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**IT NEEDS TO BE SAID...**

**BY**

# FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE

*Author of "Our Daily Bread".*

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# A NEGLECTED FUNCTION OF A CERTAIN LITERARY ASSOCIATION

[1]



It is only natural that a nascent literature, arising in a young country which is on every hand surrounded by older civilizations, should, from a spirit of self-assertion, emphasize those features, conditions, mental and spiritual attitudes which distinguish its life and its nationals from those of other and older countries. The spirit of youth is hope; its driving force is confidence in its own powers; its reaction to life is that of an unbounded optimism. This country has a future, a great future; and whether that future is going to be one of mere wealth, or of a mere purveyor of raw materials, will depend to a large extent upon ourselves. Yet, you say, we feel the strength of our muscles, the vigour of our enterprise: what should spring from it but glory and prosperity and happiness? We feel competent to cope with any problem. So long as that spirit, that confidence, that optimism are naive and unsophisticated, they are perfectly legitimate. But are they? Is there not a pose in much that is being said along these lines? Is not the boast of our youth often deliberately assumed to cloak a deplorable impotence?

That this is a young country is, of course, perfectly true. Manitoba, my home province, is, as a political unit, scarcely older than myself. I know people still living who came to Winnipeg when the present great city was a village with a handful of inhabitants—a marvel of development. Even those who may not unreservedly approve of the direction which this development has taken cannot but admire its swiftness and resistless strength—in spite of the fact that it is by no means the first time in the history of colonial settlements that such a marvel of development has taken place. As I have said, it remains but natural that this young country should feel like David before the battle with the Philistine.

But it is also true that, mentally and spiritually, this young nation forms a mere bud on the larger growth of the great Anglo-Saxon Empire. Many of us came to this country saturated with the spiritual achievements of the older parts of that Empire, saturated with the great British tradition; many others imbued themselves with that tradition as their true intellectual and spiritual food—by studying its policies, its thought, and its marvellous literature, unequalled or at least unexcelled by that of any other of the younger nations of Europe as opposed to those which we call ancient.

This great Anglo-Saxon tradition forms one of the directing and living influences at work on our literature in the making. It has this in common with the other great traditions of Europe that, being born from a blending of the greatest artistic urge which the world has seen, that of ancient Greece, with the greatest religious urge which the world has seen, that of Judah, its aim is still that of a final evaluation of life; of a recognition of man's true place in nature; of a determination of the balance, so far attained, between man's beasthood and man's godhead.

Over against this determining influence of a literature sprung from the mother civilization stands a newer, younger, accessory influence which, in spite of its newness and its accessory nature—from its purely accidental geographical and chronological nearness and immediacy—is exceedingly powerful: the influence of a materialistic, mechanistic, almost brutal spirit which tries either to ignore deeper problems or to solve them by the power of force or gold; a spirit which at the present moment flouts its very origins by attacks insensate in their fury: attacks on puritanism and all spiritual seriousness, in fact, on everything that made it what at one time in its history it was. What this national spirit of the larger sister nation, the spirit of shallow optimism, of a narrow, mistaken, fanatical patriotism—it calls the object of its eulogies the "champion nation of the world"—what this spirit has, during the last generation, produced as the expression of itself, in the form of a literature, is there for everyone to see who has eyes to look and ears to listen below the surface.

Not, of course, that within a great nation like the United States, there is not even now a reaction and an attempt at a revision of its standards. The fact remains that, to a first, searching look—I mean, of course, into what the majority of United States Americans read—there is revealed an almost unconditional adoration of a purely external success in life: the two topics which, in a hundred thousand milieus and disguises, United States fiction seems to recognize, with few exceptions, being success in "business" and the winning, by the man, of the girl: both topics, in a wider view of the Greek, Hebraic, and Anglo-Saxon traditions, which seem profoundly uninteresting, ephemeral, inessential. For what, in a deeper sense, does economic success or, in other words, a high standard of living mean? What but that we have fed our transient appetites with costly foods—or that we have been, as Sallustius says of Catilina, "addicted to the belly"?[2]

There are, of course, many other influences at work on our slowly shaping, specifically Canadian literature; but I believe I am right when I say that these two are preponderant. Which of them is going to carry the victory?

Will you permit me to be perfectly frank? During the few decades preceding the last I have made five trips to various countries in Europe, to England, Sweden, France, Germany, and Italy; the last time in 1909. In all of these various countries I have friends, nearly all of them engaged in the work of writing, nearly all of them engaged in what I personally consider the good fight; nearly all of them viewing the phenomena observable in any given country from the wider view-point of a leadership on earth of the white race, as opposed to the leadership of this or that special nation within that race. Most of them call themselves "Good Europeans"—"*de bons Européens*". Is not that in itself significant? America is left out of their consideration. Not because, culturally, it is a mere bridgehead of Europe; but because, in a deeper sense, they consider America as not yet grown-up, as not yet having faced the true, the fundamental problems of human life—those problems which someone, perhaps half ironically, has called the "great commonplaces"; those commonplaces which, in the last resort, make up the topics of all really great creations in the realm of art.

Well, what about Canada? I remember a conversation with a French writer of world repute. In refutation of something he had said I remarked, "America is a continent, not a country." "*Ah, oui*", he replied with a deprecating smile, "*vous êtes Canadien*—you are a Canadian. But then," he added after a slight pause, "permit me to use your very words. Culturally, America is a country, not a continent." To me, this was profoundly revealing. He meant, of course, that, in the eye of the European, there is no difference between the United States and Canada. There may be trifling differences of a political or economic nature, or of an administrative nature—inessential, trivial, temporary differences; but, in the sense of, for instance, literary expression, if such a difference exists, it is negligible; it is imperceptible to the eye from a geographical distance. Why should that be? Vast is the difference in that respect between Norway and France; yes, between Norway and Sweden; between Germany and the southern peninsulas of the European continent.

Please observe that I do not give you these remarks as my own opinion. They represent the opinion of another who, however, in my humble view, is competent to judge—from a distance; that is, superficially.

Now it goes without saying that in all countries and at all times there is a literature of the day, concerned only with the task of supplying a more or less illiterate public with reading matter for sale. This reading matter, as far as the author is concerned, serves only one single purpose, to supply him with the means which buy the ease of life. Naturally, then, such an author will exploit recognized and generally acknowledged sentiments; he will use forms which have been proved to appeal to the general taste; he will carefully avoid saying the only thing which he at bottom should say, namely that which only *he* can say and with which it would perhaps take the public a few years or a few decades or a few centuries to catch up. As far as the public is concerned, such reading matter serves the same purpose which most of the appliances of what we call our great material civilization serve, namely the purpose of killing its time and of insuring it against the one thing needful, yet the one thing which, to an observer from distant climes or times, we all seem to dread more than anything else, namely the being alone with ourselves and the facing of the fundamental facts of our lives.

The situation is, of course, slightly complicated by the publisher who, as a middleman, stands between public and author. An English writer once answered a question of mine as to why, having certain things to say of which he had told me during a long walk on the chalk cliffs of Dover, he had never said them and, instead, had put forth book after book of fantastic ineptitudes—he answered, I say, this question by the—to me—astonishing remark that his publishers demanded something in the vein of....; and he named a book of his which had "sold" by the hundred thousand. I have sometimes flattered myself with the very probably mistaken idea that, if this English writer has since produced two or three books which will endure beyond the day, for a little immortality of two or three decades, it might just be that in my profound amazement he glimpsed the fact that there may be a recognition worth more than the enormous notoriety which he derived from the highly profitable sale of his pot-boilers which were and are the derision of those who know what sort of thing he was capable of.

Few publishers anywhere are interested in the value of a book; though there are a few. But even those who are interested frankly and exclusively in its saleability are just as fallible in judging that saleability as anyone else; and that holds good of all publishers no matter what country or period we select for examination; for publishers, even as business men, are naturally only fallible humans.

But every publisher thinks he knows what the public wants; and so the enslavement of the publisher by an imaginary public and the enslavement of the author who allows himself to be enslaved—both of which have existed since there has been a publishing trade—have become general. But never, in the history of letters, has that double enslavement been so universal and absolute and so cynically proclaimed as it has been in the United States of America during the last fifty years, up to a comparatively very recent time when a marked improvement has set in. When that imaginary public was

found not to exist, it had to be created; and thus the art of advertising was called in; which art is, properly speaking, the art of making the public buy what it does not want and persuading it at the same time that it wanted that very thing. There is a serious side to this situation; for the taste of no general reading public has, to my way of thinking, ever become so degraded as that of the general reading public of the United States of the last fifty years.

In fact, when I look for the most striking difference between English and American literature during the half century from, let me say 1870 to 1920, I find nothing quite so significant as the number of English writers of the first importance who, regardless of immediate recognition, laboured on in comparative obscurity and poverty, ceaselessly and strictly endeavouring to express just what they had to say—a thing the public, so it seemed, would not hear and yet at last has heard. I will mention only three names: Thomas Hardy, George Meredith, Algernon Swinburne. Between these and the great names of an hour or a year, since forgotten, there stand innumerable others who exhibit a mixture of that eternal and heroic spirit of humanity and the commercial spirit of every age in countless shades of gradation. There is, for instance, Arnold Bennett who, to save his immortal soul, wrote *The Old Wives' Tale* and *These Twain*; but who, to feed his mortal body and to buy high-powered motor cars, wrote countless other books that are like chaff before the wind. And let me add that nobody can serve two masters; nobody can first "make his pile" and then create the things that mirror his uniquely-fashioned soul. It has been tried again and again; and nobody has ever succeeded in doing it. Even Bennett, perhaps the most gifted among all those who have ever served Mammon, has had to realize that the taint of the one sort of work carries over into the other.

If, next, I look into American literature, I find very little of that tenacity of purpose, of that contempt for mere notoriety which distinguished Hardy and Meredith—that is to say, since Hawthorne, Thoreau, Emerson have been dead. In Thoreau's diaries there is a passage in which he says, "I have now a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over seven hundred of which I wrote myself." For he had to buy back his *Week* from the publishers because it did not "sell"; yet to-day it is being printed in many cheap editions to satisfy the demand of those who know. He adds, in the above passage, "Is it not well that the author should behold the fruits of his labour?... This is authorship; these are the work of my brain... I believe that this result is more inspiring and better for me than if a thousand had bought my wares. It affects my privacy less and leaves me freer."<sup>[3]</sup> And perhaps it is precisely because he could take that stand that he lives to-day when his freedom can no longer be trammelled. But then, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Emerson stood in the great English tradition, not in any American one; in fact, they have hardly yet been assimilated in the country of their birth.

"This, indeed," says Hazlitt in the eighth lecture on the English poets, "is one test of genius and of real greatness of mind, whether a man can patiently and calmly wait for the award of posterity, satisfied with the unwearied exercise of his faculties, retired within the sanctuary of his thoughts; or whether he is eager to forestall his own immortality and mortgage it for newspaper stuff." One of the strangest things to me is how rarely, to-day, we bear the word posterity.

But I fear I am wearying you. I started out to say that there is a function of this association which, in addition to the one for which it was founded, it might well assume and which, from my short experience as a member, it has perhaps not fully assumed so far. This association is a Canadian one; that is, in contradistinction to similar associations in the United States of America, it is recruited entirely from British North America, the affiliation of which is still with the mother country on the western edge of Europe. It is concerned with Canadian Literature which so far has been a bud on the tree of the great Anglo-Saxon tradition. Let it, then, always uphold that tradition in which achievement ranks higher than success. Let its members create a new spirit on American soil—new and yet old: the spirit of those who can patiently wait "for the award of posterity".

I realize that the spirit of the age militates against such a tendency. Among ourselves, as in the great nation to the south of us, there is a tremendous urge for immediacy of reward; there is a fierce fight for recognition; the moment is all; we little care for that which will endure. But if, in a truly national economy, there is a function for the writer, it is that of taking the long view of things, not the short one. Business men and exploiters of the material wealth of the country we have galore; politicians there are, the gods of the day. They "have their reward". But the writer, if he wants to be true to a god-given trust and a god-imposed task, by the mere fact that a book is something not so readily produced or destroyed, must take a long view and not work hastily. "*Nonum prematur in annum.*" If he does, he will be able to earn the admiration of the world to come, on those very grounds on which Euripides, in Aristophanes' comedy, claims an honoured place in the commonwealth for the artist, namely "for his skill, his good counsel, and because he makes men better in their cities". After all it is he who, on a wide view of things, has in the past, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus expressed it, "made gentle the ways of the world".

In the reports of the activities of this or that local branch of this association I find now and then an admonition put forth by one of its members and addressed to the others to spare no effort in order to have as many articles, poems, short stories, plays, novels printed as possible; I should like to see and hear almost the contrary admonition: *Nonum prematur in annum!* Hesitate, delay; boil down, concentrate, perfect; above all, swim against the current in order to strengthen your muscles! Never say what he who listens wants to hear: he has heard that before, in the voice of his weakness; say what you have to say with your strength; say it again and again till the strength of the listener hears it and responds. I should like to see imprinted above the entrance of every room in which the members of this association meet these words borrowed once more from Hazlitt, "Genius is the heir of fame; but the hard condition on which the bright reversion must be earned is the loss of life. Fame is the recompense not of the living but the dead." Or these, "Fame is not popularity, the shout of the multitude, the idle buzz of fashion, the soothing flattery of favour or of friendship; but it is the spirit of a man surviving himself in the minds and thoughts of other men, undying and imperishable."

I have said at the outset that, apart from our own, special, and personal interests, we have, or should have, that common interest which we may summarize in the words Canadian Literature.

Whether, in any given book of fiction, let me say, the setting is that of the Canadian East or West, matters little, though matter it does. But whether, in a deeper sense, in our ultimate aims and our spiritual outlook, we align ourselves with that glaringly new and purely material civilization of our neighbours to the south, or with that older, grey-haired, yet fiery-hearted tradition of Britain, matters much: it matters much whether the books we produce mirror and body forth a new, a Canadian outlook on life, whether they do so with that ancient and almost fanatical or Biblical seriousness or not. The Canadian outlook, as it is lived to-day—if the opinion of one who for decades has earnestly striven to understand it counts for anything at all—the Canadian outlook is still, so it seems to me, though tinged with a newer-world hopefulness, essentially British, in as much as it tends to take a long view of things, a thoughtful view, with this final aim; to determine man's place in nature, or, if you want to express it that way—and a good way it is, rightly understood—to determine man's relationship to God rather than to Mammon or to Ashtoroth.

In any young writer who joins your ranks there is the potentiality of greatness. No man is born great; he becomes so. What he will do will depend on his aim and outlook. His aim and outlook will, at least in part, depend on the aim and outlook of those with whom he associates. If their outlook be serious, bent on eternal things and values; if their aim be to utter only what in the depths of their hearts cries for utterance; then he will learn to listen into himself rather, in order to discover that which only *he* can say, than to listen to the clamour of a public or a press which is frantic to hear what flatters its prejudices and its mistaken vanities. Like Shakespeare, Milton, Keats—though perhaps on a vastly smaller scale—he will say what he wants to say, in spite of the fact that perhaps it does not reach the ears of any contemporaneous public; or, if it reaches any ears at all, perhaps only those of the few who, though living in the present, listen with the ears of the future. That young writer of whom I am speaking and who joins your ranks should, in your meetings, hear less of E. Philips Oppenheim, Zane Grey, and Arthur Stringer; and more of Lamb, Hardy, Meredith, Hazlitt, Milton, Shakespeare, to mention at random a few whose names come to mind. The word success should sound less resonantly in his ears than the word art; the word recognition, less than the word fame.

For the eternal function of art and more especially of literature is to define the emotional attitude of man to that which is not he. Literature makes the individual as well as the nation articulate. What, to the members of other nations, does Canada stand for? So far, very little. Does that mean that our unrivalled sea-shores, our proud mountains, and our boundless prairies, unique on earth, have not tinged man's attitude to life and the world, or to God, whatever you care to call it? Does it mean that our broad slice of the universe as it was settled has not engendered a new human reaction to the outside world? I do not believe it.

In fact, I believe that such a new reaction is to-day crying for utterance in verse and prose; for only by being uttered can it be born. Let us, then, aim at supplying a future generation with its expression.

