

INTRODUCTION

There are some important literary artists who, despite the dictum of the critics that the short story is not a dignified or legitimate field for great creative work, seem to find in it their most perfect expression. Notable among such men, who need not necessarily be pronounced incapable of production on a larger scale, are Kipling in English, Maupassant in French, and in German P(etri) K(ettenfeier) Rosegger. Their art may be compared to that of the painters of miniatures, or of those Dutch and Flemish masters whose tiny paintings often reach the highest attainable excellence in point of atmosphere, style, and swift accuracy of delineation.

There is indeed a certain measure of unreality in the very composition of the novel, with its extended canvas and complex action. No author can take directly from life itself the materials for such a work, without piecing together matters originally disconnected. He who copies directly from life itself will find himself relating episodes, for it is in that form that life comes to our cognizance.

It was in large measure as a result of the peculiar circumstances of Rosegger's youth that he became possessed of that astounding wealth of anecdote and story which is one most marked characteristic of his literary production, and which undoubtedly had much to do with his fondness for the short story form. Born in the year 1843 of a humble Styrian peasant, who by dint of unrelenting labor managed to give his family a not too cramped life, Peter seemed destined to a life of equal obscurity and homely usefulness. But the delicacy of his frame