

ness; who has a vivid consciousness of those propensities which tend to enervate, has little patience with that literature which is pervaded with the very thing he has striven to eradicate from himself. He who has just emerged from a state of morbid sentimentalism, and is seeking a more healthy vigorous life, does not care to put himself under the influence of Rousseau and his followers, excellent in some respects though their writings are, yet tinged with an unmanly spirit, tending to weaker resolution and self-restraint. The same is true of Heine, in spite of the exquisite melody of his lyrics and the poignant wit of his "Pictures of Travel". One who reads them pays for it at the cost of his peace of mind. They are the product of the man who found the world and its conflicts too much for him and the notes he sounds most frequently are those of sorrow and despair.

We do not pretend to say that literature should be a moral code, containing only set rules and regulations. On the contrary all preaching should be kept out of it. We only ask that it be filled with vigorous, healthy life, and only indirectly teach just as every strong man, sound and whole, in whatever business he may be, is a force for good though he says not a word.

We do not object to poetry that deals with nature or sentiment; but let it be done in a healthy manner not in a piling, languishing way. The real genuine spirit of nature is refreshing and invigorating. But we protest against that sickly, artificial representation by one who has forsworn the world on account of wounded egotism or weak sensitiveness and seeks sympathy from her in his moods of weariness and despondency. Nature is not a vast sepulchre of blasted hopes. It is an imposition to represent her as gloomy and melancholy.

That condition exists not in her, but in the diseased imagination of the would-be interpreter. It is hardly fair to take advantage of the impersonality of nature and make her, like the chameleon, take on the color of whatever she comes in contact with.

Carlyle expresses the idea somewhere in his essays that literary creation is no separate faculty but the combination of the natural powers. It is only by being more of a man that one is able to write well. The picture of Hell and its horrors in the Divine Comedy was conceived by a man who vividly saw and felt what he expressed. It was a living reality to Dante. The dark passions, the crimes, and all the brood of Sin he saw in his intense, active existence, furnished him material which he concretized in his description of the infernal regions. He did not obtain it from some secret place known only to him. He simply had what is always present to every one,—man and nature. What distinguishes Dante from the ordinary individual is impressionability; which means that he is original not in kind but in degree. Dante is gifted with a keener vision; he sees what we do, only more vividly and comprehensively. Any view which does not recognize the literary man as a larger type, as having power and weight in some way at least, must be false. We do not worship dwarfs; we want no what is less, but more than ourselves. He who would command attention must have something behind his words.

We do not want thin ideas and copious verbage. Weak thought is not less out of place in literature than the "Fisher-man's Hornpipe" as a musical basis for a symphony. Power there must be if it takes hold of men. We do not mean stormy violence. It is not necessary to speak with a shout. The test is in the energy of the thought.

But whatever literature may seem to critics, the people will hardly care for more than the simple definition Wordsworth gave to poetry,—that which makes us wiser, better or happier.

We who have not time to refine on the subtle niceties of literary theories are satisfied with the effect. A hungry man having fasted for several hours does not care for a lengthy treatise on roast beef and its nutritious value; he wants the article itself. So as regards literature, we read it because it answers our needs and wants. What these wants are, determines our choice.

But the judgement of men in general we think, would favor the so-called moral standard,—that literature is not merely exquisite word-painting, but is the concrete expression of the life of earnest, thoughtful men who have trod the same paths that we have, but having keener, stronger vision, discover more than we. They write our history on a larger scale, as what were possibilities to us, are realities to them.

Perhaps this is a narrow view. It may be that literature should only attract us as a sunset or an Alpine scene. But there are some who do not care to forever gaze. They want something more tangible, something that bears more directly on the part they are playing in actual life. They are keenly interested to know the experience of others who have passed on the same road. Their sympathies draw them to seek what is allied to them, not foreign.

What this intellectual sympathy demands, is life,—a picture of its realities so strongly and harmoniously painted that it seems one with nature. This explains the power of the novel; why Mrs. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" struck a more telling blow against slavery than a store-house of sermons and moral dissertations. Not the fact but the impression conveyed is most important.

Of course we do not mean to say that form is of no consequence. Form is necessary but it is not all, nor the most important part. We have something more to do than contemplate pictures. That might be possible if we were living in the fabled golden age, but at present we have an age of harder material.

But it is not best for any critic to say "I am the way through which all must pass who would comprehend literature." For it is possible that he may have mistaken his dimensions; that humanity is too wide to be compressed within the narrow space of his personality. Building partitions is uncertain work unless one has a very clear conception of the size of what is to be confined in them. This is not always possible to finite man, as is demonstrated by the wholesale destruction of standards,—literary, philosophical, political and theological.

Perhaps it is wiser for a man not to insist on all viewing the universe through the same key-hole that he does. It often occasions trouble. Truth is too universal to admit of such monopoly.

The field of literature is broad. The horizon of every one does not extend to its limits. But it matters little whether we succeed in expressing its function in a precise formula or not. Air is just as life-giving, defined or undefined, and so is literature. There are some things that do not depend on analysis for their worth. It would be as well, perhaps, to desist from applying the hammer and crowbar method to literature in the vain endeavor to nail it down securely. The labor of such critics is valueless to them, painful to us.

That funny little apparatus over in the Lab., described by a Sophomore as a new fangled corn sheller, turns out to be a water metre. The city water is to be paid for by the drink, so to speak. The name of the measuring machine suggests the possibility of a variation in Churchill's favorite pun. Pity that Edward is not here in person to strike a new chord on the old thing.