SOME MERITS AND DEFECTS OF THE AMERICAN NOVEL

MANY SUCCESSFUL AMERICAN AUTHORS GIVE THEIR VIEWS

Continued from Ninth Page.

wider field, appealing to all manner of persons. And in the exact degree to which they do appeal to all manner of persons, they succeed. In my opinion the best magazines are the popular magazines of the higher type; that is, those edited by men of intelligence and real appreciation who, while deliberately catering, with some of their material to what is called the "low brow" at the same time publish other matter which is valuable either for information it contains, or for real literary quality, and which could be got into the hands of the low brow in no other way. It seems to me that the *Saturday Evening Post*, for one, does this thing to prefection, giving the low brow nothing that will hurt him, much that will do him good, and all that he will stand of the material which will actually elevate his taste and make him think; and which (the latter grade of material), at the same time causes persons who are not "low brows" to read the *Post*.

But with the novel it is different. A novel cannot be made to cater to so wide a field of readers as a popular magazine by supplying within itself various materials of altogether different grade. It must be one kind of a novel, like the enlarged counterpart of one story in a magazine.

If I were asked what one thing seemed to me most to enrich a novel I should say that it was the background of the author. In making this statement I am, of course, assuming a certain degree of literary skill, but I think that, upon the whole, background is to be preferred above literary skill, and that novels in which skill is the apparent thing are never so good as novels in which the background of the author's mind—if it really be a fine mind—is forever felt by the reader; as for example, beautiful tapestries on the walls of a room are felt by us subconsciously when we are in that room and thinking of other things.

It is this sense of background that makes us love Meredith and Hardy. It is the same thing that makes the admirers of Henry James cleave to him so passionately (and in some cases imitate him so faithfully), although some see Mr. James's background as through a style, darkly.

The great exponent of background in Great Britain to-day is Joseph Conrad, who, struggle as he may with his technique, gives us always a sense of the philosopher behind the work, of the vastness of the world, the mystery of its hidden places and the swiftness of the wind. H. G. Wells also gives us a sense of background, but on his background there seem sometimes to be nasty spots. One feels Mr. Conrad struggling like a great, honest giant in the toils of his story, while Mr. Wells has, somehow, the air of being greased, and thereby slipping through with cunning facility. Arnold Bennett, on the other hand, seems to me to have less background than Mr. Wells, but what there is of it is more uniformly agreeable. Mr. Wells's tapestry is older than Mr. Bennett's; it is more beautiful in some spots, but more rotten in others; for Mr. Bennett's tapestry always gives me the impression of something very good, but also very, very new.

The American novelists in whom I seem to sense the richest background are Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, and, more recently, Booth Tarkington.

A distinguished editor—one of the few old school, scholarly editors we have left—once told me it had been his observation that the really able literary men were engaged in storing up the riches of the mind until they reached about the age of 40, and that thereafter they began to give off their best. It is interesting to observe, therefore, that Mr. Tarkington's "The Turmoil," with the impression it gives of ripeness, of a mind richly stored and of the sweep of life in the United States to-day, occupies, roughly speaking, a corresponding position in the chronology of his work to "The Rise of Silas Lapham" in that of Mr. Howells and to such works as "The Tramp Abroad," "Huckleberry Finn" and "Life on the Mississippi" in the chronology of Mark Twain.

These writers—indeed, all writers who have achieved in high degree the quality of background—differ most from the ordinary lot of writers in that they have highly developed their observation, their intellectual powers and their faculty for self-criticism. They have not written with their ears to the ground, nor to the telephone wire at the other end of which sits an editor. Nor, upon the other hand, have they juggled with culture for culture's sake, which is another popular American pastime. They have plodded up the hill of life slowly, observing as they went along, working their way round and round, up and up, until, at last, they have reached the point that many never reach: the point at which there is a "view."

