

your opinions about things you do not understand. But if you will persist in doing so, be kind enough to write to the Editor-in-Chief and not to members of the Faculty. The Faculty do not edit THE REVIEW.

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A PROPOS of the article on "Uncle Sam and His Critics," which was published in the January number of this journal, the *Saturday Review* is a critic of things American, as sharp and caustic as ever was Mrs. Trollope. Here is a choice bit clipped from a recent number:—"It is the peculiar function of the United States to reproduce a certain number of very old things. The Old World, which has got out of that stage itself, is horrified at such outbreaks as the Homestead strikes and the Tennessee riots. It wonders how social order exists at all in the country where such things are possible. But social order continued to live through several centuries of worse things in Europe, and produce a good deal of speculation, and statesmanship, and art and literature the while. The United States having, under a mistaken impression that they were in the van of civilization, returned in some respects to the condition which Europe left behind in the tenth century, have naturally got the disorder back also. The other things may come. America need not despair prematurely of one day reaching the twelfth century. For the present it is in its early tenth." Poor old Uncle Sam.

THE STUDY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

THE AUTHOR'S FIELD.

It is certain that the President of the United States and the Queen of England are important personages. Fifty or sixty millions of people know the name of Mr. Cleveland, and more know the name of Queen Victoria. Nevertheless, some other names are still better known in the world, the names of a few individuals who have neither favours nor places to bestow, and who, seated at a table in the evening, have occupied themselves with covering sheets of white paper with black lines.

For example, it may be affirmed that every man or woman who has read of Queen Victoria or of President Cleveland has also heard of Shakespeare; it is now two hundred years since people began to talk about him, and we are very sure that people will still talk about him two or three hundred years hence, or indefinitely, so long as the English language lasts.

On the contrary, in the twentieth century, it will be with President Cleveland as with his predecessors, Hayes, Jackson, or Adams; it will be with Queen Victoria much as with her predecessors George III., George I., or Queen Anne; to the public at large they will simply be vague shadows, half-lost in a file of other shadows; they will remain distinct only in the memory of historians.

As far as publicity goes, it is always essential to add to the edition of to-day all succeeding editions; at that rate, if a president or queen has his or her name printed a million of times, Shakespeare prints his name, or has it printed, by hundreds of millions. And not only does he inscribe his name in the greater number of minds, but, again, he engraves, in each of these, at least in the minds of those who read, several lines and even entire pages. And this, because great writers, through a peculiar privilege, and especially the poets, alone possess the engraving instrument.

Othello, Iago and Desdemona, Lear and Cordelia, Coriolanus, Hotspur and Falstaff are characters which one never forgets. Certain dialogues, like that between Macbeth and his wife, or that between Brutus and Cassius, certain popular scenes like the rebellion of Jack Cade, harangues accompanied with the comments and applause of

the crowd, like Marc Antony's speech to the people after the murder of Caesar, when once they have a place in the imagination, remain then fixed forever.

Frequently, even textual passages by the poet, a soliloquy by Hamlet or Macbeth, an exclamation by Ophelia or Imogen, an expression of Prospero's or of Caliban's, become the permanent occupants of our mind; in vacant or melancholy hours, in times of reflection on the conditions of human life, we involuntarily repeat to ourselves Shakespeare's actual words; suddenly, as with a lamp brought into a crypt, it reveals to us some deep trait of our nature; thus far, this trait, ignoble or sublime, bestial or divine, has remained distinct and lost with thousands of others in the confused mass of our experiences; it now detaches itself, and appears to us in bright light. Shakespeare, to all cultivated men, is more than a teacher, for he has contributed in large part to the judgments they have formed of man, and to the knowledge they have of their own hearts.

PUBLIC INTEREST IN AUTHORS.

When a personage gets to be important, there is a desire to make his acquaintance, not merely through what is said of him, but in a direct way. People strive to see him; in any event, they buy his photograph; an interest is taken in his appearance, in his occupations, ambitions, means and affections—in short, in his private life. It is only lately that our American newspapers considered the question whether Mr. Cleveland would remain a bachelor, whether he was not too busy to think of matrimony, and on what ladies, all of them charming, his choice could fall. Two or three times a year, at public receptions, the President sees his drawing-room filled with unknown visitors who come from all parts of the union, intending, for once in their lives, to shake hands with him, and they do it so vigorously that, at the end of the ceremony, it is said that he has run the risk of dislocation of his wrist.

In England, I saw, on the occasion of a review in Hyde Park, a hundred thousand persons standing in long rows, and waiting for three hours to see an ordinary carriage go by, in which sat a healthy-looking lady in a white bonnet, and because that lady was the queen. The *Court Circular* every morning, as well as the large newspapers, recount what she did the previous afternoon, and what hours she went out, whether afoot or in carriage, what ladies accompanied her, what guests had the honour of dining with her, and countless persons, especially in the provinces, read all these details with interest. In default of more instructive matter, their curiosity centres on these.

With great authors we fare better. Whilst the correspondence of a statesman remains secret, and leaves the archives only at the end of fifty or a hundred years, whilst that of a man of letters almost the moment after his death. It is published at once, even indiscreetly and superabundantly. Things that he never thought of printing, which he kept for himself, or, at best, for two or three friends, his confidential communications, are all handed over to us.

Thanks to these accumulated documents, we can observe him from early infancy, and even go further back; we learn the condition and history of his parents, often of his grandparents; we follow him even from the age when he left off frocks and learned his A B C, through his boyhood and youth up to maturity, and down to his last days, year after year at school, at college, in the university and through all the turning-points of his career. The publisher adds his portraits, sometimes portraits at different ages, views of the principal dwellings he once occupied, of the surrounding landscape, of his drawing-room, study and library.