

nated by the extirpation of the unfittest, the social instincts of the race now carefully preserve the feeble and less fit specimens of humanity. Nor can any satisfactory evidence be adduced to show that the effect formerly produced by the selective process is now brought about by the appearance of any power to transmit to children the acquired faculties and aptitudes of experience. How the absence of such a power, if Mr. Balfour's statement on the point be accepted, is to be reconciled with the law of evolution, on general principles, is a question which may be left to the men of science to answer. We refer to the very interesting point made by Mr. Balfour to suggest whether the faith of the optimists may not be justified in accordance with a higher law, which may still be regarded as a law of development. The *Spectator*, to which we are indebted for an outline of Mr. Balfour's argument, suggests two riders to his propositions. The first is that the cohesion of human society, depending, as it admittedly does, "on a profusion of influences of the binding force, and often of the very existence of which, the members of that society are as completely unconscious as they are of the circulation of their blood and the condition of their nerves, must owe its fine constructive energy to a power far higher than any of which we can sound the depths or fathom the purposes"—in a word, to the mighty Power which "foreknew what it did predestinate." The next rider is that "heartily faith in the guidance of this Power is one of the most effective of all securities against the social languor and decay to which every society is otherwise liable." The thought we were about to add is this: It should not, it seems to us, be overlooked in such discussion that the very cause of the overthrow of the savage selfishness or indifference which wrought out the elimination of the weakest, and the substitution of the merciful instincts which now lead to their careful preservation, is the development of the higher qualities and attributes of the race, such as sympathy, unselfishness, pity, love, etc., which are now operating as conscious forces vastly more powerful than any unconscious forces can possibly do for the elevation and progress of the race. That is to say, the cessation of the selective or eliminating process is at once the outcome and the proof of the development of those nobler instincts and moral qualities which are the highest attributes of humanity. We do not attempt to show just how this fact is to be fitted into the evolutionary science, but it certainly accords well with the belief in human progress, and may even justify the faith of the most ardent optimist, while it surely gives us much more than a glimpse into the modes of working of that mighty predestinating Power of which the *Spectator* speaks.

THE CHRIST-CHILD'S BIRTH.

In the olden time, in an eastern land,
 In a land beyond the sea;
 A song was sung by an angel band,
 In celestial harmony;
 And that song has re-echoed down the years,
 And it falls on the heart to-day,
 As fresh as when under starry spheres
 The eastern shepherds lay,—
 And marvelled to hear in the night so still
 The heavenly host proclaim,
 "Peace on the earth, to men good-will,
 In the new-born Saviour's name!"

Halifax, N. S.

CONSTANCE FAIRBANKS.

Of course Canadians are Americans in a broad sense, just as Nova Scotians are Canadians, but when it comes to calling our best Canadian writers and notable people by the more general title, and thus giving the impression that they are citizens of the United States, we strongly object. We have often had cause to protest against this appropriation of our talented countrymen and women by the United States, and sometimes English authorities are guilty of crediting the work of our writers to Americans. In the *Illustrated London News* of October 31 (American Edition), we find a portrait of Miss Sara J. Duncan, author of those bright books, "A Social Departure" and "An American Girl in London." Miss Duncan is a Canadian, but she is, in the paper mentioned, spoken of as "one of the brightest and most deservedly successful of recent American writers." True, the *New York Book-Buyer* is cited as authority, and the note goes on to say she was born in Brantford, Ont., and gives a list of the prominent journals the young lady worked so successfully for, but when we see the error made of calling our writers American, we are seized with a burning desire to set people right on the subject. Miss Duncan was married a few months ago to Mr. E. C. Coates, who holds a scientific appointment at Calcutta, where she met him on her journey around the world.—*Halifax Critic*.

THE FIGHT IN FICTION.

"SO I say that these two are going to be the watchwords of fiction for the next twenty years at least—ROMANTICISM and IDEALISM." So asseverates Mr. Hall Caine, with the watchwords in capitals. Nevertheless he cannot quite conceal his fears as to the result, even though he "feels very strongly" that the assertion that the "stream of tendency" is "towards a newer and purer 'Realism' is utterly untrue, and that somebody should say so with all the emphasis he can command."

