I was thus extinguishing my fire, but I did not ever pervert my heart.” It is enough for us to take his con­fession that he extinguished or impaired his fire.

Yet his poetry is characterized by merits which make it readable still and readable by foreigners. So far as it exhibits the endeavour of the romantic school in France to enlarge the vocabulary of poetry and to give greater freedom and variety to the alexandrine, it has interest chiefly for readers of his own nation. But it exhibits more than this. It exhibits already the genuine Sainte- Beuve, the author who, as M. Duvergier de Hauranne said in the *Globe* at the time, “ sent à sa manière et écrit comme il sent,” the man who, even in the forms of an artificial poetry, remains always “ un penseur et un homme d’esprit.” That his Joseph Delorme was not the Werther of romance, but a Werther in the shape of Jacobin and medical student, the only Werther whom Sainte-Beuve by his own practical experience really knew, was a novelty in French poetical literature, but was entirely characteristic of Sainte-Beuve. All his poetry has this stamp of direct dealing with common things, of plain unpretending reality and sincerity ; and this stamp at that time made it, as Béranger said, “a kind of poetry absolutely new in France.” It found, therefore, with all its shortcomings, friends in men so diverse as Béranger, Lamartine, Jouffroy, Beyle. Whoever is interested in Sainte-Beuve should turn to it, and will be glad that he has done so.

It has been the fashion to disparage the criticism of the *Critiques et Portraits Littéraires,* the criticism anterior to 1848, and to sacrifice it, in fact, to the criticism posterior to that date. Sainte-Beuve has himself indicated what considerations ought to be present with us in reading the *Critiques et Portraits,* with what reserves we should read them. They are to be considered, he says, “ rather as a de­pendency of the elegiac and romanesque part of my work than as express criticisms.” “ The *Revue des Deux Mondes,”* he adds, which published them, was young in those days, “mixed a good deal of its wishes and its hopes with its criticism, sought to explain and to stimulate rather than to judge. The portraits there of contemporary poets and romance-writers can in general be considered, whether as respects the painter or as respects the models, as youth­ful portraits only; *juvenis juvenem, pinxit."* They have the copiousness and enthusiasm of youth ; they have also its exuberance. He judged in later life Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, more coolly, judged them differ­ently. But the *Critiques et Portraits* contain a number of articles on personages, other than contemporary French poets and romance-writers, which have much of the sound­ness of his later work, and, in addition, an abundance and fervour of their own which are not without their attraction. Many of these are delightful reading. The articles on the Greek poets and on Leopardi have been already mentioned. Those on Boileau, Molière, Daunou, and Fauriel, on Madame de la Fayette and Mademoiselle Aïssé, may be taken as samples of a whole group which will be found to support perfectly the test of reading, even after we have accustomed ourselves to the later work of the master. Nay, his sober­ness and tact show themselves even in this earlier stage of his criticism, and even in treating the objects of his too fervid youthful enthusiasm. A special object of this was Victor Hugo, and in the first article on him in the *Portraits Contemporains* we have certainly plenty of en­thusiasm, plenty of exuberance. We have the epithets “adorable,” “sublime,” “supreme,” given to Victor Hugo’s poetry ; we are told of “ the majesty of its high and sombre philosophy.” All this is in the vein of Mr George Gilfillan. But the article next following this, and written only four years later, in 1835, is the article of a critic, and takes the points of objection, seizes the weak side of

Victor Hugo’s poetry, how much it has of what is “ creux,” “ sonore,” “ artificiel,” “ voulu,” “ théâtral,” “ violent,” as distinctly as the author of the *Causeries* could seize it. “The Frank, energetic and subtle, who has mastered to perfection the technical and rhetorical resources of the Latin literature of the decadence,” is a description never to be forgotten of Victor Hugo as a poet, and Sainte-Beuve launches it in this article, written when he was but thirty years old, and still a painter of “portraits de jeunesse” only.

He had thus been steadily working and growing ; never­theless, 1848 is an epoch which divides two critics in him of very unequal value. When, after that year of revolution and his stage of seclusion and labour at Liége, he came back to Paris in the autumn of 1849 and commenced in the *Constitutionnel* the *Causeries du Lundi,* he was astonish­ingly matured. Something of fervour, enthusiasm, poetry, he may have lost, but he had become a perfect critic—a critic of measure, not exuberant ; of the centre, not pro­vincial ; of keen industry and curiosity, with “ Truth ” (the word engraved in English on his seal) for his motto; more­over, with gay and amiable temper, his manner as good as his matter,—the “critique souriant,” as, in Charles Monselet’s dedication to him, he is called.

Merely to say that he was all this is less convincing than to show, if possible, by words of his own, in what fashion he was all this. The root of everything in his criticism is his single-hearted devotion to truth. What he called “fictions” in literature, in politics, in religion, were not allowed to influence him. Some one had talked of his being tenacious of a certain set of literary opinions. “ I hold very little,” he answers, “ to literary opinions ; literary opinions occupy very little place in my life and in my thoughts. What does occupy me seriously is life itself and the object of it.” “I am accustomed incessantly to call my judgments in question anew, and to re-cast my opinions the moment I suspect them to be without validity.” “ What I have wished ” (in *Port Royal)* “ is to say not a word more than I thought, to stop even a little short of what I believed in certain cases, in order that my words might acquire more weight as historical testimony.” To all exaggeration and untruth, from whatever side it proceeded, he had an antipathy. “I turn my back upon the Michelets and Quinets, but I cannot hold out my hand to the Veuillots.” When he was writing for the *Moniteur* he was asked by the manager of the paper to review a book by an important personage, a contributor ; his answer is a lesson for critics and paints him exactly. “ I should like to say yes, but I have an insurmountable difficulty as to this author ; he appears to me to compromise whatever he touches ; he is violent, and has not the tradition of the things he talks about. Thus his article on Condorcet, which the *Moniteur* inserted, is odious and false; one may be severe upon Condorcet, but not in that tone or in that note. The man has no *insight—*a defect which does not prevent him from having a pen with which at a given moment he can flourish marvellously. But, of himself, he is a gladiator and a desperado. I must tell you, my dear sir, that to have once named him with compliment in some article of mine or other is one of my self-reproaches as a man of letters. Let me say that he has not attacked me in any way ; it is a case of natural repulsion.”

But Sainte-Beuve could not have been the great critic he was had he not had, at the service of this his love of truth and measure, the conscientious industry of a Bene­dictine. “I never have a holiday. On Monday towards noon I lift up my head, and breathe for about an hour; after that the wicket shuts again and I am in my prison cell for seven days.” The *Causeries* were at this price. They came once a week, and to write one of them as he