

A CHINESE PORTRAIT BY ARTHUR WALEY

THE rubbing here reproduced was made from an incised slab in a temple at K'ai-feng Fu (Honan) and was presented to the British Museum by Mr. Charles Freer, of Detroit, in 1910.

The inscription runs as follows:—

Illustrated eulogy of the Meditation¹ Master T'ung-wu, founder of the Ta-hui-an Temple at the Southern Capital²; made with bowed head by Ssu-tsu and by Tsu-chao of the town T'ai-yüan,³ disciples of the Merciful and Just, True and Great Law King.⁴

(The lines which follow are in five-syllable verse, the even lines having the rhyme -ai.)

Like a moonlit cliff was the master T'ung-wu,
First abbot of the temple Hui-an,
By proofs he supported our Hsü-ming sect; (?)
His "seal"⁵ was handed down to the Yang-shan School.
Once of old when he lodged on the banks of the Chang
The people that flocked to him were like the union of
wind and clouds.
His preaching was like bamboo-shoots burgeoning in
winter;
Or like pearls and gold set off against each other.⁶
That here a Sage should "establish" his treasures⁷
The Earth Spirits⁸ did not dare resent.
Moreover, any undertaking was bound to be prosperous
In accordance with the auspicious signs of this reign of
peace.⁹
Three times a new abbot was proclaimed;
The Mantle of the Law was twice bestowed.
During successive reigns Emperors have drunk;¹⁰
Their prayers against drought he answered with copious
rains.
He was able to dispel insidious doubts and delusions;
Throughout the country people vied with one another in
consulting him (?)
His strength upheld the Lin-chi style.¹¹
By his laughter and conversation he drove away evil
spirits.

¹ Japanese, *Zen*. I am aware that *Zen* means something more nearly akin to self-hypnosis than to meditation; but an exact English equivalent does not exist.

² K'ai-feng Fu.

³ Shansi.

⁴ Buddha.

⁵ The patriarchs of the Zen sect claimed that through them alone was transmitted "the imprint of Buddha's heart."

⁶ Phrase from the Book of Odes, Pt. 3, Bk. 1, Ode 4.

⁷ i.e., found a temple.

⁸ Who are wont to take offence at foundations being laid.

⁹ The Yüan dynasty, 1206-1341.

¹⁰ The wisdom of his teaching.

¹¹ The Meditation Master Hui-chao, died 866 A.D., lived at

He crossed the mountains and blessed all Buddhist
"Spheres";
The radiance of his illumination lightened the thousand
"worlds".

He lowered his bait and hooked whales and leviathans,
And came home riding in a fully laden carriage.
This faithful portrait that I have made of him
Will keep away fire¹² and prevent flames working their
havoc.

May the Royal House be blessed with prolonged
brilliance,
From root to branch¹³—continued ten thousand years!

(End of the poem.)

Chih-ta, 46th year of the cycle,¹⁴ a day of the Ch'ing-ming
Festival.¹⁵

(So far the inscription is evidently copied from one
which was appended to the original painting upon
which the slab was based.)

This stone was set up by Yin-t'eng: the writing was
done by Hsüeh-kung and the stone was incised by the
priest Yüan.

Above the right shoulder are the two characters
Chih-kung, evidently T'ung-wu's posthumous
name. It should be noted that *En-kung*, which
I have translated "merciful and just," is a title
of Buddha and not a man's posthumous name.
The inscription contains several ambiguities, but
this is not the place to enter into a discussion of
them.

The portrait upon which the slab was based was
apparently painted from life in 1309. We may
suppose that the slab was cut some years later,
probably after T'ung-wu's death. It would then
correspond in date with the Flemish monumental
brasses which it so strikingly resembles.

It seems probable that incised Buddhist portraits
such as this were made from the 6th century
onwards; and so fine is this comparatively late
slab, that one would be glad to meet with earlier
specimens. I shall be grateful to any reader of this
article who can throw further light on the difficult
and allusive passages of the inscription.

