Art. II. —ORLEY FARM.

*Orley Farm*. By Anthony Trollope. Chapman and Hall. 1862

M. Forgues has recently taken occasion, in the gazes of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, to express, under the unflattering title of “Dégénérescence du Roman,” his views as to the present state of English fiction, and the future prospects of English morality. As he grounds his opinion in the one case on a survey of about a dozen of the most worthless stories of the day, and in the other on the revelations of Sir Cresswell Cresswell’s court, it is natural enough that the account which he gives of us should be of a somewhat gloomy and humiliating character. With perfect good humour, and with a polite vindictiveness, the fruit evidently of prolonged provocation, he turns the laugh of his audience against the affected severity of our social code, the delicacy of our taste, and the boasted prudery of our literature. British mothers, he says, look upon a French novel as “the abomination of desolation,” and British youths veil their faces in pious horror before the innuendos of Paul de Kock, the eager voluptuousness of Dumas, or the ingenious impurity of Ernest Feydau. And yet, continues our frank monitor, England stands a good chance of descending from her pinnacle, and proving herself, in outward demonstration, no better than her neighbours. Such exposures as the Windham trial show that profligacy is much the same on one side of the Channel as the other, and the activity of the Divorce Court bespeaks an un-hallowed restlessness in the matrimonial world. On the other hand, free trade is likely enough to extend from material to intellectual productions: along with the vintage of Bordeaux and the silks of Lyons, the sturdy Puritans are day by day imbibing the lax notions of less austere communities; and England, whose *métier* it has been to lecture the rest of Europe on improprieties, already possesses a race of novelists who want only the liveliness of their neighbours and the tricks of the trade, to be as viciously entertaining, and to gratify their own and their readers’ improper craving’s and unchastened sensibilities by delineations as daring, a levity as complete, a license as openly avowed, as any thing that Eve’s latest and most degenerate daughters can pluck from the fruit-trees of forbidden knowledge in the lending libraries of Paris.

Such a work as *Orley Farm* is perhaps the most satisfactory answer that can be given to so disagreeable an imputation. Here, it may fairly be said, is the precise standard of English taste, sentiment, and conviction. Mr. Trollope has become almost a national institution. The *Cornhill* counts its readers by millions, and it is to his contributions, in ninety-nine eases out of a hundred, that the reader first betakes himself. So great is his popularity, so familiar are his chief characters to his countrymen, so wide-spread is the interest felt about his tales, that they necessarily form part of the common stock-in-trade with which the social commerce of the day is carried on. If there are some men in real life whom not to knew argues oneself unknown, there are certainly imaginary personages on Mr. Trollope’s canvas with whom every well-informed member of the community is expected to have at least a speaking acquaintance. The disappointment of Sir Peregrine, the boyish love of his grandson, the conceited transcendentalism of Lucius Mason, the undeserved prosperity of Graham, the matrimonial troubles of the Furnival establishment, and the high life below stairs to which Mr. Moulder and his travelling companion introduce us,—have probably been discussed at half the dinner-tables in London, as often and with as much earnestness as Royal Academies, International Exhibitions, the last mail from America, Sir William Armstrong’s newest discovery in the science of destruction, or any other of the standing conversational topics on which the conventional interchange of thought, is accustomed to depend. The characters are public property, and the prolific imagination which has called them into existence is, without doubt, the most accurate exponent of the public feeling, and of that sort of social philosophy which exercises an unperceived, but not less actual, despotism over the life and conscience of every individual who forms a unit in the great aggregate of society. More than a million people habitually read Mr. Trollope, and they do so because the personages in his stories correspond to something in themselves: the hopes, fears, and regrets, are such as they are accustomed to experience; the thoughtfulness is such as they can appreciate; the standard of conduct just that to which they are prepared to submit. It becomes, therefore, an interesting inquiry to see what are the principal characteristics of an author in whom so large a section of the community sees as it were its own reflection, and who may himself unhesitatingly be accepted as the modern type of a successful novelist:—how far are we justified, with *Orley Farm* in our hands, in rebutting M. Forgues’ accusations, and in maintaining that neither in literature nor morality has the period of English degeneracy as yet commenced.

