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place it is a wholesome thing for a young scholar — who is prone to ossify in his learning, and to lose touch with humanity and all practical concerns — to come in contact with people whose sphere of thought and action is widely different from his own ; and to be compelled to put himself *en rapport* with them and communicate with them, not in the learned jargon of the specialist, but in common human language, intelligible to all. Secondly, whatever may be said to the contrary, a smattering of knowledge (to adopt an odious phrase) is not such a bad thing after all. To the vast majority of the human race, to whom the mere rudiments of knowledge are accessible, it is not a question between superficiality and thoroughness, but between superficial learning or no learning at all. In spite of all that has been said and written against the popularization of science, science is still being popularized ; and it would be a hazardous thing to dispute the great benefits which have resulted from this admirable tendency. The improved sanitation of our cities, the more intelligent regard for health in diet and clothing, the increased comfort, and the diminished waste of human life and energy, are largely due to this general diffusion of scientific knowledge.

An intellectual interest of any kind dignifies life — makes it better worth living. And to the vast multitude, scattered in hamlets and crowded in city tenements, absorbed in soul-crippling drudgery, the mere lifting out of the ordinary rut of toil for bread is a wholesome and beneficial experience. The extraordinary success of the Chautauqua movement in this country amply demonstrates this. Those of us who have had exceptional advantages of education are apt to underestimate the intelligence of those whose circumstances in early life have debarred them from the blessings which we have enjoyed. A summer's experience at Chautauqua would be apt to convince any skeptic on this point that average Americans — the great American people — are possessed of an intellectual alertness which enables them to profit by any kind of vital and intelligible discourse. They have little patience with learned conceit and assumption ; but they have an admirable appreciation of manly worth coupled with sound scholarly acquirements.

It was a natural thing that the University Extension idea should strike root and find enthusiastic advocates at Chautauqua ; and, as a matter of fact, the movement took definite shape there last summer, and is making rapid headway. But previous to this a number of gentlemen, mostly teachers in the public schools of New York, Brooklyn, and the cities of New Jersey, had undertaken a similar movement in this State, and have now begun active operations. Prominent professors and tutors of Columbia and other colleges have been invited to deliver lectures on literary and scientific subjects, and their experience so far has been most gratifying. The attendance is large and increasing, and a most intelligent interest is manifested by their audiences. The credit for what has so far been accomplished in New York and vicinity is largely due to Mr. Seth Stewart, the energetic secretary of the University and School Extension, and the prime mover in the enterprise. At a recent dinner, attended by two hundred and fifty gentlemen vitally interested in this work, speeches were made by President Eliot of Harvard and President Seth Low of Columbia, expressing their approval of the idea of University Extension and promising their valuable coöperation.

OPEN LETTERS.

Henrik Ibsen.

THE Norwegian dramatist's fame has, at last, reached England and crossed the Atlantic. A society has even been formed in London for the purpose of furthering the study of his works and their representation upon the stage. "A Doll's House," apart from its merits as a play, has produced a profound impression, and occasioned spirited polemics between the admirers of the author and his detractors, in the press. Mr. William Archer on one side and Mr. Andrew Lang on the other have sustained the solo parts, and more or less the discordant choruses have amplified their theme and given a multitudinous resonance to their voices. It is not necessary to take sides in that controversy. Liking or disliking Ibsen is largely a matter of temperament. The optimist, who takes life as he finds it and satisfies himself with the reflection that everything has been wisely ordained, will have no patience with the corrosive criticism to which Ibsen subjects the fundamental institutions of civilized society. A certain philosophic discontent is a prerequisite for understanding him. He persists in seeing problems of universal application where most of us see only annoyances, or, perhaps, misfortunes affecting our individual lot. To judge him as a mere playwright is absurd. Though by no means contemptible as to technique, each of his plays — with the exception of the early historical ones — is a dramatized piece of philosophy. Each preaches more or less incisively a moral lesson, lays bare a social canker, diagnoses a social disease. But what distinguishes Ibsen above all others who have hitherto dealt in this species of morbid anatomy is the fine surgical precision with which he handles the scalpel and the cool audacity with which he cuts.

