

We are in utter need of such a standard, for there is a plethora of poor and innocent writers, who should be, not suppressed, but assigned to their rightful places. It is a hopeful thing to see many stirred to artistic expression, nay, more, without the many, the surpassing few are seldom found. And it only becomes a discouraging thing to see the pen or pencil in every hand, when some uninspired canvas is called a masterpiece, or when some jingling rhymes are spoken of as poetry.

The Despairing section of the community entrench themselves behind three arguments which they consider strong enough to render others as passive as themselves. And the first is our lack of nationality. Upon the necessity of this hardly definable quality they dwell with such insistence, that we must almost conclude that the great poets and novelists of the past, first paused to find out whether they had a nationality before setting themselves to their immortal work. We are obliged to assert that we are the sons of Englishmen, Scotchmen and Irishmen; that we are the inheritors of British laws and ideals. The soil upon which we live is, truly, separated by a sea from that upon which our forefathers dwelt, but it would require more seas than the earth possesses to make us less than British. The very language of our art which is to be, is the most wide, most free, most noble English tongue. Genius is no less the creator of nationality than nationality of genius. Luther and Lessing, Schiller and Goethe and Herder, were no more the products than the makers of German nationality; and in every country this relationship is reciprocal and mysterious. They are rash who say this or that is not the ground in which genius can spring, for even as they speak, it shoots above the surface.

The second argument of the Despairing is our lack of wealth. To this it may be answered that wealth has never been the best patron of art. For art is not a manufacture which fluctuates with supply and demand. It may be purchased by money, but never produced. Wealth may indeed be the foster-mother to encourage, but never the true mother to give birth to art. It is certain, however, that material rewards warm both the heart and the hearth of the artist, and it is to be hoped that the increasing opulence of our country will increase these rewards.

And the third argument which is considered to explain the impossibility of a literature for us, is the scattered nature of our population, together with the division of races. Both of these objections disappear before an examination of the history of art in the past. For the greatest poets have had at first the smallest audiences and the fewest readers; nor are there many countries whose inhabitants are of undivided races.

Here again it must be urged as in the matter of wealth, that the workings of art are esoteric, and as independent as the principle of life, of the laws of the scientist.

It may be thought that in removing the three chief barriers to the growth of art, some other obstacle must be found, or the thing itself discovered, for its absence must surely be explained. But this is a mistake—the appearance and disappearance of genius is unexplainable. As it is a perpetual glory, it is a perpetual mystery. It is present or absent without a law discoverable by man.

This being acknowledged, it can be asserted that art has already shown itself among us. We have already made many attempts and castings and approximations. In a few isolated instances the spark was struck, and the imperishable flame is already lit