

fluences that no two minds are precisely alike ; and yet, they often approach each other so closely as to be indistinguishable by our rude methods of mental analysis. With George Macdonald and Wilkie Collins we encounter no such difficulty. The contrast is so plainly marked that their novels scarcely present a single feature of similarity. The authors differ *toto celo* ; their minds have nothing whatever in common ; they move in parallel grooves, and, therefore, present no point of coincidence. In their views of the world, of human nature, of moral and religious duty, and even of the aim and manipulation of the art they both employ, they are hopelessly apart. Both delight in mystery, it is true ; but even here the resemblance, which is only apparent, serves to measure the gulf fixed between them. The one puzzles his readers and perhaps himself with spiritual fancies ; the other keeps us in suspense, and heightens the interest by a series of difficult situations. The one has all the haziness of the mystic ; the other claims only to be a skilful weaver of plots.

Dr. Macdonald is, in many respects, an attractive writer. He possesses a subtle and delicate fancy, high and pure aims, sensitiveness of the most ethereal order, and a graceful and nervous style. His works, although strongly impregnated with the religious spirit are not of the species known as "goody." He can be dogmatic enough at times, but his theology seems to sit loosely upon him. An author, who appears to believe, with Schleiermacher, in a Christian consciousness revealing all truth to its possessor, cannot hold to a very strict theory of biblical inspiration. Some keen scent after heterodoxy is even said to have discovered in *Wilfrid Cumberland* the germs of Universalism. It is hardly fair to the author to bring him to logical tests. He appears to look upon fiction as the play-ground of emotion where that peculiar description of fancy, which he would probably call "spiritual insight," may have full and free exercise. We doubt not that, if examined, we shall not say before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council because that body is notoriously latitudinarian, but say before the Consistory Court, or one of the General Assemblies at Edinburgh, he would acquit himself to the satisfaction of the indubitably orthodox. As a novelist, however, the author of *Wilfrid Cumberland* has a theory, in which we presume, he believes more or less, and to which the exigencies of art require that he should be faithful.

He approaches humanity from the emotional side. Intellect has nothing to do with the immortal destiny of our race. Belief is the condition precedent of knowledge ; knowledge is the fruit of belief. As St. Anselm tells us, we ought not to seek knowledge as the basis of belief, but rather to believe in order

that we may know*. The author's views, even of external nature are rigidly subjective. He gives us fresh and vigorous descriptions of scenery, but they are only introduced upon the canvass as the background to psychological effects. His *dramatis personæ* have no vitality ; they lack the first essential of humanity—as we alone know it—corporeal existence. They resemble rather those beings encountered by Æneas on the banks of the Styx—thin, airy sprites, without body, flitting to and fro under the hollow semblance of a human form. Take Wilfrid Cumberlande himself, Charley Osborne, Geoffrey Brotherton, Mary and Clara and throw old "grannie" and the rest in as additional raw material, and you will not find the makings of one solid, flesh-and-blood man or woman in the mass. The account of *Wilfrid Cumberlande's* childhood and youth is interesting enough, but so utterly unreal as to be valueless for psychological purposes. The opening chapters of *David Copperfield* give some reminiscences of infancy which, though fanciful in appearance, have an air of verisimilitude about them ; but what shall we say of a hero whose earliest wish, as a child, was that "he had watched while God was making him, so that he might have remembered how he did it ?" And so Wilfrid goes on, in maudering and moping introspection, as if life were indeed a feverish sleep, whose highest enjoyment is to be found in the misty splendour of spiritual dreams.

Let us give one instance of the manner in which Dr. Macdonald deals with a question of taste. Many reasons could undoubtedly be given for breaking through the traditional practice of winding up a story to the music of wedding bells. Our author's reason (given in *Robert Falconer*) is that "not woman but God is the centre of the universe" which, though an undoubted truth, has not the slightest bearing upon the question. The peculiarly spiritual air in which the author seeks to involve his subject, permeates the whole book. We are constantly treated to such sententious remarks as this,—“Death never comes near us ; it lies behind the back of God,”—which may be a profound truth, for aught we know ; if it is, it might be expressed in a clearer and, perhaps, in a more reverent manner. So again—“When it comes, death will be as natural as birth.” If Dr. Macdonald merely means that both are in the ordinary course of nature, he is putting himself to unnecessary trouble in stating a truism ; if more than that, he is transcending the limits of human knowledge, since regarding birth and death alike we are completely in the dark—“our little life is rounded by a sleep.” We have thought it necessary to object to the semi-inspired tone in which *Wilfrid*

*“Neque enim quæro intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam.”