture of the victims of a hostile society in order that their pity for the poet might be awakened. Both the letter and the editor's reply strengthened the thesis that Alfred de Vigny was at all times regarded as an independent thinker by the editor of the Revue. The letter in the original French and the reply, which I have judged better to render in English, follow:

Lettre à M. le Directeur  
au sujet de Chatterton (8)

Monsieur:

Le public, qui a bien voulu écouter quarante fois le drame de Chatterton au Théâtre-Français; et le lire depuis, a vu que loin de conseiller le suicide, j'ai dit: "Le suicide est un crime religieux et social, c'est ma conviction; mais que pour toucher la société, il fallait lui montrer la torture des victimes que fait son indifférence.

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(8) Revue des Deux Mondes, Sept. 1, 1835.



Chaque mot de cet ouvrage tient à cette idée et demande au législateur, pour la pitié, le temps et le pain.

Veillez apprendre ce fait au législateur M. Charlemagne qui (le 30 août) vient de désigner mon ouvrage comme enseignant le suicide.

Il est triste de parler pour ceux qui ne savent pas entendre, et d'écrire pour ceux qui ne savent pas lire.

Agréer l'assurance de ma haute considération.

Cte. Alfred de Vigny

Réponse au sujet de Chatterton (9)

This just claim brings to mind the countless debates which have been going on for some time "à la tribune et au barreau," on the fatal consequences of the new literary works, both on the stage and in print. In all cases it is the literature of the day which is called upon to account, and to a degree far too common and far too ridiculous. We cannot praise too much the progress in Christian humility which is being made each day by literary men. In the same session of August 30, M. Thiers said to us, "For five years the theater has been a free agent and for five years, I see that it has produced nothing good. If among thirty-two million individuals, you can produce nothing good, I shall, as a consequence, deem it necessary to revoke this liberty." "Si ce ne sont ses paroles expresses

C'en est le sens-----"

"And besides," concludes the editor, "M. Thiers does himself too much justice in stating that liberty has been

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(9) Ibid.

allowed us. He isn't quite so guilty; he has supplied himself with a few policemen and a key in order to close many theaters which were helpless in the face of such sudden and hasty censure."

The bond of understanding and sympathy between the editor of *La Revue* and Alfred de Vigny is as clear here as it is in other instances.

After going on to other matters, the editor concludes his chronicle with the announcement:

M. Alfred de Vigny will shortly publish an important work entitled "Servitude et grandeur militaires." M. Buloz seemed never to have missed an occasion to credit the name of Alfred de Vigny in the public eye.

An article published in the *Revue* in 1841, (10) but obviously written before Vigny retired to his country home in 1837, reflects the independent policy of the *Revue* toward the Government. It is a further proof of the esteem in which the periodical held the independent-minded writer.

This letter which comprises about sixty pages, begins with the lines, "This is in no way a novel; it is a story of yesterday, today, and assuredly tomorrow." Mlle. Sedaine, daughter of a deceased poet, of whom Vigny had spoken in his "Veillée de Vincennes," had come to Vigny with her sad tale. She was seventy-four, destitute and almost blind. Literary heir to her father, she had, according to the then existing law, been forced to relinquish all rights, ten years after his death. A small pension, granted by the Emperor

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(10) Alfred de Vigny, "Of Mlle. Sedaine and La Propriété Littéraire," Revue des Deux Mondes, Jan. 15, 1841.

and continued by Louis XVIII, had been subsequently cut to almost nothing. Vigny recounts the life and works of the poet Sedaine, but more of the works than the life, for he feels here, as is his custom, that it is not necessary to probe the personal relationships of the author in order to give a just appreciation of his work. He analyzes Sedaine's work and praises his sense of dramatic composition. In spite of his talent, the poet was not rich. Vigny profits by this circumstance to take up, in passing, the thesis upheld in Chatterton. After that, he comes to the famous law of July 19, 1793, which had limited the use of literary property to ten years after the writer's death. A bitter protest against the law ensues. Vigny states that the dignity of a man of letters who had so painfully achieved literary distinction demanded that his family and heirs be left the independence to which it was entitled.

In 1839, M. Portalis had asked that the acquisition of literary property by the Government be delayed fifty years. The objection of the Government was that the literary glory of celebrated writers might suffer through their work being too long held by a jealous family. The Chamber of Peers would not grant Portalis's request. However, it passed a law which allowed a family to retain all literary property of its members for a period of thirty years. This appeared to Vigny to be a most illogical solution to the problem, for the third generation would thus be expo-

priated rather than the first and the second.

Vigny concludes that the problem of the rights of a family versus those of a nation is evidently a delicate one. The idea together with the expression belongs to the one who has conceived it, however the apparent purpose of the author is to make it a gift to man. It would seem just to Vigny that the property be forever and equally divided between the family and the nation.

Whether or not this article had any effect upon subsequent legislation concerning literary property is not a matter to be considered here.

The discussion attending the success of Chatterton prompted an article by the young critic Sainte-Beuve. (11) In it, he praised the original genius of Alfred de Vigny in his poetry, and in his prose. In an article published after the death of Alfred de Vigny, the critic reverses all that he has said about the poet, in what Brunetière calls a "history of his rancour." (12) The first article sheds little light upon the character of the work of Alfred de Vigny, but it indicates that Sainte-Beuve may not have dared, at that time, to publish the adverse and ironical criticism which appeared in the one article which he published about the poet after his death. At the time of the first article, Sainte-Beuve was young, thirty-one, and the Romantic fever had not left him.

(11) Sainte-Beuve, "Alfred de Vigny," Revue des Deux Mondes, October 15, 1835.

(12) F. Brunetière, "Les grands Écrivains," Revue des Deux Mondes, December 1, 1891.



After the publication of the Poèmes Philosophiques in 1843 and 1844, François Buloz believed that Vigny had been sufficiently consecrated in glory for candidacy to the Académie Française. The Revue des Deux Mondes proposed his name at this time. After being rejected at four elections, he was chosen to fill the chair of the deceased dramatist, Étienne. (13)

Vigny delivered his discourse of reception as a member of the French Academy on January 29, 1846. One of the co-editors of the Revue des Deux Mondes, Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve reviewed the address and published his reactions. Although the criticism is guarded, it is subtle, ironical and unflattering. Since it is unlikely that a digest of the discourse may exist in English, and because it shows clearly that the critic did not go as far as he might have wished in attacking Alfred de Vigny, a summary of the "Réception d'Alfred de Vigny à l'Académie Française," (14) is included in this paper.

Sainte-Beuve begins by tracing a development in the type of discourses expected of a new academician. It was Patru who, in 1640, inaugurated the custom of thanking the assembled body for the honor accorded the new member of the French Academy. Charles Perrault decided that inaugural sessions of the illustrious body should be made public. In his memoirs he notes (1671), "I gave a harangue" which seemed to please everyone." Fléchier, the next

(13) L. Séché, Alfred de Vigny, Vol. I, Chapter on the candidacy of Alfred de Vigny.

(14) Sainte-Beuve, "Reception of Alfred de Vigny to the French Academy," Revue des Deux Mondes, Feb. 1, 1846, 536-549.

academician to be received after Perrault limited his eulogy of Louis XIV to thirty minutes. During many years the "harangue" never extended beyond this time. Even the discourse of Buffon, an innovation, because of the nature of its subject, held to the expected limits. The group had formed the habit of watching the clock; the eulogies to Louis XIV and to Richelieu were gradually dropped. After a simple opening compliment, the new member was expected to recount in eulogy the life of his predecessor. The response of the director was two-fold. He received and praised the new academician, and then celebrated the memory of the deceased. The reception under discussion was one of the largest in attendance, and curiosity heightened because of Vigny's previous persistence in rapping at the unfriendly door of the august assembly. Count Mole was to receive Count Alfred de Vigny. Sainte-Beuve remarks that here we have a diversity of type, capable of stimulating intense interest. The session promised much; realization more than surpassed all expectation.

"One knows the high qualities of M. de Vigny," says Sainte-Beuve, "His cult for art, carried into each thought, and his habit of clothing thought in the most beautiful draperies, each fold arranged with care." From the beginning of his discourse, the poet painted a magnificent double picture, one of two races into which he gathered an infinite variety of spirits. The first, that of all the thinkers, contemplatives, lovers and searchers for beauty, philosophers, poets and lonely dreamers; the

second that of men of action of a positive and practical nature, including possible critics, statesmen or literary men. The latter were classified under the general title "improvisateurs" and, as M. de Vigny enlarged his prodigiously fluctuating limits, it seemed clear to Sainte-Beuve, that it included about everyone from Richelieu to Étienne who was the subject of the proposed discourse. Count Mole, the director of the French Academy, and a statesman, became more uneasy as the clock neared the mark of three-quarter hour. Having placed Étienne firmly in the second class (there are no specific words in the discourse which justify the accusation of Sainte-Beuve), Vigny noted one rare quality in Étienne. It was one which Mazarin demanded in all whom he employed, that of happiness. Sainte-Beuve's comment is terse. Nothing is added to elaborate this quality.

Admitted to the Academy in 1811, at thirty-three years of age, enjoying the intimate favor of the ministers Bassano and Rovigo, editor-in-chief of the official organ the Journal of the Empire, Étienne furnished the French stage and the opera-comique with a variety of successful plays. In an interminable flood of injury and depression, according to Sainte-Beuve, Vigny reviewed the plagiarist and lawsuit connected with one of the works of the playwright. Sainte-Beuve adds, "As vulgar and lacking in taste as these last plays were, there is not so much to condemn, that one is bound to parade their lack of worth in public."

Count Mole answered Vigny with the same frankness which

the "réciplendaire" had shown in the exposition of his doctrine. "This has become a habit in the Academy," adds Sainte-Beuve. "Étienne has been shown to us as we have known him, a little embellished perhaps in his person, and justly classed as a pupil of Voltaire." Then came the rectifications. M. Mole made them vigorously and with accuracy. He remarked that happily, Étienne had lost nothing, when in 1814 he refused to deliver his play Intrigante to those who wished to use it as an arm against the prisoner of Elba. Mole justified Étienne as remaining faithful, even though Vigny's complaint of lack of generosity might be justifiable.

In concluding M. Mole spoke in the name of the Academy. Hasn't the time come to put an end to dispute, and what purpose will it serve for the future? "I should like to see adapted a program "du classique, moins les entraves, du romantique moins le factice, l'affectation et l'enflure, Voilà les mots de bon sens."

Endless comment concerning the cool reception of the poet by the director of the Academy followed. It is quite clear that in bringing up the old point, of the long intervals during which the new generation was barred from the Academy, Vigny unnecessarily antagonized the group; besides, it was not quite true. In tracing the literary generation, the omission of the name of Chateaubriand by the poet was interpreted as an intentional slight which the Academy never forgot.

It is noticeable that both Count Mole's and Sainte-



Beuve's reactions to the exasperating insinuations contained in the discourse of Alfred de Vigny were mild. Sainte-Beuve has painted an ironical caricature of the poet's personal appearance and his lack of oratorical appeal. We see the far-sighted poet holding his paper at arm's length caressing each word with an unctious tone. The critic limited his satire to the personal qualities of the author. The fact that he did not openly attack the poet's work at this time seems to indicate that he did not dare to do so.

E. Caro (1826-87) was a brilliant professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne. His eloquence and broad vision attracted a large public. According to George Sand, (15) Caro is perhaps a better critic than a philosopher.

The following article by Caro discusses the influence of Alfred de Vigny upon the work of Madame Ackermann. In this article, (16) Caro points out scientific ideas and trends which are agitating the conscience of humanity, notably those of Comte and Darwin, and their effect upon philosophic poetry. He maintains that poetry, like science, has had its Age of Innocence and its "Âge Mûr," and he leaves us to assume that his age is one of the ripe periods.

True poetry, believes Caro, expresses only one thing, the torments of the human soul facing the questions of its destiny. Those who have not lived profoundly, scarce-

(15) George Sand, Fin du Neuvième Siècle, 242.

(16) E. Caro, "La Poésie Philosophique dans les Nouvelles Écoles," Revue des Deux Mondes, May 15, 1874.

ly understand the sublime translation of an eternal quest. To only those poets who understand this cry, is it given to understand true lyric poetry and only great poetry can be lyric. Life is a seeking, and be it melancholy doubt or pensive dreaming, all poets worthy of the name are attracted by questions of eternal destiny.

In this age, God has been dethroned. There remains no one to curse for our destiny. Thus man must renounce his rage toward fate--his rage but not his sadness. In this Godless world, pity is all we have to give, and Caro points out that Alfred de Vigny has admirably expressed this thought in "Éloa." The mystic virgin has given everything, her innocence, her beauty, heaven and her God, all to appease the storm of hate which rages in the heart of the accursed. She hopes by means of sacrifice to restore calm in a wrathful soul and, having given everything, she would not have her gifts lost. She questions Lucifer:

"Will you be happy, at least are you content?"

"Sadder than ever," he replies.

"Qui donc es-tu,--Satan?"

Caro does not comment on this final plaintive query, in its simplicity, a devastatingly romantic "cri du coeur."

Though "Éloa" had sprung from the Age of Innocence, Caro feels that the subject matter has undergone the influences of science for he maintains, it offers man the truth after so many centuries of sad dissolution. It brings to man one supreme consolation. "Be assured, God

is not." Like "Éloa," science says to man, "Will you be happy?" and man answers, "Sadder than ever." Caro finds that here the poet announces and celebrates the advent of a new doctrine.

Caro's article continues with a discussion of the work of Madame Ackermann, whom he calls a positivist poet, following the inspiration of Alfred de Vigny, and influenced by the philosophy of August Comte.

The letters edited by Louis Barthou (17) are part of a collection written to Victor Hugo by Alfred de Vigny. Barthou states that it is not his intention to write the history of the friendship of Alfred de Vigny and Victor Hugo, but only to enrich it with documents which were believed to be lost. He believes they prove that during a twelve-year period no cloud of distrust appeared between the two poets.

Emile Deschamps, childhood friend of Alfred, introduced him, in 1820, to Victor Hugo, who was at that time occupied with editing the "Conservateur Littéraire." Victor, five years younger than Alfred, had become celebrated through the appearance of numerous poems. The younger of the poets could have assumed the role of protector, but at that time modesty was one of the charms of genius developing in Hugo.

On the occasion of his first letter to Alfred, Victor Hugo sent his ode on the birth of Monseigneur,

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(17) Louis Barthou, "Lettres inédites à Victor Hugo," Revue des Deux Mondes, February 1, 1925.

the Duke of Bordeaux. The seal of Vigny's answer bore the date October 20, 1820. During the years 1821 and 1822, friendship between the poets was strengthened. One finds the proof of this in the correspondence and in the unedited letters published by Ernest Dupuy. (18) Both poets exchanged their verses and their compliments. They had the same editor for their first volume. Vigny's poems appeared without the name of the author, in March 1822. Odes and other poems of Victor Hugo appeared in June of the same year. On October 12, Alfred was a witness to the marriage ceremony of his friend and Adèle Foucher.

