

other artist, should be true to nature. But what artist could we tolerate, if he were always setting before us the most repulsive scenes in history?

We had thought that it was the function of the artist to show the ideal in the real; so that whilst nature was placed before us, we should, as it were, see something higher and nobler shining through the reality. And we maintain that this is the truth of nature and experience. You cannot photograph the whole of any scene. Every event has its interior as well as its exterior. Every act represents much more than it expresses. Even failures may suggest the possibility of success.

But our Zolaists revel in the disgrace of humanity. They rejoice to show our coarseness, our baseness, our selfishness, our animality. Has humanity nothing but these qualities? Is it not striving towards something better? Has it not in some measure attained?

We are not pleading so much for what has been called moral purpose. Such a purpose may be too conspicuous and defeat its own end. Most persons are agreed that the admirable literary work of the late Mr. Charles Reade was distinctly marred by the pamphleteering spirit by which it was pervaded. A writer who is true to humanity will teach abundant moral lessons by simply showing us how men really live and act. But we believe that the true artist, as Cicero said of the true orator, must be a good man, a man with high and noble aspirations and philanthropic purposes, and such a man's writing will raise the reader and not depress or degrade him.

Writers like Mr. Howells, who fancy that they have discovered the secret of writing novels without a plot, or without a plot which is of the least importance, may be fashionable with a certain class of persons for a certain period of time. But, after all, people who read stories want stories. They want not merely descriptions, more or less vivid, of scenery, and dialogue, sometimes clever, sometimes insipid, and often very wearisome, they want incident; and ultimately they will go to those who provide it; and we believe they will be right. Even morbid analysis of the contents of the human consciousness will only go a little way to satisfy ordinary human beings. Here and there it may add a flavour to the report; but it must not make the whole of it.

While we write there lies before us a contribution by Mr. Oscar Wilde to the July number of *Lippincott*. We suppose that Mr. Wilde would be described as an aesthete, and perhaps a stylist, and perhaps a romanticist. No doubt, Mr. Wilde is a very clever man, and we believe he is much admired. Doubtless, too, there are persons who will rave over such writing as this and go to sleep over the pages of Walter Scott. By a chance there lies near the magazine a novel of Walter Scott's. It has not been reckoned one of his greatest: it is "Peveril of the Peak." And yet as we pass over a paragraph or two in the magazine, and then turn to the pages of the great wizard, we seem to be turning from a display of second-rate fire-works to gaze upon the calm, starry heavens.

We want no one to imitate Scott or Thackeray or Dickens; but we want our writers to be simple and natural in the true sense, we will say, in the accepted sense. We had more to say on French novels, and a good deal on Russian novels; but, for the present, we must hold our hands.

#### LONDON LETTER.

"AT the Artists' Benevolent Fund Dinner the other day (writes Mr. Frith to me this morning) where Millais was in the chair, he told us of something that had happened to him when he was a boy, which I don't think has ever been in print. So it may be of use to you.

"When Millais was painting the 'Ferdinand and Ariel,' a dealer who saw it said if, when it was finished, he liked it as much as he did then, he would buy it for a hundred pounds. Millais was jubilant. He was living with his father and mother, and as they were badly off, the money which they made up their minds was quite secure they anticipated and the greater part was spent.

"At last 'Ferdinand' was finished—do you recollect it? It was painted when Millais was twenty, in '49, in his Præ-Raphaelite days, and was exhibited with a lot of his others some years ago in Bond Street—and the dealer was asked to come. But it was no good. 'I promised when I was here before to have the picture if I liked it,' he said. 'But I don't like it, and I won't buy it,' and off he went.

"When the anxious old people were told in the other room you can imagine their distress. There was nothing to be done but to retrench. So "Furnished Apartments" was written out on a card and wafered to the front parlour window, and the family sat down to wait for a lodger who was to mend their broken fortunes by helping with the rent.

"A week or two after this, another dealer dropped into the painting-room just to look round, bringing with him an old gentleman in a blue coat and brass buttons. Millais showed them what he was doing, and the strange old gentleman listened with sympathy to the story of the disappointment, looked attentively at the 'Ferdinand' on the easel, and seemed to know a good deal about pictures and to care for them. To Millais he gave some kindly advice, and finished by pulling a book out of his pocket, a book he particularly recommended to young artists. 'I'll give you this copy,' he said, 'if you will promise to read it. And if you will fetch me pen and ink I'll write your name in it.'

