

cultivated few, but with the unlearned many, without impairing truth, deserves the name of artist in its very highest sense.

There is, however, a different class of writers to this last, deserving consideration at our hands, whose member, leaving the dusty paths of recon-dite knowledge to the erudite or the specialist, explore the lanes of being, so to speak, in a desultory and sentimental manner. Their office is not so much to instruct as to amuse. Not so much to present incontrovertible truth as to surmise and make suggestions. Not so much to tell us the why and the wherefore of what is, as to represent the outlines of what they would have things to be. To explore, in short, not the realistic realm of matter-of-fact entity, but rather the regions of imagination and probability, roving from scene to scene, from motives of mere curiosity, relaxation or pleasure. To this class belong the novelist and the poet, romancers as we term them, who, if they ever are deductive or philosophical, so envelop their teachings and their morals in the draperies of felicitous imagery and flowery diction, that the seer is almost lost sight of in the sensualist, and philosophy ever holds a secondary place to art.

There is, certainly, a species of light, or rather may it not be termed popular literature, as there is a species of painting, as there is a species of sculpture, without any manifestation of the true art spirit. It is either sombre and neutral-tinted, a barren, prosaic, twilight waste of narration, with never a gleam of poetic light to illumine its monotonous weariness; or, on the other hand, a very Sahara of pedantry or frippery, lacking an oasis of common sense, or a nook of philosophic shade. The brooding atrabiliousness of distempered dogma and dreary platitude distinguishes the one, the garish high-lights of unabashed lewd-

ness and shameless effrontery signalize the other. A good deal of modern prose, as exemplified by the modern daily press, is of this description. We have the incoherent mumblings of trite experience, the disgusting recapitulation of atrocity and crime, and the maniacal vituperation of this or that sect, or clique, or political cabal. We write too much now-a-days, we read too much in the wrong direction, we talk too much, we think too little. Dr. Pryde, in his "*Highways of Literature*," makes the following remark, which contains a germ of truth: "The multitude of books has now become almost overwhelming, many of them are comparatively worthless; and it is quite possible for a man to go on reading for a lifetime and never light upon the great standard works."

No artist ever produced a picture worthy of immortality, no sculptor ever taught the insentient marble to breathe for all time, without long preparatory study of first principles; without deep and concentrated self-communion with the spirit of art, that art, which appreciated and fostered, men call genius. We in this New World are apt to laugh at Old World prejudices and seven years' apprenticeships. But truth is truth, and, paradoxical as the statement may appear, truth comes not by intuition but by wooing, and the longer the wooing the truer the truth; therefore, in a reflex sense, the more resplendent the genius; for much of genius after all is but highly cultivated talent and the power to reproduce things as they really are.

What makes the works of the early dramatists so readable, in spite of their coarseness, in spite of their themes: sensuality, seduction, rioting, bloodshed, full-blossoming villainy of every type? These are topics fit only for a barbaric age, the renaissance of Paganism. Whence then their fascination? It is due to the