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THE CRITIC'S CORNER. II.

Agreat many people, including Macaulay's school boy, are quite well aware that the word "critic" comes from a Greek word, which means a judge; and that the proper usage as well as the correct etymology of the word should keep us from supposing that it can refer to mere fault-finding. Men who have suffered from bungling or unfair criticism have said bitter things, such as that the critic is a man, who having failed at everything else, regards himself as a competent judge of other people's performances; or in other words:

"Every man must learn his trade,
 But critics are all ready-made."

With a great deal of perfunctory reviewing and slipshod criticism abroad, there is little wonder that this impression should prevail, but in spite of superficial appearances, it is still true that criticism is a fine art, that in order to be a critic a man must know something of the subject with which he is dealing, and must endeavour to view each work of art, or piece of literature in a sympathetic spirit and from the right point of view.

One great writer has told us the story of "the critic fly"; this particular fly is walking up the side of a cathedral wall and discovers a crack whereupon it gives a judgment of the building, in which nothing appears but the crack. The fly can see the flaw and be annoyed by it, but has not a brain big enough to grasp the ideal that this is a great structure, a temple, nobly planned, and finely executed, in which men can meet for the worship of the living God. There have been too many "critic flies" buzzing around. Many of the ablest writers and poets have had to fight against misinterpretation and contempt, when a little appreciation would have helped them forward. Good men admit that they learn something even from harsh criticism, but there is no need that criticism should be unfair and harsh.

On the other hand, mere flattery is not criticism. To say that a bright, clever book is an incomparable stroke of genius, that it

possesses all the great qualities, and hence is "unique." That kind of criticism stultifies itself, it is merely an effusion of personal or partizan feeling. It is not working from any real standard or applying any great principle. It does not help the reader, and it is in the end just as unfair to the person praised as is the opposite extreme.

Criticism is judgment and it reveals and judges the critic. No man has a right to judge another man's work in a hasty, superficial fashion, though he has a perfect right to treat slovenly work with contempt. That into which a man has put honest toil and earnest conviction, deserves careful consideration, though it may come from a different point of view from that which we usually occupy. It should be looked at as a whole and judged from the standpoint of the author's aim and purpose. We heard recently of a gentleman who wrote a scathing condemnation of a book he had not seen. That proceeding was both ungentlemanly and immoral; it was not a manifestation of criticism but a display of fanaticism. No noble battle can be fought, no good cause helped forward in that spirit. Above all, we must have fairness, if out of the clash of conflicting view, the truth is to come forth in clearer form and with sweeter power.

Of course, it is not necessary that a man should be able, in every case, to do a thing himself in order to criticise the doing of it. There are, of course, some forms of criticism that are only possible to experts in that particular line. But a man who cannot write a story may be able to see that a particular novel is false and foolish, considered as a reflection of any form of real life; a man who has little dramatic power may feel the power of a great tragedy and see how wonderfully the artist has handled a real situation. But, in any case, the critic must show fairness and sympathy, he must have the power to put himself in the other man's place, he must allow the full force to arguments that come from a different point of view. In other words, he must have a broad view of the world, a large knowledge of life, and sympathy with all endeavours after the true and the beautiful. It is difficult to reach this high position, but we can keep it in view as the thing to be aimed at, and seek to judge others in all things, in the spirit that we ourselves desire to be judged.

UNDER THE BAN.

The liquor saloon appears to be losing its friends. It has its devotees, but has it really any friends? Across the border among our neighbors the saloon is coming in for not only criticism but denunciation. For instance, Bonfort's Wine and Spirits Circular, published in New York, has this to say:

"The average saloon is out of line with public sentiment. The average saloon ought not to be defended by our trade; but it ought to be condemned. In small towns the average saloon is a nuisance. It is a resort for all tough characters, and in the South for all idle negroes. It is generally on a prominent street, and it is usually run by a sport who cares only for the almighty dollar. From this resort a drunken man starts reeling to his home; at this resort the

local fights are indulged in. It is a stench in the nostrils of society and a disgrace to the wine and spirit trade. How, then, shall we defend the average saloon? We answer, Don't defend it, condemn it."

This is not only a sweeping condemnation of the liquor saloon, as an enemy of decency and humanity, but it intimates a disposition on the part of those who claim to be legitimate representatives of the liquor traffic to reform that traffic by placing the saloon under the ban. But, even with the saloon abolished, we shall still have all the main evils of the liquor traffic to fight. So long as the liquor traffic is legalised and regarded as a legitimate trade, so long we shall have drunkenness, and the result of drunkenness in a more or less aggravated form. Abolishing the saloon will not legitimise the liquor traffic morally or restore to it the apparent respectability which it once possessed. Abolition of the saloon would simply be a step, possibly an important step in the direction of abolishing the whole traffic. That is the goal christian and temperance people should keep in view; at the same time they should accept, retain and make good use of every concession they can win from the law-makers of the country.

THE CRITICISM OF PUBLIC MEN.

Mr. Waldo L. Cook contributes to the October number of the International Journal of Ethics an article on this important subject. He begins with the statement that "The letters of Junius are the classic, in English language, of the abuse of public men. Modern journalists are discreet, tender and chaste compared with the writer who, as Mr. Lecky says, is chiefly responsible for the fact that any one remembers the Duke of Grafton. The duke has come down to us as the most abused politician of his time." But the sober historian speaking of the statesman whom Junius abused has to sum him up thus "A young man of great position, strong passions, weak character, his notorious indolence, vacillation and indifference, the contrast between his old friendship for Wilkes and his recent policy, and the careless and undisguised profligacy, which led him on one occasion—when still prime minister—to appear publicly at the opera with a well known courtesan, were all sources of scandal and weakness." As the essayist says, there was evidently some reason for the abuse, and as he goes on to point out, this rough criticism did good and the private life of public men is higher today than ever before.

"Even Lord Melbourne could not swear in the presence of the youthful queen and it followed, as Mr. Gladstone used to say, that the accession of Victoria drove profanity from the British court in a somewhat analogous way; the rise of the free press has reacted upon the public life of democracies. The preliminary question asked nowadays by political managers is whether the possible candidate carries with him the faintest aroma of scandal. No party willingly enters a popular campaign burdened with the defence of a scandalous private life. Notwithstanding the exaggeration, the libel, the scurrility which have long accompanied criticism of