

times? and Leigh Hunt too is coming up, for eager notice—and that is good. Charles Lamb used to thank God that he had “a universal taste for reading”—yet he had an index (an expurgatorius index), and it delights me to see what authors are set down there unmercifully. Hume is one of them, Paley another. There are many others. “With these exceptions,” said he, “I can read almost anything.” I would be curious to know how many people have had resolution enough to read Milton through. After all, does not the supreme merit of a book rest upon the desire it awakens in us of getting to the end? Are there not a few books, we feel, can never end? In the spiritual order it is a universally acknowledged fact that the Bible and the Imitation of Christ are books without an ending—they are always new; but it is not in that order I started. I’m presuming to speculate.

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Out with recreative books! Among these, is it not well to include all that is best in our recent fiction? Who can despair of the times when such a novel as “Lorna Doone” is so warmly received, so lengthily dwelt upon by the best critics: better still, is read and re-read by those who know a thing or two about novels? That there are young ladies to day, capable of a genuine and freely spoken admiration for such an unconventional hero as honest “John Ridd,” is an un-

mistakable proof that Miss Woolson, and Mrs. Amelie Rives Chandler, have not prevailed upon womankind to adopt their views. And there’s the “Deemster” an unconventional novel surely, in fact no novel at all, but a masterpiece of romance. “a tale of a great love and a great suffering,” well told, a most sensational tale, yet, hardly to be confounded with the sensationalism so loudly demanded,—no less loudly denounced,—of late. There may be, as there are, some who will object to the heroine’s persistent love for the unhappy hero, but I fear they read awry, and not aright, in the great book of human nature. This seems hardly a matter of taste, the disputing of which is out of the question, but, a matter of psychological insight.

Owen Mei’sdith says somewhere—

“Nature and man were children long ago—
In glad simplicity of heart and speech,
Now they are strangers to each others woe;
And each hath language different from each.
The simplest songs sound sweetest and most good.
The simplest loves are the most loving ones.
Happier were sons’ forefathers than their sons—
And Homer sang as Byron never could.

But Homer cannot come again; nor ever
The quiet of the age in which he sung,
This age is one of tumult and endeavor,
And by a fevered hand its harps are strung.
And yet I do not quarrel with the time;
Nor quarrel with the tumult of my heart,
Which of the tumult of the age is part;
Because its very weakness is sublime.”

—L. P.