

The Study of Literature.

Critics sometimes say of a book that it is or is not "convincing." What they mean is that the author has or has not been able to make what he has written seem true to the imagination of the reader. The man who in daily life attempts to act a part is pretty sure sooner or later to betray himself to the observant eye. His real self will shape the disguise under which he has hidden it; he may hold out the hands and say the words of Esau, but the voice with which he speaks will perforce be the voice of Jacob. It is so in literature, and especially in literature which arouses the perceptions by an appeal to the imagination. The writer must be in earnest himself or he cannot convince the reader. To the man who invents a fiction, for instance, the story which he has devised must in his imagination be profoundly true or it will not be true to the audience which he addresses. To the novelist who is "convincing," his characters are as real as the men he meets in his walks or sits beside at table. It is for this reason that every novelist with imaginations is likely to find that the fictitious personages of his story seem to act independently of the will of the author. They are so real that they must follow out the laws of their character, although that character exists only in imagination. For the author to feel this verity in what he writes is of course not all that is needed to enable him to convince his public; but it is certain that he is helpless without it, and that he cannot make real to others what is not real to himself.

In emotion we express the difference between the genuine and the counterfeit by the words "sentiment" and "sentimentality." Sentiment is what a man really feels; sentimentality is what he persuades himself that he feels. The Bad Boy as a "blighted being" is the type of sentimentality for all time. There is about the same relation between sentimentality and sentiment that there is between a paper doll and the lovely girl that it represents. There are fashions in emotions as there are fashions in bonnets; and foolish mortals are as prone to follow one as another. It is no more difficult for persons of a certain quality of mind to persuade themselves that they thrill with what they conceive to be the proper emotion than it is for a woman to convince herself of the especial fitness to her face of the latest device in utterly unbecoming headgear. Our grandmothers felt that proper maidenly sensibility required them to be so deeply moved by tales of broken hearts and unrequited affection that they must escape from the too poignant anguish by fainting into the arms of the nearest man. Their grandchildren today are neither more or less sincere, neither less nor more sensible in following to extremes other emotional modes which it might be invidious to specify. Sentimentality will not cease while the power of self-deception remains to human beings.

With sentimentality genuine literature has no more to do than it has with other human weaknesses and vices, which it may picture but must not share. With sentiment it is concerned in every line. Of sentiment no composition can have too much; of sentimentality it has more than enough if there be but the trace shown in a single affectation of phrase, in one unmeaning syllable or unnecessary accent.

There are other tests of the genuineness of the emotion expressed in literature which are more tangible than those just given; and being more tangible they are more easily applied. I have said that sham sentiment is sure to ring false. This is largely due to the fact that it is inevitably inconsistent. Just as a man has no difficulty in acting out his own character, whereas in any part that is assumed there are sure sooner or later to be lapses and incongruities, so genuine emotion will be consistent because it is real, while that which is feigned will almost surely jar upon itself. The fictitious personage that the novelist actually shapes in his imagination, that is more real to him than if it stood by his side in solid flesh, must be consistent with itself because it is in the mind of its creator a living entity. It may not to the reader seem winning or even human, but it will be a unit in its conception and its expression, a complete and consistent whole. The poem which comes molten from the furnace of the imagination will be a single thing, not a collection of verses more or less ingeniously dove-tailed together. The work which has been felt as a whole, which has been grasped as a whole, which has as a whole been lived by that inner self which is the only true producer of art, will be so consistent, so unified, so closely knit, that the reader cannot conceive of it as being built up of fortuitous parts, or as existing at all except in the beautiful completeness which genius has given it.

What I mean may perhaps be more clear to you if you take any of the little tinkling rhymes which abound, and examine them critically. Even some of more merit easily afford example. Take that pleasant rhyme so popular in the youth of our fathers, "The Old Oaken Bucket," and see how one stanza or another might be lost without being missed, how one thought or another has obviously been put in for the rhyme to fill out the verse, and how the author is obliged to consider what he might say next, putting his work together as a joiner matches boards for a table-top. Contrast this with the absolute unity of

Wordsworth's "Daffodils," Keats' "Ode to a Grecian Urn," Shelley's "Starza written in Dejection," or any really great lyric. You will perceive the difference better than any one can say it. It is true that the quality of which we are speaking is sufficiently subtle to make examples unsatisfactory and perhaps even dangerous; but it seems to me that it is not too much to say that any careful and intelligent reader will find little difficulty in feeling the unity of the masterpieces of literature.