Lin-chi in Shantung. The important Zen sect which he founded
is known in Japan as the Rinzai Shü.

¹² From the place where it is hung.

¹³ i.e., from generation to generation.

¹⁴ Easter, 1309.

BAUDELAIRE BY EDMUND GOSSE, C.B.

AT the moment when all the west of
Europe is determined, by an organised
industrial and military effort, to assert
its liberty of action and to demonstrate
the energy of civilised life, it is strange,
it is almost a paradox, to be called upon to con-
template the career of a man of letters who was
the enemy of active emotion and the most
remarkable type which literature has given us of
passive and despondent sterility. Paris, however,
has not hesitated for a moment, even at this
strenuous time, to celebrate the jubilee of Charles

Baudelaire, who was born in 1821 and who, after
a lamentable life, died of general paralysis on the
31st of August, 1867. It is extremely difficult to
form a sound or moderate opinion on the subject
of the poet of "Les Fleurs du Mal", and we make
a great mistake, here in England, if we imagine
that France is unanimous in applauding him. It
is certainly a proof, if proof were required, of his
genius, of his force of personality, that after the
passage of half a century, judgments regarding
him should still be so diametrically opposed and
that his body should still be in the thickest of

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the æsthetic battle. It is perhaps well to impress this fact on the admirers of Baudelaire in this country, who have never formed a very numerous but always a rather fanatical body.

They have also been inclined to be an ungrateful one. They speak as though, from the first, the value of this poet's work had been denied by the leaders of academic opinion. This is quite inexact. Sainte-Beuve, in 1857, at the very outset of the controversy, described Baudelaire in terms of delicate appreciation, and called him "the Petrarch of the horrible", detestable in his mania for advertising his moral tortures, but exquisite in the execution of his work, adding, with a gesture of caress, "vous avez dû beaucoup souffrir, mon enfant". Victor Hugo's compliment, "You have created a new shudder", is a bye-word, and Hugo had a phrase for everybody. But Leconte de Lisle, who, in his marmoreal purity, wasted no praise, poured out his appreciation of "Les Fleurs du Mal," and so did the most exalted spirit of them all, the noble Alfred de Vigny. It is simply incorrect to say that the best academic judges failed to recognise the merit of Baudelaire. But it is perfectly true that in a later generation, as he himself oddly expressed it, "pedagogic sphinges accused him of dishonouring classic taste". The leader of opposition was that Ignatius Loyola of criticism, Ferdinand Brunetière, who created a sensation in 1887 and again in 1891 by denouncing with extreme heat and, it must be added, with remarkable courage, the influence which Baudelaire was exercising over the thought of young France. Brunetière spoke as though he were Bossuet eviscerating some "libertine" of 1687.

In our days, when the pleasure of praising is so universally indulged in, it is worth while to remind ourselves that the Devil has an advocate whom it is useful for us to hear. Brunetière deliberately preferred the "critique des défauts" to the "critique des beautés". His object, in dealing with a work of art which he considered was being blindly (or morbidly) praised, was to expose its defects. He did this in the case of Baudelaire with such vehemence (the animadversions of Faguet are much saner though hardly less cutting) that he roused an equally violent reaction in favour of the poet to whom he very foolishly denied those qualities of splendour and melody which every one with an ear could not help detecting in almost every page of Baudelaire. When the "sphinx" of official criticism said of the author of "Don Juan aux Enfers" and "Parfum Exotique" that "the poor devil had not merely no style, but no harmony, no movement, no imagination", he did unconsciously more to endear Baudelaire to fair-minded readers than pages of eulogy would have done. The solemn consecration of the memory of the poet in that belated "Tombeau de Charles Baudelaire" which Mallarmé saw through the

press in 1896 was the reply of enthusiasm to the "critique des défauts", and it left poor Brunetière silent in stupefaction.

