**ON ANONYMOUS LITERATURE.**

IT is I think, new generally presumed that all literature of a high class which presents itself to the public alone, standing on its own merits, and not as a part of any combined effort, should present itself accompanied by the name of its author. When I speak of literature standing alone, it will be understood that I speak of books as distinguished from periodical writing, whether in newspapers, magazines, or reviews. As the practice to which I allude has become general in. regard to literary work which is intended to stand alone, so is it not general, but of comparatively rare occurrence, in that other class of literature which we call periodical, and which is maintained by the combined efforts of various minda. As to the wisdom, of this practice in respect to books, there can, I think, be no doubt. A man should always dare to be responsible for the work which he does, and should be ready to accept the shame, the rebuffs, the ridicule, or, worse than all, the indifference which will attend bad work, as he is ever willing to receive the praise and fame, and everyday distinction among ibis fellow-men, which are the consequences of good work. This I think to be true in regard to everything done by man for his fellow-creatures, from the cobbling of a little shoe to the initiation of a great law; but it is especially true in regard to men who, by the very nature of their work, undertake that it shall be done in public. The man who puts forward his printed words, whether for instruction or dellectation, and publishes, that is makes public, his own thoughts and creatures, should never be ashamed to say from whom they come. If there be shame, let the shame deter him. If there be doubt, let him solve it as best he may. And if his doubts will not solve themselves, and he yet leans to the bolder course, let him dare the worst, and silently bid the critics do what they will with that hitherto unknown name which he presents to them. The young poet whose timidity induces him to send forth his verses under a pseudonym, is either too timid or not timid enough.

All this is, I think, now so far understood that I doubt whether we shall in England ever have such another instance of concealed name as that which Walter Scott created; and the author of the "Pickwick Papers," were he to begin now instead of having begun same thirty years since, would probably commence as Charles Dickens and not as "Boz." That there are exceptions I must of course admit, and exceptions which the public allows; but in latter days these allowed exceptions are allowed most frequently on behalf of women. One or two female pseudonyms that have preserved themselves in spite of the high literary position which their owners have obtained, of [492] course occur to us in any discussion on this subject. But the nature of a woman is such that we admire her timidity and do not even regret her weakness.

But this assumption of that responsibility which attaches itself to the publication of an author's true name, though as a rule it ig practised by English writers who, as I have said before, stand alone in their writings,---has never become general in. this country among that equally influential class of literary workmen who produce our newspapers, reviews, and magazines. The question whether such responsibility should be assumed has been debated,---though not as yet I think, on any open ground; and such debate, as far as it has gone, has hitherto been very strongly in favour of anonymous authorship for periodical literature. It is of course known to all men that a rule, and indeed a law, directly the reverse of that which prevails here is in operation among the French. In France all writings in newspapers and reviews are signed; and in France, undoubtedly, a high professional standing has been acquired by a respectable professional body through the working of this law. To the workers themselves there can, I think, be no doubt that the practice is salutary. It keeps them ever on their mettle, urging them to do their best. It gives to each man an individuality in his work, without which work is so distressing, so little alluring, that here in England such individuality is achieved by the foremost among our writers for the periodical press by side shifts as it were, by underhand means, by means which, though underhand are undoubtedly justifiable, and necessary to the preservation of the salt of the man's mind. It gives,---this French practice, to the individual the praise and honour which his work has won for him, or it subjects him to that inferior position in his profession beyond which he has not been able to raise himself by his talents and industry. That the individual writer is served by this rule seems to be manifest; but it is by no means so clear that it is advantageous to the public. And it must be remembered that they who conduct an enter prise of this nature,---such an enterprise, we will say, as that of, the Times newspaper,---are bound to look solely to the public advantage Any editor or editors who may manage the Times can have no other, duty than that of making that newspaper such as its readers would. wish it to be. Unless it could be shown that the newspaper could be produced better of its kind, and more generally influential, by writers with names than by writers without them, writers without names should be preferred. For this reason, and, as I take it, for this reason only, writers without names are preferred by all newspapers.