By HARRY LEON WILSON

Time indeed this discussion of the American novel be taken from the *Atlantic Monthly* and made public! If our novel "is beyond question in a bad way" more of us ought to know it. But I doubt any wide acceptance of this verdict. Our publishers won't take it, our book reviewers and the buying public patently do not; so how can the novelists themselves be expected to believe it? Personally I suspect the American novel to be in better state than this fashion of criticism would have it. Even Mr. Nicholson seems rather too blithe for one entirely convinced in his pessimism. He not only enumerates a generous list of good American novels but concedes that we produce other good ones, three or four a year. Which I submit is doing very well for a people so young that its artistic voice has not begun to "change." And surely it is just to measure the American novel by the best of its kind. The "quack" novel is an inevitable by-product, prodigious in numbers, but negligible for purposes of criticism. Not the output of a hundred Harold Bell Wrights could dim the fine lustre of novels like "The Virginian," "The Call of the Wild," "The Conqueror," even though their like is too seldom vouchsafed us; while the Wrights are always with us. The institution of our novel is not a chain depending on its weakest link.

Mr. Nicholson does not say so, but I suspect him to feel merely that our good novels ought to be better. That is something else. It is true that we have no Turgenieff, no Tolstoy, no De Maupassant, no Flaubert, no Hugo. But artists of the stature of these must be fathered and mothered by races that have learned to think. They never spring from a civilization as crude as ours. As a people we have not learned to think. We only have emotions. To be concrete—briefly, as one here must: The law requires saloons in New York to be closed on Sunday. They never have been closed. But the citizen clings as religiously to his law as he does to his Sunday highball. He would regard as licentious the legal opening of these saloons that are never closed. He must preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath by various infantile subterfuges. This mental juggling is of course not peculiar to New York. It marks our whole social body. And a people still capable of it is a people that will produce great artists all too rarely. For the artist must not only be fathered and mothered; he must be evoked, welcomed and given freedom by his people.

To be again concrete: The New Yorker believes that he may eat well at his best restaurants. In truth he eats wretchedly. In two restaurants there—though it may be but one at this writing—one may, after diplomatic negotiations of the most delicate and involved character, obtain for an enormous sum a really good dinner. But only such a dinner as may be had quickly on demand at any one of twenty restaurants in Paris and for half the price. I refer of course to those restaurants in the French quarters of Paris that have survived the invasion of the American gourmet whose ideal is a nice steak and hashed brown potatoes, with ice cream and a slab of apple pie to come. On the boulevards, to be sure, one may here and there dine as badly and expensively as one must in the best restaurant along Broadway. Again the matter of demand for the artist. New York restaurants unquestionably have the talent in their kitchens for better cookery. But there is no demand for it. The New Yorker buys—and is satisfied with—good food badly cooked. For his fiction he buys—and is satisfied with—good material badly written. For better novels, then, we must have a demand no less than a clear thinking society to produce the novelists.

Especially must we have clear thinking about that phase of human association at present notorious as "sex." What those Continental artists would have written about in these United States one can only conjecture, but certainly they could not have flowered to their full here where our every approach to this vital relationship is still likely to be that of the bad little boy who scrawls things he shouldn't on dead walls. Indeed, it is not altogether their own fault that we have a school of writers skilled in exploiting the merely concupiscent—made doubly nauseous by its sentimentally punctilious "correctness." So long as we shirk the facing of life in its entirety we must share the blame for this—shall we call it the novel of near adultery? The adept of this school plays endlessly on the one theme. His heroines differ from one another as sharply as do chocolate eclairs among themselves. He is concerned solely with their biological differentiation from his males. That this is uniformly simple he leaves his readers in no doubt. In an early chapter he gets the girl into—or out of—something "revealing every line of her lithe young figure." Short of clinical tests he could go no further.