It is useless to bandy compliments with the dead, and we may permit ourselves to face this eternal question of the value of Baudelaire's verse. If we listen more closely to the Devil's advocate, we shall observe that a particular object of his aversion is the rather long poem entitled "Un Voyage à Cythère". This appears to have been written about 1848. Among writers of Baudelaire's own generation, no one was then prominent, although Théodore de Banville had recently published "Les Stalactites". It was a barren period of French poetry, given up to romantic imitations of Lamartine and to the sentimentalities of Musset. The poem of Baudelaire insidiously begins on the most optimistic note. His heart, like a bird, sings and claps its happy pinions in the rigging of a ship which flies over the azure of a waveless sea, like some intoxicated angel of the Sun. But an object on the horizon catches the eye of this infatuated being:—

"Quelle est cette île triste et noire? C'est Cythère!"

The supposed bourne of all desires, the ineffable island of loves and roses and of hearts sighing in adoration of the Cytherean in her majesty, proves on approach and inspection to be a horrible rock, strewn with corpses, and adorned, not by a sacramental cypress, but by one great gibbet; while the last stanza sums up the impression thus:—

Dans ton île, o Vénus! je n'ai trouvé debout
Qu'un gibet symbolique où pendait mon image.
Ah! Seigneur! donnez-moi la force et le courage
De contempler mon cœur et mon corps sans dégoût!

The secret of Baudelaire may be divined, I think, in this poem, and the cause of the hatred and the admiration which his poetry has excited. The two critical camps are here irreconcilable, and will never be reconciled, because their difference of opinion is founded not on any qualities which can be analysed, but on taste, pure and simple. Baudelaire started with the definite idea of outraging, perhaps of revolutionising, taste. This design appeared even in his title "Les Fleurs du Mal," which was a red rag to ethics. (We have recently been told that the original title of the volume was to have been "Spleen et Idéal," and that "Les Fleurs du Mal" was suggested at the last moment by Hippolyte Babou; this may be so, but we can be sure that Baudelaire jumped at it.) Then, he put foremost in his category of poetical subjects, physical corruption and the decay of corpses. While other poets were declaiming the charm of flowers and stars and plump giggling girls, Baudelaire was obstinate in celebrating what Shakespeare calls "carrion men groaning for burial". He took all the smiling illusions of life and turned them inside out, and showed them to be not merely hollow, but putrid. He insisted that putridity was just as worthy of the assiduities of

metrical skill as fragrance or freshness. For his part, he made no bones of considering it more worthy, and he thrust "Le Vampire" and "Une Martyre" under the quivering nostrils of the public. Some people, and especially some professors, were disgusted, but those young persons who had sniffed the opopanax of Alfred de Musset to excess found in this new perfume an exciting change.

Imagination has a logic of its own which it is sometimes difficult to follow. It is quite certain that such early admirers as Sainte-Beuve and Leconte de Lisle did not form a correct impression of Baudelaire's attitude to experience. To them he was the artist dowered with a fatal sensibility who had plunged into every species of physical and moral indulgence, and had found suffering and terror at the root of all enjoyment. Alfred de Vigny thought that his young friend had stood by Hamlet's side in the graveyard, and had been poisoned by its emanations. Leconte de Lisle sympathised with the "fierce sobs of despair" which "the tortures of passion" had drawn from a soul whose native aspiration had been towards "ideal peace and joy". "How much you must have suffered, poor child!" we have heard Sainte-Beuve exclaiming. This was the spirit in which Baudelaire was taken by his earliest admirers, and it accounted for all (or most) of the indecencies and for all of the blasphemies in the poems, while the refrain of the whole, the "O Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère," was accepted as the cry of the prodigal catholic eating husks among the swine and loathing them. There is always a certain charm about the sinner who has sinned prodigiously, and who is willing to be confidential about the crimes which he deplures.