There are many moods in me of which I should have remained entirely unaware had not music made them conscious, had not poetry made them articulate. A human being, especially in the early, formative period of the awakening soul, is to himself an unexplored continent: and its exploration is, for the individual, of infinitely greater importance than the exploration of any Africa however rich and fabulous it be. And it is the same with nations. But even a nation can explore itself only by its reaction to moods, thoughts, feelings already uttered. To utter them is the function of the writer who, therefore, cannot live the life of the day. Not success, not recognition must be his aim: his aim must be to say as nearly as can be done without residue, what only he can say: that, to my mind, summarizes what I have already called the spirit of

the great Anglo-Saxon tradition.

That I am right in this, I will, in conclusion, confirm by quoting lines known to you all. They will bear repetition. "Alas," says Milton:

"Alas, what boots it with incessant care  
To tend the homely, slighted shepherd's trade  
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?  
Were it not better done, as others use,  
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade  
Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair?  
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit does raise  
(That last infirmity of noble mind)  
To scorn delights and live laborious days.  
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find  
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
Comes the blind fury with the abhorred shears  
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"  
Phoebus replied and touched my trembling ears:  
"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil  
Nor in the glistening foil  
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,  
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes  
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove.  
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."



# LITERARY CRITICISM



IN its last foundations, literary criticism is a department of metaphysics; as such we find its principles discussed by men like Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Croce. It investigates reactions of the human mind. It asks such questions as, Just what is tragedy? What is its effect; what its foundation in human nature? Why has it universally been considered as the highest expression of the human soul? That the fact reveals some universal principle inherent in the constitution of our common humanity, is proved or at least made exceedingly probable by another strange fact, namely that tragedy, as a form of art, has sprung up independently at all ages and in all civilizations of which we have record—the most refined as well as the most primitive. What is that universal principle of human nature?

Further, we all know that a work of art holds a different appeal from such prototypes in reality as may have served, in a more or less direct way, as a model for the work of art. The appeal—to choose my example rather grossly—of the Venus painted by Velasquez is entirely, fundamentally different from the appeal which his model would have were it exhibited in the same attitude and in the same surroundings. In what does that difference consist? It has been said that reality must be reborn in the spirit in order to become fit subject matter for art. What does that mean? Just to indicate one single, perhaps inessential point: the Venus painted by Velasquez does not address herself to the same set of senses in us as its hypothetical original would do. Desire, for instance, is not among the feelings stirred by a work of art. Sex is eliminated from our consciousness by the very presence of a work of art. I am well aware, of course, that, by repeating this ancient dictum, I am flying in the face of certain ultra-modern tendencies. Perhaps I might compromise by saying, art appeals only to a sublimated sense of sex. But it does not matter. In any case, literary criticism, considered as a branch of metaphysics, concerns itself with such questions as I have indicated just now.

The literary criticism which deals with them might be called abstract criticism. It forms part of the science of Aesthetics, and more particularly deals with those works of art which use language for their tool. In what precedes, I have chosen an example from the art of painting rather than the art of literature for the sole reason that I wished to make clear what I meant in a minimum of time.

Of this abstract literary criticism I should be little qualified to speak to you; it demands the devotion of a lifetime; and at best I am a student myself. All I can do is refer to it in order to point out that in front of everything I may have to say further on there is a huge and essential gap; in fact, that my whole argument floats, as it were, in the air unless we remember that there is a tremendous, half mysterious foundation on which literary judgments must be based if they come from a true critic.

Remains what I may call practical literary criticism as exercised by the man whom we commonly call the critic. It has been said that a critic is he who has failed as an artist; being Unable to produce, he applies himself to judging what others produce. As you will see, I do not subscribe to that verdict. It may fit the case of many a book-reviewer; but a book-reviewer is rarely a critic. Book-reviewing has, with us, like many another department of public activities, fallen into the hands of the journalist; and the journalist ... oh well! In order to make clear in a practical way just what I mean by a critic, I will cite three names familiar to every student of English literature. Hazlitt, Bagehot, Matthew Arnold were critics.

What distinguishes them from the average book-reviewer to whom a new book is at best a piece of news which he has to "report"?

The three critics whom I have named faced, at different times and in different moods, and yet essentially at all times and in all moods, in three different directions. They faced, firstly, that vast accumulated mass of literature which has stood the test of the centuries and which, in what follows, I shall call classic, no matter whether it was produced in ancient Greece, or in modern Italy, England, France or Germany. They faced, secondly, the contemporary author; and, thirdly, the contemporary public.

Let us see what may be the function of the critic facing in these three different directions.

Firstly, as facing classic literature, the critic has a passive and an active duty; perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he is both receptive and creative.

In all great literatures we find common ground. The *Antigone* of Sophocles, written more than two thousand years ago, is

essentially as much alive to-day as it was when first produced, if not more so. Let us hesitate and ponder that fact. It is one of the most remarkable and astounding facts with which we can meet. Even granting—as I am only too ready to grant—that human nature is essentially the same to-day as it has always been—since, in literary art, both narrative and dramatic, the appeal to that human nature is made through concrete things, through happenings conditioned by laws and usages which are no longer laws and usages to us, how is it that the accidentals of these concrete happenings, antiquated accidentals, which have not even a counterpart in the life as we live it, do not drown out the thin, quiet voice of the spirit which speaks through them? The critic answers, Because *Antigone* is a work of art. For art is essentially that activity of the human soul—a necessary activity from which we cannot escape forever—which converts the concrete fact into a spiritual experience which has eternal life.

I will give another example. A few years ago it was my privilege to be present at a performance of *Oedipus, the King*. Being familiar with every line of the ancient poem, I could devote a certain amount of time and energy to the observation of the audience that had gathered to hear it; and I can give you the result of that observation in a very few words. Apart from callous or illiterate individuals—there were few of these—every single one of the hearers, when the curtain fell, came out shattered; shattered by the sense of the mystery, the puzzle, and the terror of life which had echoed from out of the abyss of time into a modern world. That sense is the same to-day as it has always been; but it is felt and transferred to others only by the great that have walked the earth and whose work remains for critics to explain, for others to absorb.

I cannot expatiate. Let me briefly say that, in his receptive mood, the critic is the man whose spiritual life has arisen through, has reacted to, has been nourished by the spiritual experience of the past as embodied in the great works of literary art accumulated through the centuries and tested as alone they can be tested, namely by time. A critic unfamiliar with these works, whatever else he may be, is not a critic; as a critic he is a pretender. This is, of course, merely another way of saying that the critic stands in what I call the great tradition. If he does not, he may possibly be an advocate; a critic, I repeat, he cannot be.<sup>[4]</sup>

Besides this passive duty—the duty of nourishing his spiritual life within the great tradition and thereby upholding the continuity of art and letters—the critic has an active duty or one which might be called creative. That duty consists in keeping alive what is living; for in literature, as elsewhere, that which is not lived dies, as only too much of ancient literature has died to us, on account of the want of critics in what we have come to call the dark ages which were dark for the very reason of that want.

Again, let me exemplify. There existed, in ancient Greece, a large body of lyric poetry which had arisen on the sporadic islands of the so-called Aeolian colonies. Ancient critics pronounced it to be the greatest achievement of lyricism which they knew. We have nothing but fragments; of many poems which were once known throughout the civilized world we have only detached lines. But what little we have makes us inclined to agree with that verdict of the ancient critics: every line, every word of it we hoard to-day. If it is true that one of the essentials of lyric poetry consists in the emotional intensity of expression, then, indeed, I for one feel constrained to award the palm to those lines which philologists quote as the second fragment of Sappho. It has come down to us in a quotation by Longinus in his treatise *On the Sublime*. No doubt, had this ancient critic known that not a single manuscript of Sappho's poetry would be preserved, whereas by a strange trick of chance his own treatise was destined to survive, he would have quoted the whole of it for us to read. Centuries followed in which the interest in ancient literature died down till there was not a flicker left of the all-warming flame. There were no critics; and we cannot even estimate our loss.

By the mere fact that the critic stands himself in that great tradition which is traceable through the centuries and has never been broken except with disastrous results, he keeps it alive; it must be present in every sentence he speaks or writes; if not explicitly, at least implicitly; as a spiritual presence; as a background out of which his voice sounds forth as from a cavern. On this function of his, whole departments of great universities depend for their very existence, departments which furnish him with his material.

There is a modern school of so-called literary criticism which disregards all tradition. It proclaims that it has done what it can be called upon to do when it has "explained" a work of art by tracing its origins and affiliations. It designates itself as the historical school. It resembles a science of medicine which would stop short at an etiologic diagnosis. The very essence of criticism is, of course, criticism, that is judging, analysing, sifting, investigating reactions produced. The historical school—which in its proper field, as a handmaiden to true criticism, does valuable work—declines to do the essential work of criticism. By that it denies itself the right to be called criticism; it emasculates itself; within criticism, it is what the eunuch is among men. True criticism cannot help judging because it refers one thing to another; it measures

all things by standards derived from the comparison of many works produced in the past, or derived from the great tradition—which it presumes to be permanent because it denies, outside of that tradition, the essential progress of man. Progress on earth *consists* in that very tradition, even in material things, unless it can be proved that the great achievements of the past are biologically incarnated in ourselves—a contention which science has come to deny. Thus the critic keeps that tradition alive. Let us take warning. The example of the dark ages stands as a terrible example of what happens when it is allowed to die. Not for nothing do those ages represent to us the death of the spirit. What would have happened if Erasmus and others, first critics of the modern world, had not been lucky enough to find at least the fragments of its shattered remains.

Secondly, we said, the true critic faces the contemporary author.

What is the attitude in which he faces him? It is the attitude of reason as contradistinguished from that of passion. There is, in the fight of the day, passion not only in politics, in the warfare between classes, in the schisms of creeds, but also in the disagreements between schools of art. The critic knows that there is nothing new under the sun, not even free verse. At all times little details of procedure, inessentials, have been made the subject of contention; even the artist is only human and inclined to quarrel with his neighbour about the legitimate use of rhyme or of so-called realism in fiction. But over against him stands reason in the person of the critic. In the past, the great works of art—no matter whether they were produced in ancient Greece, in the Italy, the France, the England of the renaissance, in 17th century Holland and Flanders, in modern Germany or Scandinavia or Russia—have always shown a certain conformity of aim and even of method; in its essentials, though often not in its accidentals, their totality offers the spectacle of an almost timeless, ageless congregation of great minds and spirits in which the various members, from Homer down to Goethe and Ibsen, have merely happened to take their seats at different stages of the proceedings. The critic, when he speaks to the contemporary author, speaks from their midst, unmoved by the fleeting slogans of the day.

But he will also recognize the enduring thing no matter how much it may be disguised under the deceitful appearance of seeming innovation.

All this is particularly important at the present time, when we are living under what I will venture to call the delusion of science. Because science has made us comfortable without making us happy, we are apt to forget that, neither in the life of the individual nor in the life of a nation or a race, are economic problems the most important problems of our existence. Wealth in Elizabethan times would be poverty to-day. But happiness then is happiness still; tragedy then is tragedy still. Yet the uneducated modern thinks that, because Greek methods of furnishing a house and Greek methods of moving over the road are antiquated, Greek art is also antiquated. That is ignorance, nothing else. Greek art is as living to-day as it ever was, to him at least who has learned to strip *it* and, more important perhaps, *himself* of inessentials.

But a work produced to-day may hold a great appeal through its very inessentials; through the accuracy, for instance, with which it reproduces, in fiction, certain aspects of modern life—an accuracy not hard to attain because we have greatly developed the methods of observation; or through a sort of mimicry by which it fits itself into the demands of modern prejudices—those prejudices which have an unheard-of power to-day because of the enormously increased number of people who read or rather who have mastered the mechanics of reading; or through a partisan boldness with which it defies idiosyncracies in the hostile camp, in the warfare of schools. The critic, on the other hand, faces it with eternal questions. Does this work, or does it not, reveal a new corner of the timeless human soul? Or, failing that, does it, or does it not, express something that has been expressed before in a more cogent, more convincing way than anyone else has ever expressed it? In other words, does it or does it not stand within the line of the great tradition whatever the accidental antics of its inessential form may be?

In all those countries where literary criticism is a reality, its attitude towards the contemporary author who produces or tries to produce works of literary art gives that author what he needs more than anything else—except the god-given talent and the god-imposed task, the urge which will not be denied: it gives him an ideal audience to which he can address himself, knowing that, if he have the eye to see and the voice to speak, he will be heard. For no matter what no matter who may say, he says it to somebody; and the writer when he writes writes for somebody. The critic is necessary, he is indispensable to the author because without him, barring fortunate accidents, that author speaks into a void, he does not even know to whose capacity to adjust his utterance. In fact, he is very apt to underrate the capacity of his potential audience. If the literary criticism of a given nation is worthy of its name, its authors will never be at a loss; in speaking to it or to those who represent it, they will speak to that invisible yet none the less real audience of the ages to which alone they should not think it below their dignity to speak when they take pen in hand and presume to set that vast

machinery going which is needed to produce at last a printed book.

This function of the critic I consider the one second in importance among his three functions; of the one first in importance I shall speak anon. Unless the author has this audience, how can he be blamed for going astray in the clamour of the day? It is a strange but indisputable fact that a work of art presupposes at least two, the one who speaks and the one who listens; the one who creates and the one who re-creates. Art is essentially the play of one soul upon another; and the ultimate material of all arts is neither clay nor colour nor form nor sound, but the re-creative, responsive soul of humankind. Just as surely as vibrations created on a desert island by the fall of a tree can never become sound without being heard by the ear of animal or man, thus the work of an artist cannot become art without the reaction of an answering soul. Unless, then, there is an ideal audience like the one I have tried to sketch, the temptation of the writer to speak to that concrete, ever-present audience which we call the public and which wants only to be cheated by having something given to it to beguile the time—and which is sufficiently and nauseatingly represented by the news-mongery of most of what we call the press—that temptation, I say, is so enormously great as to be almost irresistible. No genius was ever born as such. He was born as a talent. A genius he became by taking pains, by striving after a perfection which perhaps could not be attained. But it is hard to go on working "with incessant care" when there is none to perceive that such care was taken and to appreciate it. It is hard to go on striving after a perfection not to be attained when the work of art is drowned in the ocean of mediocre productions designed for no purpose except to satisfy the demand of the public to be "entertained"—that is, distracted from itself.

Art aims at the very opposite: not to distract the hearer or spectator from himself but to lead him into the very recesses of his dormant soul and to force him to face the world, not with the inessential acquisitions of his day—his education—but with the innermost essence of his soul which is the same to-day as that of Abraham. Most people go through life in the blissful ignorance of the very fact that they have a soul; how, then, should a young writer even dream of appealing to it, of evoking it, were it not for the fact that at all times there is that ideal audience represented by literary criticism to remind him of the fact that, at what he does, the ages look on. Literary criticism—or the body of the critics—should be to the writer what the Roman senate was to the Roman general in the field: an unseen presence sitting sternly in judgment over his blunders; but also voting him a triumph if he did his duty well. Shall I indulge in the sarcasm of the question, Is that what (with, oh, so few exceptions) literary criticism is in Canada to-day?

I must hurry on to the third point. The critic, facing classic literature, facing the contemporary author, also faces the contemporary public. What, in this direction, is his function?

Edmund Gosse says somewhere something to this effect, "It is extraordinary but very fortunate that the firm expression of an opinion on the part of a few expert persons whose views are founded on principle and reason still exercises a very great authority on the better class of readers. When it ceases to do so, the reign of chaos will have set in."

The English critic refers, I believe, to a function of literary criticism which I consider as not of primary importance, namely the guidance it affords the public when it takes purse in hand to buy. Whether an author's books, during his lifetime, are extensively bought or not, may matter to the author as a person; it does not greatly matter to mankind as his spiritual legatee. In fact, I have found that a great immediate success usually does even the author more harm than good. Some of the most gifted writers living at the present time—talents that might have become geniuses—have, by such a success, been transformed into mere purveyors of reading matter for sale to His Sluggish Majesty The Illiterate Public. I have quoted Gosse's words solely because they testify to the influence of literary criticism on the public—an influence which can arise from one source only, namely the respect in which, in England, expertness is held. That influence is a fact in all the older countries; and even more so in France, Germany, Italy than in England. It would soon be a fact with us if there were an expert body of men who represented true literary criticism.