In August 1823, Vigny was at Bordeaux with his regiment. He wrote to Victor Hugo on the twenty-sixth. "I have finished 'Satan', or as my friend Girodet would say, 'I have covered the canvas.' Now I have to go over it. It has been hard for me not to abandon it." At the same time that Vigny was writing "Satan," later called "Éloa," he was working on a tragedy, inspired by Ariosto. His burning of the manuscript during an illness is recounted elsewhere in this paper. (19) On October 3, Vigny confided to Hugo the printing of the manuscript of "Éloa." Six days later an infant child of Hugo died at Blois. On October 24, Vigny wrote a letter which his friend said rendered sorrow less bitter and friendship more cherished. Even in his happier thirties, pessimism is evident in

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(18) E. Dupuy, Alfred de Vigny, 216-265.

(19) A. Praviel, "Les Fêtes de Pau, Alfred de Vigny," Revue des Deux Mondes, February 15, 1925.



Vigny; "I don't know why one has created the word consolation," he wrote, "when the thing doesn't exist. One is tempted to cry, 'My God!' You haven't the right to hurt me so. I have just been talked to on the subject, Bravery. How does one come by it? How is fear of death overcome? When one is resigned to live, one can indeed be resigned to die; the first effort far surpasses the second."

"Éloa," or "The Sister of the Angels," was published in April 1824. It was announced by La Muse Française in most flattering terms. "In publishing this work, so important to letters, we acknowledge in Count Alfred de Vigny one of the original writers who characterizes best the 'physiognomie' of our times." In another tribute in the Muse, Victor Hugo attributed to Vigny whom he regarded as a master, all the resources of a talent superior to the age.

Following the letters from Bordeaux, Vigny announced a change of garrison and the hope of making war à la Du Guesclin, carrying into action thoughts that might have gone into solitary and useless meditation.

It was in the new garrison at Oloron that Vigny was stunned and saddened by the premature death of La Muse Française. The twelfth and last issue bore the date of June 15, 1824. Its demise centered around the election of Alexander Soumet, one of the founders of the Muse, to the French Academy. For two months previous, fire had been exchanged between the Academy and the Muse. It was opened by the wily Charles Nodier in an attack against the classics

and indirectly against the Academicians. On April 24, in a solemn session of the Academy, M. Auger pronounced a veritable "réquisitoire" against Romanticism. The young moralist, Émile Deschamps, answered in a witty vein, in the same number of La Muse in which Hugo had written the eulogy of "Éloa." (May 15, 1824) Deschamps's article "War in Time of Peace" was widely discussed. Soumet had to choose between the Academy and the Muse, and he sacrificed the Muse. Because of his friendship for Soumet, Deschamps resigned himself to the conditions of the peace, and one Monday morning in June, both gentlemen appeared before the editor, Tardieu, and killed the review. The assassination over, Soumet was promptly elected to the Academy, and the young Romantic School lost its principal vehicle of expression.

On the day of Soumet's election to the Academy, Victor Hugo wrote the story to Vigny. "What!" replied the latter, "The Muse shall cease when it has become a power? It is as though men barred from all ports and exiled on the ocean, should burn their ship at sea." In the same letter we find, "Your fine page concerning our friendship has made my heart beat fast. Tell me all that is going on. Is it possible that a dilapidated armchair in the Academy can hold back the genius of the century? I shall mourn deeply the Muse which was our 'paysseau d'armes.' We should have made a second 'Conservateur' of it. I wanted to talk to M. Chateaubriand, before I left so hurriedly. Has he spoken to you about the "Éloa" I left with him? Is he against me too?"

Let's keep on fighting. We'll both call ourselves Victor which means conqueror in the classic tongue." A postscript on the envelope of this letter read, "Save it at any price. I'll send it prose and verse in Greek and Arabian, if necessary."

The death of the Muse did not alter the friendly relations existing between Vigny and Hugo. Vigny took for "prénom" Alfred-Victor. Hugo replied, "I regret not to be able to return your charming proof of friendship in signing myself Alfred. However, since you sign yourself Victor, I am sure illustriousness will not be lacking to that name."

From Pau, Vigny wrote, "L'ennui surrounds me. I am alone with the Pyrenees under my eyes. Can you believe it? I don't write. However, I must put down all that has accumulated in my head or I shall die of the chagrin of living. I am drunk with solitude and I can no longer detach myself from it.

In October 1824, Alfred wrote that he was working on two "mystères." One "Gatan sauvé" was to be a sequel to "Éloa." There remains only a draft of this poem and eighteen verses published in the poet's Journal. Hugo wrote that the plan of it was disturbing to friendship. The other poem was "The Déluge," which appeared in 1826 in the collection "Poèmes antiques et modernes." In writing to Hugo of this edition, Vigny said, "The number of copies will not exceed the number of people who understand the language of poetry. You will see that they are not num-

erous. Poetry must be left to inhabit the higher regions among men, the mind of men. Mud would spoil her garments."

The letter continued, "I am surrounded by English families. I go horseback riding with the Ossian blondes. If you knew how poetic their nation is, how they place genius above all, how naturally they find it to walk equally with kings. Every day, I am astonished not to have known this better. They would not have killed the Raphael of our age, my good and great Girodet.<sup>(20)</sup> Injustice wounded him to death. How I wish I might find at Paris our union of La Muse, or rather our old friendships, but we have too much ceased to be poets in order that we may be literary." The death of Girodet moved Vigny profoundly. It is noticeable that Vigny's conception of the "Déluge" is not foreign to the painting of Endymion by Girodet. A fragment of the "Déluge" published in Mercure under the title "La Beauté Idéale" was dedicated "Aux Mânes de Girodet."

On the day of his marriage to one of the Ossian blondes, Alfred wrote, "My wife is 'indienne,' sweet and good like your daughter of 'Otaïte' (Odes et Poésies diverses de Victor Hugo) which she loves as much as we do. Today we sign the contract. Only your name will be missing, but I shall find you soon."

A month later the two families knew each other, but even then Lydia's health was giving Alfred great anxiety.

(20) Early nineteenth century painter, classic in form but romantic in spirit; he sought inspiration from Macpherson's Ossian (S. Reinach History of Art. Charles Scribners. New York 1910.



and he had to take precautions to spare her. He writes, "My muse comes to see me and sits beside my sweet wife. I shall tell you what she told me." Louis Barthou is inclined to think that the returned muse inspired the verse of "La Beauté idéale," for there is no poem in his published work which appears to be linked with the month of April 1825.

On May 8, 1825, Alfred wrote to congratulate Victor for having been named Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, on the same day that Lamartine was chosen. "The decoration will become your young figure as well as your talent." Hugo was twenty-three. In the same letter, Vigny spoke of "The Déluge." "I don't know what demon is pushing me. I have just been forced to add one hundred verses and a chant to 'The Déluge.' Quel Chant! Aux paroles des damnés!"

It is surprising that Alfred de Vigny was not invited to the investiture of Victor Hugo in the Legion of Honor. The reason may be that alone of all the poets of the time, he did not extol this historical event. Official commands were repugnant to the haughty pride of his genius.

On November 7, 1826, Vigny sent felicitations to Hugo on the birth of his son Charles, and on the publication of the "Odes et Ballades." Of his son, Vigny said, "From the bottom of my heart, I congratulate you. You have been given the one happiness which has been denied me. That is almost a compensation for me."

A few days later Vigny expressed his admiration for

the "Odes and Ballades." "I have devoured your ballads. I read them, I sing them, I cry them to the whole world. It is the poetry of fairies and gnomes that an unbelieving people need. After the sublimity of the 'Odes,' what enchanting rest to find oneself in the magic land of the ballads. Continue in this manner for our enchantment and your glory. In the prelude of the 'Passant,' eighth ballad, I am made like the 'prétendu fou.'"

A year goes by. Victor Hugo has published the "Ode à la Colonne," to avenge the marshals of the Empire, who had been humiliated by the suppression of titles due them for their victories. "You are fine in indignation as in all things. Your claws are indeed the claws of a lion," concluded Vigny.

When "Cromwell" appeared, Vigny felicitated Hugo in a published letter, "livre immortel, colossal ouvrage de la grande et large critique de la préface."

On February 25, 1830, the day of the "première" of Hernani, Vigny wrote, "I am returning the three tickets of M. de Béranger, who is ill. I shall be in the orchestra. Thursday will be the day, a state of war, triumph for you, eternal friendship for both of us, I hope." He diverted, "My poor Lydia can only be at ease horizontally." Then he returned to the subject of Hernani. "I beg you to hold preciously the seats of M. d'Orglandes et Dandelot. Have you a ticket in the first galleries for a young romantic student named Buchey, and a second for my new 'libraire' "

M. Levavasseur?"

A letter of March 26, 1831--"If I hadn't a 'ceinture de douleurs' for several days, I would have been to tell you as I tell everyone who approaches me how delighted I am with the reading of 'Le Roi s'amuse,' delighted with the original and vigorous character, surprised by the comic wit of the dialogue. Your Cromwell remains in my memory as you do in my heart."

Barthou suggests that it might have been the priority accorded Othello over Hernani that missed breaking the friendship of the two poets.

None of these letters is concerned with the relations of Alfred de Vigny and Mme Dorval. However, the part played by the tragedienne in the rupture of friendship between the two poets seems quite clear.

Notes in Vigny's Journal, written in 1829 and 1831, show a severity of judgment quite different from the cordiality expressed in these letters. The gentleman, as Sainte-Beuve ironically called him, congratulated himself that nothing during the year closing (1831) had caused him to write a line against a living person. Publicly, no, but M. Barthou ends, "To what revenge did he not give vent in his Journal Intime?"

These letters which were published sixty years after the death of Alfred de Vigny, and which are given twenty-

four complete pages in one issue of the Revue des Deux Mondes, are an additional proof of the permanent editorial policy of the Revue regarding Alfred de Vigny. (21)

August Brizeux whom Ernest Dupuy (22) classes as a "poète positiviste" was introduced to the editor of the Revue des Deux Mondes by Alfred de Vigny. It was through the influence of Vigny that the work of Buloz became published. M. Dupuy does not tell us in the article which I am about to summarize just when the work of Brizeux was published. The purpose of this short summary of the thirty-eight pages of the Revue des Deux Mondes is to bring out the relationship which existed between the Revue and two of its associates, and also the relationship which existed between the associates themselves. The significance of the article lies in the esteem with which Alfred de Vigny was held by a group of younger writers of his day. It is significant too that the Revue des Deux Mondes considered the influence of Alfred de Vigny to be an important one.

When the Revolution of 1830 dissociated the group of Romantic poets through the detachment of friendship between Victor Hugo and Alfred de Vigny, a rather restrained and conservative group, intimately bound by personal ties gathered around the author of "Éloa." It was a group of

- (21) Since this is a resumé of the article written in French, quotations are not supported by footnotes. Quotation marks are used to indicate a purely literary translation or the direct words of the speaker.
- (22) Ernest Dupuy, "Alfred de Vigny and Auguste Brizeux," Revue des Deux Mondes, September 15, 1910, 324-362.



real friends who had been so and were to remain so until the end. It included Émile and Antoine Deschamps, Charles Nodier, Soumet, Gourand, de La Touche, and Alfred de Musset. Among the lesser lights were the novelist, Léon de Wailly, whose greater claim to distinction lies in the translation of the poetry of Robert Burns into French, the journalist Busoni, the satirist Auguste Barbier, and A. Brizeux whose elegies especially "Marie," his first and best work, will always claim for him a place in French literature.

It was in 1829, when he was twenty-six years old, that Brizeux published in the "Mercure du XIX siècle", a highly flattering review of the first complete poetic works of Alfred de Vigny. He compared the poet's verse to the accomplishments created by the chisel of the Greek sculptors. Alfred de Vigny responded with a letter of warm acknowledgement. In it he admitted that he was looking for a new list of supporters for his "More de Venise, which was being played at the Théâtre-Français. "I hope it will be numerous," he wrote, "for it is the cause of youth which will help me to conquer." The answer arrived shortly. "Voici une nouvelle liste de conjurés, comme vous les appelez. Je les crois bien dévoués; d'ailleurs leur dévouement sera facile: Othello a tué à l'avance tous ses adversaires." This strategy, the success which was to be so decisive for the première of Hernani was inaugurated and organized for the support of Othello and largely through the efforts of Brizeux.

Auguste Brizeux was to become like Auguste Barbier, a most intimate friend of Vigny. This intimacy with Brizeux

was evident six or seven months after their first meeting. A melodrama entitled Incendiaire was attracting Parisians. The twenty-seventh letter of a collection, called the Sakellaridès, (23) by Vigny is addressed to Brizeux. The play is "la plus sottè calomnie et la plus plate impiété du monde," but admirably played by our only tragedienne. This evening I met Mme. Malibran, whom Mme. Dorval adores, but whom she had not known. When the little Italian found her portrait enthroned, as in a chapel, in the home of Mme. Dorval, the two were like children, forbidden to each other until then. It gave me such pleasure to see these two feminine talents so close to one another. When Mme. Malibran left, the one who remained wept. It is her way of being happy and of being beautiful. The answer to this letter is entirely unedited and completely given. It is of a rather uncommon psychological interest for it records pre-established harmonies which attracted the two poets to each other.

In a letter of 1831, Brizeux begs the poet for precise documents concerning his childhood, his adolescence, and his military life. The answer to this letter was published for the first time in the monologue of Alfred de Vigny by M. Maurice Paléologue, and reproduced in the collection Sakellaridès; it constituted a sort of partial autobiography. As to the study which Brizeux expected to make, Gustave Planche was to make it in his stead a year later.

(23) Correspondence of Alfred de Vigny between 1816-1863, collected and published by Emma Sakellaridès Culman-Levy, Paris 1905.

In late 1831, the two Augustes, Brizeux and Barbier, took a pleasure trip to Italy. The memory of Byron seemed never to have left them; they wished to retrace all his footsteps. The Revue des Deux Mondes, which they found in Naples, was like a letter from home. They were overjoyed to find there the "Elevation sur Les Am<sup>n</sup>s de Montmorency." In July of the year 1832, Brizeux, ill at his home in Brittany, wrote to thank Vigny for his service in causing the young poet's verse to be published in the Revue. When he was well, Brizeux armed himself with an Alpine stick and started on a walking tour of Brittany, in search of the legend and local color which were to appear in a work expected to expand into the dimensions of an epic, Les Bretons.

