THE PARK REVIEW, VOL. II, OCTOBER, 1900, NO. 1

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649361236

The Park Review, Vol. II, October, 1900, No. 1 by Park College

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

PARK COLLEGE

THE PARK REVIEW, VOL. II, OCTOBER, 1900, NO. 1

Trieste

P
LE
P

158
247

THE PARK REVIEW.

VOL. 2. OCTOBER, 1900. NO. 1

THE RESPONSE OF THE HEART TO LITERATURE.

HENRY NELSON BULLARD, PH. D.

A new book has come to hand. It is read and regretfully laid aside. From the moment the first page was finished, the attention was fixed, grudging the slightest interruption, upon the development of the story. There was a feeling of satisfaction within us as the end was reached. New emotions had been ours, new friends had come into our lives. The pleasant impression of the book is without flaw as we think over what we have read. Tomorrow a shock will come when we read a criticism by some well known writer in which this book, appealing so strongly to us, is torn to pieces and only a few poor fragments are left to be gathered up and treasured by those who had found such great delight in the whole. We have all faced this situation and shudder at its frequent recurrence. It is a fact to be deplored but seems inevitable. The critic holds the canons of art in mind; the reader judges by the comparative impressions made upon him as he reads. Where he finds the critic disagreeing with him, the reader clings to his own opinion. To quite an extent he is right in this attitude. There can never be a code of arbitrary rules which will make criticism infallible. Rules of art may be fixed and, if we could agree that the highest criterion of music, literature, and all that we call "the arts," is perfection of formal beauty, then we might make estimates which would be generally accepted. We could say: "This is the greatest poem the world has ever seen." And the decision would be nowhere doubted. But this is not enough. There are perfect sonnets which we can hold up for examples of form but they are never read. We take up again our favorite novel and, in spite of great flaws of composition, we read it over and over and feel that it is a master-piece. We may agree as to the requirements of

60607
17/4/13

art but the personal effect lies beyond all fixed limits. Lord Lytton once said: "Art and correctness are far from identical, and the one is sometimes proved by the disdain of the other." He realized fully how one who strives only for perfection of form and style may not touch his audience at all while the most lasting effect upon the minds of the men of the present and future may be made without the least attempt to follow the requirements of art.

It is this fact which makes possible the failure of criticism which is all too common. The vitality of literature does not depend upon artistic merit alone. Therefore a correct estimate of a new work cannot be based on that standard, another element must have its place. The wide diversity of opinion with which a book is often received may be explained by the fact that real literature contains more than any one man can see. This allows as many estimates as there are different points of view. Some of these may seem contradictory. But this does not explain the adverse consensus of opinion which now and then a really great work has to live down. Most of our criticism is purely intellectual, objective. Impression is passed over for cold dissection of thought and form. By impression is not meant that reasonless feeling which carries critic and reader out of himself before he has stopped to think. There is a deeper something which cannot be described which, if a man could master fully and bring into its true relation with artistic merit, he would become a true critic.

We call it the decision not of the mind but of the heart. By itself the estimate of the untrained heart is as little to be depended upon as that of the untaught mind. The heart alone will overestimate, the mind alone will overcriticise. Only artistic perfection can gain the unqualified approval of the mind. It is because the mind is trained. The heart we generally leave to take care of itself. Where there are serious flaws in the style, the balanced estimate should acknowledge the good features and, instead of throwing them out of the scales, weight them against the flaws.

It is altogether impossible to define a power which is as subjective as this we call the heart. However we all know what it is. When we read of the death of Colonel Newcome, there is something behind the tears telling us that the words have gone home. To the music of the "Charge of the Light Brigade" something urges us to march in time. We all know how some words touch our

sympathy and make us respond. We say it makes the heart beat. If we stop to think we realize that this feeling is not entirely unregulated. We can never consciously train it but it does develop under certain conditions. No one needs to go far to find the heart which responds to only one style of music of literature. Shut out for a moment the differences due to heredity and surroundings. Take two brothers who have grown up together and would naturally have the same tastes. They read the same books at first. Soon one of them always has a history at hand. His interest centers in the great men of the world. He desires to be a president or a great general when he becomes a man. His brother is always reading some sea story. His "Robinson Crusoe" is thumbed to pieces. He has read more than once "Wing and Wing," and "Two Years Before the Mast." Give him a chance and he will run away to sea. Neither boy will respond in the least to what the other reads. Only a love story appeals to one reader and it is trash to another. He who likes history despises the lover of poetry. When our preference is fixed, our reaction time is lengthened for every other impression. The prejudice of the heart is unconscious but it is just as strong as that of the mind.