It may be remembered that the late Lord Herbert agitated this subject some time ago, thinking that the French practice might be introduced into England with beneficial results; but Lord Herbert failed altogether in producing any strong feeling on his side of the [493] question, although, he was a man who by his own standing and character was perhaps as well calculated to lead public opinion on such a subject as any man living. But in forming his own opinion he had probably given less than the proper weight to a consideration of the difference between French newspapers and English newspapers, and between French politics and English politics,---and he failed. In France the periodical press of the country is not allowed to guide political opinion. It is the object of the government to guide political opinion from the throne; and though the throne may fail, and political opinion may succeed in forming itself on guides furnished from other quarters, not the less is the nature of the newspaper in France made to adapt itself to imperial instincts and imperial edicts. It will, I think, be at once seen that a newspaper press which is to flourish under such a system, will flourish best by individual efforts. This man's style or that man's wit will attract more readers in a country so ordered, than any combined effort to support a party, or to advocate a policy. But among us a newspaper, which has its various uses,---is chiefly used as an instructor and informant in politics; as a guide through the trimly gravelled walks of Conservatism, if such be the leaning of the reader, or, as a pioneer among the waterfalls of Whiggery or the rocks of Radicalism, if such pioneering be required. Now no man chooses to be guided in politics by Johnson, Thompson, or Watson, though Johnson, Thompson, or Watson may be excellent guides. But men do choose to be guided by the Times, the Daily News, or, it may be, by the Morning Herald. It is felt by their different admirers that these are emanations from a certain political focus to which have radiated various political streams of light, all indeed having the same tendency, though coming from various quarters of the political heaven; and the whole is accepted, not as the. teaching of one man, but as an expression of concrete wisdom from a condensed mass of political information and experience. The newspaper is not a lamp lighted by a single hand, but a sun placed in the heaven by an invisible creator. For these treasons I think we may acknowledge that the present anonymous System of writing for the daily press in England is useful and salutary as regards the public, even though we may admit that it is salutary as regards the writer.

But in such discussions as have hitherto been held in England. this subject, this mistake seems to have been made,---that all periodical writing has been taken together, as though the whole had the same nature; and it has been supposed that arguments which are good as to newspapers, must therefore be good also as to magazines and reviews. Now it may,/ I think, be shown that the contrary to this is the truth, and that all those reasons which are strong in France for the responsibility of authorship in regard [494] to periodical writing, are aa strong m England -when they are brought to bear on periodical literature that is not political; and that none of those reasons -which dispose us to adopt anonymous writing in political journalism, should have any weight in inducing us accept anonymous -writing in journalism which is not political. Indeed the feeling in favour of such responsibility is becoming strong, that even the genuine British newspapers which most pride themselves on the privilege of anonymous authorship are pro to break through their own rules, under a feeling on the part of their editors, of which the editors are perhaps themselves unconscious, that much will be gained and nothing lost by the use name in which the public puts trust. This name may he a true name, pure and simple, as when Dr. Temple or Mr. Thomas Hughes, descend into the arena among the unnamed gladiators, and take the short-sword of journalistic discussion, without the shield even of a pseudonym; or it may be some more esteemed nom de plume, such as Jacob Omnium or Historicus, in using which the writers become the most valuable of all newspaper contributors, because the readers' know who are the personages from whom they are deriving their information. By Johnson and Thompson, as I have said before readers are unwilling to be guided;---but Jacob Omnium, and Historicus have made themselves so plainly audible, that editors newspapers readily recognise the value of their signatures. They are supposed to have something special to say, which shall be valuable as coming from the individual, and are not therefore required to do their work as part of a combined effort produced by an invisible power. The same thing may be said, or should be said, of those writers who furnish ordinary articles to magazines and reviews fear that all who are employed on such work in this country have not indeed made for themselves as yet such reputations as the two great pugilists in type whom I have named; but the work which they do is work which stands alone, which requires no manipulation or welding to make it compatible with other work, which must either be a lamp by its own virtue, or else give no light at all, nor assist in giving any light.