It is not the obvious vices he attacks; it is the hidden subtle defects. As Dr. Brandes has said in his masterly essay, "It became a passion with him to tap with his finger whatever looked like genuine metal, and to detect with a kind of painful satisfaction the ring of hollowness which grated on his ear and at the same time confirmed his expectation." He admits nothing to be sound until he has tested it, and so keen and searching is his test that no hidden flaw escapes his scrutiny. It is as often in the virtues of society, its vaunted perfections, as in its foibles that he finds the evidences of its unsoundness. Society enters at his door as a man, imagining himself in vigorous health, enters the office of the physician who is to examine him for life insurance. But it comes out crestfallen, with tottering step. An unsuspected disease is lurking in its vitals. Something is wrong with the heart, or the brain, or the circulation of the blood.

Naturally, the man who has the penetration to make and the courage to trumpet abroad these unpleasant discoveries can never be popular. Though he is widely read both in Germany and in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, and his plays are frequently produced, it has always been a limited minority of the public to whom he has appealed. But this minority makes reputations; and its influence is all out of proportion to its numbers. And Ibsen cherishes so profound a distrust of the popular verdict, whether it be in art, literature, or politics, that I verily believe he would begin to doubt the soundness of his own convictions, provided they received anything like a popular indorsement. In his opinion, the many are sure to be wrong; and a democracy, governed by the many, is therefore, in the present state of humanity, the absurdest form of government conceivable. The foolish are in every community in an overwhelming majority; the wise, the truly cultivated and intellectual, capable of exact thought, are a vanishing minority. Democracy means, therefore, the government of the wise by the foolish.

In his very first play, "Catiline," written before he was twenty-two years old, this view of life is fully matured. *Catiline's* plot against Rome is the corrupt individual's legitimate vengeance upon the society responsible for its corruption. *Catiline's* greatness is his curse. He cannot stoop, as Cicero does, to flatter the multitudes whom he despises, and by utilizing their folly rise upon their shoulders to civic eminence. He is compelled by his noble scorn of political trickery and petty arts to fling down his gauntlet to Rome; to wage war single handed against the world-empire. That Rome in the end proved too strong, in Ibsen's opinion detracts nothing from the sublimity of the challenge.

The same sympathy with extreme types, who loom in dusky grandeur above the heads of the throng, is manifest in the four historical dramas, "The Wassail at Solhaug," "Mistress Inger of Oestraat," "The Warriors of Helgoland," and "The Pretenders," which for fineness and force of characterization and dramatic intensity and power are unsurpassed in Scandinavian literature. In 1862, Ibsen, without entirely abandoning the field of historical drama, made his first essay as a satirist of contemporaneous manners. "The Comedy of Love" ridicules the tuning down of the poetry of love into the prose of an engagement. The man of high beliefs, capable of heroism, is, by regard for his *fiancée* and family relations, transformed into a timid Philistine. Society holds it to be legitimate for a married or an engaged man to be unfaithful to the ideals of his youth, to apologize for that which was noblest and best in him as youthful folly. Nay, it nurses the lurking cowardice in his nature and praises his surrender to Mammon as practical, and justified by family considerations. Ibsen is brimming over with scorn for this kind of marriage, which means a pusillanimous compromise with a sordid reality, the harnessing of the winged Pegasus to the plow of necessity (where he soon degenerates into a sorry family nag); the sobering of the high dithyrambics of untrammeled youth, by conjugal affection, into the spiritless jog-trot of matrimony.

