

country life. The painting of the family portrait and the gathering of the cleric gooseberries become to us subjects of fascinating interest; while the evening notes of the good man's flute as he watches his children playing around him in the garden breathe a softer pleasure to us than the rattle of firearms that forms the pæon of the modern novelist. It is only when we compare these older works with those of the middle period that we feel that something is still wanting to perfection. We find that the action is too much subordinated; want of incident often renders the depiction cumbrous and uninteresting. The movement of the plot is too slow and too much interspersed with deviation and moralizing. Not until we reach the time of Dickens and Thackeray do we find this heaviness and excess of depiction relieved by a more liberal introduction of action, a more regular and culminating movement of plot and incident which produces the desired balance between the two elements in question.

In the works of the present age, however, we find that the reaction against the faults of the earlier novelists has driven us to the other extreme. Action and incident here reign supreme; character is entirely subordinate and its portrayal almost left out of consideration. The author contents himself with labelling his characters as belonging to a certain type by devoting a two-page description and analysis to each personage when first introduced, and when we as yet can have no possible interest in such analysis. After having described and introduced his characters, the author plunges into a series of occurrences as complex, grotesque and startling as possible. All attempts at pleasant deviation are carefully avoided; the writer attempts to throw no sidelights upon his characters. Nothing is done to make them interesting in themselves, for the novel is manifestly merely a skilfully planned chain of events, not a study in human character. It is a common remark in regard to Dickens' characters that we feel as if we knew them. It might be said of those in the books of our own day that we have been introduced to them but haven't spoken since.

There are, of course, many exceptions to this general class of fictitious literature. In an age so prolific as this there could not fail to be. Some writers attempt to make their characters real and human rather than puppets in a permutation. But their character-sketching is done, not as formerly, to hold up a mirror to our every-day life, but rather from a psychological and analytical standpoint. Such a work is the famous "Robert Ellesmere." The immense popularity with which this work and other recent novels of a similar design have been received shows that a reaction in public taste is already setting in, and that we are tending towards the earlier type again.

Only in two or three points has a decided advance been made in fiction. The author's *répertoire* of characters has been overhauled, and several personages formerly great favorites and considered as the first essential of a novel have been discarded. The hero and the heavy villain have been the most important victims; we have grown to recognize the fact that no man is utterly bad or utterly good, that there are infinite shades of complexity in our nature which forbid such a rough classification. The fendishness of a Bill Sykes is as unnatural as the sickly sinfulness of a Nicholas Nickleby. Strangely enough, though, the heroine keeps her place still. Though the author must feel that her universal excellence is totally impossible, he abates no jot or tittle of her virtues, except perchance to say as a sacrifice to the consciousness of her impossibility, that her mouth was a trifle too large. Until the heroine is dethroned and the depiction of character restored to its proper place, modern fiction can never attain to its past brilliancy.

S. B. LEACOCK.

The *Argosy* is a Bluenose contemporary, and a good one it is. The editorial, literary and news departments are well filled.

THE SENATE.

At the Senate meetings last week notices of motion were given for submitting the matriculation examination paper to a committee before the examination; for a special committee to report on the subject of University extension, and for making the meetings of the Senate open to the public. In the future there will be but one honor list in B.A. examinations in Philosophy and Political Science. A status providing for a Fellow in Political Science and for the establishment of two scholarships in Physics were passed. The Building Committee are to arrange for the new Library building and discuss ways and means for the erection of a Convocation Hall and Lecture Room and other accommodation for the lady students.

LIBRARY NOTES.

The shipments delivered during the past week amount to thirty cases, twenty-six of which came to us through the English committee. Two cases, containing the gift of the University of Cambridge, were on board the *Grecian* when she caught fire, but are in no way damaged.

Work is going on very rapidly in connection with the Reference Library and Reading Rooms, so that the prospects indicate a speedy re-opening of the Library, not in its old-time glory, but still with sufficient material for the average student to keep him more than busy.

During the past week additional shelving has been placed in position, so that there is now very little more room that can be used for shelving. The books have been rearranged, and until crowded out will occupy the spaces allotted to the different departments. The Library Staff has grown considerably since June. There are now four young lady assistants and a porter. Miss Julia Cowan is a matriculant of '89, and stood well up in honors in Moderns.

The greatest need of the University to-day is suitable quarters for the Library—that means a separate library building. We see that at a meeting of the Senate held last week that the matter came up. We hope to see it attended to with the utmost despatch. At the same meeting Mr. Walter Barwick, M.A., who has done so much as Secretary of the Library Restoration Committee to make that movement a success, was appointed a member of the Senate to succeed Mr. S. Wood, of London. We are glad to know of this appointment, for he will be able to render very valuable assistance in matters pertaining to the Library.

CLASS OF '92.

The class of '92 spent Saturday evening in the Y.M.C.A. parlors. Nearly all the members of the class were present and all enjoyed themselves thoroughly. During the early part of the evening a pleasing program was rendered, with the president, Mr. R. H. Knox, in the chair. The Glee Club of the year, consisting of Messrs. Wales, Parks, Evans, Cameron, Hume, Lamont and Tennant, sang several glees, of which the Class Song was the most heartily applauded. Miss Mackenzie, the Class Historian, read an interesting account of the college life of the past year. The Class Poem by Miss Green and an instrumental solo by Miss Hillock were well received. Recitations were given by Messrs. Cooper, Odell, Govenlock and Brown, and were exceedingly well rendered. The High Cock-a-lorum, Mr. Graham, brought down the house repeatedly. The remarks of the Prophet, Mr. McLennan, and the Critic, Mr. Tucker, showed the true spirit of prophecy and of criticism. After the program refreshments were served, and the rest of the evening was pleasantly spent in conversation.