

sought and obtained. I am now using this information in strict compliance with my agreements, or in accordance with my best judgment. I share, of course, the liability to error that is the heritage of mortals; but I have had an opportunity to become fairly well acquainted with the conditions of Russian life; I have studied the working methods of the Russian Government with careful attention; I have had the benefit of suggestions and advice from the persons in Siberia who are most directly interested in my narrative; and I am not likely, I think, to make grievous mistakes in the use of the material intrusted to me, or in the adoption of means to protect my friends.

George Kennan.

#### Sarcasm of Religion in Fiction.

THAT religion and philosophy are getting to be on good terms, there is no question; one is growing rational and the other is fast becoming religious. Father O'Toole may not be much of a philosopher, and Schopenhauer cannot even by courtesy be regarded as a good Christian; still the two worlds of faith and reason are fast melting into each other, and—contradicting physics—will soon occupy the same space at the same time. Will the same process of mutual approach go on between religion and literature, and the subtle antagonism which has long existed between them fade out into mutual respect? The *religious* suspects the *littérateur*, and the suspicion is more than repaid by contempt. Especially is this so as between religion and fiction. The clergyman and the novelist have much in common, but they do not get on well together: the parson cannot understand the author, and the author makes game of the parson. Will they ever get to be good friends?

The sarcasm of religion in fiction has long been the cause of much complaint and hard feeling. Let us turn the matter over in a few sentences with a view to finding out if it is well or ill.

Often this sarcasm is of a mild character, like that found in the Waverley novels, which bears on the rusticity and extreme simplicity of clergymen and the extravagance of certain sects. It assumes a more serious type in the novels of Charles Kingsley, where sects and theologies are brought into odious contrast. It is severer still in the works of George Eliot, who treats church and dogma with semi-contempt and often puts clergymen at the farthest remove from respect. In Dickens the whole range is covered—from gentlest ridicule, as of the Dean in "Edwin Drood," to stinging contempt, as in Chadband and Stiggins. In MacDonal'd the same thing is to be found—coupled, however, with such earnestness that it passes beyond sarcasm and becomes protest. The lead of these great authors is followed, and a work of fiction is now the exception in which some question of religious faith or practice is not introduced, and treated, for the most part, with disfavor. If the various churches and creeds were to apportion this criticism they would find but little partiality. The formalism and corruption of the prelatical churches, the dogmatism and austerity of the Puritans, the emotional excesses of the Methodists, the ceremonial emphasis of the Baptists—whatever is most distinctive and conspicuous in all churches has been satirized by fiction. Ridicule and travesty

of some form of religious belief or conduct is a part of its stock in trade. The lovers, the catastrophe, the rescue, are not more surely included than is the caricature of some opinion, custom, or character called religious. The most notable example is seen in Dickens, both in the severity of his sarcasm and in its pervasiveness. He not only scourges hypocrisy,—for the most part connected with dissenters,—but, in a less open way, the faithlessness of the whole Church to its trust in caring for the degraded masses. Nearly every book of Dickens sends a keen shaft into the body of the national church, yet with all his courage he did not dare to set up the vices and foibles of the Establishment as a target for ridicule; he stabs it, but not with satire. It may be unfair to criticise an author for what he does not do, but we cannot avoid thinking that Dickens would have left a true exponent of his feelings if he had given the parallels of Stiggins and Chadband to be found in the Established Church, as Thackeray has done in "The Newcomes." In view of the immense field from which Dickens drew his characters, it is strange that he overlooked the English type of clergyman so faithfully drawn by Mr. Curtis in the Rev. Mr. Creamcheese. The Established Church is an ark upon which even Dickens did not venture roughly to lay his hand. Miss Brontë showed a finer courage in her picture of the three Curates, and her works throughout are tinged with slight satire upon traditional forms of religion. We find the same feature in nearly all English and American fiction. Now a sect is ridiculed *en masse*, now certain dogmas, now strictness of religious observance or hypocrisy or bigotry or weak-minded conformity. Forms, dogmas, missions, and revivals are treated almost generally with contempt. A marked exception is found in Hawthorne. That he entertained opinions which, if he had expressed, would have taken this form, some letters quoted by Mr. Fields indicate; but whether a virtue or not, he withheld his pen from sarcastic treatment of religion. The reason is to be found in the superior range of his themes, which are not those of society but of human nature—the abstract rather than the concrete. He is not a Dickens or a Thackeray, but a Shakspeare; his romances are subtle discussions of moral problems that have always vexed the human mind—sin, conscience, and the ways of the bare spirit in man. As a literary artist he could not descend from these heights in order to satirize any special form of faith. Had it come within his purpose to depict a religious hypocrite he would not have connected him conspicuously with any church or creed, but would have kept him within the region of psychology—not as in a church, but simply in human nature. Hence in Hawthorne we find a certain bareness of setting that renders him uninteresting to the average reader.

