

stitute what may be called the unclean publications of the press, ministering to the most depraved tastes of the reader and ever developing those tastes to still lower degrees of baseness. "Many judge of the power of a book," writes Longfellow, "by the shock it gives their feelings." The poet is speaking of this very class of unhealthful volumes, shocking to the purest instincts of men, and, for this very reason, dangerous in their influence. Startling and repellent at first, they at length secure attention and acceptance by their very peculiarities, until nothing will satisfy the expectation of the reader save the most pronounced departure from the normal and natural. These are the "earthly, sensual and devilish" books of the day, having to do with what an American author has recently called "the discovery of the unclean." No more fitting illustration of such an order of literature can be given than that which is found by comparing "The Confessions of Rousseau" with "The Confessions of Augustine," or with Coleridge's "Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit." The main design of each of these treatises is the same—a personal and detailed disclosure of innermost experience, so that the reader may see below all that is external. As we would now say, these books are realistic, concerned with what Mr. Arnold calls "the criticism of life." It is just here that we can mark their radical difference in treatment and tendency. With the French author, realism is one thing; with the devout North African scholar and the philosophic English essayist, it is quite another and a better thing. With the one, it is synonymous with a sickly and revolting examination of what is basest in the heart for the sake of revealing it in its foulness; with the others, it is a natural and serious unfolding of human nature as it is, to the end that a better knowledge of life may be obtained and the highest interests of truth secured. No reader of any ethical sensibility can go far into the pages of Rousseau without discovering the fact that these confessions are detailed in the interests of a carnal curiosity. Who, on the other hand, can read a page of Augustine or of Coleridge and resist the conviction that here he is in the presence of devout and candid men, revealing the whole truth on behalf of the truth, if so be that what is base in them may be forgiven of God and avoided by men?

Even in the pages of De Quincey's "Confessions" and in John Stuart Mill's "Autobiography," this disgusting diagnosis of the French infidel is absent, and we are dealing with minds who, with all their faults of habit and errors of doctrine, are at least sincere in their devotion to the truth as they conceive it. The same is true of Tolstoï, the distinguished Russian novelist, as he reveals to us his life in his autobiographic works, "Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth;" "My Confession," and "My Religion." Whatever theological or literary errors may here be found, the author cannot justly be charged with insincerity of confession or with a morbid desire to subserve the interests of evil. If, as we