It may, indeed, well be that an editor shall think it needful to repress the names of his contributors, because he finds it expedient to employ writers, whom he trusts probably for capacity experienced by himself, but as to whom he does not feel that public recognition has as, yet given value to their names. The editors, managers, and proprietors of magazines may conceive,---though they are, I think, wrong so conceiving,---that for this reason anonymous contributions are more valuable to them than contributions which are signed; but the public receives no part of this value, nor does the writer. The public will get worse work than it would otherwise obtain because the writer [495] who is made to give his name will be more careful, when-using it, than he is when keeping it concealed. And the writer without his name will work imder circumstances which are injurious to himself,-and repressive of his energy. He will not he on his mettle, and will dare to he slovenly, inconsequential, and unjust. What has he to gain hy such efforts that he should give to them the best of his mind and the best of his conscience? I may be told, with truth, that manv have gained much, and have given to anonymous literature the best of their minds and the best of their conscience; but such men have done go because their work has not in truth been anonymous. They have been known by other marks than those of a signed name, and have received their reward in the recognition given to them.

In looking at our magazines and reviews as a class in literature, we expect to find in them literary work which may be classified under the following headings:---fiction, poetry, short popular treatises on science and theology, speculations on social subjects, short political essays, and criticism on literature and works of art. As regards fiction, we may say that the name is commonly given. It is given either in the publication itself or in advertisements; and it may be admitted that this class of periodical writing is burdened with no sin in the direction of which we are speaking. As to poetry, we do not get much in our magazines; and as to the best of what we adopt, our editors are always willing enough to break through their own rules. and give us the names of their poets. If I remember rightly, the names or initials of Mr. Tennyson, Mrs. Browning, Mr. Thackeray, and R.M.M., now Lord Houghton, have always been appended to those pieces which they have contributed to our periodical literature, not probably from any anxiety for such distinction on their part, but because the editors have felt the value of their signatures. And as to younger poets,---younger and therefore less known,---it cannot be supposed that the poets themselves would object to the notoriety arising from the addition of their names to verses which have received the imprimatur of an editor. The public certainly would not object, nor can it be argued that poetry itself would lose anything by such a practice.

As regards treatises on science, theology, social matters, and pohtics in the abstract, there can hardly be a doubt that such essays are valuable when coming from competent men,---men who have studied such subjects with minds capable of comprehending them, and who write of them with skill in expression,---but are valueless, and become mere padding, when they are the productions of those who have not such capabilities. It may no doubt be fairly argued that the capacity of no man can be judged till it has been tried, and that the young bird must flutter before he can fly. It may also, probably, be felt that the pases of a magazine afford a fit arena for such flitter- [496]ing. But let us inquire why the names of such flutterers are with held. Is it that their modesty may not be outraged? I think not. Such flutterers are often modest while their manuscripts are still manuscripts; but the approval of the editor gives great courage, and the beauty of the type turns the coward into a hero. But let that foe as it may, such timidity should not be encouraged. The flutterer who hopes to be a bird must risk some tumbles in his early feathers It is not this, however, that keeps out the virgin name. The editor knowing that his unknown or unappreciated writer will by hia signature attract no special notice, that he may in some sort deter rather than attract, trusts that an innocent public may presume that he employs none but first-rate hands,---and that those first-rate hands are employed anonymously because it is the recognised nature of English periodical literature to be anonymous. He will tell vyy in his little back parlour,---for when you meet him in the flesh the editor is very candid,---that he cannot afford to append the names of all his writers. "When I get anything," he will tell you, from A. or H. or L., the thing becomes known at once. 'Have you seen that paper of H.'s in the ------?' men will soon ask. But if I put in the names of A. and H. and L., I must also put in the Johnsons and Thompsons, and that will make me seem weak." That is the editor's reasoning, and, as far as he is concerned, it is very good reasoning. But it is not good reasoning as regards the public. Let them not expect more for their sixpence, shilling, two shillings, or five, than the watchful, earnest editor can give them for their money; but let them, at any rate, know what they get. It is absurd to argue that readers should judge by the matter and not by the name of the writer. Men go to hear the Bishop of Oxford preach, who will by no means trust themselves to the preaching of Mr. Pifkin, the curate. Pifkin thinks it hard that they should not give him a trial, but hearers as well as readers value acknowledged excellence. Let Pifkin, the curate, and the literary Johnsons and Thompsons, have their trials. and obtain such recognition as they may. Let the Johnsons and Thompsons obtain it in magazines ; but let them make their struggles without a subterfuge. Let it be remembered that there is no such justification for the practice here as that which political newspapers can plead with truth. The magazine essay is not written to order. It is not inserted there that it may assist to uphold a certain policy or party, on behalf of which or in support of which the newspaper is ever struggling. Any one can understand that a leading article in the Times must be written as a part of a combined whole. It must support certain views to which the Times is committed. It must be subject to, and compatible with, the prevailing spirit of the Times. That is the valid reason for anonymous writing in political journalism; but no such reason operates in regard to magazine articles.