In December 1833, Brizeux received, through Sainte-Beuve, an unexpected proposition. Jean-Jacques Ampère had been forced to abandon a public lecture course given in the Athenaeum of Marseilles. The succession was offered to Brizeux and he accepted. The subject of the course was a general study of poetry, accompanied by examples. Guarding himself against undue exaggeration, Brizeux preached the doctrine of Romanticism. He interpreted to the people of Marseilles, the "Divine Comedy" of Antoine Deschamps, the "Consolations" of Sainte-Beuve, and he especially commended to them, because of their originality, his models by predilection, "Moïse" and "Éloa."

Having returned to Brittany, Brizeux, resumed his tramp through Brittany. He is far from Paris on February

12, 1835, the date of the première of Chatterton, for we recall the friendly reproach of the play-wright, "Where were you, my friend?"

In May 1845, Vigny was elected to the French Academy. In June, Brizeux published his long poem "Les Bretons" which had none of the unexpected "flair" and the breath of youth of his first work "Marie," and did not bring him glory. It is now that Vigny proves himself the eager ingenious friend in need. Ill and discouraged, the delicate and intemperate Brizeux was experiencing utter gloom. The new academician who had become a close friend of the Minister of Public Instruction, M. de Salvandy, solicited and obtained the Cross of the Legion of Honor for his disheartened friend. During the same year, a letter from Vigny discloses that he has attended to the renewing of a pension of twelve hundred francs previously obtained for Brizeux by Vigny through the latter's insistence in the Ministry of the Interior. The insidious malady which was to carry away Brizeux, started to torment him at this time. He went to the south of France, and then to Italy, where he remained thirty months. During this time both Vigny and Sainte-Beuve continued to find publishers for his work. The "Ternaires," "Marie," "Primel," and "Nola," and the "Fleur d'or" were published in the Revue. At this time, the director of the Revue, with his accustomed decision, judged that Brizeux should be elected to the Academy. After twenty-eight years of



literary life, Brizeux, too, became fired with this new ambition. It was especially Alfred de Vigny who espoused Brizeux as a candidate. Back in Paris for the campaign, Brizeux met failure in elections of 1856 and 1857.

In May 1859, Vigny learned of the death of his friend in Montpellier. He wrote to a Monsieur Boyer, " I shall do all that I can to grant his last request - - that his remains be brought back to his native Brittany. I loved him as though I had, like you, the blood of the same mother in my heart. I will go to the Minister of Public Instruction with all the details tomorrow." The remains of Brizeux were brought to Brittany. His brother wrote to Vigny, " He loved you as an artist, as a man, as a poet, and as a friend."

If I have dwelt too much upon incidents in the life of the lesser poet, it is only because it seemed necessary in order to reflect the qualities which all friends of Vigny knew so well, those of a man, a friend, an artist, and a poet. At the time of Brizeux's death, Alfred de Vigny was suffering physically. However, he never spared himself to help those who called upon him. His friendship became an art, and seemed to be inspired by the same sincerity and love for suffering humanity as his poetry.

CHAPTER IV

LA REVUE DES DEUX MONDES AND ALFRED DE VIGNY,  
LA COLERE DE SAMSON. LETTERS AND REVIEWS PUB-  
LISHED AFTER THE POET'S DEATH.

Alfred de Vigny left several manuscripts to M. Louis Ratisbonne, his literary heir. Only one poem was published posthumously in the Revue des Deux Mondes. The writer's contribution in prose include memoirs which were not published in M. Ratisbonne's edition of the "Journal d'un Poète" in 1867. These unpublished letters were edited by Fernand Gregh. The Revue also published the correspondence of Alfred de Vigny with the Comtesse d'Agoult and the poet's letters to the Comtesse de Plessis.

"La Colère de Samson" was written in England, and is dated 1839. (1) (2) It is probable that the poem was inspired by his adventurous love affair with Mme. Dorval. For the details Vigny has taken his inspiration from the Bible and from a drama by Milton, Samson Agonistes. (3) In the poem by Vigny, the betrayal of Samson by Delilah symbolizes the fickleness of feminine love. The poem opens with an elaborate painting of a desert scene. Two shadows are those of Samson and Delilah. Samson is seated, he is singing a funeral song. Delilah is sleeping. After the song, Samson goes on to proclaim the

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(1) Revue des Deux Mondes, January 15, 1864.  
(2) Journal d'un Poète, April 7, 1839.  
(3) Judges, Chapter 14, Verse 15.

doctrine of Vigny: Man has need of the love of a woman, but the woman to whom he gives his love knows only deceit and falsehood. Delilah awakens, and while Samson sleeps, she betrays him into the hands of the enemy. In this poem, Vigny has accommodated the Bible to his personal reaction, in a most original fashion. "What is, must be," is his fatalistic conclusion to the betrayal. One finds in the celebrated ending the bitterness of Vigny:

"Et toute femme est plus ou moins Delila."

It was not until 1897 after the death of Louis Ratisbonne that the unedited fragments of the Journal d'un poète were assembled and sent to the Revue des Deux Mondes. A summary of their contents will become part of this paper. If the thought seems incoherent, it is because the arrangement of M. Gregh who assembled the incoherent fragments was published in chronological order.

It is seldom that two forces of criticism and creation work together as they did in the case of the Romantic Movement. Sainte-Beuve was a critic, not only of the Romantic Movement, but of the nineteenth century, for his work continued until the time of his death in 1869. Until his time, the science of criticism had been almost entirely conducted on what may be called pedagogic lines. (4) The critic either constructed for himself, or more probably accepted from tradition, a cut and dried scheme of

(4) George Saintsbury, History of French Literature. 504.

the correct plan of different kinds of literature, and contented himself with adjusting any new work to this, marking off its agreements or differences, and judging accordingly. I shall not attempt to elaborate upon the method developed by Sainte-Beuve, for it should be known to the reader. It included a study of the author and the object which the author himself had when he composed the work. This method had the danger of limiting the consideration to external facts and of giving a gossiping biography rather than a criticism. Another danger was that of regarding an author as a product of his age and circumstances. Victor Hugo has stated that according to this method, the question, "Is the work good or is it bad?" remains unanswered.

As a disciple of La Rochefoucauld, (after 1848) Sainte-Beuve believed that man is governed by self-love." (5) He seemed to take almost malicious pleasure in portraying the survival of the ego. Belonging to a different "natural family"; (Sainte-Beuve's expression) he was incredulous of the social gospel of Vigny and saw little merit in his work. A shrewd observer, he found "no firm anchorage for the spirit in the movements peculiar to the nineteenth century." (6)

In the literary critiques which Sainte-Beuve published in the Revue des Deux Mondes, little additional light is shed upon the work of Alfred de Vigny. There appears to be

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(5) Irving Babbitt, Masters of French Criticism 173.

(6) Ibid. 188.



a surfeit of gossiping biography of a trivial and inconsequential nature. Since they are articles in the *Revue* concerning the work of Vigny, a condensation of them is a necessary part of this paper.

The third critical essay which Sainte-Beuve wrote for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on the subject of Alfred is called "A Character Portrait of Alfred de Vigny." (7) The critic refers to an essay which he wrote during the poet's lifetime, and which appeared in the *Revue* of October 15, 1835. It considered the prose writings of the illustrious poet. Sainte-Beuve recalls that he was timid then, trembling while making some observations "à demi voilées." In this article he proposes to go over some of the same traits then treated, but this time with more insistence and completion.

Sainte-Beuve begins by claiming the distinction of having authenticated the poet's year of birth as 1797. It had been said that Vigny gave his day of birth as March 27, 1799. After unflattering insinuations concerning the ancestry of Vigny, Sainte-Beuve cites the appearance of a certain Vigny whom he assumes to be an uncle of Alfred, an unfortunate type stranded in England without friends or money. The name of Vigny appeared but rarely in the historical memoirs of the eighteenth century, according to the critic. He has found the name once or twice in the journal of the Duke of Luyne under the date April 8, 1741.

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(7) *Revue des Deux Mondes*, April 15, 1864.

"The King has just granted a pension of twelve hundred pounds to M. de Vigny, 'écuyer de quartier,' son of M. de Vigny, lieutenant general of bombardiers, to whom one owes the invention of 'carcasses,' a sort of bomb of oblong shape, loaded with grapeshot." M. de Vigny had been a squire of the King for thirty years.

Sainte-Beuve proceeds to rectify possible misconception concerning the poet's earlier works. He points out that although the poet's literary début dates from 1822, Vigny has judged it well to antidate "La Dryade" and "Symètha" to 1815, both poems included in an edition published in 1829 and again in an edition of his poetry of 1837. The "Bain d'une jeune Romaine" bears the date 1817. This intentional antidating was done so that one might not say that he had been directly inspired by André Chénier, according to Sainte-Beuve. The critic then notes that both "Symètha" and "La Dryade" are superior in style to "Héléna" which could not possibly have been written before 1821, and "it would be strange if the two poems mentioned could have preceded 'Héléna' by several years." The authentic date of these neo-Greek poems is that of their publication, according to the critic. In the edition of 1829, Vigny appended "La Dryade" with these words "Written in 1815." For the "Bain d'une jeune Romaine" he did more, noting the precise day on which he had composed it, May 20, 1817. "Why these minute retroactive precautions?" questions the critic. To escape without doubt the reproach of imitation

particularly of the poetry of Chénier which had been published by M. de Latouche in 1819. "Tout cela, c'est de la coquetterie encore. Piquante contradiction." On one hand Vigny is accused of making himself younger by two years, and on the other of antidating his poems by four or five years. "The critic who believes as little as possible on hearsay and who is always on guard against excess precaution, will consider only dates authenticated by the printer." It would seem strange to Sainte-Beuve that Vigny had written anything before 1820, so insistent is he that Vigny began to write under the inspiration of Andre Chenier.

Sainte-Beuve considers the earlier poems of Alfred de Vigny with rather superficial critical insight, for one accepted as the foremost literary critic of his day. In a "pretty selection," "Le Bal," the critic finds that Vigny has shown himself "d'une grâce aimable" more subtle of tone than in poems which follow. He sees in this "choice and elegant morsel which attempts to insinuate itself into life," only a depicting of the sentiments and customs of the day and something of the poetry of the Soumets, the Pichalds, and the Guerauds. "M. de Vigny has given there a charming sample of it."

In "Moïse," "Dolorida," and "Éloa" the critic finds that the poet has attained his greatest originality. He remarks that "Éloa" appeared in 1824, this time with the name of the author. The fact that Alfred de Vigny's first poems were published anonymously antagonizes the literary

sensibilities of the critic for he mentions it several times.

Even after Lamartine and Chateaubriand, the subject of "Éloa" might be considered new and a bit strange. Upon seeing Lazarus dead, Jesus out of pity shed a tear. Angels caught it in a diamond urn and carried it to the feet of the Eternal Father. Through the desire and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, it suddenly took on life, becoming a white and moving body, a lady-angel who answered by the name of "Éloa." "This is an entirely mystic and Christian metamorphosis," remarks Sainte-Beuve. Éloa felt within herself the necessity of loving a castaway, and among all the fallen angels, instinct drove her to choose Lucifer. Although depicted in the role of an angel, Éloa is indeed a woman. "She is another Eve, created by the Son, while the first Eve was created by the Father. The second falls harder, and with infinitely more charm. Satan shows himself far more seducing than the serpent. He is an enchanting Lovelace, a Don Juan who has taken on a celestial accent." At one point in the poem, it appears that the virgin angel is about to reopen Heaven to a repentant criminal. "Who knows?" adds the critic, "Evil may have ceased to exist." However, it is Éloa whom the ravager lures into the depths of the abyss of Hell. Even in sin she is happy to be lost forever with Lucifer for she pities him. "What does all this prove?" questions



Sainte-Beuve. "Nothing perhaps, or at the most, a satirical moral which affirms that every woman is more or less a pilferer at heart, and that the purest possess a weakness for 'les mauvais sujets.'" Sainte-Beuve questions whether Vigny might be joking in this poem. He concludes, however, that romantic poets were not given to plaisantry, that they hadn't even the "plus petit mot pour rire," and Vigny less than any other. What could this serious poet have wished to attain in this "mystère rajeuni et renouvelé"? "Nothing," concludes the critic "except to demonstrate that he was capable of writing elevated poetry." It is dazzling in tone and in touch, more magnificent in its elegance than French poetry had known up to that time.

"Monte aussi vite au ciel que l'éclair en descend." Here we have one of those immense images which embrace the two poles at a glance.

A poet like Alfred de Vigny could hardly expect to be understood or to find himself popular even in the most enlightened circles. Sainte-Beuve feels that the poet understood this only too well, for in publishing his ancient and modern poems in 1826, he idealized the literary role of the poet-priest under the guise of Moses. "Moïse," is dedicated to Victor Hugo. Moses is seen conversing with God, "face to face." He complains of the burden of responsibility involved in leading a chosen people to the Promised Land, and of the solitary grandeur which he has suffered during the pilgrimage. Sainte-Beuve finds

Vigny quite at ease as the self-aggrandized person of the poet under the mask of the prophet. "Good sense may say what it will concerning this ambitious claim; it may find a strange interpretation in the poet's relegating to himself the rights and privileges of God-anointed, and of making himself a god of supreme disdain for the honors of the earth."

In "Dolorida," which is given a Spanish setting, a loving but jealous wife avenges herself by administering poison to her unfaithful husband. Half of the vial is reserved for herself. The form, rather studied and complicated, is far too dramatic for Sainte-Beuve who finds it, too, a bit pretentious.

Sainte-Beuve found nothing good to say about the novel, "Cinq Mars," which appeared in 1826, except that it was widely read among the aristocrats of the faubourg, Saint-Germain. The historical school of Thierry, Thiers and Guizot is quoted as recognizing in it none of the true spirit of the historical novel. The critic found there nothing of the quality of Walter Scott maintaining that Vigny lacked the first quality for a writer of historical novels, a sense and vision of reality. "Aside from some delicate scenes, the novel is entirely lacking in historical worth and is scarcely readable today by any lover of truth." Sainte-Beuve concludes the first chapter of his criticism by recounting the often told anecdote of the meeting in Florence of Lamartine and the father-in-law

of Vigny. Following the introduction to the poet, Sir Bunbury remarked, "Oh, I have a poet in my family." "And what is his name?" he was questioned. The old eccentric had difficulty in recalling the name, so the crowd gave the names of several contemporary French poets. When Vigny was named, his father-in-law said, "That's the one."

