

out of Shakespeare the text will bleed : it is much the same with Bjornson. His characters are like the wild flowers that grow in his native valleys, each lending to each till the whole field is full of beauty and delicious fragrance. They deserve a better fate than to be torn from the perfect setting their creator has given them for the instruction or amusement of the passer-by. Each of his characters, whether strong or weak, pure or tarnished, great or small, each and all are, where they are, for a purpose. They are a part of the created design, and that design is only perfect when the last page is finished and the book is closed. Some may prefer the pocket camera novels which certain men are enabled to write by exposing the sensitive plates of their minds to the narrow existence which lies around them, and then reproducing exact copies of it. For my own part, I prefer the work of men who study the shifting scenes of life from a higher standpoint than its own level, and whose every creation is filled with a great purpose to benefit mankind. I am aware that for some years back there has been a little coterie of influential writers for the press who have used their best efforts in the endeavor to persuade the public that in the judgment of all orthodox critics romanticism and all the beautiful ideals which are its children are dead, and a newer and purer realism is the only living force in the literature of to-day, and is the watchword for that in the future. Now this a question wide as literature itself. Though there is not sufficient opportunity in a paper like the present to discuss the matter adequately, I shall not pass it by in silence, lest my so doing might give the impression that I assented to the truth of their assertion. I do not assent to it, nor accept it in any sense whatever.

I feel very strongly that it is utterly false, and if the error obtain a hold it will be fatal, not only to the production of good literature, but will also

prevent the appreciation of good literature by the public at large. But first let me say that when I use the words realism and idealism it is as having their ordinary and well-understood meanings. I take it that thus used realism, as applied to fiction, is the doctrine of the superior importance of the real facts of life ; that is, the reproduction of actual life utterly devoid of any striving for romance, poetry, or uncommon incidents and situations. Idealism, I take it, is the doctrine of the superiority of ideal creations over the facts of life. For some years past the realists have been constantly proclaiming that they studied facts, plain, naked facts, and that from these materials and these alone, they were going to build a literature which would affect the life and conduct of the race more potently than any the world had yet seen. And what has been the result ? Any one acquainted with the French literature of the times will have already answered the question. I do not care to discuss such characters as Fanny LeGrand and Sidonie, or the numerous train of satyrs which Zola pictures so vividly in such works as *La Terre* ; they are characters with whom, I am glad to say, we have nothing in common, and from whom I think we have nothing to learn. I had rather spend an hour with the Philosopher of the Attic, for I think the little book which brought Emile Souvestre a crown in the French Academy has more of good for the race in it than all the Sapphos ever written. But why has French literature reached its present state ? Why do we experience such a feeling of chill and gloom after reading such works as Gogol's *Dead Souls*, or Turgeneff's *Liza* ? not though by any means to class them with the French school. I believe the latter writer is perhaps the healthiest and most honest of realists, and the pessimism which casts so profound a shadow over his work is more readily traceable to French influence, especially to Flau-