

have looked for a new novel from their pens. Then I got my first introduction to "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," which in itself is almost one of the events of a life time. Was there ever anything written more charmingly? Hawthorn's "Twice-told Tale" impressed me most by the air of complete and thorough Americanism which permeates them throughout, and I had almost made up my mind that this was what constituted the charm in Hawthorne, but on reading "Our Old Home" he seemed to enter just as completely and as lovingly into the details of English life as he had of American life in the former work.

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Some people seem to have an uncontrollable desire to mark passages in every book they read. Whether one reader has a right to force his interpretation of a passage upon all future readers is a debated question. I have always felt like classing these marking individuals with those even less tolerable ones who insist upon reading aloud anything which happens to impress them, either in a newspaper or a novel. They have always seemed to me to be persons to whom ideas came so seldom that when they did get hold of one they felt in duty bound to rush out and announce it to the world.

Perhaps we can never persuade such individuals to allow an author to suggest his own rendering of a thought, but would it be entirely out of place to ask them to add their names to any marks they make so future readers may know that such is a good passage in *their* opinion and may be able to place some estimate on the value of the marks. Nothing is more provoking than to find an article marked in a very emphatic way and to be unable to tell whether it has succeeded in eliciting the approval of a first prep or of the chancellor.

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Why is it that a novel, dealing with a tragedy which is lived out for years, and which does not derive its force from a murder or any sudden happening, will produce a greater effect upon one than the same events in actual life? Take Pere Goriot, for example. The tragedy consists in the gradual abandonment of a father by the daughters for whom he would have sacrificed everything. The climax of their heartlessness is as startling as can well be imagined. One who has read the novel can never forget it. Yet I venture to say that the same events in actual life would be commented upon in a gossiping way for a day or so and then forgotten. It cannot be that a good writer can represent such a tragedy more forcibly than it exists for the actors, for it is generally admitted that the art of writing is not developed sufficiently to represent perfectly human feelings. Some other explanation must be thought of, and it has occurred to me that perhaps this is it. A good novelist—a Balzac—if he wishes to depict the evils of filial disrespect, will exclude rigorously from his work everything which will distract the attention of the reader—everything which will lessen the effect he wishes to produce. Even though he may be true to nature, he can omit the trivial incidental things of everyday life, which occupy our time and temper any great shocks we may meet. And so his completed work will stand, as does the abandonment of Pere Goriot, stripped of everything but its tragic effects. This, perhaps, accounts for the objective part of the phenomenon. The remainder rests entirely with ourselves. This, perhaps, accounts for the subjective part of the phenomenon. The remainder rests entirely with ourselves. The reader of a novel idealizes the situation for himself; the author merely suggests an outline; and the manner in which that outline is filled in depends entirely upon the temperament or sensibility of each individual reader. If one who

sincerely loves a parent reads Pere Goriot, the desertion assumes for him all the horror he is capable of feeling. But the same passages, read by one whose filial love has not been so fully developed, are regarded in a comparatively matter of fact manner.

This principle holds good regarding the events in actual life as well, but must be supplemented by another. With us, bathos is so often and so inseparably connected with pathos that only in the most extreme cases does the latter completely exclude the former. In a case similar to that of Pere Goriot we should be so encompassed with the thoughts of Madame de Nucingen's toilet, with the ball she was to give or with some other gossip, that we should have little more time or inclination to seriously take to heart her desertion of her father than she had herself. One of the best examples of this truth is found in Anna Karenina. Tolstoi has been criticised for lack of artistic feeling in delaying a wedding and throwing everybody into a state of terror lest something terrible had happened to the bridegroom, when in truth nothing more serious had happened than that he had packed and shipped all his shirts, and was without that very necessary adjunct to a successful marriage ceremony. And yet, however much this touch of Tolstoi lacks artistically, it is only too apt to be true to life. Many of our would be grand occasions are intruded upon by some utterly unpoetic reality like this.

These commonplace incidents, while they are often death to the poetry or tragedy of life, nevertheless form a bountiful packing which saves our sensibilities from rude shocks.

Yet another point, perhaps, is that a novelist can hold his reader's attention to a matter until he has said what he wishes, while in actual life one may escape from a disagreeable incident by a change of surroundings.

CURRENT COMMENT.

The dawn of a great national election is upon us. On every hand the hum of political machinery is audible. The conflict is to be fought upon great and leading principles. Between the old parties the tariff lines have been drawn. Every voter should find himself on one side or the other and help to decide the contest according to the dictates of his own conscience. The old idea of lauding party candidates regardless of principle has reached that stage in the progress of events that intelligent thinking men can no longer rely upon it. It is true that the past political history of our country teaches that men will support their party's candidate whether the candidate or the party he represents is in strict accordance with their convictions or not, simply because they cannot see immediate gain by giving their support to some one else. But we can no longer be justified in judging the future by the past. In all parts of the country things are changing. The laboring man can no longer with impunity be charged with following the leadership of party henchmen; but on the contrary they are beginning to break the shackles of their political thralldom and assert boldly their diffidence to any party that is unfriendly to their interests. The laboring men of this state are tariff reformers to a man almost, and many are firm in declaring their convictions in regard to their past party affiliations. They believe in protection only so far as it is necessary to promote the interests of the country without leaving an overflow surplus in the national treasury. There are few free traders, but many who would effect needed changes are branded as such by trained hirelings. We believe with the laboring man that the education of the present day teaches men to be more