

"My master," replied Gurth, "*will take naught from the Templar save his life's-blood. They are on terms of mortal defiance, and cannot hold courteous intercourse together.*"

We hear readers repeatedly praising favorite passages of their favorite authors by saying: "That is good because it is so true to life. These are the exact words that he or she would have used in actual life," assuming that they have thereby paid their author the highest tribute. But is it the author's or the artist's aim to reproduce the exact words of his characters? Examining the two passages quoted above with this question in our minds we are at once surprised at the remarkable difference. The former has the characteristic diction, phraseology and tone of ordinary colloquial speech; the latter, though we have perhaps read it many times without noticing anything remarkable in its style, has when we examine it closely a diction, a phraseology and tone that is very far removed from that of ordinary colloquial speech. To indicate the distinction more clearly I have written in italics the words and phrases in the first passage that *are* characteristic of ordinary actual discourse; in the second passage I have indicated in a similar way words and phrases that are *not* characteristic of ordinary actual discourse.

And now to feel the effect repeat the marked passages in the first extract several times and listen to them closely. The conversation is between a minister and his wife regarding their boy and his school life, "He hates his school," "Well, I don't wonder at that," "Well, I don't wonder at that." Repeat this several times and listen to it, "in that kind of a school." "The boys are *just* wasting their time." We would strike out that word "just" from any fifth grade boy's composition. "I am not going to put up with those chits of girls any longer." This when we repeat it several times calls us back to our early school days with Mr. Rich. Read it all over several times and listen and you cannot help but feel how trite, commonplace and flat it is. Yet here the author has been true to the actual words of his character in conversation. That is the characteristic of the whole passage.

Now look at the second passage. The conversation is between a swineherd and a robber. I have here marked the words and phrases that evidently could not have been used by the actual speakers in such a discourse. It might be remarked in passing that the selection in this case was made originally by the students in the first form of the high school while studying a number of selections in order to discover what an author's aim really was. Notice the language attributed to the swineherd. "It is his pleasure," "*assuredly* you will learn *naught* of them," "might *reveal* my master's," "by his good lance," "will take *naught* from the Templar *save* his life's-blood," "on terms of mortal defiance," "courteous intercourse." This is not surely the actual language of the swineherd, "the born thrall of Cedric the Saxon," and yet though Gurth is perhaps as familiar an acquaintance of the Anglo-Saxon world as his prototype Eumæus was to the Greek world, it is quite probable that few have ever noticed anything unnatural in his conversation here.

The difference in the passages chosen is still more remarkable when we remember that the latter is a conversation between a swineherd and a robber in the