

## CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK.

It is a mistake to suppose with some critics that permanence of popularity is a fair test of absolute literary greatness. For a large part of the reputation of many literary productions depends entirely upon circumstances which do not at all testify to intrinsic merit in the author. Thus the archaic quaintness, and the simplicity and purity of Chaucer, for which we so much admire him, are in a large measure mere accidents of his time. If we thought, spoke, and acted as people did in those days, Chaucer's writings would cease to be in a special degree wonderful to us except on the score of antiquity. There are now living in England and America very many better novelists than Richardson and Fielding, but because they chanced to stand alone the names of these two authors will live long after most of these others shall have been forgotten. Perhaps no small share of the reputation which attaches to the name of Walter Scott is due to the fact of his being the only considerable Scotch novelist. Fenimore Cooper's European fame grew almost entirely out of the absolute freshness of his subject matter. His home reputation was due to the patriotic braggadocio of his countrymen. They had little native literature, but they sought to compensate themselves by exaggerating the excellence of what they had.

In our estimate, then, of the elements of absolute greatness in literature, reputations which are due merely to fortuitous coincidences and relations must not be taken into account.

Again, it is evident that the mere nature of the theme of an author's work is no index of its greatness or permanency. The great religious tomes of the Schoolmen went down to darkness and irredeemable oblivion no less surely than the black-lettered volumes of sorcery and incantation of the Evil One. Not alone did Homer and Virgil tell of the sorrows of the Son of Peleus or of the burning walls of Troy. The other writers are forgotten, and the survival of these shows that the theme or subject matter is not the immortal principle in literature.

A remarkable degree of popularity is sometimes obtained for a writer by the adoption of some peculiarity in form or style. The best recent instance of one phase of this fact is the case of the late Henry Shaw, "Josh Billings." There are many other writers who owe their reputation to peculiarities not essentially dissimilar—peculiarities not so patent indeed as miss-spelt words, but quite as artificial.

Such popularity can be only ephemeral. It is impossible that a reputation built on mere style or form of any kind should be lasting. These things are mere convention, and necessarily tend to pass away with the generation that gave them being. Addison and Macaulay were masters of style in their day, but they are more talked about than read nowadays. If the new generations read them at all, it will be rather as a duty than as a pleasure. Their popularity will be a memory rather than a living reality.

It seems to me that the essence of greatness and permanency in literature is entirely distinct from either the form or the matter in the usual signification of these terms. It is in the spirit or tone of the writing, a certain influence which can be felt, but not described, for it appeals to the sensibilities rather than the intellect.

In spite of the infinite diversity of human minds there is yet one great element in common. It is the susceptibility to impressions of the good, the true and the beautiful in human life and in the world of nature. This susceptibility is often counterfeited, it is often subjected to conventionality, and often shamelessly burlesqued by its pretended devotees in the world of literary fashion. But its existence as a genuine and permanent factor in human nature cannot be gainsaid. If this were not so, Burns could not have immortalized the daisy and thomely Scotch cotter, nor Goldsmith the poor Vicar of Wakefield, nor St. Pierre the two lovers of Mauritius.

In its highest manifestations this spirit entirely ignores all previous opinions on the matters; it sets itself to seek out truth and goodness and beauty anywhere and everywhere. Its perpetual discovery of them in what the world considers the most unlikely

places, is more than a surprise, it is a revelation and a new gospel to the people.

When the spirit of a writer is such that he appeals in the simplest, the strongest and the deepest way to these most universal and most permanent feelings and sympathies, then it may safely be said that he has attained the heights of greatness in literature and that his name will endure through the ages.

Taking the single field of short stories and applying this standard to the multitude of writers that have recently arisen therein, both in England and America, there is no author within the writer's knowledge who so well fulfils the conditions of literary greatness and immortality as "Charles Egbert Craddock" in the book of tales entitled "In the Tennessee Mountains." From the very nature of the case it is impossible for any one to obtain a correct and adequate impression of the surpassing merit of these stories without reading them. It would be idle for us to attempt to do for our readers what they must do for themselves. We conceive that the highest function of the critical writer is to find out good literature and to interest others to such a degree therein that they will be constrained to read it. To serve this purpose we shall quote some characteristic passages from this author's works in a future issue of the VARSITY.

A. STEVENSON.

## AD CATONEM.

Nec facultatem celerem loquendi  
Arte mira vel superiorum habendo,  
Nec lyra cum voce modos amoenos  
Dulce canendo.

Possumus lenire animum dolentem.  
Vae ferunt haec nil animo quietis,  
Pectore ex imo nisi inaudiamus,  
"Integer es tu!"

T. A. GIBSON.

## THE FUTURE OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

An exceedingly able article on the above topic appeared recently in the *Chicago Current*. It was written by J. H. Long, M.A., LL.B., a recent graduate and examiner in English in Toronto University.

After showing the reasons why the great colonies cannot long remain in their present relations to England, he considers their three possible futures, absorption by some foreign power (*i.e.*, in Canada, annexation), independence, and federation.

Annexation Mr. Long considers practically a dead issue, as only a few people near the borders favor it, and the feeling is not increasing.

There is, the writer says, a certain amount of independence sentiment in Canada, and it would be stronger were it not believed that independence would be a mere stepping-stone to annexation. Patriotism, so far as it does exist in Canada, is diverted towards the Province and the Empire rather than to the Dominion.

Mr. Long then deals ably and at length with the remaining question as follows:—

"It is some years since the idea of Imperial Federation, was broached; the honor of the first regular enunciation of the principle being due, I think, to a Torontonian, Mr. Jehu Matthews. The scheme as originally mooted, and as it is advocated even yet by a small number of persons, is that Great Britain and those colonies which possess responsible government shall form a federation, with inter-imperial free trade, and with a federal parliament dealing with strictly imperial matters, such as war and peace, copyright and postal regulations, trade and commerce. Each member of the Confederation shall, according to its population, contribute to the common defence, and be entitled to representation in the parliament. Now, this is undoubtedly a grand conception; but it has features that would render its working impossible. Not the least objectionable of these features would be the heterogeneousness and unwieldiness of the proposed parliament.