[497] I have not, however, as yet touched, upon. the great difficulty, the true stumbling-block, which stands in the way of that open. responsibility which I think authors should, assume in putting forth their work. It is in respect of criticism, on. the works of others that this reticence is felt to be the most necessary, and that it will, I fear, be defended with the greatest obstinacy. I speak here of all criticism, of criticism on literature, painting, music, architecture, sculpture, acting, and what not. The critic who encounters the known author, either with praise or censure, or, as is more common, with both combined, should dare to make himself known, and to be responsible for the guidance which he offers to the public. He should be led to this for his own sake as a man. He should be led. to this for the author's or artist's sake, that the author or artist may know whether the lessons inculcated may be trusted. But he should be led to this, above all, for the sake of the public, in order that they may know how to hold a balance between the critic and the criticised. Of course it will be argued that the critic's hand should be free, and that no critic could venture to be plainly outspoken if he were to declare himself to all his victims. In answer to this, I say that the man who dares to be a critic should dare to face all that his criticism may bring upon him. We doubtless should have less of critics, if such writing were no longer anonymous, but we should probably have more of real criticism. We should have less of critics; and who that has examined our literature for the last twenty years will not admit that this would be an improvement? Of what nature are those myriads of critical articles which swarm, at present from our periodical press? Is it not manifest that a very large proportion of them is written without even a cursory reading of the book noticed? How is a literary workman who works for ten shillings a column to read and digest a book, for the full comprehension of which a week would be quite insufficient, when the result of his labour when written will produce for him twenty or thirty shillings? And what necessity now exists which binds an editor to employ critics who are competent to their work? Let any who may read these words think of ie criticism, which appears in. many of our minor newspapers on acting and painting, and then ask himself whether the continued production of such literature can be good for any of the parties concerned?

I am far from. saying that there is no good criticism now extant lhough that which is good is small in bulk as compared with that which is bad. But all that which is good is known by its intrinsic qualities as surely as though it were signed. Every author, every painter, every actor knows who is his critic, if the criticism be of any mark either for good or bad; he knows him. or may know him if he wish to do so. The good criticism,---that which is of anv use either [498] to artist or public,---is in fact signed. The bad criticisia,---criticism which, is in fact unsigned) and which is useless both to artist and public,---would perish under the practice which I recommend, to the great benefit of all survivors. It will be said that criticism, carried on under a system of signatures would generally be eulogistic, and that censure, useful censure would not be forthcoming. Let me remind those who will use this argument that almost all the best criticism they have known has been eulogistic, or at any rate so far eulogistic as to be devoid, of personal offence. Let them think of it, and they will confess that it has been so. Such censorious criticism as we have known, and have recognised for its utility, has generally been applied not to individuals but to growing sins in literature or art, or, if applied to individuals has been applied with thoughtful dignity to men who have been great but who have fallen away from their greatness. In such cases the: i critic is almost always known, and no demand for the name of such a one would have any effect towards silencing him. As to the early snuffing out of young literary or young artistic imbeciles, I would maintain that they may be well left to the indifference of the public. But even as regards any such imbecile, and the need which may exist for the snuffing of him out, a man should be ashamed to do without his name that which he is not prepared to do with it.

Here, in this new Review of ours, we intend to try what signatures will do for us. Our Editor will, at any rate, not be ashamed, of putting forward the names of his contributors; and we, on our part, will not be ashamed to put forward our names under his authority.

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

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