Already surely we are a little tired of this controversy. We think we have heard before and heard enough of Classicism and Romanticism, Idealism and Realism, Spiritualism and Naturalism; just as we think we have heard before and heard enough of another controversy not a little analogous to this, in which similar watchwords divided similar camps—the Nominalism or Conceptualism and Realism of the Schoolmen, namely. This latter controversy, if it was not brought to a conclusion, was happily at least brought to a stand-still. Nobody now anathematizes anybody else upon the question whether Universals are *ante rem* or *in re* or *post rem*; nobody much cares whether Universals exist at all, much less where or how; perhaps some may not even know or care what *Universalia* are. And to some of us, I say, the one discussion arouses as little interest as the other. Nor is this new quarrel by any means so new after all. We must at least regard Zola's "Le Roman Expérimental" as a throwing down of the gage, and this appeared more than ten years ago; some trace it to Balzac; others go as far back as Diderot; and one writer thinks it "bears unexpected and laughable affinities to the controversy in which Æschylus is pitted against Euripides at the close of Aristophanes's 'Frogs.'" And neither of these squabbles is a mere storm in a teapot. The apparently purely logical—shall we say logomachical?—discussion concerning genera and species ramified in all directions, and especially, and of course, into theology. And so does this apparently purely fictional—shall we say fictitious?—discussion ramify in all directions. "The Realists," says Mr. Caine, "are all unbelievers; unbelievers in God, or unbelievers in man, or both. The Idealist must be a believer; a believer in God, a believer in man, and a believer in the divine justice whereon the world is founded." That is enough to show us something of the scope of the enquiry. It is almost coterminous with Optimism *versus* Pessimism, and that, we know, is interminable.

But what is it all about? I can very readily imagine a great many very sensible people asking. It would be as difficult to find an answer in the case of the Novelists as it would be in the case of the Schoolmen. The watchwords are so comprehensive they cover everything in the heavens above and in the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth; and what is more, they are so vague they are actually interchangeable. This is a simple fact. Hugo, of course, was a Romanticist. Yet did not "Hernani" proclaim the victory of Romanticism over Classicism, and was not Romanticism one step, and a long one, towards Naturalism? Mr. George Meredith has been called a Realist, which will be news to some. Walt Whitman Mr. Symonds calls an Idealist—Walt Whitman, whom Mr. Alfred Austin takes as the archetype of the materialistic trend he sees in modern poetry—and Materialism has always been the hand-maid, or rather let us say the body-servant (it is difficult femininely to personify Naturalism), of the foe of the Ideal. But what is perhaps most astonishing of all, the same writer, Mr. Symonds, enumerates Saul also among the prophets by classing with Whitman Zola himself, and in this he is joined by M. Anatole France. It is doubtful, I think, whether the author of "La Terre" would admit the soft impeachment. However, there are reasons of course, and not uninteresting ones, for these vagaries. Hugo is undoubtedly a Romanticist, beside, let us say—to compare small things with great—Mr. George Moore, though both deal with life in a great metropolis. Mr. Meredith is styled a Realist because he "takes a soul . . . that he may explain how it works," because he "lays bare the fibres," and so on, even though he himself holds that "if we do not speedily embrace philosophy in fiction, the art is doomed to extinction," which seems far enough removed from Experimentalism. M. Zola is an Idealist to Mr. Symonds because he is constructive, synthetical; because his picture as a whole possesses artistic "composition," though the details are photographic. And so with Walt Whitman.

Already perhaps by this ringing of changes the confusion existing between the combatants has become worse confounded. And, after all, is it at all possible to draw a hard and fast line of demarcation between them: to say to the Naturalist, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther; and to the Idealist, Have thou nothing to do with that man? That Naturalism can go to inordinate lengths, and that Idealism keeps company with a certain amount of Naturalism must be conceded when we remember that it is not with abstractions but with flesh and blood that fiction deals. Absolute Realism is as impossible as absolute

Idealism. It is impossible to paint things as they "really" are; they are only as they appear to the painter. Indeed M. Guy de Maupassant lays down the rule that nothing should be depicted till the pourtrayer has enveloped it with his own personality. But even so, no one could represent the whole of a fact or of an idea; and if he did, it would destroy the general effect, and thus art would defeat its own ends—which lands us in a quagmire of discussable points. Broadly perhaps Idealism is nearest akin to Optimism, Realism to Pessimism. But then Optimism and Pessimism are themselves untenable extremes. The staunchest subscriber to "Whatever is right" must admit that many things certainly appear very wrong; and nobody can believe that this is the worst possible of worlds, since he himself could add to its pejection, thus impaling himself on a dilemma. Shall we say that Idealism takes for its theme the ultimate perfectibility of Humanity? Even here there are obstacles, for there are two ways of preaching this, that of preaching the blessedness of higher things, and that of preaching the cursedness of lower ones, and it is the latter, the Naturalists may aver, that they adopt. Schopenhauer, in modern times, is the great exemplar in this method. "He has shown with unusual lucidity of expression," says Professor Wallace, "how feeble is the spontaneity of that intellect which is so highly lauded, and how overpowering the sway of original will in all our actions." But did not even Schopenhauer believe in the possibility of the ultimate expungation of Will? If so he is an Idealist. But Professor Wallace distinctly declares to the contrary, "He has thus," he continues, "reasserted Realism." Here again we have completed the circle of argumentation.

