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SOPHOMORE SOCIETIES AGAIN.

Sophomore Societies were again the subject of criticism from one of the best of the alumni in the letter published in the last issue of the WEEKLY. The complaint of the letter that the underclass society system is distorted, top heavy, and ill adjusted as a means of determining, in the last elections, those most worthy of the highest honors, is based on plain fact and may justly be lodged—and, indeed, should be lodged, against the system, as often and with as much emphasis as opportunity offers.

The WEEKLY'S position has been given over and over again. The main criticisms of all those who are against the present system are accepted by this paper, but it has seemed timely, after every fresh onslaught, to ask those who would destroy, what are you going to substitute? Mr. Burr, in his letter already alluded to, meets this question by frankly declaring for large under-class societies, decreasing in number with each year, and thus allowing for a natural sifting process, which will spur ambition and draw into the race for final honors the largest field.

All that we feel disposed to say of this plan at present is, that we believe it would be better than the present system, which is indeed no system at all. There are a good many things in favor of Mr. Burr's proposition, and the men now in College, particularly the men of the Senior class, who should be the special guides and counsellors of the Freshmen in this question, will prove themselves quite indifferent to a special opportunity, if they do not consider this solution of the problem, and themselves apply some solution. The thing has been talked about long enough. The evil is admitted; why not attack it with some other weapon than criticism? We pray you, men of Yale, move ahead, somewhere. The direction is not all important, but it is all important that indifference and inaction in the matter should cease. The present attitude of the College is most unlike Yale, as she has always been, and, please God, always will be.

Graduates and all who intend to be present at Inauguration will find in the news columns of this issue the detailed arrangements for the Inauguration. Attention is especially invited to the proposition made to all graduates who wish to take part in the procession in the evening. As the time is very short in which to make preparations for any considerable number who may attend it is requested that a prompt decision be made at once and application sent by return mail.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOVEL.

The Development of the English Novel, by Professor Wilbur L. Cross. The Macmillan Company. New York.

This book justifies its aim "to trace in outline the course of English fiction from Arthurian romance to Stevenson" and "to follow some of the more important steps whereby a fascinating literary form has become what it is through modifications in structure and content." In this latter view, Professor Cross put himself on the same ground with Brunetière (to whom, significantly enough, the volume is dedicated), but with this difference from the author of *Le Roman Naturaliste*, that he uses the evolutionary theory more as a convenient analogy by which to correlate literary phenomena, than as a fixed and unalterable scientific dogma. Our author further tacitly dissents by establishing his own dogma of action and reaction, of ebb and flow between realism and romanticism. "Now what is the procedure of a man of letters who has assented to a reactionary creed? He reverts to some earlier form or method and modifies and develops it" (Intro, p. xii). Basing his book, then, on this obvious action and reaction and upon the consequent change and development of the art of fiction, Professor Cross gives us the historical distinction between novel and romance, which he tentatively accepts, and the history begins.

The critical reader need hardly be surprised, if the first chapter, "From Arthurian Romance to Richardson" (a period by the way, from 1139 A. D. to 1740 A. D.), seems a somewhat cursory account of the fundamentals of modern fiction. It is to be judged by its failure or success in establishing the author's theory applied to a time when fiction had not become a literary form of the first rank. Here we observe the antitheses of *Amadis of Gaul* and of *Don Quixote*, of the *Arcadia* and the Spanish *Rogue Stories*, of the early allegories of Barclay and Sauteri and the homely one of Bunyan. But three pages and a quarter are devoted to the discussion of the literary forms that contributed to the novel, a matter that in a more extended work might well fill a chapter, as this chapter might extend into a round volume.

But that the foundation is well laid, the theory and its application adequately outlined, becomes apparent in the second chapter, surely one of the most fruitful periods for the historian of fiction, and one of the most satisfactory divisions in the volume—"The Eighteenth Century Realists." That the theory is here tacitly assumed and the critical method appreciative rather more than scientific, is probably the reason why its value is so distinctively literary. Further, the great novelists of the eighteenth century are few and the author has elbow room as it were and a breath of leisure. It is his opportunity to reflect here no less upon literary methods and fashions, so opposed and complementary, than upon the striking and various personalities of the novelists themselves. We prize especially the treatment of Sterne. The essay on Richardson is encyclopedic, necessarily so, and somewhat dull withal, necessarily too, for the author of "Clarissa" was dull. A pinch of salt like the following seasons the dish. "A Mr. Edwards, author of 'Canons of Criticism,' wrote to Richardson, 'I have read, and as long as I have eyes will read, all your three most excellent pieces at least once a year.' Two years later the critic died" (p. 40). Of Fielding, to whom the art of fiction and in scarcely less degree the sum total of English masterpieces owes so much, we should expect the historian to make an important chapter. He has been much written about, but we doubt if his full importance has been elsewhere realized so fully or indeed if in many places outside "The English Humorists" he has been so discriminatingly appreciated.