Ibsen's next work, "Brand," a dramatic poem, deals with a kindred theme, though one of much larger dimension. It is the most original work which ever has been produced in the Scandinavian countries, and the most profoundly philosophical. Brand is a clergyman who is resolved to live in absolute conformity with Christ's command, without compromises or concessions. He interprets, literally, the injunction "thou shalt," and the prohibition "thou shalt not." The ideal demand is the absolute demand, which admits of no adaptation to circumstance, no bargaining or half-way fulfilments or splitting of the difference. "If any man come to me," says Christ, "and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Brand, in his effort to embody in his every action this heroic gospel, wrecks his own life and that of every one who is dear to him. When the physician declares that his only child must die unless he moves away from the fierce, sunless mountain region in which he is pastor, he refuses, though it wrings his heart, and lets the child die. Heartrending in its tragic force is the scene where he compels Agnes, his wife, to give the dead boy's clothes — which she worships with a bereaved mother's idolatry — to a wandering gipsy woman; as also the scene where he closes the shutters on Christmas Eve, and forbids her to stare out into the graveyard and shudder at the thought of her child lying under the snow. This kind of Christianity in a society built upon half-way measures and compromises leads necessarily to destruction.

Merely as the expression of a vigorous soul who fashions his God in his own heroic image, and scorns all weak popularizing of the sublime, this is full of interest. Christianity has, in his opinion, been vulgarized by its adaptation to average, commonplace men, and its demand of absolute purity, uprightness, and saintliness has been compromised at thirty or fifty per cent., according to the ability of imperfect human nature. The idea pervades all his writings that civilization has dwarfed the human race. Paganism, with its enormous social inequalities, and the untrammeled liberty granted to him who was strong enough to conquer it, created heroes and pygmies, while Christianity in its practical effects has raised the small at the expense of the great, or reduced the great for the benefit of the small. There are few now who will sympathize with this complaint, and even in Norway Ibsen's is a solitary voice crying in the wilderness. In English literature Thomas Carlyle represented a kindred tendency and intoned a similar lament. But he was far less consistent than Ibsen, and with all his scorn of the Philistine was less audacious in his arraignment of the paltriness and pusillanimity of the modern democratic state.

Of Ibsen's later works, which are all in dramatic form, I will now refer only to the most conspicuous. In "Peer Gynt" he lashes the boastful Norwegian patriotism, which finds consolation in a heroic past for the impotence of the present. *Peer Gynt,* who is intended as the type of the race,—if the expression be permissible,—"lies himself great." His grand intentions reconcile him to his paltry performance. He lives a heroic dream-life, and deludes himself with visions of glory which are far removed from the realm of fact. His mendacity acts as a safety valve for his pent-up spirit. The unheroic present affords him no field of action for the greatness that is in him, and his restless energy finds a refuge in a realm of fancy, where he performs all the fabulous deeds for which reality denies him the opportunity. He is psychologically comprehensible even when he cuts the sorriest figure; for it is a fact, and by no means an uncommon one, that the paltriest lives may be irradiated with the fantastic light of wonderland, without being at all, as far as the world is concerned, redeemed from their paltriness.

It is not a grateful task to tell people unpleasant truths, and Ibsen had to pay the penalty of his sincerity. Though it is an exaggeration to say that he was forced to leave his country, it is true that he lives in voluntary exile. He is of a solitary nature, reserved, almost shy, though not from lack of self-confidence. He always reminds me of a great solitary creature of prey, prowling, with a suspicious feline watchfulness, upon the outskirts of society. Having selected and silently spotted his prey, he makes his spring, pouncing now upon this foible, or vice, or imagined virtue, now upon that. First it was love he assailed, striking a set of pitiless claws into its delicate body; then it was patriotism, matrimony, hypocrisy, etc. In "The Pillars of Society" the theme is the inner rottenness which an outward respectability may cover. Every one bows to the standard of virtue which society has set up for its own protection and imposes upon its members. When a character in which the barbaric strain of passion is too strong for control breaks through its barriers, it has to do so secretly and still continue to pay homage to virtue and wear its mask. If we are to believe Ibsen, this imposition of the virtuous mask is an odious tyranny which entails a worse degradation than an open avowal of vice. Society needs an airing out now and then, a grand *exposé* of its hidden crimes and wrongs, as a preliminary to a healthier condition.