Now criticism, in contradistinction to art, deals primarily with ideas. The concrete, spiritual experience into which facts of reality have to be transformed in order to become subject matter for art is, by criticism, analysed and re-created as an abstract idea. Such ideas are more easily handled than spiritual experience; they condense the latter into a form which lends itself to discussion. Art, though it is not concerned with originating or developing ideas, often uses them, especially in the art form of literature, as media of expression. Criticism, by dispersing and clarifying ideas—ideas concerned with the spiritual experience of humanity—will tend to create an atmosphere, mental and spiritual, which is uniform throughout an appreciable fraction of the population—and that the fraction which becomes articulate in public life; and at the same time it will develop one of the most valuable tools of literary art.

It is characteristic that the great flowering periods of art in the great nations that were peculiarly favoured and

predisposed, by their endowment, to produce great art have almost invariably been periods in which a large body of ideas, religious or temporal—perhaps long prepared, perhaps quickly unfolded—was almost universally and homogeneously spread throughout the racial or national groups to which the great creators in the realm of art belonged. In some cases this spread seems to have been spontaneous, though we may have that impression simply as a result of our ignorance; we do not happen to know the names of the critics who spread the ideas.

Thus Greek tragedy arose and flowered at the time when the great idea of the city-state had taken hold of the Athenians; when splendour meant national splendour, not individual wealth; when Pericles, after labouring all day at beautifying Athens by the most perfect buildings which the world has seen, went home at night to his poverty-stricken house which we should consider a hovel hardly fit to shelter the pioneer at the outskirts of civilization.

Elizabethan drama arose when the Renaissance had pervaded the civilized world, penetrating and unifying thought everywhere by a new ideal, that of the "humanities". Its critics, in England, were such men as Colet and More, and Erasmus.

The classical German drama arose when Lessing and Herder—here we know that they were literary critics in the narrower sense—in the midst of surroundings of an almost unimaginable pedantry had proclaimed, to the acclamation of a disrupted nation, their ideas of a new, a national literature which, though German in content, was to be ageless and without a geographical border-line in its appeal.

In these three cases, the ideal audience of which I have spoken, the invisible audience of the ages, had, to a large extent, become the concrete audience which we call the public. Yet the fact remains even here that, in the appreciation of the public, the Greek dramatists were successively replaced by less and less enduring workers; that Shakespeare, in his strength, had to wait for centuries before his greatest work was heard; that Goethe, the most towering figure which the world has produced since Shakespeare died was, at the time of his death, known to only a few hundred of his compatriots and that he is only now on the point of becoming the world-influence which he might have been in the Napoleonic era were it not for the extreme slowness with which the masses catch up with the great.

We have, then, another, a vital—the most important—function of the critic. It is this function of which Matthew Arnold spoke with such eloquence as to transform the attitude of the Victorian age. The critic must sift and judge ideas—ideas which have eternal value. The fundamental idea which stands behind all art, the idea of beauty, is one of the great realities, of vastly deeper importance than economic prosperity; it is one of the immortal needs of mankind without which it cannot have "life". By insisting on such ideas, by spreading them, the critic must, in an economically heterogeneous mass, in the "public", produce that homogeneity of judgment as to what is excellent which we call "taste" and which is—with regard to literary and artistic production—a reality within those nations which present to us, as such, the spectacle of a spiritual entity—as France, or Greece, or the Germany of a hundred years ago.

There is much more to be said, especially about the relation of the true critic to those who must act as the middlemen, so to speak, between him and the wider public. But I must close and let it go at that.

I will summarize. The critic faces three ways: towards the past, towards the author, towards the public.

By facing the past, he subordinates himself to, and upholds, the great tradition which is continuous and unbroken, for its very essence consists in such a continuity. Whenever, in the past, that tradition was apparently broken, it was resumed by a later time at the exact point where the break occurred; and the time intervening was as if it had not been.

By facing the author, he provides for him an invisible, ideal audience which supplies him with a standard—a standard which remains unchanged throughout the centuries, thus enabling him to adjust his utterance to an unchanging level.

By facing the public, he creates that homogeneous atmosphere permeated by ideas universally accepted—at least among the educated of any nation—which alone can produce, not a work of art, nor even an artist, but a great national movement of art or spiritual experience.

May I add in conclusion that such a national movement of art—or of a unified spiritual experience—has so far proved to be, in a wider outlook, the only thing which has ever justified the existence of any nation on earth?

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# REALISM IN LITERATURE



EVER since I have been asked to address this or that meeting, I have taken occasion to say here and there that I am a man without a formal education and that I must warn my hearers against accepting my conclusions for more than they are worth as the expression of opinion of a single man who bases them upon nothing but his own thinking. They do not flow from profound systematic study or prolonged research. I believe this statement of mine has, by many, been interpreted as a pose which I choose to adopt for some reason or other. Perhaps, therefore, I had better explain once for all what I mean by it.

Most people, when asked to speak or to deliver a paper on Realism in Literature, so I am told, would first of all familiarize themselves with everything that has been said or written on the subject by others. They would tabulate it and proceed to examine it critically, refuting this, accepting that; and to whatever they find worthy of acceptance in the work of their predecessors, they would lastly add what they may have of a contribution of their own. Thus, I am told, their conclusions rest on the sure foundation of all previous thought.

Such a method is closed to me by my invincible aversion to research work, taking the word re-search in its most literal acceptance.

My own method is vastly simpler and more primitive.

I define roughly what my topic seems to imply, classify the little I know of the world's literature into realistic and non-realistic, and, from an examination of the material thus assembled, derive a detailed definition which I give for what it is, namely my own.

It is clear, of course, that this definition, no matter what its value may be, labours from the outset under the immense disadvantage of ignoring the critical thought of almost all that have gone before.

I cannot help that; I am an autodidact; and even my original reading in the literatures of the world has been exceedingly limited owing to the fact that for more than thirty years I have lived in the country or in small country towns, with little money to spend on books and with no library within my reach.

Yet, in the present case, I have become aware of certain popular prejudices with regard to this idea of Realism; and so I feel impelled to deviate from my usual method of blunt and outright assertion and to take issue with those prejudices.

There is a common acceptance of the word realism—in literature—against which I must define my attitude, if for no other reason than to avoid a possible misunderstanding of what is to follow.

In this vulgar and, to my mind, erroneous sense of the word, realism means frankness in matters of sex.

Now, sexual matters are, of course, among the weary "facts of life". All "facts of life" are, in my opinion, legitimate subjects of artistic presentation. In a literature addressed to grown-up minds—and does anything that even remotely deserves the name address itself to any other?—I cannot see a single valid objection to the choice of sexual relations for its subject matter. Yes, more, I cannot but ascribe, in a large measure, the very insipidity of the vastly greater part of the American literature of the last few decades to the prudery with which this fundamental fact, sex, has been either ignored or banned. Love affairs and even married life have been treated, where they formed the topic, as if the actors involved in them had no bodies but only etherealized, that is, thinly diluted souls. The sex instinct which is at work in us and claims a large fraction of the energies of the normal man and woman, exalting some of their activities, interfering with others, has been treated as if it were a shameful thing; and the consequence is that there is no field of human activities in which ignorance and stupid prejudice prevail to such an appalling and disastrous extent. For we have reached the point where that very ignorance becomes, in life, the source of tragedy and of unnecessary tragedy. Among enlightened people there are those who assert that one half of what a man or woman may get out of life depends on his sex relationships. I myself would put it at a third or perhaps a quarter. Yet we leave all sex matters to the hit-or-miss methods of chance. In this large domain of life we allow our young people to blunder their way into some sort of understanding and some sort of personal reaction; and on the whole, of course, with disastrous results.

So, where the topic calls for it, I advocate frankness in matters of sex; clean, searching, unimpassioned, and unprejudiced discussions of their bearings and their importance. Sex is real; as real as mountain tops and barren sea; as

forests in a storm or fields in the first tender green of spring. Whatever exists is the legitimate subject matter of the literary artist, be he romantic or realist.

But—and this is the important point—realism in this mistaken sense is a matter of the choice of subject, not of literary procedure; realism in my sense is a matter of literary procedure, not of the choice of subject.

On still another point must I, before I start on my discussion, take issue with a popular prejudice.

During the seventies and eighties of the last century, there sprang up in France a new school of novelists who called their method "le naturalisme". To this very day the central figure of this school remains Emile Zola. In America nothing is more common than to hear Zola called a realist. His affiliation is presumed to be with Gustave Flaubert. I cannot enter into any very great detail here, for my topic claims me. Yet, in order to avoid misconceptions, I must point out one or two facts of literary history.

Flaubert's early affiliation was with the Romantic school. Throughout life almost, Victor Hugo remained an idol to him. His own first *Saint Antoine* is frankly romantic, that is lyric, with no objective figure in it but the author. We should, however, not forget that he never published that work, although it was finished in 1850. The second *Saint Antoine*, published in 1874, was frankly realistic; that is, whatever there was in it of lyricism, was attached to the central figure of the great ascetic. We owe the preservation of the first version to mere chance; and it was not published till 1908, twenty-eight years after Flaubert's death. Now, some of us may prefer the first version; as there are those who prefer Byron to Shakespeare. The fact remains that Flaubert himself suppressed a form of the work in which he had displayed, in an enormous nightmare, his own soul, his own thoughts, his own temptations, using the figure of the saint as a mere mannikin for the display of the gorgeous draperies of romantic lyricism: and that is the typical procedure in strictly romantic literature. In the final version, the execution of the work is quite realistic; that is, *Saint Antoine* becomes an objective figure in which neither the author nor his time appear directly upon the stage. That indirectly even now *Saint Antoine* reveals to us, not the fourth century, but Flaubert and his time, is a different matter entirely.

Flaubert, then, growing out of the Romantic School, became a realist and as such wrote what, in a wider survey of nineteenth century literature, will perhaps one day be considered as the three most solidly-built novels of their age. The sexual preoccupations of their heroes and heroines, by the way, are explained in them as the outcome of their precisely romantic inclinations.

With this Flaubert, the mature, self-critical, and austere artist, Zola, the naturalist, has no connection whatever. We are used to think that the word naturalist denotes, in English, something entirely different from what it connotes in French. That is an error. A naturalist, in English, means a scientist; but no more emphatically so than in French.<sup>[5]</sup> The most striking feature of Zola, the man and thinker who stands behind his work, is that he claims to be "*un savant*", a scientist. To him, the novel was not an art-form which enabled him to cast on his canvas a picture of life as he saw it; it was a "scientific experiment" in which he produced artificially facts and sequences of facts from which he claimed he could deduce laws of nature with as much certainty and necessity as a chemist deduces laws from the behaviour of liquids observed *in vitro*. The moment we examine these scientific pretensions of Zola's somewhat more closely, they appear singularly weak, confused, and altogether lacking in the permanent power of art.

Science, as far as it is that edifice of human thought by the help of which we try to *interpret* physical reality, is in itself strangely unstable; it is in a state of everlasting flux; it changes almost from moment to moment; and certainly from year to year; which is only natural since the true function of science can never be interpretation; it is classification. Science is a search; art is necessarily a finding. It is characteristic that those works of science which have endured through the decades and the centuries deal almost exclusively with observed facts, not with attempts at explanation of no matter what. In order to realize that, we have only to look back over a few centuries and think of Newton's *Principia* or of Harvey's *Circulation of the Blood*. Newton's observations were wonderfully exact; and consequently his explanations held sway, almost unquestioned and untested, for centuries; but, while his observations, capable of being repeated by anyone who cares to repeat them, remain the marvel of posterity, his explanations are shown to be inadequate right now; and that by the very methods which he taught us. It has been the same with Heraclitus, Thales, Democritus, or Pythagoras. Their observations stand; their explanations make us smile.

Now Zola's pretensions to science were exactly of that ephemeral type; he attempted explanations and conclusions such as true science repudiates; if true scientists advance them occasionally, tentatively, they do so in a spirit of profound scepticism. That popular fancy chiefly fastens on to these tentative and ephemeral flights of scientific imagination,

advanced as fantasies, not as facts, is once more a different matter altogether. As a matter of fact, Zola's conclusions, even though they are just now on the point of gaining a foothold in America, have, without exception, long been outgrown and discarded by science. If he is still read, even in Europe, he is read for the poetic power with which he projected erroneous conceptions into visions capable of being re-created by the reader's vision; rather for that than for the truth of the picture of life which he presented to his contemporaries.

Zola's realism is a pseudo-realism. We seem indeed to see men in working clothes, swinging their arms, rolling their eyes, shouting at the top of their voices. But what animates them is not their soul, that soul which is common to us all, but an ingenious mechanism constructed in the image of pseudo-science. At the very best, his characters are pathological cases, unsuited to the novel, though perhaps interesting, here and there, as cases taken from the margin of the stream of life. Psychologically, therefore, Zola is singularly dull; rarely do we feel that, under the same circumstances we, the readers, should have acted in the way his characters act.<sup>[6]</sup>

Zola's aim lay outside of the domain of art. He was a propagandist. And, whereas to popular prejudice he was the typical realist, he was, in actual truth, for the very reason given, a typical romantic.

But, as I have said, unless I want to lose sight of my topic, I cannot enter into details. I will merely repeat: of the two, Flaubert was a realist—that is to say, first of all an artist; Zola, because his aim lay outside of the domain of art, was a romantic.

What, then, is realism?

I open a small popular dictionary, Annandale's, and find this definition, "the endeavour to reproduce nature or to describe real life just as it appears to the artist".

Does this eliminate the artist from his work? For realism is sometimes called the "objective method". If realism consisted in nothing but the unimpassioned, untinged, or objective reproduction of that which is, we might perhaps preferably look at life itself instead of at a work of realistic art? But before a work of literature can be a work of realism, it must be a work of art and conform to the canon of art; and in art the artist is an indispensable medium through which we see things.

As a record of fact the camera and the gramophone are without doubt vastly more reliable than the human eye; the photographic plate or the phonographic record vastly more retentive than the human memory. The essential point, however, is that neither interposes that interpretative stratum which, in a work of art, is furnished by the artist's soul; neither, in other words, mirrors and evokes an emotional reaction. Camera and gramophone see and hear things from the outside, as it were. The artist fuses and reproduces them from out of his soul. In order for anything whatever to become a fit subject matter for art, it must be reborn in the soul of the artist. Thus the artist necessarily tinges the picture which he gives; if only by the fact that, in the face of a vast continuity of happening, he gives his work a beginning and an end; by this mere fact he has begun to interpret emotionally what he presents.

It is quite true that in the vast crowd of writers there are those who at least aim to be mere reporters of fact; who chase after accuracy in the little things which they can observe; who fill note-book after note-book with minute bits of actual truths: the very method of science, but stopping short of classification. Let us suppose for a moment that they succeed in catching, within their word pictures, a surface likeness to reality; and that, out of such material, they try to make a book—a novel which is to live. At the very best, namely if he who attempts this method is, in addition to being a reporter, a great artist, he will, by this synthetic method, succeed in piecing together the outer garment of an inner body; that inner body still remains to be inferred; and the artistic activity in the true sense is once more analysis. The synthesis is at best an inverted analysis; and in the analysis—which is interpretation—the artist is inextricably involved as a spiritual entity.

"The endeavour to reproduce nature or to describe real life just as it appears to the artist." I have no fault to find with that definition.

Eliminate the artist? As God is omnipresent in the world, thus the artist is omnipresent in his work—or anyone could be an artist, just as anyone could be a reporter; though even there, degrees of excellence remain.

However, the realist, being concerned with the presentation, not of himself, but of that other thing, human life; and having learned, besides, that he alone is nothing; that the work of art can spring only from an intimate, almost mystical fusing of the two things which are needed—a thing presented and a soul presenting—will never step forward into the lime-light as

a person. The moment he exclaims, "*Ecce homo!*" or "*Ecce Pulchrum!*" he ceases to be a realist who speaks through things and human figures whom he marshals about on his stage; he becomes the pedant who points his moral, be it with an ever so magic wand.

