

Difference in Fiction.

Aside from mere differences in the life and customs depicted, almost all readers have noted certain almost indefinable differences in the essential motif, style, and thought of British and American novelists, apparently marking two distinct national schools of fiction. Some of these subtle and less evident differences were lately impressed upon Mr. W. D. Howells in reading Mrs. Humphry Ward's latest story, "Eleanor," and after much analysis of this book and others he concludes that the main characteristic of British novelists is breadth of treatment, while the dominant note of our own novelists is depth. When Mr. Howells uses the latter word to characterize the American novel, he is referring to the classic novel of Hawthorne and other writers of international and assured reputation, not to what he regards as the ephemeral work of the "matinee school" of "Janice Meredith," "Richard Carvel," "The Redemption of David Corson," and other novels that have lately supplied the voracious appetite of our new reading public. Mr. Howells thus explains his views about British breadth and American depth, writing in the North American Review (July):

"I confess that the effect of the breadth I have felt, or seemed to feel, in Mrs. Ward's work was such as to make me discontented with the depth that I remembered in the best American work, as if this were comparatively a defect, since it was necessarily narrower. It was only by reflecting that our depth was the inevitable implication of our civic and social conditions that I was consoled, and restored to something like a national self-respect. To put it paradoxically, our life is too large for our art to be broad. In despair at the immense variety of the material offered it by American civilization, American fiction must specialize, and turning from the superabundance of character it must burrow far down in a soul or two.

"Men may invent almost anything but themselves, and it was not because Hawthorne made himself psychological, but because he was so, that in the American environment he bent his vision inward. His theory was that our life was too level and too open and too sunnily prosperous for his art, but it was an instinct far subtler than this belief that he obeyed in seeking

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the subliminal drama. Hawthorne was romantic, but our realists who have followed him have been of the same instinct, and have dealt mainly with the subliminal drama, too. In their books, so faithful to the effect of our every-day life, the practical concerns of it are subordinated to the psychical, not consciously, but so constantly that their subordination has not been a matter of any question. The usual incidents of fiction have not, in the best American novelists, been the prime concern, but the subliminal effect of those incidents. Love itself, which is the meat and drink of fiction, is treated less as a passionate than as a psychological phenomenon. Long ago the more artistic of our novelists perceived that the important matter was not what the lovers suffered or enjoyed in getting married, or whether they got married at all or not, but what sort of man and maid their love found them out to be, and how, under its influence, the mutual chemistry of their natures interacted. All the problems, in any case, are incomparably simplified for the English novelist by the definite English condition. One can no longer call them fixed; but they are still definite, and in a certain way character proceeds from them—the character of gentleman, a business man, an artisan, a servant, a laborer. Each of these has his being in a way so different from the others that he is a definitely different creature; and when through some chance, some perverse mixture of the elements, the conditions are traversed, and the character bred of one shows itself in another, it has a stronger relief from the alien background. But, ordinarily, the Englishman feels, thinks, and acts from his class; when you name his class you measurably state him; and you have rather to do with what he does than with what he is. The result in fiction is a multiplicity of incidents and persons; you have breadth rather than depth. Even in so psychological a story as Mrs. Ward's "Marcella" the definite conditions account for so much that it is, after all, a study of incidental more than a study of motive."

A fundamental difference between English and American life, says Mr. Howells, may perhaps be indicated in the fact that the dialogue of English novels deals with incidents while American dialogue deals with interests. He thus elucidates his idea:

"Their (the British) denser life, we will say, satisfies them with superficial contrasts, while in our thinner and more homogeneous society the contrasts that satisfy are subliminal. This theory would account for their breadth and our depth without mortifying the self-love of either, which I should like to spare in our case if not in theirs. Our personality is the consequence of our historic sparsity, and it survives beyond its time because the nature of our contiguity is still such as to fix a man's mind strongly upon himself, and to render him restless till he has ascertained how far all other men are like him. We are prodigiously homogeneous, though in the absence of classification we seem so chaotic. We shall change, probably, and then the character of our fiction, our art of representing life, will change, too. Very likely it will become more superficial and less subliminal; it will lose in depth as it gains in breadth. As yet, its attempts to be broad, to be society fiction, have resulted in a shallowness which is not suggestive of breadth.

