

lack of those characteristics which are apt to exert deep influence on future song. Whether they have adequately stamped themselves on the mass of their fellow-countrymen is quite another question. For instance, we see no trace of Whittier upon the new verse, yet undoubtedly his influence has been wide and deep on American life and sentiment.

We may omit discussion, therefore, of Stoddard and of Bayard Taylor; as well as of the essayist-poets Lowell and Stedman, the former of whom is less a master in his verse than in his prose, while the latter, speaking to us as our wisest critic of song, proves his title to this office, now and again, by the production of a perfect lyric. Passing over, also, a later poet, Mr. Aldrich, whose standing has been fully secured to him, whose gem-like richness and elaborate art have long been widely recognized, we come at last to what may be considered as distinctively the younger school. The most prominent members of this are:—Joaquin Miller, Edgar Fawcett, Sidney Lanier, Richard Watson Gilder, Charles de Kay, Miss Ellen Mackay Hutchinson, H. H. Boyesen, Maurice Thompson, F. S. Saltus, Starr H. Nichols, Miss Edith M. Thomas, with others who may be referred to later.

I have mentioned here the name of Miss Thomas, although as far as I am aware her poems are not yet gathered in book form, and are therefore only to be obtained, few in number, by gleaning from the magazines and periodicals. Yet so red-blooded are these verses, of thought and of imagination all compact, so richly individual and so liberal in promise, that the name of their author is already become conspicuous. Miss Thomas's work, in some of its best characteristics, recalls to me Shakspeare's sonnets. We are justified in expecting much from her genius.

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ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE BRIBERY CASE.

MR. ARMOUR's thoughtful paper on the Bribery Case has opened for discussion some interesting questions in ethics. It is well worthy of consideration whether the means taken for the detection of the offence were justifiable, and, upon the whole, the best that could be adopted in the interest of morals.

Let it be granted, as to which there can be no dispute among honest men of whatever political opinion, that the transaction was one tending grievously to lower the tone of public morality, and to bring serious and lasting discredit upon the whole community; then it follows that the Government was not only justified by the instinct of self-preservation, but also bound in the interest of public morals to take such steps as would insure the offenders being brought to justice and prevent the failure of justice through any defect in the evidence. To have brought the charge and to have failed in the proof would have been, politically, disaster to the Government, and (assuming the charge to be true in fact,) it would have been morally a defeat of right and a triumph of wrong.

Again, if the members approached had contented themselves with indignantly declining the bribe and kicking the person who offered it down stairs the offence, no doubt, would have been complete, but the punishment would have been entirely inadequate. Had such a course been adopted, can any one seriously believe that exposure of the conspiracy, the due punishment of the offenders, or the prevention of like attempts in the future, would have been the result? If the matter had come to light at all, would it not have been merely in the shape of a few nights' sensational debates in the Local House and a few days' scurrilous articles in the city dailies? The attempt would have been denied or explained away by the alleged offenders, and the whole affair would have proved but a nine days' wonder—a result widely inconsistent with the theory of morals and the object of criminal law, and a heavy blow and great discouragement to the moral instincts and sentiments of the community.

But it is suggested that by the means adopted to secure the detection of the alleged offenders, the persons approached not only trifled with and jeopardized their own honour, but created and procured the commission of the offence. The latter charge seems entirely contrary to the evidence, inasmuch as it clearly appears that the first overtures were made by the bribers. As to the former, while it may be conceded that there are men whom even the boldest briber would not dare to approach, it does not follow that a man is regardless of his honour because, in order to promote the ends of justice, or on some special emergency, he permits it to be temporarily placed in an ambiguous position. Or to take the illustration offered by Mr. Armour, circumstances may be imagined in which it might be needful and commendable for a woman to allow herself to be placed, for a time, in circumstances of apparently doubtful propriety in order to ensure the conviction of an offender and the protection of herself and others against the repetition of disgraceful overtures, and her fair fame should sustain no damage. Self-preservation is an instinct of

nature and a moral duty, yet occasions not unfrequently arise when that instinct and duty must give way to some paramount affection or obligation.