"A Doll's House"—or literally "A Doll-Home"—deals with matrimony; but it may as well be admitted that, as a social satire, it has less application on this side of the ocean than in Europe. Wives are not here, as a rule, the playthings of their husbands. Nor are they usually lacking in individuality. Girls are, to be sure, brought up with far less reference to their individual character and proclivities than are boys; and as long as the chief object of the great majority is to become wives and mothers, they have to be trained with a view, not primarily to their own development, but to make them pleasing to men. As long as this is the case, the situation in "A Doll's House" may well find its counterpart anywhere. *Nora* has been petted and spoiled, first by her father, and then by her husband, and no one has taken pains to make her acquainted with the machinery of the society in which she lives. She has been shielded from contact with the rough realities of life. She has so little idea of business relations and the ethics which govern them, that she forges her father's name for the purpose of saving her husband's life, and has not the remotest idea of the enormity of the act she has committed. She cannot comprehend it; her feelings tell her that she has acted from the noblest motives, and she declares that the laws are unjust if they forbid a wife to save her husband's life.

This reasoning is essentially womanly, and is not confined to one side of the Atlantic. Her glib mendacity, too, which is almost purposeless, is not a sign of depravity, but of lack of development. It is the mendacity of a child. It is a kind of mendacity which is far more common among women than among men; because, though women are not ignorant of the wrong of lying, they are not, from their very nature and education, so strongly convinced of the binding character of social ethics, when they conflict with individual feeling. When *Nora* expects "the wondrous thing" to happen, namely, that *Helmer* shall shield her by declaring himself guilty of the forgery, she has really no conception of what such a sacrifice would involve. She only sees what effect it would have upon her; how it would forever unite her to her husband with a deep and abiding love. But she reasons again like a child, even when she finds her real self, and is resolved to go forth alone, abandoning her children, and not return to them until she has developed, by the experience of the world, into a definite and individual being. A marriage cannot exist except between two human beings, two coördinate persons, each contributing a definite character and developed personality to the union. But *Nora* is little more than a personification of her sex, and she feels how much more she might have been if opportunities for development had been afforded her. Her dormant human soul awakes and demands its rights. It will no longer consent to effacement. She declares that her first duties are not to husband and child, but to herself. And this declaration is profoundly characteristic of Ibsen. He utterly repudiates social obligations if they involve detriment to the individual character. He would, no doubt, agree with Herbert Spencer, who states in substance that the most perfect marriage is that which provides the highest development for the offspring compatible with the individual well-being and development of the parents.

It is contrary to the tendency of modern thought to emphasize individual rights *versus* social obligation. But Ibsen represents wholly this contrary tendency. Others have pointed out our gain by the social compact, he never loses an opportunity to emphasize the loss; and he says, in "An Enemy of the People," "The strongest man is he who stands alone."

Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen.

Bloodhounds and Slaves.

AN interesting article on the English bloodhound, by Mr. Edwin Brough, in the June, 1889, number of THE CENTURY MAGAZINE, reminded me of the long-standing slander that the Southern master formerly used the bloodhound to run down his runaway slaves. Mr. Brough says that the English bloodhound "is quite different . . . from the Cuban bloodhound of slave-hunting notoriety." We look at the article "Bloodhound," in "Chambers's Encyclopædia" (J. B. Lippincott & Co., editions of 1884 and 1887). I find the following statements: "The Cuban bloodhound, which is much employed in the pursuit of felons and fugitive slaves in Cuba, differs considerably from the true bloodhound of Britain and continent of Europe, being more fierce and having more resemblance to the bull-dog. . . . It is this kind of bloodhound which was formerly employed in the United States for the recapture of fugitive slaves." It is not surprising that Englishmen should believe all this, as it is what we told them of ourselves. Laying aside the brutality, one would hardly think that an ordinarily sensible man would