One part of the charge may, we think, he very speedily disposed of. If the popularity of the portrait is the result of its truthfulness, and English life is at all what Mr. Trollope paints it, whatever its other failings may be, it is at any rate a very correct affair; writer and readers alike look at the performance from a strictly moral point of view: there is a general air of purity, innocence, and cheerfulness. The Bohemians that now and then flit across the stage are the tamest imaginable, and are only just sufficiently Bohemian to be picturesque without violating propriety. There are occasional villains of course, but they seem to belong to an outer world, with which the audience has so little in common that it can afford to treat their crimes as a matter of mere curiosity. The Jewish attorney, the brass-browed Old Bailey practitioner, Mr. Moulder in his drunken moods, Dockwrath in his revengeful spite,—are none of them models of what gentlemen and Christians should be; but they are never brought sufficiently near to display the full proportions of their guilt, or to suggest the possibility of contamination. The real interest of the story is concentrated upon well-to-do, decorous, and deservedly prosperous people, who solve, with a good deal of contentment and self-satisfaction, the difficult problem of making the most both of this world and the next. The family of the Staveleys is in this way perhaps the most characteristic group which Mr. Trollope has as yet produced. They are thoroughly successful, and their success is well deserved; they have a calm, well-ordered, and. healthily unobtrusive religion; they are quite above intrigue, shabbiness, or malevolence. Lady Staveley is a model as wife, mother, and mother-in-law; and Madeline, though she falls rather more precipitately in love than that *bien rangée* young lady should, is on the whole just such a daughter as a Lady Staveley would wish to have. The Christmas party at Noningsby could have been written only by a. man who had experienced and appreciated the enjoyment of a well-ordered, hospitable, unpretentious country-house, where there are plenty of children, wealth enough to rob life of it embarrassments, simplicity enough to allow of a little romping and flirtation, and where every member of the family is on confidential terms with all the rest. Among the guests are a vulgar scheming young woman, the daughter of a London barrister; a nice simple lad, heir to a neighbouring baronet; and Felix Graham, clever, talkative, and agreeable, but ugly and penniless, and encumbered moreover with “an angel of light,” in the shape of a young lady whom he has rescued from poverty, supplied with the rudiments of education, and promised, some day ,or other, to make his wife. Every thing is, however, perfectly innocent; and Graham. having been guilty of nothing but a generous indiscretion, proceeds forthwith to throw the angel of light into the background, and to fall in love with the young lady of the house. There are Christmas games in the evening for the children; and Graham is selected by one of them as her champion, and effects on her behalf a successful raid upon the snap-dragon, over which Miss Staveley is president, as ghost and dragoness.

“ ‘Now Marian,’ he says, bringing her up in his arms

‘But it will burn, Mr. Felix; luck there, see, there are a great many at that end. You do it.’

‘I must have another kiss, then.’

‘Very well, yes, if you get five;’ and then Felix dashed his hand in among the flames and brought out a fistful of fruit, which imparted to his fingers and wristband a smell of brandy for the rest of the evening.

‘If you take so many at a time I shall rap your knuckles with the spoon,’ said the ghost, as she stirred up the flames to keep them alive.

‘But the ghost shouldn’t talk, said Marian, who was evidently unacquainted with the best ghosts in tragedy.

‘But the ghost must speak when such large hands invade the caldron;’ and then another raid was effected, and the threatened blow was given. Had any one told her in the morning that she would that day hare rapped Mr. Graham’s knuckles with a kitchen-spoon, she would not have believed that person. But it is so that hearts are lost and won.”