Suppose we leave distracting generalizations for a moment and descend to particulars. What are the supreme typical examples of Idealistic and Naturalistic fiction of the century? Of the first surely "Prometheus Unbound" stands unrivalled, unapproached. Lofty, heaven-born, are the adjectives for this lyrical drama. Yet, or perhaps consequently, it leaves us unsatisfied. In 1819 it may have been sustaining enough; they were in the thick of Romanticism then, and Romanticism lived on a very ethereal diet compared with that which suits the stronger digestive apparatus of to-day. Besides, "Prometheus Unbound" broached topics which then were "in the air," were the problems of problems, crying for answer. For us it is not human enough. Demogorgon and Panthea and Ione and Echoes and Furies and Phantasms mouthing wonderful monologues do not move us now. In 1819, we must recollect, they were some seventy-two years behind the age that talks glibly of the crash of creeds and the crumbling of crowns. And of Naturalism what shall we choose as the type? I think "La Bête Humaine" will suit. Lowly, earth-born, are the words for this. In "La Bête Humaine" the human animal is depicted with two instincts and two only—the desire to perpetuate, and the desire to annihilate, the species. All other sentiments are sunk as of little account beside these. And these are pourtrayed without a ray, without a gleam of meliorism. Only the slightest possible hint is given of a higher or nobler feeling, but the character which exhibits this is dead before the action commences, so that the harmony of animality is absolutely preserved. All the chief characters are murderers or murdered or both, and all are potentially or actually immoral in the narrowest sense of that word—and generally verily actually. Shelley's drama is replete with beauty and nobility of thought and language; Zola's romance (romance! save the mark) reeks with hideous ignobility. Shelley teaches the upward progress of man through a deliberate endurance; Zola shows only man sinking under ungoverned licence. Shelley soars into a tenuous atmosphere of delicate emotion; Zola grovels in a murky miasm of passion. And yet it is quite possible that the aim of the one is as high as that of the other. This may appear a hard saying; but its categorical denial is inadmissible. Zola may be working on the Schopenhauerian method. He may have one eye on the fritter and the glitter, the culture and refinement, the education and the taste and the what-not now everywhere so obtrusively flaunted; and the other eye on the heart of man, which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; and he may be trying to expose the one by discovering the other. This may be the explanation of his rigid exclusion of whatsoever things are pure, and lovely, and of good report. But perhaps this is merely darkening counsel. Certainly it is a sort of *lucus a non lucendo* argument. But enough. We have now got at all events some little light on the respective realms of Idealism and Naturalism.

There used to be an idea once prevalent among men not altogether uneducated or unintelligent, that Art had something to do with Beauty—what, perhaps no one was very sure. And indeed there are reasons for thinking that some such idea still lingers amongst perhaps less favoured or less civilized nations. In fact, in a little book published so late as the year A. D. 1891 there occurs the following sentence: "A theory of Beauty is at the same time a doctrine of Art, while every doctrine of Art is based upon a theory as to the nature of Beauty." What would the Naturalist say to that? And what would he say to Keats's

¹ *Contemporary Review*, lvii. 488. ² See *Forum*, ix. 391 et seq.
³ *Quarterly Review*, clxxiii. ⁴ *Ibid.* ⁵ *Ibid.*
⁶ *Contemporary Review*, cit. supra.
⁷ *Quarterly Review*, clxxiii.
⁸ *Fortnightly Review*, cxcviii.
⁹ *The Poetry of the Period*, ad fin.
¹⁰ *Fortnightly*, cit. ¹¹ *Nineteenth Century*, clxxvii.
¹² *Quarterly Review*, clxxiii, 473.
¹³ *Diana of the Crossways*, Preface.

¹⁴ *Pierre et Jean*, Preface. ¹⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, sub voce.
¹⁶ *La Bête Humaine*, Larousse's *Grand Dictionnaire* (vol. xvii., p. 2018) ingeniously (or perhaps slyly) describes as "singulière analyse psychologique de détraqués, de maniaques homicides, mêlés à une peinture des chemins de fer."
¹⁷ *The Philosophy of the Beautiful*, by William Knight. Ch. i.