At this point in the criticism, Sainte-Beuve becomes introspective, wondering why he is a critic, why there is need to analyze, to look into and behind the heart of the writers, as Alfred de Vigny had reproached him for doing "à propos de la préface des Consolations." It is evident that Vigny was able to accept criticism with far less resentment than his critic.

In the second chapter of his criticism, Sainte-Beuve considered the dramatic production of Alfred de Vigny, and also his "Grandeur et Servitude militaires." Sainte-Beuve seemed not to have been acquainted with the correct title of his work, for he has incorrectly reversed the nouns, as quoted.

It is the opinion of Sainte-Beuve that the contrasts among the playwrights of the Cenacle caused the division of friendship among the writers of 1829. Sainte-Beuve saw Vigny as a writer with ambitions which were realized only partially. Vigny's play Othello, which preceded Hernani, is interpreted as a simple prelude to the original productions with which Vigny planned to launch a great combat.

From the presentation of Othello, the spirit of rivalry is seen to have possessed him, and to have never left him.

In former times one is said to have believed in magic springs, into which one might dip a ring or a green branch and withdraw it loaded with diamonds and other elegant and strange incrustations. The mind of M. de Vigny resembled these magic springs. One never introduced there, with impunity, any fact, positive particularism, or an actual story, without having reappear something quite different and hardly recognizable from that which had entered. Sainte-Beuve cites Gabriel de Chénier, Count Mole, and Pasquier as those who criticized Vigny for his transmutation of truth. Vigny could never understand why he was charged so strongly, or where the difference lay. The idea clouded his vision and hid everything.

1830 had aroused prophets and even demi-gods on all sides; some preached for the proletariat, others for women's rights. M. de Vigny, pure and serene as he was, had been seized by an analogous sentiment. The "Archangel" had been tempted to become a divine; he believed in his mission, his apostolate, he told himself that he would plead for the poet. If one has any doubt about this zeal, he has only to read his preface to Chatterton entitled, "The Last Night of Work." (From June 29 to June 30, 1834) The play, admirably interpreted by the actress who played Kitty Bell, reached the heights. He deserved applause and a tear for some of the touching scenes, but



one must add that it was "maladif, vaniteux, douloureux," concerned with suffering, rather than with passion. It suffered from head to foot with literary rheumatism, the poetic migraine of which the poet had already described the symptoms in Stello. The effect upon a literary generation afflicted with the same illness made it only the more acute.

To Sainte-Beuve, Alfred de Vigny does not seem the same person as the poet that he knew during the latter years of the Restoration, then an amiable man of the world, living above the petty passions of the day and at given moments flying away to his Milky Way. The military gentleman gave way to the solemn man of letters who believed himself invested in the sacred ministry of a pontiff. His mind, like his speech, had acquired and expressed a slowness of thought and also a sort of ironic bitterness which made Sainte-Beuve write, "Son albâtre était chagriné."

The third chapter of the portrait repeats a previous article concerning the reception of Alfred de Vigny into the French Academy. The reporting of the critic presents many contradictions. In 1846 the "tiresome harangue" (discourse) of Alfred de Vigny had lasted forty-five minutes. In this article the critic asks what reaction one might expect after an hour and one-half of "agacement." The Director of the Academy showed no warmth in the address of welcome to the poet. "One pays back as one can, and M. Mole was not a Frenchman for nothing," observes Sainte-

Beuve.

It is true that Sainte-Beuve had observed about everything that might provoke a smile in the retelling, and we might find the article most amusing if we could forget the malicious intent and the apparently sadistic pleasure which the critic seemed to enjoy in desecrating the memory of the poet. "I am only telling what is literally true," the critic assures us, yet it is difficult to envision the complacency and angelic self-satisfaction of the poet, charged with distilling and caressing each word which he uttered. The portrait of the far-sighted Vigny, holding his paper at arms length and the long silences during which the poet noted with a pencil the applause of the audience is a pathetic one.

The fourth scathing chapter exhibits even less of the milk of human kindness. It is concerned with the poet's posthumous collection, "The Destinies," which Sainte-Beuve tells us have been given too much literary consideration, and which are thought to show a decline.

This famous article has brought little credit to the critic, Sainte-Beuve. Brunetière interpreted it as a criticism of the critic rather than the poet whose glory he sought to defame. The only reason that I see for the appearance of this attack on Alfred de Vigny may be in a less praiseworthy policy of the Revue than that followed during its earlier years. The first consideration of the

Revue after 1848 was the extension of its circulation. Vigny had died the year before the article was published. The Revue des Deux Mondes was of highest consideration to the editor, François Buloz: - Sainte-Beuve was the most celebrated critic of his day.

Sainte-Beuve had almost as great a passion for the particular as Brunetière had for the general. No man was ever more on his guard against the deceit that lurks in universals. (8) Brunetière believed that a compromise between the multiplicity of facts and the craving for unity is justified. (9) He defended the general sense of men in isolating himself from his contemporaries. His sympathy for Alfred de Vigny was due not only to a common pessimism but to the fact that, like Vigny, he concealed a great sensitiveness under outer coldness and reserve. A stoic, Brunetière considered it his special mission to attack every form of epicurean relaxation. (10)

Brunetière looks upon the appearance of the work of Paléologue as a most tempting occasion to speak again of the poet of the "Destinées," feeling that if any other pretext be necessary, it may be found in his growing influence upon contemporary poetry. (11)

The most intelligent of the Romantics, the only one who has had a well-constructed, reasonable and philosophical conception of life, Alfred de Vigny, has given us some

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(8) I. Babbitt, History of French Criticism, 300.

(9) Ibid. 301.

(10) Ibid. 305.

(11) F. Brunetière "Critique d'Alfred de Vigny," of M. Paléologue's Alfred de Vigny, Revue des Deux Mondes, December 1, 1891.

bits of verse; unsurpassed in penetration and feeling. Lucretius himself has written nothing more beautiful than the description of nature "Je roule avec dédain" of la "Maison du Berger."

Brunetière asks permission to "faire une petite querelle" on the subject of the sources of documentation used by M. Paléologue; they constitute eighty notebooks into which the poet had consigned forty years of his interior life, and the unedited memoirs of Sainte-Beuve, which Brunetière hoped would never be published "pour l'honneur même du critique des Lundis" and which have entirely the appearance of a journal of rancour. Brunetière's criticism of Paléologue is that the latter is neglectful and incomplete in overlooking volumes of printed material, saying that neither critic nor historian can hope for achievement, if he does not consider what has preceded and followed a given work. Paléologue maintains that Vigny is linked to the pure tradition of the eighteenth century. For Brunetière he is linked to it only through his philosophic scepticism. In the following verses, Vigny dreamed of no other than Racine, claims M. Brunetière.

"Belle sans ornement, dans le simple appareil  
D'une beauté qu'on vient d'arracher au sommeil."

The influence of his contemporaries is felt in "Moïse" and "Éloa." Brunetière did not specify Chateaubriand and Lamartine. The local color and exotic detail evoke scenes from René, and the ideas underlying "Éloa" remind



us of Lamartine.

"Ainsi dans les forêts de la Louisiane  
Berce sous les bambous et la longue liane." (12)

Brunetière maintains that Madame de Stael, Chateaubriand and Walter Scott were masters of Alfred de Vigny, as well as of all the youths of his time. "Est ce que ces vers existeraient seulement si la prose de Chateaubriand, celle de Bernadin de Saint Pierre, celle de Buffon ne les avait précédés?" Didn't Madame de Stael in her Corinne (1807) express overpowering melancholy and a surfeit of superiority? Brunetière believes that Vigny found inspiration in the "Soirées de Saint Petersburg" more than in any other single work of the time.

Brunetière attempts to "define the nature and the extent of the talent of the poet, 'd'après M. Paléologue.'" At a time when there was a grave abuse of literary execution, Vigny alone perceived that literature diminishes that which it attempts to adorn and that all effort toward style is in a sense a "profanation" of thought. Brunetière has difficulty in subscribing to this mystic formula so stressed by M. Paléologue, claiming that if language be the condition of thought it is inconceivable that style might profane it.

Vigny, a difficult task-master for himself, is in a certain sense more an artist than Lamartine, than Victor Hugo, or than Alfred de Musset, surely more delicate and more sincere according to Brunetière. He admits that

(12) Alfred de Vigny Oeuvres Complètes, Poésies, 19 (Eloa)

Vigny may not have all the gifts of the other poets, but he objects to talking of his "impuissance" as Paléologue has done. "If we must attribute lack of power to Vigny, let's explain it with reasons that are worthy of the author of "Moïse," "Éloa" and the "Mont des Oliviers." If Vigny has produced so little, if he has left among his papers so many sketches of poems which he hadn't the courage or the strength to finish, it is because the problems of poetry were not the same for him, as for his rivals for glory and for popularity.

Paléologue may say that philosophical poetry was written before Vigny. Brunetière admits that a certain philosophical poetry may have appeared in the "Méditations" of Lamartine, but that it may no more be called philosophy than the "Discourse of Man" of Voltaire may be called poetry.

"One would look in vain into the life of Vigny for the causes of his pessimism," says Brunetière. Vicissitudes of life render a man melancholy, misanthropic, difficult, but not pessimistic. Pessimism takes its source higher, in a metaphysical suffering or in the consciousness which we have of the misery of humanity. In its deep anguish, it becomes even more puzzled with the enigma of destiny, the reason of life and death. It feels a need not to fall, a need for security, against the "jouissances" of a vulgar optimism. Brunetière remarks that he has often tried to show "even here in the Revue," that all the arguments which one repeats against pessimism serve only as a mask to cover our attachments to the pleasures of life. In rather elevated souls

the power to love is engendered by an excess of pessimism and Vigny is one of the most noble of these souls. From a true understanding of the common misery of man "celui de l'égalité se dégage d'abord." It was the enthusiasm for pity, the passion for kindness which I felt in my heart," writes de Vigny in his Journal.

Brunetière wishes that the terms used by Paléologue were a little less vague. In using the unfortunate development of the love-affairs of the poet as a cause of his pessimism, Paléologue has done far worse than he has done in attributing the pessimism of Chateaubriand and of Byron to their simple egoism. At the time that Vigny wrote "Moïse" and "Éloa", there is no evidence that Vigny knew Madame Dorval, and "when will we stop composing the history of the great French writers by giving a litany of their 'petitesses'?" Here, no doubt, Brunetière is referring to the critic Sainte-Beuve. In another place in this article Brunetière has said that when one wishes to attack an old friend for his "histoires des Femmes," he doesn't wait until he is dead to do so, nor is it seemly in a critic to use these histories to betray the cause of literature. In truth, the celebrated article to which the editor of the Revue so often refers did less honor to Sainte-Beuve than it did to Vigny.

It would seem more reasonable and natural to Brunetière that a writer's worth be determined by his relationship to the sum-total of his work, and among the several means by

which one may judge a writer, there is scarcely any more loyal or more sure method than a consideration of the nature, extent, and depth of influence exercised by the writer. On one point, Brunetière agreed with Paléologue. Both believed that Vigny belongs not only to the literature of France, but that he finds his place in the ranks of Lucretius, of Dante and of Goethe, among the élite of the great inspirational writers of all times.

Ferdinand Brunetière was editor of the Revue des Deux Mondes, at the time that Louis Ratisbonne sent the letters of the Countess de Flessis to the Revue. A codicil to the literary testament which had named Ratisbonne heir to the manuscripts of Alfred de Vigny specified that only that which should best serve the poet's memory was to be released for publication. A letter addressed to Brunetière by Ratisbonne tells us that the Countess had remarked when she delivered the letters to Ratisbonne, "Since there is so much curiosity concerning the life of my cousin at this time, you might as well send these letters to the Revue." Ratisbonne points out in his letter to the editor that "This is not the Vigny of the poems 'Moïse' and 'Éloa,'" but an unceremonious familiar Vigny, whose familiarity was of an individual quality. The affection with which Vigny regards the Countess de Flessis seems strong on the part of a cousin. Ratisbonne comments that in spite of the effusion of these letters, there was never a vulgar line written. Ratisbonne tells Brunetière of his last visits to the home of the



Vignys. Madame Vigny had become so large and clumsy that it was as difficult for her to move as it was for her to talk. She had forgotten her English, and since she had never developed proficiency in French, conversation with her became an ordeal. Alfred de Vigny continued to treat her with the courtesy and attention he might have lavished on a young girl, and seemed not to notice her awkwardness. Ratisbonne's letter published in full closes with these words, "Your dear friend in Alfred de Vigny." (13)

The letters to the Countess de Plessis were written between the years 1846 and 1863. (14) A letter of 1848 describes the difficulties which Vigny experienced in arranging for his wife to leave Paris without him. He accompanied her part way on her journey. Time does not exist for him when he is alone, and he writes that he is hopeful that sunshine will come to him in the person of his cousin. Vigny chides his cousin, very gently, for spending so much time going to parties and for not coming to see him. Throughout the correspondence, he begs pathetically for her visits. "Certainly, I pout," he wrote, "are you going to force me to parade my virtue in order to impress upon you your ingratitude?" It appears that he is joking here.

From his estate in Charente, Vigny writes that even the Irish hills are not as beautiful as "ours" in the fall when they are covered with grapevines. He enjoys looking at the

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(13) Revue des Deux Mondes, January 1, 1897.

(14) Ibid.

country, but he never pardons Nature for her eternal impudence.

The Countess has written concerning the death of Madame Dorval. Vigny had read of Dorval's death in the newspaper. He feels that he should speak soberly about those who have gone. The Countess must have referred to his rupture with the actress, for Vigny tells his cousin that alliances of the theatre are not nearly as important to a man as the public might judge them to be. He feels that he was fortunate in finding a "joujou" of the salons who brought him success through such an excellent interpretation of her role in Chatterton.

Vigny seems to serve as guide and confessor to the Countess. He wishes to know how she spends all her days. He counsels her to read Chateaubriand's works. He adds that in his excessive pride, Chateaubriand "parallels himself to the Emperor." On September 15, 1850, Vigny asks his cousin to write him of the reactions of her countrymen to the death of Balzac. It is Vigny's conviction that marriage killed the novelist, that the "fabulous icicle from the North petrified him." Then Vigny tells the Countess of his three encounters with Balzac. The first time was when the novelist was in the printing business. He was dirty, poorly clothed, his mouth moistened excessively when he talked and showed that he had no upper teeth. A second meeting came as a surprise. Vigny had gone to the Chamber of Deputies to listen to a current debate on literary property. Someone called, "Oh, M. Vigny, will all your

poets be 'parias intelligens,\* as Chatterton said?"

Vigny turned to greet a well-dressed man, whose smile revealed a row of new pearly teeth. His last meeting with the novelist was at Charles Nodier's funeral.