All the point in this sort of scene depends on the innocence of the performers; and it is because Mr. Trollope can manufacture passages of the kind in any quantity required, that he has made himself the favourite writer of the day. The people on whose behalf he interests one are thoroughly sterling, warm-hearted, and excellent. Every body would be glad to spend Christmas at Noningsbv, to go for a walk on Sunday afternoon with the good-natured old judge, to have a chat with Lady Staveley, and to receive a rap on the knuckles from Miss Madeline. What every body would he glad to do, every body likes to read about, and hence a universal popularity without either an exciting plot or forcible writing, or the 1east pretence at real thoughtfulness to support it. Contrast Mr. Trollope in this respect with such a writer as the author of *Guy Livingston*, his superior certainly in melodramatic conception in vivid scene-painting, brilliant dialogue, and in familiarity with several amusing phases of life. Not all the ability, however, of *Guy Livingston* and its successors can force them into popularity against the steady dislike and disapproval which their loose tone excites. Throughout them there is an aroma of indelicacy, a half-admiration of profligacy, a. familiarity with crime, which an English audience finds it impossible to forgive. There are, no doubt, sets of people whose proceedings and sentiments they correctly represent; but the great mass of readers regard them with aversion, and if they consent for the sake of an amusing story, to make a transient acquaintance with the personages who play it out, accord them no welcome to their memories, and reject the whole picture as a libel upon modern society. When M. Forgues assures us that we are corrupt, and that our novels prove it, it would be enough, as regards this country, to contrast the fate of such hooks as *Sword and Gown* with that of *Orley Farm*, and, with respect to France, to remind him that such a volume as has within the last few weeks proceeded from the pen of M. Edmond About, at one time the tot decent well as the wittiest of his profession, would he unhesitatingly refused admission to every English library or railway-stall, and would certainly forfeit for its author not only literary reputation and general popularity, but would make him an outcast from all respectable society.

But if we reject the imputation of one kind of degeneracy, it should he admitted that the success of Mr. Trollope’s school of writing suggests the possibility of another. Such delineations are, to bay the truth, but very low art; and while they do not corrupt the morals, they may degrade the tastes, and foster the weaknesses of those for whose edification they are contrived. Mr. Trollope, it has been truly said is a mere photographer; he manipulates with admirable skill, lie groups his sitters in the most favourable attitudes, he contrives an endless series of interesting positions; but he never attains to the dignity of an artist. He has a quick eye for external characteristics, and he paints exclusively from without. He does not make us intimate with his characters, for the excellent reason that he is very far from being intimate with them himself. He watches their behaviour, their dress, their tone of voice, their expression of countenance, and he makes very shrewd guesses at their dispositions; but there is a veil in each one of their characters, behind which he is not privileged to pass, and where real conceptive genius could alone suffice to place him. Almost every nature has depths about it somewhere, with all sorts of moral curiosities at the bottom, if one has plummet deep enough to sound them. It is the inclination to do this, and the mental energy to do it with ability and discrimination, that constitute poetic power, and which give to writers like Charlotte Brontë or the authoress of *Adam Bede* so deep is hold over the interests and affections of the reader. When they have finished a portrait, one seems to have seen it, through and through: it is a conception, created in their minds and brought visibly before their readers, by scenes so contrived to bring the most secret passions into play, “to try the very reins and the heart,” and to show the true nature of else actor more clearly even than he sees it himself. Mr. Trollope sets to work in quite another fashion. He arms himself, in the first place, with a number of commonplaces on religion, morals, polities, social and domestic philosophy. These supply his theory of life, and beyond them, in his most imaginative moments, he never raises his eye; but, accepting them as a creed. and as the ultimate explanation of all around him, he watches the society in which he lives, and elaborate a series of complications, which interest, partly front the sympathy one feels for pretty, nicely-dressed, and well-behaved young ladies, and partly from a natural curiosity to see how the author will got himself out of the scrape into which the evolution of the story has brought him. This sort of writing can never produce a profound emotion, and leaves us at last with a sense of dissatisfaction. Mr. Trollope himself seems to feel that it falls short of the requirements of a real emergency, and screens the defect by conversations, feelings, and expressions which he does not choose precisely to delineate. It is precisely these that we want to have, if we are to care in the least about the characters of the tale, and in their absence we feel a void exactly proportionate to the interest previously excited. Take, for instance, the case of Lady Mason: nothing could be more exciting than the position assigned to her. She is beautiful, engaging, refined; an old country gentleman of high standing is her accepted lover, and she has just confessed to him that she has for twenty years been living on the proceeds of perjury and forgery, for which she is about, in a few weeks, to be brought into a court of justice. Sir Peregrine Orme, who was to have been her husband, sees of course the impossibility of his marriage; and Mrs. Orme, his widow daughter, and Lady Mason’s confidential friend, proceeds to offer advice, consolation, and forgiveness. “Many,” says Mr. Trollope, “will think that she was wrong to do so, and fear it must be acknowledged that she was not strong-minded. By forgiving her, I do not mean that she pronounced absolution for the sin of past years or that she endeavoured to make the sinner think that she was no worse for her sin. Mrs. Orme was a good churchwoman, but not strong individually in points of doctrine. All that she left mainly to the woman’s conscience and her own dealings with her Saviour, merely saying a word of salutary counsel as to a certain spiritual pastor who might be of aid. But Mrs. Orme forgave her as regarded herself.”

