

ALFRED DE VIGNY'S TREATMENT
OF
THOMAS CHATTERTON

by

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THOMAS CHATTERTON

For years literary battles were waged over the poems of Thomas Chatterton. Happily all controversy as to their authenticity is now laid, and much has been done to clear the name of him who was called a literary forger. Though misunderstood and neglected during the brief seventeen years and nine months of his life, he has compelled the world to acknowledge him as the father of the New Romantic School.

In order to appreciate the background of Chatterton's life, it is necessary to know something of the history of his native town, Bristol. The old Saxon name, Bricgestowe, or "place of the bridge," indicated its location, that is, at the bridge over the Avon stream, not far above its confluence with the Severn. During the time of the War of the Roses, there lived in Bristol, a merchant prince by name William Canynge. In addition to his commercial activities he must have wielded no small influence on the life of the town, for he was five times elected mayor. Nor did his interests cease there; he was more than casually concerned with the pursuit of learning and the study of the arts. His own home, Red Lodge, a part of which is still standing, testifies to his appreciation of architectural beauty. But his greatest contribution to the community was the no meager amount of money which he gave toward building St. Mary Redcliffe, a church dating from the middle of the fifteenth century.

Over the North Porch of the church rises a tower, not very high but compelling the admiration of the visitor and reminding him of Chatterton, for in this tower was the Muniment Room in which were kept locked chests containing records, the treasure of the church, and old parchment property-deeds. One of these chests belonged to Canynge and, according to his will, was to be opened from time to time. In connection with the name of Canynge appears that of the monk, Thomas Rowley. Not much is known about him. He was in Bristol when the church was built, or rebuilt, and the records of the adjacent see of Wells speak of his being ordained as an acolyte there.

Tradition has made him the learned companion and adviser of Canynge, for it is certain that Canynge, a friend of Henry VI's, was consequently persecuted by Edward IV, who wished the merchant prince to marry a woman of high rank of his choosing. The persecutions became so violent that Canynge fled to avoid the marriage, took orders and later became the Dean of Westbury. Two monuments to his memory remain in St. Mary Redcliffe, which is especially rich in stone effigies of knights, priests, and magistrates.

Thomas Chatterton was born in the shadow of St. Mary Redcliffe, where for almost two hundred years, or perhaps, at least, since the beginning of the seventeenth century, the position of sexton had been handed down in the Chatterton family. The poet's father, Thomas Chatterton, would have held the post but he aspired to something higher, and the office was filled by his sister's husband, Richard Phillips. The elder Chatterton was a sub-chanter in the Bristol Cathedral and from 1738 to 1752 he taught in the Pyle Street school which was founded in 1733 by a tradesman of Bristol. He was an ordinary man, not scholarly, with a taste for literature and a slight knowledge of music. He drank too freely, was careless and crude, and on the whole rather colorless. His wife, who was much younger, was very meek, decent and unassuming. She was often treated with contempt by her husband who said that he merely considered her a housekeeper. When he died, August 7, 1752, his daughter Mary, was several years old, but the second child, Thomas, was born November 20, 1752, when his mother was in the fourth month of her widowhood. The little family was allowed to remain on for several months in the schoolmaster's quarters of the Pyle Street school where the father had been teaching at the time of his death. Later little Thomas was sent to school there but he couldn't learn, so the teacher said, and was returned to his mother with the verdict that the child must be an idiot. He was very odd, didn't care to play with other children, and showed a tendency to be melancholy.

But very early there developed within him a great love for St. Mary Redcliffe whose stories and legends he had learned while following his uncle, the sexton, up and down the shadowy aisles. His father had from time to time carried home old parchments

from the Muniment Room to cover his pupils' books. Thomas was familiar with the sight of these but he paid no particular attention to them. One day he found at home an old French musical folio with illuminated capitals. According to his mother he "fell in love with it" and learned to spell and read from this folio and a black-letter Bible. Once embarked on the sea of literature he never slacked sail. He read eagerly and hungrily everything he could buy, beg or borrow. He had heard the story of Canynge and spent hours in the church where his unleashed imagination conjured up stories of knightly adventures. He was a handsome lad with unusual grey eyes. Those who spoke of him during his life and afterwards, always mentioned the fire of his eyes, especially when he was suddenly aroused. He was very proud and early had dreams of fame. When he was still a little lad a pewterer had promised to decorate a bowl for him, and when told to choose a design, he said, "Paint me an angel with a trumpet, to trumpet my name over the world." (1) His affection for his mother and sister was very marked and when he was older and earning money he frequently bought them presents. But his mother did not understand him. Alas, did any one? She used to punish him when he was a small boy for staying away from home at meal times and later for reading so much.

When Thomas was eight years old he was allowed to enter Colston's as a regular boarder, but he spent Saturday afternoons at his home. Colston's was a charity school where commerce was taught. Thomas was a lad of dreams and hated such a life. At first he had been over-joyed at the prospect of being able to study but his disappointment in the limited curriculum was almost more than he could bear. However he worked hard and obeyed the masters, while he continued to read and dream and think. Meantime he had written and published, when ten years old, two poems, one written after his confirmation. This poem, "On the last Epiphany," and the other one, "A Hymn for Christmas Day," appeared in Felix Farley's Journal, January 8, 1763.

He formed no really intimate friendships at school unless that with the teacher, Thomas Phillips, is so considered. He never told any one of the grand romance which was slowly taking shape in his mind. Somewhere in his studies and searchings he had come upon Thomas Rowley. What he really knew of

this mysterious person we shall probably never learn. But he made of him a gentle, studious monk who was a friend of the rich William Canynge and collected treatises on customs and early literature and translated old Saxon texts. As these imaginings grew, Rowley became a poet and thus the boy created for himself a vent for all the ideas which had been developing through a period of several years.

He spent seven years at Colston's. During that time two sides of his nature developed. On the one hand he was a dreamy affectionate lad, wrapped in his romantic speculations. On the other, he was a keen thinker and reasoner and an accurate observer of men. He studied prodigiously outside of his regular schedule, finding time somehow to delve into theology, medicine, astronomy, and heraldry, in addition to his reading of history and poetry. One day he looked with a new eye upon the old parchments scattered about his home. He gathered them up, got more from the Muniment Room, and carried them all to his little garret workshop at home where he spent his free hours on Saturday afternoons. There he practiced drawing ancient bridges and castles. He decided to put his whole soul into Rowley, so he cleared a few of the parchments and copied on them some of his verses. Thus "Elinoure and Juga," written when he was less than twelve years old, gives the first glimpse of his secret labors. According to his sister, Mrs. Mary Newton, he became more cheerful after he began to write.

When Chatterton was fifteen years old, he was apprenticed in 1767 to John Lambert, a lawyer in Bristol. Although his working hours were nominally twelve, very often there was so little work at the office that he could have as many as ten hours during the day to pursue his reading, studying, and writing. However, reading and writing poetry were frowned upon by Lambert and he was beaten for writing an anonymous epistle against one of his former masters at Colston's. As a little boy he had been beaten for reading and now he suffered a like punishment for writing. Such a violent method of correction brought on deception. He was not more than sixteen years old, yet he knew himself to be different and during the three years he remained with Lambert he had neither adviser nor friend.

Another person who had an important role in the

Chatterton tragedy was William Barrett, a surgeon of Bristol, a cold, calculating man. He was writing a history of Bristol which contains so many errors that it is of no interest except as an oddity. But he had a taste for literature and had many books in his library. This Chatterton knew. He formed an acquaintance with the doctor and was very frequently at his house. When the new bridge was opened at Bristol, in 1768, there appeared a curious article in the newspaper purporting to be an account of the opening of the first bridge. It was signed Dunhelmus Bristolensis. When pressed for an explanation, Chatterton, who had carried the article to the newspaper office, said he had found it in the Muniment Room. No more was said about the matter.

Chatterton now began furnishing manuscripts to Barrett for his history. Some of them were genuine and when these gave out, he had to invent some, for they were the coin by which Chatterton secured books from Barrett's library, and books were his meat and drink. Barrett must have known that there were false manuscripts among them. He had purchased some genuine manuscripts from a Bristol barber, Morgan, and easily could have compared them but he said nothing. Chatterton gave several of his best Rowley poems to Barrett, who thus came into possession of "The Battle of Hastings," which is a remarkable production and seems to have fooled several learned men, even though it is an account of an eleventh century battle "wrote by Turgot the Monk, a Saxon, in the tenth century"! There are two versions of this poem. When Barrett asked for the original, Chatterton said he wrote it but that he had another on the same subject, a copy of an original by Rowley. Barrett also received the "Songe to Aella" of which two copies exist. These two differ a bit but Barrett said nothing if he noticed the difference.

Another dupe of Chatterton's was Burgum, a pewterer, a stupid man and a ready victim for Chatterton's wits. The lad devised the scheme of making up a pedigree for Burgum. He traced it to the reign of Charles II and in so doing discovered one ancestor who was a poet. This gave him his opportunity to write his "Romance of Troy." In the making of this pedigree the youth needed to have some Latin translated. Barrett did it for him without

asking about its intended use. Nor did he say anything later when the whole affair was exploded; Chatterton had been too valuable an aid to him, he dared not expose him. Burgum was delighted with the pedigree and paid five shillings for it. The success of this practical joke encouraged Chatterton to further deceptions. For five years the pewterer glowed in his new glory. Then, his suspicions being aroused by the constant prickings of his acquaintances, he sent the pedigree to the Herald's College in London. Word came back that the whole thing was spurious.

All of this happened while Chatterton was at Lambert's. Meanwhile his versatile pen was pouring out love songs which a friend, Baker, recently gone to America, wanted to send to some girl in South Carolina. These poems possess no great beauty but were sentimental enough to please the young lady.

It was through the brother of a friend of Dr. Barrett's, the Reverend Alexander Catcott, that Chatterton was given access to the Bristol Library, in an old Latin dictionary of which may still be seen some of his scrawls on the margins where he was practicing ancient scripts. For this favor the boy never ceased to be grateful and the Reverend Alexander Catcott, who believed implicitly in the authenticity of the Rowley manuscripts, had received from Chatterton's hands "The Tournament" and the fine ballad of "The Bristowe Tragedie". The Reverend Alexander Catcott gave full credence to the Noah story and had written a tiresome treatise in support of his belief. Chatterton who, at the age of ten, had become a member of the Church, but who since had rejected all its dogmas and especially the supernatural parts of Christianity, contenting himself with his own religion of faith and practice, of dream and aspiration, used to attend the Reverend Alexander Catcott's sermons, but only to disagree and argue with him later.

Chatterton was now beginning to wonder about the worth of the Rowley poems, and was anxious to have them appraised by a critic. Consequently, on Dec. 21, 1768, he wrote to James Dodsley of Pall Mall, but no answer came. Again he wrote, Feb. 15, 1769, this time enclosing a portion from the "Tragedie of Aella". Still unnoticed the young poet was not daunted. He decided to appeal to Horace Walpole. It

may be that Barrett suggested it for he helped with the correspondence. With the first letter to Walpole, dated March 25, 1769, Chatterton sent a manuscript on the "Ryse of Peynteyne". Walpole replied at once, professing his interest in a most courteous fashion, even hinting his willingness to assist with the publication. Such praise from Walpole buoyed up Chatterton's hopes and immediately brought forth a second letter in which he stated frankly that he was the son of a poor woman and badly in need of help.

Meanwhile Walpole had shown the manuscript to Gray, who declared that it was not of the fifteenth century, as it purported to be. Walpole felt that he had been tricked and when the second letter came he replied coldly, with a great deal of good advice, urging the boy to continue in the lawyer's office, and not aspire to literature until he had acquired wealth and thereby leisure. He kept the manuscripts which Chatterton had sent him and not until several months later, in July of 1769, after three requests from Chatterton, did he return them. Walpole was naturally ruffled by the whole affair and after Chatterton was dead and Dr. Fry of Oxford began an investigation into the whole matter, Walpole denied that he had ever communicated with Chatterton.

Why, in his thirst for fame, the youth ever ascribed to another what was destined to bring him so much honor, is a question that has never been cleared up. Probably he meant to use Rowley's already established reputation as an aid to securing his own personal recognition. And in the deception, was it not natural that he should turn to Walpole who had himself published "Otranto", in 1764, as if it were translated from an old Italian manuscript? Chatterton's ire burst forth in all its bitterness against Walpole in the lines:

Walpole, I thought not I should ever see
So mean a heart as thine has proved to be.
Thou who, in luxury nurst, beholdst with scorn
The boy, who friendless, fatherless, forlorn,
Asks thy high favor--thou mayst call me cheat--
Say, didst thou never practise such deceit?
Who wrote Otranto, but I will not chide;
Scorn I'll repay with scorn, and pride with pride. (2)

Chatterton was greatly hurt but not discouraged. The flame of poetry still rose and he turned it to account in his political writings. At this time interest was at white heat in London. There Wilkes was the leader of the people. He had dared to criticize the king and was therefore refused his seat in the House of Commons. Chatterton used his pen in behalf of Wilkes, who had a newspaper eager and ready to receive all such contributions. Chatterton was also writing metrical satires, for his was a strange nature, that of a dreamer and observer, as well as that of a singer and satirist. He saw the rising conflict between people and privilege and he did not hesitate to sympathize with the people. He wrote prose articles against the king, the government and the king's mother. He had no difficulty in selling these for his wonderful command of English ranked him next to the powerful Junius.

It was through these writings that Chatterton was first known to Thomas Beckford, Lord Mayor of London in 1762 and re-elected to that office again in 1769. He was stupendously busy at this time for he was carrying on Rowley in poetry and prose, Barrett, Catcott, the lawyer's office, the Wilkes' articles and an endless amount of reading. Yet his sister said that he was home almost every night from eight until ten, the hours at which he was permitted to be absent from his quarters at the lawyer's. Many of these poems are inferior to the Rowley ones because they were written rapidly and only served as fuel to the boiling political pot.

Lambert was becoming more and more unkind. He even destroyed in anger many of the manuscripts which he took from Chatterton's desk. The poet yearned to be free from the lawyer's office which had become an inexpressible burden to his spirit. The editors in London had hinted that he might do well there, but he did not see any avenue of escape. The idea of suicide seems to have been no stranger to him. In 1769 he wrote these lines, which he called "Sentiment".

Since we can die but once, what matters it,
If rope or garter, poison, pistol, sword,
Slow-wasting sickness, or the sudden burst
Of valve arterial in the noble parts,
Curtail the miseries of human life?
Though varied is the cause, the effect's the same:
All to one common dissolution tends. (3)

A few months later, April 14, 1770, he wrote a curious document in a half-playful tone, purporting to be his last Will and Testament. In this he leaves directions for his burial and monument and makes various bequests to acquaintances in Bristol. "Item. I give all my vigour and fire of youth to Mr. George Catcott, being sensible that he is most in want of it. Item. From the same charitable motive, I give and bequeath unto the Reverend Mr. Camplin senior, all my humility. To Mr. Burgum all my prosody and grammar, --likewise one moiety of my modesty to any young lady who can prove without blushing that she wants that valuable commodity. To Bristol all my spirit and disinterestedness;.....I leave the Reverend Mr. Catcott some little of my free-thinking, that he may put on (the) spectacles of Reason, and see how vilely he is duped in believing the Scriptures literally. I wish he and his brother George would know how far I am their real enemy; but I have an unlucky way of raillery, and when the strong fit of satire is upon me, I spare neither friend nor foe.....I will and direct that, whatever any person may think the pleasure of reading my books worth, they immediately pay their own valuation to him (Mr. Clayfield) since it is then become a lawful debt to me, and to him as my executor in this case.....Item. I leave all my debts, the whole not five pounds, to the payment of the charitable and generous Chamber of Bristol.....I leave my mother and sister to the protection of my friends, if I have any. Executed in the presence of Omniscience this 14th. of April, 1770. Thos. Chatterton". (4)

This Will of Chatterton's recalls the one written by François Villon in Paris three hundred years before. Villon was well-educated but he became a poet of the streets, given over to the life of a vagabond. His bohemian existence led him from one escapade to another, some so serious as to merit a period of imprisonment. At least once he barely escaped the gallows. When he was about twenty-five years old, he decided to leave Paris to go to Angers where his uncle lived. He had hopes of replenishing his purse by such a visit. With this proposed journey in mind he wrote "Le Petit Testament" with its farewell to Paris, "Adieu! je m'en vais à Angers", (5) and the satirical legacies bequeathed in mocking, laughing verse.

The first of these is for his friend and protector
whose name he evidently chose to bear,

Je laisse, de par Dieu, mon bruit
A maître Guillaume Villon,
Qui en l'honneur de son nom bruit
Mes tentes et mon pavillon. (6)

To the woman who may have been partly responsible for
his decision to leave Paris, to her

Qui si durement m'a chassé,
.....
Je laisse mon coeur enchassé,
Pâle, piteux, mort et transi:
Elle m'a ce mal pourchassé,
Mais Dieu lui en face mercy!" (7)

To an acquaintance,

.....maître Ythier Marchant,
A quel je me sens très tenu,
Laisse mon branc d'acier tranchant
.....
Qui est en gage detenu:
Pour un écot huit sols montant;
Je veux, selon le contenu,
Qu'on lui livre, en le rachetant." (8)

Furthermore

.....ma nomination
Que j'ai de l'Université,
Laisse par résignation
Pour esclore d'adversité
Pauvres clercs de cette cité,
Sous cet intendit contenus:
Charité m'y a incité,
Et Nature, les voyant nus. (9)

And again

Item laisse et donne en pur don
Mes gants et ma hucque de soie
A mon ami Jacques Cardon;
Le gland aussi d'une saulsoye,
Et tous les jours une grasse oie
Et un chapon de haute graisse;
Dix muis de vin blanc comme croye;
Et deux procès, que trop n'engraisse. (10)

The poet concludes his will with the declaration that it is

Fait au temps de ladite date,
Par le bien renommé Villon,
Qui ne mange figue ni date;
Sec et noir comme écouvillon,
Il n'a tente ni pavillon
Qu'il n'ait laissé à ses amis,
Et n'a mais qu'un peu de billon,
Qui sera tantôt à fin mis. (11)

This pathetic description was not borne out by the facts as is shown by Marcel Schwob (12) who adds, "Le poème eut beaucoup de succès aussitôt, et fut copié et répandu". (13) Very different was the outcome in the case of Chatterton. Lambert came upon this strange document, left intentionally or otherwise on Chatterton's desk, and having read it through without knowing in how far it might be true, he showed it to Mrs. Lambert. She had never liked Chatterton and was terrified at the possibility of finding the youth dead in her house. She therefore declared her unwillingness to retain him longer. Lambert agreed with her and on April 16, 1770 Chatterton was released.

Liberty was his at last. One week later he went to London with high hopes, confident in his own powers and never doubting that the greatest success would be his. It had been arranged that he should live with a distant relative, Mrs. Ballance, who lodged with a plasterer's family at Shoreditch. So eager was he to begin his participation in public affairs, that on the very afternoon of his arrival he called on four editors to whose publications he had been contributing. They were Edmunds, the editor of the "Middlesex Journal", Hamilton, the proprietor of the "Town and Country Magazine", Fell, the editor and printer of the "Freeholder's Magazine", and Dodsley, the publisher of the "Annual Register", in Pall Mall. These men must have been surprised to discover that D.B. of Bristol, his favorite pen name, was a mere lad of seventeen. Chatterton wrote to his mother a very enthusiastic report of his journey to London and his visits to the printshops.

The time of his coming to London seemed indeed auspicious: Wilkes had just come out of prison where he had been held twenty-two months, and the Lord Mayor, Thomas Beckford, had just made his famous remonstrance

to the king in favor of the people. Chatterton so approved of Beckford's attitude that he wrote a long letter commending him, then followed up the advantageous impression made by the epistle, by calling upon the great man. Beckford thus came to know and like young Chatterton, who then wrote the second letter endorsing Beckford and this letter was to have been printed in the "North Briton."

In spite of his apparent headway in forming influential friendships in London, Chatterton was very much alone. Mrs. Ballance could not understand this mad young man who refused to be called Tommy, who ate very little, drank nothing but water, and who sat up until morning, writing, writing, and then destroying what he had written. The plasterer's son who shared the room with him was afraid of Chatterton, and a niece who lived in the household said he was "more a mad boy than anything else, he would have such flights and vagaries, and but for his face and her knowledge of his age she would never have thought him a boy, he was so manly and so much himself". (14)

Chatterton was now contributing to almost every periodical in London and the publishers were eager for his articles, but he was very meagrely paid as there was no commercial basis then for periodicals. But Chatterton was hopeful. In early June he seemed started on the road to success. However disasters came in rapid succession. Within two or three weeks all his newspaper friends were in trouble over politics. An uncontrollable terror fell upon the press. The Wilkes case was undecided, Edmunds of the "Middlesex Journal" was in prison, Fell of the "Freeholder's Magazine" was arrested for debt, and it was he who had promised to bring Chatterton and Wilkes together. Now that was impossible. One editor after another went to prison or into exile. Chatterton's opportunity for publishing disappeared altogether. Then came a final crushing blow. Beckford died most unexpectedly on June 19, 1770. Mrs. Ballance, who saw Chatterton soon after he received the news, said she feared the boy would go insane. He repeated over and over, "I am ruined". The second letter which Chatterton had written in support of Beckford and which had been accepted for the next issue of Bingley's "North Briton", was of necessity returned to him and that small reward was never realized. Chatterton was now desperate, but his great pride would not allow him to disclose his poverty. He sold two elegies on Beckford

which brought him a few shillings. He next tried writing some musical skits for the Marylebone summer garden, and also an operetta, "The Revenge, a Burletta". The airs were lively and the recitatives were all in verse, showing the versatility of the poet. He sold the operetta for five guineas and this carried him through two or three weeks.