Another test of the genuineness of what is expressed in literature is its truth to life. Here again we tread upon ground somewhat uncertain, since truth is as elusive as a sunbeam, and to no two human beings the same. Yet while the meaning of life is not the same to any two who walk under the heavens, there are certain broad principles which all men recognize. The eternal facts of life and of death, of love and of hate, the instinct of self-preservation, the fear of pain, the respect for courage, and the enthrallment of passion—these are laws of humanity so universal that we assume them to be known to all mankind. We cannot believe that any mortal can find that true to his imagination which ignores these unvarying conditions of human existence. He who writes what is untrue to humanity cannot persuade us that he writes what is true to himself. We are sure that those impossible heroes of Guida, with their superhuman accomplishments, those heroines of beauty transcendently incomparable with their corrupt hearts, base lives, and entire defiance of all sanitary laws, were no more real to their author than they are to us. Conviction springs from the imagination, and imagination is above all else the realizing faculty. It is idle to say that a writer imagines every extravagant and impossible whimsy which comes into his head. He imagines those things, and those things only, which are real to his inner being; so that in judging literature the question to be settled is: Does this thing which the author tells, this emotion which he expresses, impress us as having been to him when he wrote actual, true, and absolutely real? To unimaginative persons it might seem that I am uttering nonsense. It is not possible for a man without imagination to see how things which are invented by the mind should by that same mind, in all sanity, be received as real. Yet that is precisely what happens. No one, I believe, produces real or permanent literature who is not capable of performing this miracle; who does not feel to be true that which has no other being, no other place, no other significance save that which it derives from the creative power of his own inner sense, working upon the material furnished by his perception of the world around him. This is the daily miracle of genius; but it is a miracle shared to some extent by every mortal who has the faintest glimmer of genuine imagination.

To be convincing literature must express emotion which is genuine; to commend itself to the best sense of mankind, and thus to take its place in the front rank, it must deal with emotion which is wholesome and normal. A work phrasing morbid emotion may be art, and it may be lasting; but it is not the highest art, and it does not approve itself to the best and sanest taste. Mankind looks to literature for the expression of genuine, strong, healthy human emotion; emotion passionate, tragic, painful, the exhilaration of joy or the frenzy of grief, as it may be; but always the emotion which under the given conditions would be felt by the healthy heart and soul, by the virile man and the womanly woman. No amount of insane power flashing here and there amid the foulness of Tolstoy's "Kreutzer Sonata," can reconcile the world to the fact that the book embodies the broodings of a mind morbid and diseased. Even to concede that the author of such a work had genius could not avail to conceal the fact that his muse was smitten from head to feet with the unspeakable corruption of leprosy. Morbid literature may produce a profound sensation, but it is incapable of creating a permanent impression.—Talks on the Study of Literature—Bates.

The Secret of Joy.

BY REV. THORODD L. CUYLER.

Ought every Christian to be happy? Yes; and may be so, provided that he seeks in the right quarter for his joys. Brave old Paul, who never uttered a whimper or a whine, sent from Nero's guard-house this cherry message: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." He was too wise to exhort us to rejoice in money, for wealth is a shifting sand bank; or in health, for it is a variable possession; or in the society of our households, who may be snatched away at any moment. Our soul's joys, to be solid, must rest on something immovable. The one permanent, unchangeable joy is to have Christ Jesus in the heart and to serve him in the daily life, and to walk in the sunshine of his love.

A healthy joy is not a mere exhilaration or a rapture; neither the mind nor the nerves could stand a continual ecstasy. I have observed that some people who live on moods and frames, and are shouting on one day are very liable to be sulking or scolding on the next day. A strong bow loses its tension. Even spiritual exhilarations are apt to be followed by reactions. Just as soon as we hang our happiness on emotions or changing circumstances of any kind, we go up or we go down with the tide. The thermometer, of our joy is at the mercy of outside atmosphere. But if an indwelling, strengthening and gladdening Saviour be in the heart, if we strive to keep his commandments, and walk in the sunshine of his smiles, then we can expect to "rejoice evermore." No blow that does not strike Christ and a clean conscience away, can seriously disturb a healthy Christian's inward peace. Although his fig-tree shall not blossom, neither fruit shall be in his vines, although his flock may be cut off in the fold, and there be no herd in his stalls, yet he rejoices in the Lord, and joys in the God of his salvation.

