

5.
Narrower
and wider
sense of
criticism.

The word Criticism has been used in a narrower and in a wider sense. In English literature it acquired a definite meaning through Pope's "Essay on Criticism." This essay is written very much in the spirit of the French writers of the seventeenth century, notably of Boileau, who, on his part, followed in the steps of Horace and the ancients. In fact, criticism in this narrower sense is in modern literature a creation of the French mind; it means a kind of philosophy of taste, and is an expression of the literary, artistic, or æsthetical conscience of the age. In this sense it was used by Henry Home, Lord Kames, whose 'Elements of Criticism' appeared in 1761, and quite recently Professor Saintsbury has thus used the word in his valuable 'History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe.'¹ But the country which has not only produced separate and isolated works on criticism in this narrower sense, but has consecutively produced a literature of criticism, is France. M. Brunetière says in this regard: "Even if the Italian and English critics are not isolated in the history of their literatures, one may say that they form a kind of exception, and that nowhere else than in France has criticism had for the last three centuries what we call a consecutive history. Must I add that it has been truly the soul of French literature? I, at least, see from Ronsard to Victor Hugo a revolution of taste and of literature which, with us, has had for its origin and

¹ 3 vols., Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1900-1904: Prof. Saintsbury defines the "criticism" with which he deals as "that function of the judgment which busies itself with

the goodness or badness, the success or ill-success, of literature, from the purely literary point of view" (vol. i. p. 3).