

Excursion SOCIETY PETER, IVERS. 19th, 1902

Some Notes

MODELS IN FICTION.

BY CRUX.

HERE is nothing new beneath the sun" is a peculiar old saying. In reality there is much truth in it, for every thing that the hands of man can do is after some model, more or less remote. The Creator alone has the power to originate and create; man is merely able to shape new forms out of already existing objects, or to imitate that which has been already created. Man can build an engine, but he must first have the material needed for the construction; and that material he could never make were it not for the creative power of God, to which its existence is due. In art, more especially than in any other branch of human acquirement, is there the necessity for models. If the painter, for example, does not reproduce from previous works by copying, or from nature as she extends her attractions before his gaze, at best he must have in his own mind some imaginary model whereby to work. And what is true of painting, of sculpture, and of every other imitative art, is equally so of fiction. In fact, the writer of fiction may invent his characters, but if they be not based upon some real and active models in life, they are not calculated to live. This question of models in fiction has given rise to considerable discussion as to how far an author is justified in reproducing in his work the traits and characteristics of living and well known personages, and to what extent of liberty he may go in this direction without exposing himself to incur censure or the justified anger or vexation of the persons thus indicated in an unmistakable manner. It is not my intention to enter into the discussion of this point, I merely desire to show that every successful novelist has had his fixed models, and without them his characters would not have created an immortality for themselves.

SOME EXAMPLES. — It is well known that Dickens portrayed Leigh Hunt and Landor in "Bleak House," and Thackeray was frequently accused of caricaturing his friends. But the latter would never admit that such was the case. The "Daily News" some time ago published a very interesting article on this subject, and when dealing with Thackeray it made use of a few statements, both referring to him and to George Eliot, which I might here reproduce. That organ said:—"Thackeray's worst offense was against Andrew Arcedeckne, a school-fellow of his at Charterhouse, who was—according to Edmund Yates—the too exact original of our dear friend Harry Foker. He bided his time, like Prosper le Gai, and it arrived on the night of Thackeray's first lecture on the English humorists. Arcedeckne met him at the Cider Cellars, surrounded by a crowd congratulating him on his brilliant success. 'How are you, Thack?' cried Arcedeckne. 'I was at your show to-day at Willis's. What a lot of swells you had there—yes! But I thought it was dull—devilish dull! I'll tell you what it is, Thack, you want a piano.' That was neater and more effective than a libel action. George Eliot, according to the late F. W. H. Myers, was also accused of making a copy out of her own household. A too sympathizing friend condescended with her domestic troubles on the mistaken assumption that Mr. Casaubon in 'Middlemarch,' was a portrait of G. H. Lewes. No two men could differ more widely, 'But from whom, then,' said a friend to George Eliot, 'did you draw Casaubon?' 'With a humorous solemnity, which was quite in earnest, however, she pointed to her own heart.' One wonders if she was thinking of the sonnet which describes Sidney's perplexed search for a poetical subject, until—

'Fool! said my Muse, look in thy heart and write.'

Here are two examples of two different classes of writers of fiction. The former certainly drawing his characters from life and refusing to admit the fact; the latter forming in her own mind ideal personages and painting them in words for the public. But in both cases, as in all others, their characters were drawn from models.

AUTOBIOGRAPHIC FICTION. — It would be out of the question to

attempt dealing with that branch of the subject known as autobiographic fiction. To enter into the details of all the writers who took as models for leading characters would mean to fill a volume. But there are a few that I might mention as having attracted the world's attention for a long period. Dickens himself was the original of David Copperfield; Thackeray was Pendennis; Fielding was Captain Booth; and Bulwer Lytton was Pelham, while Lord Beaconsfield was Lothaire. It is remarkable that most of these writers, who devoted so much labor to the delineation of their own characters, and who were so exact in their portrayals of various distinguished and historical personages of their times, should have invariably fallen into exaggerated ideas when attempting to make use of Catholic prelates, Cardinals, archbishops or priests, as models for their characters of fiction. This is again a phase of the subject that would well repay careful examination and a splendid series of articles. But I wish especially to emphasize the fact that a host of writers of fiction have found models where and when the readers least suspected it. In every-day life, in their rounds of the city, in ordinary intercourse with friends, acquaintances, servants, tradesmen and quaint types of character, they found what they needed to build up most interesting characters—especially characters that had the semblance of reality. In this connection I came across another very interesting paragraph from an article in the same organ, the "Daily News," which perfectly illustrates what I mean.

