

smaller ones alone. It is easier to teach the mob to throw a brick-bat at a fool than to worship at the shrine of a saint, but it is a lesson not worth the teaching."

Augustine Birrell certainly has a true gift of expression. One cannot, perhaps, make any unusual claim for originality for him. In truth, it would be difficult in any case to say anything very new about those of whom he writes. But he has a very happy and striking way of putting what he has to say. He is never dull and the reader's attention never flags, even though our critic is writing of an author whose work perchance we do not happen to have read. He has the pleasant habit of quoting freely to illustrate his points, and seldom does he fail to make you feel as if you had had a personal introduction to the author, even though he may choose to discuss him in no more space than ten small pages.

Birrell's language is never grandiloquent. His style is easy, natural and almost conversational. You may wonder *afterwards* if those happy phrases and passages of good-natured humour all bubbled up as spontaneously as they seem to do, but never *while* you are reading. Then you only feel that you are listening to a man of cultured mind who is talking of what he likes and enjoys, and who takes almost as much pleasure in his part as you do in yours.

His method of attacking a subject is that of direct assault. In beginning an essay, he frequently starts out with an oracular sentence or two, with apparently not a great deal to do with the subject. Then, while you are wondering what the connexion can possibly be, with a sudden clever turn, he brings you suddenly out upon the right trail. But once having reached it, you soon find yourself travelling along it with few deviations and at a good rapid rate. It is a little trap to catch your wandering attention and afford you, as he avows, "the pleasant sensation of thinking without any of the trouble of it." You know it perfectly well, of course, but it nevertheless succeeds of its object.

Seriously, however, he believes that a writer should deal with his readers in a straight-forward manner. He tells you so in his essay on Emerson, with whom he finds fault chiefly