# LITERATURE IN THE MARKET-PLACE.

The recent wide and prolonged discussion of the question of copyright has thrust into great prominence the commercial motive in literature. It was a necessary incident of this agitation that authors should be represented chiefly as men in business, since the law affects them only as they offer books for sale. The ethical ground taken was that the laborer is worthy of his hire. Whether as a profession or as a trade, literature was regarded as a means of gain. All this is somewhat out of consonance with old traditions of the literary life. It is true that the noted saying that "the man who does not write for money is a fool" is more than a century old, and its promulgation by Dr. Johnson marked the beginning of new conditions in literary production; on the other hand the soon-cured reluctance of Byron to take pay for his poetry marked the end of the earlier feeling —the aristocratic prejudice, if you will—against making a trade of the nobler uses of great faculties in thought and imagination. But there still remains a middle ground between these two extremes, an ethics in the practice of literature, and it is probable that only a few authors of distinction in this century would admit that the pecuniary reward had much to do with their own writing. It has been argued that the widening of the market for books of American authors, by securing to them an equal chance with foreign authors in our own country and also remuneration for their sales abroad, would tend to increase the quantity of our production and to better the quality of popular reading. In other words the strengthening of the commercial motive, which is the practical change effected by the law, is relied upon to give an impulse to American literature. Without raising any question of the existence of a right of property in literature, certainly as just as many forms of private ownership, and without doubting the expediency of the rule that authors should live, as other social workers do, by pay for their service to the

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community, one may inquire whether the importance assigned to the financial aspect of the matter has not been exaggerated, and examine in general the influence of the trade spirit in literature with a view to its actual results. The law may be both just and wise, and yet its effects in the encouragement of literature may have been imperfectly forecast.

The copyright law, however, is referred to here only incidentally. It is proposed in this paper to glance at some conditions of the production of our current literature, which the law may aggravate or ameliorate but which exist independently of it. The commercial motive has long been acting on our literary producers. What are its effects? Do they show that writing for money is a practical method of creating literature that shall be an historic possession of the nation and a final depository of its renown, the lasting record of its higher civilization—that of the mind and the heart—age by age? Of such literature we have now but a minimum; can we look to the commercial motive to secure its production? It would be, perhaps, unfair to do more than recall the fact that great literatures hitherto have been little indebted to the desire for gain, and that nations and communities, distinguished by the spirit of trade, have been often conspicuously deficient in literary genius. Our civilization is a commercial one throughout the world to a degree which makes the present a new age. Money itself is more regarded, and its possession implies also the control of public and private opportunities, and the individual distinction even, which were once rather in the gift of rank and fame than of riches; and hence the commercial motive is of wider range and is, besides, freed appreciably from degrading associations. It may be that the change in general social conditions is so great and works in such complex ways, that past experience is an unsafe ground for inference. Copyright may yet rival patent-right in its results. It is, however, uncertain how far patent-right is to be credited with the progress of invention made possible by disinterested scientific discovery and made necessary by the growth of society without regard to who should receive the incidental profit. It is plain that thus far the hire of the laborer has been, to say the least, of mixed good and evil in literature.

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Mr. Walter Besant has lately given it as his opinion that Dr. Johnson, with whom the dependence of literature on the book-trade began, made a better living by his hack-work than he would have gained in any other profession. Really large returns were not obtained from the book-sellers until the next generation. Sir Walter Scott received considerable sums, and he wrote his novels with these in view. He is a conspicuous example of a man who sought money without contracting any sordidness in his moral habit. Byron is the other instance of striking pecuniary success in that generation. Many other authors, who did not make fortunes, were well paid in the same period, and as the century advanced the writing of fiction in particular became one of the roads to a competency or even to comparative wealth. It remains, nevertheless, generally true that the literary career in the strict sense is still an unprofitable one, involving much self-denial in its earlier years and a success, if success be won, often long deferred. The two great poets of the age, Tennyson and Browning, are illustrative cases. Carlyle, in prose, is another example. It is not likely that any of the really great authors of the century, from Sir Walter Scott on, would have failed to write their works, though all these had been as unsalable as those of Wordsworth, Shelley, or Hawthorne. They were men of genius to whom expression was a necessity of their nature. The commercial motive was not a governing one in their lives, and, except in the making of fiction, was little felt. Sir Walter, Thackeray and Dickens, and George Eliot stand in the position, as regards this matter, of Shakespeare; whether he wrote for money will always be a mooted question, but the possession of genius implies its exercise, and it is rational to think that the great English story-tellers, both in drama and romance, would have told their tale of life just as those of ancient and mediæval times did before them, whether their purses were filled or left empty. The money value of fiction at present supplies a strong external motive, and each decade now is strewn with reputations of failure in consequence. The internal impulse must first exist if greatness is to be achieved, and is of itself enough. Victor Hugo made a fortune, but the. fortune had no hand in making him; day and

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night are the same to the volcano—it is irrepressible; with or without wages he would have done his work, like Cervantes.

It is well to insist on the lack of any necessary relation between the great works of literature and the money they may or may not earn for their authors, for the point is a cardinal one in any forecast of our own national fortune in letters. It serves in this place to mark off the limit within which the commercial motive does operate with some mastery over the result. The new thing in literary conditions in this century is the rise and increase of the reading public, infinitely varied in what it seeks and vast in its numbers, but not widely sensitive to pure literature. The whole mass of books which aim to spread information, all the ever-multiplying series of scientific works, literary biographies, history manuals, collections of standard authors of the past, selected poetry and prose, the exhaustless library of travel—in a word, the literature of knowledge for the people—all this, broadly speaking, is produced for a price. The demand is an opportunity for publishers and writers to make money, and the supply follows the demand. The commercial motive in this region often blends with an enlightened desire among the educated class to spread knowledge for its own sake as an element of civilization. Nevertheless, it is a market that is stocked in the process for value received. The literature of popular knowledge, however, is strictly limited in its character; it must be, so far as it goes, the same for the lowest as for the highest intellect, and one with the truth as it has been written by the best authority. There is no opportunity for any sinister influence, except so far as incompetent writers may be employed for the sake of cheapness, and this seldom occurs.