DOCUMENTS AT HAND. — The paragraph to which I refer reads thus:—

"Oliver Wendell Holmes was loath to write a novel—the he overcame his shrinking—because he said that he would have to show up all his friends in it, and they might object to being 'butchered to make a Roman holiday.' There is, of course, what the school boy called a third alternative. The novelist may rely on 'documents,' like that eminent writer of 'penny dreadfuls' who lately confessed that when he needed a new sensation for his next chapter he merely took up a daily paper and studied the inquests and the police news. The highest modern example of this method is M. Zola, who once boasted that he had a 'document' for everything that the critics blamed as untrue to life in his amazing picture of the Second Empire. Chs. Reade, who adopted a similar plan, describes it for the good of future novelists in his 'Terrible Temptation,' where the author puts his best foot foremost as the versatile and omniscient Rolfe. But it is only the rare writer who has sufficient 'fire in him,' like Ram Dass, to fuse all these odd fragments of metal into a perfect cast. The man of genius, whose psychology has not been made clear even by Dr. Lombroso and Mr. Havelock Ellis, can somehow produce a living and breathing being out of the heel-taps and fragments which Thackeray mentions. But the ordinary respectable novelist is bound to copy from life, if he wishes to produce people who are not mere wooden puppets. Hence it arises that keys are made to such works as those of Alphonse Daudet, that we discover the remarkable resemblance of Robert Elsmere to J. R. Green, and that Mr. Kipling's school days have been described—on the lex talionis principle—by the alleged original of McTurk. It all contributes, no doubt, to the general sum of harmless amusement, but we can hardly be surprised if the too enterprising novelist finds himself regarded with some shyness by his friends."

Intelligent conservation of the forests of a country is the highest evidence of its civilization. The climate, the soil, the productive capacity of the farm, the equality of the rainfall and the beneficent flow of the streams are all dependent upon the science of forestry. We have wisely set apart already in the West, forty-one national forest reserves—about forty-six million acres. One of them is already paying expenses and yielding a slight revenue.

ALWAYS THE MODEL.—Thus we see that no matter who the writers of fiction may be, or what the class of their work, they have had to have their models. The passage clipped from the evening paper telling of some scene in a police court, or of some sensational event of the day previous, is, in itself, the model upon which the fictitious events recounted are based, and the persons therein described constitute the models after which the actors in the romance are made to speak, to move and to play their parts. This brings me back to the conclusion or contention with which I began, to the effect that there is nothing absolutely

new in this world, and that the so-called creations of the most fertile imagination, are after all merely the outcome of a certain imitation and shaping after pre-existing models. In a word, there is no such a thing as creation, as far as man is concerned: the only creative power is God, and all else is mere copying, or imitation. I will have occasion to come back to this subject, from a very different standpoint—that of the Catholic Prelate in Fiction.

Forest Preservation.

Mr. Depew, of New York, made in the Senate at Washington, the other day, a timely argument in advocacy of the Appalachian Park project. A bill has been reported to the Senate by the Committee on Forest Reserves and the Protection of Game, which proposes to expend \$10,000,000 in the creation of a national forest park, to embrace about two million acres of forest lands in the States of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and Virginia. This great Appalachian reserve is to be maintained and administered by the Federal Government in order to guard the sources of the thousands of watercourses which find their way from its plateaus to the Atlantic or to the Gulf of Mexico, and thus protect the vast area of agricultural lands which these rivers enrich and fertilize. As a member of the Committee on Forest Reservations the Senator from New York has given much careful study to the forestry problem, and his appeal to the Senate to undertake this beneficent and national work was supported by many illustrations of the injuries suffered in other countries from a wasteful and short sighted denudation of forest areas.