By the very fact that he cannot reproduce except what was potentially in him, he is, in the totality of his creation, present to the spectator or reader. By the very fact that he cannot convincingly represent a character or a happening which finds no echo in himself, he delimits his work by his own personality. Here we lay our finger on greatness. For who, in that vast world which goes by the name of Shakespeare, can point to an opinion expressed or to a feeling evoked and say, Here speaks the poet, not the character whom he created? And who, by contrast, when he thinks of Marlowe, is not instantly aware of his personal predilections, his superhuman reaches into chaos, and the failure of his hand to grasp what it reached for? Shakespeare, by that criterion, was a realist while Marlowe was a romantic. Greatness, did I say? Yes, greatness; for the drama and the epic call for realism; romanticism is the method of the lyric; and in the drama and the epic, therefore, lyricism can appear only within a hybrid.

The realist, then, while necessarily, by the mere conception of his work as a work of art, omnipresent within it, must, as it were, remain invisible as a bodily or mental or emotional conrescence.

But he must do vastly more. It is one of the fundamental tenets of my own theory of art that what makes a work of literature or any other craft a work of art is the fact that it mirrors a more or less universal human reaction to what is not I. This human reaction, individual to every artist, yet universally valid, is a matter of emotion. Emotion is a matter of interpretation. Interpretation is a matter of making conscious and articulate what was, previous to the act of interpretation, unconscious and inarticulate. The artist—or the realist; for to me, personally, within at least the realm of drama or epic, the two terms are synonymous—must mirror, in his presentation, an emotional response to the outside world and to life which is, as nearly as such things can be, a universal response or at least capable of becoming such. Or, as I have latterly come to express it, a work of literature or of any other craft is a work of art exactly to that extent to which it disengages the generally tragic reaction of the human soul to the fundamental conditions of man's life on earth.

What does this imply?

For one thing that an exceptional, abnormal personality, a morbid personality can never be a realist. His emotional reactions would be incapable of becoming universal. Therein lies the supreme and ultimate sanity of realism. We, as readers, may be temporarily allured by the excrescences of such a personality as Baudelaire, for instance, or Pierre Louys. But permanently we are attracted only by those creations of the greater one of the two which show him to be not devoid of that cool, unimpassioned outlook upon life which might be God's. That, too, is the reason why we do not often linger with Byron on his Alpine heights; and why yet, with perfect confidence, we build our huts on Shakespeare's mountain-slopes. Strongly-seasoned meats may be congenial to us in an occasional craving of our palate; but for our daily meal we want plain bread—the bread of sanity.

Secondly, that the realist must never, as Zola did, base his interpretations on the current aberrations of the day. He is not concerned with the interpretations of the erring mind; he is concerned with the considered judgment of the never-ending soul. The artist may be a free-thinker or an atheist; but if he writes his books—with pretensions to their being "art"—in order to prove free-thought or atheism, or even to advocate or to attack them, he merely casts a stone into smooth waters which will soon be smooth again. The interpretations of the mind are necessarily perishable; for they are necessarily arrived at without a knowledge of all the facts; they deal with the unknowable. *Ignoramus*, says Weissmann, *et ignorabimus*; we shall never know. But the artist, through his presentation of life, and in spite of the fact that the externals of life may change and do change, deals with the eternal: our own emotional reaction to life, a reaction which is the same to-day as at the dawn of history. Were it not so, Greek art would long ago have ceased to help us in discovering and realizing ourselves, our inner beings.

Thirdly, it implies that the artist can be an artist only if he be true to himself, uninfluenced by the clamour of a frantic public. For what is less lasting, what more easily detected, to-day or to-morrow, than a false emotional note?

But lastly, and above all, it implies that the greatness of an artist is measured more than by anything else by the extent or the range of things to which he can react and by the unerring accuracy with which his own reaction mirrors the reactions of mankind. That is the reason why, supreme among realists, stand the three great names of Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe. That is the reason why, compared with them, such lesser luminaries as Vergil, Marlowe, Schiller, and even Dante seem to be as of another world.

Realism, says, Annandale, is the endeavour to reproduce nature or to describe real life just as it appears to the artist.

As it appears. Not as he wishes to see it. Not as he sometimes sees it. Not as it seems. As it appears. No mere illusion about things will do. Only that appears which becomes clearly visible to the eye or perceptible to the ear, the sense, the mind, the soul. It must be supported by evidence beyond that of a mere imagination. The reader or spectator must at all times be conscious of the fact that, given the circumstances, he himself might act in the way in which the realist's creations act. Marlowe's Tamburlaine is not a figure moulded by a realist; Tolstoi's Kutosov is; and Marlowe's and Goethe's Faustus might furnish another example on either side of the question.

I cannot go into all the ramifications of this aspect of realism. I will restrict myself to one crucial point.

There are writers who paint devils and angels, cowards and heroes. But in a long and observant life I have found none of these. In a long and critical life as a reader I have found men in devils and men in angels; that is, alloys of both devils and angels.

As a matter of observation, I have yet to see the first villain. Many a criminal have I known; for, in order to round off my personal view of life, I had to make a study of crime. In every one of its addicts I found an incomplete man, deficient intellectually or morally, and often the two deficiencies went hand in hand. But the villain who of set purpose does what is evil, knowing that it is so, is a product of the animistic imagination; and he survives in fiction or stage-play merely as a grievous anachronism. Yes, when the realistic mind tries its powers on the devil—as Milton and Goethe did—we find that there is a good deal to be said for him and that he is no more nor less hateworthy than you or I should be were we the obstinate defenders of a cause that is lost.

Nor have I met, in life, with any male or female angel. Wings do not sprout on human shoulder-blades. Even in the most Christian endeavour there remains a vestige of the earthy motive; and again it is an anachronistic or morbidly sentimental imagination that has created angels out of the material of human life; as we all know, they abound in abortive attempts at literary art.

Yet life as we see it produces evil. Life swarms with conflict. We might almost go so far as to say that life *is* conflict. Conflicts, in the concrete, are of such exceedingly common occurrence that, in observing life, one is reminded of a sea in a storm where all large waves—great issues—are beset with smaller waves—the minor conflicts—the backs of which in turn are rippled by the wind—these ripples representing the quarrels and squabbles of menial minds. If life is not essentially of the stuff of conflicts, it tends at least to break up into a series of continual conflicts.

But I have also found that, in every conflict, both sides or, if there be more than two, all sides—the moment we enter into their respective points of view—are right. It is not judgment that is needed but sympathy. The great and ruthless selfishness which conceives a series of conflicts to conquer in, for its own glory or aggrandizement, is so exceedingly rare that art, which deals on the whole with the typical, has little concern with it. I have come to doubt whether Napoleon had it; in fact, I have come to the conclusion that he had not. This conclusion has made him less heroic to me but vastly more human and interesting.

All great men who have devoted their powers to literature knew this; and in the best of their work they took good care not to align themselves on one side of the conflict. For all really great men, whether they be great in the realms of art or life, are fundamentally realists. Nobody will ever persuade me that Shakespeare gave the character of Shylock its elaboration and motivation for no other purpose than to lure more laughter from the brutal rabble of the pit. Shylock is as much right as Portia, from his point of view and from that of the Mosaic law. In fact, when we read the Merchant of Venice or see it acted, we discount the triviality of the occasion which Shakespeare chose to unfold his character. Perhaps we do so foolishly; for that very triviality makes him all the more clearly the representative of all suppressed races, all nations and individuals living in the diaspora. If you will not admit that Shakespeare was conscious of this representative side of Shylock's character, you have only one alternative left: you can say that Shakespeare the poet was greater than Shakespeare the man, and that his work conveys a message which he did not intend it to convey. This distinction between a man and his work holds true for many who have done great things; but it hardly holds for Shakespeare who repeated the same sort of performance a dozen times.

If we survey the accumulated literature of the trifling period which we summarize in history, we find that invariably only minor intelligences devoted their perhaps great powers of expression to the partial or sentimental view of that part of life which they chose to present. Aeschylus and Sophocles, Shakespeare and Goethe, and, among moderns, Ibsen were

realists in the domain of the drama; and so, in the domain of the novel, were Cervantes, Lesage, Simplicius, Tolstoi, Meredith, Hardy, Hamsun, Mann. In other words, they led up to a conflict without producing it by the crude opposition of devils and angels. Why does Shakespeare send Lear to Goneril with a hundred followers? Because even Goneril is not a devil. True enough, she acts in an unfilial way. But even she does not do so except under provocation. In fact, looked at dispassionately, neither Goneril's nor Regan's demands seem unreasonable. The fact is that Lear, being old and in his dotage, takes offence at things which do not warrant taking such offence. It is human nature to do so; and human nature can, perhaps, best be studied in the two childhoods that bound our life.

Shakespeare was a realist; but his realism has very little to do with accuracy in such externals as the historic or social costume. Art is not a matter of facts and figures. "The aim," said Lowell, "of the artist is psychologic, not historic truth." Shakespeare's anachronisms do not detract from his realism. He mocks at them. "This prophecy," says the fool in Lear, "Merlin shall make; for I live before his time." In fact, Shakespeare's anachronisms cannot detract from his realism; for never are they contained in the basic conditions on which his conflicts are built.

Nor has realism anything to do with that bubble of the brain, poetic justice. Art is not a sermon. It is the amusement of an idle mind to analyse Oedipus till, in his conduct, a guilt is discovered which makes him deserve his terrible fate. Deserved or not, his fate is the fate of humankind: to be led on into situations where to do wrong becomes inevitable. "You," Goethe addresses the powers that rule life, "allow poor humankind to become guilty; and then you hand us over to our remorse." [7]

There are many minor schools of literary procedure. It were easy to define the contrast between Hardy and Meredith, those two dioscuri of the modern novel in England. Externals of method are perhaps legitimately debatable ground. But when we come to the essentials, there is nothing debatable. Zola and his followers professed to be descended, in a literary sense, from Flaubert and the great Russians. But Flaubert and the great Russians were artists, not advocates of presumably scientific fads. Whether to let their peasants speak in dialect or not was never, with them, a question at issue. To make such questions an issue has ever been the sign of an artistic inferiority in a larger sense. Be it enough for the artist if he can say with Lamb that the leading and collateral points of his subject had impressed themselves upon him so tyrannically that he dared not treat it otherwise than he did, for fear he should falsify a revelation; and if, with Sir Thomas Browne, he can add, "I am of a constitution so general that it consorts and sympathiseth with all things; I have no antipathy, or rather idiosyncrasy in anything."

Whether Oliver Cromwell had a wart on his nose or not, is irrelevant; paint it, or don't, it does not matter. What matters is that he was Oliver Cromwell. On the other hand, it greatly matters whether Oliver Cromwell was pure hero or villain; whether his greatness consisted in being angel or devil. It matters whether he was a man, that is, a mixture of the two, and great merely because he was both better and worse than other humans, but fundamentally of the same stuff as they. If, therefore, from a re-creation, in a work of art, of his character the fact is omitted—or its equivalent—that he sent an importunate opponent to the West Indies, kidnapped, there to be sold as a slave—then that re-creation is fundamentally false. It may do for a child; it will never do for him who is mentally grown-up.

We do not, in life, meet with heroes and villains; we are ourselves never one or the other. We are both; we are guilty and not guilty at the same time. If we were not, we should be neither the tragic comedians which we are nor of any earthly interest to anyone but minors.

Art, true art, appeals to none but mature intellects, for it deals with essential, emotional truth; and since that truth demands maturity in him who cares to face it, there is not one great work of real literature which I should not want to see emasculated before I give it into the hands of a person with an unformed mind to read by himself, without the guidance of an older person who knows life. That is the reason why there is, to my mind, no danger in advocating frankness in matters of sex where such frankness is called for by the theme: if the artist's aim is the aim of art, his work will neither appeal to children nor will any one dream of giving it to them. But to realism as such this frankness is quite inessential, provided that sex is not the theme; as I have said, it is not a question of literary method.

Let me, before I close, return for a moment to Shakespeare's Lear. I find that even a critic of the erudition, acumen, and breadth of insight of James Branch Cabell reproaches Shakespeare for not giving Lear more valid provocation than Goneril's refusal to harbour, besides her father, a hundred debauched, rough-mannered, and drink-addicted knights. But, if Goneril had begun by giving greater provocation than she did, we should no longer understand her; she would be a monster instead of a human being; and the tale would indeed be fit for children only, such children as cannot perceive the shadings in character and as classify human beings frankly into angels and devils. That, once she has entered the fatal

path, she goes on and can no longer help herself, is once more only human. I am afraid that the common interpretation of Shakespeare's tragedy lends itself rather to the conception of Goneril as an inhuman monster. But that reflects on the maturity of the average mind rather than upon Shakespeare's artistry. Shakespeare was too much of a realist not to let, at least for a moment, the semblance of reason remain on her side. The point is that Goneril is, after all, no more than human; that, while she is willing to give her father all that an old man in his dotage can reasonably ask for, she is unwilling to give him more; unwilling to let him and his train upset her own life and that of half the realm to boot. She will grant him what reason demands; she refuses what only love could submit to. For Lear *is* unreasonable; he *is* in his dotage; and in that lies the tragedy: the old, eternal tragedy which consists in the fact that unfortunately youth and old age are juxtaposed in life; that they look at the same thing and see different aspects of it.

True realism always develops a conflict in such a manner that we see all sides, understand all sides, sympathize with all sides taken separately, and yet cannot tell how that conflict can be avoided which, as it unfolds itself, crushes our sensibilities. That is the tragic necessity which we find in all great works of literary art and which exalts us as it crushes us; that is the "fate" of the Greek tragedy; it is the inexorable quality of life itself. Give it, and you have given an image of life; give it, and you have given art; and you have given it by the true method of all dramatic and narrative art, namely realism. All other things are inessentials of procedure.

If, then, I were asked to furnish a short formula by which to express what I mean by realism, I might say: there are three criteria by which I distinguish realistic art from what, for want of a better term, I will call romantic art. Firstly, in realistic art the creative spirit as such will never appear in the first person; whatever it has to say it will say indirectly, through the medium of action and character; it will submerge itself in the world of appearances. Secondly, it will, in the indispensable and unavoidable interpretation which all artistic activity implies—an emotional interpretation—aim at giving an as nearly universally valid reaction to the outside world as is possible to its own human limitations. Thirdly, it will place itself and thereby the reader in the heart of things in such a way that they look on at what is happening from the inside, as if they were themselves a world-consciousness which has its ramifications in all human beings that appear on the stage of the work of literature. As God is a spirit, and, of that spirit, part is in us, thus the author of a book should be, and therefore should make the reader, a spirit transfusing all things and embracing them in its sympathies.

And now, if in conclusion I may return whence I started, namely to a frankly personal remark, I might add that all I have said is no more and no less than a statement of my personal point of view for which I claim no measure of general validity. I have, in dealing with this particular topic, simply tried to define my personal prejudices—or to trace the limitations of my mind.



## THE HAPPY ENDING



HAVE heard it said repeatedly, of late, by so-called novelists, that men do not read. In order to "make a commercial success", it was alleged, we, the novelists, have to keep in view as our readers young girls and their mothers; and from the pusillanimous attitude of certain self-styled critics it appears that they share this view.

I pointed out to a certain writer, that, in a certain book, she had the material of a work of art; but that she had spoiled it by an illogical and psychologically faulty "happy ending". "Ah," she said, "the happy ending! The only class of readers we can find demands it." "So," I countered, "did the only class of readers which Shakespeare, Goethe, Hardy 'found'. Their real readers they had to conquer."

Is it to be said that young girls and their acolytes, the publishers of current popular fiction, are the arbiters of literature? Perhaps men do not read because they do not find what is fit to be read by a man with the mind and the tastes of a grown-up? Or do I flatter our adults by this assumption? But what does it matter? What has "success" to do with art?

We can approach the subject from an empirical or from a theoretic point of view. Just let us see.