In all the criticism of the reader the heart-response holds undisputed sway. The reader passes by the form, he notices the style only to remark how beautifully it fits the meaning, he pays no attention to the mechanism unless it interferes with his reading. The perfection of art is to be unnoticed by the reader, by those for whom the writing was done. Mark Twain has criticised the accuracy of many of the details in some of Cooper's work and his points are well made. Anyone who has read "Deerslayer," at once sees the point of the criticism and at the same time realizes that in reading none of those flaws attracted his attention. And it is possible to read the book again without the effect being spoiled in the least. Why is it? Because it is real literature. As long as perfection in form is so nearly impossible it does not seem best to emphasize form so much in choosing the body of our literature. As long as the present conditions continue, much that is called literature will be piled out of the way in our attics and we will keep on our tables and read that which has real meaning for us.

When we come to discuss what kind of literature means the most, we must not be dogmatic. Minds differ and hearts differ.

The commonest division calls what appeals most to the mind, realistic; and most to the heart, idealistic. If the heart is forbidden any relation to the writing then we have naturalism; if the mind is denied place then we have pure flights of fancy. These two extremes are unreal. When both elements have their part, no matter what the proportion, truth to life is always possible. Realism can give us an exact picture which we all must admire; idealism makes us feel. No novelist has ever been great without both methods at hand. They can only be classified by their purpose and the preponderance in their work of the one element over the other. In the novels of the great idealists, Austen, Dickens, Eliot, there are magnificent realistic portraits but their strength is where they have given us the type, where they have added of their own life and personality to the model and have made it stand for more than appears on the face. The great realist, Thackeray, is at his best in his scene and portrait painting. There he was master and yet many are the instances where his heart speaks out in the voice of the dying, his love sparkles in a farewell glance, and we have more than any other, except he, saw or could have seen in the original. In the work that is real there must be the personality and love of the master. If all is beautiful but cold, it may be a case worthy of the most beautiful jewel but it is locked, it is only a handsome coffin. Is there no tear in the words? Then there will be no tear in the eye. The heart must respond or the word of praise from the mind will mean nothing.

In the years not long past we have suffered from a period of the most extreme realism. In fiction our heroines have been insipid and our heroes fools, either in a way not true to life or in a way true enough but not inspiring. Some have described with utmost care the most disgusting scenes with a thought of reform. They might learn much from Mrs. Stowe and Mrs. Jackson. We know that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" is true to life, yet it is a masterpiece of idealism. Therein lay its power. It fascinated the interest and did not seek to compel it or shock it. Few people can be moved as much by the facts of oppression, no matter with what care they are served up, as when they are shown the underlying meaning of it all and feel it as their own experience. Of late the reaction seems to have set in. All of the best literature of the present is idealistic in nature. Tolstoi's new novel goes to prove the facts of the reaction. Even criticism is generally arrayed against it. Meanwhile the literary world is amazed at the un-

equalled popularity of a number of new books, most of them by new writers. Some of them are transient in value but others are worthy of comparison with anything since the great novelists finished their work. Men who knew the original of David Harum say that he was a queer fellow but that he did not begin to compare with the character in the book. And yet no one can say that the picture is not perfectly true to life. That is idealism. Historical novels naturally tend to idealism and this seems to be a period of historical novels. "To Have and to Hold" and the several other American novels which are now so popular are very different from the popular novels of a few years ago. One cannot read that Virginian story without feeling the response of the heart. The author's beat as she wrote and ours must respond.

No writer can put of his own life into the creations of his imagination without life resulting on the printed page. It is there. We do not see letters and words, we see pictures. Can you read of the last run for the Shepherd's Trophy by the Gray Dog of Kenmuir in "Bob, Son of Battle" without loving the dog as though he were human? He is only a dog. No, there is life there, heart there. It is no matter what the disguise is, whether fur or broadcloth. The tears come when you lay down "Prisoners of Hope." Can you keep your heart still? Why not? You have not been reading in your room, you have been down on the "tall, gray crags." Your heart must respond when other hearts are torn as these.