"So the old gentleman in the blue coat and brass buttons took the volume to a side-table in the painting-room, wrote in it, and brought it back to Millais. 'Mind you read it now: mind you read it; it will do you good,' he kept on repeating.

"As Millais was letting them out of the front door the dealer contrived to whisper that his companion was Mr. Ellison—the Mr. Ellison by the way who afterwards left pictures to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. So Millais on returning to his work opened the book which had been so highly recommended by this judge of art, whose name of course he knew, and as he opened the covers there fell out a cheque for a hundred and fifty guineas, signed by Ellison, for the 'Ferdinand.' There's a delightful surprising way of selling a picture. Do you know what Millais declares was the first thing he did after telling his people? From the window he unwafered that 'Furnished Apartments' card and tore it up; and since that day he says he has never had occasion to call in the help of lodgers.

"At the Academy last night I heard that one of the miniatures had been stolen from the case at three o'clock one afternoon last week. At five o'clock, it was found at a pawnbroker's. At half-past five it was hanging again in its place in the Academy. Quick work, that!

"I am delighted with Miss Duncan's 'Social Departure.' It's the cleverest book of the kind I've read. Did you hear Justin McCarthy wrote a leader on it in the *Daily News*, an honour which in my humble opinion it fully deserves?"

Appropos of the last paragraph in Mr. Frith's letter, I recollect the pleasure with which one used to cut the *Lady's Pictorial* every week, all agog for that new chapter on "Orthodocia and Orthodocia's adventures," hidden away among the fashion-plates and among the bits of intelligence about the nobility and gentry. (*Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?*) I recollect, too, saying something in THE WEEK, while the story was running, expressive of my admiration for the work of this charming Canadian writer, from whom her sister-journalists in England have everything to learn. It is good to find one did not praise too soon, neither heedlessly or foolishly. To the last word of the last chapter the "Social Departure" kept up its character of uncommon excellence. And now that the "Adventures" are republished and everyone is reading them—it is only your lazy-minded dilettante who has inclination for a serial—on all sides you hear but one opinion. That clear little claxon of *The World*, to which all wise men listen, first I think drew attention to the quality of the book. Then, with many an elegant flourish of trumpets, other papers followed suit.

What strikes one most in the generality of woman's work is the absence of humour. (When they are witty they are cruel, says Mr. Lang. Is he thinking of the stories of Miss Rhoda Broughton, I wonder?) They are seldom quite natural when they have a pen in their hands, and if one is not at one's ease, one cannot be amusing. Now Miss Duncan is emphatically at her ease at all times. Never forced, never insisted upon, her delicious and rare feeling for the humorous side of things—fun which, *pace* Mr. Lang, I find tainted not at all with cruelty—is half suspected, like the onion in Sydney Smith's salad, and animates the whole.

But perhaps it is not the humour of the "Social Departure" that one cares for best. "In the name of the Bodleian," says a famous critic, "what have the general public to do with literature?" And the general public, skimming the pages and making out most of the story from the clever little pictures with which they are ornamented, would not stop to consider whether the book is worthy of the name of literature or not. (Indeed, it is a commodity of which they can't judge, as the absurd mistakes that are continually made, testify. I am thinking for instance of "Little Lord Fauntleroy," that success of maukish sentiment; of "Three Men in a Boat," that success of fifth-rate Yankee jokes.) The general public, attracted solely by Miss Duncan's fun, will judge her by her fun. But to a small section, and it is a shamefully small section, who don't skip and really care for reading, there is "something beyond, beyond."

I remember "Mrs. Growthem's" crowded little drawing-room in Assiniboia, where the gilt top of the looking-glass is cut to fit the wall, and the kitchen window, from which she could see the baby's grave under the trees in the ten-acre wheat-field. I remember a pale, weird woman, whose draperies the girl-travellers came near, up amongst the hills by the tomb of Iyeasu, and "who made strange passes with a bell and a fan-rattle, strange posturings, strange measured steps in a semi-circle, within the cell-like little temple where she sat all day to do her religion this service." In the Cinnamon Gardens at Colombo, was not Arabi Pasha wandering that day we drove up the white road bordered by low glossy bushes, and "the spicy breezes blew soft o'er Ceylon's isle?" I have been

in Warren Hastings' old home outside Calcutta, in Alipore, where, to keep secure certain papers hidden in the wall, comes in the dusk of the evening the poor ghost in his plum-coloured coat and lace cravat, the ghost of him who lived through the long, long seven years of misery in Westminster Hall. And the Towers of Silence I remember, and the burning of Chuttersingh, who lay with a loop of yellow marigolds across his feet as the priest set fire to the funeral pile. Then, best of all, I have heard in the Tay Gardens the Bulbul singing to the Rose, "a low, sweet, dropping melody that fell and ceased, and throbberly fell again," as the shadows of Orthodocia and the Presence sauntered across the doorway of the Indian tomb, and the Chronicler, in the cool starlight, sat looking on at the old, old Romance.