On this point, a group of women recently petitioned the art director of the San Francisco exposition to withdraw from view there a painting by a Hungarian artist entitled "The Expectant Mother." One gathers that the title damned the picture with these protestants. Had it read "Apres le Bain" or "Une Femme Inconnue" or perhaps anything in French, they would doubtless have gazed and passed on—shocked, perhaps, but not indignant. And not impossibly among them now are women who thrill conventionally to the always legal concupiscence—the trained and never indecorous lubricity—of these latest current gods of the partially literate.

Such mental obliquity is of course not local to the Pacific coast. Boston would have no dancing bacchante, and New York did its utmost to befoul the naked little beauty of "September Morn." And at least San Francisco makes no muddled ado about the ingestion of Sunday cocktails.

The bettering of the American novel must await on this mental clearing up. I have faith that it will keep pace with our growth in the power of clean, clear thinking. But we must not expect it to lead that by any great distance.

There remains only the danger that our bigger novelist when he finds himself will choose to live in England, as once one did with the most distressing results. Yet, forever, to Henry James the credit for leading us a little way at least from the tale of external incident—the true Victorian novel! His later degeneration should not blind us to this service. Did England stifle his genius? Did he go because he could no longer grow here?—to fumble with his bloodless, back parlor intrigues, his tepid liaisons, his studies of the reaction of the child mind confronted with normal human lechery or with obscenities not to be more than hinted at even by the master of hinting? Anyway, he was lost to us—once our novelist of great promise. And the pathos of his belated official exit! He had lived the years there in a fussy pasteboard world such as the times let him blandly conceive—a world in which there could be no blood or tears, or struggle with aught but adverbs and a naif conception of human speech. Probably nothing less than a world war could have awakened Mr. James to reality, and no one I think can fully appraise the shock this must have been to him. Human beings out there! Acting in rude, human ways on a vast and bloody stage! Doing things one never did in the James scheme of things. Blood and tears and rabid strife! Small wonder he lost his head. Small wonder he did something that, had he been a truer humorist, would have been the last act he could have thought of at so poignant a time. In taking the citizenship of Henry James from us the war has provided American letters with its supreme blend of the comic and the pathetic.

May our next artist of like promise read his annals and his novels and shrink in horror from his course, even if we would, for yet a time, cramp him to the dephlogisticated piffle of the rubber stamp hero who goes "out west" to build an irrigation dam or to keep trees from burning up and nobly wins the love of a pure young American girl aged 19!

By BASIL KING

Worse than sentimental writing is self-conscious writing and self-conscious writing is what so much writing about writing is bound to produce. The American novelist, with all his faults, is nearing the time when he needs to be let alone. The spontaneity will be crushed out of him if he pays attention to the cuffs and coursels that are just now so liberally given him, and the fear is that he may. Why not let him, for a while at any rate, respond to the call of the people and the publisher in peace? People and publisher alike know what they want, and the novelist is but the workaday journeyman who supplies it. No more than Giotto or Perugino or Andrea del Sarto—I am trying to recall a passage in Ruskin—does he take himself as a heaven inspired genius. According to his powers he is doing honest work for honest pay in the spirit of the demand that calls for his effort. It is commonly found that when a nation is aware of a need it furnishes the men who can respond to it. The novelist is evolved by the nation at peace as readily as the soldier by the nation at war, and with as unerring an instinct. If the American nation has one taste and the English another who shall say either of them nay? If one has a liking for the topics dealt with by Winston Churchill and the other a preference for the views of H. G. Wells why should not each be free to follow its own bent without being called names? I have heard representatives of both nationalities urge the rival claims of tea and iced water as drinks with real animation on both sides. The discussion as to the comparative merits of the English and the American novel seems to me on the same level of intelligence and likely to lead to much the same result.