Sometime in June Chatterton had moved from Shoreditch to Brooke Street, Holborn, No. 39, with a Mrs. Angell who was a dressmaker. Here he had a garret room but for the first time he was alone. He wrote madly day and night. He saw the rapid fall of his hopes in the ruin of his friends and his pride would not allow him to tell his mother how poor he was. She too was poor but she had established a small dame's school in her home and was also doing needlework, so there is no reason for believing that she could not have helped him with enough money to pass this crisis. But he suffered alone with his poverty, living on stale bread and water and refusing an occasional invitation to dine with Mrs. Angell, who suspected his condition, and with Mr. Cross, a friendly apothecary in the neighborhood. Hamilton of the "Town and Country" had accepted but not paid for some manuscripts. In fact, he continued to publish these manuscripts for more than a year after Chatterton's death. It was the old story of the tyranny of the strong over the weak. During these last desperate weeks, Chatterton wrote "An Excelente Balade of Charite", which was the last attempt in the Rowley style. He offered this to Hamilton and it was refused.

Only one plan occurred to him now. During his association with Dr. Barrett at Bristol, he had become interested in medicine, had learned no little from him and had read widely in the field. In this last stand against Fate he decided to seek a position as surgeon's mate on a vessel. On August 12, 1770 he wrote to a friend in Bristol requesting him to ask Dr. Barrett for a letter of recommendation. Barrett's refusal left him without resource. Everybody seemed to be against him. He had been downtrodden and misunderstood from the first. Those who could have helped him had been too ready to defeat him. Was there any place in this world for the poor and lowly?

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;
Of Him who walked in glory and in joy
Following his plough, along the mountainside:
By our own spirits are we deified:
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness. (15)

His "Memoirs of a Sad Dog" give a very good description of Chatterton's circumstances. He claimed he was not a Christian but at least he was in a more restless frame of mind on the subject of religion than the sceptic who feels no urge to proclaim his views.

On August 24, 1770, when he was seventeen years and nine months old, he had sold enough manuscripts to buy some arsenic, probably from Mr. Cross, saying that he wished to poison rats in his room. He retired there that evening and after tearing up countless manuscripts, he mixed the arsenic with water and drank it. Saturday morning, August 25, Mrs. Angell observed that he had not yet come downstairs at eleven o'clock. When her knock at his door was unanswered, she began to fear that something might be wrong, and called to a man who was passing. When they broke down the door they found him lying on the bed, the floor littered with the precious children of his brain. Singular pathos attaches to his last verses, though by no means the best, which he wrote on the day of his death:

Farewell, Bristolia's dingy piles of brick,
Lovers of Mammon, worshippers of Trick!
Ye spurned the boy who gave you antique lays,
And paid for learning with your empty praise.
Farewell, ye guzzling aldermanic fools,
By nature fitted for Corruption's tools!
I go to where celestial anthems swell;
But you, when you depart, will sink to hell.
Farewell, my mother! cease, my anguished soul,
Nor let Distraction's billows o'er me roll!
Have mercy, Heaven, when I cease to live,
And this last act of wretchedness forgive. (16)

So perished in poverty, obscurity and despair one whose name might have ranked with the first of his generation. He was overwhelmed by neglect, without hope for a future career, and unconscious of the fame which was in store for him. Just as his writings indicate a twofold life, so his character

has a double aspect. The bitter satires, the mediocre poetry and the rather worthless magazine articles, all of which he did not hesitate to acknowledge as his own, show an impulse to write, a desire to emulate and excel his contemporaries. But the more exalted creations of his mind, his unconfessed and noble aspirations, given to the world without an acknowledged author, evidence the inspiration which sustained him in his mental loneliness.

If Chatterton's literary position has not been satisfactorily established, it is because he has not been so thoroughly studied as many other English poets and his real fame has been one of hearsay rather than of independent opinion. Judgment has been affected by prejudices, partly dependent on the ambiguity surrounding his works, and partly on the sentiments, whether of sympathy or contempt, which his story never fails to excite. Henry A. Beers in his "History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century" writes that Chatterton's life is the tragedy of English Romanticism and that it shows by what process antiquarianism became poetry. He quotes Dr. Samuel Johnson as saying of Chatterton, "This is the most extraordinary young man that has encountered my knowledge. It is wonderful how the whelp has written such things". (17) David Masson declares, "These antique poems of Chatterton's are perhaps as worthy of being read consecutively as many portions of the poetry of Byron, Shelley or Keats. There are passages in them at least, quite equal to any to be found in these poets". (18)

One of the marvels of his work is the great variety of the stanzas which he used. Some of them are his own invention and at a time when the style of Pope and Dryden held sway in poetry, Chatterton dared to break away from it and sing in his own fashion. His antique words are not hard to read, indeed it seems that he first wrote in modern English and then translated into his own dialect following Bailey's and Kersey's English dictionaries and making therefore the mistakes found in them. On the ground of the Rowley poems alone he has earned the sympathy at least of the antiquarians. That these poems possess real merit and originality of thought must be conceded by those who study the poetry of his period. He avoided as if by instinct the conventional and narrow limits of poetry and allowed his genius

full sway in the making of models for a new school of poetry. If his influence has been less pronounced than that of Keats and Wordsworth, it is due less to lack of true ability than to shortness of life and to the peculiar fashion in which his great but erratic genius was shown.

ALFRED DE VIGNY

In 1867, Louis Ratisbonne published, under the title "Journal d'un Poète", selected portions of notes which he had found among the papers of Alfred de Vigny. Mr. Ratisbonne explains in his preface that Vigny showed him a series of notebooks in his library in which through the years he had jotted down notes, memoranda, his impressions of men and affairs, his ideas about life and art, and brief outlines of his own proposed writing. A few days before his death Vigny said to his friend, indicating the books, "Vous trouverez peut-être quelque chose là". (19) And in truth much was found there--the man himself. He had written for himself in perfect frankness but not without color and style. From this "Journal", from his letters, and from M. Léon Séché, who knows more perhaps than any one else about Alfred de Vigny, the outstanding events of his life may be learned.

Maurice Paléologue offers evidence to prove that the family had been ennobled since 1575, although the château on the road to Rouen, mentioned in the "Journal", never belonged to Alfred de Vigny but to some of his relatives named Saint-Pol. (20) That pretention to ownership was however merely a youthful boast, and Vigny came to realize more than many another that the aristocracy of mind is superior to that of birth. The Vigny name is not especially illustrious in history. Most of the men served faithfully in the army but never advanced far in rank. Very few of them were known at court, though the father of Alfred, the Count de Vigny, was a courtier as well as an officer under Louis XV. He distinguished himself in the Seven Years' War in which he was severely wounded and left permanently crippled. The mother of Alfred de Vigny was the daughter of Admiral de Baraudin and a grandniece of the poet Regnard. She was an unusually gifted woman, beautiful, intelligent and endowed with great strength of character. When her father was held a prisoner in the chateau at Loches, near Tours, she and her husband, now weak and aged by wounds and exposure, followed him to Loches and established themselves there. Three sons were born but they died in infancy. On March 27, 1798, the fourth and last son, Alfred, was born. For the first eighteen months of his life the family continued to live at Loches, then "sous un ciel plus heureux, ils vinrent habiter Paris" (21) which, says the poet, "me donna de bonne

heure la tristesse qu'il porte en lui-même et qui est celle d'une vieille ville, tête d'un vieux corps social". (22)

At home Vigny listened eagerly to the tales of past splendor told by his father. The elder Vigny possessed no wealth but he bequeathed to his son an invaluable legacy in the riches of reminiscences. So fascinated was the child by the stories of his father's lifetime that he would come back to events of his own day with a shock. His mother superintended with great firmness his early education and he learned readily all she outlined for him. In fact he was too apt for his own happiness: Later when he went to school with other boys, they hated him for the rapidity with which he learned, for he was younger than they. That made him gloomy and defiant. They persecuted him too because of his title. "Tu as un 'de' à ton nom; es-tu noble? Oui, je le suis. Et ils me frappaient. Je me sentais d'une race maudite, et cela me rendait sombre et pensif". (23) In his father's home, after school hours, he listened with enjoyment to the conversation of those who had seen and read a great deal and who were hostile to the Empire. Their griefs saddened him, his gloom deepened. "Je suis né avec une mémoire telle que je n'ai rien oublié de ce que j'ai vu et de ce qui m'a été dit depuis que je suis au monde. L'expérience chagrine de la vieillesse entrainait dans mon esprit d'enfant et le remplissait de défiance et d'une misanthropie précoce". (24) His days in the school in the faubourg Saint-Honoré continued so miserable that he resolved to neglect his work in the hope that his parents would take him from the school and have him taught at home. He succeeded in this and carried with him sad impressions of the egotism and malice of the pupils, the haughty indifference of the masters and the rigor of the discipline. Melancholy left its mark on his spirit.

Vigny felt that his real literary education was obtained at home, for he worked without tiring in many different fields: Latin, Greek, English, and Mathematics. Finally he decided to take the necessary examinations to enter the École Polytechnique and he was accepted. Meanwhile he was seized with a desire to write and he tried fragments of stories and of plays, but they smacked of the French Classic writers, and not being able to tolerate imitation he destroyed what he had written. "Cependant je sentais en moi un invincible désir de produire quelque chose de grand et d'être grand par mes œuvres. Le temps me paraissait perdu s'il n'amenait

une idée neuve et féconde". (25) He was exhausting himself in meditation and felt the need for action. Like the students everywhere at that time he was restless. He wanted to be an officer in the army and finally persuaded his father to take the steps necessary to procure the rank for him. This was made possible by the fall of Napoleon and the return of the Bourbons. At the age of sixteen, in 1814, Vigny joined a company of young men, all of whom were made second lieutenants in the Gendarmes Rouges. But military glory was not to be his. When Napoleon returned from Elba, Vigny accompanied Louis XVIII as far as Bethune, where the King's army was disbanded. During the Hundred Days, Vigny was held at Amiens, but at the time of the Second Restoration he joined the Garde Royale and was made a captain.

However Vigny was fast losing his dreams of military greatness. Moreover his Muse was beginning to sing, and he allowed his thoughts to turn toward the inner life and poetic revery. Military inactivity offered much time for thinking and for satisfying his craving to read. His books, his letters, and his notes give evidence of that. He read especially the Old Testament; the philosophers of the eighteenth century and the Greek writers. Some of his best imitations of the ancients date from this period. His innate love of harmony urged him to write in verse. Thus he gave us "La Dryade" and "Symétha". After that there was a new factor in his inspiration for he realized the need of a more profound analysis. In 1822 he published, without author's name, a little volume of verse in two parts. The first part contained "Héléna", the other was made up of the Poèmes antiques, Poèmes judaïques, and Poèmes modernes. "Moïse" also was written in 1822 but it did not appear until four years later. "Moïse" personifies the solitude of the soul of a man of genius and "Elva", published in 1823, is the picture of pity unconsciously developing into love. While we may not subscribe to Gautier's judgment that it is "le plus parfait poème de notre littérature", (26), it is surely an exquisite inspiration of mystical poetry; nothing in it is literally true, yet everything in it is ideally true.

About this time a new movement was evident in French literature. At Paris a group of young men with the same ideals in literature, religion, and politics began to hold a prominent place in literary circles. They had a tendency toward mysticism, toward the cult of the Middle Ages and its chivalry; they had a horror of the eighteenth century and the Revolution.

This group--among them Victor Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, Émile and Anthony Deschamps, Musset and Vigny--met frequently to enjoy their own efforts at self-expression. Vigny's tasks in the army were not so exacting but that he found frequent opportunity to leave the barracks for a stay in Paris, where he added his enthusiasm to that of the group of young writers. His only promotion in the army came after a service of nine years. About this same time he went on a campaign in the Pyrénées and from there in 1825 he sent the exquisite poem "Le Cor" with its memories of Roland. He also began "Cinq-Mars", his historical novel, "Le spectacle philosophique d'un homme profondément travaillé par les passions de son caractère et de son temps". (27) He allowed himself too much liberty with the truth as regards official documents and persons, but he believed, as he expressed it in his "Réflexions sur la Vérité dans l'Art", which serve as the introduction to Cinq-Mars, that "La Vérité dont l'art doit se nourrir est la vérité d'observation sur la nature humaine, et non l'authenticité du fait.... L'idée est tout". (28) And again he says: "L'humanité fait un interminable discours dont chaque homme illustre est une idée". (29)

Alfred de Vigny's literary position was more important now than his military one. Moreover he was completely disillusioned in regard to the life of a soldier. He realized that it was not compatible with his ideals. Therefore he obtained his release from the service in 1827 and entered upon a life of literary leisure. The next year he married an Englishwoman, Lydia Bunbury, whose wealth brought even greater freedom from the burden of labor. The marriage, while not an unhappy one, was without sympathetic understanding. Because of this connection, Vigny made several visits to England, increasing his knowledge and use of the language.

The Romanticists were now making themselves known. Vigny's "Othello" was given at the Théâtre Français in 1829, thus antedating by a year the famous "bataille d'Hernani". The play reproduced the spirit of the original, it was an attempt to return to simple modes of expression. In the Préface, in a "Lettre à Lord...", Vigny says, "Il fallait refaire l'instrument (le style) avant de jouer un air de son invention". (30) His next play, "La Maréchale d'Ancre", in 1831 with its complicated plot and numerous characters, was doomed to but brief success. But "Chatterton", presented on February 12, 1835, to an audience tense with expectancy, was received with acclaim. The next day the name of

Alfred de Vigny was famous. He was hailed as the creator of a new drama.

At the most brilliant hour in his career, almost on the day following the triumph of his "Chatterton", his literary production suffered an abrupt halt. Except for the three episodes of "Servitude et Grandeur Militaires", and a few splendid poetic bits such as "Le Mont des Oliviers" et "La Maison du Berger", he published nothing during the remaining twenty-two years of his life. And yet his thoughts were never more fruitful than in those silent years, as the posthumous publications were to prove. Why was he silent? Because he was a poet and not a "producteur". He knew how to be silent when the voice within was silent. In speaking of the dramatic possibilities of "Moïse" and "la Colère de Samson", Poizat asks, "Pourquoi Vigny n'a-t-il pas construit l'oeuvre que ce fragment appelait?" And he answers his question, "Parce qu'il n'en a même pas eu l'idée et parce que la formule alors adoptée au théâtre ne le conduisait qu'à 'Chatterton' et à la 'Maréchale d'Ancre', deux pièces que vingt autres, à sa place pouvaient écrire aussi bien que lui. N'est-il pas désolant de voir le mal que peut causer ainsi une idée fausse, un préjugé retourné?" (31)

In explaining why Vigny wrote so little, Petit de Julleville says, "La sobriété, non pas faute de matière et d'inspiration, mais volontaire et réfléchie, par goût, par choix, par scrupule, la discrétion poétique, pour ainsi dire, est le premier signe d'une nature comme celle de Vigny. Celui-là n'est pas un homme de métier, un versificateur éperdu et intempérant, qui n'a pas besoin de penser pour écrire, un virtuose, habile et détaché, qui se plaît à improviser des variations. Ce n'est pas purement un génie lyrique qu'un rien suffit à émouvoir et à ébranler, une âme aisément impressionnable, un 'écho sonore'. Ce n'est pas davantage un génie oratoire et abondant, un accumulateur de mots, un assembleur d'images, qui s'appellent, qui s'engendrent les uns les autres. Le vol des grands oiseaux, lorsqu'ils commencent à s'élever de terre, a toujours un peu de lourdeur et de gaucherie. Ceux-là ne volent pas, ne sautillent pas de branche en branche; ils n'émigrent pas; ils ont une maison et une aire; ils ne vont pas en bande, comme les étourneaux, mais ils planent très haut, à perte de vue; ils sont avec cela farouches et cachés; on ne les aperçoit que rarement dans certains pays". (32)

Moreover Alfred de Vigny was enduring many sorrows. His mother had become an invalid, his wife was ill, and he himself suffered from an incurable malady. He held the highest ideals of duty and honor and in no instance did he fail to do everything possible for those dear sick ones for whom he constituted himself a "garde-malade" during those long years of illness. Of no one did he write unkindly except Molé whose depreciatory words spoken at Vign's reception into the Academy touched him to the quick. "Qu'est-ce qu'une grande vie?" he says. "C'est un rêve de jeunesse réalisé dans l'âge mûr". (33) "Le monde de la poésie et du travail de la pensée a été pour moi un champ d'asile que je labourais et où je m'endormais au milieu de mes fleurs et de mes fruits pour oublier les peines amères de ma vie, ses ennuis profonds, et surtout le mal intérieur que je ne cesse de me faire en retournant contre mon cœur le dard empoisonné de mon esprit pénétrant et toujours agité". (34)

He did not wish to live like a slave resigned to Destiny, but, rebellious, he sought in the struggle greatness of character. It is this opposition of soul and destiny that explains his life, his ideas, and his art. Destiny had made him an aristocrat. "Étant né gentilhomme, il faisait l'oraison funèbre de la noblesse". (35) Conflict filled the silent tragedy of his life. As a child his body and heart had "la délicatesse d'une jeune fille". (36) His teachers, his comrades at school, and later the officers in the army made him realize the coldness of human society. To avoid this suffering, flight alone was left to him and he withdrew within himself in meditation and dream. "Consolons-nous de tout par la pensée que nous jouissons de notre pensée même". (37) Solitude became dearer day by day. "Le recueillement est aussi saint que la prière". (38) But meditation in peace was not his. His own inheritance was extremely small and that of his wife was so involved that they realized very little from it. "Naître sans fortune est le plus grand des maux". (39) "Il n'y a dans le monde que deux sortes d'hommes, ceux qui ont et ceux qui gagnent.....Pour moi, né dans la première de ces deux classes, il m'a fallu vivre comme la deuxième et le sentiment de cette destinée me révoltait toujours intérieurement". (40)

Adding to his unhappiness was his passionate love for Madame Dorval. Maurice Masson writes, "Il aime, lui, le chantre exquis ^à Pudeur (Éloa Chant III),.....lui

qui semblait comme préservé de tous les appétits matériels,lui, qui saluait sa muse incorporelle avec cette ferveur d'adoration mystique, "O ma muse, ma muse! toi, tu n'as pas de corps, tu es une âme, une belle âme, une déesse", (41) il fut touché, lui aussi, par l'universel besoin de caresse et d'amour". (42) Thus this soul who was so eager for independence and who would have been so proud in it, did not win it from Destiny, but instead tasted one by one all its forms of servitude: servitude of race, of society, of money, of woman, of the body, then the servitude of death, the last sign of his slavery and at the same time his entrance into freedom.

Emile Montégut regretted the publication of Alfred de Vigny's "Journal". In his opinion, Vigny did not have any influence upon his age and voluntarily wrapped himself in silence. "Il y avait chez lui de la sécheresse, de l'amertume, de l'orgueil blessé, de la misanthropie,.... c'était une âme malheureuse". (43) This brings to mind the thought uttered by Tolstoi in his letter of October 14, 1887, to Rolland Romain: "Never do true artists share the common man's power of contented enjoyment", (44) and embodied in the series of biographies planned by Rolland who says, "Let them not complain too piteously, the unhappy ones, for the best of men share their lot". (45) "Life is hard. It is a continuous struggle for all those who can not come to terms with mediocrity. For the most part it is a painful struggle, lacking sublimity, lacking happiness, fought in solitude and silence. Oppressed by poverty, by domestic cares, by crushing and gloomy tasks, demanding an aimless expenditure of energy, joyless and hopeless, most people work in isolation, without even the comfort of being able to stretch forth a hand to their brothers in misfortune". (46) Rolland recognizes that there is another greatness, a profounder one, than that of action: greatness of suffering. Even so Vigny does not allow a chance to escape to declare that the man of thought is superior to the man of action.

Vigny's nature is that of an idealist without illusions. "La seule fin vraie à laquelle l'esprit arrive en pénétrant tout au fond de chaque perspective, c'est le néant de tout: gloire, amour, bonheur". (47) Vigny admits that he had been duped by his ideals but avers that there is nothing to be preferred to them. He realized in himself the poetic theory which he advances in the Préface of Cinq-Mars: the same profound difference between "la vérité qui convient à l'art et le vrai de la réalité, entre l'histoire et le fait, il l'a établie entre l'artiste et l'homme". (48)

In further analysis of Vigny's character, Montégut states that he had an inveterate grudge against two persons, both important but in varying degrees: Dieu et M. Molé. Of the two, the less explicable but by far the more serious is the grudge against God. What were the origin and cause of this quarrel? Certainly Alfred de Vigny was one of the privileged of the earth, his name was noble, his poetic gifts remarkable, his intelligence superior, and esteem for him general. Was it poverty? "Mon père resta seul et m'éleva avec peu de fortune, malheur dont rien ne tire quand on est honnête homme". (49) There is no doubt but that poverty is a misfortune but sometimes it carries its own compensation. So it was in the case of Vigny. It kept him in solitude hedged around by his own dignity and self-respect and he did not have to fear the insults of men. It gave him reserve, discretion, and pride. Rather than a grudge against poverty, Vigny in a measure owed it some gratitude.

Did the secret of his misanthropy and bitterness lie in some offense against his vanity? He was unusually sensitive and could never forgive the régime which allowed him to serve nine years in the lower ranks of the army. Therefore he saw the fall of the Bourbons with unruffled calmness of mind. "Je me sens heureux d'avoir quitté l'armée; treize ans de service mal récompensés m'ont acquitté envers les Bourbons". (50)

Perhaps he felt that his literary fame did not equal his merit. And in that he was not entirely wrong. His part in the great literary reformation of his time has never been fully appreciated. In his production of "Othello" he carried to triumph the principles of the Romanticists. He was an originator not a follower, and had reason to believe that his place was not sufficiently exalted. But whom could he blame if not himself? Too often he allowed himself to be forgotten completely; he shut himself up in his "tour d'ivoire" and failed to take the place as leader which might have been his had he shown a more aggressive spirit.

