

reader; of Louisa Alcott and those "little women" that were so naturally interesting, and, to make a little descent, of "The Duchess," with her ever charming "Molly Bawn;" Augusta J. Evans Wilson, and her way of making her heroes incarnations of some tolerably maleficent demon only that the good fairy heroine may eventually angelify him; of May Agnes Fleming, who being dead yet writeth, and the rest.

Now, in most of these, except George Eliot's and Miss Yonge's, the moral and moralizing faculties continually get the supremacy over artistic feeling. The fact that character is a shadow of our past life, that we ourselves are not an instantaneous fabric, so to speak, but an organism with an historical basis; that actions are fateful things, that as a man sows so shall he reap—these and kindred truths are not permitted to reach us in that most direct and artistic and divine way, the gradual evolution of character, but each important step and decision is liable to be taken out and labelled, "This was destined to cast a dark shadow over the once happy life," or "The time would come when in bitter sackcloth of repentance and ashes of remorse he would bewail his miserable weakness and error," etc.

Such writing in some hands degenerates into a preaching of pet ideas and breeds readers of a sanguinary disposition, who thirst for gore, and who, analogously to the spectators in the Roman amphitheatre who, when roused, invariably turned their thumbs downward in condemnation of the poor defeated gladiator and wanted fresh horrors, seek new excitement in books that only a little greater literary polish distinguishes from the dime novel.

Now, men are not so apt to talk in this way. The characters act out their own life and preach silently, so to speak. Another department might be referred to in this hurriedly written essay—that of translation. Lately there have been some noteworthy translations from other European languages in which women have shown all their delicate perceptions of meaning to best advantage.

A summing up, then, would be—delicacy and fineness of treatment of topics already somewhat prepared; exquisite feeling in language; tendency to moralize in a way prejudicial to artistic harmony; sympathetic and worthy translations; and, lastly, incalculable possibilities.

LOVE MISSPENT.

A lovely maid,
Gaily arrayed
In sweetest smiles and fine attire,
To college came
For love of fame:
Such thoughts alone her soul inspire.

A student bright
With great delight
Her graceful form one day espied;
And Cupid's dart
Soon pierced his heart:
Anon for her alone he sighed.

But now grown bold,
His love he told
Before this maid on bended knee;
And she ne'er sighed,
But quick replied
Thus to the student-lover's plea:

"I'll tell you true—
'Tis but your due—
Such thoughts are quite beyond my ken;
Hither I came
For love of fame,
But not, forsooth, for love of men."

MENDORE

LETTER LEGACIES.

(Continued.)

June 12th, 188—

MY DEAR G.—

I did not expect that you would have spoken in such a manner of our literature. But your own literary ambitions never looked to Canada for support and consummation, and as you have never tried the Canadian public with high-standard verse you are not in the best position to judge by a hasty condemnation. For myself, who have neither the genius to inspire nor the independence to execute these high-class conceptions, I can judge in a different, perhaps in a more impartial spirit. The subject for consideration is not the question that has presumptuously been asked, "Has Canada produced a poet?" but more mournful and conclusive, "Why has Canada not produced a poet, and why will Canada, as she now exists, never beget and maintain singers aspiring even to a semi-immortality of fame?" I start, you see, from a true and incontestable assertion, with a sad wealth of material from which to draw as pessimistic conclusion as it may please me. There are two most evident causes of our failure in the past, which shall be, in time to come, the two most inspiring elements of the national poems. Our political system is not even dead-and-alive; it is hopelessly dead and decayed as far as concerns immediate inspiration. There are three questions abroad and present to every thinking mind, each of which strikes at the root of our present system of government. Imperial Federation, Independence, and Annexation are each accepted by their several adherents as not only certain of speedy fulfilment, but as the only summit of national happiness and prosperity. No one outside of the ministers in power dreams or desires that Canada should continue to stagnate in poverty under the principles that confederation established. The United States, on the other hand are working surely towards an end which is never overpast, but always followed with hope and pursued with ever increasing prosperity without a prospect of the disastrous pause and change of direction that even a peaceful revolution would produce. It is true that I am taking an unique case in the history of the world; for the United States inaugurated political principles which have hardly wavered from a definite and most true end since their first adoption; and with this people all past hesitation has only resulted in an increase of power and independence. With them alone of all countries in the world can poetry inform politics with a purity of intention and bend it from all base ends. There the assembled poets of the land sang forth to the nation their fierce denunciation of slavery; and there in his America of democracy can Walt Whitman chant those grand political choruses which must move him who hears aright.

But with us the trade of politics is timid, tentative and confined. We work in vain; for if the signs be true our present state cannot outlast the most aged dying generation, and some impending and momentous change will annihilate all the labours of those who do not work with desire to hasten destiny, and precipitate the change that future histories will moralize upon forever. We are hangers-on of England. Our systems are not sprung of the desires of the people, but of the fear of some and of the indifference of others. They are wholly imitative, and in part dependent. So cruel are they to all spiritual effort that genius spurns the Canadian soil as readily as the Canadian public ignores genius. And to conclude quickly, Canada must annex, or break all bonds in peace with England. The Atlantic is a cold, cold connecting medium, and is strong only because in our infantility it links us to the distant rumour of a land that possesses a good navy and a crown. Canada is at present famous because a native is prospective champion oarsman of the world, Greece and all, while Greece, who only grows ponds, possesses Homer and many immortals beside.

The second cause conflicting with a poetic birth, and you may challenge the assertion, I am convinced arises from our possession of immense uncultivated areas of land which, because they demand intense and prolonged manual activity for their development, cannot produce a race inclined to sympathy with a literature striving to struggle into existence