

who is thoroughly good, whose heart is filled with kindness, although he avoids the very appearance of sentiment, who loves a joke and yet wears an air of professional gravity, is conservative, yet welcomes changes which will improve the social tone of the community, who has not much poetry or delicacy in his make-up, but who is a model of good faith, of high ideals of conduct, and of practical helpfulness and sagacity.

What shall we say in conclusion as a final estimate of the fiction of John Galt? We must recognise that his novels are marred by grave defects. Slovenliness of style, looseness of structure, lapses into bad taste, these are some of his faults. His great excellence lies in the fact that he painted the life of his time, of a Scotland that was rapidly passing away, with great fidelity to actual conditions. Dalmailing, Gudetown, and Garnock are not idealised communities, like Thrums and Drumtochty, but the colour of nature done in nature's paint. Galt has been discounted because he lacks glow and exaltation, because he aspired not to the world of soaring imagination. Susan Ferrier, who owed many hints to Galt, sets forth the orthodox literary doctrine of her day in one of her letters to Lady Charlotte Bury. "We

see quite enough of real life without sitting down to the perusal of a dull account of the commonplace course and events of existence. The writer who imitates life like a Dutch painter, who chooses for his subject turnips, *fraus*, and tables, is only the copyist of inferior objects; whereas the mind that can create a sweet and beautiful though visionary romance, soars above such vulgar topics and leads the mind of readers to elevated thoughts."

Nowadays we have become more tolerant. We still enjoy the air of high romance, even Miss Ferrier's airy, fairy heroines; we remain loyal to that other great contemporary of Galt, Sir Walter Scott, but if John Galt were writing to-day he would find himself among friends who love exceedingly "the writer who imitates life like a Dutch painter," who can never get enough of the unvarnished but clean details of real life, who can appreciate in them not only opulent humour but touching reminders of the sweetness and sadness of the simple annals of the poor, and who can hear an echo of "the still, sad music of humanity" in the chronicles of *The Reverend Micah Balwhiddër* and *Provost Pawky*, and in the moral and physical tragedies of "The Entail."