E. TEMPLE THURSTON WHOSE NEW NOVEL IS ANNOUNCED BY APPLETON.

MARY JOHNSTON AUTHOR OF "THE FORTUNES OF GARIN" (HOUGHTON-MIFFLIN)

GEORGE HENRY PAYNE AUTHOR OF "THE CHILD IN PROGRESS" (PUTNAMS)

Any teller of a tale tells it in relation to time, place and circumstance. Given the difference of conditions between the two continents what can be looked for but an equal difference in aim? The two sets of writers are not doing the same thing. They have different materials to work with and different instincts to appease. True, there are Americans with English tastes who prefer English roast beef and ale; and likewise there are Englishmen—though fewer because the English population is relatively small—who share the American appetite for corn on the cob and doughnuts. These tendencies bring about an amicable international give and take, in which each class is within its rights till it begins to claim superiority over the other, as one of them threatens to do now. We have been told so long, and told so persistently, that corn on the cob and doughnuts are unworthy articles of diet that the wonder begins to grow that the American can stomach them. That he does can only be explained by his deadness toward a great part of the critical writing in papers and magazines.

I must own to a share in this hardness of heart in confessing that I have not read the articles on the American novel by Owen Wister and Meredith Nicholson which appeared in the *Atlantic*, nor yet the English opinions of Mr. Garnett that preceded them. The omission is due not to a lack of respect for these admirable writers but to the necessity in which I find myself not to read any present day criticism whatever. For a writer on a small scale and a reader on a large one the Babel of mere individual opinions is too distracting. One says black and another white, and no one speaks with authority. It is a long time since I have read a review of one of my own unimportant books, apart from the very few which well meaning friends have forced upon me. It is rarely that I read a current review of any book at all. I make, however, one exception to this rule. On the publication of a novel in which I am interested and which stress of economy forbids me to acquire I purchase THE NEW YORK SUN on Saturday, the New York *Times* on Sunday and the Boston *Transcript* on the following Wednesday afternoon. I then know the book from cover to cover, and have had the privilege of reading the more dramatic portions in the text. I get this pleasure for just six cents, when otherwise I should have forced myself to spend $1.35. For this thrifty opportunity my thanks are due entirely to the author and the publisher, who make me a present of their work. The respective newspapers need no gratitude, seeing that they pocket all the cash. Apart from the pecuniary profit we, the members of the public, thus receive, literary criticism, whether in the manner of the *Atlantic* and the *Saturday Review* or in that of the *Massasquatchet Mercury*, would appear to run on much the same level of utility.

And the tale is told as the teller sees it. Why shouldn't it be realistic if thus it presents itself? Or why shouldn't it be romantic? or humorous? or sentimental? or grotesque? or poetic? or didactic? Who is to limit a free instinct to a purpose or a school? Who shall say that there is only one angle from which to look at life? Why should not Mr. Dreiser be allowed his point of view as well as Mr. Harold Bell Wright? But then why should not Mr. Harold Bell Wright be allowed his as well as Mr. Dreiser? Since neither has a monopoly of human experience why should not each distil his own without cavil or injunction? The same reader will probably not relish them both to the same degree, though such a reader is conceivable, but then he is at liberty to take his choice. He has also the choice of the wide range lying in between, and what he does not care for he can let alone. Why badger the teller of the tale? Why badger the listener? Why, if I like Mr. Joseph Conrad's ingenious method of getting in backward like a crab, shouldn't I be permitted to enjoy it? and why, if I yearn to vary that intellectual exercise with an hour of Mrs. Barclay's "sob stuff," should that simple heart's ease be denied me? Who made any one a ruler and a judge?

In the neo-English crusade against sentimentality there is something funny. It is a confession of sentimentality in itself. It is like the fear of a man who trembles lest he use the wrong fork at the table, and betrays a similar set of conscious, antecedent weaknesses. It is the practice of etiquette as seen from the pantry, aghast at a breach of the fixed rules. Marie Corelli is not more sentimental than Arnold Bennett, or any other writer of the "stern stuff" school. Where the one is artless in letting it out the other is red in the face from holding it in, so that it is equally evident in both. There is such a thing as being sentimental over not being sentimental. The only unsentimental writer is the writer to whom sentimentality is not a bugbear. The bravado of much of our current English fiction is like that of the youngster who says, "See what a brave little man I am!" at the moment when you know he is ready to break down and weep.