It is said by the committee reporting the bill that "it may fairly be urged that the establishment of this forest reserve in the region of the North Appalachian Mountains is a matter of great national importance, and that, owing to the peculiar conditions existing in this region, the establishment of this reserve need not necessarily be accepted as a precedent for the establishment of similar reserves elsewhere in the East." Mr. Depew spoke in part as follows: Nature has been so prodigal in her gifts of forests to the United States that the important question of their preservation has been neglected too long. The attacks of the settlers upon the woods for clearings and a home have been indiscriminate and wasteful in the extreme. The settlers are not to blame, nor are the lumbermen. The destruction which has been going on with such frightfully increasing rapidity during the last fifty years is due to a lack of that government supervision in the interest of the whole people which can only come from education and experience. The lumberman wishes to realize at once upon his purchase, and as a rule, vast fortunes are made in deforesting the land. Railroads are run into the woods, all the appliances of modern inventions and machinery are at work, and all this magnificent inheritance is being squandered with a rapidity which is full of peril for the future.

The result of an attack upon this forest created by nature for the protection and enrichment of the people is more disastrous than the sweep of an invading army of savages over a thickly populated and fertile country. They kill, they carry off captives, they burn and they destroy, but after the war the survivors return to their homes and in a few years every vestige of the ruin has disappeared. In its place there are again cities, villages and happy people. But the lumberman selects a tract of hardwood forests upon the Appalachian Mountains. The trees, young and old, big and little, surrender to the axe and the saw. Then the soil is sold to the farmer, who finds abundant harvests in its primeval richness. For about three years he gathers a remunerative and satisfactory harvest, but he sees, as the enormous rainfall descends, his farm gradually disappear. At the end of three years he can no longer plant crops, but for two years more, if lucky, he may be able to graze his stock. At the end of five years the rains and floods have washed clean the mountain sides, have left nothing but the bare rocks, have reduced his farm to a desert, and created a ruin which can never be repaired.

But this is not all. That farm has gone down with the torrents, which have been formed by the cutting off of the protecting woods, into the streams below. It has caused them to spread over the farms of the valleys and plateaus. It has turned these peaceful waters into roaring floods, which have ploughed deep and

destructive gullies through fertile fields and across grassy plains. One freshet in the Catawba River last spring, occasioned wholly by the deforesting of the mountains, swept away \$1,500,000 worth of farms, buildings and stock. The damage done by the freshet of last year alone, in the large territory fed by the streams and rivers which came from these mountains, was estimated at over \$18,000,000.

This destruction cannot be repeated many years without turning into a desert the fairest portion of our country. This process of destruction is constantly enlarging because of encroachments upon the forests on account of the growing scarcity of hardwood. The lumbermen are running light railways so as to reach the heretofore inaccessible depths. The giants of the mountains, which are 400 or 500 years of age, and many of them seven feet in diameter and from 140 to 150 feet high, are falling in increasing numbers every month before the pitiless and ruthless invasion of the axe and the saw. In ten years the destruction will be complete, the forests will be practically gone, the protecting soil will have been washed off the hillsides, and the newspapers will be filled each year with tales of disaster to populations, to farms, to villages and to manufacturing enterprises, occasioned by unusual and extraordinary rains, and the torrents which have been formed by them and flowed down through the valleys.

It has been estimated that there is in these mountain streams 1,000,000 horsepower, which can be easily utilized. This means a saving of \$30,000,000 a year in coal alone, which would otherwise have to be used for manufacturing purposes. But it means more. This 1,000,000 horsepower that these streams, which flow equally all the year round because of the nature of the sponge which forms the reservoir that supplies them, would create an incalculable amount of electrical power. With the successful demonstrations which have been made in California and Niagara Falls of the distance to which this energy can be transmitted, the value of these streams, kept in their original condition, to the future of these States cannot be estimated. There are in these conditions all the elements necessary for transportation, for light and heat, for manufactures and mining, in a very large section of the United States.

