

imagination and invention that has produced more than one novelist. Yet further back Nature had spoken to him in his native Isle of Man in various tones. He had wandered by the sea and watched the storms that tossed the waves into furious unrest, and he had seen the stormy passions that toss the hearts of men. Always sensitively alive to the mystery and the force of the outward world he was equally open to the sense of mystery that encompasses the origin and end of human life. Nature and life were to him a picture on which he was never tired of gazing, and in his after life in the great city the background of his urban experiences was the rocky headlands, the wild seas, the murk and the sunshine of his island birthplace. Then came the world of London and literature, the friendship of poets, the revelling in what had already been written and painted and sung. He published a volume of poems in 1882. They were called "Sonnets of Three Centuries." "Cobwebs of Criticism" came out in 1883. But it was when "The Shadow of a Crime," "A Son of Hagar," and the "Deemster" were successively issued, that it became plain that he was by vocation a novelist. "The Manxman," which took everybody by storm last year, put the stamp of certainty on the growing conviction that he was a novelist of the first order.

How have these years of work, how has this success left him? It is one of the marks of his greatness that they have left him more interested in life, and in people, than in himself. His head is too big to be turned, even if his heart would allow of the process. He is a brother of mankind. He still hears the old mysterious symphonies, he still has a child's full-eyed wonder at the romance and surpassing interest of this romantic and interesting old world. So there is no bumptious narrowness about him, on the contrary the largest tolerance, pitifulness, joy, appreciation. He is the reverse of self-assertive, either in manner, voice, or gesture: but withal he has a sense of responsibility that wonderfully dignifies him. He is not merely a clever man, but his conviction that this is a moral universe, shines through every page he has written, and transfigures his daily life and conversation. I am aware that it is very high praise, and that these words may be taken as extravagant and enthusiastic panegyric, but it is my impression that Hall Caine would be considered great among his friends even if he had written no books. While some writers impress us with the idea that they are only the media through which some higher intelligence expresses itself, Caine makes you feel that it is he himself you want to know; though his books were blotted from memory. You feel this with regard to some other men of achievement, whether literary or administrative, but they are frequently icebergs—they never quite thaw. They are unable to communicate themselves. An impenetrable reserve and reticence ever and anon rises up that says *noli me tangere* as plainly as possible to the outside crowd. When they are winsome it is with a palpable effort. One cannot have too much pity for these imprisoned souls who can never quite disclose themselves. They can impart no magnetic thrill, and when they greet you, it is as if you grasped not a human hand but a mechanical contrivance. Hall Caine has none of that craven fear of close contact with humanity which is probably the basis of reserve. He is a friendly man, boldly frank, heartily sincere. He does not retire into his personal castle and pull down the blinds. On the contrary, he may be compared to the continental people who live *al fresco* and take tea on the boulevard.

Talk to the young fellows who have met him and you soon find how completely he has won their hearts by his engaging ways. But they recognize his greatness all the same. They do not wonder in the least that when he is announced to lecture in Britain the places are all taken up days before, and that there is often a crowd besieging the doors that can have only the faintest hope of finding standing room.

Caine's style is poetically and picturesquely great. Its grand simplicity enthralls far more than epigrammatic brilliance ever could. His are all heavy guns, there are no mere fireworks and blank cartridges. The sublime reality of his writings is like nature, and their broad effects are such as touch the heart's deeps. The story moves on with the dignity that always accompanies truly humane portraiture. You may be saddened by its weird gloom, but so you are by the blackness of the thundercloud. As for the pure art of the writing, it makes you read and re-read it, and you do not borrow the books, you buy them. There is a delicate force

and strength about them beside which many, not to say most novels, seem but frivolous and empty. Something of all this there is about the man when you see him. The leonine head with its mass of tawny soft hair thrown back from the expansive forehead; the expressive and sympathetic brown eyes wide open and far apart; the sensitive mouth and chin concealed by the expressive moustache and beard, the worn expression, somewhat sad, the kindly smile, the slight nervous figure, the delicate artist's hand—unmuscular but sympathetic, these are all familiar to us now, and they make up the salient points of a personality which has recently become very interesting to Canadians, because he whom they characterize has spoken to them in those pleasant tones of his, words that show them very plainly that he understands their aspirations, their passionate loyalty to the Mother Land and the disabilities and limitations under which they labour. He has come out here with a view to assist in settling the copyright difficulty, but it may well be counted that even if he be instrumental in a large degree in that important mission it will be but a small part of his service to the Dominion, for it is the ministrations of such as he that we need to make those at home acquainted with us. It was no wonder that when he returned from Morocco and wrote as he did of the condition of the Jews in that country, describing their state with a sympathetic lucidity which has rarely been surpassed, he should be at once designated by the Jewish Committee in London as the man of all others to go to Russia and portray the state of their brethren under the Muscovite rule. When I saw Mr. Caine the other day I asked him about his experiences on that arduous journey, undertaken at a time when cholera was abroad and travelling was surrounded with unusual dangers. I heard, in reply, some of the most interesting details I have ever listened to. They showed that he had been able, in a remarkable way, to appreciate and understand the conditions of life in Russia, to penetrate to its inner sentiments as well as to acquaint himself with its outward scope, and I could not help thinking that if this were the case with regard to people of another type and race, how much more favourable are the circumstances of his observations here. Britain has much to do in the way of understanding and acquainting herself with her Colonial children, and it may be affirmed that the services which such an observer as Hall Caine is able to render us in this regard may be of incalculable value.

There is a sentence in the "Deemster" that again and again comes to the mind of him who reads it. It is at the close of the chapter that tells of the killing of Parson Ewan by Dan Mylrea, and it runs thus: "The blind leading that is here of passion by accident is everywhere that great tragedies are done. It is not the evil in a man's heart, more than the deep perfidy of circumstance that brings him to crime." This exemplifies that recognition of the outside forces amid which a man's life is tossed about which runs through much of what Caine has written. It is a recognition to be found also in Shakespeare, in Browning, in George Eliot and in all writers who have painted for us with any discernment the complex drama of human life. At the present juncture we may perhaps be permitted to turn the hard saying about, and to say that the blind leading of benevolent impulses by accident is everywhere that beneficent works are done. It is not the good in man's heart more than the happy combination of circumstance that brings him to auspicious action. The happy accident of a somewhat bewildered and bewildering copyright law has brought Hall Caine to Canada, than which, in some respects, nothing more strange ever happened in the history of a writer of imaginative literature. This business must be contrary to his bent, and repugnant to his taste. To be learning by rote a mass of dry statutory information and attempting to digest the statistical instruction with which he has been favoured by a number of advisers since he set foot on our shores must be far from desirable to one who is accustomed to live in the realms of fancy and amid the creatures of his poetic imagination. The more credit is due to him for the vigour with which he has buckled to his work. We will hope, however, that the fate that placed this matter of business in his hands and sent him hither with it, will lead to such an interpretation of our spirit and life as a people, as may still further cement the bonds of affection and loyalty that bind us to the Empire, and lead to the journeying hither of hosts of those for whom our splendid resources of land and life furnish ample room and verge enough.

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