If the cause of his strange misanthropy does not yet appear, it may be found in the obscurity of his nature and temperament which defies all explanation. Consider his "Journal". It seems to be a moral void except for the paragraphs which he wrote under the grief of his mother's death. He seemed to have no belief. Religious faith disappeared early in his life. Various systems of philosophy inspired in him no

confidence and he even refused to allow himself to subscribe to any political conviction. If a God does exist, he is a tyrant.

S'il est vrai qu'au Jardin sacré des Écritures,
Le Fils de l'homme ait dit ce qu'on voit rapporté;
Muet, aveugle et sourd au cri des créatures,
Si le Ciel nous laissa comme un monde avorté,
Le juste opposera le dédain à l'absence,
Et ne répondra plus que par un froid silence
Au silence éternel de la Divinité. (51)

How could one be otherwise than sad in such a state of mind? To look within and find only a moral Sahara beautified with a few poetic mirages is sufficient to induce sadness. One faith only remained to him and that was the belief in honor. But honor cannot take the place of a faith which gives a man a support outside of himself. Honor is merely a decoration of the soul. The incredulity of Vigny seems sufficient to explain everything. There are some states of mind, some conditions of the soul more violent than lack of belief but there is none more deplorable.

But in his pessimism one thing saved Alfred de Vigny: he did not cease to love "ses frères de douleurs", the humble, the resigned, the group of souls that have such petty destinies. It was not only reflexion on his own case that led him to his pessimistic views but an impersonal consideration of the suffering which ravaged every creature. Nothing could describe better the beautiful yet sad fluctuations of his life than that simple story in which he put all that he was and all that he dreamed, "La Bouteille à la mer". It is the story of Vigny himself. He too wished to work for humanity, but without mingling with it. He too remained solitary in life like the sailor on his vessel, but the sea was unkind to him and he suffered from its daily attacks, gradually disappearing in the storms. His ideas did not bring him the peace of mind that he had hoped. He saw everywhere "l'homme spiritualiste étouffé par la société matérialiste". (52) "Servitude et Grandeur..... pourrait être l'épigraphe de toute son oeuvre, le mot où viendraient se résumer cette âme pascalienne, si tourmentée de contradictions, cette vie qui s'est épuisée à réaliser d'irréalisables rêves, cette pensée qui a oscillé du doute impie à la foi sereine, cet art qui a hésité entre la stérilité aristocratique et la prédication sociale. Mais la servitude n'est qu'une apparence. C'est à la grandeur qu'appartient le dernier

mot: grandeur de cette vie,.....de cette pensée, de cet art.....La Destinée qui l'avait tant de fois contredit, lui réservait une fin plus douce; et c'est d'une main confiante.....qu'il lui aussi, au jour du dernier naufrage, a 'lancé la bouteille à la mer et salué les jours de l'avenir". (53)

Equally beautiful is the tribute paid Vigny by Gaillard de Champris: "Il est grand surtout par l'unité harmonieuse de sa pensée, de son oeuvre et de sa vie..... Vigny fut toujours fidèle à lui-même; sa vie fut orgueilleuse peut-être, mais douloureuse à coup sûr et bienfaisante; sa doctrine est grave, hautaine et généreuse; son art probe, sévère et sublime. Poète, il nous procure les jouissances esthétiques les plus élevées et les plus pures; philosophe, il fait penser; homme, il apprend à vivre. Triple mérite infiniment rare qui, à défaut des manifestations bruyantes, des admirations collectives et intéressées, lui vaut l'hommage recueilli, mais plus précieux, de ceux qui honorent en esprit et en vérité, tout acte de Vertu, tout effort vers le Vrai". (54)

REASONS FOR VIGNY'S INTEREST IN CHATTERTON

A cursory review of the lives of the two men, Alfred de Vigny and Thomas Chatterton, shows that there was ample reason, both by contrasts and parallels, why A. de Vigny chose Chatterton as a symbol and an illustration of the theme he wished to prove. Léon Séché says, "De 1829 à 1835, c'est-à-dire, de la représentation d'"Othello" à "Chatterton", Vigny ne vécut que pour Shakespeare ou du souvenir de l'Angleterre. Tout cela s'harmonisait avec sa nature calme et sa douce gravité". (55) In 1828 he had married an Englishwoman and that naturally intensified his interest in things English. In addition his translation of "Othello" had been produced and successfully so. The story of Chatterton appealed to his intellect and his sympathies, and around this young poet, Vigny wove the romance which culminated in his greatest triumph.

Thomas Chatterton was of humble and obscure lineage. His father was of no great value to his community and country; his mother possessed some admirable qualities but was very meek and self-effacing. Alfred de Vigny, on the other hand, was descended from a noble line. His father was known and recognized for his services to his country. The mother was strong-minded, well-educated, and unyielding in the face of various disasters which came to the family. But both boys had this in common: an undying and unselfish love for their mothers. After Chatterton went to London from Bristol he wrote long letters to his mother and sister and very frequently sent them expensive gifts which he could not afford. He tried also to tell his mother only the cheerful side of things and that was all too soon a difficult task. Even in his darkest hours he never allowed her to know his deep distress. The same spirit was manifest in Vigny. He kept his mother with him always, spared her all knowledge of his fast diminishing means during her long illness, and never intimated to her the agony his own malady was causing him.

Chatterton at Colston's and Vigny at the lycée in the faubourg St. Honoré both suffered as only a sensitive, precocious child can suffer from uncongenial tasks and taunting comrades. Both studied prodigiously and

advanced rapidly even while their souls were yearning for different fare. Both read everything available and insisted that they learned more at home than at school. Early ambitions stirred within them. Chatterton was a mere child when he said he wanted his name to be heralded around the world. In truth he began early to acquire literary fame, for he was only ten or eleven years old when his first poems were published in a local paper. Vigny wrote when still very young, but feeling the unworthiness of his lines he destroyed them. Both boys were silent and gloomy, Chatterton being melancholy to a distressing degree. However writing brought them relief. Mary Newton, Chatterton's sister, said that her brother seemed more cheerful after he began to write, and Vigny said that writing eased his heart. They formed no intimate friendships, and after Chatterton's death no one knew of the lad's secret dreams and ambitions. His manuscripts were his secret self and into them he had poured his very life. And as to Vigny, "Monte si haut au-dessus des autres hommes,.....il contemple face à face la pure Vérité et la pure Beauté,....Comment après les longues heures de contemplation et de vision sur les cimes, redescendre au milieu de ces hommes qui vivent d'une vie si grossière....? Vigny n'en a pas le courage". (56) His "Journal" was his *Moi*; into it went his meditations and his dreams. Just as Chatterton very early meditated the Rowley plan, so Vigny studied and thought long before writing. The first important publications of both men were unsigned and the posthumous publications of both help to reveal the greatness of their authors.

Both men were prepossessing in appearance and manner; they had the look of the unusual, and intensified that impression by holding themselves aloof. But perhaps the most outstanding characteristic common to the two was their great unyielding pride with their extreme sensitiveness. Pride caused them both untold anguish; it hampered Chatterton from his earliest years and it was largely responsible for his death. He realized it and admitted it, but he was never able to overcome it. His feeling that the world was against him, that the rich and powerful hindered when they should have helped, his exquisite singing, all these things were paralleled in Vigny and led him to choose Chatterton as an example of the martyrdom inflicted on poets by society. In the three episodes of "Stello" and in the play, "Chatterton", which are used as a basis for this present study, and in "Moïse" --not the poet but the leader of men--Alfred de Vigny developed his thesis.

But of all these it was the tragedy of Chatterton's life that haunted him most, since he was not content with treating it once: "Je me sens ému à la mémoire de ces oeuvres naïves et puissantes que créa le génie primitif et méconnu de 'Chatterton mort à dix-huit ans'! Cela ne devrait faire qu'un nom, comme 'Charlemagne'. (57)

Whether Thomas Chatterton is a hero worthy of the honor bestowed upon him, is a question which can never be completely settled. Alfred de Vigny says himself, "Le poète était tout pour moi; Chatterton n'était qu'un nom d'homme.....Toi, que tes compatriotes appellent aujourd'hui merveilleux enfant! que tu aies été juste ou non, tu as été malheureux; j'en suis certain, et cela me suffit.--Ame désolée, pauvre âme de dix-huit ans! pardonne-moi de prendre pour symbole le nom que tu portais sur la terre, et de tenter le bien en ton nom".(58)

III

"HISTOIRE DE KITTY BELL" IN "STELLO".

"Le poète est le martyr inévitable de toute société et de toute forme de gouvernement,.....lui sera éternellement un étranger, un déshérité parmi les hommes, en tout temps, en tout lieu, sous toutes les formes de gouvernement. Pour prouver cette thèse, il (Vigny) a pris trois poètes placés sous trois formes de gouvernement différentes. Gilbert, sous une monarchie absolue, Chatterton sous une monarchie représentative et Chénier sous une république démocratique et il les a montrés expirant tous trois sous la cruauté ou l'indifférence sociale". (59)

It is the second of these three episodes of "Stello" which, under the title of "Histoire de Kitty Bell" has for its hero Thomas Chatterton and centers around Chatterton's London life. Kitty was a young English woman, "une marchande de gâteaux" at whose shop, which stood near the Parliament buildings, the members of the two Houses frequently met to continue their discussions while eating her buns. Kitty Bell was exquisite with "son nez aquilin, ses grands yeux bleus, le visage tendre, pâle et allongé, la taille élevée et mince". (60) She had two children, eight and ten years old, who assisted their mother in the shop. Her husband, Master Bell, one of the best saddle-makers in London, was so completely absorbed in his trade that he left the responsibility of the pastry-shop to Kitty, in whose wisdom and virtue he had complete confidence. She was like a statue of Peace as she stood behind the counter, and her presence inspired order and quiet.

It was in 1770 that the Frenchman, who relates the story, and who was designated as le Docteur-Noir because of his continual gloom and his black clothes, happened into the Bell shop. He was so struck by the restful, pleasant atmosphere that he went back again and again until he had formed the habit of dropping in to sit a while, to read the papers, and to watch the people. Among other things he observed that every day when the fog was thick in the late afternoon, a certain shadow passed on the sidewalk along the front of the shop. Kitty Bell, upon seeing the shadow, would give her older boy something which he carried out doors. Then

the shadow would disappear. The Docteur-Noir recognized the shadow as being the figure of a very young man whose black coat could not hide the grace of his body, and whose triangular shaped hat, although drawn down, allowed two blazing eyes to be seen. The first time this happened the doctor felt a keen disappointment. Was Kitty Bell less virtuous than he had thought? The second time he complimented himself on his shrewdness for having observed what the other customers seemed to have disregarded. The third time he felt such a great desire to know more about the affair that he tried every means, save that of direct questioning, to learn who the man was and why Kitty Bell befriended him. But to no avail. She told him nothing, she continued to stand behind her counter as calm and composed as if nothing had happened. Her countenance was still placid and her smile pure and unchanged. But the doctor vowed he would find out the meaning of this daily pantomime, and his persistence was rewarded in the following fashion.

One day the doctor went to the shop earlier than was his wont. The two children were walking up and down before the door. Upon going into the shop, the doctor's glance fell on Kitty Bell. He was startled. There she stood with the same calm and regular features, yet it was not the same woman. Rather it was her statue. Not a drop of blood colored her skin, her lips were pale and the fire gone from her eyes. Yet, when the doctor sat down in front of the counter, she smiled. He rose and as he shook hands with her, she gave him a letter with an air of despair, as if she were showing him one of her children dead at her feet. "Lisez, mon ami, je vous le permets, et cela m'importe peu". (61)

The doctor took the letter and opened it. "Ma chère madame", it began, "A vous seule je me confierai, à vous, madame, à vous, Kitty, à vous, beauté paisible et silencieuse qui seule avez fait descendre sur moi le regard ineffable de la pitié. J'ai résolu d'abandonner pour toujours votre maison; et j'ai un moyen sûr de m'acquitter envers vous. Mais je veux déposer en vous le secret de mes misères, de ma tristesse, de mon silence et de mon absence obstinée. Je suis un hôte trop sombre pour vous, il est temps que cela finisse. Écoutez bien ceci.

"J'ai dix-huit ans aujourd'hui. Si l'âme ne se développe, comme je le crois, et ne peut étendre ses ailes qu'après que nos yeux ont vu pendant quatorze ans la lumière du soleil; si...la mémoire ne commence

qu'après quatorze années à ouvrir ses tables,....je puis dire que mon âme n'a que quatre ans.....Dès le jour où elle a commencé de fendre l'air du front et de l'aile, elle ne s'est pas posée à terre une fois;... Jamais le sommeil des nuits n'a été une interruption au mouvement de ma pensée.....Aujourd'hui la fatigue accable mon âme, et elle est semblable à celle dont il est dit dans le Livre saint: 'Les âmes blessées pousseront leurs cris vers le ciel'. Pourquoi ai-je été créé tel que je suis? J'ai fait ce que j'ai dû faire, et les hommes m'ont repoussé comme un ennemi. Si dans la foule il n'y a pas de place pour moi, je m'en irai". (62)

Here follow the directions to Kitty Bell: "On trouvera dans ma chambre...des papiers et des parchemins confusément entassés. Ils ont l'air vieux, et ils sont jeunes: la poussière qui les couvre est factice; c'est moi qui suis le Poète de ces poèmes; le moine Rowley, c'est moi.....Il (Rowley) a chanté comme Ossian. Il a chanté la "Bataille d'Hastings", la tragédie d'"Ella", la ballade de Charité,.....celle de "Sir William Canynge" qui vous a tant plu; la tragédie de Goddvyng", le "Tournoi" et les vieilles "Eglogues" du temps de Henri II. Ce qu'il m'a fallu de travaux durant quatre ans pour arriver à parler ce langage du quinzième siècle, dont le moine Rowley est supposé se servir pour traduire le moine Turgot...eût rempli les quatre-vingts années de ce moine imaginaire. J'ai fait de ma chambre la cellule d'un cloître,....j'ai fait mon coeur plus simple, et l'ai baigné dans le bénitier de la foi catholique;....j'ai placé ma Muse religieuse dans sa châsse comme une sainte.

"Parmi ceux qui l'ont vue, quelques-uns ont prié devant elle et passé outre; beaucoup d'autres ont ri; un grand nombre m'a injurié; tous m'ont foulé aux pieds. J'espérais que l'illusion de ce nom supposé ne serait qu'un voile pour moi; je sens qu'elle ~~est~~ m'est un linceul. O ma belle amie, sage et douce hospitalière qui m'avez recueilli! croirez-vous que je n'ai pu réussir à renverser le fantôme de Rowley que j'avais créé de mes mains? Cette statue de pierre est tombée sur moi et m'a tué; savez-vous comment? Épouvantés de voir comment quelques esprits élevés se passaient de main en main les parchemins que j'avais passé les nuits à inventer, comment le moine Rowley paraissait aussi grand qu'Homère à lord Chatham, à lord North, à sir William Draper, au juge Blackstone, à quelques autres hommes célèbres, ils (envious men) se sont hâtés de croire à la réalité

de mon Poète imaginaire; j'ai pensé d'abord qu'il me serait facile de me faire connaître.....mort et vivant, le Poète a été repoussé par les têtes solides dont un signe ou un mot décide des destinées de la Grande-Bretagne: le reste n'a pas osé lire. Cela reviendra quand je ne serai plus: ce moment-là ne peut tarder beaucoup: j'ai fini ma tâche: 'Othello's occupation's gone'.

"Ils ont dit qu'il y avait en moi la patience et l'imagination; ils ont cru que de ces deux flambeaux on pouvait souffler l'un et conserver l'autre....J'essayai de leur obéir, parce que je n'avais plus de pain et qu'il en fallait envoyer à Bristol pour ma mère qui est très vieille, et qui va mourir après moi". (63) He tried various tedious tasks but without success. Every one believed him "incapable de choses utiles; j'ai dit: Vous avez raison, et je me suis retiré." (64) At last he has appealed to the Lord-Mayor, Beckford, who has sent word that he will come himself to see the young man. Now that the hour has come for the visit, the poet does not know if he can endure to "voir en face un protecteur.....Tout le matin j'ai rôdé sur le bord de la Tamise....J'ai passé dix fois devant votre porte, je vous ai regardée sans être aperçu de vous.....J'ai espéré que la mort me prendrait ainsi,....mais mon corps faible est doué pourtant d'une insurmontable vitalité". (65) He has refrained from speaking to Kitty Bell lest he should see a tear in her eye and that would make him recoil from his determination.

"Je vous laisse tous mes livres, tous mes parchemins et tous mes papiers, et je vous demande en échange le pain de ma mère; vous n'aurez pas longtemps à le lui envoyer. Voici la première page qu'il me soit arrivé d'écrire avec tranquillité. On ne sait pas assez quelle paix intérieure est donnée à celui qui a résolu de se reposer pour toujours. On dirait que l'éternité se fait sentir d'avance, et qu'elle est pareille à ces belles contrées de l'Orient dont on respire l'air embaumé longtemps avant d'en avoir touché le sol". The letter is signed "Thomas Chatterton". (66)

No sooner had the doctor finished reading the letter than in the fog a gilded coach drew up before the door of the shop. Footmen carried torches before the horses and behind the carriage. "The Lord-Mayor", Kitty cried, "et par un instinct maternel et inexplicable, elle courut embrasser ses enfants, elle qui

avait une joie d'amante!"(67) It was indeed Beckford, the Lord-Mayor, not formidable to the King as some of his predecessors had been, but a worthy gentleman, who filled his office gravely and politely, and occupied a palace in which he at times entertained the King and drank prodigiously without ever losing his composure. "Le brave homme était d'une haute taille, avait le nez gros et rouge, tombant sur un menton rouge et gros. Il avait un ventre paresseux, dédaigneux et gourmand, longuement emmailloté dans une veste de brocart d'or; des joues orgueilleuses, satisfaites, opulentes, paternelles, pendant largement sur la cravate; des jambes solides, monumentales et goutteuses, qui le portaient noblement d'un pas prudent, mais ferme et honorable; une queue poudrée, enfermée dans une grande bourse qui couvrait ses rondes et larges épaules, dignes de porter, comme un monde, la charge de 'Lord-Mayor'. Tout cet homme descendit de voiture lentement et péniblement". (68)

While he was thus getting out of his carriage, Kitty Bell ventured to express her belief that Chatterton would return when he saw the carriage of the Lord-Mayor. And indeed, while the footmen were holding the lights for Beckford to enter the shop, the pale shadow with burning eyes, slipped past the window and came in after Beckford. The doctor looked eagerly at Chatterton. Only eighteen years old, his hair unpowdered, his eyes, black, large, piercing, his lips which seemed never to have smiled. He carried his hat under his arm and kept his eyes fixed on Kitty's face. He was dressed in black from head to foot, and his coat buttoned to his chin gave him an appearance both military and ecclesiastical. He advanced to the Lord-Mayor who extended his hand. They looked at each other in surprise. Several people had come into the shop and were eating and talking without paying any attention to what was taking place. But when Beckford began to talk in the patronizing tone of one who condescends to offer his protection, every one fell silent and listened. Kitty's eyes were wet with tears, so happy was she to know that some one with power was extending a hand to Chatterton.

The Lord-Mayor began by returning to Chatterton some verses which he had received from the poet the day before. He is prompt, he understands, as he says, the state of mind of a poor young poet and he has come to see for himself how Chatterton is lodged and to make him a little proposition. He remembers the time when he himself tried to please the ladies by writing verses.

But he was wise enough even then, to give only his spare time to the Muses, and soon forsook them to devote himself wholly to business, which has amply rewarded him. He wishes to rescue Chatterton from the unhappy predicament in which the young man finds himself, and moreover he wants to show that no one appeals in vain to this Lord-Mayor. Chatterton has done nothing but write a few verses in unintelligible English. The lines are not beautiful, and even if they were, "je vous parle en père,....à quoi bon? je vous le demande, à quoi bon?" (69) Chatterton did not reply. He seemed to read in the smile of all those present, "Of what use are they?" Beckford continued, "Un bon Anglais qui veut être utile à son pays doit prendre un carrière qui le mette dans une ligne honnête et profitable. Voyons, enfant, répondez-moi.--Quelle idée vous faites-vous de vos devoirs?" (70)

Chatterton replied in a gentle, hollow voice, "L'Angleterre est un vaisseau: notre île en a la forme; la proue tournée au nord, elle est comme à l'ancre au milieu des mers, surveillant le continent....C'est à bord du grand navire qu'est notre ouvrage à tous. Le Roi, les Lords, les Communes, sont au pavillon, au gouvernail et à la boussole; nous autres, nous devons tous avoir la main aux cordages, monter aux mâts, tendre les voiles et charger les canons; nous sommes tous de l'équipage, et nul n'est inutile dans la manoeuvre de notre glorieux navire". (71)

His words astounded his listeners. They did not know whether to scoff or applaud. The Lord-Mayor set the example by exclaiming, "Well, very well!....Rule Britannia!....Mais, mon garçon,....que peut faire le poète dans la manoeuvre?" (72) Chatterton remained motionless, but raising his eyes he answered, "Le poète cherche aux étoiles quelle route nous montre le doigt du Seigneur". (73) The reply provoked Beckford. Imagination instead of good sense and judgment! This man was too much given to poetry, he would never succeed. "La Poésie est à nos yeux une étude de style assez intéressante à observer, et faite quelquefois par des gens d'esprit; mais qui la prend au sérieux? Quelque sot. La plus belle muse du monde ne peut suffire à nourrir son homme;... Vous avez essayé de tout ce que pouvait donner la vôtre; quittez-la, mon garçon. Lisez ceci; acceptez l'offre que je vous fais et vous vous en trouverez bien". He handed a note to Chatterton, adding, "Il s'agit de cent livres sterling par an". (74)

Kitty Bell could scarcely restrain her joy. She bowed low to the departing Lord-Mayor, who smiled upon the group with the air of a bishop conferring confirmation. He expected to see Chatterton follow him to the door, but he caught a glimpse of the youth who, after casting a glance at the note, suddenly seized his manuscripts, threw them into the fire, and disappeared from the room. Beckford smiled with satisfaction. "I see that I have brought him to mend his ways. He is giving up poetry". And he drove off. But the doctor said to himself, "It is life that he is giving up". Kitty Bell had seen Chatterton's face. Seizing the doctor's hand, she hurried him toward the door which Chatterton had left open. Their departure was not noticed in the noisy discussion of the Lord-Mayor's beneficence.