Constant external prosperity is the lot of no man, and

perfect sinlessness is the attainment of no man. But (here is one thing which Christ's followers can do, and that is to keep themselves in the delightful atmosphere of His love. It is our fault and our shame if we spend so many days in the chilling fogs, or under the heavy clouds of unbelief, or in the contaminating atmosphere of conformity to the world. "Is it always foggy here on the banks of Newfoundland?" inquired a passenger of an old Cunard captain. "How should I know, madam? I don't live here."

The love of Jesus Christ is our sunshine, and there are three things which the Master enjoins upon us; if we fulfil them, we have got the secret of spiritual joy. The first one is Obedience. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love." The only real and tangible evidence of faith in Christ is obedience to Christ. A lad leaves home for college, and his good mother puts a Bible in his trunk, and says to him: "Now, my dear boy, you will read this every morning and night, and when you are reading it, and on your knees in prayer, your mother is with you." By and by he writes home from college that he is doing just what she bade him; and every time that boy opens his Bible and bends on his knees before God, he is surrounded by the sweet atmosphere of his mother's love. He gains two blessings; he gains strength to resist temptations, and also the heart happiness of pleasing his devoted mother.

In like manner we who call ourselves Christians should abide in the bright, warm atmosphere of obedience to Him who laid down His life for us on the cross and commands us to lay our lives at His feet. We must heartily accept a whole Christ, both as Saviour and Lord, and accept Him without any reserves or limitations. He has a right to command; it is ours simply to obey. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The why to do it we must leave with Him; and the how to do it we learn by Bible study, by prayer and by practice. Genuine, hearty obedience to a faithful Saviour is not a reluctant task work; it becomes a source of grateful joy. Jesus sends His sweet smile into our conscience, and tells us that our "joy shall be full."

The second direction for keeping in the bright beamings of Christ's love is growth in strong, godly character. If you will turn to the short epistle of Jude you will read these words—"building up yourselves on your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God." The construction of an edifice. Some church members never get beyond the foundation. Not far from my residence is the grass grown foundation for a great cathedral—laid nearly thirty years ago; but no walls have yet risen upon it. Some people start with professing before the world their faith in Christ, and there they stop. They do not "add to their faith, courage, temperance, meekness, patience, godliness, love," and all the other stones that enter into a solid and effective Christian life. Such self-stunted professors know nothing of the joy of Christ's approving smile. They may be growing rich, or growing popular, or in self-conceit; but there is no growth in grace. They make a wretched attempt to live in another atmosphere than the love of Jesus, and they attain to no more size and beauty and fruitfulness than the stunted plants, and frost-bitten flowers that Nansen found on the dreary shores of the Kara Sea.

There is one more essential to a strong and happy life. Obedience to the Master's commandments; and the building of a solid and useful and fruitful character cannot be done without the divine help. Therefore the apostle says, "praying in the Holy Spirit keep yourselves in the love of God." Every one who desires to be lifted into the sunshine of fellowship with Jesus might use the wings of fervent prayer.—Independent.

The Mote Hunters.

BY REV. J. H. GAMBRELL.

"Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." That is a good piece of advice our Lord gave some ancient mote hunters, though it was not relished greatly. Things disharsh are often the things most helpful. Medicine, as a rule, is not palatable, but it helps a disordered system. The cleavage of the skillful surgeon's knife is not the occasion of rejoicing, but its incisive touch saves life. The important question with humanity is not what will be relished, but what is needed, what will help me?

Christ undertakes to supply the needs of humanity rather than tickle its fancy and vanity. In this how pronounced and striking his wisdom and goodness! He graciously brings to the surface the hidden things of dishonesty, by a single declaration: "Thou hypocrite." How the imperious nature of the royally clad deceiver, must have quivered under this terrible indictment, that revealed the real character. Nothing hurts a hypocrite so much as exposure of the real character. To keep covered the real character is the great task of the hypocrite. He who brings to naught this effort, incurs the enmity of the deceiver. It was so with Christ. It will be so with others to the end of time.

The beam-eyed are a shrewd, adroit set. They are often conscious of their defects, but divert attention from themselves by magnifying the smaller imperfections of others and keeping public attention away from themselves on the conduct of others better than themselves. The "stop-thief" cry is often raised by the rogue, who shows,

on the surface, a correct wrong doer. As a down as a beam, can wrong with that of imperfections of others cannot be a good, as his fitness and skill and skill, the more danger of his operating the trouble from themselves to the retain their motives state is worse than

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As I lay musing ship. She was bu builder and maker strong oaks of Zion and her riggings of doctrines of salvati Faith, Hope and broken. Her helm Her anchor was fu head was the embli the Word of God.

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