

of such stories as Irving's lies in their brevity, and the slightness of the material composing them. The plot is rarely if ever absorbing in interest; the characters are, as I have said before, types of classes rather than strongly-marked individuals, and the fascination the tales possess is derived from exquisite charm of manner, and direct simplicity of narration. That which, if otherwise told, would be melodramatic, becomes natural; that which, if otherwise told, would be commonplace, becomes poetical; and characters, in themselves conventional, and drawn sometimes merely in outline, become instinct with life and motion. 'Men are but children of a larger growth,' and Irving's tales are simply the highest expression of the kind of story-telling with which we amuse children. It may be conceded that the novel, in the hands of genius, is a much higher form of art than mere story-telling; but it may still be matter for regret that the latter should become in any sense obsolete. Irving's stories are of two distinct kinds, the humorous and the romantic: of the first, 'Rip van Winkle,' and the 'Legend of Sleepy Hollow,' are the best examples; of the second, 'The Student of Salamanca,' and 'The Story of the Young Italian,' in 'Tales of a Traveller,' are favourite illustrations. His Spanish tales have never been so popular or so widely read as 'The Sketch Book' or 'Bracebridge Hall,' although they are exceedingly graceful and attractive. The 'Tales of a Traveller' alternate the humorous with the romantic, but although many of them display Irving's peculiar qualities, by no means at their worst, they are not, as a whole, nearly up to the level of his two best known works. Of Irving's efforts in the more ambitious field of history, in which, indeed, he has been eclipsed by his countryman Prescott, I do not intend to speak, but there is a somewhat similar class of literature in which he stands without a rival, and which should be noticed even in this brief paper. His

'Life of Goldsmith' is the best biography of its kind in the English language. Biographies may be roughly said to be of two kinds: one which, by faithful and minute records of actions, allows the life to tell its own story and unfold the character of its subject; and the other which presents the life in the form of a story, from the point of view of the narrator. It is obvious that the latter form of biography must largely assume the character of a criticism, and must depend for its success greatly upon the degree of sympathy between the biographer and the man whose life he sets before us. The complete sympathy between Irving and Goldsmith, the similarity of their natures, are in themselves reasons for the supreme excellence of this work. It has all the charm of fiction, combined with absolute truth and fidelity to fact, and at the same time presents us with an accurate portrait of the man, and a generous and faithful criticism of the author. There is no other man whose life Irving could have written so well, and it is no less true that no one could have written Goldsmith's life in such a manner. This work will, I am convinced, form one of the least perishable monuments of his fame.

I have made a wide digression from the Old Christmas papers, but one may be excused for growing a little garrulous over Washington Irving. There is no author who is dearer to us, and whose character is more clearly and indelibly imprinted in every line of his works. We can apply to him, without the excision of a single word, his own language concerning Goldsmith: 'The artless benevolence that beams throughout his works, the whimsical yet amiable views of human life and human nature, the unforced humour, blending so happily with good feeling and good sense, and singularly dashed, at times, with a pleasing melancholy; even the very nature of his mellow, and flowing, and softly-tinted style, all seem to bespeak his