This seems to us about the most feeble way or getting through a striking scene that it is possible to conceive, and the suggestion of calling in the clergyman puts the finishing touch to the “mildness” of the whole. Contrast it, for instance, with the description of Miriam and Donatello, in *Transformation*, after the commission of the murder, or with that of the heroine of the *Scarlet Letter* after the discovery of her guilt. It is mere trifling to slur the scene over with hack religious phrases, to send for the parson just as one would for the parish engine, and calmly to pretermit the exact tragical *dénoumen*t to which the whole story has been leading up. Later on in the book we have a glimpse of the sort of consolation which, we suppose, the “certain spiritual pastor” administered on his arrival. “No son,” the author more than once informs us,” is truer than that which teaches us that God does temper the wind to the shorn lamb. A shorn lamb: and this of a woman whose whole life has been one long lie, whose every act has been studied for a hypocritical purpose, and who is driven to reluctant confession at fast, not from any sudden conviction of guilt, not because she finds the burden of her solitary crime becoming absolutely intolerable, not because in an agony of fatigue and remorse she tears off the mask she has worn with such suffering endurance—but because she is not wretch enough to incur the infamy of involving, a noble old man in the disgrace and ruin which she knows, awl which other people know, shortly about to break upon herself.

There are, no doubt, people going about the world with secrets locked up in their hearts, to the safe custody of which, as of some ferocious wild beast, their whole existence is devoted. The Spartan lad with the hidden fox gnawing his flesh is probably no exaggeration of the agonies they endure, and the heroic self-restraint which concealment necessitates. “Let the great gods,” cries Lear in the thunder-storm,

“Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,

That hart within the undivulged crimes,

Unwhipped of justice: Hide thee, thou Woody baud;

Thou perjured, and thou simular man of virtue.,

That art incestuous: Caitiff, to pieces shake,

That under covert and convenient seeming

Hast practised on man’s life!”

The tragedy of such careers is a dark one, and the artist who to paint it must be prepared with a courageous hand, intense colouring, and shades and lights in more striking contrast than are to be found in the mere conventional routine of ordinary society. Hypocrisy is a painful trade, and must make felt over an entire character, where once its employment has become essential. Lady Mason, after twenty years of it, would have been something very different from the calm, handsome, well-dressed, but impressible and half-coquettish woman to whom Mr. Trollope introduces us. Her experience would have put her beyond the reach of such gentle ministrations as Mrs. Orme’s, and would have made it impossible for her in the crisis of her fate to behave like a silly impressible school-girl. Imposture “should be made of sterner stuff,” and the sternness should be evidenced by a resolution, a courage, prepared nerves, a daring spirit, a readiness to run risk and encounter disaster, such as we find no trace of in Mr. Trollope’s creation. Repentance, when it comes, must be the result of something more than accident, and remorse, if it is to be real, must require deeper comfort than little bits of twits, pet curates, and pretty proverbs.