This habit of fiction has, within a few years, changed its objects of attack. First it was sects, then dogmas, now it is certain types of character. Another distinction of the later period is that untruth is treated more severely than fanaticism. Weakness, inconsistency, hypocrisy, are scourged while intensity of belief is comparatively respected. The habit cannot be explained as a trick of the profession, caught by the many from the chance example of the masters; the originality of genius forbids such an explanation. Nor can it be accounted for on the ground of its

availability; it probably tells quite as much against an author as for him, especially in England, where anything like irreligion is unpopular. Nor can it be referred to sectarianism. There is a second-rate class of writers who produce novels in the interest of some church or theology which they bring into favorable relief by very dark shadows thrown upon the opposite side, but they are hardly accorded a place in literature. We cannot recall a work of fiction of the first class in which a character is held up as admirable by virtue of his connection with any church or of holding a definite creed. Such characters are presented for the opposite feeling — certainly not for the readers' sympathy. The solution is largely to be found in the fact that religion, when organized under either forms or dogmas, awakens antagonism in the peculiar genius of the novelist. We qualify our phrase because genius of the purest type is to be found in connection with church and creed. No critic would withhold the name from Augustine, Luther, Wesley, John Henry Newman, Robertson, Stanley, and Bushnell. But it is hard to get poets and novelists within church-doors. No reminiscence of Wordsworth more widely separates him from his class than that of his every Sunday walk over Nab Scar to little St. Oswald's in Grasmere. And Miss Brontë spoke both for herself and for all kindred genius in that exquisite chapter in "Shirley" where she makes Caroline Helstone refuse to enter the church, preferring to remain without and watch nature at her evening prayers. The genius of the novelist, like that of the poet, is impatient of form and definition and organization. Being based on the imagination, and therefore ideal in its operations, it does not consort well with what is fixed and formal. It may use facts and forms, but the argument it enforces is ideal and outside of them. Hence the staple of fiction is love before marriage, or lawless love after it, when it has the liberty of perfecting itself in the imagination — not love after marriage or in true marriage, when the dream is over and fancy yields to fact. Hence established institutions, whether social, ethical, or religious, have seldom been directly strengthened by fiction. It may be doubted if any established government was ever positively helped by imaginative writers; the sympathy is made to turn against what is, and in favor of what may be. The drift is in favor of spontaneousness and excess of liberty, against social custom and settled thought. In the end it may not be unfavorable to social and moral order, but this end is reached through loosening and destructive criticism. It ungirds, but does not find it within its function to rebind. Mrs. Stowe depicts the evils of slavery and hastens a political revolution, but as a literary artist she cannot, in fiction, reconstruct the government. Charles Kingsley in "Alton Locke" helps on reform, but only as an antagonist of the existing order. Dickens reveals the horrors of a school system and turns the laughter of the world against the courts of chancery, but he felt no call to picture a well-ordered school or a prompt court of justice. So far as fiction has any vocation besides that of pleasing, it is critical, and it criticises by depicting that which it deems false and unworthy and by suggesting ideals of perfection, not by portraying excellence already gained. When the latter is attempted, the work is tame and flavorless. Were a literary artist to write a

political novel, he would compose it of two leading elements — criticism of existing institutions and suggestion of a better order; actual evil against ideal good. Fiction, by its nature, has its standpoint in ideality. Its lifelikeness, whether of good or evil, is based on an ideal beyond the fact. Otherwise it would be mere rehearsal of statistics, or philosophy.

