

positive advantage from a closer connection of the literature of the two countries. There is an interesting possibility in the influence of Scandinavian literature upon American literary art. We are readier, I think, to assimilate this literature to our own than the English are, and in going to it for suggestion and inspiration we find what is at once foreign and familiar. There is a common ground on which the thought of the two nations may meet; but the Norwegian expression has an idealism and a romantic element which we

may advisedly study. I think a study of the finer literature of Norway would be better worth the while of American authors than much of the labor which is expended on German current literature, for example. The inspiration to be drawn from it is peculiarly fit and forcible; for this literature is expressive of a people possessing virtues singularly desirable in the American character. I think that both travel in Norway and study of Norwegian literature offer admirable advantages to the American student.

Horace E. Scudder.

## ANOTHER DAY IN NORWAY.

IT is only by degrees that the recent visitor to Norway who has recollections of the old idyllic period can attune his mind to the change which has come over the country. From a purely literary point of view, the drowsy idyl in which Mr. Scudder reveled was, I fancy, far more attractive than the political strife and turmoil into which I plunged when, after an absence of nineteen years, I landed at the pier in Christiania. It was the very same pier, by the way, which inducted Mr. Scudder into the long, enchanted day that preceded the present storm. The mountains, to be sure, were there yet, bathed in the magic illumination of the midnight sun. The fiords had the same still, mysterious air, and the steamers glided over their surface as in a dream; and the light of wonderland broke from the sky in strange, swift flashes, thrilling one with a delicious, vaguely questioning sense of unreality, like that of Aladdin when he first entered his fairy palace. But the life—the life for which this mighty scenery forms the setting—is marvelously changed. I had all the time a feeling as if it had been transposed into a different and wholly discordant key. On the northward steamer, where my predecessor in 1881 encountered only jollity and good-natured mirth, I was assailed by clamorous political debate, rude, shrill, and angry. Even the ladies with whom I spoke scoffed at the old idyllic repose, and declared that Norway was now wide-awake and modern, and that the time was happily past when she was content to be «romantic» and picturesque for the benefit of gaping tourists. A charming blonde maiden, of the purest Scandinavian type, whom I took to be of the meek and submissive kind (like the heroines of

Walter Scott), assured me that Ibsen and Kielland were her favorite authors, that Björnson was old-fashioned, and that she could see nothing so very shocking in Zola. She also asked me if I knew Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Julia Ward Howe; and I rose visibly in her estimation when I was able to boast the acquaintance of the latter.

This was no isolated experience, but one of a long series which gradually convinced me that Norway had, in very truth, been invaded by modern thought, and that the old idyl which looked so lovely in Björnson's early tales has grown by a myriad imperceptible filaments into the great web of European life, and is an idyl no more, but a *fin de siècle*, realistic novel. I confess that, though generally speaking my sympathies are with human advancement and progress, an indefinable regret stole over me at this discovery. I would not, indeed, have Norway stagnate in medieval conditions, and cut herself off from a vigorous participation in the world-life. Her situation, to be sure, and her smallness, will always prevent her from playing a leading part. But then we cannot all be protagonists, and an inferior rôle is preferable to none. Only, that stimulated cerebral activity which enables a man or a nation to assert himself or itself in the battling ranks of modern civilization involves the loss of simplicity, picturesqueness, and a number of other pastoral virtues for which we do not ourselves aspire, but which we have agreed to regard as esthetically commendable.

And here is just the point which I wish to emphasize. As long as you are unconsciously picturesque, as the Norwegians were in the old idyllic days, you suffer no degradation, no loss of self-respect, by reason of your pic-

turesqueness. But only let the least hint of a suspicion enter your mind that you are pictorially interesting, and you instantly become uneasy, awkward, vaguely theatrical. Presently you are confronted with the alternative of discarding either your picturesqueness or your self-respect. It is this which has happened to the Norwegian peasantry during the last ten or twenty years. The tourists have stared at their national costumes, and have been stared at in return, until some confusion of mind has arisen as to which of the two are the more normal human creatures. In my childhood I remember hearing the peasants laugh heartily at the stray Englishman or American who invaded our valley, and call him «speckle-bird» (on account of his speckled clothes) and other derisive names. It never occurred to them then to question that a Norwegian peasant was the most normal and rational creature in God's world, and that all departures from his type must be regarded as queer, abnormal, and standing in need of an explanation. But since then the travelers have poured down upon them year by year in an ever-broadening current, until at last it looks as if the world were inhabited, not by Norwegians, but by speckled tourists. When the foreign artist at the roadside now asks the peasant girl to pose for him, and the kodak fiend snaps his instrument at her, the deadly suspicion invades her mind that it is not he, but she, who is queer; and this suspicion, when once it becomes rooted, reverses for her the order of the universe.