The Countess is reading Lamartine. Vigny asks her how she likes the confidences which the poet shares with the whole world. Vigny would say of him as had been said of Molière's Célimène, "The whole universe is well received by you." (15) Lamartine who, according to Vigny, scattered incense on all sides and liked everything that he saw, was quite different from Chateaubriand in the eyes of Vigny. Vigny describes Chateaubriand as one who hated everything.

Vigny discusses the "dirty politic" (without the "s") of the second Empire, attributing the expression to Horace Walpole. He tells the Countess how much he admires the literary charm and eloquence of Lacordaire, and of his regret to lose the Dominican whose chair in the French Academy had been next to his. Vigny tells some amusing stories concerning one of his servants, who thought Lacordaire was Arab, and another who took him to be a strolling singer.

The Countess reproaches Vigny for not writing about himself. He tells her that he has often been reproached on that account, adding that one is eighteen only once in a lifetime, and that he has never experienced the pleasures of that age.

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(15) Molière, Le Misanthrope.

\* Vigny's spelling

The last letters are sad. They reveal the heart of a man hungry for friendship and affection. Vigny tells his cousin to prepare for suffering. Life is good until after thirty and then it has no meaning except sacrifice and noble suffering. Vigny adds that a malady which has been diagnosed as "gastralgie" keeps him at home. The disease is "without danger but long in being cured." This was the beginning of the cancer which caused his death.

The last letter to the Countess was dated April 2, 1863. Alfred de Vigny tells of the final illness of his wife Lydia, that pure and good soul" whose last words were, "Alfred, I am not suffering." He told the Countess of the details of the funeral and of the kindness of all who surrounded him. This collection of letters is so filled with allusions to current events and to literature and customs of the day that their contents might constitute a separate study. Some references like, "I have just made a French mistake dear to Madame Sevigné" are obscure in meaning. One letter describes a stagecoach trip which Vigny had been called upon to take during the night. He tells the Countess that the other passengers slept, but that his mind was "active with all the sense and nonsense" which she knew so well. Vigny's nonsense, and there is an amazing amount of it in his personal correspondence, reveals a current of pathos and wistful longing that humanize the poet-philosopher, but which present contradictions baffling to one trying to reconcile his life with his work.



These letters were edited by Ferdinand Brunetière. It has been said that Brunetière liked to quote Auguste Comte who was credited with saying that humanity is composed of more dead than living. (16) It is clear that Vigny is one of the vital human beings about whom Brunetière likes to write.

René Doumic became editor of the Revue des Deux Mondes in 1916. In an article entitled, "La Pathologie des romantiques," (17) Doumic states that Romanticism is more than a malady of the century. It is, he claims, a disorganization of human nature, a disorganization of the soul and its faculties, of society and its elements, and of art and its conditions. This organization is all the more pathological because of the enthusiastic fever which accompanies it. The fever of Romanticism has created a cloud of dizziness which precludes a clear and accurate vision in accordance with reality. It is overemphasis, gesticulation, an overdose of color and idea. When it is a question of ideas, they are characterized by a mystic exaltation which falsifies and denatures them by a mixture of troubled religiosity. It is true that these ideas had some positive content, but they could not adapt themselves to reality. Romanticism made dreams and monsters of them.

Domic does not believe that Romanticism is a result of social or scientific progress. He affirms that progress had appeared on the scene long before Romanticism, but that

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(16) F. Brunetière, Évolution de la Poésie Lyrique, Chapter 2, 37.

(17) Revue des Deux Mondes, September 15, 1907.

Romanticism had given social progress the character of a gospel. To Doumic, the French Revolution is considered an historical epoch. The Romantics changed it into a revelation. They made of it, an hegira.

The editor of the Revue summarizes the spirit of the seventeenth century with its emphasis on authority. The eighteenth century, developed a destructive war against religion and government, and inaugurated the royalty of men of letters. It gave them a position in society which was quite out of proportion with their importance or benefit to society. In a disorganized society, no one is in place, and it is inevitable that certain individuals take a disproportionate position. In this unbalanced state, the personality of the writer becomes inflated at will. The nineteenth century produced a school of writers whose emotions knew no bounds. Doumic tries to imagine the reaction of a seventeenth century poet in reading a line written by Alfred de Musset.

"Il faut aimer sans cesse après avoir aimé."

The literary writer whose excesses were accepted at the time assumed the right to place himself above the rest of men. This privilege brought suffering. The condemned one of ~~genius~~, the solitary Moses, will have to die like Chatterton, a victim of indifference if not of hostility. However, he will have fulfilled his destiny, he will be regarded as a prophet like Olympio. He will have lead his children a long way toward the Promised Land.

Although the name of Alfred de Vigny was not mentioned

in this article, references to the poet are clear. Vigny's exaggerated idea of the poet's importance in society, his emphasis upon an idea beyond the bound of reason, are elements of the disorganization which Doumic regards as pathological. The importance which Doumic has given to the characteristics of Vigny and the references to "Moïse" and Chatterton reflect the opinion of the editor of the Revue des Deux Mondes regarding the importance of Vigny's work.

In sketching the life of Alfred de Vigny, much interesting biographical detail was omitted in Chapter II. The following essay by Ernest Dupuy is a charming study entitled, "La Famille et la Jeunesse d'Alfred de Vigny. (18)

Three months after the death of his mother, Alfred de Vigny wrote a letter of condolence to Auguste Barbier, who had just lost his father. He used these words:

"You have done, as I have done, closed the eyes upon the first friends who were know to you in this sad world."

Vigny's father and mother were, in all the sense of the word, his first friends.

The best picture of the father of Vigny is that found in the "Journal d'un Poète" dated 1831. "I am the last son of a very rich family," said Alfred, "my father, ruined by the Revolution, consecrated the wealth that remained to my education. A good old man with white hair, witty, educated, wounded and crushed by the Seven Years War, he was nevertheless charming, elegant and distinguished?"

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(18) Revue des Deux Mondes, March 15, 1910.

Except for the "famille très riche," M. Dupuy finds all characteristics in conformity with the facts. To serve as a frame for this portrait of his father, Vigny chose the first apartment occupied by his parents in Paris, that of the Elysée Bourbon. The Vignys stayed there five or six years, from their arrival in 1798 until the time when the palace was bought by Murat, a certain "roi de Naples." The Elysée Bourbon had been confiscated during the Revolution and administered by a company of capitalists who, believes M. Dupuy, had acquired it from national wealth. This black-marketing band had bought it, not to raze it for the land, but to rent it. Madame de Richelieu, widow of the Maréchal de Richelieu, occupied the first floor beside the garden. The other part of the first floor which faced a large court was rented by Alfred's father. The Chevalier de Vigny was found during the pleasant days seated at the entrance of the great stairway. In the evening, he was seated before the fireplace from whence he kept up a steady flow of conversation with Madame de Vigny. Bright and witty conversation became for him an art, a study and a consolation. He always wore a white shirt, a jabot, and little sleeves, like those seen in portraits toward the end of the reign of Louis XVI. The Chevalier de Vigny was first called "l'Abbé de Vigny" for in his youth, he had been destined for the church. He had spent some years at Saint Sulpice in company with the Abbé Lazerne, who was later elevated to the rank of bishop and then that of cardinal. Having returned from emigration



in 1814, he came immediately to the home of his former seminary colleague. More erudite than is expected of a warrior and a courtier, the elder Vigny could usually be found discussing theology or the ancient tongues with some of his extensive acquaintanceship.

The exalted accounts of Alfred de Vigny agree with the testimony of the caustic Frénilly, who had known the Vignys since 1797, and who said that one of the greatest contributions to his happiness at Lèches was that there was a quantity of books, and that the library of the Chevalier de Vigny was always at his service.

Mlle de Baraudin had married at thirty-three, when the Chevalier de Vigny, already a semi-invalid, had passed fifty-three. Alfred de Vigny proudly compared his mother to Niobe, whose severe beauty she possessed. "Her beauty of the Italian race, her black eyes and oriental figure, her manly and hard-working spirit, the strange vigor of her character and her body gave her something more than is found in her sex." Mme Vigny was raised in the severe convent of Beaumont les Tours. She studied music and painting. In music she preferred the long problems of harmony. In painting, she copied the masters with assiduous ardor. She was a great reader of Rousseau. She had studied and learned by heart most of his Dictionary of Music, knew all his musical dissertations and with the rest of her generation, was spell-bound by Émile. Conforming to the principles of Émile, her son was, each morning, subjected to cold baths. This custom from which Vigny never departed, inured him to the coldest

weather; he laughed to see the snow melting on his chest. As in the discipleship of Jean-Jacques, all diversion had its educational objective, daily exercises, visits to the galleries, Bible lessons, training in voice and in music. Every incident of this education was minutely noted, and the narration sent to Miss Sophie Baraudin in Maine-Giraud. Having turned over all procedures and progress in her mind, she replied to her sister, with the counsels of a second mother of Alfred.

It is hardly necessary to insist upon the "inconvenients" of an idolatry which father, mother, and aunt heaped upon the person of Alfred. They regaled him with stories of the great deeds of noble ancestors. They kept him away from other children, so that exaltation and a vanity carefully sustained might solidify. The great pleasure of his young years was reading, for which he developed an early and burning passion, "la conversation grave du soir." Alfred wrote of this period: "I took my place beside matured men and even illustrious old men." Among the "homes<sup>m</sup> faits" we see again Auguste de Frénilly praising the first verses of the young author. In the intellectual élite which he was privileged to meet, Alfred placed his parents at the top. He was twenty when his father died.

Like many other illustrious poets, it was especially of his mother that Alfred was the son. It was for her that he lived, that he wished to distinguish himself, and to become a poet of first rank. Not only during a delicate childhood and a troubled adolescence, but even when he had reached

a mature age, and during the most agitated and fecund years of his literary career, he remained subject to her. "She was his reason, his will and his light."

There appeared to be little religious training in the early life of Alfred de Vigny. Bible History seemed to have been studied primarily for its cultural and aesthetic worth. When Alfred was a little boy, his father presented him with the family cross of Saint Louis. The Chevalier impressed upon Alfred his sense of nobility and his duty to the royalist traditions of his ancestors, but attached no religious significance to the ritual. In her letters, Madame de Vigny was ethical and even Puritan in counseling her son. The idea of a well-governed life as a duty to God apparently had escaped her. The atheism of Vigny may be somewhat excused in view of the fact that little or no religious fervor appears to have been instilled into the impressionable mind and heart of his youth.

A summary of M. Moreau's critical essay on the thought and art of Alfred de Vigny (19) forms part of a contention which is revived by the Revue des Deux Mondes upon the appearance of literary criticism unfavorable to Vigny. M. Citoleux's study of Alfred de Vigny is part of his larger work, Persistances classiques et affinités étrangères.

According to Pierre Moreau, Alfred de Vigny has written two or three comments in his Journal, which have been the desperation of critiques. "Concerning criticism," confided the poet, "the best is almost always petty because it is attached to the surface of the work." In another place,

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(19) Revue des Deux Mondes, August 15, 1925.

reacting to an article which Sainte Beuve had devoted to him, Vigny made this note. "This procedure of attempting to open the brain of one still living is bad. God alone and the poet know how his thought is born and takes form." Reviewing the "Elective Affinities," Vigny pitied Goethe and all men of genius for being condemned to have commentators brought into their poetic paradise.

But Vigny was never able to discourage the commentators. Learned editions and critiques have multiplied about Vigny. "M. Citoleux has just consecrated a vast study to the poet," writes M. Moreau. "He questions his ideas and his art. He permits us to define more surely his philosophy, his religion and his thought. M. Citoleux constructs his ensemble of Alfred de Vigny with the authority of an architect. The structure of the chapters of his book make one think of a well-ordered apartment, with his political ideas, his ideas on love, his military and his social ideas."

According to Moreau, Vigny has constructed a "magnifique sottise" in philosophy. However, he does not content himself with summing up the philosophy of Alfred de Vigny with the single vague and convenient word, pessimistic, as M. Citoleux has done. In reality this noted pessimist was fundamentally an optimist. Life had not treated him badly, claims Moreau. In the deeper recesses of his mind, Alfred always found a beautiful child who went to his mother with the long blond curls which she liked to twirl around her

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(Misuse of French word in quotation marks is that of the author.)



finger. He never forgot himself as the charming officer who so captivated Delphine Gay. Moreau finds that while in the army, Vigny found galant and happy friends who shared with him his amiable skepticism.

It has been customary for critics to trace a dark picture of the poet's wounded pride, of his disappointed ambitions, of his betrayed friendships. Victor Hugo and Sainte Beuve disdained him. The Academy was closed obstinately to his pleas and when it finally was opened, Count Mole received him in an unfriendly manner.

M. Moreau is not sure that Vigny spent many hours dreaming of battle; a letter recently published testifies that he did not wish to do combat duty in Spain but that he asked to go only as far as Grenoble. Literary glory never dazzled him. He never wished to touch more than a few chosen souls "élues entre mille milliers de mille." Citoleux recalled personal chagrins, his invalid wife, his paralytic mother, his own ill health, the infidelity of Mme Dorval, the political crises of France. Moreau points out that during the keenest physical torture and in the most bitter moral crises that Vigny shows the greatest serenity and strength.

M. Citoleux has gone deep into a study of the sources of the work of Alfred de Vigny. Through his work are found the echo of all the dreamers of the century, Saint-Simonians, theosophists, English and Germans, but especially English. Besides being correct in stressing some

Romantic affinities, Moreau feels that M. Citoleux is right in stressing the classic persistencies in the poet. Moreau too finds that "The Destinies" and the "Journal d'un Poète" are filled with the light of Plato and the rays of Pascal.

According to Moreau, pessimism, was only a point of departure from which the poet took flight. It was a methodical pessimism, like the doubt of Descartes. Vigny said of Cinq-Mars, of Stello, and of Servitude et Grandeur Militaires, "They are the chants of a sort of epic-poem on dissolution. I shall build on this debris, on this dust, the holy beauty of enthusiasm, of love, and of honor." In building this edifice which the poet promised us, he spent more than thirty years. M. Moreau believes that it would be easy to show that from "L'Esprit pur" or from Chatterton to "LaBouteille à la Mer" the poet overcame all doubt and sadness. During this time, he left the realm of the heart for the realm of thought. His vision extended to the whole world of all times. The poet no longer cast his works into the fire as did his hero Chatterton, but he threw them into the ocean of souls to come, as did the captain in "La Bouteille à la Mer." This slow ascension was quite in keeping with the temperament of Vigny. He always aspired to the regions of the divine. Alexander Dumas père said of him, "When Vigny folded his wings and alighted by chance on the crest of a mountain, it was a concession which he made to humanity." Moreau extends the metaphor by adding that Vigny flew beyond all pessimism; he soared above

the oceans furrowed by human genius to the heights not reached by the "Déluge," to the God of ideas.

