

We should now advert to the symptoms which led others, more sanguine or better-informed students of France, to the conviction that she was sound at heart.

First of all one ought to remember that a country cannot be judged exclusively, or even mainly, by its literature. Literature is not so artificial as the theatre, because its field is wider, but it is far, all the same, from being the adequate expression of a community. The fact is that the bulk of the French nation was ignorant of, or averse to, the philosophy implied in the literature which scandalized the rest of the world. Foreigners who happened to stay in Paris—to say nothing of less sophisticated towns—long enough to see with their own eyes frequently expressed their surprise at finding the French home so different from the descriptions of the novelists. It took more time or more penetration to satisfy oneself that the affectation of scepticism or cynicism common in certain circles was only an affectation which any opportunity for seriousness could dispel; yet some people had a chance of coming to that certainty, and must have taken it as a matter of course when Zola came forward as a champion of morals, or more recently when Anatole France spoke up for patriotism: books were books and life was life—give a man a chance to rise above the dalliances of literature and he would be sure to act decently.

Still, literature is in one way a necessity. At a pinch a man will act on his impulses, and books will have but little share in his decisions; but in more peaceful periods our intellect craves formulas, and according to the tendency visible in such formulas a country will, in its daily life, make for idealism or for materialism, for courage or for indulgence. If there had been no