It is this which is meant when you hear—not once, but a hundred times, during a summer's sojourn—that the English and the Americans have ruined Norway. The old, primitive existence is going, if it is not already gone. Nothing impressed me more painfully than this ever-obtrusive fact that the note, the accent, of life, was changed. The chord was more complex, no doubt, but it was not more beautiful. It had lost a certain sweet, pastoral tranquillity, and a shrill, uncomfortably self-assertive modernness kept perpetually jarring on my ears. It appears to be a mere question of time when Norway, like Switzerland, will have to pay the full penalty of her picturesqueness, and her peasantry will by degrees degenerate from dignified freeholders into a race of innkeepers and liverymen. They are making the discovery (which, of course, they could not fail to make) that the tourist traffic is far more remunerative than the culture of the meager soil from which, with extreme

toil, they barely managed to coax a scant crop of rye, grass, and potatoes. But be it said to their credit that they have not abused the opportunities which this new industry has thrown in their way. Being themselves reared in a state of chronic impecuniosity, they may not as yet have risen to a conception of the tourist's presumable resources. However that may be, I fancy that the absence of all extortion gave an additional zest to my enjoyment of the magnificent scenery with which Norway fairly overwhelms one at every turn. All demands for compensation were so delightfully reasonable that I was frequently tempted to remonstrate with my landlady in her own interest rather than in mine.

It is impossible to speak of modern Norway without mentioning the name of Björnstjerne Björnson, for he has been a tremendous factor in bringing about the change. He has himself chronicled both the old idyllic period (in «Synnöve Solbakken,» «Arne,» and «A Happy Boy») and the new, wide-awake aspiration (in «Flags are Flying» and «The Ways of God»). Norway was like the princess in the fairy-tale «The Sleeping Beauty,» only she had slept for four centuries instead of one. Björnson was the daring prince who broke through the dense, thorny hedge of obscurantism, prejudice, and patriotic conceit, and woke the slumbering princess with a kiss of stormy affection. A great fresh gust of modern thought rushed in through the breach which he had made, and it was of no avail that the conservative ministers of state and the Lutheran clergy pulled the furred collars of their overcoats up to their very eyes in order to preserve themselves from the dangerous nineteenth-century draft. People began to breathe the new atmosphere, and it apparently agreed with them. Nothing very terrible happened to anybody except the old minority government, which was turned out of office.

Björnson possesses in a remarkable degree the faculty (in which Goethe gloried) of compelling his people to share the processes of his own intellectual growth. He has been, and is, to Norway an intellectual liberator. He is himself aware that a man who undertakes such a labor will and must reap a great deal of contemporary hatred and malediction; and I fancy, too, that there are moments in which he may concede that the new which he brings is not an un-mixed blessing. For, as Stevenson has aptly said, «The possession of a brain that has been thus improved and cultivated, and made into the prime organ of a man's enjoyment,



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

THE MIDNIGHT SUN.

brings with it certain inevitable cares and disappointments.» A semi-vegetable existence, repeating tranquilly the ancestral routine of centuries, untrammelled by any other problem than that of nutrition, has, no doubt, advantages compared with the restless, eager, nervously overwrought condition of modern life, keenly conscious in every fiber. And yet, who would exchange the latter condition for the former? Who would descend in the scale of being, and buy ignoble repose by a spiritual shrinkage and lowered vitality expressing itself in blunted curiosity and dulled desires? The intense intellectual life which Norway has displayed during the last twenty-

five years is the direct result of the awakening which the old fogies, both at home and abroad, are lamenting.

Such keenly modern spirits as Björnson, Ibsen, Kielland, Lie, and Grieg could not have sprung from a nation of idyllic herdsmen and sailors. And the price Norway has paid for whatever eminence she now enjoys is a proportionate loss of that Arcadian innocence which literary tourists, from Harriet Martineau to Horace Scudder, have not grown weary of praising. There is, indeed, yet left much that is quaint and delightful; but the traveler who desires to enjoy it will do well in not delaying too long.

*Hjalmar Hjörth Boyesen.*

### A WISH.

ONLY to be a bird  
In the primrose dark of the morning;  
No future—no past;  
Just a present, with wings  
For an instant cast  
On the green verge of things,  
Then to cease without warning!

*Helen M. Bullis.*