Kitty Bell quickly closed the door behind them. They were at the foot of a long flight of stairs. There she stopped, overcome, clinging to the railing and unable to go further. Wild-eyed and crouching on the lowest step, she motioned to the doctor to go up. "Vite! Vite! Allez!" (75) The doctor hastened up, and reaching the top step was wondering which way to turn when a door suddenly opened. The doctor looked into a little room whose floor was littered with papers torn into a thousand pieces. It was Chatterton who had opened the door. He was swaying and about to fall; the doctor seized him and supported him. On the youth's face was the look of wakeless sleep; his eyes were half-opened but unseeing. He shook his head as if to say it was useless to attempt to do anything for him and with his foot he pushed a small vial which lay on the floor. The vial rolled down the stairs to the last step where Kitty Bell still sat. When she saw it, she screamed and, trembling, started to drag herself up the stairs by clinging to the banisters. Chatterton guessed that it was she and made a motion for her to go away, then he seemed to fall asleep on the doctor's shoulder. The doctor started to carry him to the bed, but with wonderful vitality, for he had taken sixty grains of opium, Chatterton regained consciousness and implored: "Monsieur, you----médecin, achetez-moi mon corps, et payez ma dette". (76) Then in spite of the doctor, he staggered to the top of the stairs, fell on his knees, held out his arms to Kitty Bell, uttered a long cry and fell forward, dead.

The doctor tried to reach Kitty Bell to prevent her seeing Chatterton, but he was too late. He took her

by the arm and made her sit down on the steps. She obeyed passively, crouching wild-eyed like a mad woman. Her whole body shook. The doctor took from her hand the small vial which she had brought up the stairs and her glance seemed to say, as did Juliet, "L'ingrat! avoir tout bu! ne pas me laisser une goutte amie!" (77) The pall of silence was rent by a loud, gruff call from below, "Come, mistress Bell!" Kitty Bell sprang up. It was the voice of her husband. "Come, mistress Bell!", (78) the voice repeated. This second call started her down the steps, slowly like one deaf and blind. The doctor aided her to the foot of the stairs. She walked into the shop, stepped behind the counter, took a small Bible from her pocket, opened it and began to read. Then she swooned away and fell back in her chair.

In the midst of the excitement, the doctor handed Mr. Bell three guineas, saying that they paid the rent for Mr. Chatterton, who was dead. Bell counted them carefully and his sole comment was "Oh!" spoken in a tone of great satisfaction. "The body belongs to me," added the doctor, "I shall have it taken away." And indeed it did belong to him, for Chatterton had had the calm foresight to leave on his table this note, "Je vends mon corps au docteur (le nom en blanc) à la condition de payer à M. Bell six mois de loyer de ma chambre, montant à la somme de trois guineas. Je désire qu'il ne reproche pas à ses enfants les gâteaux qu'ils m'apportaient chaque jour, et qui, depuis un mois, ont seuls soutenu ma vie". (79)

As for Kitty, a few days later when the doctor, after providing for the burial of Chatterton, went back to the pastry-shop, he saw only the two children, singing and playing, dressed in black. It took eighteen months to gather up, paste together and translate the bits of the manuscripts which Chatterton in his fury had torn up. Those he had burned contained the end of the "Battle of Hastings" of which only two cantos remain.

What Beckford had offered Chatterton in the letter, "C'était une place de premier valet de chambre chez lui". (80)

In speaking of "Stello", Montégut says, "Les trois nouvelles qui composent 'Stello' sont la grâce et la coquetterie même. Il n'est certes aucun lecteur imaginaire qui n'ait gardé dans sa mémoire aussi vivement que le jour où elles y firent empreinte pour la première fois leurs petites figurines aussi nettement taillées

que des miniatures découpées sur agate: le roi Louis XV et Mlle de Coulanges, vivants résumés de toutes les grâces espiègles, de toutes les vivacités libertines et de toutes les spirituelles puérilités de la littérature romanesque et de l'art rococo du XVIII^e siècle; le lord-maire tout bouffi d'importance, --pareil à une caricature de sot échappée d'une toile d'Hogarth; Kitty Bell à la grâce sévère....." (81)

To Paléologue, "Stello" recalls Sterne and Diderot "par la fantaisie de la forme, où les pensées et les rêveries de l'auteur s'inséraient comme d'elles-mêmes entre les épisodes de la narration". (82) And it is by means of one of these inserted musings that Vigny allows us to see his own admiration for Chatterton's poetry. "Oui, continua Stello, oui,...je me sens ému à la mémoire de ces oeuvres naïves et puissantes que créa le génie primitif et méconnu de Chatterton mort à dix-huit ans!.....si vous pouvez vous émouvoir, ne sera-ce pas en vous rappelant le début simple et antique de la 'Bataille d'Hastings'?.....il est rare qu'une si simple et si magnifique création que celle de la 'Bataille d'Hastings' vienne du même poète anglais que ces chants élysiaques qui la suivent; quel poète anglais écrivit rien de semblable à cette ballade de 'Charité' si naïvement intitulée: 'An excolente balade of Charitie'?rien de naïf comme le dialogue de l'abbé de Saint-Godwyn et de son pauvre; que le début est simple et beau! que j'ai toujours aimé cette tempête qui saisit la mer dans son calme! quelles couleurs nettes et justes! quel large tableau, tel que depuis l'Angleterre n'en a pas eu de meilleurs en ses poétiques galeries!" (83)

With this understanding and appreciation of Chatterton and his poetry, Alfred de Vigny wrote the second episode of "Stello", which he was still further to develop in his play "Chatterton" to show that "De par l'autorité de son génie, le poète demeure encore, ainsi que Dante voulait qu'il fût, le véritable conducteur des peuples; il ne doit sortir ni de la communion humaine, ni du groupe social où la destinée l'a fait naître; il est impérieusement tenu de mettre ses dons de sensibilité, d'imagination et d'intelligence au service de ses contemporains.....Sa mission propre était de créer les idées dont l'humanité a besoin pour vivre". (84)

Thus was Alfred de Vigny himself striving in "Stello" and later in "Chatterton" as well as in his poems, to create those ideas without which mankind must starve, and thus fulfil his mission as a poet.

IV
"CHATTERTON"

The play is preceded by a full description of the "Caractères et Costumes des rôles principaux" in which we discover two characters not found in "Stello", and note in the others the same characteristics as in the story, at times even expressed in the same words.

Act I. "La scène représente un vaste appartement; arrière-boutique opulente et confortable de la maison de John Bell. A gauche du spectateur, une cheminée pleine de charbon de terre allumé. A droite, la porte de la chambre à coucher de Kitty Bell. Au fond, une grande porte vitrée: a travers les petits carreaux, on aperçoit une riche boutique; un grand escalier tournant conduit à plusieurs portes étroites et sombres, parmi lesquelles se trouve la porte de la petite chambre de Chatterton. Le quaker lit dans un coin de la chambre, à gauche du spectateur. A droite est assise Kitty Bell; à ses pieds un enfant assis sur un tabouret; une jeune fille debout à côté d'elle". (85)

The first words of Kitty Bell prepare the audience for the realization of the fact that she fears her husband. "Il me semble que j'entends parler monsieur; ne faites pas de bruit, enfants". "Mon Dieu, votre père est en colère;.....je l'entends bien au son de sa voix.--Ne jouez pas, je vous en prie, Rachel". (86) Then her attention is diverted from the angry voice of her husband to a book which the little girl has. It is a Bible and she devines that the young gentleman, monsieur Tom, who has been lodging there the past three months, has given it to the child. Yes, Rachel and her brother have been to his room where they found him reading and in tears. The mother tells the child to return the book and to accept no other gift from the stranger to whom her mother has not even spoken. But the Quaker shows Kitty that "rendre à un malheureux le cadeau qu'il a fait, c'est l'humilier et lui faire mesurer toute sa misère". (87) Eagerly she takes the book and bids the child keep it, yes all her life. Again the angry voice of her husband strikes terror to her heart. "N'est-ce pas comme un orage qui vient? et tous les orages tombent sur mon pauvre coeur". (88) She flees with the children, while the Quaker watching John Bell enter, comments: "Voilà l'homme riche, le spéculateur heureux; voilà l'egoïste par excellence,

Bell is followed by a group of his workmen from his mill. He has recently dismissed one of their number who did not compel his wife and children to work. "Les femmes ont des années comme nous; donc, c'est perdre un bon revenu que de laisser passer ce temps sans emploi. Tobie a laissé sa femme et ses filles dans la paresse; c'est un malheur très grand pour lui, je n'en suis pas responsable". (90) "...Il est chassé pour toujours". (91) Bell has worked hard and been saving, he is now the owner of the village, Norton, as well as the mills and insists upon his right to govern all those who live in Norton and work for him. The Quaker tries in his quiet way to bring John Bell to a realization of his injustice, but he argues, "La terre est à moi parce que je l'ai achetée; les maisons, parce que je les ai bâties; les habitants, parce que je les loge; et leur travail, parce que je le paye. Je suis juste selon la loi". (92) He sets the example for the workmen by having his wife, Kitty Bell, work. She directs the "maison de plaisance" to which the lords come on their return from Parliament or from Hyde Park. This practice establishes for him connections which will doubtless prove valuable sometime. Why wasn't Tobie as far-sighted? To the Quaker's reminder "Il s'est rompu le bras dans une de tes machines," he heartlessly replies: "Oui, et même il a rompu la machine". (93) The Quaker tries in vain to bring him to reconsider discharging the mill-hand; John Bell will have none of his meddling: "La secte de vos quakers est déjà une exception dans la chrétienté, et vous êtes vous-même une exception parmi les quakers. --Vous avez partagé tous vos biens entre vos neveux; vous ne possédez plus rien qu'une chétive subsistance et vous achevez votre vie dans l'immobilité et la méditation. --Cela vous convient, je le veux; mais ce que je ne veux pas, c'est que, dans ma maison, vous veniez, en public, autoriser mes inférieurs à l'insolence". (94) "S'il n'était vrai, docteur, que nous étions mon ami depuis vingt ans et que vous avez sauvé un de mes enfants, je ne vous reverrais jamais". (95)

Refusing to listen any longer to his moralizing, Bell summons his wife from whom he demands the accounts of the day before. He asks about the lodger who has no further identification than the name "Tom" or "Thomas", and who seems to stay up all night working in his small room. A hasty glance at the accounts reveals to John Bell the fact that five or six guineas are missing. His wife tries to avoid an explanation, but he refuses to be put off and obliges Kitty to go into her room where

there will be a reckoning, not only because of the accounts but because of the idleness in which the children are allowed to spend their days, and neglect in the house-keeping.

It is at this point that Chatterton appears for the first time. He comes down stairs, gives a kiss to Rachel, shakes hands with the Quaker who says, "Ton âme te ronge le corps. Tes mains sont brûlantes, et ton visage est pâle.--Combien de temps espères-tu vivre ainsi?

Chatterton-- Le moins possible.

Le quaker--- Ta vie n'est-elle donc utile à personne?

Chatterton-- Au contraire, ma vie est de trop à tout le monde.

Le quaker--- Crois-tu fermement ce que tu dis?

Chatterton-- Aussi fermement que vous croyez à la charité chrétienne.

Le quaker--- Quel âge as-tu donc? Ton cœur est pur et jeune comme celui de Rachel, et ton esprit expérimenté est vieux comme le mien.

Chatterton-- J'aurai demain dix-huit ans.

Le quaker--- Pauvre enfant!

Chatterton-- Pauvre? Oui.--Enfant? non...J'ai vécu mille ans". (96)

And some of those years have gone into a letter which he has just written and "qui m'a bien coûté", (97) and in which his last hope rests. The Quaker seems to feel something of the inner striving of the young man and warns him to be on his guard. "Les hommes sont divisés en deux parts: martyrs et bourreaux. Tu seras toujours martyr de tous, comme la mère de cette enfant-là". (98) But Chatterton resents that idea: "La bonté d'un homme ne le rend victime que jusqu'ou il le veut bien, et l'affranchissement est dans sa main....Dites-moi pourquoi on ne se laisserait pas aller à la pente de son caractère, dès qu'on est sûr de quitter la partie quand la lassitude viendra? Pour moi, j'ai résolu de ne me point masquer et d'être moi-même jusqu'à la fin....On me trahit de tout côté, je le vois, et me laisse tromper par dédain de moi-même, par ennui de prendre ma défense. J'envie quelques hommes en voyant le plaisir qu'ils trouvent à triompher de moi par des ruses grossières. Je suis assez vengé par leur abaissement, qui m'élève à mes yeux, et il me semble que la Providence ne peut laisser aller longtemps les choses de la sorte. N'avait-elle pas son but en me créant? Ai-je le droit de me roidir contre elle pour réformer la nature? Est-ce à moi de démentir Dieu?

Le quaker--- En toi, la rêverie continuelle a tué l'action.
 Chatterton-- Eh! Qu'importe, si une heure de cette
 rêverie produit plus d'œuvres que vingt
 jours de l'action des autres! N'y a-t-il
 pour l'homme que le travail du corps? et
 le labeur de la tête n'est-il pas digne
 de quelque pitié? Dois-je dire à l'inspiration
 ardente 'Ne viens pas, tu es inutile'?
 Le quaker--- Elle t'a marqué au front de son caractère
 fatal. Je ne te blâme pas, mon enfant,
 mais je te pleure". (99)

Just as in "Stello" Chatterton explains in the letter which he writes to Kitty Bell, his ambitions, his fears, his despair, so in the play, Chatterton tells the Quaker, often in the very words used in "Stello", that for the last three months he has been almost happy. Here no one knows his name, no one talks to him about himself, the two children are fond of him, and the Quaker, severe toward the rest of the world, is kind to him. The Quaker tells him he loves him because the world hates him: "L'imagination et le recueillement sont deux maladies dont personne n'a pitié"(100) "Et cependant", says Chatterton, "n'ai-je pas quelque droit à l'amour de mes frères, moi qui travaille pour eux nuit et jour; moi qui cherche avec tant de fatigues, dans les ruines nationales, quelques fleurs de poésie dont je puisse extraire un parfum durable; moi qui veux ajouter une perle de plus à la couronne d'Angleterre, et qui plonge dans tant de mers et de fleuves pour la chercher? J'ai fait de ma chambre la cellule d'un cloître; j'ai béni et sanctifié ma vie et ma pensée; j'ai fait mon cœur plus simple; je me suis appris le parler enfantin du vieux temps; j'ai écrit, comme le roi Harold au duc Guillaume, en vers à demi saxons et francs; et ensuite, cette muse du dixième siècle, cette muse religieuse, je l'ai placée dans une chaise comme une sainte. Ils l'auraient brisée s'ils l'avaient crue faite de ma main: ils l'ont adorée comme l'œuvre d'un moine qui n'a jamais existé et que j'ai nommé Rowley.

Le quaker--- Oui, ils aiment assez à faire vivre les morts et mourir les vivants." (101)

Chatterton continues to explain to the Quaker how he has tried to devote himself to other things than writing, "j'étais incapable de suivre les lentes opérations des calculs journaliers"; (102) his body is already too worn by nights of wakefulness to permit him to enter the navy or the army, and moreover, even

though he had the strength of a giant, "je trouverais toujours entre moi et mon ouvrage,....la fée malfaisante trouvée sans doute dans mon berceau, la Distraction, la Poésie!" (103) Poetry is life to him, it has saved him, yet it has destroyed him; he writes because he must, the voice within will not be hushed.

Just now Chatterton's attention rests upon little Rachel and he repeats a question already put three times. "Où est donc votre maman?" (104) The Quaker marks the frequency of this query and he attempts to divert Chatterton's attention when the voice of John Bell is heard. Chatterton sees Kitty Bell coming and knows that she is wretchedly unhappy. The kindly Quaker takes him away for a walk, leaving Kitty Bell and her husband alone. In spite of the latter's urging, Kitty has refused to account for the six guineas missing. For the first time she dares disobey her husband. A lie would save her but she refuses to lie, even were it to save her children, asking only to be permitted to keep silent on the subject, at least for a few weeks. But the hard-hearted manufacturer grants her only one day's grace. This she regards as a kindness, kissing his hand in gratitude only to be struck with terror, when she touches his hand, at the sudden thought that she has done something wrong in keeping the small Bible which Chatterton had given Rachel. She resolves therefore to return it.

Act II. Chatterton excitedly rushes in after his walk with the Quaker, who is amazed at his actions. They had caught a glimpse of a man, one of his friends, Lord Talbot, with his grooms. Above all things, Chatterton did not wish to be recognized, his place of refuge would be known, his peace of mind gone. The Quaker's explanation that Lord Talbot comes frequently to the Bell establishment only adds to Chatterton's agitation. He feels certain that this encounter will bring him unhappiness; it is inevitable but he is accustomed to it, he can no longer escape the enemy, Fortune, Destiny, pursues him. Then suddenly, "Croyez-vous que Mistress Bell soit très pieuse? Il me semble lui avoir vu une Bible dans les mains. Le quaker(brusquement)-- Je n'ai point vu cela. C'est une femme qui aime ses devoirs et qui craint Dieu. Mais je n'ai pas vu qu'elle eût aucun livre dans les mains. (A part) Où va-t-il se prendre! à quoi ose-t-il penser! J'aime mieux qu'il se noie que de s'attacher à cette branche...(Haut) C'est une jeune femme très

froide, qui n'est émue que pour ses enfants, quand ils sont malades.

Chatterton-- Si cette jeune femme aimait un homme, il ferait mieux de se faire sauter la cervelle que de la séduire. Ce serait affreux, n'est-ce pas?

Le quaker--- N'y aura-t-il jamais une de tes idées qui ne tourne au désespoir"? (105)

Lord Talbot had seen Chatterton. He follows him back to the house, and informs John Bell that Chatterton is a person of some importance who does not wish his name to be known. Bell instantly changes his attitude and insists that Kitty invite Chatterton to have tea with them. She requests the Quaker to extend the invitation. The latter does so, advising him not to accept. Chatterton declines and is about to escape to his room when Lord Talbot comes in, slightly intoxicated.

He is an irresponsible fellow, good-natured and jovial, whose boisterousness annoys Chatterton. He reveals at once to those present that they were at the University together, where Chatterton spent money freely, that he bought his hunter from Chatterton's father.

Lord Talbot--Mais tu sais que nous venons tous souper ici après la chasse. Ainsi, à ce soir. Ah! par Dieu! nous nous amuserons.
--Mais tu es en deuil! Ah! diable!

Chatterton (avec tristesse)-- Oui, de mon père.

Lord Talbot-- Ah! il était bien vieux aussi. Que veux-tu! te voilà héritier.

Chatterton, (amèrement)-- Oui. De tout ce qu'il lui restait. (106)

Talbot then turns his attention to Kitty Bell whom he greatly embarrasses with his too friendly greetings; "Je dis que vous êtes une puritaine; sans cela, je vous recommanderais mon ami"; (107) he laughs at the Quaker who tries to stem his heedless jests, and when Chatterton would shield them both, Lord Talbot voices his suspicion that Chatterton is there because of Mrs. Bell. All protests on the part of Chatterton are of no avail, and Kitty's name continues to be bandied about until the grooms arrive with the horses and the lord's party leaves for the hunt. John Bell wishes to ingratiate himself with Chatterton and insists that Kitty remain to chat with him and endeavor to rent him a more expensive room. He even tries to take the Quaker away, but the latter refuses to leave Chatterton and Kitty.