Concerning his religion, Moreau believes that Vigny was Christian at the very moment that Christianity was dead in his heart. He was Christian by his attitude of reserve, by a resignation which is not indifference, and by a silence which is not always revolt. "Depth of the mind, classic depth," adds the critic. "Romanticism venerates the sensibilities of imagination, classicism venerates reason." With Vigny imagination and sensibility seemed quite subordinate to reason."

Moreau is assured that authentic symbolism has recognized its master in Alfred de Vigny. Verlaine placed him outside Romanticism in a superior realm. H. de Régnier regarded him as an initiator. He saw above the closed garden of "Son âme douloureuse et odorante" one of those immortal butterflies which an interior Psyche sometimes sends to us, bearing the message of her invisible presence. Like Vigny in his ivory tower, the Symbolists have climbed to their tower of porcelaine. Here Moreau recalls how Vigny used to accept their master Baudelaire. He would have recognized in Verlaine too his own "Chanson grise où l'imprécis au précis se joint." Vigny, like Verlaine and his disciples, liked the indecisive music of a subtle vibration. In a letter to his cousin, the Countess of Plessis, we read, "I find verses more ravishing when their form is determined and when the limit of their sentiment is not fixed upon one image, permitting free play to revery." Vigny refused

to translate profound and rare emotions into commonplace language, resigning himself to say with the Julien of Daphné, "I shall sing for the Muses and for myself."

This profound "moi" which Vigny clothed in symbols is not a faltering Psyche, abandoning itself to revery and sensation. It is thought. Therefore, Vigny does not allow all of nature to enter his works. The shadings of Hugo with his twilight fogs, and the confused voices of Lamartine are lacking. Rather than the feeling for Nature sung by Romantic poets, Vigny prefers a feeling for all humanity, that feeling which made Racine a master of his art, and Corneille one of the masters of thought. Moreau takes this excerpt from Vigny's Journal "My tormented soul finds rest in ideas, clothed in mystic garb. In order to retain positive ideas, my head is forced to throw them into the domain of imagination." These immortal ideas contain nothing of the morose pessimism which one might expect, nothing of the vague idealism of the Romantics, no "mal du siècle" or adventuresome messianism but the supernatural beauty of a world which Vigny and his master Malebranche have designed from the very name of God. The latter declared that God is "le lieu des âmes," the former that "souls have their world where unseen treasures accumulate." His Word is the sojourn of our minds, as space is that of our bodies.

This essay is more a eulogy to the art and thought of Alfred de Vigny than a consideration of the work of M. Citoieux. It reflects the permanent policy of the Revue



des Deux Mondes in defense of the poet-philosopher.

The following excerpts (20) shed interesting light upon political and social ideas of celebrated Frenchmen in 1830. It has seemed fitting to translate in many cases.

In 1867, when Louis Ratisbonne published the little notebooks in which Alfred de Vigny had inscribed the essence of his intellectual and moral life, the editor found it better to hold some passages in reserve. Many notes concerning Sainte Beuve and Victor Hugo, who were still living, were considered far too caustic. The poet's reflections on the Bourbons and the d'Orléans were judged disrespectful. An historical work on Corsica appeared too documentary and of only special interest. Today its curiosity rests in the modern historical method employed by Vigny.

The unedited works of Alfred de Vigny came to M. Gregh through M. and Mme Tréfeu, literary heirs to Louis Ratisbonne. From these notes, M. Gregh edited the novel Daphné and published it in 1912. World War I prevented the publication of the unedited fragments of the Journal d'un poète, which appeared in 1920.

The first fragment is dated May 20, probably 1829. The poet had just rearranged his poems, pursuant to the publication of a new edition. Since 1817, he had been looking for a modern subject which might prove as beautiful in form as those taken from antiquity. He hadn't

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(20) Revue des Deux Mondes. Jan. 1, 1897.

found it. Modern tableaux seemed to him, more tormented with passionate and dramatic detail than the ancient tableaux, and therefore, less simple in form and less durable. In "Éloa" alone, Vigny believed he had assimilated the two trends. He wrote, "The journals that disdained this work and found it absurd in 1823, are praising it now. This generation will understand me. At present you must write for those who follow, for if you are not ahead of the times, you are behind them."

May 23, 1829

Vigny had just been to see Victor Hugo, Sainte Beuve and two "indifférents." "Sainte-Beuve is a rather ugly little man, who makes reverential and obsequious facial contortions like an old woman. He expresses himself painfully but with a fund of erudition and with skill as a literary critic. Idolizing Victor Hugo, he has been drawn into poetry by him." Vigny's observation concerning Hugo is that since he had come into the world, he had spent his time going from one man to another "pour les écumer," skimming off the best in them. While affecting the tone of a master, Vigny regards him rather as a pupil of Sainte Beuve, for it is the poet who gathers from the critic a fund of information.

In 1822 when the Odes appeared, Hugo claimed to be "vendéen." "His mother often told me that he was born in a town near Chateaubrant. Hugo was so devout then that one time at a ball, he turned his eyes from some girls in low-

necked dresses saying, "Aren't those whitened sepulchres?" Chateaubriand was his god. He had cause to complain of the indifference of that great writer. Lamennais was his second prophet. "At that time he (Hugo) was almost a Jesuit. Today he told me that he was leaving the right wing." Hugo spoke of the virtues of Benjamin Constant. He believed that he would soon become a minister in the government. "He is calculating, but he is not the Victor I used to love. Then he was a bit fanatic concerning religion and royalty, chaste as a maiden, a bit 'sauvage,' too. We liked him that way. Now he likes the 'propos grivois' and becomes a liberal; maturity has set in. However, he lives after having written when one should write after having lived."

A Russian colonel, M. de Meyerdorf, and Ed. de Lagrange had called on the poet. M. de Lagrange had previously seen Walter Scott in Edinburgh. Scott had begged him to tell Vigny that Cinq-Mars was the only French book which he was reading. He found only one fault with it. "Le peuple" didn't hold a sufficiently important place.

August 20,

Victor Hugo had just published his Marion de Lorme, an excellent work in style, but the public didn't seem to see that this was his only talent. No one ever had as much form and less depth. "He hasn't an idea of his own, not a conviction, an observation or a dream beyond the times, but he handles words with an admirable art."

September

"Le More de Venise is in rehearsal. I feel neither

pain nor pleasure as the time for a performance draws near. A mob which I scorn will judge the work without understanding it."

"Later Le More de Venise was a success. It has been playing all winter (1829) at the Théâtre Français."

July 2, 1830

"This morning, I conceived the idea of writing the history of a country as one would that of a man--first, its portrait, its place on the globe, its geographical and topographical formation, its configuration, its features, mountains and valleys, the relationship between the inhabitants and the earth, the people with their features, origin and history, the history of their governments. The title will be Corsica. I shall talk to M. Pozzo de Borgo concerning documentation."

July 10

Vigny had just spent two and one-half hours with M. Pozzo de Borgo. The poet had questioned him about Corsica, and his complaint to his journal was that there had been too few answers relative to Corsica and too many about Pozzo di Borgo. "Bonaparte and I, moi et Bonaparte," reappeared in the conversation at every moment. At age 24, M. Pozzo de Borgo had been sent to the Constituent Assembly as one of the Corsican deputation. The delegation proposed to tender the support of Corsica to the new Constitution, and to draw up a "procès-verbal" of the sessions. M. Pozzo claimed to be the possessor of the only existing copy of the



"proces," the repercussions of which had stimulated the fury of Napoleon I, and had brought about eighteen months of guerrilla warfare in the mountains of Ajaccio. During the whole conference, M. Pozzo never lost sight of his one idea, "nor did I lose sight of mine," noted the poet. The history of Corsica was never written but the list of questions proposed by the poet and the answers of the Corsican are most amusing and show the delightfully humorous and often hidden side of the poet's nature.

August 9

"The Duke of Orleans is King of the French and the French are Republicans. I am one too, more than anyone else, now that the weakness of Charles X and the Dauphin, who didn't know how to fight, have freed me from my superstitious attachment for them.

M -----has just come back from Normandy. He saw the King and his pitiful suite. The Dauphine and all her family have neither money nor personal linen. The Duchess of Berry was dressed as a man, in a little 'redingote.' She asked the Duc de Caumont, La Force, to buy her some handkerchiefs."

"Do you wish batiste?" asked La Force.

"No, no, the cheapest thing you can find."

Pathetic little feminine needs seemed to impress the poet.

October 16

"Governmental force is destroyed. The revolution has done more than reverse a dynasty. The people will be able to do as they wish now. I took up arms during the night,

formed a battalion, and conducted thirty prisoners to the Prefecture of Police."

November 12

"Last Sunday, I dined with the King, the Queen, and Madame, the King's sister. They spoke with great charm of Cinq-Mars and of my other work. The King has dignity of face as of 'façons.' His figure resembles that of Louis XIV, his 'façons', those of a peasant 'parvenu'."

On October 30, Vigny finished a drama in five acts, which he had started on August 2 of that year, the Maréchale d'Ancre. "I did it for Madame Dorval, for I believe her to be the first tragedienne of the day. She is twenty-nine, 'passionée et spirituelle'."

December 1

"I am occupying myself with the doctrine of Saint-Simon. His pupils are clever economists who make religions to seduce artists; those of Bazard -Enfantin are pantheists and give nothing to the future of the soul. They know Malthus better than Plato. This religion could be called the "Religion du Prolétaire;" a philosophical theocracy cannot be thus founded 'a priori'. It annuls the individual on earth and all in Eternity."

While Bonaparte was on Saint Helena, an English captain came and said to him (according to Vigny), I wish to wash my country of the crime of your death. Come! My ship is yours." Bonaparte bowed his head and replied, "There is no further role for me to play in this world. I shall stay."

Vigny's reflection was that one must sense his role in life and resist destiny only when she wishes him to play an ignoble and unworthy part.

"Sainte-Beuve told me that he was going to adopt the idea of abolition of heritage, of the Saint-Simonians, but that he detested their religion; he felt they destroyed the individual, and all spontaneity. Conversing with him on the side, he told me that he thought they would soon take over the earth, and that doubtless it would become a religion."

December 11

"Today I am finishing Les Coupables by Goethe. It is a pretty comedy. Goethe says the moral is that it is the innocent who throws the first stone.

Doubt has seized me. Wasn't Christ himself a skeptic when he said, 'Pardon them for they know not what they do?' Isn't that doubt itself?"

December 19

"Popular uprisings are beginning again, and a brainless courtisan, M. de<sup>m</sup>armier, an old dullard, is all they need to lose everything and compromise the National Guard. I am staying in Paris for the sake of honor and to appear not to be fleeing from danger. My Lydia can't make up her mind to leave Paris alone."

December 23

"Lydia has gone to Bellefontaine. I spent the night under arms with the battalion. Picturesque bivouac!

The National Guards forgot the **cause** and started to dance. I could write a book entitled History of the Neutral and Skeptical Majority. This majority would not become impassioned for any one man, or for any form of government, but only for 'les idées justes'. Good sense would be its soul. It is that element which would have abandoned Bonaparte and the army at Waterloo. Scorn will choke me some day!"

January 5

"I have read Tartuffe for the tenth time. The moralist dominates in Molière. Observations, portraits, maxims are the background of his tirades which are too long sometimes, and out of place for purposes of truth; but finally one perceives that these passages form a web of ideas, a compact ensemble, and leave in one's mind 'la moralité', l'idée-mère', which he wished to inject."

January 12

"In reading Marlowe, the English contemporary of Shakespeare, I find a play entitled Doctor Faustus, played in 1590. Goethe translated it and imitated it almost entirely in his Faust, which is looked upon as an original.

I have read Egmont of Goethe. Bad development and made for the opera. Ferdinand is too German in his friendship. Claire finishes badly. She has only one charming scene in the third act.

In 1823, Lammenais had the idea which he put to work in l'Avenir. Afterwards, he contradicted himself and lost



his place in society. One cannot make others believe in an idea, when he hasn't faith in it himself, at least in appearance and perseverance.

Destiny refused me war, which I loved. I wrote Servitude et Grandeur Militaires, desiring to hasten the destruction of that love of military glory which I couldn't conquer and which only time will destroy."

Although these excerpts contain much that is obscure in meaning, and which make little sense for one who is unacquainted with French history, they indicate that the Revue de Deux Mondes was willing to publish almost anything in connection with Alfred de Vigny.

In 1925, the Regional Association of the "Basses Pyrénées" commemorated a centenary in honor of the sojourn of Alfred de Vigny in Bearn. (21) Many tales of old men telling how the "nature pyrénéenne" had conquered the poet, had been preserved. The young officer of the guard could be met any day walking around the city. One is not sure that Pau, in spite of the splendor of its panorama and its historical richness, held great powers of incantation, but it is true that the poet spent three seasons there, and that the Revue des Deux Mondes took this occasion to publish an account of his stay.

On June 11, 1824, toward the end of the day, the 55th Infantry made its entrance into Pau. The city offered little to stimulate the patriotism of the regiment. That which greeted the eye had scarcely changed since medieval

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(21) Revue des Deux Mondes, September 15, 1925.

times. A statue of Louis XIV adorned the public square and under it, the "particularisme béarnais" had placed this inscription, "Here is the grandson of our Henry." The reception of Pau was anything but triumphant. The officers tried to impose respect by affecting a disdainfully martial manner. Only one adapted a different attitude. Leading his company on horseback, a young captain, with long blond hair and a detached dreamy air, made no effort to conceal his boredom. His manner was as little military as possible. Gaspard de Pons said of him, "There is one who has not the look of three things that he is, an officer, a poet, and un homme d'esprit." Everything about him reflected his detachment from army life. Instead of a manual on military tactics, he carried in his knapsack a well-thumbed Bible. He had just rejoined his regiment, after a four-month leave, which he had used to publish "Éloa." For nine years Vigny had supported garrison life, the "servitude militaire." He aspired to know the grandeur and was granted his request to join the fifty-fifth regiment, for combat duty in Spain. The regiment had crossed France from Strasbourg to Bordeaux but it stopped at Orthez, never crossing the frontier. Captain de Vigny had no need to go farther in order "to build castles in Spain". In this panorama of mountains and rivers, he lived a history, picturesque, impressive and historical.

Oloron, where Vigny received orders to appear with his troupes, occupies three hills separated by the gorges of the Aspe and the Ossau. This discreet city, with its Medieval

and Renaissance structures pleased him immediately.

