

are women, perhaps a concession to the Comtist belief of George Lewes and his school.

Nathaniel Hawthorne is justly credited as the greatest of American prose writers. This is one of the best chapters in the lecture. A quotation will show its value.

"Nathaniel Hawthorne was scarcely less than George Eliot, but with a genius of a distinctly different order. His writings are as rich in veiled religious teachings as the other, only they are given first-hand and not broken up among the characters sketched. Hawthorne is a vivid chronicler of introspective processes and does not spend himself on scenes of action. Steeped through and through with a moral seriousness, he gives the first place to ethical and religious problems, and all else are subsidiary. There is no rest for the human spirit according to his teaching but in the highest duty and the holiest love.

"His imagination is so eerie and fearsome that we sometimes doubt its perfect sanity. Some of his stories which he labels as moralities, parables, allegories, romances, are not infrequently set in a framework of psychological occultism and semi-scientific marvels. We find ourselves groping along the intricate paths of a sombre borderland, where it is neither light nor dark. But through all his scenes the book of remembrance looms vaguely in view; a sense of judgment is ever in the air—self-judgment mysteriously forced upon the mind by a hand from the unseen. He has a scheme of retribution which asserts itself with almost monotonous consistency through his plots and ghostly dramas. Its processes are inward; but the wounded conscience is not alone in the revenge it inflicts upon sin. It leagues itself with a relentless memory, and the unknown powers of a boundless imagination, and these combined influences imprint upon the very flesh brands and stripes as real as though some machinery of torture had been applied from without. The instruments of judgment all lie ready to hand within the unseen half of man's personality.

"Hawthorne's lack of the idea of the doctrine of sacrifice and mediation make the introspection of his subjects to end in a remorse scarcely distinguishable from insanity.

"The wise, solemn, sagacious ethics of this leader in American prose, hidden not infrequently under the veil of fantasy and

romance, is a much-needed corrective to the ribaldry of those fools of an ephemeral fiction who make a mock at sin and have no sense of its criminality before God. He dramatizes with transcendent skill some of these great facts of human nature which are at the very roots of all theology."

Such a work as this would be incomplete if the trend of modern pessimism were not examined. The lecturer has dealt fairly with the school in putting into the witness-box its most brilliant representative, a realist of the first rank, Mr. Thomas Hardy, who stands among the first of his contemporaries. There is a hopeless note in his writings in strange contrast to the authors dealt with in the first part of the book. He seems to teach that the odds are always against virtue, innocence, and unselfishness. Things could only turn out as Thomas Hardy represents them if the universe were in the hands of mere chance, or under the rule of the Evil One.

"A prince in modern literature, attired in the noblest purple and fine linen, this author has a curious mania for exploiting sewers and acting Parisian ragman. Filth and defilement he faces with the calm, unshrinking countenance of a Local Board labourer, and, amazing sight! the implements of his unholy toil are shod with beaten gold and encrusted with rubies and pearls. Thomas Hardy has made his home in the slime-pits of Siddim, as early ascetics betook themselves to the caves of the wilderness, and studiously cultivated the most lachrymose and intractable types of pessimism that a morbid ingenuity can devise.

"He is the realist who can only see the dirty side of life, he seems to have set himself the task of re-writing the book of Ecclesiastes with the cheerful moral, 'Fear God and keep His commandments,' dropped out. Whether he guides us over the purple heath, or through the lush, pastoral valley, or by the restless sea, we are never quite away from the refrain, 'vanity of vanities.'"

Mr. Selby now turns to George Macdonald and the Scottish school, the latter including such