The encounter with Talbot has distressed Chatterton

as he knew it would. Moreover he recognizes that Kitty is disturbed, "elle est affligée! Ce n'est plus la même femme". (108) She offers him the Bible which she believes to be his, and he replies, "A présent, je serais bien aise qu'il revînt dans mes mains". (109) But if he attaches some worth to it now, she dares neither return nor keep it. The Quaker understands her feelings and takes the book. Whatever she tries to do, seems to bring unhappiness to Chatterton. In accordance with her husband's wishes, she offers him a more suitable room, but he refuses it. In reply to the Quaker's warning "Un silence qui vient de l'orgueil peut être mal compris", he exclaims, "Une torture de plus dans un martyre, qu'importe!" (110) and he leaves them abruptly. Kitty blames herself for his wretchedness. "Les premières paroles que je lui adresse lui causent du chagrin! mais en suis-je responsable aussi!les avez-vous entendus, ces jeunes gens? Comment se fait-il qu'ils aient la puissance de troubler ainsi une vie que le Sauveur même eût bénie? Où donc faut-il se cacher? Je me taisais, je baissais les yeux, j'avais étendu sur moi la solitude comme un voile, et ils l'ont déchiré. A quoi donc m'ont servi mes deux enfants toujours à mes côtés comme des anges gardiens? A quoi m'a servi la gravité de ma retraite? O mon ami, obtenez qu'ils ne reviennent jamais dans ma maison,...eux tous...et lui aussi,...oui, lui". (111)

Chatterton rushes back into the room like a madman. He walks to and fro, talking furiously without seeing any one. "Et d'ailleurs ils ne possèdent pas plus leurs richesses que je ne possède cette chambre. ...Je vous rendrai votre chambre quand vous voudrez...Pourtant je voulais encore attendre le succès d'une certaine lettre. Mais n'en parlons plus". (112) The Quaker begs him to be calm, lest he frighten Kitty who after all is a stranger to him. The word stranger infuriates him. "Il n'y a personne sur la terre à présent qui ne me soit étranger. Devant tout le monde je dois saluer et me taire. Je ne voulais qu'un peu de repos dans cette maison, le temps d'achever de coudre l'une à l'autre quelques pages que je dois. Je suis ouvrier en livres, voilà tout. Adieu, madame; adieu, monsieur. Ha! Ha! Je perds bien du temps! A l'ouvrage! à l'ouvrage!" (113) And he dashes up the stairs to his room.

The tirade has frightened Kitty Bell. This young Chatterton has deceived them. He is evidently rich instead of poor. Why did he ever come to them? Why did he arouse sympathy? And yet, he seems to be very

unhappy. The Quaker, deeply disturbed, replies: "Il serait bon que ce jeune homme mourût". "Mourir! pourquoi?" "Parce que mieux vaut la mort que la folie.....Que la plus forte raison ne tiendrait pas à ce qu'il souffre". (114) And who has caused this anguish? In part, Kitty Bell is responsible because of her silent sympathy. The peace which she inspires has touched the young man whose mind "a mûri trop vite sous les ardeurs de la poésie"..... but who has "le cœur naïf d'un enfant". (115) It is not Kitty Bell's fault, if rejected on all sides, he has found happiness in an "accueil bienveillant" and to Kitty's anxious inquiry: "Hélas! croyez-vous donc qu'il ne nous ait pas trompés?" the Quaker replies: "Ne lis-tu pas sur le front de Chatterton la timidité de la misère? Moi, je l'ai sondée, elle est profonde". (116)

Kitty Bell, horror-stricken at what she was about to do, reveals to the Quaker that she has kept from her husband a small sum of money which she spent for Chatterton, that her husband is demanding it, and that she was on the verge of mentioning it to Chatterton.. How glad she is to have been saved "cette mauvaise action! Oui, c'eût été un crime assurément, n'est-ce pas?" (117) To which the Quaker replies: "Il en aurait fait un, lui, plutôt que de ne pas vous satisfaire. Fier comme je le connais, cela est certain. Mon amie, ménageons-le. Il est atteint d'une maladie toute morale et presque incurable, et quelquefois contagieuse; maladie terrible qui se saisit surtout des âmes jeunes, ardentes et toutes neuves à la vie, éprises de l'amour du juste et du beau, et venant dans le monde pour y rencontrer, à chaque pas, toutes les iniquités et toutes les laideurs d'une société mal construite. Ce mal, c'est la haine de la vie et l'amour de la mort: c'est l'obstiné Suicide. ... Je dis obstiné, parce qu'il est rare que ces malheureux renoncent à leur projet quand il est arrêté en eux-mêmes." (118)

Kitty Bell is overcome, the horror of the idea rises up before her. She does not want him to die! So young a man, so good, so pure; to kill himself, that shall not be. If it is money which will save him, she will find some for him, she will sell her jewels, she will take more money for him, she will even lie. But no, the Quaker assures her that Chatterton cannot accept money from her, rather they must fight against his one fault "noble imperfection, péché sublime: l'orgueil de la pauvreté". (119) Then Kitty remembers the letter in which Chatterton seemed to have placed his hope.

Evidently he is expecting help from some one. Yes, that is the hope to which they must all anchor.

When Kitty seeks an explanation of Chatterton's bitter words about Lord Talbot: "On peut l'aimer ici, cela se conçoit!" the Quaker bids her forget that speech. "Que voudrait dire cela? Il faudrait donc supposer...que Chatterton se croit le droit d'...être jaloux, supposer que ce charme d'intimité serait devenu en lui une passion? ... Si cela était.....--Oh! ne me dites plus rien..laissez-moi m'enfuir". (120) And just as he did in the first scene, the Quaker says, "Si cela était, sur ma foi! j'aimerais mieux le laisser mourir!" (121)

Act III. In this act the scene shifts first to Chatterton's miserable little room. He is trying to write, but thoughts will not come. His head burns with fever and his cold hands can scarcely grasp the pen. His ravings lead him from one broken idea to another. Thoughts of Kitty Bell add to the blackness of his despair. He is certain that she does not love him. Nothing remains for him except the necessity of conquering himself enough to write. "Il faut...que ma volonté soit assez puissante pour saisir mon âme et l'emporter tour à tour dans le cadavre ressuscité des personnages que j'évoque, et dans le fantôme de ceux que j'invente! Ou bien il faut que, devant Chatterton malade, devant Chatterton qui a froid, qui a faim, ma volonté fasse poser avec prétention un autre Chatterton gracieusement paré pour l'amusement du public, et que celui-là soit décrit par l'autre: le troubadour par le mendiant. Voilà les deux poésies possibles, ça ne va pas plus loin que cela! Les divertir ou leur faire pitié; faire jouer de misérables poupées, ou l'être soi-même et faire trafic de cette singerie". (122)

He laughs wildly at himself; a clock strikes and recalls him to the necessity of labor. There is no advantage in further reflection and self-pity. His lodging place is known and tomorrow if this book is not finished, he will be arrested and thrown into prison. The idea forces him to his writing which he continues for a few minutes. Then he remembers Kitty Bell. "Il est certain que cette jeune femme ne m'aimera jamais". (123) Why does he continue to think of her? Why does his pride permit it? But of what is he proud? Certainly not of his position and rank. Yet it is his pride which sustains him. Always his pride keeps him from showing the depths of his misery, especially

before Kitty Bell. Ah! if she only loved him!

But why can he not write? Heretofore he has had to rein in his fancy, but today he must spur it on. Perhaps it is because of the chill which comes in from the thick fog stretched outside his window like a shroud. It hung thus at his father's window the night he died. Time rushes on and yet his writing does not advance. Why write of Harold, of Duke William? He reckes not of them. He destroys the manuscripts. Why try to stir ashes long since cold when round about him everything quivers and suffers? "La Terre crie et demande justice au Poète de ceux qui la fouillent sans cesse pour avoir son or, et lui disent qu'elle peut se passer du Ciel. Et moi! qui sens cela, je ne lui répondrais pas? Si! par le Ciel! je lui répondrai. Je frapperai du pied les méchants et les hypocrites.... Ah! misérable! Mais....c'est la Satire! Tu deviens méchant.....Écris plutôt sur ce brouillard qui s'est logé à ta fenêtre comme à celle de ton père". (124)

He sees on his table a snuff-box which had belonged to his father. Ah, he was a brave man, a captain in the navy who fought by day and slept by night. He was not a literary outcast. And to think that tomorrow will find the son in prison if the writing is not completed. How can he write when he is hungry? He has sold the diamond which was on his father's snuff-box in order to get food, but the hunger persists, and the pride, handed from father to son, will not allow him to tell anyone. Why was he created? But the same pride which starves him will keep him out of prison. He is still master of himself and the bottle of opium on his table shows him a possible way to maintain his pride to the last. He hears a heavy tread on the stairs and his first impulse is to hide the opium, but is he not free to do as he pleases with his life? Why hide the evidence of his liberty? And he replaces the vial on the table.

It is the Quaker who comes in and his glance rests at once on the opium. He recognizes it and tells Chatterton that he knows what relief it can bring, yet though the Stoics did hold that the reasons which bind us to life are very trivial and therefore one has a right to give up life for a slight cause, nevertheless Fortune changes often and if she has aid for any one, surely it is for a live person, not a dead one. But Chatterton replies that at least Fortune can do no harm

to a dead person and since she does more harm than good, it is wise to flee her. Then the Quaker endeavors to persuade Chatterton that suicide is cowardly, but the youth retorts, "Connaissez-vous beaucoup de lâches qui se soient tués?" (125) The poet's pride is next worked on. Chatterton would only beggiving pleasure to his rivals by thus blotting out his own name from possible fame, a thing his rivals are not able to do as long as he lives. The faint reaction soon dies down. Then the old man bethinks himself of the letter Chatterton was expecting. Yes, Chatterton had written to the Lord-Mayor, Beckford, a friend of his father's who had often offered to aid him but whose assistance he had always been too proud to accept. He had expected to live by his own ideas, but they have failed him and he has written Beckford. However he will wait no longer. "Les hommes d'imagination sont éternellement crucifiés; le sarcasme et la misère sont les clous de leur croix. Pourquoi voulez-vous qu'un autre soit enfoncé dans ma chair: le remords de s'être inutilement abaissé? Je veux sortir raisonnablement. J'y suis forcé". (126)

The Quaker, in a last hope of saving Chatterton, tells him that he is going to reveal something, the telling of which puts upon him the blot of wrong-doing. Le quaker--- Chatterton! Chatterton! tu peux perdre ton âme, mais tu n'as pas le droit d'en perdre deux. Or, il y en a une qui s'est attachée à la tienne et que ton infortune vient d'attirer comme les Écossais disent que la paille attire le diamant radieux. Si tu t'en vas, elle s'en ira; et cela, comme toi, sans être en état de grâce, et indigne pour l'éternité de paraître devant Dieu. Chatterton! Chatterton! tu peux douter de l'éternité, mais elle n'en doute pas; tu seras jugé selon tes malheurs et ton désespoir, et tu peux espérer miséricorde; mais non pas elle, qui était heureuse et toute chrétienne. Jeune homme, je te demande grâce pour elle, à genoux, parce qu'elle est pour moi sur la terre comme mon enfant.

Chatterton-- Mon Dieu! mon ami, mon père, que voulez-vous dire? Serait-ce donc....? Levez-vous! Vous me faites honte....Serait-ce?"

Le quaker--- Grâce! car si tu meurs, elle mourra....

Chatterton-- Mais qui donc?

Le quaker--- Parce qu'elle est faible de corps et d'âme, forte de coeur seulement.

Chatterton--Nommez-la! Aurais-je osé croire!...

Le quaker---Si jamais tu lui dis ce secret, malheureux!
tu es un traître, et tu n'auras pas besoin
de suicide; ce sera moi qui te tuerais.

Chatterton--Est-ce donc...?

Le quaker---Oui, la femme de mon vieil ami, de ton hôte...
la mère des beaux enfants!

Chatterton--Kitty Bell!

Le quaker---Elle t'aime, jeune homme. Veux-tu te tuer
encore?

Chatterton(tombant dans les bras du quaker)--Hélas! je
ne puis donc plus vivre ni mourir?

Le quaker---Il faut vivre, te taire, et prier Dieu! (127)

In the following scene the action is again placed in the room at the rear of the Bell shop. Kitty Bell is seen sending her children to carry their fruit as a gift to Chatterton. The Quaker tells her that Chatterton, like every author, cares only for his manuscripts and he thinks that it will be desirable that Chatterton move to another house, perhaps outside of London. Kitty consents to any plan, just so Chatterton lives. The Quaker will prepare Chatterton for it gradually. Kitty Bell's pity is stirred to the depth; she argues that she cannot mistreat the young man while he remains in her house; she wants to make him less miserable. Only this morning the Quaker had said "rendre à un malheureux un cadeau qu'il fait, c'est l'humilier et lui faire mesurer toute sa misère". (128) Therefore she knows that the Quaker has not returned to Chatterton the Bible he gave Rachel. Where is it? The Quaker draws it from his pocket, saying, "Tiens, mon enfant, comme c'est moi qui te le donne, tu peux le garder". (129) Kitty exclaims gratefully, "Oh! mon ami, mon père, votre bonté a quelquefois un air méchant, mais c'est toujours la bonté la meilleure". (130)

The sound of the hunting horn is heard. Lord Talbot, tired of the hunt, has returned to speak to John Bell about Chatterton. He has just learned that Chatterton's poems have brought him nothing, but worse yet, some one has just published an article saying that Chatterton is not the author of the poems which he claims are from his pen. But Talbot protests that they are Chatterton's, that they were youths together and he saw the poems grow. But in addition to this calumny, Skirner, a millionaire landlord, is seeking to have Chatterton arrested for debt, because of rent unpaid. Chatterton has promised that he would pay on a certain day, but that if he died before that date his body would be sold to a surgical school and thus the debt could be paid.

Lord Talbot rejoices that he has learned this and will pay the debt but he cannot explain Chatterton's calmness at such a crisis. Doubtless it is his pride, and the only thing which will stir Chatterton is to force him to a realization of his own uncertain future. John Bell, discovering that Chatterton is poor, and seeing the possibility of a scandal in his house, tells Talbot to advise Chatterton to move. Kitty Bell has heard this conversation in agony. She dares to ask permission to speak; she mentions the name of Lord Beckford, who is a relative of Talbot's and the only protection left to Chatterton. Talbot promises to go to see him. At this moment Chatterton himself comes downstairs with the children.

Lord Talbot questions Chatterton about the affair with Skirner and finds that the report was true--he, Chatterton, was wrong in trying to force his muse to a certain course and he is willing to pay for this lack of respect to her; the world is right, only the poets are wrong. "La poésie est une maladie du cerveau. Je ne parle plus de moi, je suis guéri. Je n'écrirai plus un vers de ma vie, je vous le jure, quelque chose qui arrive, je n'en écrirai plus un seul". (131) The Quaker knows that desperation has again seized Chatterton, who never takes his eyes off Kitty Bell. The poet admits that he has sought the protection of Beckford, who in his eyes, represents England. It is therefore on England that he relies.

Lord Beckford himself arrives at this moment, and a group of young lords leave their supper to welcome him. After talking with them, John Bell and Lord Talbot, he asks for Chatterton who answers when his name is mentioned. So this is Chatterton, son of "un digne homme, ... un pauvre soldat, mais qui avait bravement fait son chemin" (132) and whom Beckford had known; this is the young man who believed himself a poet. Well, many a youth has thought the same thing, even Beckford had the same fancy for verse writing, but what good are verses? "Un bon Anglais doit être utile au pays. Quelle idée vous faites-vous de nos devoirs à tous, tant que nous sommes?" (133)

Again Chatterton frames his reply in the very words found in "Stello" in a like situation. "Je crois les comprendre, milord. L'Angleterre est un vaisseau. Notre île en a la forme. ... c'est à bord du grand navire qu'est notre ouvrage à tous. Le roi, les lords, les communes... nous autres... nul n'est inutile dans la manoeuvre de notre glorieux navire.--Que diable peut

faire le poète dans la manoeuvre? --Il lit dans les astres la route que nous montre le doigt du Seigneur". (134)

Lord Beckford does not approve entirely of this reply. He has some information obtained from the investigations made by Bale and he understands "ses petits ruses de manuscrits". (135) But he considers them innocent and he will not withhold the succor he has brought. The details of the plan are contained in a letter and it will mean one hundred pounds a year to Chatterton. Beckford hands him, with a journal which he has brought to convert him, the letter that he advises him not to scorn. Chatterton, reading in Kitty's face a prayer that he accept, consents to whatever arrangements Beckford may make. Now that the affair is settled, Lord Beckford expresses the desire to go to the young lords' supper. Talbot invites them all including the Quaker, and all follow him except Chatterton, who stays behind with the excuse that he has some papers to burn.

Chatterton cannot believe that good fortune has really come to him. At last he will have a position, doubtless a humble one, but it will permit him to live and write what he wishes. The Quaker will have his peace of mind restored and Kitty Bell will not die. Would she have died? He doubts it, and moreover she need never have known it if he had ended his life, for the Quaker would have seen to that. But still, living is worth while, if only that she may live. Now what is it that the newspapers say of him? He turns to the article signed by Bale and reads: "Chatterton, n'est pas l'auteur de ses oeuvres... Voilà qui est bien prouvé. --Ces poèmes admirables sont réellement d'un moine nommé Rowley, qui les avait traduits d'un autre moine du dixième siècle, nommé Turgot... Cette imposture, pardonnable à un écolier, serait criminelle plus tard..." (136) Thus is his name besmirched, his honor taken away. Then he opens the letter which Beckford had given him, and exclaims indignantly, "Une place de premier valet de chambre dans sa maison! Ah! pays damné, terre du dédain! sois maudite à jamais!" (137) He takes the vial of opium. "O mon âme, je t'avais vendue! je te rachète avec ceci." He drinks the opium. "Skirner sera payé! Libre de tous! égal à tous à présent! Salut, première heure de repos: que j'aie goûtée! Dernière heure de ma vie, aurore du jour éternel, salut! Adieu, humiliations, angoisses, misères, tortures du coeur, adieu!" He throws all his manuscripts into the fire, exclaiming, "Allez, nobles pensées écrites pour tous ces ingrats dédaigneux, purifiez-vous dans la flamme et remontez au ciel avec moi!" (138)

As Chatterton stands thus before the fireplace, tearing and burning his manuscripts, Kitty Bell comes from her room. When he sees her he stops destroying the papers. Kitty observes his countenance and is frightened by what she sees there. She asks him if he is not going to dine with Lord Beckford and the others, but Chatterton replies that he is going away and advises her to avoid poets hereafter, saying that poets are egotists whose brains are nourished at the expense of their hearts. "Moi, j'ai été plus mauvais qu'eux tous." Kitty Bell, alarmed, exclaims: "Mon Dieu! pourquoi dites-vous: 'J'ai été'?" He seeks to allay her fears by explaining: "Parce que je ne veux plus être poète; vous le voyez, j'ai déchiré tout." (139) Then he speaks to her of her children whom she loves more than her life and for whom she must always live, never permitting any grief to outweigh that love. She sees that he is suffering and she refuses to leave him in spite of his insistence that this hour belongs to him.

Kitty Bell-- Jamais je ne serai heureuse si je vous
laisse ainsi, monsieur.

Chatterton-- Venez-vous pour ma punition? Quel mauvais
génie vous envoie?

Kitty Bell-- Une épouvante inexplicable.

Chatterton-- Vous serez épouvantée si vous restez.

Kitty Bell-- Avez-vous de mauvais desseins, grand Dieu?

Chatterton-- Ne vous en ai-je pas dit assez? Comment
êtes-vous là?

Kitty Bell-- Eh! Comment n'y serais-je plus?

Chatterton-- Parce que je vous aime, Kitty.

Kitty Bell-- Ah! monsieur, si vous me le dites, c'est
que vous voulez mourir.

Chatterton-- J'en ai le droit, de mourir. Je le jure
devant vous, et je le soutiendrai devant Dieu!

Kitty Bell-- Et moi, je vous jure que c'est un crime:
ne le commettez pas.

Chatterton-- Il le faut, Kitty, je suis condamné.

Kitty Bell-- Attendez seulement un jour pour penser à
votre âme.

Chatterton-- Il n'y a rien que je n'aie pensé, Kitty.

Kitty Bell-- Une heure seulement pour prier.

Chatterton-- Je ne veux plus prier.

Kitty Bell-- Et moi, je vous prie pour moi-même. Cela
me tuera.

Chatterton-- Je vous ai avertie! il n'est plus temps.

Kitty Bell-- Et si je vous aime, moi!

Chatterton-- Je l'ai vu, et c'est pour cela que j'ai
bien fait de mourir; c'est pour cela que
Dieu peut me pardonner.

Kitty Bell-- Qu'avez-vous donc fait?

Chatterton-- Il n'est plus temps, Kitty ; c'est un mort qui vous parle.

Kitty Bell(à genoux)-- Puissances du ciel! grâce pour lui!

Chatterton-- Allez-vous-en.... Adieu!

Kitty Bell-- Je ne le puis plus.

Chatterton-- Eh bien, donc! prie pour moi sur la terre et dans le ciel.

He kisses her forehead and goes upstairs, opens his door and falls into his room.

Kitty Bell-- Grand Dieu!

She find the vial.

Qu'est-ce que cela? Mon Dieu! pardonnez-lui. (140)

The Quaker comes in and finds her crouched at the foot of the stairs. She begs him to hurry to Chatterton who is about to die. The Quaker rushes up the steps, telling Kitty Bell not to follow him. But, half-fainting, she goes upstairs, and after an effort she succeeds in opening the door to Chatterton's room. Chatterton can be seen, dying in the arms of the Quaker. Kitty cries out at the sight, and, half-dead, grasps for the banisters, stumbles and slips to the lowest step. The voice of John Bell is heard calling her. The sound frightens her, she springs to her feet, goes to a chair and begins to read her Bible. The children run to her and cling to her dress. The Quaker comes down, asking himself: "L'a-t-elle vu mourir? l'a-t-elle vu?" (141)

John Bell enters the room impatiently. "Que fait-elle ici? Où est ce jeune homme? Ma volonté est qu'on l'emène." Le quaker: "Dites qu'on l'emporte, il est mort. --Mort? --Oui, mort à dix-huit ans! Vous l'avez tous si bien reçu, étonnez-vous qu'il soit parti!" (142) The Quaker looks at Kitty Bell and sees that she is dying. He begs their father to take the children from the room but John Bell is too amazed to do so. The Quaker takes the dying Kitty in his arms. John Bell exclaims in awe-struck tones: "Eh! eh bien! Kitty! Kitty! qu'avez-vous?" The Quaker drops to his knees and remains thus until the curtain falls. "Oh! dans ton sein! dans ton sein, Seigneur, reçois ces deux martyrs". (143)

V
"CHATTERTON" ON THE STAGE

On the evening of February 12, 1835, Alfred de Vigny's "Chatterton" was presented for the first time. The Théâtre Français was filled, even the king, Louis-Philippe, and his court being present. The role of Kitty Bell was played by Madame Dorval whose art "assura à la pièce un succès considérable". (144) Marie Dorval was in truth admirable. When she appeared holding one of the two children in her arms and the other by the hand, applause burst forth from all parts of the theatre. She resembled Raphael's Madonnas, (145) and so graceful was she that she seemed, not to walk, but to skim over the floor. In the dénouement, when Kitty Bell had dragged herself up the stairs to the door of Chatterton's room and had seen him stretched out lifeless, she uttered a great cry and, half-fainting, grasped the balustrade of the stairway, allowing herself to glide from top to bottom like a dove wounded by a sudden shot, and fell in a collapse at the bottom of the steps. Then the whole room, shaken with a great tremor, arose, applauded as if in a frenzy and called Madame Dorval back to the stage. She could not find an actor at the moment to share the applause with her, so she took the two children by the hand and walked to the front of the stage with an extraordinary charm and dignity. From the royal box a huge bouquet was tossed, and fell at her feet.

