

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN.



O many; so discordant, so extravagant are the human cries that it is no matter for surprise if the wise ones of earth, whose great aim would seem to show that they, thank ever so many powers! are not human, are prone to hoist their righteouseye brows at the least intimation of a plea for the human. Argument with these de-humanized, *i.e.* inhuman members of the great family, is out of the question. Let us ignore them *in toto*, and lend a sympathetic ear to some of these cries of the human, to one let us say. And without further begging of the question let us say that what interests us just now is the human cry for *Romance*. Yes "grave and venerable signors," solemn and super-human matrons, preternaturally wise youth and maiden. *Romance* is the theme: not the lack-a-daisical moon-shiney serio-comic extravagance most people of to-day take for such, but the ideal possibilities and impossibilities that have inspired the Artist since Art began to be spoken of among the children of men, the idealism that has warmed the heart, illumined the soul and guided the hand of poet, painter and sculptor from Homer to Tennyson, from Apelles to Millet, from Phidias to Canova, *ave*, and from Cervantes to Hall Caine! The magic word would lead us far and high were we to yield to a desire of proving its divine right of existence. Everywhere limiting its meaning and its powers to the novel we shall escape the danger attending an undertaking a thousand times exceeding our ability of execution. Those whose starboard eye has been directed correctly on the phases of thought during the past fifty years must see, unless said eye has contracted one of the many optical diseases of these times, that there has been what might be called a complete face about in ever so many things, novels not excepted, indeed in novels especially, so complete has been the reversal of taste or judgment or caprice that it becomes a matter of serious query for the wide awake on-looker to see how it came about.

Has any great revolution any other

prime cause than a great abuse? The Philosophers of History will not say no to this question; even if they do, the truth is there and no where else. A great abuse requires a great remedy, and revolution is the extreme remedy. Have there been great abuses in this world of fiction as in the world of reality? alas, that there should be so many jarring yet undeniable responses to this question! No need to sully these pages with the names of the *sans-culottes*, and scarlet republicans, whose pens have done more harm than the horrible guillotine of another revolution not yet ended. But it is with a sense of awakening from a horrid nightmare that we hear the strong, clear voice of unsold humanity asking for the healthy food, the inspiring, refreshing draught that is all the sweeter and all the more invigorating that we were sick unto death with the nauseous food and drink served out to us as sustenance. In other words the repulsive realism concocted by the French caterers and clumsily imitated by their infatuated German and English brothers has reached the climax of exaggeration: hence its day is over and though we still want and always will want our fiction true, we want no more nastiness, no more *terre a terre* pastime for our immortal souls. The protest has been sounding all these years, from every refined and spiritualized, *i.e.* from every Christian, reader, but it was like the "cry of one in the wilderness" there seemed no hope, because there was only a cry, "a voice and nothing more," but now we have a protest, though of one individual,* voicing what, all through this period of Zolaism and a few other isms, has been uttered with deepening pathos and most hopeful earnestness by the healthy section of the world.

And in proof that the protest is resonable, Mr. Caine has given us two novels very recently that show that all isms of the whole modern era have not prevailed over the true instincts of humanity; he has dared to take us out of London and Paris gambling resorts, out of the

*Hall Caine, in the *Contemporary Review*, April 1890.