It was there that he worked tenaciously, during seven months of 1823 and 1824, planning and writing most of his novel "Cinq-Mars." He had with great difficulty arranged to have three hundred books and some manuscripts sent to Oloron. He annotated them with feverish concentration during the leisure hours which his command allowed. At Oloron his poem "Dolorida" is dated. It bears the Spanish proverb which is its theme, "Yo amo más a tu amor que a tu vida," and is impregnated with southern lyricism. When "Dolorida" appeared in La Muse Française, in October 1823, Sophie Gay, Mother of Delphine, wrote of it, "It is divine." Alfred has already told and retold it to us." If this be true, it was written long before 1823. It may be that Madame Gay took this occasion to exaggerate her close friendship with the poet, who wrote in his journal that he had never proposed to daughter Delphine because she laughed too loudly.

The poet wrote several beautiful things at Oloron, his "Prière pour ma mère," which only appeared in his Journal and which is dated September 1823, and his "Déluge," inspired by the grandiose spectacle of the surrounding mountains. To write one of the most beautiful chapters of Cinq-Mars, he had only to note what was under his eyes.

On June 27 and again on July 27, there was a great stir in the barracks on account of the passage of the Duchess of Angoulême, first coming from Bayonne and then returning

from Couterets. Whether the princess arrived by one road or another was of little interest to Vigny; there was always the same ceremonial. The city of Pau received the princess with correctness but the mental attitude was unfriendly. Officers of the Royal Guard had been hissed soon after their arrival in Pau. On August 1, a real battle arose, when at Jurançon, the Béarnais attempted to hinder the soldiers of the Fifty-fifth from taking part in the "contre-dances." The military were forced to beat a retreat. However, their conciliatory attitude did not calm the assailants. Fights broke out on the bridge of the Gave and extended to the gate of Pau. Stones rained down upon the Fifty-fifth, and according to the letters of Captain de Vigny, the weak authorities didn't dare take vigorous action against the townspeople. The movement had so intensified by the next day that officers dared not leave their quarters. The indignation of Captain de Vigny ran high. He remembered his father's words when he was entering the guards of the "Maison Rouge," "You are a Count, cousin of the Vignys killed in the Army of the Princes, and nephew of the Lieutenant of Suffern, shot at Quiberon."

Vigny took an active part in formal protests to the civil authorities. He was responsible for causing the arrest of civil leaders of the disturbances, and for their arraignment before the Cours d'assizes. However, the jury found it expedient to close their eyes to the evidence rather than to fan the fires of civil revolt. The "Mémor-



ial béarnais" followed the proceedings with a story.

"These events in no way reflect the politics of the Béarnais, who have always been noted for their love and devotion to the adored family of our kings."

Whether it was the deception and mortifying after-taste of this "fracas" or not, Vigny fell seriously ill at this time. He believed himself lost to this world, and burned numerous manuscripts, a tragedy of Roland, one of Julien the Apostate and another of Anthony and Cleopatra, "Toutes essayées et griffonnées depuis dix-huit à vingt ans." The auto-da-fé being accomplished, Vigny recovered and in his journal we read that he was astonished not to be dead and to have passed through "a long illness which had all the symptoms of cholera."

The marvelous climate of Pau shortened his convalescence. He wrote, "The beautiful mountains, the pure air, and the soft colors of the sun console me a little for the inhabitants, whom I could never like no matter under what circumstances." He visited the Parc de la Haute Plante, where the King of Navarre, companion in captivity of Frances I, at Pavie, had brought, to hold her court there, the sister of the king-chevalier, Marguérite d'Angoulême, "The Marguérite of Marguérites, the tenth muse, feminine of body, with the heart of a man and the head of an angel."

At this time Vigny's constant companion was a young sergeant, Jean Panthier, who wrote verses. This modest companion of arms and of letters was to become a "savant sinologue,"

and to be named testamentary executor of the poet of the "Destinées."

The fact that the society of Pau was closed to Vigny, was no doubt his reason for turning toward the English colony, where he made the acquaintance of the extravagant Sir Hughes-Mill Bunbury. This English family had all that was necessary of the fantastic and the unexpected, for the seduction of Alfred de Vigny. The father was credited with several millions, and counted among his domains an island of Polynesia peopled with cannibals. Rather than try out the benefits of civilization upon his subjects, he preferred to perambulate through all Europe in a vehicle, bizarre at the time, -- a trailer. Detesting stage coaches and "berlines" beyond all expression, he had constructed a wagon with salon, dining room, kitchen and bedrooms. Thus he became master of all his "déplacements." He could depart at will in the direction which his fancy dictated, and if the site didn't please him he moved on, having satisfied his curiosity. We might find in this vagabonding less poetry and more "sybaritisme," but unmistakably the free vagabondage of "La Maison du Berger."

It is not certain that Sir Hughes-Mill Bunbury arrived in Pau in this independent and romanesque fashion. However, Vigny was attracted less by the originality of the old globe-trotter than by the charm of his two daughters, Lydia and Alicia. The elder a grave Creole, cold and majestic, corresponded well to the picture which Vigny must have

had of his muse. Niece of the Governor of Jamaica, she had, according to Banville "everything of the daughter of a king." Coming from a distant country, she was adorned with that vague prestige, which has so much influence on the marriage of poets. Besides, that which made the young captain an object of jest to his comrades, only added brilliance to the halo of glory and of beauty which the young miss of twenty-five built around him. It was she who became more determined than he to break the resistance of Sir Bunbury.

At the end of 1824 Vigny's regiment was recalled to Orthez. Here he obtained the leave which permitted him to return to Pau and to marry. On February 3, his commanding officer, Colonel de Fontanges, affixed his signature to the civil contract. On February 8, the president of the Consistory of the Basses Pyrenées came from Orthez to Pau to perform the Protestant rite. There is no evidence that Vigny ever sought a Catholic benediction of their union.

Although Alfred de Vigny was not endeared to Pau as a civic body, M. Praviel feels that the powerful vision, the profoundness of thought and the sober vigor of expression which made the poet indifferent to passing modes owes something to the eternal youth and inspiration of the mountains at Pau. It is true that Cinq-Mars was, for the most part, achieved there. It was there that Vigny wrote "Le Cor" although the epic subject of the poem was unfolded in the valley of Roncevaux far away. The following verses from "Le Cor"

describe faithfully the majestic panorama of Pau:

"Monts gelés et fleuris, trône des deux saisons.  
Dont le front est de glace et le pied de gazon!" (22)

Thirty letters edited by M. Daniel d'Agoult (23) are part of a record of a friendship faithfully sustained between Alfred de Vigny and the Countess d'Agoult for more than thirty years. I have translated many excerpts, for it seems that in no other way could one describe the little known qualities of the author. In addition, the quality of literary material which is accepted by the Revue des Deux Mondes becomes clearer. Though the inclusion of one article cannot be used to evaluate the standards of a periodical, still the fact that it includes material of a familiar and not too literary style is revealing. The Revue seeks a large reading public among the literary middle class, and at the same time tries to sustain an appeal to the "savants" by choosing to discuss persons of literary fame.

The letters of Alfred de Vigny to the Countess d'Agoult were written between the years 1839 and 1854. An unpublished letter of 1835 was said to have been written in a rather ceremonious tone. Except for the peak year of their friendship, following the rupture of the Countess and the musician Lizst, the letters are evenly distributed over the years. This fact seems to accentuate two qualities of the poet, unswerving loyalty, and a sympathetic under-

(22) Alfred de Vigny "Oeuvres Complètes, Poesies" 127.

(23) Revue des Deux Mondes, November 1, 1934.



standing of the problems of others. Sometimes the letters present a jumble of nonsense. They are spontaneous and incoherent. Changes of thought appear in a most unexpected manner.

In 1823 Vigny made the acquaintance of the Countess d'Agoult, who as Mlle. Flavigny had just finished her training with the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. Mlle. Flavigny notes that the young officer was handsome, distinguished, "exquis." They danced divinely. Vigny might have declared his love, but as a poor young officer, he could not aspire to the hand of the rich heiress. Only delicate scruples withheld the expression of his desire. Evidently, Mlle. de Flavigny was unaware of the great sentiment so modestly dissimulated. However, she responded with an open sympathy, which common background of education, taste and temperament transformed into a pure and lasting friendship, between the poet "toujours admiratif, mais apaisé and the young maiden, touchée et reconnaissante."

After Mlle. de Flavigny had become the Countess d'Agoult in 1827, her salon was always open to Alfred de Vigny, whose fine manners and growing literary fame were becoming known in the world of the Faubourg-Saint Germain.

Breaking with the rigorism which reigned in the Faubourg-Saint Germain, the Countess attracted to her salon, besides the aristocratic society, writers and artists who were the discussion of the day. The Countess was known as the "Corinne of the rue Malaquais." One day she asked Vigny to read an unpublished poem. He chose "The Frigate." The

poem was little appreciated by the pretty society ladies of the audience. A confusing silence followed the reading. Upon taking leave of the Countess, Vigny remarked that his frigate seemed to have caused a shipwreck for the Austrian ambassador had just asked him if he were a shipbuilder.

Though Liszt was not unknown to the poet, the departure of the Countess with the musician left no occasion for continued relations with the poet. Upon her return to Paris in 1839, following a temporary separation from Liszt, the Countess sought her old friend. Vigny was one of the few faithful ones who returned to stimulate her courage and energy, in the face of sadness and difficulty. Correspondence of the Countess and Liszt furnished proof of the high quality of friendship offered by the poet. The final separation of Mme d'Agoult and Liszt found the friendship of the poet and the Countess unaltered. After the Coup d'Etat (1851) the poet ceased to appear at the salon of the Countess, although his letters of 1854 bear the same friendly note.

These letters reveal the delicacy of spirit of the man and the grace of the poet in its exquisite variations. The intellectual life of the Countess fuses with that of the poet; their exchange of ideas on literature, art and poetry was constant. In 1842, Vigny found a design of his likeness, in the study of the Countess. He inscribed an autograph "Only silence is great." Confident of his literary progress and accepting himself as an enlightened critic, he applied himself to a study of the first works of Daniel Stern, pen-name of the Countess. During his so-

journs in Paris, in the decade following 1840, Alfred de Vigny was a frequent guest at the salon of Mme d'Agoult. He forced himself to be amiable to her guests in order that the Countess might be pleased. His friendship "un peu jalouse" had need of the appearances of solitude, for he wrote that he was never really satisfied except in the sweet "tête à tête" too rarely accorded. "If I had married you, I would never have written a verse," he wrote to his friend. But it was all friendship according to the lady "He never troubled me. Alone with him, I never sensed that we were alone. He hadn't the spontaneity or the flame that is communicable. His poetry doesn't awaken in me the emotions of that of Victor Hugo or Lamartine." How rudely these words would have torn the poet's ears, had he known them!

The first published letter of December 30, 1839 manifests a friendship freely expressed. In Vigny thanked Madame d'Agoult for her invitation to a New Year's Eve party, adding that whether his life were regulated by an absolute government or by two powers, in some respects the limitations were the same, for he had never had at his disposition the last hours of the closing or the first hours of the new year.

From 1842 on, the letters revealed a growing intimacy on the part of Alfred de Vigny. In announcing a visit, the poet's letters took a familiar tone. He begged to see the Countess alone. "I can talk from the bottom of my heart only 'seul à seul', and then with some effort, so much do I fear to wound a delicacy as perfect as yours."

On February 24, 1842, Alfred wrote, "If you take it into your head to have the least regret for not thanking me for a visiting card of five volumes,--your modesty is detestable. You can't seem to believe that it is you alone I wish to see. However, it is like that, and you must come to a decision. Too bad if I offend you, and if your character is so badly constructed. Will you open the curtains of your "boite de velours" on Monday between two and three? I'll not finish my note by a banality after such courteous chivalry." This letter reveals an Alfred quite different from the one we find in the literary histories or critiques. It appears that the poet often wearied of his pure ways and fine formality. This unevenness in his personal life seems to find its way into his work. When the poet has soared beyond our human comfort, he takes a sudden drop back to earth, awkwardly at times, but quite refreshingly. It is reassuring, and intensifies that pity and love for humankind which is the keynote of his work.

The letters of 1843, sought the opinion of the Countess concerning "Philosophical Poems" which Vigny had started to publish in the Revue. However, the letters never dwell long upon the literary. His comment on his work is short and to the point. His interests in correspondence are personal; he never loses sight of what is going on in the world. "I fear the moments when I feel myself carried away by ideas. Sometimes I leave your home with great remorse that I may have hurt someone." "Dinners are the 'mise en scene' of friendship. We will skip them."



During these years, Balzac was called the most fecund writer of the times. This seemed to disturb Alfred de Vigny, who wrote Mme d'Agoult that he was incontestably "de nos poètes," adding that he was accustomed to these literary attacks, and that far from being poisonous, they acted rather as a bromide. During these years the poet went to see Mme d'Agoult on Fridays; "my Friday rock" he called her. When she suffered, he said, as he did to Desdemona in Othello, "It is necessary to become<sup>so</sup>." Another reference to Desdemona from Othello, Act III, Scene 3 concerned a future rendezvous. He thanked Madame for the five minutes she has granted him alone, adding, "I pray you name the time, but let it not exceed three days. We shall talk about two poems which will appear in the Revue on March 1, and April 1. You say such delicious things about the 'Maison du Berger'. I'm pleased to have made you shiver. Never do I consider Nature without a secret horror, so disdainful she is. She looks upon us as dust, and we never cease to load her with compliments. She is a glorious insolent who survives everyone. I made a study of the peasants of Touraine for the "Maison du Berger." Barbarism still holds our feet within its snare. People are not interested in government."

Vigny's reaction to clerical criticism of the "Maison du Berger" was simply, "Sorry to have wounded the Pope. And who reads a poem, Mon Dieu? And when one has read it, who takes it seriously? Do you? It is our good country of France for whom I write. I make an effort in that

direction but perhaps in vain." In closing, the poet sweeps back to earth and to all that is vulnerable in the feminine heart. "When you don't sleep tell me one of the tales you tell so well,--your friendship for me, or is that a fairy tale? No, No, No, I'm sure not. Number "three" being unlucky, let us take no chances, choose two and be alone. How do you like this Russian weather?"

Madame d'Agoult has accused Vigny of being at an address in Suresnes, and he replies that even his delirious imagination could not have invented such an address.

"Where is it, between Siberia and China? I haven't budged from Paris, nor would I put foot away from this noble dust. You thought I was hidden with the beautiful unknown who resembles Mme Sand. When I go to the country, even to your house, I shall be so cross, so detestable, faced by Nature, that I shall have the oaks cut down, and pull up the poplars when I leave, in order to get to the streets of Paris and to breathe the odor of the gutters and the asphalt. Little by little you are becoming soft, to the point of cherishing the trees and the grass. They are our mortal enemies, for they rejoice when they grow green over our skeletons. You are out of your mind to live so far away. It is as far as Saint Petersburg. Going to see you would constitute a career for most men."