The "soirée de Chatterton" can not be appreciated without some acquaintance with Madame Dorval. Marie Dorval, wife of Allan Dorval, was a Bretonne by birth, her parents being actors who traveled about over a large part of France. Marie took part in plays from her childhood and received really excellent training from her father. The Dorvals had three daughters. Maternity developed and softened the qualities in Madame Dorval which were to make her an incomparable Kitty Bell. When she was twenty years old, in 1818, she made her debut in Paris. In four short years she had already attained a degree of fame. In 1830 she met Alfred de Vigny, and their friendship began. For six years it continued, though not without some misgivings on the part of Vigny, who was not always sure that Madame Dorval was reserving her affections for him alone. Some of his friends could not understand how Vigny could be so

completely absorbed in this passion, yet "Aimer, inventer, admirer, voilà ma vie", (146) might also be said of Mme Dorval's life.

In 1831 Vigny wrote "La Maréchale d'Ancre" for Mme Dorval, but the rôle was given to Mlle Georges in spite of the author's protests. Two years later, "Quitte pour la peur" was presented as a benefit performance for Madame Dorval. Then he created the rôle of Kitty Bell for her and it remains his most beautiful dramatic production and his surest title to glory as a dramatist. Madame Dorval's debut was recent, she had not yet obtained her "lettres de naturalisation". Mlle Mars was intensely jealous of this "actrice de boulevard"; the Director of the Théâtre Français and his associates were scandalized at the idea of giving her the rôle of Kitty Bell. Vigny finally threatened to take his play to the theatre of Porte-Saint Martin. The Ministre des Beaux-Arts and the king thought that Mlle Mars should have the part, but Vigny was obstinate and it was finally acknowledged to be Mme Dorval's.

In that short period of lyric exaltation in 1835, the success of "Chatterton" was as brilliant as it was ephemeral. It was a burst of enthusiasm. At the time of its first presentation no weakness was detected in the play. The three acts were a long triumph. In a letter to Brizeux, Vigny wrote, "France! France! On peut donc te parler gravement quand on est grave et avec tristesse quand on est mélancolique. J'ai réussi à ce que j'avais entrepris. Ma récompense est grande, puisque je puis dorénavant avoir confiance entière dans l'attention d'un public dont on avait trop douté". Sainte-Beuve writes coldly enough of the success, "Son plus beau triomphe fut la soirée de Chatterton, où après quatre ans d'efforts silencieux et pénibles, il força la foule assemblée, les salons et les critiques eux-mêmes à applaudir et à fremir au spectacle déchirant d'une douleur que la plupart méconnaissent ou enveniment". (147)

What were the author's hopes for this play which was considered so overpowering that the critic Maxime Du Camp fainted away at the first performance? In 1834 he had written: "Dans l'état actuel des théâtres, et tel qu'est le public, j'ai peu d'estime pour une pièce qui réussit, c'est signe de médiocrité; il faut au public quelque chose d'un peu grossier;..... Je me méfie aussi d'un livre qui réussirait sur-le-champ et sans un an au moins d'intervalle pour que l'élite

puisse y convertir la masse idiote". (148)

But after the first presentation his joy knew no bounds. "Chatterton a réussi", he writes. "C'est alors que mes amis sont venus à moi en fondant en larmes. Ils balbutiaient des paroles sans suite, des cris: mon ami, mon ami. Ils ont souffert aussi ce martyre que j'ai écrit. Un sentiment doux et triste remplit mon cœur et des larmes inondent mes yeux malgré moi". (149) But later in the same year, 1835, when the play was being published, he was tempted to burn it as he had done with several others. "Je pensai que cet enivrement paraîtrait sans doute ridicule, présenté à des lecteurs distraits; mais aussi je songeai à ceux qui se pénètrent plus profondément des émotions qui naissent d'une œuvre sérieuse, et il me sembla que je leur devais un compte fidèle du travail que je venais de faire, et qu'il fallait les faire remonter jusqu'à la source même des idées dont ils avaient suivi le cours". (150)

An entry in his "Journal" after August, 1835, indicates that Vigny neither hoped for nor wanted a material reward from the play. "Je ne sais pourquoi j'écris.--La gloire après la mort ne se sent probablement pas; dans la vie, elle se sent bien peu. L'argent? Les livres faits avec recueillement n'en donnent pas. --Mais je sens en moi le besoin de dire à la société les idées que j'ai en moi et qui veulent sortir". (151) Nevertheless Vigny must have welcomed whatever revenue his literary efforts brought him because he was being constantly called upon for more money to meet the increasing expenses of the household. "J'aurais mieux aimé me faire soldat que d'emprunter le moindre argent à mes plus proches parents; et presque tout ce que m'ont donné mes travaux: "Chatterton", "Servitude et Grandeur", mes œuvres complètes, a servi à payer les dettes que des dépenses, toujours au delà de mon revenu réuni au sien (i.e. his mother's), m'avaient fait contracter". (152)

Vigny himself gives a few hints as to the fate of the play following that brilliant presentation on February 12, 1835. In a letter to the director of the Revue des Deux Mondes written in September, 1835, he mentions the fact that the play had been presented forty times and read by many since then. The drama had some popularity outside of Paris. When Vigny visited M. de Barante in 1843 in the interests of his election to the Académie Française, "il me dit qu'il a vu jouer 'Chatterton' à Pétersbourg, que Mademoiselle Bourbier jouait Kitty Bell, moins bien assurément que

Madame Dorval, qui y était fort belle. Il passe de là à la pièce même et me dit qu'elle est antisociale". (153)

Thus even in Vigny's life-time the star of "Chatterton" began to pale. In December 1857, twenty-two years after the first presentation and nine years before Vigny's death, Théophile Gautier, who still cherished the memory of that "soirée", shuddered at the inopportune revival of the play. "Aucune femme ne comprend Kitty Bell et les jeunes filles la trouvent absurde. Le génie, ô Chatterton, ce n'est pas seulement l'inspiration, c'est aussi la patience. Le quaker, malgré ses excellentes intentions, fait sur sa chaise l'effet d'un radoteur en enfance. John Bell, ce Barbe-Bleue commerçant qu'on haïssait d'une si violente impulsion comme un traître de mélodrame, semble aujourd'hui le seul personnage raisonnable de la pièce". (154) The same year Janin wrote, "Si vous voulez avoir une idée approchante des labeurs d'un poète sans idée et du pénible enfantement d'un écrivain sans style, il faut voir tout le troisième acte de 'Chatterton'. C'est un long monologue que l'on prendrait pour la suite et la fin d'un rêve pénible. Il n'y a là dedans ni clartés ni lueurs! En ce moment Chatterton ivre à l'avance de l'opium qu'il va boire n'a vraiment plus la conscience de ce qu'il dit ni de ce qu'il fait". (155) Pellissier says, "Thirty years later (1865) when the work was reproduced the audience advised the poor devil to sell his boots". (156) Likewise in a recent revival of the play at the Odéon, Lauvrière says that the present generation were interested only in the rôle of Kitty Bell, especially the last scene. So he adds, "L'ère romantique semble décidément révolue". (157)

These tribulations of the most successful play of Alfred de Vigny's make it easier to estimate his whole dramatic production. Whether the play under consideration be a drama of thought, an historical drama, tragedy or comedy, semi-romantic or semi-classic, his theatre is richer in ideas and ideals than reality and life; it is more theoretical than true. Thus Vigny in spite of his ambitious hopes, "sentant son génie épique mal à l'aise en ces étroites proportions de la scène, eut raison après 'Chatterton' de s'en détourner pour n'y plus jamais revenir". (158)

VI
COMPARISON BETWEEN THE "HISTOIRE DE KITTY BELL"
AND "CHATTERTON"

When Alfred de Vigny incorporated the story of Thomas Chatterton in the second episode of "Stello", he called it the "Histoire de Kitty Bell". By thus naming it, he directed attention to the heroine of the story and it is through her eyes that the reader witnesses the last tragedy of Chatterton's life. Two years later, in 1834, when Vigny used the same material for his drama, he renamed it "Chatterton". This change in title is interesting as evidence that the author was more intent than ever upon the social question involved. More determined that the public should realize the martyrdom which poets suffer.

Paléologue, in his volume on Alfred de Vigny, says that "Stello" is "un récit mêlé d'histoire, de philosophie et de roman". (159) Sainte-Beuve writes that Vigny "s'est développé en 'Stello', mi-parti d'analyse et de poésie". (160) Emile Lauvrière judges in the following fashion, "Voilà cet imprévu plaideur d'affaires publiques induit par la force même de ses convictions à dramatiser tout à fait, et non sans le fausser encore davantage, l'un des dialogues de 'Stello': du second épisode de son livre, il tire le drame de 'Chatterton'". (161) And Alfred de Vigny comments: "Dans 'Stello'...., l'idée est l'héroïne: l'idée abstraite est ajoutée au drame, et c'est une difficulté de plus". (162)

As in "Stello", so in the drama, the scene is laid in the establishment of John Bell, which being in Westminster near the Parliament buildings, is frequented by the members.

In "Stello", Kitty Bell, the "placide", the almost solemn "marchande" of buns and mince pies, "au doux visage de marbre", presides over the little pastry-shop. "Elle avait le visage tendre, pâle et allongé,....un aspect élégant". She was "sérieuse et sage" with "une attitude douce en regardant ses enfants" (163) who are eight and ten years old and are therefore quite able to assist her. Her timid charity is shown by some clandestine gifts of cakes to the wandering Chatterton. In the drama she becomes "mélancolique,....élégante par nature plus que par éducation,....tremblante devant son mari, expansive et abandonnée seulement dans son amour maternel". In her "longs cheveux bouclés dont les repentirs flottent sur le sein" (164) we recognize

"Les beaux cheveux attachés en large chignon derrière le cou, et détachés, en longs repentirs devant le cou"(165), which the Docteur-Noir admired. In the play, Kitty Bell, who, "Mile Montégut insists "n'est pas aussi touchante que....., la marchande de gâteaux de Stello"(166), is raised to the rank of a rich manufacturer's wife. She now belongs to the rich middle class but she is not idle. Her domineering husband, who with his mill-hands is like "un monarque au milieu de ses sujets"(167) cannot tolerate idleness. Therefore lodgers are kept not only to keep Kitty occupied but to serve as an example to his workmen and a source of possible profitable connections with influential persons. "N'ai-je pas donné l'exemple du travail et de l'économie?" (168) "Que tout travaille et serve dans la famille.--Ne fais-je pas travailler ma femme, moi? --Jamais on ne la voit, mais elle est ici tout le jour; et, tout en baissant les yeux, elle s'en sert pour travailler beaucoup. Malgré mes ateliers et fabriques aux environs de Londres, je veux qu'elle continue à diriger du fond de ses appartements cette maison de plaisance, où viennent les lords, au retour du parlement, de la chasse on de Hyde-Park. Cela me fait de bonnes relations que j'utilise plus tard..... Or, les femmes ont des années comme nous; donc, c'est perdre un bon revenu que de laisser passer ce temps sans emploi." (169) So, Kitty Bell receives from time to time the lords and nobles. It is here that Chatterton lodges.

But in the play, as in the story, Kitty Bell is still the earthly daughter of Eloa, who gave to her that most beautiful of virtues: Pity. She is an "angélique puritaine" and thinks that "la conscience ne peut avoir tort". (170) Thus she is tormented by shame at her overmastering pity for Chatterton and by tenderness. She would have felt for any poor youth, whether he were a poet or not, an instinctive compassion. "Faible de corps et d'âme" she is "forte de cœur" only. (171) Restrained by a religious reserve she does not know how to express her feelings except through her maternal love. But when the supreme despair of love comes, she shows great energy and tragic grandeur. From the very first she gives evidence "qu'une douleur imprévue et une subite terreur peuvent la faire mourir tout à coup" (172). And in truth she does die suddenly. Lauvrière, in writing of Kitty Bell says, "En sa mièvre pâleur, en dépit de sa faible intelligence, par la grâce de sa délicate tendresse, cette petite âme demeure jusqu'en nos répertoires contemporains l'un des plus touchants types, plus anglais, à vrai dire, que français, de douce fragilité féminine". (173)

This ~~same~~ similarity exists ^{also} in his portrayal of the physical and moral qualities of the hero. In the drama, Chatterton is a "jeune homme de dix-huit ans, pâle,épuisé de veilles et de pensée," wearing "habit noir, veste noire, pantalon gris", with "cheveux bruns, sans poudre, . . . l'air à la fois militaire et ecclésiastique". (174) This description bears out what he had previously written in "Stello" of "l'ombre pâle de dix-huit ans", with "cheveux bruns tombant sans poudre sur les oreilles. . . . Le costume de Chatterton était entièrement noir" and gave him "l'air militaire et ecclésiastique". (175) In "Stello" two sentences only give any information concerning Chatterton's family. In the letter which he wrote to Kitty Bell he says, "J'essayai de leur obéir, parce que je n'avais plus de pain et il en fallait envoyer à Bristol pour ma mère qui est très vieille, et qui va mourir après moi. . . . Je vous laisse tous mes livres, tous mes parchemins et tous mes papiers, et je vous demande en échange le pain de ma mère: vous n'aurez pas longtemps à le lui envoyer". (176) In the drama, however, we learn that his father, now dead, was a "bon vieux marin! franc capitaine de haut-bord", (177) very proud, who with his diamond-set snuff-box, his mount to ride to hounds, his generous allowance to his son at Oxford, had died penniless: "Mon père. . . vous qui étiez vieux et qui saviez qu'il faut de l'argent pour vivre, et que vous n'en aviez pas à me laisser, pourquoi m'avez-vous créé?" (178)

In "Stello," although John Bell appears only at the close, we know him from the effect his voice produces on Kitty. He is "un des meilleurs selliers de Londres" (179) and pays little attention to the pastry-shop which he leaves to the management of his wife whom he trusts. Yet, that Kitty feared him is shown by the fact that it was secretly she gave food to Chatterton, and further by the electrifying effect which John Bell's terrible voice had when he called her as she sat on the steps, dazed by the death of Chatterton. " 'Come, mistress Bell!' A cet appel, Kitty se leva comme mue par un ressort; c'était la voix de son mari. Le tonnerre eût été moins fort d'éclat et ne lui eût pas causé. . . . une plus violente et plus électrique commotion. Tout le sang se porta aux joues; elle. . . . resta un instant debout pour se remettre. 'Come, mistress Bell!' répéta la voix terrible. Un second coup la mit en marche, comme l'autre l'avait mise sur ses pieds". (180) More light is thrown on his character by his scolding when Kitty Bell swoons

and by the readiness and satisfaction he shows in accepting the money from the doctor for Chatterton's rent.

But in the play, this rather vaguely-drawn saddle-maker of "Stello" is an over-bearing husband, before whom his wife and his young children (four and six years old) tremble; a laboring man who by hard work and saving has become a mill-owner and is a pitiless taskmaster. He is an "espèce de vautour qui écrase sa couvée", (181) an "égoïste par excellence". (182) His suspicious soul has for its motto, "Où je vois un mystère, je vois une faute", (183) and he maintains that he is "juste selon la loi" (184) He is swayed perhaps a little less by a love of money than by subservience to influential persons. When he learns from Lord Talbot that Chatterton is a man of some importance and wealth, he heaps favors upon him. But no sooner does he discover his mistake than he wishes to give him notice to leave his house. (185) The John Bell of "Stello" is stern, cold, and selfishly interested in his own business. But the John Bell of "Chatterton" is, in addition, cruel to his family and workmen, greedy for wealth and influence, and unmoved in the face of need and suffering.

The noble Lord Beckford is his worthy complement, for that "imposant protecteur" (186) is as void of delicacy as of keenness, filled with self-esteem, with consideration for the wealthy and with scorn for the poor. The Lord-Mayor in "Stello" dressed richly in "une veste de brocart d'or", with "des joues orgueilleuses, satisfaites...pendant largement sur une cravate", walking with "un pas ferme et honorable"...his "queue poudrée enfermée dans une grande bourse qui couvrirait ses rondes et larges épaules", (187) appears unchanged in the play, as a "figure de protecteur sot: les joues orgueilleuses, satisfaites pendant sur une cravate brodée; un pas ferme et imposant.... Collier de lord-maire au cou; habit riche, veste de brocart, grande canne à pomme d'or". (188)

In the first version of the story, no mention is made of Lord Talbot, that good-hearted, boisterous youth, full of unconscious egotism, to whom the Quaker justly says: "Depuis cinq minutes que tu es ici, tu n'as pas dit un mot qui ne fût de trop". (189) He makes the character of Chatterton stand out in stronger relief and gives a light touch to an otherwise wholly sombre painting. He had known Chatterton rather intimately at Oxford and is ready, not only to

defend his literary reputation, but to pay Chatterton's debt to Skirner.(190)

The Quaker, who like Alfred de Vigny in his last years, "achève sa vie dans l'immobilité et la méditation, (191) plays a rôle in the drama comparable in the sympathy shown, to that of the Docteur-Noir in "Stello". The Quaker, who is also a physician,(192) and the Docteur-Noir are the ones who witness and understand the torment in the souls of Kitty Bell and Chatterton. The Docteur-Noir is an interested spectator and does not take a prominent part in the action until, of course, at the very last. On the other hand, the Quaker, whose character is delineated with much greater definiteness-- as are all the characters in the play as compared with those in the "Histoire de Kitty"--intervenes in the action of the drama. He is a brave, dignified man with lofty thoughts; he understands Chatterton and sympathizes with him; he strives to save him for his own sake and for that of Kitty Bell, who, he says, "est pour moi sur la terre comme mon enfant".(193) He reads her heart and realizes what she does not know, that her great pity is changing to love.

According to the story set forth in "Stello", Chatterton had called upon the Lord-Mayor and left him some verses to read. Following that, Beckford visited Chatterton at John Bell's to bring his answer to the poet's appeal for assistance. In the play, it is in reply to a letter that the Lord-Mayor comes and because of an earlier friendship with the poet's father. In both cases, the note containing Beckford's offer of help precipitates the tragedy. The term of lodging with the Bells is shorter in the play than in "Stello". The dying Chatterton begs the doctor to pay to Mr. Bell three guineas for the rent of a room during six months. To the Quaker, Chatterton says that in the three months at Bell's, he has known happiness for the first time. In both story and play, Chatterton sells his body. In the former, the Docteur-Noir, by paying Chatterton's rent, secured possession of the youth's body, had it removed from the Bell's house and arranged for its burial. According to the play, the body was to be sold to a medical school in order to pay Skirner what Chatterton owed him. However Lord Talbot knew of this arrangement and he promised the Quaker, "Je donnerai tout à son insu."(194)

Whether in the "Histoire de Kitty Bell" or in the drama, Vigny pleads the cause of poets, setting

forth their right to life and happiness. So consistent is his purpose that he frequently uses in the play the same words, expressions, and even long speeches that are found in "Stello". What had won favor in the story was to be used even more effectively on the stage. A part of the letter Chatterton wrote to Kitty Bell corresponds exactly to a speech he makes to the Quaker in the fifth scene of the first act: "J'ai fait de ma chambre la cellule d'un cloître; j'ai béni et sanctifié ma vie et ma pensée; j'ai raccourci ma vue, et j'ai éteint devant mes yeux les lumières de notre âge; j'ai fait mon cœur plus simple;...je me suis appris le parler enfantin du vieux temps; j'ai écrit comme le roi au duc Guillaume, en demi-saxon et demi-franc; et ensuite, j'ai placé ma Muse religieuse dans sa châsse comme une sainte". (195)

Another interesting comparison of this nature may be made between the words found in "Stello" and those used in the play at the time Lord Beckford made his visit to Chatterton. "The Lord-Mayor! Lord-Mayor! s'écria tout à coup Kitty en frappant ses mains l'une contre l'autre.....; et, par un instinct maternel et inexplicable, elle courut embrasser ses enfants, elle qui avait une joie d'amant! -- Les femmes ont des mouvements inspirés on ne sait d'où." (196) In "Chatterton":

Kitty Bell --- Il vient lui-même, le lord-maire, pour monsieur Chatterton! Rachel! mes enfants! quel bonheur! embrassez-moi.

(Elle court à eux, et les baise avec transport)

John Bell --- -Les femmes ont des accès de folie inexplicables!