I consider myself, in literary things, a grown-up with a grown-up's tastes. The bread and meat of my mental fare consist of Homer, Horace—you perceive I am old-fashioned and behind the times—of Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Heine, Baudelaire among poets; of Cervantes, Lesage, Voltaire, Keller, Flaubert, Balzac, George Eliot, Hardy, Meredith, Tolstoi, Hamsun, Hemon, Galsworthy, Mann among novelists. Besides, I read, or rather skim through, a vast mass of contemporary publications. I have two libraries, small as they are; one stands on open shelves, one in sectional book-cases. Once in a great while I transfer a volume from the former to the latter. I will enumerate what I find on one or two of the shelves of this more intimate collection. One contains Shaw, Hemon, Hardy, Tolstoi, Hamsun; another Thoreau, Burroughs, Meredith; a third one, Galsworthy, Conrad, Eliot, Emerson, and two volumes of Bennett's. There is not a contemporary American author among them; and these three shelves, chaotic as they are—I have no system—are representative of what I like. I have been led to think, by the comments of occasional visitors, that my tastes coincide fairly well with those of other men of education. How can a cultured man not be a reader? How can a cultured man not be an observer of life? Naturally, he will read that in which he finds reflected what he sees in life.

The cultured man is necessarily a seeker after truth. Truth has many aspects; among them three are of particular significance.

There is a concrete truth—concrete does not mean unchangeable or absolute—which concerns itself with the phenomena of creation and the interrelation and interaction of created forms: its domain is science in all its branches. There is an abstract truth which concerns itself with first causes and the fundamental meaning of life: its domain is religion and metaphysics. There is what, for want of a better term, I may call a subjective or emotional truth which concerns itself with my own attitude, with man's attitude, to the things of life and to the totality of creation: its domain is art.

Art I have elsewhere defined as that activity of the human mind and soul which awakens and directs an emotional response to what is not I. Inasmuch as it is the aim of art to express a purely human reaction to the phenomena of life, irrespective of individual idiosyncrasies, it may be said to destroy individuality and to fuse the common humanity inherent in us all in a primitive response to the outside world; it may be said to interpret us to ourselves—our feelings, our reaction to life; and to make the deepest in us, that which ordinarily remains unconscious or semi-conscious, articulate.

Art, then, appealing as it does, not to me as of this country or this age, but to the primeval human being in me, is of no nationality and of no time. The quality of the emotional reaction awakened and directed by art, necessarily depends on, and is tinged by, the quality of life itself as it has been from the beginning of the world. That quality, being inherent in the very conditions of our existence on earth, has not changed and cannot change, no matter how much our so-called progress has changed the inessentials. We should, therefore, expect that the emotional reaction of mankind, as mirrored in art, must have remained the same throughout the ages. It can be demonstrated, and I have elsewhere tried to do so, that such is the case, not only in one of the art-forms, but in all. Here I must restrict myself to that art-form which uses language for its tool.

Look where you please: into Greece, Germany, Scandinavia, England. Choose what time you please: antiquity, the middle ages, modern centuries. What is the quality of the response mirrored in the greatest works of literature of no matter what time or clime? There can be only one answer: it is tragic. Where it is not so—I will mention Aristophanes, the Suabian Tales of southern Germany, Molière, Congreve—it is only apparently not so. There is a state of the human mind to which laughter is bitterer than tears. Read comedy after you have learned to cull the essentials from the inessentials, and out of its very laughter the tragic mask will stare into your face.

This, the tragic quality of the response to life, is universal. Every great work of art is fundamentally an outcry against the immortals: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport."

Who is right—the young girl and her abettor, the American author (America is a continent, not a country), or Sophocles, Shakespeare, Goethe, Tolstoi? The consensus of the latter, to whom thousands of others might be added, is unanimous.

Nor do we need to restrict ourselves to such works of art as are assignable to individual great minds as their creators. I choose at random three great poems assignable to the collective authorship of three great nations: the poems known under the name of Homer, for the Greeks; those known as the Edda, for Scandinavia; those known as the Nibelungenlied, for mediaeval Germany. What is the response they mirror and therefore awaken? It is tragic. And so is that of the Bible and other religious works. Are we to paste a happy ending on to Saul's life or the life of Jesus in order to bring these documents up-to-date? Moses did not set foot into the promised land.

It is the universal verdict of mankind at its highest that the feeling released in the human soul by the contemplation of life is tragic; and therefore, by inference, that human life itself is a tragic thing.

It may seem supererogatory to proceed. Are we going to summon Shakespeare and Goethe, Homer and Dante before the tribunal of children and of those childish minds who, with few exceptions, review our books in the daily press, in order to question the competence of greatness in giving judgment? Yet, further elucidation of the fundamentals is always called for. Birth, Life, Death never lose their interest.

What, then, is tragic?

To have greatly tried and to have failed; to have greatly wished and to be denied; to have greatly longed for purity and to be sullied; to have greatly craved for life and to receive death: all that is the common lot of greatness upon earth. It would be misery indeed, instead of tragedy if there were not another factor in the equation. It would be crushing, not exalting. The tragic quality of Moses' fate—combining the terror that crushes with Aristotle's catharsis which exalts—lies in the fact that he accepted that fate of his; that he was reconciled to it; that he rested content with having borne the banner thus far: others would carry it beyond. In this acceptance or acquiescence lies true tragic greatness: it mirrors the indomitable spirit of mankind. All great endeavour, great ambition, great love, great pride, great thought disturb the placid order of the flow of events. That order is restored when failure is accepted and when it is seen and acknowledged that life proceeds by compromises only.

Whatever may be the aspect of life presented in a work of art, it will dissolve in art only if it hold that element of tragic greatness. But needless to say that this greatness need not be an attribute of birth. Tolstoi's Polikushka strives greatly to live up to a trust though that trust be only of a paltry sum. He is as truly tragic as King Lear.

It remains my impression—as, American authors excepted, it is the universal verdict of mankind—that all of us who conceive a great aim must necessarily fail and fall short of achieving it. Ask any great man who has achieved greatly whether his achievement is of his aim; he will tell you that in the innermost depth of his heart he knows he has failed.

But it is also one of the fundamental tenets of my creed that an ideal realized would be an ideal destroyed. If God revealed Himself, He would be dead. The aim, the ideal, to be of value as a guide, must be unattainable. A beacon reached is a beacon put behind; a beacon never to be reached will always beckon. Achilles failed; and Siegfried failed. Don Quixote failed; and so did Molière's Alceste. Lear failed; and so did Caesar. Hardy's Jude failed; and so did Meredith's Beauchamp.

It is the fate of humankind. We pile Ossa on Pelion; and for our pains we are chained to a mountain-flank, like Prometheus, the bringer of light: but even in our failure we exult, because we have fought against the odds of life.

A work of art, I have said elsewhere, must have a beginning and an end and something of an infinitude between the two.

It must mirror this fate of mankind: the Promethean fate. If it does not, it is untrue in its fundamentals.

The demand for the happy ending is the demand of a childish mind. Our country is in its childhood; so we deify success. But success is failure in a higher sense. "With a thousand masts," says a German poet, "youth sails into the ocean. Quietly, on a salvaged skiff, the grey-beard drifts into the port."<sup>[8]</sup> Show me the truly great man who would not say, were he to speak truth, that in the essential aims of his striving he has failed, and I will show you a god instead of a man. As men, we can all be truly great in our own, allotted sphere; but in the essentials we are bound to fall short.

Are we expected, being men—or grown-up women—to accept the sweetish custard of our most successful authors? Give us meat and bread; and we shall show our appetite.



# THE AIM OF ART



It may be deemed, and probably is, presumption on my part to attempt a new exposition of the difficult questions: What is art? and what its aim? But, then, unless we dare we cannot do.

Is art anything that we have reason to value? Or is it a mere adornment of life which we can do without—a mere knick-knack for Dame Civilization to hang about her wrinkled neck in order to dazzle her neighbours? The answer to this latter question I shall give in a later address. For the present I shall try to make clear in a concrete way just what I mean when I say that art is that necessary activity of the human soul which mirrors and therefore awakens and directs an emotional response to the outside world.

We build houses because we must have shelter. Architecture is universally considered as one of the branches of art. Are, then, our houses manifestations of art? The mere idea makes us smile.

But in the modern city of Rome there is more than one "house" extant, built for the purposes of residence, which has stood and will stand, throughout the ages, as a document of the time when it was built. We say, it expresses those times; and since those times live in us—since we are not radically, biologically different from the people then living—it must express at least part of ourselves as well.

I will mention the so-called "Palace of Venice". Its façade has a simple, straight-lined sort of sombre and sinister beauty, with frowning cornices and embattled parapet. Since it was built, it has stood in the midst of a great city; yet it is only half a palace; half it is a castle. It is a house, a place of residence, yet ready, instantly, to be thrown into a state of defence; and as ready to be used as a threat, as a menace to overawe the populace. About its lowering magnificence there is something treacherous; just as there was something treacherous about the masculine beauty of Cesare Borgia. You shudder when you see it; just as you shudder in Venice itself when you see the "leads" behind the fragile grace of the Palace of the Doges. Those leads were the things conditioned by that grace.

The Roman palace expresses the feelings of the householder of its time; it expresses the *human reaction* of its builder to his surroundings: constant fear and constant watchfulness; but also supercilious, armoured arrogance; and an almost ferocious pride. Inasmuch as these things are expressed in its masses, lines, and details, in a manner as nearly perfect as any human thing can be, the building is a work of art. Here was life at its best, smooth, rich, magnificent: but what was the price that had to be paid for it?

Nearer home we have a few examples of, *mutatis mutandis*, almost the same type of building. They are primitive structures in which perhaps few people, even among those who see them daily, have ever been conscious of seeing some of the finest specimens of new-world art; and that in spite of the fact that every time they consciously look at them, they succumb to their subtle influence on mind and soul. I will mention Lower Fort Garry on the Red River in Manitoba; and the bastion at the foot of Bastion street in Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. These are vastly more valuable, architecturally and as works of art, than all the Easter-cake elaboration of our western—or, for that matter, eastern—Parliament Buildings, Universities, Agricultural Colleges, Court-Houses, and Banks, more especially when these are built with "artistic" pretensions: we have not yet crystallized our attitude to life into architectonic symbols: perhaps we never shall.

On account of their importance for my argument I will give two more examples of the same principle taken from architecture. I choose that art-form for exemplification with this very thing in view that, to the layman, a building is rarely associated with the idea of feelings or of an emotional response to the world as we conceive it to be.

The first of these examples is the Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens in Greece. It stands in ruins. Its beautiful ornaments are scattered throughout the museums of European nations. And for our reasoning both facts are fortunate; for thus nobody can attribute the effect which the building still has on us to inessentials. I challenge anyone who approaches the ruins with an unprejudiced, pure, and receptive mind to defend himself against a very peculiar shade of awe, as of a presence from another world. The very essence of our reaction to all that is mysterious in what surrounds us—the *animistic* reaction to nature—is there. This reaction was very strong, very dominant, very persistent in the Greek mind. It is reflected in all their sacred buildings. I remember succumbing to it with peculiar force when I first beheld the two Doric temples at the ancient Paestum in Italy, south of the peninsula of Amalfi, on the shores of the Tyrrhenian Sea.

As my second example, also from sacred architecture, I have chosen the Gothic structure of the cathedral at Strasburg in

the Alsace; the reason for this choice being that the reaction which finds expression in this building is almost the opposite of the animistic reaction of the Greeks.

The limit of the time allotted to me forbids that I should point out more than two features of this contrast.

The severity and simplicity of the general outline of the Greek temple suggests seclusion, safety, a holy-of-holies where the goddess dwells: Athena, virgin, wise, and armed. Outside, perhaps, lurks chaos; evil spirits lie in ambush, peering, inspiring the noon-day panic of Pan who gave his name to that feeling: the fear of everything, of the unknown, of all that is possible or that can be imagined, arising suddenly and without apparent cause, like a flood which, when the dam of reason has broken, engulfs our sanity. Within, inside the temple—the house or dwelling of the goddess—there is order, mysterious quiet, shelter from whatever threatens. When I am caught in a storm, I hurry and run till I escape under a roof: such was the feeling of him who entered the peristyle of the temple: such is still our feeling when we approach it.

The Gothic cathedral is not the dwelling-house of God—that is a pagan idea. It is the house where the worshippers assemble and cry and call upward, raising their hands and spires to the heaven above: the vaulted heaven of the mysterious arches. The whole outline of the architectural masses is such a cry to God. Men's bodies grovel on the floor; but their spirits reach up and storm the firmament. Inside, the interior is divided into nave and aisles, divided lengthwise, so as to accentuate this one direction, upward, into freedom and air. A study of the actual dimensions confirms this.

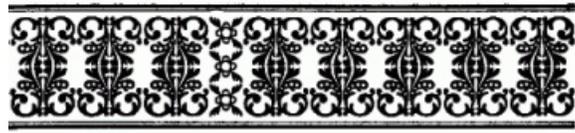
And details! The Greek filled the metopes, the frieze, and the pediments with scenes from the life of the goddess, calm and dignified as befitted her dwelling; the sculptures have reference to nothing but her service and cult. The Gothic structure, unless seen from a distance, seems to break up into component ornaments. If the Greek building is a unit mass, the Gothic building is a collective body. It swarms with images of vegetable, animal, and human life: sinners all, unredeemed and crying for salvation at the hands of God; or even, in a satanistic mood, scoffing at it; but by their very scoffs still acknowledging His power. Windows flower into rosettes; pillars grow from slender bundles of canes; water spouts from gargoyles grotesquely spitting rain from swollen cheeks: swarming, grovelling, writhing details: all nature assembled in its thousandfold, myriad-shaped forms; a veritable army of creatures, sometimes uncreated, normal or misshapen, straight or contorted; a whole world pulsating, vibrating with a strange sort of life, an underground life, as it were, laughable and sublime, which seems to arrange itself into a grand procession, into a single gesture, all crowding upward, all crying upward, out of sin to salvation, in one movement, with one voice, upward, to God!

Such is the human reaction, perfectly expressed, of mediaeval mankind to the wider world-consciousness which it called God. The cathedral, expressing without residue and for all times, this human reaction, is one of the supreme works of art which we have on earth to-day.

It would be possible to show that all great works of other art-forms, without exception, express the human reaction to some part or to the totality of the outside world. The forms of art are many; its aim is one; and it consists in the clear and unequivocal expression of the generally human, that is tragic response of the soul to the fundamental conditions of man's life on earth. I say "generally human"; for this response or reaction is independent of nationality, individuality, station in life, and education. Contrary to the common prejudice I do not rank that work of art highest which, for its comprehension, presupposes an initiation into the arcana of particular schools. A work of the intellect may be of great value though it be accessible to only a chosen few. A work of art must make its final appeal to the masses, or it is of no value whatever. It may, like the light of the stars, take centuries to reach the masses; but, as a potentiality, that appeal must be there. Yet, by "the masses" I do not mean the "reading public"; but rather the wider, the underlying masses who do not read lightly and who, after all, still carry the flame of life through wars and disasters—just as they carried it through the dark ages—and who will carry it even through the insane flickers of the rush-light antics of our so-called civilization—those masses who live stolidly and stubbornly, and who live near to God.

Supposing, then, that what I contend is sketched and suggested rather than elaborately explained and proved—proof is beyond the scope of a short address like this—namely that art, as art, is concerned with giving a universal expression to the human reaction to the outside world—what is the value and importance of art to us: to you and myself? That will form the subject of my next address.

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# THE VALUE OF ART



MAN is an animal; primary instincts teach him to seek for food, shelter, and a chance to reproduce his kind. But he is also a god; his secondary instincts drive him to classify the multifarious forms and phenomena of creation in a rude sort of classification which he calls science; to delve into first causes and to find a meaning in his existence, dignifying the results of his search by such names as religion and philosophy; and lastly, to define to himself his own attitude, whether of joy or of grief, toward the outside world and life by his endeavours in the realm of art.

That these secondary activities spring from fundamental instincts is shown by the fact that they have appeared independently in every race, even the least refined that has arisen on earth. Wherever nature was conquered to the extent that the search for the primaries did no longer claim every minute of the waking day, the leisure thus gained was employed to arrive at truth in the secondaries which constitute what has been called man's higher life.

