

prospective member of parliament, handsome and attentive to women, in a word all that the ordinary love story makes a hero. And yet he is hateful, so repulsive that Clara Middleton tries to run away to avoid her marriage, and ultimately begs and contrives and rebels until she does free herself from her odious and loathsome engagement. What is this mysterious leprosy which the friends of both cannot see? What is the foul plague spot which only the affianced bride can discern and hate? No lack of manly beauty, no lack of social or intellectual accomplishment, no vulgar vice of the soul against which the moral edicts level their dread thunderbolt. What then? Clara could not tell. When she was asked to "give reasons," she had none to give. Constantia had fled dismayed, utterly unable to frame a single charge against this man; and none of us could have said, as Meredith has said, just what the vileness was; that vileness that we all feel in people so much and so often. We put it down to this, that and the other cause. We even, in charitable fits, put it down to our own lack of kind charity, though feeling the insincerity of such charity. We feel an involuntary antipathy for one who should be a near friend. We say he is vulgar, and that quality we cannot tolerate; yet we know that we can and do tolerate vulgarity in other people and love them just the same; or we say it is selfishness about little things, and yet we know that in people we love, this is almost an endearing quality. What, then, is this awful something that asserts its icy presence and drives us from our fellow beings? We cannot tell. But Meredith says it is this: *He is an Egoist.*

We are astounded; we do not believe in Meredith; how can a man be generous and an egoist? We consult our dictionaries; we think we know what an egoist is, and Sir Willoughby is the very opposite. Is not an egoist a person who does not help others, and who is grasping and boorish and always self-conscious and doesn't understand others because he is wrapped up in himself? And is not *Patterne* the reverse of all this? He, of all men, to be called an egoist! And yet against our wills Meredith convinces us—an egoist he is, and that is his disease, and an awful one; and also a common one, and doubly. Alas! we all suffer from it more or less. He who does good to others, in order to glorify himself may be said to do good that evil may come of it. There are grades and varieties of selfishness; in a sense, every act of life is selfish that is referred to our own good; but only in proportion as we live for others without reference to our own pleasure, even our own legitimate and rightful pleasure, so we free ourselves from egoism. Every man is to think of others and live for others, and this not for the self-gratification of being respected and honored, but purely that he may get outside himself and kill the deadly serpent of egoism. This is surely the greatest of English novels in the power of its ethical teaching. What a laying bare of our meanness and littleness. After reading the book, one says to one's self: "The very acts I thought were generous and helpful, were

soiled with the slime, of the serpent; the good deeds had a purpose, not quite clear to myself, of getting honors and respect and praise from others. I was fattening my spirit on the offerings of those I helped, caring in my inmost heart more for the offerings than for the hearts they came from."

No man can read this work without being a better man. Many will learn here who will not learn from sermons, nor even from sermonizing works of art; but surely the spirit of right is in this novel, and the very spirit of the angel's song in Arnold's new poem:—

"What lack of Paradise

If, in angelic wise,

Each unto each, as to himself, were dear?

If we in souls descried,

Whatever form might hide,

Own brother, and own sister, everywhere?"

Read *The Egoist*, even at the sacrifice of much labor; the language is obscure, but the wit is sparkling; the epigram is almost too brilliant, the tone is refined, the thought is marvellously subtle, and above all the lessons are such as we need, to understand other people and ourselves, and the whole tendency of this man's work is distinctly and strongly towards that perfection of humanity of which "The Light of the World" tells us, towards that

"Peace beginning to be,

Deep as the sleep of the sea;

When the stars their faces glass,

In its blue tranquility.

Heart of men upon earth,

Never still from their birth,

To rest as wild waters rest,

With the colors of Heaven on their breast.

Love, which is sunlight of peace,

Age by age to increase,

Till anger and hatred are dead,

And sorrow and death shall cease.

'Peace on earth and good-will!'

Souls that are gentle and still,

Hear the first music of this,

Far-off infinite bliss!"

May this time come, and meanwhile may we honor great and good men like George Meredith, who strive with all their great powers to bring it about. Let it be said that Canadians appreciate an Englishman of genius, who, in his own land, is known and loved only by the very elect. There are not lacking great critics who will declare George Meredith to be the greatest living novelist, if not the greatest English novelist of any generation.

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The other morning, when the streets were very icy, and pedestrianism difficult, Jones accosted Robinson with the usual "Good Morning," and added, "very rough, isn't it?" Robinson, turning, and tripping as he spoke, remarked cynically, "Say smooth, you idiot."