The proposition in the bill is to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture, at an expense not exceeding \$10,000,000, to purchase 4,000,000 acres of these forests. They are held now in large tracts of from 1,000 to 5,000 acres. They are being rapidly bought up by lumber companies at from \$1.50 to \$2 an acre. The owners, as I am informed, would much prefer selling them to the government than to individuals or corporations. The reason is obvious. It is estimated by the Department of Agriculture that within five years the forests would be self-sustaining, and after that a source of increasing revenue for all time to come. It is impossible for the States to undertake this work. New York, in order to protect the Hudson and Mohawk, has been purchasing a large domain through the Adirondack forests which she proposes adding to every year. This is possible, because the whole territory is within the limits of the State of New York. But in the Appalachian region one State cannot buy the forest sources of the streams, because they are in another State. The State which has the forests cannot be expected to go to the expense of protecting them in order to preserve the streams and agriculture and industries of adjoining commonwealths.

The government does much in many ways to create wealth for the people. Every river and harbor bill carries with it million of dollars to create wealth by dredging harbors, rivers and streams. The irrigation propositions which are always before us, and some of which have passed the Senate, are also for the creation of wealth by making fertile the lands which have always lain arid. Here, however, is a proposition not for the creation of wealth, but for its preservation. This is a scheme not for many local improvements, like the \$70,000,000 Public Buildings bill or the \$70,000,000 River and Harbor bill, or the innumerable other bills which we pass for localities, but it is a public and beneficent measure to keep for future generations in many States and over a large area, the productive energies which nature has stored for the comfort, the living and the happiness of large populations and for the wealth of the whole country.

It differs from all other schemes of governmental aid in another way. The advantages derived by the government from the improvement of rivers and harbors is incidental and indirect. The same is true of irrigation, of public buildings and public

expenditures of every kind; but in this broad and beneficent scheme the government protects its people by entering upon a business impossible for States or individuals, and which no machinery but that of the government can carry on, and which the experience of other countries has demonstrated will prove a source of perpetual revenue.

We have been the happy possessors of such extensive forest territories that we have not yet, like other nations, felt the poverty of wood. There has not been brought home to us how dependent we are upon it for all purposes in our domestic, home and business life. It would be little short of a national calamity if we should feel acutely the loss of our wood. That this will occur, and wood become so high as to make it a luxury, is certain if this forest denudation goes on. From the cottage of the poor man and the home and outbuildings of the farmer to the highly polished woods whose artistic graining ornaments the palaces of the rich, this wise provision of nature is our necessity. We can only keep these hard woods, which every year are becoming scarcer and more costly, within reasonable reach of the demands of the people by the government entering upon this process of scientific forestry. Instead of this 150 miles of hardwood forests being destroyed, as they will be in ten years unless measures are taken for their preservation, they would under this scheme last forever, and yield annually a harvest for the uses of the people. A few corporations or individuals may accumulate in a short time large fortunes in a generation or two; but wise ownership, preservation and administration by the government will give employment, property, industries and homes to multitudes for all time.

To sum up briefly, then, this is a work which only can be done by the government of the United States. It should be done by the government because it interests many States and in a large way the people of the whole country. It preserves the hardwood forests and their product for future generations. It keeps upon the hills and mountain sides the woods, whose influence upon climate, soil and rainfall is most beneficial to a vast territory. It prevents mountain torrents, which will in time, as the destruction of the forests goes on, turn a large agricultural region into a desert. It conserves for manufacturing purposes that enormous water-power which will be utilized for a multitude of industries which will give employment to thousands and add enormously to the wealth of the country. Instead of being an expense and a drain—and it would be the best expense which the government could make if that was necessary—it will be one of those beneficent improvements which will shed blessings everywhere, and at the same time be self-sustaining and a source of everlasting revenue to the government.

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Sympathy is easy to get, but when you need help you will find that is a different question.

Practical piety is not much cultivated, but greatly needed. Sentimental piety is common, and not uncommonly of little worth.

To rejoice in another's prosperity is to give content to your own lot; to mitigate another's grief is to alleviate or dispel your own.