

EXCHANGES.

THE Colby *Echo* for November contributed an article on Geo. Eliott, which shows considerable knowledge of her work, and considerable insight into her character. With regard to its literary style, however, some of the expressions might be improved. "Dingy mortals," for "ordinary mortals" or "obscure mortals" is not a happy phrase, for it calls attention to the word rather than to the thought. "Common ranks of life," should be "ranks of common life." Sympathy is not enlisted in people. You have interest *in*, but sympathy *for*. It has only to be mentioned to be noticed at once that the following sentence is confused in its figures. "She gave *life* to thoughts and feelings which before had been *dumb*, and to her readers a *mirror* by which to look into their own souls, and *test* their inmost workings." As a rule the writer of the article weakens instead of strengthening his remarks by a too frequent use of adjectives and adverbs.

As regards the matter two sentences may be quoted as perhaps the best in the article. "Geo. Eliot is unrivalled in the presentation of character—not so much the character already formed as that in the process of development. She analyzed with merciless precision the complex web of human motives and shows their subtle working under the intricate and varying circumstances of human life." Two other sentences express a rather noticeable contrast, to which we call attention by means of italics. "She is beyond doubt the best apostle of the modern doctrine of *humanitarianism*," and "The great central fact of her creed is that of *infinite* aspiration towards truth, and right, for individuals, and of *infinite* compassion and love towards mankind." Apart from the correctness or incorrectness of the latter statement, there is no indication in the contribution that the writer can reconcile the doctrine of humanitarianism with his use of the word "infinite" at all. If he does why should he seem to consider that there is a radical conflict between the highest morality and the best religion.

Apart from this, and viewing the article as a whole, the writer is too lavish in his praises. No doubt Geo. Eliot felt the mystery of life. That is apparent from the mental toil that is manifested upon almost every page. But her worth does not lie so much in the solutions of the difficulties which beset her so thickly, as in showing that there are questions to be solved or she would almost say, seem to be insoluble. You may go to Romola or to Daniel Deronda to see that her burden was greater than she could bear. We would refer the writer to an article in No. 6 of the *Oberlin Review* on "The Pessimistic view of Life," which touches in one paragraph upon that side of Geo. Eliot's character which is the opposite of the one dealt with by himself.

The *Notre Dame Scholastic*, No. 14, and *The Dalhousie Gazette*, No. 3, both contain articles which deal with novel-reading, entitled "Novels and novel-reading," and "Novels, their use, and abuse," respectively. Amongst other things each has something to say of the historical novel. The *Scholastic* says, "although Sir Walter Scott's novels gave a better insight into the character and customs of the age of which he writes than can be obtained by the reading of history, still he is not to be relied on for historical knowledge," and the *Gazette*, "the advantages to be derived from the historical novel are of a very doubtful character. Whether the deeply rooted prejudices, which, with the young at least, are the inevitable results of a course of historical novels, are compensated for by the increased interest in the study of history may well be questioned." What does the writer in the *Scholastic* con-

sider to be historical knowledge apart from an insight into the character and customs of the age? And does the writer in the *Gazette* think that the historian can be implicitly relied on for an impartial presentation of historic truth? While you may point out novels which have given untrue pictures of historical characters, you can also point out so-called histories which fail in the first requirement of true history, viz.—the historic imagination. In these, history becomes a mere catalogue of events. With reference to the young it may safely be said that more children have conceived a thorough distaste for history by reading such histories than by reading historical novel.

"Novel-reading is a recreation which requires no mental effort on the reader's part." is the opinion of the *Gazette*. "Novels are good only when read for amusement, and when tired of the more arduous task of life" is the opinion of the *Scholastic*. They would probably place poetry in the same category with novels. No doubt they are in a sense correct. But if that is for the writers the whole use of novels and poetry it can with tolerable certainty be affirmed that neither will ever comprehend the spirit either of a great novel or a great poem.

November's *Sunbeam* in "Greatness and Littleness" poses as a preacher, who gives in regular order sermon and application. Only those whose lives are examples of purity can venture to exhort others. T. L. may be one of these. But she writes, "How often are we prevented accomplishing our object because we consider the way too humble for our noble feet to tread!" That is sarcasm; and even such mild sarcasm as that scarcely harmonized with the true spirit of the theme. But setting that aside, and we only ask the question, when then the subject is set forth with sufficient clearness, is there any need of application? Well not those, to whom any application would be of benefit, do the applying for themselves? Each individual would then fit the sermon to his own need, while your application may only suit a few. But this is no place for dogmatism.

→*PERSONALS.*←

GEORGE M. MACDONNELL, B.A., Q.C., '60, is the happy father of a young son.

MILES S. ROBERTSON, B.A., '84, conducts the class of junior German.

JOHN YOUNG, B.A., '82, is finishing his theological studies at Edinburgh University.

REV. ALEXANDER McLEAN, B.A., '78, died at Mooretown, Lambton Co., of typhoid fever, caught while filling appointments in the Presbytery of Sarnia.

JOHN R. SHANNON, '85, lately on the *JOURNAL* staff, early in the season received and accepted a good appointment on that of the *Montreal Star*.

REV. JAMES MURRAY, B.A., '82, B.D., '84, having accepted the call to Streetsville, was inducted on the 10th of November.

JAMES BETHUNE, Q.C., an Alumnus of '60, the eminent lawyer, died the middle of last month at Toronto, of typhoid fever. "He was a man of sterling integrity, high principle and unblemished reputation, and his death will be deeply regretted throughout Canada."