Kirghiz hordes break into song on Siberian steppes where they ride along in endless files, on half-starved ponies, driving their stunted cattle from pasture to pasture: a vast, melancholy utterance full of their almost inarticulate realization of man's forlorn position in the face of a hostile barrenness of nature. Norse wanderers, driven beyond the sea by hunger, erected shapeless mounds as a sort of dull protest against death and the cessation of things; and perhaps as an expression of their longing for some small measure of immortality right here on earth. In the pioneer districts of present-day western Canada old men and women from all quarters of the globe bend over dog-eared and frayed copies of the Bible and other cherished books, painstakingly spelling out words and sentences which express what they feel.

On the whole these latter read vastly better literature than the facile city clerk who buys the current magazines of fiction; for under such a process of reading—the pointing finger and the muttering lip—only a very good book will stand up; what is not solidly built breaks down.

The characteristic thing about the three examples which I have quoted is that in all three cases primitive man turns to art to find relief for something that is working in him. Would he do so unless art were the product of an inner urge? Would he do so if it were no more than the idle amusement of a leisure hour?

Art is one of the necessary, universal activities of mankind, as unavoidable as science or religion. It is born by an instinct bred and created into the innermost constitution of the human soul. It interprets us to ourselves, our feelings, our response to life; it makes us emotionally articulate.

Of value? Let us see.

I have, in my previous address, tried to show in a concrete way that a work of art expresses the human reaction to the outside world. The examples by means of which I did so were taken from architecture. I will, then, for a moment longer stay with that art-form and refer back to the examples which I have so briefly discussed.

Suppose you had never felt the noon-day panic so familiar to the Greek—because he was so little removed from what we may call barbarism; for it is of the very essence of the animistic consciousness of nature—or that you had never heard, in your heart, the cry "de profundis", the cry to God so familiar to the mediaeval Christian; and suppose, at the same time, you were ordinarily susceptible to the influence of art—and everyone who is not is in some peculiar way deficient, mentally or emotionally—and you were suddenly transposed to the threshold of the Parthenon as it stood, on the Acropolis of Athens, in the year 400 B.C.—and afterwards to the interior of the Strasburg cathedral as it stands today: should you or should you not, for the first time in your lives, at the threshold of the one, experience the feeling that you must remove your shoes because you are treading on holy ground; and should you or should you not, for the first time in your lives, in the nave of the other, feel your spirit soaring upward and crying upward, to Him who alone can save you from the grovelling of the worm in the dust?

If you answer "yes", then you have answered the question as to the value of art.

For who will deny that it is a valuable function to unite all souls in a common feeling, a common emotion: there lies the very foundation of all true civilization. Who will deny that it is a valuable function to awaken in us emotions new to our experience: there lies the very wealth of the inner life of every individual on earth. To strip us of the artificial gew-gaws of a material civilization—of our station in life, our informational education, and to create and direct an emotional

response—the response of our common humanity—to release the generally human reaction, ordinarily suppressed in the give-and-take of the day—the reaction to the outer world and to human life as it is?

But the thing needs only to be pointed out to make itself clear. In fact, whether you want to or not, you cannot get away from the all-pervading influence of art. The only question is whether you are willing to clear heart and soul of all the rubbish that accumulates in the fierce competition of economic struggles.

In every reading lesson which you took when you were children; in every speech of cultured men and women to whom you listened, getting it perhaps at the third or fourth hand, you heard an echo of Homer or Shakespeare, Dante or Goethe. In every building at which you look in walking through the streets of a city you can trace, in what little there is pleasing in it, a reflection of harmonies that first arose in the minds of Dorian or Ionian artists on the shores of the Aegean Sea. Even in the terrific "jazz" of our blaring gramophones we catch an occasional concrescence of sound which first haunted the soul of a Beethoven or a Handel. And wherever we meet with such a reflection of a reflection, it strikes home; it wakens a response in us; it widens out our consciousness of ourselves; it enriches our lives and helps in making us articulate. The question is merely whether we are willing and intelligent enough to go to the sources direct and to leave undiluted by adulteration what we can have pure for the asking.

How many of us would be able to make our reactions to life and its attendant circumstances more than rudely clear to ourselves if art did not come to our assistance? Our emotional, yes, our sensational lives would be extraordinarily poor if they were not quickened by our experiences in the world of art. Art gives us a tongue with which to speak in more than a stammer; an ear with which to hear what is not a mere noise; an eye with which to see the glory of a mountain top or of the sea in a storm; and that no matter what social stratum or class of income tax we may belong. A purely scientific mind would be strangely grey and colourless; a purely religious one, strangely austere.

I venture to make the seemingly bold statement that what our statesmen and orators call "our great material civilization"—without the enormous background which the accumulated art of by-gone centuries and alien races has given it—would be no more than sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. In fact, an amazing fraction of it is just that to-day.

Yes, I will go still further in boldness. I will say that a nation's endeavours in the realm of art are vastly more important for each single one of its members, for the nation itself, and for mankind at large than all its efforts to secure material prosperity and glory. For the individual, because there is necessarily a certain accessibility about that which was created under familiar climatic, political, and social conditions; for the nation, because, in contradistinction to controversial science and to the schism of churches, art cross-sections the communities and is the most powerful tool in creating an inner cohesion; for mankind at large, because all rivers flow into the sea and help to swell its floods. Man can live under all sorts of material conditions short of actual starvation; man does; and he does so in this our vaunted country wherein milk and honey flow. But take from him what little he holds on to, at least in the west, of his perhaps dark reachings into wider realms, and you turn him into a beast.<sup>[9]</sup> The endeavours of this our nation in the world of art help us, or should do so, to find an inner, a truer relation to that which surrounds us on every hand.

The very wealth of the inner life of every person, to-day as millennia ago, depends on the diversity and the depth of his emotional reactions. What we really know of this world in which we live is limited by the range of the things to which we react emotionally. Our emotional reactions are the one, fundamental reality, the one, only thing which we really know and which at bottom concerns us. What do we know of the nature of birth and death except how we react to them?

And on the other hand, what is the material civilization of the Greeks to us? Let us be honest though we force the pupils of our high schools to memorize a vast mass of so-called facts about it; it is nothing. But Greek art still lives in word and stone; it still helps a few of us directly to realize ourselves. Unless we have fundamentally changed—and nothing tends to confirm such a presumption—history will repeat itself as it has always repeated itself in the past. Our material civilization, proud as it seems to us when we do not scan its seamy side too closely, is doomed to crumble and to make way for other things; sooner or later "there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down". What, then, will be left?

Perhaps it is only natural that the growing generation, left without guidance in the essentials, should frequent the sensational cinema to whip its prematurely jaded nerves into some kind of response; perhaps it is only natural that they should flit about, over the face of this earth, in the cars with which their parents, blinded themselves, have provided them, as if for nothing but the sake of fast motion and quick waste; and that they should take down the radio receiver in

preference to a volume of Shakespeare's. Yet it needs to be said that not from such can we expect a deepening of our lives, a steadying of our purpose, a helping hand in the grim task of facing life and eternity.

It needs to be said and repeated that life is fundamentally the same as it was at the dawn of history. Man as such and human life as such have not changed, though we try to delude ourselves into a belief that they have. Man is fundamentally what he was when he wrote the psalms and sang the Iliad; and the psalms and the Iliad are still more potent for an ultimate good than any, however perfect, spinning-jenny. Material civilizations rise and fall; and the wind takes care of their fame. Spiritual civilizations endure.

What we need is dreamers who will stop and listen into themselves instead of mirroring the insane scrambling which goes on about us; who will go into the wilderness to discover new continents, not in any unexplored or undiscovered ocean, but in the human heart and soul. I have a haunting suspicion that that is the only corner left in this world where undiscovered continents are still abounding. Let us find worlds within the world to which we have not yet reacted.



# THE NOVEL



THE question which I propose to treat of in what follows may seem to be in no need of an answer. Nearly everybody believes that he knows that answer. Yet, how many have ever given any real thought to just what the novel is?

Now, first of all, it is one of the forms of literary art. The aim of art—to define man's emotional reaction to life or to the outer world, to all that is not I—is one and indivisible; the methods which artists employ to achieve that aim are as manifold as human temperaments. According to the method employed, there are many forms of art.

One of them uses words or language for its tool; it we call literature.

True literature is that in the given utterances of a given age and country which, by virtue of its excellence and general validity, will endure; which will remain as the document of its time and origin throughout the ages.

Within the realm of literature we have the province of narrative art.

This branch of literature has, during the last two or three centuries, assumed an importance which is phenomenal and unheard-of in the history of the last two or three thousand years. The reason is, of course, that, with the development of printing, the circle of readers has enormously widened; the circle of listeners and spectators has almost proportionately contracted. Even true plays are more commonly read these days than seen. Naturally, then, prose narration, conceived and written to be read, not memorized and recited to an audience, is the form most commonly chosen by the artist of today as the one most directly adapted to his purpose which is, of course, to waken an emotional reaction and response, in the largest possible number, to a given set of conditions, data, circumstances, events, and characters.

If, then, we take the vast mass of works of more or less permanent value which have accumulated under this heading of narrative prose, we find that we can roughly classify them in three groups which, for our present purpose, have a special significance. In ascending order of importance (without prejudice to their artistic value), we might call them The Tale, The Short Story, and The Novel. All three try to achieve the aim common to all art by depicting a section of human life.

In order to define the novel, I cannot do better than briefly delineate the border lines between the three groups.

Edgar Allan Poe wrote Tales. He took his subject matter, as it has been well said, from the border-provinces of human life—in contradistinction to its main stream. Poe presents things which happen "on the margin of life".

From this follows one important deduction: the tale is not *socially significant*.

Its incidents may have the interest of anecdotes, the charm of dreams, the novelty of a surprise; its characters may be interesting as pathological cases or as physiological accidents, like a man with either a diseased liver or with a hump-back on his shoulders or six fingers on his hands. But no conclusion can be drawn from either incidents or characters as to the state of society in which they are set.

The tale is not necessarily a short narrative: the Russian Dostoievski, the Pole Joseph Conrad have written tales of five hundred pages each.

But the secret of its appeal and at the same time its limitation lies in this that it consists of accidental or incidental things. It deals with the unusual, in character as well as in event. It satisfies our occasional appetite for the adventurous, the mysterious, or the horrible.

In juvenile literature, we have, characteristically, the Fairy Tale. In literature written for adults, we have Hoffmann, De Quincey, Poe, Chesterton, Conrad, the greater part of Hamsun's work, and many others. In its vile and decrepid degeneration, it has flooded the market with Conan Doyle and his congeners, satisfying at last no human need any longer except the itch of a vulgar curiosity.

The feature, to repeat, which marks it off from Short Story and Novel is the unusual quality in character and incident; to put it briefly, its "marginal" quality.

Both Short Story and Novel, on the other hand, deal with *socially significant* things from the main stream of life. In them,

both characters and happenings must be more or less typical for a given society. They must be the normal, natural growth of given conditions actually existing in our midst. In reading them, we must be living the lives depicted as if they were our own.

The exceptional, the unusual thing in character or incident has no place in either except in so far as it may be exceptional or unusual merely in degree, being the quintessence of the typical. In this respect, in fact, it is imperative, if the short story or the novel is to be of value, that the unusual element enter largely into its composition. But of that I shall speak a little further on. In life, a pure type is rarely met with; you and I, and our next-door neighbour are mixed types; but in art the pure type has demonstrated its vitality;<sup>[10]</sup> that is all we can say unless we wish to reason from a-priori premises.

Next, then, what, summarized in a very few words, is the difference between short story and novel? Is it a mere difference in length? No; for there are true novels in existence which are shorter than certain true short stories. Let us see.

In studying anatomy, the medical student is sometimes puzzled by the difference in behaviour of certain parts of the animal body according as these parts and their reactions are studied within the body or excised—*in situ* I believe the medical phrase has it, or *in vitro*.

The short story presents characters or incidents, or more commonly both, "excised" from the social body or *in vitro*.

A character with which it deals it takes for granted; it defines it and shows it in reaction to one single crisis, choosing, of course, most commonly the chief emotional crisis in the life of that character. The conditions under which the incident or the crisis takes place, it merely outlines, without relating them to the wider social background in which they lie embedded.

The Russians Gorki and Tchechov, the German Keller, the Frenchman Maupassant—at least at his best—the Englishmen Quiller-Couch, Hardy, Walpole, Hope, Galsworthy have written true short stories in which some phase of the human life of their times is epitomized.

Like the short story, the novel presents an emotional crisis in the life of its hero or heroine.

But the emotional crisis is not barely "sprung" on the reader; it is led up to from its antecedents in circumstance and character; its unavoidable necessity is shown.

The characters of the men and women involved in it are not, as in the short story, merely depicted and taken for granted; they are explained and developed from their initial impulses, their origins—and unfolded by their reactions to circumstance—successes and failures, human contacts.

From a series of novels written at various periods of a given century, it would be possible to write the history of the manners and morals of that century, within the social strata with which they deal. For, if a given work be a true novel, it will root the crisis and the characters involved in it in the social conditions of the period which it depicts.

Knut Hamsun's *Growth of the Soil*; Tolstoi's *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, *Resurrection*; Mann's *Buddenbrooks*; Balzac's *Les Illusions Perdues*; Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*; George Meredith's *Richard Feverel*, *The Egoist*, *Harry Richmond*—all these are true novels, to mention only a few. As for American authors, from this or the other side of the border, I am at a loss to name one which I should care to class with any one of these.

Let me summarize.

The novel, as a work of art using the form of prose narration, presents an emotional crisis in the life of its hero, developing that crisis from the data of ordinary, every-day life, and at the same time unfolding the potentialities dormant within the hero's character which must be such that we feel, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

Is there any domain of life which is excluded from treatment in the novel? To my mind, there is none. If the novel is to be read, it must interest, of course. Personally, I have certain aversions. Thus marriage, to me, is a beginning, not an end: the problem of sex is broached, not solved at the altar. For that reason I abominate the common love-story—the story of prenuptial love—almost as violently as I abhor the gramophone, the telephone, or the radio. In life, both young men and young maids are peculiarly uninteresting at a time when they see each other as they are not. Apart from that, judging as a

reader, anything is grist that comes to my mill.

Perhaps, from what I have said, and considering that I dabble in this field myself, you will say that my idea of the novel is rather ambitious. It is. It is as ambitious as my idea of the tragedy.

Having briefly defined the subject matter of the novel, it remains for me to say a few words about its treatment of that subject matter. And nothing will help me so much to make clear what I mean as a brief reference to the tragedy; for the simple reason that I can refer to a writer of tragedies whom I may presume to be universally known.

Shakespeare, in a series of tragedies, has treated various socially significant aspects and relations of human life. For instance, the relation between a father and his grown-up children, in *King Lear*; or between a boy and a girl who fall in love, in *Romeo and Juliet*; or between a jealous man and his wife, in *Othello*; or between an over-ambitious man and the world in which he lives, in *Macbeth*.

Having once grasped his problem, having isolated it, as it were, he proceeded to build it out into almost titanic proportions. Every father is a King Lear. The eternal conflict between parents and children results always in some sort of a tragedy. If the children are vitally stronger, the tragedy is that of the parents; if the parents are vitally stronger, the tragedy is that of the children. Ordinarily, in every-day life, these are small tragedies, shot with comedy and a good deal of neutral life which is neither. In order to make the relation as he saw it a fit subject for his art, Shakespeare raised the conflict to a plane where we think we see demons and demi-gods pitched against each other in some twilight of subversion. The slights inflicted on their parents by ordinary, every-day children seem to be enormities committed by Goneril and Regan.

Only thus could they have that unlimited appeal which, in the audience, demolishes individuality and fuses a thousand divergent minds into a mass whose feelings sway jointly and willingly according to the dictate of the poet.

Shakespeare was one; novelists are many and of many ranks. But unless the novelist does something of that nature, he will never really take hold of his readers' hearts and minds. Out of any given conflict he must distil its very essence, he must concentrate, must saturate his solution of it; he must raise it to a plane above the pettiness of cavil and rebellion on the part of his readers. Life, in order to become a fit subject for art, must be reborn in the spirit. It must show connections more clearly; it must lay bare significances more ruthlessly and conclusively than the most tragic reality ever does.