"The English are less apt than we have been to carry a story abroad, and to find in an alien setting terms more favorable than those of home for the subliminal interests. This may be because they inevitably carry their civilization with them in all possible details down to the emblematic bathtub, while we find that we can get on abroad fairly well without steam heat and exposed plumbing, and the American order which they stand for. We are, in fact, far more easily detachable from our native background, and blend far more readily with the alien atmosphere, than the English, so that I think if an American family as nearly as possible corresponding to the Manisties had been set down in the air of Rome, they would have lost their native outline more. The thing is hard to say, and perhaps I shall come as near to suggesting it as may be in noting the impression that the cosmopolitan Englishman gives, of being more English than if he had never left home; whereas, the cosmopolitan American really ceases to be American even if he does not become anything else."—Literary Digest.

A Floating Hotel.

The talk about a floating hotel, to be towed out from the Battery every night and brought to the dock in the morning, which has filtered through the newspapers during every hot spell in recent summers, is at last to be realized. Mr. John Arbuckle, who has had the plan under consideration for several years, has bought some fine ships and brought the scheme so near to completion that it will be launched soon—it is to be hoped before we have a repetition of last week's heat. The details were fully told in Sunday's Eagle. The boats, or hotels, will leave the Battery in the evening, return in the morning, and will make over Sunday cruises to nearby points. Ample provision seems to have been made against accident and for the preservation of the decorous conduct which is essential to the success of a

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scheme of this kind. No liquor will be sold on the boats and other provisions have been made, calculated to insure quiet and good order. With thousands of people sleeping on Coney Island sands last week and many more thousands tossing at home, unable to sleep on good beds, in spacious rooms with large windows, it would seem as if this project would meet an existing demand. But much will, of course, depend upon the management and success cannot be guaranteed in advance. It should be primarily a device to enable those detained in the city to secure a good night's sleep when the heat denies them that luxury on shore. Therefore, it should not be a picnic with late hours, music and other noises to disturb the people who seek these boats for rest. There are abundant resources for merrymaking on shore. No addition to them is needed which the beaches will not supply on the mere suspicion of a demand. But there is no way of insuring refreshing sleep to thousands in the city who would be glad to pay for that privilege. Mr. Arbuckle's is the only project before the public likely to meet that demand. If it keeps strictly to that one purpose it ought to prove a boon to thousands who now swelter helplessly through at least two or three weeks of the summer.—Brooklyn Eagle.

Outing for the Poor.

It is not alone the rich and the well-to-do who are planning to go into the country this summer. The poor are going, too—hundreds of them. Moreover, they are not to be taken in charity, but in neighborliness. In other words, the settlements are to take them.

Time was, not so very many years ago, when the poor of this city had no thought of a summer outing. If, by any chance, such a favor was extended to them through the kindness of some benevolent person, it bore the obvious aspect of charity. With the institution of the settlements, however, there has come about a new condition. It is not a change which the obtuse can easily understand, for it is a spiritual rather than a material difference. It lies here: The summer outings given to the poor of Chicago this summer will be extended as hospitality from friends to friends, and those who receive this hospitality are placed upon the same footing as all other guests and expected to give of their loyalty and good will, their talents and services, just as the members of a house party would do.

For example, the Chicago commons will establish Camp Good Kill at Irving, Ill., as in former years. As soon as the heat of the summer has made itself assertive thirty boys will be taken to the camp for a fortnight. At the conclusion of that period another detachment of thirty boys will be invited, and, after three detachments of boys have each enjoyed their two weeks' visit thirty girls will be taken. The camp will be kept open for twelve weeks, and the boys and girls who visit there will each pay fifty cents for their vacation. They will also help with the housework and will be expected to assist in amusing each other and to look after any who are not strong or who are shy or unused to the English tongue. By such reciprocity is this hospitality placed on a higher and more neighborly plane than the