And for heaven's sake why shouldn't he break down and weep? What is there unnatural in tears? What is there forbidden in comfort, or any other bright, optimistic thing? Why shouldn't the reader be made to cry as well as to laugh, if he likes it? What does the Englishman gain by this pose, which our native American critics take for genuine British phlegm, of having no soft spots, when we all know he is made up of them? Does it not resemble that other pose, "the cultivated air of inefficiency," as I think H. G. Wells has called it, the manner of looking and speaking like a born fool, that the Englishman has so often put on through fear of being suspected of intelligence, which it has taken the war and its horrors to dispel?

Ah, but you will say that it is I who am now calling names. I do not mean to. I am only entering a feeble plea for literary toleration, for recognition of the vast legitimate range of the reader's tastes and needs—for a breathing space of freedom from the literary doctrinaire and for the letting of the poor, harried, worried art of the American story teller alone. It is a beautiful art; and when practised between the artist and his audience it can be a pleasant one; but it comes near to being spoiled by the pontificating of the self-appointed middleman.

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

The American novel is in a bad way, says Mr. Meredith Nicholson. And, reading what he has to say of our novels and our writers, one sorrowfully agrees with him; indeed the charge is not a new one, nor the truth of it very far to seek.

But, with American fiction—are not American architecture, American art, the American social structure, American women and children and schools, equally in a bad way? We are a nation of spendthrifts, morally, mentally and physically; why single out the writers for especial censure? As a matter of fact your popular writer has cleaner hands than are usually brought from the business of living; he writes, his publisher and his public approve, he enjoys his income and his glory knowing that not one of his hundred thousand readers grudges him the latter or has been deceived or betrayed into contributing to the former. Is it for him to fling aside the honest work that so pleasantly solves the problem of living, to hammer away in hunger and obscurity for a dozen years, and finally to perfect his real dream for the hundred or less real judges who will find it good? Are bakers blamed because they do not leave the pulpy, sugared five cent loaves that sell by tons for old fashioned whole wheat bread that will not sell at twenty-five cents a loaf? Are silk merchants blamed because they no longer carry the five dollar silks that made our grandmothers' "best" gowns, but continue to please the public with "almost silk" and "part silk," that wear at best a few months?

An unknown writer whom I knew some years ago wrote a short story about a fat girl. The story was rejected by two leading magazines because the heroine was fat. The writer's friends suggested that instead of setting herself up as a better judge of fiction than two editors, she reduce her girl in figure. But the writer persisted; she wanted this particular pleasant, helpless, good natured girl fat. She sent the story out again, and the third editor sent for her; an editor, by the way, who was also a writer. They liked the story, but not the fat girl. "There are fat girls," protested my writer. "But not in fiction!" said the editor. He took the story, but it was altered when it appeared, and the illustrator had drawn the usual sylph.

Now this is perfectly typical. I cannot blame the writer, I certainly do not blame the editor. It is our reading public that must be arraigned. It is our reading public that must somehow be brought to realize that when America has her own fiction its background will not be that of French or German fiction, above all it will not be that of English fiction. Try as we may—and it seems to me a deplorable fact that some of our very first novelists are continually trying—we cannot take up the pleasant familiar histories of landed gentry, of squires and curates and picturesque villagers. We have had too much of them! We are so satiated with them that our first mad efforts at novelizing are struggles to adjust our own nation to their standard, to find stability where all is rush and change, to find a servant class and an upper class where no such things exist. The millionaires of our to-day are paupers to-morrow, our newsboys are buying motor cars, our East Side children wear white stockings and the demure little stenographer at whom her employer's wife looks so coldly may be receiving weekly cheques for moving picture scenarios that would make the other lady turn pale with envy.