It is this fact—that the case, in a novel, is necessarily overstated—together with the second fact that the novel condenses and omits and thereby rearranges the whole aspect of life, making the picture fundamentally truer than any mere reality can be, because we never see reality as a whole (for only a work of art has a beginning and an end)—which makes unsympathetic or unsusceptible people say, "That is not how things proceed in real life!" The point is that, were it, the novel would no more be art than a newspaper report or the minutes of a proceeding in chancery. A novel must be a whole; it must have beginning and end; and something of an infinitude between the two.

I come to the last point in this bird's-eye view. There are hundreds of thousands of so-called novels in existence. Out of this enormous mass every reader will probably pick a different set for his library. His choice will be determined largely by chance. Yet every reader reads many more novels than he would care to pick for the companions of his life. So do I.

What is the test by the help of which I accept or reject?

As a young man I did my accepting and rejecting instinctively, that goes without saying. But as the years piled up, I came to formulate my judgments in a more or less precise way. I did that exactly as the centuries do it, by looking back and analysing those books which "had stayed with me". I came to look for three things in a book. Finding none of them, I rejected it; finding one or two, I said the book was not without its merits; finding three, I knew that I had indeed made a "find".

These three things I have come to call Power, Depth, Beauty.

Beauty, to me, is that which makes me go back to a thing. After a possible lesson contained in a book has been assimilated; after its characters have been understood; after the incidental curiosity interest has been satisfied—there remains, about that which is artistically well-done, a challenge and a provocation which leaves a desire to be again thus challenged and fascinated; in fact, this challenge and fascination is heightened, not lessened, by a second experience. A good book tempts to look back rather than forward.... I need hardly add that this quality has nothing whatever to do with

the presentation of so-called beautiful things. An ugly thing may be described, a revolting scene may be presented in such a way as to give the treatment this element of beauty in the highest degree.

Depth I might define as significance. If the author of the book succeeds in forcing me to supply the background of human nature; if he compels me to fill in the thousand and one things which must necessarily remain unsaid; if he conveys to me the feeling that what he gives is given as a significant sample only of the enormous mass of things which he might have given but did not give; and if, at the same time, he makes me divine at least their trend; if, in reading, I am conscious not only of what is explicitly "denoted"—by the words as well as by the scenes presented—but also of the much larger number of things which are "connoted" only—in other words, if I am conscious, not so much of the author's leadership, as of the enormously stimulated activity of my own mind—then I say the book has depth. I am speaking, here, of course, of fiction only; for it may be quite different in the literature of science; but with this restriction I would say that no author has depth who speaks his whole mind. He who, having made a survey of what he has to say, says one third of it and scatters the rest between the lines gives a depth and a relief to his utterance which is the most inspiring thing which I can imagine. It is depth in a book which rouses the reader to the exertion of his own powers. A book which does not so rouse me I lay aside as paying me the poorest compliment an author can pay me, namely that of presuming that he must do my thinking for me.

Power in a book is the ability to make the reader see. By seeing I do not mean the mere process of reproducing in my mental vision the aspect of a thing—or its sound, smell, or taste, or even its emotional content. I may have looked at a thing a thousand times and yet never have seen it. To see it, in its true significance, in its relation to other things, in a true and yet novel bearing, as a part of that web of things and events which we call the totality of human life—that is the function of the artistic temperament. If to this artistic temperament there is joined the ability to make others see, then we have what I call artistic power. Whenever I read a new book, I ask myself what new thing, unknown to me, I have learned to see by reading this book. There are a thousand different methods to achieve this power; what does the method matter so long as the aim is achieved? Power is the ability of making you see, so that you stop and marvel because you never saw before. It consists in the moving up of the thing to be seen, so close that you cannot get away from it; that you must look and cannot turn your back. That you see, not only it, but through it human life, recognizing with a sudden thrill its whole, abounding significance.

Measured by this triple standard, I have, in my own little library, perhaps thirty novels, of which perhaps ten are in English—novels which I value as being of the very first order of excellence.

If we, you and I, as far as we are readers, accepted only what measures up to such a standard; and if we rejected ruthlessly what falls short, then we should soon have less books to bewilder us; but, since it is only human nature in our many authors to give us more or less what we demand, we should perhaps have a Canadian literature worthy to exalt our name among the nations.



# NATIONHOOD

[An address delivered to twenty-odd Canadian clubs.]



YOU hear a great deal, these days, of the inexhaustible resources of this Dominion. I have no doubt they are very great. Just how great, I, not being versed in such matters, must leave to others to estimate and to ascertain.

Great, too, are the resources of such stretches of land as the Atacama Desert or of those islands off the Pacific Coast of South America whence guano is shipped to all quarters of the globe.

Great, in dim antiquity, seemed the resources of Spain to the ancient Romans. There is a tradition that the same Romans coveted Britain because its soil held tin. No doubt many of those barbarous Britons grew very rich through the trade. In fact, we read in Tacitus that, with the Roman trade, such "alluring vices"—his word for luxuries—"such alluring vices as the porch in front of the house, the bath with hot and cold water, and the pride and pomp of the formal dinner-table" found their way into the remotely northern province. But the canny old philosopher adds, "This sort of thing they, in their ignorance, called culture whereas it was merely part of their slavery."<sup>[11]</sup>

It is a comfortable thing to sit back and to listen to our orators exalting the seemingly infinite wealth of that country which happened to give us birth or home. We like to feel flattered by the illusion that, when our wealth is praised, at least part of the glory redounds to our credit. Does it?

Those among us who were born in this country could not very well help themselves even though they might wish to have been born in warmer climes; and had they been born in poor Serbia or on the barren rocks of Greece, they would have had to be satisfied, too. Those who came from choice, I suspect, showed largely that they had sense enough to go where milk and honey flow.

We may wish to feel that we have developed this country faster than any country has ever been developed before. Is that a fact? The truth of the matter is that, in the settlement of this country, there was repeated the age-old story of all colonial settlements—and not always has it been a creditable story. Thus was Aeolia settled in Asia Minor; thus Sicily between the Ionian and Tyrrhenian Seas; thus the coast of Massilia which became Narbonensic Gaul and is to-day the south of France. Credit? Credit to whom? To chance? To geologic processes? To God? Of a certainty, not to us.

Is wealth or—the same thing under another name—material civilization at any time or in any country a thing to boast of? It is a well-known fact that genius is commonly rewarded by the erection of statues to the dead—whereas in life it went hungry. It is a no less well-known fact that Greece decayed when it grew rich; that Rome never developed that indigenous culture of which the republic had exhibited the germs because it grew rich before it had done so. Wealth produces at no time true values.

While travelling, recently, in the east of this great Dominion, I heard one of our orators prophesy that Canada, by virtue of its still untapped resources, was destined one day to become the centre of the British Empire. The assertion contained nothing new. One day, indeed, Canada may be able to feed those parts of the British Empire which are unable to feed themselves. It will continue—as it does already—to supply the world with nearly all its nickel. It will send its coal around the globe. It is probable that it will mine its magnetite ores and ship them west to be smelted into iron and steel. It will do all these things the moment it will "pay" to do so. The empire of Rome was fed by Egypt and Sicily. What, apart from that, was Sicily to the ancient world at the time? What is it to us to-day? Thus Canada has already become the granary of the British Isles.

Is that our ambition? If so, our ambition is small.

Let me, before I proceed with my topic, point out a danger lurking in such a situation. Spain, Sicily, Egypt—like Canada and the United States—were, by the accident of their being colonial countries, prematurely brought into contact with advanced material civilizations for which they were at bottom not prepared.

In the past, true civilizations have grown out of a spiritual soil, not a material one. Is the course of evolution going to be reversed in our favour? But spiritually no nation was ever prepared to make a profitable use of a great material civilization unless it was also prepared to scoff at the very blessings which such a civilization had to bestow. Yes, if a

great material civilization was bestowed upon a people which was spiritually not prepared for it, it has ever had but one effect, and that a coarsening one which has necessarily prevented the deeper nature of that people from maturing its finest blossoms. That is the situation we are facing to-day. It has been thus with ancient Spain, ancient Sicily, and the Egypt of Roman times. They did not produce true civilizations of their own. Is that what we covet for Canada? Aeolia, on the other hand, produced the Homeric poems and that whole pelagic civilization which they reflect. The Aegean islands produced the finest lyric poetry of which we have record—a poetry so precious that we hoard single fragmentary lines with the feeling of infinite loss because there is no more.

But Canada has been aspiring to nationhood; and it has realized some of its international ambitions. Is Canada going to be content with the part which Spain played in the Roman Empire?

Material resources are not going to give us a right to be proud of ourselves. The true importance of nations as well as individuals can never be measured by economic standards. We cannot claim to be great because we are rich. What is Lucullus to us? What Trimalchio? Except inasmuch as the latter furnished the central figure for an immortal satire?

Let me, at the outset, state it as my fundamental belief that we, in the present, cannot be truly great except through what posterity will call so. Posterity is a word we hear all too rarely to-day. For with nations as with individuals, "Fame is the recompense, not of the living, but the dead".<sup>[12]</sup>

That will simplify matters; for I need now only enquire what has made nations in the past in order to know what will make them in the future. Perhaps I should add that a second fundamental belief of mine is that, though the accidentals of human life have changed on earth, the essentials are to-day what they have always been. And one of the most signal lessons taught by the past is that ages of an unbridled thirst for wealth and power lead into the dark; from which I conclude that in our wealth lies our greatest menace.

Yet, when I look into the still short past of this our country, I find a few things which the people of Canada have done and of which they have a right to be proud. They afford great hope for the future. But they are not the things that are commonly mentioned.

Thus there lives, in the far east of this Dominion, a curious race: that of the French habitant. They were a conquered race once; they are a free race to-day. When they were flooded and almost drowned out by the Anglo-Saxon influx, they became a testimony to the world that a nation may be conquered by the force of arms and yet remain a nation by the strength of its inner cohesion. Who would say to-day that French Quebec, though a group separate within, and distinguished from, the rest of Canada—preserving its own religion, its own ideals, its own language, its own aims, its own art—is any the less an integral part of that Dominion than any one of the other eight provinces? Would it had been so with the aboriginal Indian! It is the highest praise, not only for French Quebec, but for the people of Canada as well, and for the principles which have become dominant within the British Empire that this unique situation has become a fact: within an Anglo-Saxon federation lives an alien race, not only willing but eager to uphold a union which at one time was forced upon it. For a contrast, look at the partitions of Poland whose parts remained foreign bodies within the kingdom of Prussia and the Russian Empire. The French race in Canada has proved itself in adversity; we can only honour it on that account; in honouring it, we honour ourselves. For the principle of the British Empire as it stands to-day is not that of the Melting-Pot; it is federation.

In speaking, during a recent tour through the east of this Dominion, to hundreds of Eastern Canadians, I found many who were opposed to present conditions. I found some who cursed the fact of confederation: not one of them was French.

If next, from Quebec, we glance at the rest of the country, we find a situation not dissimilar but applying to the whole.

South of our borders lives a mighty nation which is reaching out with its tentacles over the globe—with a view towards the Americanisation, as it is commonly called, of that globe: a nation which, by the help of two processes, has evolved a mechanical civilization unique in the modern world—the two processes being mass-production and standardization (mass-production doing away with artistic aspirations, and standardization, with individuality): a nation proud of its wealth and power and proud of its great material civilization. Yet the fact is that all over the world, even in the Latin republics of the western continents, we find to-day a certain disquietude at the growth of its influence. All over the world, that influence is, by thoughtful minds, considered as dangerous: as a shallowing of ancient standards, as a re-orientation of men's minds and desires, from things spiritual, towards things material and economic.

The very word Americanisation is a challenge to us; for though we are Canadians, we also live in America. Are we

going to allow ourselves to be identified with that tendency of our neighbours to the south which bids fair to recast the established values of life? The fight is on between the ancient ideals of Europe and those of this new America which is asserting itself from day to day. There are those who have found a name for the process: The Drift of the Nations. The centre of gravity, they assert, of the white world is shifting. If it is, what is the meaning, what the direction of that change? No better ground can be found to study that drift than the broad west of this Dominion of ours.

As I have said, civilization, in times gone by, has meant a moral and spiritual trend; it is with us, beginning to mean an economic urge, thereby losing the only meaning it can have which is worthy of man. It goes without saying that in a great nation like that to our south there are many minds who clearly see the points at issue and who are even fighting by our sides. But if we view the trend of the hour by-and-large, we cannot but come to the conclusion that, in that nation, the great Anglo-Saxon tradition as it came from Europe is in grave danger of going into eclipse. That tradition, itself part of the great European tradition—old and grey-haired perhaps, and certainly restrained and reticent, yet for all that still fiery-hearted—has been a compound of the greatest religious urge which the world has seen, that of Judah, and the greatest artistic urge which the world has seen, that of Greece. Its God has been the god of goodness and truth; its dream, that of beauty; its law, a retracing of that divine law born within us which cares for nothing but what is right; its aim, the realization of man's fullest potentialities as a creature formed in the image of God—that is, in the image of the highest perfection which the human mind can conceive.

What to-day, in contradistinction, does the word Americanisation mean? It means the re-orientation of the minds of immigrants, immigrants coming from the countries of Europe where unfortunately economic pressure has become so great as to infringe upon spiritual freedom—it means, I say, the re-orientation of these minds towards a religion, if we may call it such, whose god is a jealous god because he denies the human soul the soil in which it can grow according to laws of its own, his name being a Standard of Living;<sup>[13]</sup> towards a law which bows before economic obesity;<sup>[14]</sup> toward aims which exhaust themselves in sensual enjoyment and the so-called conquest of nature. These things have become tools devised by a new, a nascent plutocracy for the enslavement of the mind and the spirit. Thus the course of British history is becoming, before our very eyes, reversed in what is to-day so insolently called America.

What bearing has all this on my topic? This, that from it I derive one of the most hopeful signs for our own Dominion.

Canada and the United States are of pretty much the same age. But even in individual families we find the quick, brilliant boy side by side with the slow, plodding one; and not always is it the quick brilliant boy who remains at the end to show the world what stock he came from. Too often he is the prodigal son.

Thus, with her neighbour and brother growing faster and faster, Canada has slowly, slowly grown up within that neighbour's shadow. The two have lived in comparative outward peace, involved only now and then in those brawls which are the flaws in the history of Europe. But from the start they have lived in a war of principles which is, perhaps, at the present moment at its height; and the old ideals of Europe which Canada has represented<sup>[15]</sup> have had to register many a grievous defeat. Canada has had to stand the pressure of capital: one eighth, they tell me, of the industrial enterprises within its borders are owned by United States interests. Canada has stood the pressure of the example given by the shallow ease of the life led by the industrial masses across the border. Canada has stood the influx of millions upon millions of books which insinuate among us American ideas perhaps all the more subtly and effectively since they do so indirectly. Canada has stood the flood of American magazines which trumpet forth the new gospel of economic success—and as a gospel it is certainly new—more crudely perhaps, but also with a more brassy and penetrating voice which immature minds, young or old, find it hard to resist. Over cinema, gramophone, radio, and the horror of middle-western Sunday editions permit me to draw the veil of silence. And, as a consequence, Canada has lost vast numbers of its young.

I come to the point at last.

But in spite of all that, the Canadian travelling in the United States is still recognized as a Canadian. They call us slow. Let us glory in that epithet.

A few months ago a cultured and learned European on tour in the east—in a conversation I had with him—scoffed at the idea of Canada's nationhood. What, he asked, have you done to lift yourselves out from the mass of second-rate states? We have done this, I replied; we have lived for centuries in the shadow of a more powerful brother, lured and driven to imitate him. We have held out against the influence of example and pressure and almost compulsion; what but annexation is still missing in that domination exercised by a great nation over a smaller one? Suppose annexation came. Would it

mean absorption? If we can trust the testimony of the past, it would not. We should still be a separate group within a huge whole, a group with its own individual character; just as within our borders Quebec is a unit, not hostile to, but differentiated from the rest.