The last letters addressed to Madame d'Agoult are saddened by the illness of Madame Vigny. The poet continues to use Nature to express his melancholy. "When one is accustomed to silence and reverie and when one tries to find rest after seven nights of sick-duty, even then, Nature

delights in tantalizing."

Alfred de Vigny, so reserved, so icy to his contemporaries, showed himself in his letters to Mme d'Agoult "enjoué, badin" and even "gamin," regaling her with pleasant illusions understood only to the two correspondents. His familiar style is quite different from his published work. There are many short sentences. The constant change from the serious to trivial banter, and the ensuing flight to "higher branches" is spellbinding; it is also confusing. The poet speaks of a rendezvous in a pavillion but we hear no more of it than of the "siège de Banquo" and "la porte de quatre heures." In looking back wistfully to their youth, Vigny alludes to the many "rires de bon coeur."

"Will I be free today? I pray Saint Socrates to permit it. With my habits of the owl which watches without ceasing, I cannot tell. However, owlish my habits, they do not exclude those of the salamander. It cannot leave the fire without drowning itself forever. Do you understand, my Bird of Paradise? If posterity were to find these letters, I would be curious to know how it would interpret them. If I thought that anyone might read them, I should feel my hand freeze. Am I locked in your thoughts?"

The letters are filled with illusions to the personal and family life of the former Countess. Vigny inquires about the health and progress of her little blonde daughter. He regrets that he cannot be present at her wedding. He tries to get François Buloz, the absolute monarch of his Revue

interested in manuscripts of the Countess. Vigny tells her that he has talked about the interests of the "dolls of little girls" and that he is sure that one hundred and fifty francs "par feuille" will be enough for a dress. In an article on the poet Platen, he tells her to leave out the German jokes. They are too heavy for the French trade. General Buloz, Dom Buloz with his opinions 'buloziennes' will not like them. "You know Buloz-Pasha holds strictly to the holy unity of the Revue. No jokes about the Germans. Take your scissors to them."

Commenting on one of the lady's last letters concerning the "Mont des Oliviers," Vigny tells her that he has a friend who wishes to recommend him to the Dominicans to be burned. He too had often given himself the pleasure of burning useless things. He had hesitated over the "Maison du Berger" but had decided to send it to Buloz rather than to throw it into the fire."

The Countess d'Agoult dropped her masculine pen-name Daniel Stern during the later years of her life. Alfred de Vigny wrote to congratulate her. He was happy to know that she had come out of the lion's den so successfully.

Though the contents of these letters may seem inconsequential, it is clear that the Revue des Deux Mondes is always willing to publish the works and correspondence of Alfred de Vigny as they are discovered among the families of his former associates and friends. When the letters



were published, the poet had been dead for seventy years. The Revue must have considered them of literary interest when it devoted twenty-eight pages of one periodical to their publication.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis, although limited to the direct and the indirect relationship between Alfred de Vigny and the Revue des Deux Mondes, has told the story of a poet philosopher who in his life and in his work was a nobleman. His character reveals a high degree of vitality altogether free from romantic effusion and egocentric sentimentalism. On the contrary, his philosophy of life was that of a stoic. He aims at an objective, and at time impersonal interpretation of the basic problems of our existence, foreshadowing the coming of men like Léconte de Lisle, the author of the Poèmes antiques.

The idea of martyrdom and the worship of genius seemed engendered in the nature of Alfred de Vigny. Born at a time when "noblesse oblige," instinctive and well-nurtured nobility became an obstacle rather than a benefit. Vigny's work has been interpreted as a maladjustment to the society in which he lived. (1) He has been classed with the generation of men disheartened by the disasters which the French Revolution had involved and who suffered from the "mal du siècle." It has been thought impossible to understand the writings of Alfred de Vigny or to understand the peculiar feelings that enter into them, without considering that the "Three Days" (2) were the destruction of all which the nobility loved and revered. The inward workings in the

(1) C. C. Wright, History of French Literature, 672-674.

(2) John Stuart Mill, Dissertations and Discussions, 1, Essay on Alfred de Vigny.

minds of many of the noble and educated youths of France whose family connections or early impressions ranked them with the defeated Carlist party cannot be too strongly emphasized. (3) The contradictions which they had to reconcile, the doubts which they had to find a means of overcoming, could not help but find expression in their work.

In Alfred de Vigny, this nobility of blood finds expression in a nobility of spirit. No fact betrays itself more forcibly when one has read his correspondence, and studied his relationships with his family, friends and literary associates.

Of all the Romantics, Vigny is the greatest perhaps the only thinker. He felt that he had a mission in life. Since society rejected, his efforts in social causes, he espoused the cause of the poet in a hostile society. In Vigny's "Dernière Nuit de Travail," the preface to his well-known play "Chatterton," he defines the poet's mission. Vigny divides writers into three classes. The first, men of letters, know how to arrange words to express feelings. They are adept in fashioning sentences of a pretty but commonplace style. The second class, the celebrated writers, have in mind the people for whom they are writing. They are masters of order and clearness, and they enflame with an ardent passion the social causes which stimulate their writing. They keep a weather eye on conditions and trends. Within the souls of the third class, who are the poets,

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(3) Ibid., Essay on Alfred de Vigny

burns a divinely inspired genius. Its flames move slowly, like the smothered forces within a volcano. Vigny feels that it is the duty of society to protect and cherish the inspired one, for it is in the poet's inspired word that humanity will find the lessons which are needed.

Alfred de Vigny is regarded as the truest philosopher among those poets of the Romantic School who aspired to be philosophical. (4) His philosophy is pessimistic, although he has been regarded, too, as a great optimist. (5) Pessimism has been popularly regarded as an attitude of one who looks on the dark side of life or of any problem. Technically, it is a system of philosophy, an explanation of the universe according to which this is considered the worst of possible worlds. Vigny's pessimism appears to be a reasoned system in which both good and evil have been duly considered, and in which evil is found to be more abundant than good. Vigny's pessimism does not appear to be the "mal du siècle" of Werther and René. It is not a melancholy and pathological emotionalism. Vigny's conclusions are that this is a bad world. The other Romantics had no quarrel with the construction of the world in general. Their contention was that it was filled with melancholy for chosen souls like themselves. Musset is inspired by the disillusionment of his own life. His poetry, though inspired, is the reaction to great exaltation of spirit at some times, and adventurous and passionate disappointment at others. There is little

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(4) Benedetto Croce: Alfred de Vigny

(5) Brunetière: Revue des Deux Mondes, December 1, 1891, 751



Byronism in Vigny. (6) He felt none of the boredom of living of the English poet, dragged "from climate to climate," and extending the "moi" beyond normal proportions. Vigny found no consolation in Nature as Byron did.

Both Schopenhauer and Leopardi have been compared to Vigny in his philosophy. Vigny resembles them in little except that their philosophy, like his, had some positive content. Schopenhauer had a grandmother and an uncle who were insane. Leopardi was cursed with ill health. Vigny was of a sane and healthy strain as far as is known. With Schopenhauer, only pain is positive in character: the higher the intelligence, the more sensitive the pain becomes. The root of all evil lies in the personality. Only the will to enjoy beauty in the arts will bring comfort. Leopardi finds that happiness of this world is a great deception. Christianity is equally delusive. Leopardi is more negative than Schopenhauer for he scorns resignation.

Vigny, like his Doctor Noir in Stello had formed the habit of taming his sensibilities. It was in his serenest moments that he formulated his philosophy. When he was in his twenties, he wrote his best known poems. No sorrow or disappointment had come into his life at this time. "If Vigny is a pessimist, it was because he was born a pessimist." (7)

The philosophy of Alfred de Vigny is neither bravado or defiance hurled against Heaven, but a noble sentiment of duty. (8) The good soldier obeys a command coming from above

(6) Estève: Byron and the French Romanticists, Chap. II

(7) Benedetto Croce: Alfred de Vigny, 138

(8) Alfred de Vigny: Servitude et grandeur militaires

in a spirit of resignation and abnegation. A like command weighs upon us. In honor we must submit silently "Fais énergiquement ta longue et lourde tâche," and afterwards like the wolf, suffer and die without murmuring. The honor of a soldier is a type of moral nobility. It teaches us to act for an ideal far beyond us, for a good which is not ours, but that of all humanity. The essence of love is pity and the effect of love must be sacrifice. Nature has no need of love, it is insensible; but that which weeps has need of love. "I love the majesty of human suffering," says the poet. All the effort of love and kindness, he feels, will not be spent in vain. The years during which he cared for an invalid mother and an ailing wife are sincere proof of a sacrificing love. In a letter to Philippe Busoni, Vigny proposed that relief be established for needy authors and the comfort of the deaf and dumb. The nobility of Alfred de Vigny can be found in a long record of devotion to his family and his friends. The correspondence included in this thesis alone is largely a part of this record.

Vigny is easily moved. That which scarcely touches others wounds him to the quick. From this personal emotion he draws a general idea. This general idea is translated into a symbol. A triple richness is thereby found in most of his poetry. His sensibilities are awakened by the slightest vibration. He would like to hide them, but he seems not to be the master. The idea asserts itself vigor-

ously and the symbol covers it with a "robe of purple and gold." With him, creation is the fruit of labor. He confides that sometimes reading, sometimes thinking the idea comes to him. It grows like a seed in earth, worked relentlessly by the imagination. Without loss of time, he sketches a development. With the aid of colors and forms, he transforms the sketch. "Labor without brilliance," he says modestly, "only the poor merit of assiduous attention, patience and memory." Then he must choose, and form groups around the inspired center. This is where the great "Bon sens," which is genius itself, enters. (9)

Vigny's religion is not a sentimental debate or an endless search for God. For Vigny, God is ruthless and insensible to the misery of man but as he tells us in his Journal, "Death is only death, it is not a vengeance." Sometimes it seems that the essential questions, the thoughts of the poet are not very clear or even very original. He has contradicted himself in regard to nature, love politics, and even social action and religion. It has been shown that Vigny often borrowed from Pascal. His portrayal of the immensity of the universe overpowering the weakness of man are comparable but his reasoning seems to have a subtle wavering quality and an unevenness which, aside from their different views of the Creator, makes it difficult for me to classify Vigny as a thinker of the stature of Pascal. It appears that Sainte-Beuve may have been correct in maintaining that the ideas of Alfred de Vigny so far ex-

(9) Expressions enclosed in quotation marks are literal translations from the Journal d'un Poète.

tended beyond the limits of reason that he can hardly qualify in the realm of pure thought. His ideas became an obsession.

Concerning his style, the language of Vigny is not always pure. His vocabulary is limited. His sentences often hinge upon awkward and heavy inversions and, in addition, become encumbered with elegance and disturbing obscurity. On the other hand, he has created admirable symbols, some of the most striking in poetry. Like no other poet, Vigny possesses the secret of mysterious and caressing verse which once heard is unforgettable, so charged is it with delicate emotion, so easily does it create impressions. His rank as the first and the greatest of the nineteenth century Symbolists is uncontested. In addition, the Parnassians have claimed Alfred de Vigny. An idealist, he was at the same time a great realist. An acute sense of reality enabled him to place a character or fix an attitude with dramatic affect which appeared quite unstudied. He seemed often to have translated ideas or sentiments which were entirely Romantic into a form which was Classic. Sobriety of description and severity of composition, according to the method of the great classicists gave the impression of large horizons condensed into a short poem. This is a procedure of Fontaine.

In his well-known and often quoted book on Alfred de Vigny, M. Ed. Dupuy has given us, in a few words, an excellent interpretation of our writer's relationship to the



Revue des Deux Mondes. He wrote, "It is with the Revue des Deux Mondes that Alfred de Vigny has regularly and one must say gloriously collaborated. He truly aided Buloz to found it, and from the first days he gave it its brilliance and distinction. From 1831 until 1854, Vigny contributed novels, prose, articles, and poetry."

Vigny's story as it appears in the Revue des Deux Mondes brings out essentially the main features which appear and reappear in the critical editions of M. Paléologue, L. Séché, Robert de Traz, Baldensperger, Estève, and M. Citoleux. All draw in action and reaction from Sainte-Beuve, Brunetière, and the editorial comment of the Revue.

One of the finest pieces of critical appreciation of the poetry of Alfred de Vigny comes from B. Croce.<sup>(10)</sup> He comments on "La Colère de Samson," "La Maison du Berger," "La Mort du Loup," "Le Mont des Oliviers" are not only pertinent but profound. In treating the three problems: 1. Aristocracy, 2. Pessimism, 3. Art of Expression, it is clear that the author has read the criticisms of the work of Vigny in the Revue des Deux Mondes. After reading the Journal d'un Poète and the correspondence of Vigny which the Revue published after the writer's death, the poetry of Vigny becomes more understandable, and the poet himself becomes more human.

The work of Vigny was not surrounded with great glory in his lifetime, as was the work of Lamartine and Victor Hugo. Vigny's solitude and disdain set him apart from the

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(10) B. Croce: European Literature in the Nineteenth Century, 131-144.

other Romanticists after the year 1830. His philosophy was in conflict with the accepted philosophy of his day, and with the philosophy of all times. However, his influence upon subsequent poetry is incontestable. Whether or not the editors of the Revue des Deux Mondes anticipated the influence which Vigny was to exert on the poetry of the future is debatable. The publication of the poet's work and the essays which appear concerning the poet's life and work reflect, for the most part, only admiration and esteem. Even Sainte-Beuve came to recognize the genius of Vigny. In 1863, the critic was credited with saying "In thirty years there will remain more of Vigny than Musset." (11)

There appear to be many contradictions between the life and the work of Alfred de Vigny. Emile Faguet believes that Vigny amuses himself with the play of ideas without believing in them. (12) This may seem ridiculous but, according to Faguet, there is less danger in playing with ideas than with actions. An idealist without faith, it was as impossible for Vigny not to love glory, happiness, and religion as it was for him to believe in them. (13) Faguet concludes that Vigny is the greatest artist of a century which could give birth to a mind so constituted.

More than any other nineteenth century poet Vigny

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(11) F. Baldensperger: 199 (This statement was published in the Temps of January 16, 1911.)

(12) E. Faguet Dix-neuvième Siècle, 131.

(13) Ibid. 128.

had the gift of "l'idée poétique" which speaks to the imagination but which is often the dupe of reason. The poet, unaware of the inferiority of his execution to the conception of his idea, would have been satisfied with his literary rank according to Brunetière. (14) It was a satisfaction to the critic-editor of the Revue des Deux Mondes that three generations continued to bear testimony to his greatness.

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(14) Revue des Deux Mondes. December 1, 1891

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