How tragical does such a position become in the hands of a really pathetic writer! Who has not almost shuddered at Hood’s description of the utter isolation, the nervous watchfulness, the growing horror of the secret criminal living alone amid the crowd of innocent school-boys?—

“Peace went with them one and all,

And each calm pillow spread

But Guilt was my grim chamberlain

That lighted me to lied,

And drew my midnight curtains round

With fingers bloody red.”

Eugene Aram lives in one’s thoughts as a reality; Lady Mason fades into indistinctness as soon as Mr. Millais’s pretty sketches of a graceful sentimental woman, always *bien mise*, and always in an appropriate attitude, have ceased to enlist our sympathies or arouse our curiosity.

But if Mr. Trollope’s position in the artistic world is not very high, it is to this very circumstance that he probably owes much of his reputation. He travels with great agility, it is. true, but never in a region where the million readers of *The Cornhill* find the least difficulty in following him. He paints life in its easy, superficial, intelligible aspects. Felix Graham and Lucius Mason, who are intended to be originals, deviate in no essential quality from the ten thousand other young men who might with equal propriety have been introduced to fill their place. Lucius is on the whole a greater fool than Graham, and being less of a gentleman, lets his folly escape in more disagreeable ways; but neither of them suggests any real rebellion against the actual constitution of society, the theories by which it life is shaped, and the maxims which the majority at once obey for themselves and inflict upon others. The whole picture is full of sunshine: the tragedy of life, of which every man is conscious in his graver moments, and which at some particular absorbs his thoughts, —the grave doubts, the painful struggles, the miserable anxieties, the humiliating defeats, all that makes the world something else than a mere playground for children or a bed of roses for idlers,—find no place m the cheerful, sanguine, well-to-do philosophy which feeds the perennial font of Mr. Trollope’s fictions. “Si vis me fiery,” says the Roman instructor in the art of influencing others, “dolendum est Primum ipsi tibi,” People like Charlotte Brontë speak out of the fulness of their heart, when they depict the sufferings of our existence, and they infect us with sympathy for vicissitudes, disappointments, or regrets, with which each of us has something in common. They go nearer the truth, and they teach us a worthier lesson than he whom a good-natured superficiality and a perilous influx of success prevent from looking into the gloomy caverns which surround him, from visiting the chamber where he, like his neighbours, has a skeleton on guard, and from indulging in the aspirations to which suffering flies for refuge, and which alone saves the miserable from despair.

A word of Lady Stavelevs would be, after all. a poor concern, and angels like Madeline would be the inhabitants of a duller heaven than even that which conventional theology has depicted as the future residence of the blest. Contentment is a noble achievement, but it must not be the content or a mere material well-being. of shallow thought, of slight insight, of narrow scope. it is to this sort of mood that Mr. Trollope’s stories are calculated to minister; and by fostering it, they perhaps do as much towards lowering the dignity, enfeebling the energies, and coarsening the prevailing taste of the times, as if they in any tangible particular violated the conventional standard of decorum. The mass of second-rate people is preserved from corruption only by a leaven of genius, and the world goes its way in peace only because a few men here and there are sensitive enough to appreciate its catastrophes, and bold enough to infringe its rules, question its methods, and attack its abuses. Without them we should degenerate into that Lilliputian congeries of petty interest, timid thoughts, and unworthy ambitions, which Béranger, with a gloomy mirth, depicted as the approaching condition of his countrymen:

“ Combien d’imperceptibles êtres!

De petits jésuites bilieux

De milliers d’autres petits prêtres

Qui portent de petits bons dieux!

Béni par eux tout dégénére,

Par eux 1a plus vielles des cours

N’est plus qu’un petit séminaire

Mais les barbons regnent toujours!

Tout est petit,—palais usiness,

Science, commerce, beaux arts.—

De bonnes petites famines

Désolent de petits remparts;

Sur la frontière mal fermée

Marche, au bruit de petits tambours,

Une pauvre petite armée;

Mais les babons regnent toujours!”