The Constant Reader will not have it so. He knows that there are fat girls and divorces and snobs and labor troubles and all the yeasty distresses to which so hastily brewed a mixture as this nation of ours is heir, but he will not read about them. The writer may see the dramatic possibilities of a row of little crude suburban houses bravely perched on a muddy bank, he may read the tremendous story that every trail of factory smoke writes on the April skies, he may ache to make immortal the comedy and the tragedy of the city's boys and girls, pale faced and eager, at the film play, but the Constant Reader will not see it.

So he writes of a lesser theme, a Southern girl, with a bay horse and roses, or an irreproachable young engineer who transforms a whole railroad system, and of course as he writes he preaches. For even his casual investigations have given him something about which he may preach.

Yet one feels that his real day is coming very fast. There is dawn behind all this groping darkness, there is success beyond all these clumsy failures. And while we wait it is good to feel that there have been those before us to preserve the old times that are no more. Surely "Cranford" is no truer picture of the old England than Miss Wilkins and Miss Jewett have given us of the new; old California is safe in the pages of Bret Harte, and for the South we have Cable and Page and Ruth McEnery Stuart. We shall not lose one delightful phase of our national development while Mr. Howell's "Boy's Town" is in print, nor forget the childhood that was in little country towns when "The Boss of Little Arcady" and "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm" and "The Gentleman from Indiana" were written. These are all American to the core, as "The Call of the Wild" was American, and as "Peter Stirling" was American. And each presents its distinct and separate glimpse of the cities and towns, the men and women, from whose histories the Great American Novel will some day be wrought.

By ERNEST POOLE

Since reading Mr. Nicholson's interesting article I have been thinking of the novels—modern American novels—that I have read in the last few years. Most were disappointing, but some interested me enormously—and of these last, as I look back upon them now, it seems to me that almost every book in the lot gave me the feeling as of a window—a new window—through which a tremendous vista was opened for me upon this American life of ours. For, though I was deeply thrilled at times in each of these novels as I read, I was, I remember, thrilled still more by the thought that for me at least this was one of the first books, one of the first really big novels dealing with this field of our life. How many others I would read in the still richer years abroad—as human life, all kinds and conditions, teeming, pregnant, multiplying, spreads over this wide and generous land and its writers glean the true tales that are here—the wonderful stories that shall be here.

I have read such books as "The Octopus," "A Certain Rich Man," "Maggie," "A Man's World," "The Jungle," "The Virginian," "The Midlanders," "Old Wives for New" and many more—and these novels, though they have gripped me hard, have done more than that, they have made me all the hungrier for the others of their kind, the still more powerful of their kind, that will richly reveal to me lives of real men and women and children—in New York and in Chicago and in Oklahoma City, in Butte and in Seattle, on our coasts and up our rivers to lonely little river towns; and in isolated houses or sweeping fields of wheat and corn, or cattle ranches, on plantations, in mining towns, on steep mountain sides, amid strikes like those in Colorado—books revealing all such struggles, all such places, all such people—and again and again, books of the town, the great cities I mean, of people most amazingly rich and people most alarmingly poor—the intense and dramatic, significant life of the millions of our immigrants—and again the rush of young people for towns.

These are only a few of the fields of our life that come up in my mind as I write.

In reading I know that nine times out of ten I shall be disappointed. I shall take up books and drop them—sometimes because they are dry as dust, all crammed with the most painstaking truth, the most useful information, with just the ghost of a story, and an artificial ghost at that, looming up forlornly through the pages here and there, other disappointments will be books that are small Russias, ruled by a literary czar, a chap who has a purpose, a sermon or a tendency, who writes with a pen of iron, jabbing his characters into line—poor devils or saints as the case may be—to prove the point he is making. Books that a Russian friend of mine used to call "so damn tendencious."