That I believe to be an achievement of which we may justly be proud—more justly than of the extent and the wealth of our country. It was won in the face of enormous difficulties. Proportionately, we have had an influx of alien elements no less great than the United States. It is said that in certain districts the Anglo-Saxon element is reduced to a minority. We have not, except under the excitement and the mistaken counsel of harrying circumstance, brought pressure to bear on our immigrants and forced them to kiss the flag; it was wisely done. We have relied, and in the main successfully, on the vitality of our own ideals among which toleration still stands to the fore. We have left French Canada free to participate in our common freedom; we have left other nationalities free in the same way. If we have a Ukraine in Canada, we have trusted that, provided its citizens are good Ukrainians living in Canada, they cannot help being good Canadians; and one of the proudest things we can point to to-day is the fact that there exists, in Calgary, a Ukrainian Canadian Club, a brother-club of the hundred odd others strung out from sea to sea; and the same thing will apply to the Swedens, Icelands, Volhynias incorporated within the country. We do not, as our neighbours, abominate hyphenation; we welcome it; for I repeat, the principle of the British Empire is not that of the Melting-Pot; it is federation.

Such is our achievement. Shall we rest on our laurels? A war is on; we can never rest.

What then, I will ask at last, is the essence of nationhood?

Individuality of the nation's civilization. But individuality is the very opposite of standardization.

Suppose French Canada were in no characteristic way distinguished from France—as, I believe, the purely French population of Algiers is not so distinguished—nor the English population of India. We could not, then, speak of the French-Canadian nation; just as there is no French-Algerian nation, nor an Anglo-Indian one.

If, however, nationhood manifests itself in characteristic distinction, the question arises, in what field of human endeavour does such a distinction show?

In the Bay of Fundy there is an island called Grand Manan. There are no motor cars there, nor any aeroplanes, nor radios, nor gramophones: no modern inconveniences of any kind. It is a poor island; its population has long been stationary; all who succumbed to the lure of material things have left it from generation to generation. Yet, to-day it is one of the few spots in America that have an atmosphere all their own. Were it larger, it would be a fishermen's nation.

That is another proof for the fact that a nation's characteristic criteria cannot be looked for in material things; at best these are the disguising or revealing garb of what lies below.

Where are we to look for these distinctive criteria? There is only one possible answer. We must look for them in the things of the spirit. What are they?

We often hear the word spiritual used in a narrow sense as if it had something to do with the dogmatism of the churches. But the word itself proclaims its meaning with no ambiguous sound. It tells of the old, immemorial dualism between body and mind, body and soul, body and heart. Things material concern the body—and might I just suggest in passing that even our proudest Parliament Building, as far as it is nothing else, is but a link in the chain that pulls the bread-wagon over the road? Things spiritual concern mind, soul, heart.

Consequently, the so-called higher activities of man are commonly divided into three branches: religion, science, art; and we call the three eternal values for which man strives goodness, truth, beauty.

There was a time when religion alone filled the three needs, giving us, not only a system of ethics, but a cosmogony as well, and a subject for contemplation which embodied that highest perfection which we vaguely call beauty. This fact should remind us of a fundamental unity underlying the three activities. Even to-day we cannot divide them without disastrous results. The very attempt to separate them has produced that unsettling of men's minds which we call our modern unrest. They are fundamentally one even though they represent three facets of a single crystal.

They satisfy one fundamental need of mankind: an emotional one. We wish to feel at peace and at rest with God and the world. Or, to divide the three activities again: we wish to feel in accord with a great tendency or direction which we seem to observe in nature and in history; we wish to bring our intuitions into harmony with what we see, striving after

that accurate truth which must be one and must offer no contradiction; we wish to find in all things that at which we would look again and again, for such I have come to regard as the one characteristic common to everything which we call beautiful.

But the strange and, to us, incomprehensible thing is that religion, itself a birth of the human heart, demands of us a belief in things which we cannot grasp with our minds; that science, true science, presents us on all sides with an enormous "We don't know and shall never know", tracing out for us the limits of our ignorance rather than of our knowledge, inasmuch as it gives us processes to view without explaining what brings them about; and that, thirdly, perfection in things human cannot be attained, and that, therefore, beauty is an ideal to be striven for rather than a goal to be achieved.

These three antinomies are fundamental conditions of human life; and the unity of the three branches of man's higher activities, as they are commonly called, is, therefore, a fundamentally tragic one. It spells failure; and at the end of failure waits death.

All religion, all science, all art, rightly understood, lead us on to that realization and to what I have come to call the generally tragic reaction of the human soul to the fundamental conditions of man's life on earth.

Tragic does not mean gloomy or hopeless. If it did, tragedy would not have remained, throughout the millennia, the highest form of literary art. The word implies a standing-up to one's destiny. From Moses down into the New Testament all the Biblical figures have been tragic figures: they undertook to do what cannot be done by human strength alone: they exhibit the indomitable, the Promethean nature of man.

I know very well that this is a doctrine unpopular at this hour and in this country: we are too close to our neighbours in whom what they call the conquest of nature—an inessential—has bred a shallow optimism which prevents them from seeing that life is to-day what it has always been. But no modern optimism, no labour-saving devices, no boast of natural resources will help us to be blind if we care to look. Should any one doubt, let him read the Bible. Let him read Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe. And when he has learned to cull the essentials from the inessentials, then let him read such mirthless laughter as Aristophanes' comedies, or Molière, or Congreve, or George Bernard Shaw. Out of their very laughter the tragic mask will stare into his face....

It should be easy now to define the essential characteristics of nationhood. Nationhood must depend on a new or distinctive shade in the generally tragic reaction of the human soul to the fundamental conditions of man's life on earth.

Let me speak for a moment of myself. I am a Canadian by choice. I am a Westerner by choice. I am also one who, whether successfully or not, strives after beauty. For reasons which are not relevant here I left Europe. Whether I knew it at the time or not, I was searching for an environment which would help me to express that individual, tragic reaction to life, the world, the universe—to God—which I felt to be alive within me. I sought it in vain in the United States. I found traces of it; but there was more of it in Canada; and so, after having left this country, I returned to it. What kept me in Canada, and more especially in the Canadian West was the fact that I found here more clearly than elsewhere the germs of such a new or distinctive shade in the generally tragic reaction of human souls to the fundamental conditions of man's life on earth. I did not find these germs in the great cities with their churches and schools and universities. There, life is too strenuous, too prone to conformity with the rest of the continent. I found them among the plain, rough people of the prairies.

In what did they consist?

I had come from Europe. In spite of the wranglings and disastrous dissensions among Europe's nations—consequences of an aberration of European minds from the ancient paths, aberrations which deflected European thought from what has been its greatest glory through the centuries, the pursuit of things spiritual, to a frantic pursuit of things material or economic—in spite of all that, I say, Europe, to me, still stands for the devotion to the so-called higher things of life; for that spiritual strength which has created the Christian churches; which has built the edifice of science, in spite of the clear recognition that science does not lead below and behind the surface of things but merely fights that surface back; and which has given us an art within the domain of which such names as Aeschylus, Michael Angelo, Rembrandt, and Hardy merely mark the higher peaks within a serried and seemingly chaotic mountain range, which yet remains a range and therefore shows direction.

This European tradition I still consider as the fundamentally human tradition which looks at life with a fanatical, and almost Biblical seriousness even when it smiles or jests.

That such is the case, that the European tradition is in accord with a generally human trend, is shown by the significant fact that it harmonizes in every essential point with the great traditions of India and of the utmost east. Interpretations and conclusions differ widely between east and west; but interpretations and conclusions are arrived at by the erring mind; the fundamental, emotional reaction is arrived at by the never erring soul. That is the reason, too, why ancient art is still with us; and ancient religious feeling; and the spirit in which the ancients sought for truth. The conclusions of ancient science, it is true, are almost forgotten. But then, in whatever stage we may look at science, essentially it remains a search which would end if God revealed Himself.

In the general reaction, then, to life and the universe, of the people living in certain districts of the west of Canada, I discovered a continuation of this old European tradition, as distinguished from the new-born American tradition which has not yet found its way to the fundamentals.

But I discovered also something which subtly diverges from the European tradition. Europe is troubled to-day by a resurgence of old economic troubles—the same that led to the organization and the downfall of the Roman Empire and to the disastrous migrations of the dark ages.

That something as well as the clearer traces of the European tradition I shall have to try to define in some way or other; but before I attempt it, I wish to wind up my central argument.

That Canada is one day going to be the economic centre of the British Empire, may well be; those who know more about such things than I do assert it; but it is nothing to boast of. We did not lay down the clay of its plains which bears its wheat-fields. We did not lift up its mountains nor wear them down to the point where they reveal their hidden treasures. We can boast only of what we have done ourselves. We can boast of the fact that we have stood out against the enormous pressure exerted upon us by a more powerful sister-nation; and that we still represent an individuality in the American family. If we are worthy and able to hold on to and make truly ours what was handed down to us by our fathers—whether those fathers lived in the British Isles or in Central Europe or in the Eastern provinces of this Dominion—if we prize our spiritual heritage above material things, then, perhaps, in the distant, and yet, as the lives of nations go, not too distant future, Canada stands a chance of counting as one of the spiritual units which will go to make up a greater British Empire: just as Greece came to mean, not Athens or Sparta, but Asia Minor and the Sporadic Islands as well. Canada has been tested, in the past, in a way unique in modern history; it has stood the test. And that is all we can say at the present moment. The future lies on the knees of the gods.

It remains for me to define or perhaps rather to illustrate what I found in certain strata of the ever-changing population of the west. What I found was a preoccupation with the essentials and fundamentals of life rather than with the inessentials and accidentals; and, characteristically, as I have hinted, I found that preoccupation in the poverty-stricken pioneer districts rather than in the well-settled and prosperous districts. By that I do not necessarily mean to say that I found it prevailing in the nature of a passing phase; though that, too, was and is only too often the case. In spite of the fact that, for the moment, it is geographically segregated, I have observed signs of its spreading through the populations of whole provinces like a leaven.

It consists in the unification of such a spiritual reaction to life and the world as I have spoken of. And history teaches us that, viewed from the vantage-ground of the millennia, such a national movement of spiritual experience—we might call it a unified, national movement of art and thought, or of art and religious feeling—has so far proved to be the only thing which has ever justified the existence of any nation on earth. Material civilizations rise and fall, and the wind takes care of their fame. Spiritual civilizations endure. For an example, look at Greece or at Judah.

It is the spiritual content or achievement of a civilization which makes it endure for after ages. Greece and Judah are a reality to-day even though, as political units, they have fallen into the dust; just as the spiritual achievement of individual men is the only thing which remains when they lie under the sod. The reason is that a spiritual achievement furthers mankind on its way—on that way which we must infer to be the way of a trend hidden in events, whether that trend be enforced by a divine will or inherent in a process which we have come to call evolution.

These men and women of the Canadian West—where, I believe, they form larger groups than elsewhere, groups composed of all nationalities—often stand distinctly opposed to what we call the proud march of our great material civilization which is, properly speaking, the great material civilization of our neighbours to the south. Don't think for a moment that there is an essential difference in the level of intelligence between city and country. The rural dweller may not have the ready phrase bred by the quick and incessant intercourse of the market-place. But the most intelligent

discussions of national problems I, for one, have heard in the open country. But what I want to touch on has little to do with the intellect. It lies deeper.

In an age gone insane with transportation and speed—an age forgetting eternal things in the hunt for material things—an age reaching out, no longer for happiness, but for pleasure and comfort and for that ease of life which, by the very conditions of man's existence on earth, is denied us—in such an age these men and women of whom I am speaking stand unmoved: like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; like the British yeoman of old; like the present-day mid-European peasant: concerned with eternally valid things, things valid no matter where life is lived, no matter when; concerned with the problem of right living rather than with the problem of acquiring wealth; concerned with goodness, truth, beauty: the goodness of the home, hearth and breeding-place of the greatness of nations; the truth of their own, individual reactions to life and the world—reactions which to-day are largely those of the Bible; and the beauty of that universe in which, for every pair of lovers, the evening and the morning still make the first day.

Many of them can neither read nor write; and many are graduates of famous universities. What does it matter?

For in their perhaps lucid and clear, perhaps dumb and inarticulate way they strive for a very great thing; and if they heard me define it here in my own words, they would stand amazed and deny that they know what I am talking about. Yet it is there; and the thing they strive for is threefold. They strive for a final evaluation of life in terms of that eternity which is always present to them; they strive for a recognition of man's true place in nature, defined by the fact that he alone of all created beings was given the gift of reason; and they strive for a determination, within themselves and their own lives, of the balance so far attained between man's beasthood and man's godhead.

By doing so, they prepare the soil from which new thought, new art, new religious feeling can spring through those among them on whom the gift of speech was bestowed.

And as, in this broad country of ours, old men and women from all quarters of the globe bend over dog-eared and frayed copies of the Bible and other cherished books—with muttering lip, and the finger following the line, perhaps—and painstakingly spell out the words and sentences which express what they feel, they are giving birth—they rather than the busy merchant, or the owner of forges, or the builder of railways—they rather than the smooth, imitative poet of our magazines—they rather than the glib writer of patriotic leading articles in our daily papers—to the things and thoughts that develop nationhood.

Let me add one more thing, and I shall have done. In their eyes, as they read or speak or think, I have seen a thing which I have never seen in the eyes of a European peasant. I don't know what it is: a new hopefulness perhaps. I don't know whence it comes; but it is bred by something peculiar to Canada; whether, as some have asserted, it is the wider spaces of our plains, the greater height of our mountains, or the vaster extent of our indented shorelines, or what. I have sometimes thought that perhaps it arises from the fact that here, in this country, they can own the soil on which they stand. For I take it to be a desire still inherent in man as born by woman to own that bit of land whence, with tentative mind, he reaches out into the dark mysteries which surround us.

In that reaching out he strives for that distinctive element in the generally tragic reaction of the human soul to the fundamental conditions of man's life on earth which I have defined as individuality in a people's civilization. On that individuality, I have said, depends true nationhood.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[1]Most of the chapters that follow were originally meant to be delivered as addresses to that certain association. Owing to circumstances not here relevant, they were not so delivered. The only reason why that original purpose is mentioned here consists in the necessity of an explanation of their present form which, at this late hour, I find myself unable to recast.

[2]Ventri pronus.

[3]Autumn. Riverside Press Edition, vol. VII of Works, 164.

[4]This might be the place to touch on another point. A certain book-reviewer who likes to lay claim to the title of a "critic" recently praised a book highly yet added, "Its literary value may not be high." By that he confessed that he is no critic; for the only concern of the critic is with literary values. As soon as he allows himself to be guided by likes or dislikes, he once more ceases to be a critic and becomes an

advocate.

[5]See Littré et Beaujean: *Naturaliste (dérive du latin naturalis)*, Celui qui s'occupe spécialement de l'étude des productions de la nature.

[6]Compare Lanson; he is highly illuminating.

[7]Ihr lasst den Armen schuldig werden.  
Dann ueberlasst ihr ihn der Pein.

[8]Schiller:  
In den Ozean schiff't mit tausend Masten der Juengling;  
Still, auf gerettetem Boot, treibt in den Hafen der Greis.

[9]Such a beast as Mr. Merrill Denison has portrayed in *Marsh Hay*.

[10]George Meredith, *The Egoist*.

[11]Agricola, 21. "Paulatimque descensum ad delinimenta vitiorum, porticus et balinea et conviviorum elegantiam. idque apud imperitos humanitas vocabatur cum pars servitutis esset."

In the above translation I have tried to interpret the text, borrowing the term "alluring vices" from Maurice Hutton.

[12]Hazlitt.

[13]See the Dayton trial; see legislation re the teaching of evolution in Tennessee, Mississippi, Florida, followed by an attempt to enact similar laws in Oregon. See also the heresy laws in New Hampshire; or Bryan's speech at Minneapolis in 1924.

There is a curious irony in the fact that the great republic which owes its origin to religious intolerance in England should, to-day, be the most intolerant nation on earth: they cannot understand that any one may wish to live in a way differing from their own. When they answer certain accusations, they betray that they do not understand what others may object to in them: see the October number of *Scribner's Magazine*, 1928. Was it different with Germany in 1914?

[14]Chicago murder trials.

[15]See the story of the U. E. Loyalists.

**THE END.**

[End of *It Needs to be Said...* by Frederick Philip Grove]