Some such danger seems to us, we confess, to impend over a generation for which such contrivances as *The Cornhill* secure an infinity of “Orley Farms,” and which seduces an artist like Mr. Millais from his legitimate occupations to draw little commonplace sketches of commonplace life be-crinolined young ladies fresh from the pages of *Le Follet*, and incidents whose trivialities his pencil alone could rescue from being absolutely vulgar.

When we have said, however. That Mr. Trollope is incapable of conceiving a tragedy, or of doing justice to it when circumstances bring it in his war, we have well nigh exhausted the complaints that need be brought against him. It is a more agreeable task to touch upon the many excellent qualities which have concurred in recommending him to the good will of his countrymen. His pages are unsnllied by a single touch of malice, unkindness, or revenge. His amusing sketch in *The Warden* of three bishops, given as a burlesque account of the three sons of the archdeacon, proves that he could, if he pleased, be personal to the greatest effect; and every author must have little spites and dislikes of his own, which only a resolute good feeling can prevent from intruding upon his canvas. Mr. Trollope never sins in this respect, and his immunity from this failing might well be accepted as an apology for a host of minor delinquencies. Another great charm is, that the author is fur the most part kept well out of sight, and if he appears, shows himself thoroughly interested in the piece, and sincerely desirous that his audience should he so likewise. Thackeray’s curious taste for careless, rambling, “roundabout” writing, and the clever knack he has of making the mod of “an infinite deal of nothing,’’ has set the fashion to a host of imitators, who do not scruple to stop at every convenient point of their narration to indulge in a few personal confidences, and enunciate their views about their story, themselves, or the world in general. Mr. Thackeray. in particular, loses no opportunity of, so to speak, yawning in public; saying how dreadfully tiresome his novels are to him, how he falls asleep over them at the club, and strongly recommends his friends to do the same. Mr. Trollops has no touch of this affectation; he does his very best: he believes in the piece, he detests the villains, admires the heroes, and can scarcely refrain from caressing his pet heroine when she crosses his path. If he comes for a few moments on the stage, it is only to bustle about, to adjust the ropes, to hurry the scene-shifters, and to assure the beholders that no pains are being spared for their entertainment. Mr. Thackeray, on the contrary, lolls in dressed in a dressing-gown and slippers, stretches his arms, cries, Eheu! fugaces—monsieur, mon cher confrère;” and acknowledges that he has often done vilely before, but never so vilely as on the present occasion.

Mr. Trollope dues not, however, invariably preserve the wholesome rule of impersonality. Though a thorough optimist, and believing in his heart that the world is the best of all possible worlds, he has one or two little grievances which keep us just short of absolute perfection. With characteristic carelessness and high spirits, he points out the tiny flaw which he has discovered, and adds a scarcely serious murmur to the general chorus of complaint. One of his troubles, for instance, is, that there should he such wicked people as lawyers in the world, and he grows quite sentimental over the circumstance that gentlemen should put off their consciences when they put on their wigs, and consent, for the small remuneration of one guinea, to make the worse appear the better cause. In support of his views, he has constructed an elaborate trial scene, with a proper apparatus of bullying counsel, lying attorneys, frightened witnesses, and, finally, frustrated justice. A discriminating critic, who appears to write with professional enthusiasm, has been at the pains to tear the whole thing to pieces, and to show that in every essential particular Mr. Trollope did not know what he was talking about, that no such facts as those on which he grounds his insinuation could possibly exist, and that all but a few black sheep in the profession do precisely what Mr. Trollope says that they ought. So much good labour seems to us in a large degree wasted upon a writer with whom instruction is necessarily subsidiary to amusement, and who scarcely pretends to any but the most superficial acquaintance with the evils of which he complains. Some of the details of the trial, especially the cross-examination by the counsel for the defence, are so ludicrously unlike real life, that it is evident Mr. Trollope’s visits to a court of justice have been few and far between, and have left on his mind only a vague and indistinct impression, which nothing but the haze in which it is involved preserves from instant exposure. Ideas of this kind hardly admit of being definitely stated, but may be easily insinuated in the course of a story constructed for the purpose of exemplifying them. Witnesses, no doubt, arc sometimes bullied into confusion and even forgetfulness; but Mr. Trollope cannot seriously mean that when a poor fool like Kenneby gets into the box to swear away another person’s life or character, his capacity to remember any thing, and the degree in which he actually does remember the particular facts in question, ought not to be tested with the utmost severity. It is curious that, in the very case which Mr. Trollope frames in his own support, the performers do precisely that which justice required. Mr. Chaffanbrass, from the Old Bailey, may have been a great rogue; but he acted quite properly, and served the general interests of society in demonstrating. that Dockwrath had private motives of the very strongest kind for supporting the prosecution, just as Mr. Furnival acted quite properly in showing that Kenneby had only half his wits about him, and had no such accurate recollection of a matter which happened twenty years before as to justify a conviction for perjury. Mr. Trollope probably meant nothing more than that barristers are sometimes vulgar and unscrupulous, and judges are sometimes petulant and overbearing; but he should beware of discussing as a grievance that a which is really a necessity, and of grounding on imaginary and impossible facts an imputation on the honour and good faith of a profession which certainly contains in its ranks as many scrupulous and high-minded gentlemen as any other.