Le quaker(à part)-- La mère donne à ses enfants un baiser d'amante sans le savoir. (197)

In the story, the Lord-Mayor says to the young poet, "Il n'y a personne à qui il ne soit arrivé, comme à vous, de verailer dans sa jeunesse. Cela plaît aux jolies femmes....J'ai fait comme vous dans mon printemps, et jamais Littleton, Swift et Wilkes n'ont écrit pour les belles dames des vers plus galants et plus badins que les miens. Mais j'avais la raison assez avancée, même à votre âge, pour me donner aux Muses que le temps perdu.J'ai retenu ceci de Ben Jonson, et je vous le donne comme certain, savoir: que la plus belle Muse du monde ne peut suffire à nourrir son homme, et qu'il faut avoir ces demoiselles-là pour maîtresses, mais jamais pour femmes."

The same sentiment and almost the same words occur in the play: "Vous vous êtes amusé à faire des vers, mon petit ami;....il n'y a personne qui n'ait eu cette fantaisie. J'aâ fait comme vous dans mon printemps, et jamais Littleton, Swift et Wilkes n'ont écrit pour les belles dames des vers plus galants et plus badîns que les miens.....Mais je ne donnais aux Muses que le temps perdu. Je savais bien ce qu'en dit Ben Jonson: que la plus belle Muse du monde ne peut suffire à nourrir son homme, et qu'il faut avoir ces demoiselles-là pour maîtresses, mais jamais pour femmes". (199)

In reply to the question as to what Chatterton considers his duty to his country, this passage is found alike in "Stello" and in the drama: "L'Angleterre est un vaisseau: notre île en a la forme; la proue tournée au nord, elle est comme à l'ancre au milieu des mers, surveillant le continent. Sans cesse elle tire de ses flancs d'autres vaisseaux faits à son image et qui vont la représenter sur toutes les côtes du monde. Mais c'est à bord du grand navire qu'est notre ouvrage à tous. Le Roi, les Lords, les Communes, sont au pavillon, au gouvernail, et à la boussole; nous autres, nous devons tous avoir la main aux cordages, monter aux mâts, tendre les voiles et charger les canons; nous sommes tous de l'équipage, et nul n'est inutile dans la manoeuvre de notre glorieux navire". As to the poet's share in all this: "Le Poète cherche aux étoiles quelle route nous montre le doigt du Seigneur". And, "Il lit dans les astres la route que nous montre le doigt du Seigneur". (200)

One of the greatest differences between the two versions lies in the fact that, in "Stello" the love between Kitty Bell and Chatterton is not admitted by them: Chatterton, dying at the head of the stairs "s'y jeta sur les deux genoux, tendit les bras vers Kitty, poussa un long cri, et tomba mort....."(201) ~~And Kitty~~ ~~un~~ ~~able~~ ~~to~~ ~~speak,~~ ~~she~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ ~~able~~ ~~to~~ ~~speak,~~ "L'ingrat! avoir tout but ne pas me laisser une goutte amie". (202) Whereas in the play, as a last resort to save him from suicide, the Quaker tells Chatterton that Kitty Bell loves him, as he knows that Chatterton loves her. In the last scene between Chatterton and Kitty Bell, when he has already taken the poison, under the terrible stress, they confess their love to each other, she in the hope to save him, he as an explanation for his death: "Parce que je vous aime, Kitty". (203) "Et si je vous aime, moi!" (204)

The story in "Stello" is not as concise and clear-cut as to action and not developed as to characters as in the drama, and what was the philosophy of the story is crystallized into a definite defense of the author's thesis. In "Stello" are mingled history and philosophy; in "Chatterton", analysis, poetry, and drama. The conviction which prompted the writing of the second episode of "Stello" grew stronger with the years and came to full fruition in the drama. To the best of his ability Alfred de Vigny was pleading for a sympathetic understanding of those who in return for the riches of thought and inspired song which they bring to mankind, make only one request: "Faites que je vive!" (205) "Je crois", says Vigny, "...à l'avenir et au besoin universel de choses sérieuses;.....c'est, ce me semble, le temps du Drame de la Pensée".(206)

VII

HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF "L'HISTOIRE DE KITTY BELL"
AND "CHATTERTON".

On Dec. 9, 1825, Vigny made the following entry in his "Journal": "Achevé de revoir les dernières épreuves de 'Cinq-Mars.' Ce qui fait l'originalité de ce livre, c'est que tout y a l'air roman et que tout y est histoire.--Mais c'est un tour de force de composition dont on ne sait pas gré et qui, tout en rendant la lecture de l'histoire plus attachante par le jeu des passions, la fait suspecter de fausseté et quelquefois la fausse en effet". (207) In spite of his assertion as to the historical truth in "Cinq-Mars", Paléologue and others have pointed out the too great liberty which he took with official documents in this novel, which he characterizes as "le spectacle philosophique de l'homme profondément travaillé par les passions de son caractère et de son temps". (208) What does Vigny say then of the accuracy of his drama "Chatterton", and how do his critics judge it?

In the "Dernière Nuit de Travail" Vigny says, "Le poète était tout pour moi; Chatterton n'était qu'un nom d'homme, et je viens d'écarter à dessein des faits exacts de sa vie pour ne prendre de sa destinée que ce qui la rend un exemple à jamais déplorable d'une noble misère". (209) In his "Journal" he wrote in 1835, "Goethe fut ennuyé des questions de tout le monde sur la vérité de 'Werther'. On ne cessait de s'informer à lui de ce qu'il renfermait de vrai. Quand j'ai publié 'Stello', la même chose pour Mme de Saint-Aignan, dont j'avais inventé la situation dans le dernier drame d'André Chénier; la même pour Kitty Bell, dont j'ai inventé l'être et le nom. Pour 'Servitude et Grandeur Militaires', même question sur l'authenticité des trois romans que renferme ce volume. Mais il ne faut pas en vouloir au public, que nous décevons par l'art, de chercher à se reconnaître et à savoir jusqu'à quel point il a tort ou raison de se faire illusion. Le nom des personnages réels ajoute à l'illusion d'optique du théâtre et des livres, et la meilleure preuve du succès est la chaleur que met le public à s'informer de la réalité de l'exemple qu'on lui donne. Pour les poètes et la postérité, il suffit de savoir que le fait soit beau et probable. --Aussi je réponds sur 'Laurette' et les autres: 'Cela pourrait avoir été vrai'". (210)

In the preface of "Othello", Vigny explains his ideas as to what the new French drama should be. "La scène française s'ouvrira-t-elle, ou non, à une tragédie moderne produisant: --dans sa conception, un tableau large de la vie, au lieu du tableau resserré de la catastrophe d'une intrigue; --dans sa composition, des caractères, non des rôles, des scènes paisibles, sans drame, mêlées à des scènes comiques et tragiques; dans son exécution, un style familier, comique, tragique, et parfois épique?" (211) Emile Lauvrière in writing of Vigny says, "Les personnages de 'Chatterton' répondent, en effet, aussi peu que 'la conception' aux présomptueuses promesses d' 'Othello'. De même que l'intrigue, ramenée à l'ultime crise d'une 'catastrophe', n'offre nullement 'un tableau large de la vie', mais uniquement 'l'aspect sévère et simple d'un tableau flamand'; de même, les personnages, réduits aux conventionnels 'rôles' de types généraux de l'humanité, ne manifestent nullement de réels 'caractères' individuels: ce ne sont qu'abstractions aussi dénuées de vérité que de vie, inventées pour le seul besoin de 'la cause'." (212)

To begin with, Lauvrière points out that the Chatterton of Vigny's drama has nothing in common with "l'actif, rusé, érotique petit poète faussaire" (213) upon whose life had already been turned the search-light of contemporary criticism. Judging from the edition of Chatterton's works published by the Clarendon Press at Oxford, it would seem that the hero of the play resembles more closely his French creator than his English prototype. As to his physical appearance, Vigny lends to Chatterton "cet air à la fois militaire et ecclésiastique" (214) qu'il revendique ailleurs pour lui-même". (215) "Une rêverie continuelle" (216) forms the basis of Chatterton's nature, whereas the indefatigable writer of polemics was anything but a mystic dreamer such as Vigny was. Neither did a timid reserve characterize Chatterton's social attitude.

It is clear that even on the stage, as in his poems, under symbolical names, it is always the personality of Alfred de Vigny which is in play. He forgets his own rule that the duty of a dramatic poet is to keep himself detached from the play. He himself is the unhappy son of "cette fée malfaisante" (217) who is named Poetry. As his vitality decreases, so the morbid essence of his poetic nature increases. His incurable malady, Poetry, developed into a sort of madness sometimes exalted, sometimes melancholy. The "pâle jeune homme", "faible de corps, épuisé de veilles, timide....et fier" (218) with a sensitiveness too keen is Alfred de Vigny, in whom

"la rêverie a tué l'action". (219) This Chatterton is endowed with certain generous qualities which are those of Vigny. He has a tender heart and is capable of some heroism: He consents to prolong his life in order not to cause the death of her who loves him. Only at the moment of death does he confess his love. It is to be regretted that, in such a noble nature, a high purpose cannot conquer weakness of moral discipline and bring about an energetic mastery over self.

As Vigny admits, he purposely disregarded some of the facts known to be true concerning Chatterton, in order to throw into clearer relief the idea permeating the play. However that does not lessen the interest in noting some instances in which he departed from history. When Chatterton first went to London he established his residence in the home of a plasterer where a distant relative of his lived. This was in Shoreditch and there he lived from April until early June. After that he moved to Brooke Street in Holborn and had a small garret room in the home of a Mrs. Angell, who was a dressmaker. No biographer makes any mention of Chatterton's living near Westminster, and if Providence really was so kind as to supply him with a fair consoler living under the same roof, this can, in the first stage of his London career, have been no other than the motherly Mrs. Ballance in Shoreditch, or at best that niece of the plasterer's who used to complain that Chatterton was "saucy" to her. To seek for an original Kitty Bell would surely be a waste of time since Vigny tells us that he invented "l'être et le nom". (220)

Was Chatterton really acquainted with Lord Talbot? Admitting a vague possibility of truth in such a supposition, it is certain that they did not know each other at Oxford, for whether Lord Talbot may or may not have been a student there, Chatterton never was. The idea of Chatterton's inheriting an estate from his father is just as far from the truth, for the elder Chatterton was a man of no wealth whatsoever and died two months before Chatterton was born. All of which precludes the idea that Talbot had known the father and that the son was wearing mourning because of his recent death.

Further discrepancies in chronology are found in Chatterton's age at the time of his death, and the date of Lord Beckford's death. Chatterton was born, Nov. 20, 1752, and died, August 24, 1770, being at that time 17 years, 9 months old, whereas Vigny makes him 18 years old. Lord Beckford really was Lord-Mayor of London

during the time that Chatterton lived there, and it is true that Beckford knew Chatterton, first through his writings and later personally, for Chatterton called on Beckford and wrote two letters in support of Beckford's appeal to the King for more consideration toward his subjects. However the second letter was never published for Beckford died unexpectedly on June 19, 1770, two months before Chatterton ended his own life.

Is there then any basis for Vigny's idea that Chatterton had written a letter to some one asking for help and that the position offered him was an indignity that he could not endure? It is certain that Chatterton was utterly wretched at this time. Poverty oppressed him on all sides and his unyielding pride kept him from allowing his real circumstances to be known. He had tried poetry, prose, political polemics and music, but each in turn had failed to bring him the funds needed for a living. At last he determined to apply for a position as assistant to a ship's surgeon. When he was in Bristol, browsing frequently in Barrett's library, he had become somewhat interested in medicine and Dr. Barrett had taught him many things pertaining to that profession. Naturally it was of Barrett that Chatterton thought when he considered taking up this new line of work. There exists among Chatterton's letters written in London, one which he sent to a friend in Bristol asking him to see Barrett in his behalf, saying, "I intend going abroad as a surgeon. Mr. Barrett has it in his power to assist me greatly by his giving me a physical character. I hope he will." Barrett never answered the letter, and since this occurred early in August it is clear that his failure to do so was another disappointment added to those Chatterton was already forced to bear. It is impossible to find out whether Vigny knew of this incident, but interested as he was in Chatterton, he may have heard of the affair, and used that letter for the basis of the one sent to Beckford in the play.

During the last weeks of his life, Chatterton was extremely lonely. He had formed no intimate friendships in London, nor any where else, and he had no acquaintance to whom he could unburden his heart. Except for the occasional kind words of Mrs. Angell, and a possible friendliness with the apothecary on the corner, there was none to try to dissuade him from his ever-present idea of suicide. He had no Quaker to restrain him, no Kitty Bell to inspire him, no children to love him. However, he was not in debt for his room-rent.

In some way he had managed to pay that small sum up to the last, possibly by going without food. He had not sold his body, and the only preparations for his death were the destruction of his manuscripts and the writing of a few bitter words of farewell. Bereft of friendship, encouragement and appreciation in life, he died alone, at night, at the very time when Dr. Fry, of Oxford, the one man in all England who appreciated his poems, was preparing to go to Bristol to seek information concerning the author of the Rowley poems.

VIII
THE THESIS WHICH VIGNY DEFENDS

The chief interest in "Stello" and in the drama "Chatterton" now lies perhaps in the study of the thesis which Alfred de Vigny chose to defend. Since 1829 or 1830 Vigny had been interested in social questions. The problem of the poet and his position in society was concerning him greatly. Out of that idea came the "Consultations du Docteur-Noir et de Stello". Therein he draws the perpetual contrast between the poet and the practical man, between the thinker and the man of action. In the examples of Gilbert, Chatterton, and Chénier he portrayed the poet-martyr. He appointed himself champion of those unhappy spirits; he believed in his own mission. Let some plead for the proletariat, others for woman; as for him, he would preach and plead for the poet. In ancient times writing poetry had been the privilege of all. As times advanced poetry was concentrated into a smaller group of writers. The poet had to seek a place for himself, he suffered and still suffers. The ability to write poetry becomes a malady, an affliction rather than a gift. There is a perpetual struggle between the natural refinement of such souls and the unresponsive atmosphere in which they live.

If art and poetry are ever to be called the precious product of a hidden suffering, one finds it in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Cowper, Chénier, Chatterton, Gilbert and Werther. Yet amid all the examples which illustrate this idea, Gilbert, Chénier and Chatterton were perhaps the last that should have been chosen. It was not his poetic talent that led Chénier to the scaffold. If Gilbert died prematurely on a miserable charity bed, it was not because he was a victim of poetry. He suffered from causes that were not akin to art, and like any ordinary man he had to endure the consequences of his acts. Likewise Chatterton; what killed him was not the ingratitude of the world nor the coldness of his fellow-men. It was his obstinate, foolish pride. But admitting that, society or jury would be wise enough and far-seeing enough to discover the real poet in the crowd of versifiers that appear each year? Is there not a greater danger of propagating mediocrity than of discovering genius? (221)

After Vigny had finished the three acts of "Chatterton",

he further amplified the subject in the preface, entitled "Dernière Nuit de Travail du 29 au 30 juin 1834", of which the epigraph is "Ceci est la question", in other words, "for the man of genius" to be or not to be", and in which he explains the ideas which prompted the writing of the drama.

"Je viens d'achever cet ouvrage austère dans le silence d'un travail de dix-sept nuits.... A présent que l'ouvrage est accompli,.... je me demande s'il sera inutile ou s'il sera écouté des hommes. Déjà, depuis deux années, j'ai dit par la bouche de Stello ce que je vais répéter par celle de Chatterton, et quel bien ai-je fait?" (222) He knows that many have felt the cause to be one worthy of defense. "La cause? c'est le martyre perpétuel et la perpétuelle immolation du Poète. La cause? c'est le droit qu'il aurait de vivre. La cause? c'est le pain qu'on ne lui donne pas. La cause? c'est la mort qu'il est forcé de se donner". (223) The world praises intelligence, yet crushes the most intelligent. They are killed by being denied the opportunity of living as their whole being demands. One would think from this ill-treatment that Poets are very common. But consider that a nation is proud and happy to have two in ten centuries, and that some peoples have never had and will never have a poet. Whence then this indifference? "C'est que vous ne savez pas ce que c'est qu'un Poète". (224)

There are three kinds of men who influence the world by their products, but they move in realms forever separate from each other. There is the versatile man, appreciated everywhere. He always does what he has determined to do and says acceptably what he means. He is witty and devoid of real emotion. He writes of business as if it were literature and of literature as if it were business. He knows the language of art and of criticism. He can write a comedy as well as a funeral oration, a novel, or a political speech. "C'est l'homme de lettres". He is always liked and understood; he is too light to weigh upon any one, so he is carried along whither he wishes to go. That man needs no pity.

Above him is a man of a stronger and nobler nature. He writes from a deep conviction and after much philosophical meditation. He has an excellent memory, good judgment, is studious and calm. His genius lies in observation carried to its highest degree and good sense to its loftiest expression. His language is

exact, vigorous, noble in its sweep. Order and charity reign in his writing, for he keeps always in mind the men for whom he writes and the path into which he would lead them. There are secret revolts and sublime hatreds in his heart, but his reason rules his heart. He knows how to sow and then await the harvest. He is master of himself and of many whom he sways. "C'est le véritable, le Grand Écrivain". (225) He is not unhappy. He has what he has sought; he will always be attacked, but with blunted weapons. Victorious or vanquished, he will always be crowned. He does not need pity.

But there is the third more unusual, more pure and passionate nature. He who possesses it is unsuited for anything but the divine work, and comes into the world rarely, fortunately for himself, unfortunately for society. Emotion is so deep within him that from earliest childhood he has been plunged into extasies, meditations, and reveries. In him imagination reigns supreme. His memory is broad and his judgment is penetrating yet his imagination sweeps him irresistibly toward heaven. The least breath and he is soaring, free from restraint, in uncharted spaces. From then on all his relations with men are changed. His sensitiveness is too keen; "ce qui ne fait qu'effleurer les autres le blesse jusqu'au sang". (226) His affections are out of proportion; his enthusiasms excessive, his sympathies too real. Those whom he pities suffer less than he. The buffeting of the world and its coldness throw him into despair and indignation. He sees the causes whereas other men see only the effects. Therefore he is silent, withdraws within himself. There he meditates and from the hot fire of his thoughts flows the divine lava of verse. He does not understand what is taking place within him, he is consumed by his own anguish; he roams about without knowing where he is going; he needs "to do nothing" in order to something for his art. He cannot spend his time and energy at every-day labor, he must have peace and quiet in order to hear the harmonious chords which are played within. "C'est le Poète. Celui-là est retranché dès qu'il se montre: toutes vos larmes, toute votre pitié pour lui". (227)

It is the poet whom we must seek out and save. We must find a living for him, because left alone he would find only death. In his early youth he foresees the power of his genius, he would draw nature and humanity into his embrace, and it is then that he is mistrusted and repelled. He cries out, "C'est à vous que je parle, faites que je vive!" And the world answers, "Je ne te

comprends point". (228) --And the world is not to be blamed, for his chosen words can be understood only by the elect. But some of these are busy with their own labors, others expect the perfection of a man in the work of the child, most are indifferent.

The poet cries out to the state, "Écoutez-moi, et faites que je ne meure pas". (229) But the state is a stranger to intelligence and does nothing.

What can the poet do? He can become a soldier, and allow physical activity to kill moral activity. He can enter the field of commerce, and allow figures to kill illusion. He can cease to sing in order to write, become a literary hack or even a useful writer, but in the end imagination will be killed and with it the Poem she bore.

In any case he will kill a part of himself and unless great force of resistance is given him, he will do as did Chatterton, kill himself entirely; it is a short step. Then he is a criminal for "Le Suicide est un crime religieux et social". (230) Duty and reason so declare, the world is convinced of it, but isn't despair even stronger than duty and reason? Real despair is a devouring force, irresistible, beyond argument, which begins by killing thought at a single blow. Despair is a torture which holds the heart as if in a vice until the man is mad and throws himself into the embrace of death as into the arms of a mother.

Is it he who is guilty, or is it society which thus tracks him to earth? When a man dies in this fashion, is it Suicide? There are some sources of despair so extreme as to kill first a man's thoughts and then himself: hunger, for example. Therefore it is wise not to allow a man to descend to such a degree of despair. It may be that the "infirmité de l'inspiration" (231) is a ridiculous ailment, but the number afflicted is small and the world is unanimous in pronouncing them great and immortal--after they are dead. A few lines would, if the world did but know, suffice to prove the poet. Who is there now who would not say that for the "Jeune Captive", André Chénier deserved a pension that would have kept body and soul together? But he says:

"Las du mépris des sots qui suit la pauvreté,
Je regarde la tombe, asile souhaité."

Poetry does not appeal to the multitude, budding talents are crushed underfoot and cries of distress are not heard. To those who seek to idealize it, their nation refuses bread and a roof. It should be the part of the law-makers to cure this wound on the social body. It is their task to assure the future to him who has given a pledge of the divine talent. He needs only two things: life and meditation, which mean "bread" and "time".

Some truth may be found in this exaggerated thesis. It is certain that in modern society where reward is proportionate to utility of service, the man whose pre-eminence is only in that which pertains to inspiration, is poorly fitted for the struggle for a livelihood. The poet, the scholar, the thinker all suffer alike. To present the matter as a social question, to develop the moral truth, was the goal Vigny sought to attain. No sooner had he had some experience with the drama than he began to use it as propaganda for the cause of poets. To this mission he brought an almost religious fervor; he felt the responsibility of souls to be his burden. He suffered from it yet he was proud of it. What subject could be more worthy of him and of his public, even of his Creator than a plea in favor of poets? It was for him the question par excellence, nothing could be more important. The theme inspired him with a language almost Biblical, a bold confidence which came from his feeling of being in the divine presence of truth.