With Fielding and with Goldsmith, we expect to find the author in sympathy, but with Sterne of whom Professor Cross is compelled to say, "It was a sad day for English fiction when a writer of genius came to look upon the novel as the repository for the crotchets of a life time" (p. 71), we do not expect sympathy. Yet we venture to say that nowhere else except perhaps in the case of George Meredith, does the critic show so just an appreciation. "When we give ourselves into the keeping of the king's jester," says Professor Cross, "we do well to be on the alert" (p. 70);

but also "in their kindness of heart, all Sterne's characters are cousins to that Garrick whose lips Hamlet 'kissed how oft'" (p. 74). With Sterne, however, he contrasts Goldsmith, for whom "there is no human in the dash, the asterisk, the wink and the riddle," who "never twitches at our nerves with the sentimental scene, but relieves his deepest pathos with a kindly irony," who "despises ribaldry"; and with him the chapter most delightfully closes.

In the following division, "From Humphrey Clinker to Waverley," the literary importance of most of the material is so slight that our interest attaches to it chiefly as exhibiting tendencies. This chapter is somewhat inclusive and conglomerate, ranging from the Gothic romances, in which the full tide of the Romantic movement in fiction begins to be felt, to Jane Austen: that is a wide range, and interesting as the action and reaction appears, we feel once more a sense of being crowded, of a certain unevenness of treatment not obvious in Professor Beers' chapters on much the same matter in "English Romanticism." Our author fitly characterizes Jane Austen 'the critic of romance and of manners' and perhaps this definition justifies her inclusion within this chapter. "She gave anew to the novel an art and a style which it had once had, particularly in Fielding, but which it had since lost" (p. 122). "The matter of observation in passing through Jane Austen's imagination was never violently disturbed; the particular bias it received was from a delicate and delightful irony; there was precisely that selection and recombination and heightening of incident and character that distinguish the comedy of manners from real life." Admirable, not only as a bit of appreciation written in a first rate style, but also as showing Jane Austen's relations to her predecessors this portion goes far to offset a sense of disappointment in the chapter as a whole.

The section called "Nineteenth Century Romance," begins with Scott, cataloguing his imitators (in part to show the unparalleled influence of the Wizard of the North, in whom all the lines of the Romantic movement converge) accounting faithfully enough for the romancers of war, Maxwell, Lever, James Grant, dwelling appreciatively on Cooper and concluding with Poe, Hawthorne and Emily Brontë. The essay on Scott is among the most solid in the book, but we cannot but think Hawthorne somewhat slighted. Professor Cross has much to say later on about George Eliot's ethical formula and doubtless she does claim attention as the extreme of a certain tendency in realistic fiction, with an importance hardly to be exaggerated. But what about Hawthorne's ethical formula? Those who agree with Arnold that Hawthorne was our one American who had first rate literary talent, the talent of Swift, Bacon, Burke, will grudge Poe the comparison with the great romancer. "In the technique of the short tale, Poe was at least his equal; in the longer tale, where Poe left many loose ends, Hawthorne succeeded twice—in 'The Scarlet Letter' and 'The House of Seven Gables.'" (p. 166.) This is surely not a high estimate for our one genius deserving a place in the first circle of the immortals. We cannot help noting, too, that Emily Brontë ap-

[Continued on 29th page.]

NEW POLICIES.

Since that famous May-Day celebration in Manila harbor wherein Rear-Admiral Dewey participated with such astonishing results, the press and the public of these United States have revelled in argument. Long before the first enthusiasm had died away the question had presented itself as to what was our Nation's duty by these far-away islands. Political parties have taken sides, political creeds have been altered to meet new conditions, and the words of great Americans, both quick and dead, have been adduced to hear testimony in a matter concerning whose possibility they never dreamed.

The path lies straight away before us, and whether it lead at last to a new policy or to the mere adaptation of the old to new facts, the only sound course left us is wisely and consistently to follow that path and do our best on the journey.

Our country never was in better condition to meet successfully any innovation on the habits of years than it is to-day. Several years of unusual business depression have been followed by more than two of marked and constant improvement. Even the unsettling conditions induced by a brief foreign war have not prevailed to interrupt this state of affairs, and now the beginning of a new century is at hand, treading closely upon these prosperous years, and bearing with it every promise not only of the continuance of that prosperity, but of its marked increase. If, under such auspices, the American character cannot make a success of what it lays its hands to, the American character has long been overestimated.

Whatever may be said of the decision in regard to the final disposition of the islands of the sea, there is one policy in connection with this new collegiate year that is undoubtedly new, and that is the contract now offered by the Mutual Life of New York. The policies endorsed by this great company have long been held as the best, and the devisors of this latest paper had, thereof, a high standard to attain. This they have accomplished with signal success. The Grand Old Mutual has now to offer a policy equaled by none in the market. Bearing loan, cash, and extended insurance values, providing for extension of premium payments where such extension is desired, and marked by every feature tending to the accommodation of the policy-holder, it yet carries with it that greatest of all values, the name of the company which most surely may guarantee the fulfillment of all obligations.

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