It would be easy to multiply instances of the same sort of unsubstantial complaint thrown in without any real conviction, as a sort of sentimental garnishing to a matter-of-fact narrative. In his last tale, for instance, the author steps in the midst of the description of a village to contrast our present ideas of rural grandeur with those of our forefathers. In old times the squire “sat himself down close to his God and his tenants,” and placed his house so as “to afford comfort, protection, patronage” to those around him: nowadays “a solitude in the centre of a park is the only eligible site ; no cottage must be seen but the cottage *orné* of the gardener; the village, if it cannot be abolished, must he got out of sight ; the sound of the church-bells is not desirable,” &c.; in fact, the present race of country gentlemen are a sad falling away from the traditional benevolence of their race. Does Mr, 'Trollope, we wonder, really believe this? What is the golden age with whirl the present iron epoch is contrasted? Does he look back with a loving eye upon feudal times and the “droits de seigneurie”? or are we wrong in believing that the maxim, that property has .duties well as rights, has never been more thoroughly accepted than our day, and that the squires of England, more perhaps than any other class of proprietors in existence, are alive to the responsibilities of their position and struggling conscientiously “to afford comfort, protection and patronage” of the most substantial sort to their poorer neighbours?

We can afford to touch only upon one other characteristic of Mr. Trollope’s writings, to which he would, we think, do well to pay attention,—their occasional broad vulgarity. He drops every now and then with suspicious ease into a society which is simply repulsive in its stupid coarseness; and as he has not the extravagant fun that Dickens pours over low life which has immortalised such personages as Mrs. Gamp, these parts of Mr. Trollope’s writings are singularly tedious and unattractive. Some people have a genius for such descriptions: the authoress of *Adam Bede* can draw a set of countrymen drinking in a public-house so humorously that we forget every thing but the fun of the scene; but Mr. Trollope’s commercial gentlemen, lodging-house keepers, and attorneys, are simply snobs, into whose proceedings one feels no wish to pry, and who might with great advantage be banished altogether from the picture. A stupid violent man like Moulder, half tipsy, and proceeding to complete the process of intoxication before his wife and friends, must be very amusing indeed meanwhile, if we are to look on without disgust; in Mr. Tro11ope’s hands he is any thing but amusing, and tries to atone for his dulness by being unnecessarily coarse. Mr. Trollope succeeds capitally in depicting nice young ladies like Madeline Staveley, and pleasant gentlemanly fads like Peregrine Orme; and he may contentedly resign the portraiture of Moulders, K:intwiscs, and Kennebys, to artists whose knowledge of life is more varied than his own, or hose conceptive ability enables them, as in some rare instances is the case, to dispense with the experience from which all but the very highest sort of artists are obliged to draw.

From *National Review* **16** (1863), 27–40.