And just here we find an explanation of its treatment of religion. It cannot be set down to the irreligion of the authors: whether irreligious or not, the cause lies back of the artist and in the nature and function of the art itself. If religion has seemed to suffer at the hands of fiction, it has suffered in the company of morals, of domestic life, of social order and all other conservative interests, and for the same reason.

The question of the utility of this criticism is another matter. That it causes pain and awakens concern in the minds of many who have a just claim to be regarded because they represent the best interests of society, there is no doubt. When a member of a not obscurely hinted sect is portrayed as a disgusting hypocrite, or when a hero — as in "Felix Holt" — is made to turn his back upon the Church and all religious observance and Christian belief and is offered to the reader's admiration by reason of virtues developed aside from or in opposition to Christianity, it is generally felt to be an affront or an injury. The sect is hurt through its representative; the faith is slighted by the halo thrown around its contemner. Doubtless much sensibility is wounded and direct moral injury is wrought, for no one will soberly maintain that it is well to weaken the hold of religious institutions upon the people unless they become so perverted as to minister to positive immorality.

But just here two things should be remembered: one is, that all criticism is dangerous in its very nature, and most of all ideal criticism, for it means change, and that means risk; the other is, that in high fiction that for the most part is scourged which deserves it, and that notes of warning are sounded where there is most need of care or reform. We do not defend all fiction that treats of religion, nor do we refer to that ephemeral literature, now so abundant, which is dictated by simple hatred and ignorance; but only say that in the masters of fiction the objects of their criticism in religion are generally well chosen. They may be summed up as hypocrisy, weakness, fanaticism, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness. When dogmas are introduced, it is not their bare essence that is held up to scorn, but a perversion of them that renders the character contemptible. It is the frequency with which religion runs into hypocrisy and dogmas lead to bigotry — producing a type of character specially available in fiction — that leads to their general use. If a novelist would draw a hypocrite he must place him upon a background of religion, else his picture lacks shading; as Othello's jealousy requires the purity of Desdemona. So a religious fanatic in fiction must be put into ecclesiastical garb; otherwise he has no form or setting. But it were hasty to conclude that the writer intends to deride the opinions his hypocrite assumes, or that the sect with which he connects his fanatic is contemptible. Nearly the most odious character drawn by Dickens is Uriah Heep, but no one suspects that he intends to slur humility. Walter Scott often ridicules preachers, but himself wrote two very good sermons.

Nearly all the misconstruction put upon this literary habit is due to the fact that the rules of the art do not allow of explanation or qualification. The first object of the novelist is to awaken sensation in the reader. Hence he must be concrete, rapid, excessive; he must draw with bold outline and upon dark background; he cannot indulge in parenthetical explanation nor ask his readers to tone down his coloring. But what the novelist cannot do, his readers must do for him; they must translate his semi-drama into an essay if they would come at his exact meaning.