If this legend had never been disturbed, and if the world could think of Baudelaire as Swinburne could think of him fifty years ago, as one who had reaped to satiety "the hidden harvest of luxurious time," it would be easy to make the verse and prose, even where they seem most scandalous, fit in with a scheme of morals. The Muse of Baudelaire, a scarified Magdalen, in her rags and worse, would justify the pity of "un bon chrétien, par charité", and take her place in the choir. But it is manifest that she would be forgiven because she had loved much. Where are we if it is proved that she neither loved nor sinned at all? We are disconcerted, as appears from the recollections, memoirs, letters and what not which continue to dribble in, by the flood of proof that Baudelaire was a hermit of austere manners, whose extreme view of the liberty which a man could take with a woman was to live by her side like a voluptuous cat on the lap of a queen. Paris sixty years ago shuddered deliciously at the thought of Baudelaire combining the ardours of "la langoureuse Asie et la brûlante Afrique" in the arms of the terrible Black Venus, Jeanne Duval. It is now asserted

that she was not really black, and what puts us still more out of countenance, that Baudelaire lived with her, as De Quincey had done with poor Ann of Oxford Street, "in perfect innocence". Physiologists must make what they can of the deplorable correspondence with Mme. Sabatier. The image of Baudelaire as a voluptuary is hopelessly shattered. All that can console us is our satisfaction in discovering how stupid Brunetière was to compare him with Restif de la Bretonne and Casanova. Baudelaire was a painted ship upon the painted ocean of amatory experience.

We come back, a little confused from these investigations, to ask what then did Baudelaire mean by the attitude of his genius? It is difficult to admit the sincerity of the constant raving about sin, or of the repentance which promises neither forgiveness in heaven nor reformation on earth. As long ago as 1868, in a study of Baudelaire which is romantically inexact, but which as a piece of constructive criticism has never been excelled, Gautier hinted at the possibility that the women in the "Fleurs du Mal" were types rather than persons. We can go, in the unwelcome light extended by successive "indiscretions", much farther and acknowledge that Baudelaire was, in the very highest degree, a mystifier. Vulgarly speaking—and the action seems radically vulgar—Baudelaire "pulled the leg" of the credulous age he lived in. He was like Oscar Wilde, but less elegant, more profound, in his deliberate adoption of a pose. He was the most serenely artificial of human beings, and he affected in his dress, in his conversation, in his ceaseless tiresome paradox about poisons and corpses and mysterious and unpardonable sins a singularity which was his principal indulgence. To admit this, and in the face of evidence it has to be frankly admitted, is not to deny value to his work, but it is to place its interest on another plane. We have done with the sumptuous and sombre debauchee; he never existed. We are in presence of a passive creature of exquisite cerebral sensibilities, whose nearest approach to action was to pretend to have been what he was incapable of being.

Baudelaire was an invalid, nervous, feverish, convulsed, and moving about in a vague dream. We watch him, almost from boyhood, in the act of descending the direct road to paralysis. Of no other personage in the history of art, perhaps, is it so difficult to speak with perfect candour and yet with perfect justice, because of the inconsistencies in which his morbid temperament landed him. He was capable of thoughts of conscious sublimity; he was haunted by dreams which were not always squalid and were sometimes of a splendour which has rarely been exceeded; he was in some degree sanctified by the extreme wretchedness of his later condition, as appears in the "Lettres" of 1906 in startling and painful relief. Yet we have to be

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on our guard against his fascination, for to such a being simplicity is insipid and virtue ridiculous. Everything must be complicated and subtle, all images must be startling and all ideas subversive, or they cannot stir the exhausted brain. This is interesting, but may easily become disturbing, or may even lead to violent dislike. It is best, if we wish to enjoy the writings of Baudelaire, to keep his personal character as much out of sight as possible.