On the whole, it is safe to say that by the course adopted in this case such a beacon and a barrier have been raised against the repetition of the offence that the like will not be attempted for generations to come, in Canada—a wholesome result which, it is also safe to say, would not have been effected if the game had been merely blocked, if it had been simply checked by a point blank refusal, which Mr. Armour mildly proposes as the appropriate remedy. Supposing the Ministry and Messrs. McKim and Balfour to have been actuated by a sincere desire to stamp out for the future all similar attempts, and, so far, to bring about a more satisfactory condition of morals, no more effectual measures could have been adopted.

While, as Mr. Armour sententiously remarks, it is subjecting morals to grave risks to incite to the offence of bribery, it may confidently be submitted that if the offence were permitted to go unhindered, undetected, unpunished, the risk to the common-weal would be of much wider extent and far graver import.

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CHARLES READE.

THERE is no writer of the Victorian era whose just place in letters it is more difficult to assign than the distinguished novelist who died last week in London. Contemporary with such great masters as Dickens, Thackeray, Bulwer, Disraeli, and George Eliot, he won for himself a place and a name in the very teeth of his rivals' achievements. The same causes—the inbred hatred of cant and tyranny, the whole-souled love of manliness and truth—which inspired Dickens to expose the “Squeers” and “Pecksniffs” of a past day impelled Reade to tear the masks off sham insane doctors and brutal jailors. It is a question if his extreme humanitarian views and impulsiveness did not, to a considerable extent, mar him as a writer. Though his greatest admirers would not claim that Mr. Reade was a genius, he had a ready command of dramatic language, was often epigrammatic in style, and charmed his readers by an intuitive grasp of every-day thought, and life and feeling, and by a magical power of portraying men and women that lived and loved and struggled. His books are full of human nature, and are perceptibly the work of an earnest social reformer. Indeed, it is probably owing to the latter fact that they have been called “pamphlets.” Few persons have read “Peg Woffington,” “Never Too Late to Mend,” “Hard Cash,” or “Put Yourself in His Place”—representative books—without loving his heroines, admiring his earnest men, hating his shams. He sometimes lacked polish of expression, but his sincerity was ever so manifest that he was sure of present forgiveness. When something of import was to be said—when a corrupt institution was to be destroyed—he wrote with a pen dipped in gall, and struck sledge-hammer blows at abuses. He selected subjects of the day, the hour, and was keen of scent for scandals and wrongs. In his “Cloister and the Hearth,” however, he gives a graphic account of life on the continent in the sixteenth century, in a style not unworthy of comparison with Scott. His readers loved him for his fearlessness and devotion to purpose, and were fascinated by passionate language which at the same time conveyed a sense of the very manner in which the turbulent blood danced through the writer's veins under the excitement of some generous and often ill-regulated sympathy. His later works seemed to indicate that, in the absence of any soul-stirring impulses—or perhaps owing to the hallowing influences of age—he paid more attention to literary finish than to dramatic effect, a modification which proved somewhat disastrous to his reputation, for the public attributed the change to failing powers. But in “Hard Cash” and “Never Too Late to Mend”—both of which were dramatized with considerable success—Mr. Reade has demonstrated his claim to a foremost place in the ranks of modern novelists.

In temperament Charles Reade was hasty, fiery. Certainly he frequently quarrelled with his contemporaries. Physically he was tall, thin, light-complexioned, with a natural *brusquerie* that would occasionally proclaim its presence. He is said to have left copious notes for a biography, but whoever edits them will have an unenviable task in dealing with some of the extraordinary stories told about him. He had been ill for some time before his decease, and had just returned from Cannes, where he sought relief from the bronchitis which so long troubled him, and was the ultimate cause of his death at the age of seventy. As indicative of the earnestness and perseverance of his character, it may not be uninteresting to recall an incident the outcome of which fully justifies “Hard Cash.” A few years since, the inmate of an insane asylum died and was buried. Reade was not satisfied with the affair. He immediately