Still the question of utility recurs. To explain the writer is not necessarily to justify the writing. It is difficult to strike the balance between good and evil in any great human influence; we see the beginnings but not the ends. The farther off in time we get from leading causes, the plainer it becomes that they work towards a general harmony; that which promised only evil becomes a check upon the perversions of what is counted good, or a spur to yet higher good. In morals, as in nature, the system is one of action and reaction, check and counter-check. We must not hastily reject the criticism of that genius which partakes rather of inspiration than of learning, of insight than of logic. The teachers of the world are not those who enforce precedents, but those who unfold eternal principles. It must be granted that the best fiction, in the main, turns attention from what is false and formal in religion to what is true and essential: however destructive the process, this is the result. Religion, whether under ecclesiastical or dogmatic forms, requires for its own good the keenest and severest criticism. No tendency runs to speedier ultimatum than does that of the Church to formalism, of dogma to bigotry, of pledged morality to hypocrisy. Good in themselves, they only continue to be such through the greatest care within and the most watchful criticism without. Our highest faculties and our best conditions are most liable to perversion. The vice of the world is not irreligion, but the divorce of religion from morality; and the tendency, lying in human nature, shows itself in Christianity with more stubbornness because of its perfect standards. Nor is it free from this tendency because it has shaken off medieval superstition and puritanic narrowness. It still needs the watchful care of its own teachers, and it must still accept the rougher and less discriminating criticism of secular literature. Together they will not be more than able to resist a tendency which history teaches as one of its plainest lessons. And if the criticism of fiction — shaped by the rules of its art — takes on the forms of sarcasm, caricature, exaggeration, and general excess, it is still to be accepted, if not with entire composure, yet with the belief that, in the end, it subserves the interests of the hope of mankind.

*T. T. Munger.*

**How Cuban Dances become German Students' Songs,  
and American Ditties become Italian  
Mountaineers' Melodies.**

SITTING on the piazza, one hot summer's afternoon, at my seaside resort in New Hampshire, I saw two Italian pipers trudging along the road — veritable *pifferari* they looked like, with legs bandaged up to the knee, cross-gartered, and covered with dust. Halloo! I said to myself, here is a chance to note down some-

thing fresh from the Tyrol; and as they prepared to play right in front of me I took out pencil and paper and noted down the tune.

My disappointment can be imagined when I found with the exception of the opening eight or ten bars the tune was "Climbing up the Golden Stairs." These fellows had evidently picked up this popular air from hearing the bands at summer hotels play it and moonlight banjo parties sing it; and I have no doubt the pipers have by this time returned to their native land and that the tune will soon return to us as a veritable Italian melody. One fellow played the melody on a kind of oboe, and the other accompanied him on a sort of bagpipe.

This incident made quite an impression upon me; for a little while previous, after playing my own arrangement of a Cuban dance, I was asked by a distinguished New York musical critic why I called it "Cuban," when it was a popular German students' song. Not having seen the notes of the German version, I have no means of knowing whether the two melodies are identical, or merely resemble each other, but have no doubt that my Cuban air has been exported or imported in much the same way that the "Golden Stairs" were "climbing."

*Richard Hoffman.*

#### "The University and the Bible."

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE adopted last year a course of Bible study very similar to that suggested by the Rev. T. T. Munger in his article upon "The University and the Bible" in *THE CENTURY* for September, it being the first American college, I believe, to make such study a part of its curriculum. The system is entirely apart from compulsory attendance at church and chapel services, which is required as before. The course is systematically arranged, and each subject is presented by an instructor competent to treat it in the spirit of advanced scientific thought. In regard to its scope, I quote from the college catalogue for 1887-88:

For the present, the subject in freshman year is the historic origin of the Bible; in sophomore year, New Testament history; in junior year, the development of the Church as exhibited in the Acts; in senior year, Old Testament history, from the creation to the entrance into Palestine, with special reference to the inspiration and historic and scientific relations of the Scriptures.

At present, but one hour in each week is devoted to this course; but it is intended shortly to develop and extend it. Every student is required to attend these exercises, and it is necessary to maintain as high a standard of scholarship as in other studies in order to obtain a degree.

The aim of the trustees in recommending such a course of study, so far as I know it, was precisely the same as Mr. Munger's idea — to meet the student's increase of culture and critical knowledge with a presentation of Bible truths, in their scientific as well as in their religious aspects. In view of the present attitude of the university to the Bible, this was certainly a very advanced position to take, and I am glad to be able to state that the experiment has thus far succeeded admirably. From the first there was no such opposition on the part of alumni and friends of the college as Mr. Munger would seem to apprehend. Upon the students the effect is already manifest in an increased