What the future is to give us we do not know. In the past it has been first one kind and then another. Like the ups and downs of the financial world, like the tendency to political change, so it has been in literature. We have been passing through an age of realism in every field. Art, music, Biblical criticism and other lines of thought have suffered by the extreme devotion to the minute. It is very easy to keep so near to a picture that all its beauty is lost. That is the great danger of over-developed realism in writing and in criticism. If the present indications are to be trusted we are swinging back from the unreal toward idealism. We have been dissecting and admiring the minute results, we are going to have before us those effects which will be most beautiful as we stand off to admire them in their completeness. We may hope to find in the years to come some great names as when Dickens, Thackeray and Eliot lived at the same time. We are not all critics; most of us are readers. Let us keep our heart true and test what we read by it. Are you stirred by a poem or a story to a higher, nobler emotion than you felt before? Call it great then. It is so for you. Let us leave the cruel knife for another and read to make our own life happier and better. If the heart responds to what you read, make that part of your life. Be sure the heart rings true, then follow when it rings.

HERBERT SPENCER AND THE EVOLUTION PHILOSOPHY.*

CLELAND B. M'AFEE, PH. D.

The most interesting character in present-day philosophy is Mr. Herbert Spencer. He has been a prominent figure in philosophical and scientific thought for more than fifty years. Everybody reckons with him, though many sharply differ from his premises and his conclusions. Few books dealing with present-day problems of thought will be found without his name in the index. He must be quoted or referred to, in order to say what the world of scholarship has said. Now a man past eighty, he can hope to do little more that is original or constructive, if indeed, he thinks it necessary to add to the system with which his name is connected. But the event of his eightieth birthday last April called forth comment from the press and the lecturers of the whole world. His works are current in India and Japan and China and all the countries of so-called civilization. Professor Fiske says no more than many others have thought, in this paragraph:—

"There is no subject, great or small, that has not come to be affected by his doctrine, and, whether men realize it or not, there is no nook or corner in speculative science where they can get away from Mr. Spencer's thought."†

It need not be supposed that Mr. Spencer is accepted as right by those who must reckon with him in this way. But it is as plain as anything can be that he rules in English thought more than any other one man today. I do not mean to say that he is more dominant today than some men who are not now living. I am not yet ready to yield first place for Kant, and the allegiance of Germany to its own thinkers and its suspicion of English thought is too familar to need more than mention. Some items in Mr. Spencer's theory are, I hope, just about out-grown. In certain lines he is not so dominant as he was. It will not be long before he will rule *in absentia*, as Kant does, not by virtue of *all* that he teaches, but by the strength of a few great truths which were his discovery.

One of the marks of his strength is this:—that almost no one seems able to take him calmly and judicially. He is lauded or execrated. If one is an admirer, then Spencer can do no wrong;

*Notes of a paper read before The Historical Club, Park College. October, 1900.
†Century of Science, p. 49, et passim.

he did not mean that thing in which common sense would force a disagreement.* Other isolated passages can be picked out of his works which show that this could not have been his meaning. Even a criticism which can not be escaped, must be toned down until it becomes a virtue in the man to have been wrong.†

On the other hand, if he is wrong at all, he is all wrong. The truths which have inadvertently slipped into his system are mere truisms, at any rate, and have been talked over on the school grounds. The profound sayings are only empty sounds with no meaning except to furnish a laugh for those who differ with him.‡ I am not exaggerating this, really. Read Fiske and MacPherson and Harris and Mahan and Porter and any of them and see if he is not hard to take calmly.

Part of the reason for this is not far to seek. The enthusiasm of agreement with him is because of what he affirms, and not because of what he denies. The destructive results of his philosophy, the fact that it cuts up certainty by the roots, that it relegates the highest hopes and ambitions of men to the sphere of the Unknowable and Unattainable—that is all overlooked in the joy to the inspiring affirmations of the uniformity of nature and the reign of one great principle thro the whole of life and all its departments. The raptures of delight in his teaching swallow up all careful thought about his denials, and only goodness and greatness can be considered.

The reverse judgment is fair for those who are opposed to Mr. Spencer. They are occupied with his denials. Any man concerned with practical religion is apt to be interested in Spencer's denial that we can know anything about God except that he is—no, that Power is, an Inscrutable Power is, and his denial that we can ever know more about It. The liberal use of capital letters does not help us much, and the condescending advice that we go on using these definite expressions until we are developed sufficiently to use the truer, abstract ones makes one uncomfortable. Indeed it is difficult to rest entirely content with the opinion that these faulty expressions are as true as the advancement of the time will bear and that we must judge by the relative standard and not by the absolute.§ Men who object to that sort of

*E. g., Fiske, Century of Science, p. 58.
†E. g., MacPherson, Spencer and Spencerism, p. 9.
‡Notably in Mahan, Critical History, specially II 268, but throughout.
§First Principles, Sec. 32