And recollecting how these things and many more are told, it is hard to keep myself from quotation. But if I speak of the gentle womanly touches, the genial friendliness of the writer, who is sure her readers will like and understand her gay desultory talk, the many delightful pages through which, with something of a phonographic effect, one hears the laughter and jokes of these young chaperonless creatures, it is because I cannot help recording here the pleasure this book has given to us in England. I do not want to criticise. One can be content with the charming form and colour of a flower without caring to pull to pieces and classify the delicate fragile thing.

WALTER POWELL.

#### ECHO HARPS.

In youth the soul is full of golden dreams,  
Enchanting visions chain her wond'ring eyes;  
Serene are all her days, her life but seems  
Made for sweet musings in love's paradise.  
She lies beneath the laughing leaves of June,  
Joy in her heart and song within her soul:  
October comes and all these leaves are strewn,  
No beauty left on barren branch and bole.  
Her fancies fade beneath life's summer sun,  
As flowers whose graves are in the long June grass;  
Her dear dreams wane in darkness, one by one,  
Her hopes all burn to ashes as they pass.  
Tread lightly on the leaves of yester years  
Heaped in the hollows of the human heart;  
For they are echo-harps on which the tears,  
Re-shed by us for many a memoried smart,  
Recall the threne of our dead hopes and fears.

Brantford, Ont.

RUYTER S. SHERMAN.

#### PARIS LETTER.

AT last the Chamber of Deputies has approached the Labour question. The subject could no longer be postponed. The proposed Bill, whose clauses have been in operation in England for many years, undertakes to deal with the employment of children, girls and women, in factories, mines, and workshops. M. Dumay, a leading Socialist, proposed to apply this check on overwork to shops and offices, which would be an addition of half a million more establishments for the Government to control. The Australian law, fixing eight hours daily as the normal work time, might anticipate a crowd of difficulties. Deputy Aynard enquired how the Government intended to apply the law if voted in those cases, now so common in Paris and Lyons, where a father is himself a little manufacturer, subscribes to a condensed air, steam, hydraulic, or electric factory, for the motive power to drive his machines at his own residence, and where all the members of the family work in common without counting the hours. The Chamber has decided to rank such a home as an ordinary factory, and the inspectors will have to make domiciliary visits. Except in very exceptional cases, women will not be allowed to work at night. The Chamber declined to sanction Sunday as the weekly day for rest. Shortening the hours of work means curtailing the family earnings. The family counts upon the employer or the State to recoup their loss. Breakers ahead!

M. Drumont, the leader of the anti-Israelite Crusade in France, declines to attend the anti-Semitic Congress at Berlin; not that he detests the Jews less, but that he dislikes the Prussians more. He wishes all the same the work of persecution good luck. M. Drumont wants two impossible things—in France at least; that the wealthy Israelites be bled pecuniarily, as white as the meat they eat, or reduced to the level of old clo' men; and that all Jews be compelled to wear a kind of badge to enable "shent per shent" gentiles, atheists, and materialists from rubbing against them in thoroughfares. Sufferance is still to be the badge of all the tribes—save the lost ones. It is singular that such *fin de siècle* views should be even current. Respecting the badge, it was France or rather Paris that first decreed that outward and visible sign for the Jews in the thirteenth century.

The Jewesses, the prettiest Jessicas not excepted, had to wear an oval veil, on which was stitched a piece of circular yellow stuff, a few inches in diameter, with a whole in the centre. Shylocks had to display a similar badge, either on the breast of their blouse, waistband, or in the hat. And this mark of infamy was to be worn as early as seven years for boys, and thirteen for girls. The penalty for appearing in public without the yellow sign was five sous per day; St. Louis increased it to ten, and Charles V. to twenty. If the law could be applied now, a handsome windfall could be secured for the Treasury. Philippe le