The readers of this MAGAZINE will not be averse to considering the genius of this poet from its æsthetic side. His own interest in plastic art was persistent, and with the exception of Gautier, no French poet of his time has left so much criticism of painting and design. But while the hard and luminous descriptions of pictures by Gautier are representative of that poet's positive and visual temperament, the views of Baudelaire illustrate all that was vast, vague and tenebrous in his. Baudelaire was not in advance of public taste as he found it in his early youth, and to the last his painters by preference, among the dead, were Raphael and Paul Veronese, Lebrun and David. He judged the qualities of these masters to be perpetuated in Eugène Delacroix, and his long essay on that artist is illuminating. Baudelaire thoroughly enjoyed the terrific compositions of Delacroix, who he thought had lifted his art to the level of great poetry, and when he praises the painter for loving to "agitate his figures against violet and greenish backgrounds, which reveal the phosphorescence of corruption and the smell of storm," we recognise the "ciel bourbeux et noir" of *L'Irréparable* and the "lac de sang hanté de mauvais anges" of *Les Phares*.

Baudelaire admired some other contemporary artists, and always characteristically. Courbet fascinated him by his rebellious and uncompromising energy. He was always seeking for the unusual and the monstrous, and he cross-examined Méryon about his dreams, which proved to be incredible and common-place. Baudelaire was extremely attracted by *Le Danse des Morts de 1848* and *L'Invasion du Choléra* of Rethel, in which he detected a Satanic and a Byronic undercurrent. In all his art criticism it is difficult to discover the least interest in the technique of painting or drawing. He valued a picture for the idea it suggested, or at most for the arabesque it cut out in space. He states his æsthetic creed very clearly in one of his "Salons"; what he demands from painting, he says, is "the indivisible, the impalpable, the dream, the nerves, the *soul*". He regretted the decay of literature among artists, the mental poverty of the studios. He thought that by reading the poets, an artist might secure grandiose images, and define them with rapidity on his canvas. He was vexed because the painters neglected to inflame their imagination by contact with Homer and Ossian. Sorrow and splendour, he said, were the

voices which should always be echoing in the soul of an artist who desired to excel. He thought that painting ought to be philosophical; he admitted that such an opinion might seem heretical in art-circles, but he defended it all the more eagerly for that.

We may note with ease the plastic relation of such opinions to his own poetry. We trace it in "La Géante", in "La Masque", in the fourth "Spleen", in "Confession", and in a dozen other poems. Baudelaire was born old, and he turned at the outset of life from those pomps of joy which are appropriate to the exuberance of youth, and concentrated his fancies on what was mysterious, enigmatical and lugubrious. He said, in a phrase printed by Eugène Crépet in 1887, that his intention in writing the "Fleurs du Mal" had been to illustrate by a series of pictures "l'agitation de l'esprit dans le mal". This is a valuable indication, and it explains the purpose of that body of poetry. It is a mistake to treat Baudelaire as a realist, as an observer. Intelligence was his aim, the exposure of hidden and sinister facets of the human soul, a cerebral excitement unrelated to experience. The grotesque sensibility of Baudelaire dwells in vast spaces, in "arabesques" as he would put it. Grotesque, indeed, he is to excess, infatuated by certain distorted aspects of beauty, and always missing the human touch, because he is physically so little of a human being. Forever on the edge of a redeeming sensuality, he never contrives to cross it. He is a million miles away from that simplicity in beauty which actuated Theocritus or Keats or Gautier. He is a moralist turned topsyturvy, a La Rochefoucauld of the charnel-house.

It would be an error, however, to underrate the value of Baudelaire because there is much in his work and more in his character which is repulsive to a normal taste. He refreshed the substance of French literature and he added wealth to the French language. He added to poetry certain elements which were amusingly summed up by Jules Laforgue when he said (in the "Entretiens" of 1892) that Baudelaire was a mixture of cat, Hindoo, Yankee, bishop and alchemist. Baudelaire's effect on youthful intelligences, from Swinburne downwards, has been very remarkable, and in this respect, as in several others, he has had on the second half of the 19th century an influence which resembles that of Donne in the middle of the 17th. The prelatial gentleness of manner, which all who knew him report, is reflected in the solemnity of his poems, in which a rather cumbrous versification gives dignity to the most scabrous themes, and seems to invite the youthful reader to enter the perfumed temple and share the dislocated rites. Flaubert said that Baudelaire was as hard as marble and as penetrating as a London fog. We may make of that the best we can.