

you are free ; men of letters are organized and respected ; in England they are unorganized and disdained, and if any of them are honoured it is sure to be some mediocrity who beats the patriotic drum, or wins popularity with sickly sentiment."

"You are much worse off, then, than we are," he decided, "I have always understood that Englishmen don't care much for the things of the spirit."

"An artist in England," I replied, "is regarded as if he were an acrobat, and a great writer and great man like Meredith is not so highly appreciated as a tenth-rate general or politician or explorer ; indeed, he is on much the same level as a trick-bicyclist, or actor or dancer. Shakespeare was treated like a menial : Blake died in want of necessaries : and in our day poets of the first rank have committed suicide out of sheer poverty. Literature and Art are less esteemed in London than in any other civilized capital."

"Yet we have an idea," he objected, "that an aristocratic society is always more favourable to the artist or man of letters than a democracy ; England, then, forms an exception to the rule ?"

"No, no," I replied, "little as our barbarian aristocracy cares for art or letters, it still cares more than the middle class or the democracy. You have no idea how low our standard of taste and knowledge is : Georges Ohnet in England would be more highly esteemed than a Flaubert