Thus Alfred de Vigny explains the thesis of his play and passes on to the consideration of the play itself: "je ne descendrai pas de cette question à celle de la forme d'art que j'ai créée. La vanité la plus vaine est peut-être celle des théories littéraires. Je ne cesse de m'étonner qu'il y ait eu des hommes qui aient pu croire de bonne foi, durant un jour entier, à la durée des règles qu'ils écrivaient. Une idée vient au monde tout armée, comme Minerve; elle revêt en naissant la seule armure qui lui convienne et qui doit dans l'avenir être sa forme durable.....--Il n'y a ni maître ni école en poésie".(232) For the "Drame de la Pensée," "S'il existait une intrigue moins compliquée que celle-ci, je la choisirais.....C'est l'histoire d'un homme qui a écrit une lettre le matin et qui attend la réponse jusqu'au soir; elle arrive, et le tue. --Mais ici; l'action morale est tout. L'action est dans cette âme livrée à de noires tempêtes; elle est dans les coeurs de cette jeune femme et de

ce vieillard qui assistent à la tourmente, cherchant en vain à retarder le naufrage, et luttent contre un ciel et une mer si terribles que le bien est impuissant, et entraîné lui-même dans le désastre inévitable". (233)

To express his serious thought nothing was fitting save the most austere form. Stripped of all Romantic trappings, the drama of "la Pensée" is more idealistic than tragedy itself. "Une idée qui est l'examen d'une blessure de l'âme devait avoir dans sa forme l'unité la plus complète, la simplicité la plus sévère". (234) Thus there is unity of time, unity of place and unity of interest. The simplicity of the intrigue allows the logical sequence of scenes and the concentration of the dramatic forces upon the dominating character, upon a controlling passion and upon a rapid crisis. In short, Vigny used all the old armor of classic tragedy except that the introduction of the middle class and the intrusion of the element of the grotesque--brought in by the entrance of the young lords and Lord Beckford who are, according to Vigny's treatment, almost as odious as they are grotesque--bring us back from the heights so dear to classic drama, to a more prosaic level.

Were it not for this double element in this first "pièce à thèse" there would be nothing Romantic except the thesis itself: the exalted claim of the rights of a Poet. To tell the truth, the thing which interests the public at large in this play--and perhaps one might include the reflective thinker--is not so much the theme itself as the love episode. No one has so well shown its charm as Vigny himself: "Derrière le drame il y a un second drame que l'écriture n'atteint pas et que n'expriment pas les paroles. Ce drame repose dans le mystérieux amour de Chatterton et de Kitty Bell; cet amour qui se devine toujours et ne se dit jamais; cet amour de deux êtres si purs qu'ils n'oseront jamais se parler, ni rester seuls qu'au moment de la mort; amour qui n'a pour messagers que deux enfants, pour caresses que la trace des lèvres et des larmes que ces fronts innocents portent de la jeune mère au poète, amour que le quaker repousse toujours d'une main tremblante et gronde d'une voix attendrie". (235) It is interesting to note that this platonic feeling is precisely the thing to which Vigny was most susceptible and which he was experiencing just then at the beginning of his liaison with Madame Dorval, the actress who played the rôle of Kitty Bell.

The distinctive characteristic of Alfred de Vigny is his intelligence. His imagination is of the second order. He writes no word without an idea. The theses which he supports are sometimes hazardous, never commonplace nor puerile. They arrest thought. It is through his intelligence that he is a poet and the origin of all his verses is in meditation rather than inspiration. It was not his heart alone which convinced him that the poet is the inevitable martyr of society under every form of government and that, whereas other men may hope for redress with a change of rule or country, the poet will always be a stranger to justice, disinherited among all men in every time and place. Under all latitudes and in all societies poets have been and will be unhappy.

But to discover the secret of their unhappiness, it is not into society that one must delve but into the nature of the poets. Tragedies abound among them for by nature they are called to an extraordinary function in a society which is based on the exchange of regular services and in which everything is regulated by law and possession. The poet cannot fit into a social order so constituted. Alfred de Vigny realized this truth and hence made his plea for the Poet.

In closing, it may be noted that in connection with "Chatterton", his plea for the Poet, Alfred de Vigny had to speak in his own defense when he found himself charged with extolling suicide. On September 7, 1835, he wrote to the director of the Revue des Deux Mondes: "Le public qui a bien voulu écouter quarante fois le drame de Chatterton au Théâtre Français et le lire depuis, le public a vu que, loin de conseiller le suicide, j'avais 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 que fait son indifférence. Chaque mot de cet ouvrage tient à cette idée et demande au législateur pour le poète, le temps et le pain. Veuillez apprendre ce fait au législateur nommé 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!" And one cannot doubt the sincerity of that protest which, indeed, was borne out in Vigny's own life, for later, when suffering from the ravages of cancer, he did not put an end to his own torture.

IX
CONCLUSION--CHATTERTON AS A SYMBOL

It is not difficult to understand the reasons which prompted Vigny's interest in Chatterton as a poet. Both felt at an early age the urge to write, to listen to the divine voice within; both retreated within themselves to meditate, to escape, as much as possible, contact with others, both preferred to live in the realm of thought which became more real to them than the realm of physical activity. Both were therefore misunderstood, and the torture brought on through this lack of understanding was more than Chatterton could endure, bound as he was by an unconquerable pride.

Such a life brought about in Vigny the maturing of an idea characterized by Brunetière as "une de ses idées les plus chères et les plus bizarres, qui est que le poète est un être rare, à qui nous devons faire des loisirs ou des rentes". (236) The poet, the world over, is misunderstood, forced to an activity absolutely contrary to his nature, or allowed to die by a careless, indifferent world that heeds not his plea for bread. Do not these divine singers merit assistance from those whose lives are made more beautiful by their songs? "Triple divinité du ciel! que t'ont-ils donc fait, ces Poètes que tu créas les premiers des hommes pour que les derniers des hommes les renient et les repoussent ainsi?" (237) "En vérité, je vous le dis: l'homme a rarement tort et l'ordre social toujours. -- Quiconque y est traité comme Gilbert et Chatterton, qu'il frappe, qu'il frappé partout! -- Je sens pour lui (s'attaquerait-il à moi-même) l'attendrissement d'une mère pour son fils atteint injustement dans son berceau d'une maladie douloureuse et incurable". (238)

Admittedly Vigny's use of Chatterton's life as portrayed in the "Histoire de Kitty Bell" and in his drama "Chatterton", is not accurate historically. But to Alfred de Vigny, Thomas Chatterton was only a symbol, a name around which he could develop his thesis and make his plea in behalf of poets. He says himself, "Pardonne-moi de prendre pour symbole le nom que tu portais sur la terre, et de tenter le bien en ton nom". (239) Gaillard de Champris writes, "Ambitieuse, son imagination avait aussi une tendance invincible à généraliser, à

passer du fait à l'idée, de l'idée à la loi, de la loi au système, en un mot à réduire tout à l'universel. Chatterton, Gilbert, Chénier, ne sont pas des individus intéressants par les particularités de leur vie, de leur caractère ou de leur talent. Ils sont les représentants éminents de toute une classe d'hommes; ils sont le Poète devant la monarchie constitutionnelle, le Poète devant le Pouvoir absolu, le Poète devant la Démagogie". (240)

As to the worth of Vigny's thesis and the justification of his symbolical use of Chatterton, each reader must judge for himself. But surely poets have never had a more ardent advocate, a more fervent worker engaged in their cause. Vigny is the real champion, a consoler by his forceful words. For more than twenty-five years he was himself a sufferer from that subtle malady which is characteristic of precious things. "Il est malade de la maladie des perles. On ne les guérit qu'en les portant. Le porter, c'est-à-dire, l'écouter". (241) He meditated on the society in which he found himself, and he saw only reasons for bitterness and disillusion. He made for himself such a high standard in art that he could scarcely reach it, and therein was an added cause for gloom and melancholy.

Thus the "Histoire de Kitty Bell" and "Chatterton" are the embodiment of the author's personality, symbols of the suffering which Poets must endure. "Les hommes d'imagination sont éternellement crucifiés; le sarcasme et le misère sont les clous de leur croix", (242) and Vigny felt himself to be one of those "hommes d'imagination". And so "Chatterton" lives by its philosophical symbolism as well as by its comparative strength of construction, by what is sincere in its passion, by what is genuine in its pathos, and by the character of its heroine, Kitty Bell.

NOTES

- Page 3 (1) Cf. Willcox's edition of "Chatterton's Poetical Works". Vol. I, p.XXI
- Page 7 (2) Chatterton, Thomas. "To Horace Walpole" Chatterton's Poetical Works, Vol. I, p. 32 Aldine Edition
- Page 8 (3) Ibid., p. 82
- Page 9 (4) Ibid., pp. 273-275
- (5) Villon, François: "Le Petit Testament" Stanza VI, p.2
Edition published by Louis Michaud.
- Page 10 (6) Ibid., Stanza IX, p.4
- (7) Ibid., Stanza X, p.4
- (8) Ibid., Stanza XI, p.4
- (9) Ibid., Stanza XXVII, p.9
- (10) Ibid., Stanza XVI, p.5
- Page 11 (11) Ibid., Stanza XL, p.14
- (12) Schwob, Marcel. "Spicilège", p.51
- (13) Ibid., p.52
- Page 12 (14) Masson, David. "Essays Biographical and Critical. Thomas Chatterton, A Story of the Year 1770." p.247

Mr. Masson takes this quotation from "Love and Madness" written by the Reverend Sir Herbert Croft and published in 1780. This book, now nearly forgotten, consists of pretended letters from a clergyman, Hackman, to an actress, Miss Ray, who refused Hackman in

marriage. This pseudo-correspondence dealt with love, suicide, Goethe and the "Sorrows of Werther", and finally at some length with the story of Chatterton. To prepare himself to write this part of the book Croft made laborious and painstaking investigations and to him we owe a great and invaluable part of our knowledge of Thomas Chatterton's life.

- Page 14 (15) Wordsworth, William: "Resolution and Independence."
- (16) Chatterton, Thomas. "Last Verses" Chatterton's Poetical Works, Vol. I, p.266 Aldine Edition
- Page 15 (17) Beers, Henry A. "A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century." p.355
- (18) Ibid., p.362
- Page 17 (19) Preface to "Journal d'un Poète", published in 1867 by Louis Ratisbonne.
- (20) Paléologue, Maurice. "Alfred de Vigny" pp. 8-10
- (21) Vigny, Alfred de. "Journal d'un Poète" Nelson Edition, p.404
- Page 18 (22) Ibid., p.404
- (23) Ibid., p.408
- (24) Ibid., p.409
- Page 19 (25) Ibid., p.41
- (26) Cf. Paléologue, Maurice. "Alfred de Vigny" p. 25
- Page 20 (27) Vigny, Alfred de. "Réflexions sur la Vérité dans l'Art". Cinq-Mars. Nelson Edition, p.11
- (28) Ibid., p.16

- (29) Vigny, Alfred de. "Journal d'un Poète."
p. 218
- (30) Vigny, Alfred de. "Lettre à Lord...."
Written Nov. 1, 1829 Théâtre, Vol. II
Nelson Edition, p.33
- Page 21 (31) Poizat, Alfred. "Le Symbolisme. Tableau de
la Poésie Française" p.44
- (32) Petit de Julleville. "Histoire de la Langue
et de la Littérature française." Vol. VII,
p. 320
- Page 22 (33) Vigny, Alfred de. "Journal d'un Poète"
This book contains a sketch of Vigny's
life by Léon Séché who credits A. de
Vigny with having said these words "quelque
part."
- (34) Vigny, Alfred de. "Journal d'un Poète", p. 417
- (35) Ibid., p.232
- (36) Ibid., p.403
- (37) Ibid., p.268
- (38) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton." Dernière
Nuit, p. 9
- (39) Vigny, Alfred de. "Journal d'un Poète, p.232
- (40) Ibid., p. 410
- Page 23 (41) Ibid., p. 259.
- (42) Masson, Maurice. "Alfred de Vigny", pp.31-32
- (43) Montégut, Émile. "Nos Morts Contemporains"
p. 327
- (44) Zweig, Stefan. "Romain Rolland", p. 135
- (45) Ibid., p. 136
- (46) Ibid., pp. 135-36

- (47) Vigny, Alfred de. "Journal d'un Poète", p.323
- (48) Montégut, Émile. "Nos Morts Contemporains"
p. 328
- Page 24 (49) Vigny, Alfred de. "Journal d'un Poète", p. 239
- (50) Ibid., p.222
- Page 25 (51) Vigny, Alfred de. "Mont des Oliviers."
These lines are called "Silence" and were
written in 1862 Cf. Nelson Edition of
the "Poesies" of Vigny p. 260
- (52) Vigny Alfred de. "Chatterton". Dernière Nuit p.9
- Page 26 (53) Masson, Maurice. "Alfred de Vigny". pp.85-87
- (54) Gaillard de Champris, Henry. "Sur Quelques
Idéalistes". p. 81
- Page 27 (55) Séché, Léon. "Alfred de Vigny et son temps." p.35
- Page 28 (56) Hémon, Félix. "Cours de Littérature", Vol. IX,
pp.38-39
- Page 29 (57) Vigny, Alfred de. "Stello" p. 79
- (58) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton". Dernière Nuit, p.23
- Page 30 (59) Montégut, Émile. "Nos Morts Contemporains"
Tome I, p.371
- (60) Vigny, Alfred de. "Stello". Nelson Edition, p.59
- Page 31 (61) Ibid., p.66
- (62) Ibid., pp.68-69
- Page 33 (63) Ibid., pp.69-72
- (64) Ibid., p.72
- (65) Ibid., p. 72
- (66) Ibid., p.73

- (67) Ibid., p. 85
- (68) Ibid., pp.86-87
- Page 35 (69) Ibid., p.91
- (70) Ibid., p.91
- (71) Ibid., pp.91-92
- (72) Ibid., p.92
- (73) Ibid., p.92
- (74) Ibid., p.93
- Page 36 (75) Ibid., p.95
- (76) Ibid., p.98
- Page 37 (77) Ibid., p.99
- (78) Ibid., p.99
- (79) Ibid., p.100
- (80) Ibid., p.101
- Page 38 (81) Montégut, Émile, "Nos Morts Contemporains
Tome I, pp.371-372
- (82) Paléologue, Maurice, "Alfred de Vigny", p.48
- (83) Vigny, Alfred de, "Stello", pp.79-82
- (84) Paléologue, Maurice, "Alfred de Vigny", pp.84-85
- Page 39 (85) Vigny, Alfred de, "Chatterton", Nelson Edition,
p.31
- (86) Ibid., pp.31-32
- (87) Ibid., p.33
- (88) Ibid., p.34
- Page 40 (89) Ibid., p.35

- (90) Ibid., p.39
(91) Ibid., p.36
(92) Ibid., p.38
(93) Ibid., p.40
(94) Ibid., p.37
(95) Ibid., p.38
Page 41 (96) Ibid., pp.43-44
(97) Ibid., p.45
(98) Ibid., p.45
Page 42 (99) Ibid., pp.45-47
(100) Ibid., pp.47-48
(101) Ibid., p. 48
(102) Ibid., p. 49
Page 43 (103) Ibid., p.49
(104) Ibid., p. 50
Page 44 (105) Ibid., pp.58-59
(106) Ibid., pp.64-65
(107) Ibid., p.65
Page 45 (108) Ibid., p.71
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(110) Ibid., p.74
(111) Ibid., pp.74-75
(112) Ibid., p.77
(113) Ibid., pp.77-78

- Page 46 (114) Ibid., p.79
(115) Ibid., p.80
(116) Ibid., p.80
(117) Ibid., p.81
(118) Ibid., pp.81-82
(119) Ibid., p.83
- Page 47 (120) Ibid., pp.83-84
(121) Ibid., p. 84
(122) Ibid., pp.85-86
(123) Ibid., p. 87
- Page 48 (124) Ibid., p.89
- Page 49 (125) Ibid., p.92
(126) Ibid., p.94
- Page 50 (127) Ibid., pp. 95-96
(128) Ibid., p. 99
(129) Ibid., p.99
(130) Ibid., p.99
- Page 51 (131) Ibid., p. 107
(132) Ibid., p. 110
(133) Ibid., p. 111
- Page 52 (134) Ibid., pp.111-112
(135) Ibid., p. 113
(136) Ibid., p. 116
(137) Ibid., p. 116

- (138) Ibid., pp. 116-117
- Page 53 (139) Ibid., p. 119
- Page 54 (140) Ibid., pp. 122-124
- (141) Ibid., p. 126
- (142) Ibid., p. 126
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- Page 55 (144) Brunetière, "Histoire de la Littérature Française" Vol. IV, p. 420
- (145) Janin, Jules, "Critique Dramatique" Vol. III, p. 174
- Page 56 (146) Vigny, Alfred de, "Journal d'un Poète", p. 290
- (147) Lauvrière, Émile. "Alfred de Vigny, Sa Vie et Son Œuvre" pp. 189-190
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- (149) Ibid., p. 273
- (150) Ibid., pp. 281-282
- (151) Ibid., p. 285
- (152) Ibid., p. 304
- Page 58 (153) Ibid., p. 375
- (154) Gautier, Théophile. Cf. "Moniteur", 14 déc. 1857
- (155) Janin, Jules, "Critique Dramatique", Vol. III pp. 171-172
- (156) Pellissier, "Literary Movement in France During the 19th Century". English Version by Anne G. Brinton p. 332

- (157) Lauvrière, Émile. "Alfred de Vigny, Sa Vie et Son Œuvre" p. 191
- (158) Ibid., p. 191
- Page 59 (159) Paléologue, Maurice. "Alfred de Vigny" p.48
- (160) Sainte-Beuve. "Portraits Contemporains" "Vol. II, p.66
- (161) Lauvrière, Émile. "Alfred de Vigny, Sa Vie et Son Œuvre" pp. 172-173
- (162) Vigny, Alfred de. "Journal d'un Poète". p. 376
- (163) Vigny, Alfred de. "Stello", pp. 59-60
- (164) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton" Caractères et Costumes des rôles principaux. pp. 27-28
- Page 60 (165) Vigny, Alfred de. "Stello" p. 60
- (166) Montégut, Émile. "Nos Morts Contemporains" Tome I, p. 374
- (167) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton" p. 35
- (168) Ibid., p. 36
- (169) Ibid., p. 39
- (170) Ibid., p. 55
- (171) Ibid., p. 95
- (172) Ibid., Caractères et Costumes des rôles principaux p. 28
- (173) Lauvrière, Émile. "Alfred de Vigny, Sa Vie et Son Œuvre" p.184
- Page 61 (174) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton" Caractères et Costumes des rôles principaux p. 27
- (175) Vigny, Alfred de. "Stello" pp. 87-88
- (176) Ibid., pp. 72-73

- (177) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton" p. 89
- (178) Ibid., p. 90
- (179) Vigny, Alfred de. "Stello" p. 60
- (180) Ibid., p. 99
- Page 62 (181) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton" p. 34
- (182) Ibid., p. 35
- (183) Ibid., p. 53
- (184) Ibid., p. 38
- (185) Ibid., p. 103
- (186) Ibid., Caractères et Costumes des rôles principaux p. 29
- (187) Vigny, Alfred de. "Stello" pp. 86-87
- (188) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton", Caractères et Costumes des rôles principaux p. 29
- (189) Ibid., p. 66
- Page 63 (190) Ibid., pp. 101-102
- (191) Ibid., p. 37
- (192) Ibid., pp. 38, 43, 104
- (193) Ibid., p. 95
- (194) Ibid., p. 102
- Page 64 (195) Vigny, Alfred de. Cf. "Stello" p. 69 and "Chatterton" p. 48
- (196) Vigny, Alfred de. "Stello" p. 85
- (197) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton" pp. 108-109
- (198) Vigny, Alfred de. "Stello" p. 69
- Page 65 (199) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton" pp. 110-111

- (200) Vigny, Alfred de, Cf. "Chatterton" pp. 111-112
and "Stello" pp. 91-92
- (201) Vigny, Alfred de. "Stello" p. 98
- (202) Ibid., p. 99
- (203) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton" p. 122
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- (213) Ibid., p. 176
- (214) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton". Caractères et
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- (215) Lauvrière, Émile. "Alfred de Vigny, Sa Vie
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- (216) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton" p. 46
- (217) Ibid., p. 49
- (218) Ibid., Caractères et Costumes, p. 28
- Page 69 (219) Ibid., p. 46

- (220) Vigny, Alfred de, "Journal d'un Poète" p.274
- Page 72 (221) Cf. Paléologue, Maurice, "Alfred de Vigny" p.50
- Page 73 (222) Vigny, Alfred de, "Chatterton", Dernière Nuit
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- (223) Ibid., p.10
- (224) Ibid., p. 11
- Page 74 (225) Ibid., p. 13
- (226) Ibid., p. 14
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- (230) Ibid., p. 17
- (231) Ibid., p. 19
- Page 76 (232) Vigny, Alfred de, "Chatterton", Dernière Nuit
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- Page 77 (233) Ibid., pp. 22-23
- (234) Ibid., p. 22
- (235) Lauvrière, Émile, "Alfred de Vigny, Sa Vie
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- Page 79 (236) Brunetière, "Histoire de la Littérature
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- (237) Vigny, Alfred de, "Stello" p. 104
- (238) Ibid., p. 107
- (239) Vigny, Alfred de, "Chatterton", Dernière Nuit
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- Page 80 (240) Gaillard de Champris, "Sur Quelques Idéalistes"
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(241) Sainte-Beuve. "Nouveaux Lundis". Tome VI, p. 451

(242) Vigny, Alfred de. "Chatterton", p. 94

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