And still other disappointments will be novels that at first leading the innocent reader to think he is going to see some real life here, proceed later to drag him head over heels into a plot so breathless that it will not be until the end that with a gasp he looks back and sees what a pitiful little bag of tricks it was that drew his nerves so taut.

But among them all I shall find what will be the great novels for me. They will paint real life with a depth and a power which while sweeping me along in the personal narratives will at the same time bear me far out all over this wide country, books that deal first and foremost with a few individual lives, but lives not isolated, lives bound up in the intricate warp and woof of the mass life all around them, as our lives are increasingly bound these days, when not only the affairs of our nation but even those of all nations on earth have sudden and amazingly deep effects upon each one of us—on our jobs, our income, our homes, our reading, our hopes and beliefs.

Stand in the Grand Central at a rush hour and in a few moments thousands of people will have swept by you, people from all over the land. Watch their faces. They all seem intent upon getting something for themselves—money, fame, social position. Or they seem absorbed in loves and hates and jealousies, or dreams and hopes and plots and schemes—all their own, mind you, all for themselves or concerning themselves, their wives and children. And in this straining, groping, in all this breathless hurrying some of these people's faces mark at this very moment personal crises that would thrill you if you knew. But you can't, for they won't let you. It's none of your business. It's their own! But though each of them thinks, "This is my own life, my own scheme, my own trouble," you standing there can quite easily see that his life is about as much his own as is the life of one small drop upon one wave in the ocean.

Well, in the big books I shall read I think people will be shown more like that than ever they were in the books of the past. I think the tendency will be to depict characters more and more in their vital relations to the whole, so that following their stories you will be drawn too into those vast tides of business, politics, industry, education, social movements, the swift spread of new ideas into the world of the making of money, and all the many other worlds, of the spending, the wasting, the building, the dreaming, the groping and the straining on which all go to make up this astounding life we are leading these days as slowly and in spite of ourselves who are bound closer and closer together—for good or for evil, bound into a common life.

By HENRY JAMES FORMAN

Mr. Meredith Nicholson has put his finger on many weak spots in the American novel, and everything Mr. Nicholson says, so persuasive is his pen, carries conviction. Yet to my thinking he has not touched the vital points. "To see life steadily and to see it whole" is, in Mr. Nicholson's opinion, essential to the writing of sound American novels. There are at least two reasons why in the hurlyburly of our present day life to see life steadily and to see it whole" is a difficult trick to acquire.

For one thing, we are not a homogeneous people. Our fiction is of necessity chaotic because our nation is chaotic. Where else do you hear of hyphenated citizens, unhyphenated citizens and semi-hyphenated citizens? It may take centuries to make of us a homogeneous people. But to say that a novelist has to reflect all of the population of his country is, of course, to strain a point. Turgenieff is credited with the conscience of his people. But sifting it down, Turgenieff's "people" is a very small class—the Russian aristocracy. What does Turgenieff know of the millions of Tatars, Mohammedans and Jews living in the Russian Empire?

But in the United States, where the melting pot is supposed to be always engaged in melting, the very caldron itself seething on the fire, with all its heat and smoke, is fit enough material for the earnest novelist. English novelists, moulded and safeguarded by the sharp distinctions and demarcations of class, envy Americans the infinite possibilities that abound in American life. But one of the chief indictments, perhaps, against the American novelist, is that after his first one or two serious efforts money becomes an ever growing temptation to him. He craves all the luxuries of the successful business man. He forgets that novel writing is the high calling he envisaged it in his early ideals. With the pressure of the popular magazines upon him the writing of fiction becomes a speculative enterprise like hanging round the ticker in Wall Street. Where in his youth it seemed to him almost like joining a religious order, requiring preparation, purgation and initiation, middle life sees him (generally, but not always) judging success wholly in terms of magazine and public demand. That is why novel writing with us becomes so often merely a manufacturing industry.

