

THE FIRST TOOTH.

There once was a wood, and a very thick wood, so thick that to walk was as much as you could. But a timberman got in, and the trees understood. I went to this wood, at the end of the snows; and as I was walking I saw a primrose; only one! Shall I show you the place where it grows?

There was once a house, and a very dark house, as dark, I believe, as the hole of a mouse. Or a tree in my wood, at the thick of the boughs.

I went to this house, and I searched it right; I opened the chambers, and found there a light; only one! Shall I show you this little lamp bright?

There once was a cave, and this very dark cave one day took a gift from an incoming wave; and I made up my mind to see what the sea gave.

I took a lit torch, I walked round the ness. When the water was lowest and in a recess, in my cave was a jewel, Will nobody guess? Oh, there was a baby, he sat on my knee. With a pearl in his mouth that was precious to me, His little dark mouth like my cave of the sea! I said to my heart, "And my jewel is bright! He blooms like a primrose! He shines like a light!" Put your hand in his mouth? Do you feel? He can bite!

ERNEST RENAN.

His Influence as a Writer—His Personal Appearance—His Early Education—The Immense Circulation and Popularity of his "Life of Jesus."

Even the most zealous and most implacable adversaries of Renan are forced to admit that he is one of the first scholars and one of the most distinguished writers of the present day in France. But the present day is the more dangerous day for him, which it is impossible to deny, it carries the number of his enemies; and from all parts of the country, from all circles of society—but, naturally, above all from the clerical—attacks rain like a hail-storm on the head of this dangerous martyr, whom they make their victim at any price. The irony of this system is again shown on this occasion; for instead of attacking their coveted end, they produce the directly opposite effect. The more moderate the attacks, the more famous becomes the name, the larger the circulation of his book; the irresistible charm which characterizes his writings, influence, the masses, and his popularity increases every day. The "Life of Jesus" is a work of the day; the book is in every man's hand; the edition of one franc made it accessible to every one; eighty thousand copies were sold to the working men's districts of Paris alone. The most celebrated orators of the age, the Abbé Dupuis, Victor Hugo, and others, have scarcely found a larger circulation among the lower classes of the people, and the same enthusiasm for the work was visible in all classes of society.

One example taken from my own experience, may serve for the rest. A young girl, a passionate dancer, one evening positively refused to accompany her parents to a ball. Why? Because she wanted to read through a romance which took up her whole interest. This romance, the "Life of Jesus" by Ernest Renan. This example speaks volumes, and characterizes his manner of writing and the irresistible charm which his pen exercises on the most incontinent souls far better than the most comprehensive analysis of his works would do.

There is another fact which also is not without its significance—all the books which have been printed during the last ten years in Paris, "The Life of Jesus" is the one of which the largest number of copies has been sold. This fact has been proved in an authentic manner.

"The Apostles" are written quite in the same spirit and manner as "The Life of Jesus," and are to be considered as its continuation. Their subject is the resurrection of Jesus, his different apostles, the conversion of Paul, the death of Stephen, the foundation of the Church of Jerusalem, etc. The divinity of Christ is again denied. But here we are not to speak of the religious ideas and tendencies of M. Renan, but of the literary importance of his work. The same elegant style, the same charming diction, the same abundance of fine figures—in a word, the same ensemble of brilliant qualities which secured for his "Life of Jesus" such unexampled success. Renan is, at the same time, a learned scholar and a poet; he combines the best knowledge with the highest qualities of a writer; besides, he is acquainted with his public—the easily excited Frenchman—and knows how to influence them. He captivates the reader, exhibits before him the most interesting objects under an attractive form, obliges him to consult the Bible, the holy fathers of the Church, etc., and this is certainly no small achievement in these times of steam, electricity, and positivism. The questions which are asked seem to have entirely absorbed the ideal interests of humanity, so that there is neither time nor place for any religious controversies and disputes on subtle points of creeds and dogmas. But Renan has conquered this difficulty; for he knows how to excite curiosity, how to entertain, to touch, and finally to convince the reader. There lies the charm, the indescribable attraction of his works.

Whether "The Apostles" will have the same success or not, is a question which we do not know. But the success of "The Life of Jesus" is certain, that the book two days after its publication was already sold to the extent of twenty thousand copies. Everybody reads and talks of it. Renan is, in fact, taken up by the many. His ideas penetrate among the masses, and gain every day a greater extension—a circumstance that justifies the appellation which has been given him. He is called "The French Shakespeare" (le Shakespeare français).

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Dupanloup, one of the most effective writers of the clerical party, and an implacable polemic, never wrote a single word against his former pupil. When Renan is spoken of in his presence, he shrinks back, and says, "Let us not speak of him; he is my *enfant terrible*" (spoiled child). M. Renan, on leaving the seminary, had to struggle with very hard times; without fortune, and left entirely to himself, he was obliged to accept the very modest position of a substitute teacher in a boarding-school; but, however, he employed his leisure time in continuing his former studies. He published several works which attracted general attention, and he was thus fortunate enough to be admitted to participate in several expeditions which were undertaken in the interest of science, at the expense of the Government. He travelled over a large portion of the East, visited the ruins of Sheveth, the Holy Sepulchre, and thus had the opportunity to study the very same localities which were to be the scene of his later works. Subsequently he again visited the East, and in the year 1864 he had occasion to visit the Emir Abdel Kader at Damascus, and to enjoy the hospitality of this celebrated man. With this visit there is connected an interesting episode. M. Renan, who, besides several other languages, speaks Arabic very fluently, was enabled to converse with Abdel Kader on all sorts of subjects. In one of these conversations the Emir said some very flattering words to him concerning his "Life of Jesus." "Have you read my book?" asked Renan, quite surprised. Abdel Kader ordered immediately the book to be brought, and handing it to the author he said, "I have not only read it thoroughly, but I have added remarks and notes to it." "The Life of Jesus" with notes in the handwriting of Abdel Kader! Certainly this must be a very interesting copy. Renan is truly a self-taught man who owes whatever he is, and whatever he possesses, to his own perseverance and to his uninterrupted studies; he commands our respect. His appearance offers nothing striking or uncommon; his intellect is not extraordinary, and his education is not brilliant; but he has added to his natural gifts, by his own industry, a vast store of knowledge, and his mind is so full of ideas, that he seems reserved, even shy, and his movements are measured. He is small, thick and short, with a long face, a prominent nose, and compressed lips; his regard is sharp, rather ironical, his eyes are fine and full of expression, but almost always lowered to the ground as though looking for some lost object. When you see before you this small, unpretending man, you would never suspect in him the powerful intellect, the unquenchable thirst for new ideas which have provoked such incessant polemics and such violent storms. He is an excellent companion, a spirited story-teller; when he speaks, his countenance becomes excited, and he knows how to spread an irresistible charm on whatever he says. He is very happily married with an intelligent and remarkable woman, the daughter of the celebrated French painter Ary Scheffer.

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