

Westminster Hall Magazine

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THE THACKERAY CENTENARY.

has supplied a quantity of material for recent magazines, and directed attention to one of the ablest writers of the nineteenth century. The variety of Thackeray's writings has made it difficult for critics to label him. He could weave an entertaining essay or turn a smooth ballad; but he is unquestionably most widely known for his novels. In fiction the popular mind has always regarded him as the rival of Dickens. The fact is that the two novelists worked in such different fields that we have no reason for comparing them, beyond the accident that they came before the English public at the same time. We have no doubt that more of popular interest will be displayed in the Dickens Centenary (due to occur in February, 1913) than is now manifested in honor of Thackeray. But Thackeray's culture and reserve appeal to a type of mind that is not attracted by the extravagance and sensationalism of Dickens. Thackeray's portrayal of the shams of life has alienated some, who are led to regard him as a despiser of humanity. Thoughtful critics, however, see him in a different light. Although his outlook on life inclined him to pessimism, he is no conscienceless scoffer, but an earnest moralist and prophet, who employs the weapon of satire. If his penetrating mind unveiled the wretched insincerities of society, it perceived also the