Generally speaking, fiction of the best kind does and should aim to portray life, to paint the truth, to carry on the great business of the teachers of mankind, that is to exalt the ideal. If romance does that it belongs among the best fiction. If realism doesn't do that it should no less certainly be excluded from the best fiction. Well, to do your best means to forsake the maunfacturing industry of fiction. The mob of readers not only in the United States but throughout humanity hasn't the best of taste. Part of the business of the novelist is to elevate it. But what chance has an artist of doing that if he knows not how to be frugal? If he knows not how to be frugal, Stevenson has said, he will very soon cease to be honest. That spectacle we see about us every day. No country pays the highest price for the best work. "Commonly," says C. E. Montague, author of "The Hind Let Loose," "it is tough work to keep a modern country from kicking away any quite great work of art that is laid at her feet." This country is no exception to that rule. That is why the novelist of serious purpose must learn to be frugal. I do not mean by this that he must become Timon of Athens. But he must so blend his life that while not isolating himself from his kind he will yet not have his soul ground out of him by the whirring of the machinery. For in the last analysis the novelist is contemplative, a philosopher, not a merchant. And he who so looks upon his calling will embrace literature not to gain but to give. And more and more his soul will grow, and so will our literature. Romance and realism, be they what they may, so long as they are based on truth and permeated by sincerity, are equally worthy a man's or a woman's devotion. We in America have no lack of devotees. But great artists are rare the world over.

THE ROMANTIC CAREER OF AMELIE RIVES.

Few readers of the Princess Troubetzkoy's romantic new novel "Shadows of Flames" will know how this popular author lays claim to her graceful French name of Amelie or the title of Princess.

The Princess Pierre Troubetzkoy is the granddaughter of William Cabell Rives, a Southern gentleman of the old school, Congressman and Senator of Virginia and, before the outbreak of the civil war, Minister Plenipotentiary to France.

During the reign of Louis Philippe the eldest daughter of Minister Rives was born, and the French Queen bestowed her own name on the child, who in turn handed it down as a legacy to her niece, the present Princess Troubetzkoy.

Col. Alfred Landon Rives, father of Amelie Rives, was also born in Paris, and the Marquis de Lafayette, descendant of the great Lafayette of American Revolution fame, was his godfather at baptism. He returned to America and married in 1861 Sarah Macmurdo, a noted Southern beauty. To them was born in Richmond, Va., the daughter, Amelie, who has distinguished herself as a writer of fiction and poetry.

Since Col. Rives's profession of a civil engineer demanded a nomadic life the childhood of Amelie Rives was spent chiefly with her statesman grandfather at his estate, Castle Hill, in Albemarle county, Virginia. The child was the constant companion of the grave and courtly gentleman until his death, and Castle Hill is still her home, where she now lives and which to her is the most beloved spot in the universe. Above the slenderly panelled mantel of her study where she writes her books there still hangs a clustered mass of white satin and tattered silver tissue through which is thrust a pair of tarnished swords—a memento of a foreign country and splendid scenes. The crumpled shining mass is the first court dress worn by her grandmother, and the swords once clanked at the side of our former Minister at the gay court of France.

The authoress's first marriage was unsuccessful and ended in divorce because of incompatibility of temperament. She married a second time, in 1896, at Castle Hill, a Russian nobleman and artist, Prince Pierre Troubetzkoy, who is descended from the ancient Russian Troubetzkoy family, a man of striking physical appearance and highly successful in his career as an artist. Among his most notable portraits is one of the statesman Gladstone, which is favorably compared by critics with the celebrated portrait of Millais. In "Shadows of Flames" Amelie Rives writes vividly of Lake Maggiore, doubtless drawing the picture from her own residence upon that lake in the summer of 1901, when she and her present husband occupied a villa at Ghiffa. There will doubtless be many who will find in the Italian Count, to whom the heroine of this last novel gave her deep affection, a resemblance to the man to whom Amelie Rives is now married.

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