The case is wholly different when the literature of popular amusement is approached. Here the observer comes at once upon that numerous body of readers which has been named the Unknown Public; it lies outside of the ordinary literary field and is as strange to reputed men of letters as their works are to it. It is not an uncommon experience to one well informed in regard to current literature to pick up from time to time a magazine, paper, or book of which he never heard, and to find that it has thousands of readers; the authors' names are unknown

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to him, their subjects and methods are strange; the whole complexion of the thing is of a different world. Occasionally some one makes an excursion into this new province, added to our literary domain, and reports what he has found of the taste and morals prevailing there; and what we learn breaks on our routine of thought and feeling very much as the applause of the gallery-gods does at the theatre. This literature is altogether too vaguely within our view to be discussed. It has been said in the copyright agitation that much of it is of English origin, and will be unable to stand against the competition of a better American kind. One thing may be affirmed of it with certainty; it is all written for money. And if English writers have been found, who in their own country have produced for a similar class of readers among their countrymen work of this sort, what reason is there to believe that American writers will not also be found to produce the same thing under copyright here for the price that suffices there? It seems erroneous to think that this reading public prefers what is called "good literature" to what it already pays for, and takes the latter merely because it is cheaper. Cheap editions of what educated men suppose would infallibly appeal to this public have been issued, and the choice could not be bettered; but the editions remained unsold. There is a demand for just that sort of reading which is now taken in vast quantities, and it will infallibly be satisfied until the taste changes. Is it doubtful that it is already being satisfied by American writers who are ready to do more of the same kind for the same wages? Such publications are a part of the book-trade; they are commercially valuable; the copyright law, at best, has only raised the price—perhaps not even that.

Somewhat nearer to us than this nameless literature of which the manufacture goes on unnoticed by the journals of literary opinion and without the knowledge of the educated class, are the books which win great popular success. They are clearly within range. The names that lead the rest readily occur—Ouida, Roe, Lew Wallace, Albert Ross, Bellamy, and more at will. The great sale that all or some of the works of these authors have had, is proof of a multitude of readers in each case; and there is such variety in the five mentioned that it is fair to

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infer that no one of them exhausts more than a portion of the general market. Roe and Ross probably compete very little with each other, and each numbers his readers by the hundred thousands; Ouida and Bellamy are likewise far apart; but the readers of Lew Wallace are, in large masses, the same with those of Bellamy and Roe. The audiences of these writers are the Asiatic provinces of literature, mere numbers; and hence the supply of this market embodies in the strongest form the commercial motive. Each author stands for a distinct type of novel and group of ideas and sympathies, and in their works may be found reflected widely prevailing moods of the people. Each has been imitated to a greater or less degree. It is sufficient at present to remark only upon two, Lew Wallace and Albert Ross. To the first is due the religious school of fiction, which shows no signs of becoming barren, and on the contrary may long continue; the school which usually turns the gospels into sensational novels, but sometimes resorts to the Old Testament for its plots. It presents a curious return of popular taste to the old miracle-play, as unlikely a reversion as could have been dreamed of. Taken age for age with the change of civilization, our time, in finding interest in a Biblical novel, repeats the period of the religious drama, and occasionally the latter-day story is as crude, comparatively, as was the earlier play, as coarse in its feeling and as revolting in its action. Lew Wallace, learning from Kingsley and Victor Hugo certain literary effects, wrote a tale that was at least powerful in adventure, scene-painting, and the feeling for humanity; it had force, though somewhat rudely exercised; and, if its attraction was at times a meretricious glitter, there was also much besides to hold and fasten the mind by the energy of great ideas in which the Christian world is built. If the actual reverence of the reader was not offended and his sense of artistic propriety was not violated, there is no room to wonder that he enjoyed the tale and felt it deeply. But, while to say this is justly due to the author, it is impossible to make any similar allowance for the imitations to which his example gave rise; they are only degradations of the sacred story. The works of Albert Ross are of a very different order. It is not surprising that one almost involuntarily says

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that, if this is what the people prefer to read, it were better had they never learned their letters. Such a feeling can be only momentary, but it is natural. As it is better that a man should vote though he vote for a scoundrel, it is better that he should read though he read bad books. The literature of the seventh commandment has not hitherto flourished in communities of English blood either in the crude or the developed form of fiction; but it is certainly increasing on the book-stalls, and it is widely read. It is not long ago that the plea was made by one of those who regret the limitations imposed on the English novel that, since we are to have such stories by inferior authors and in their most unliterary form, it would be better to have them by masters of the art in the French taste. This is the same error as that involved in the expectation that a better American sort of popular reading will force out of the market the English wares already referred to. The public which demands the inferior kind will not take the better, if produced. An American Guy de Maupassant would not compete with Saltus or any other of the authors in this part of the field. These books are seldom mentioned in our journals or magazines, except when advertised; they are published and circulated silently; so far as criticism is concerned, they are ignored; but they are read. In addition to these two classes of novels, which are comparatively recent and still multiplying, any one at all acquainted with current literature can easily recall the sort of fiction that has been most eagerly absorbed by the public in very large editions during recent years. The five authors who have been named not unfairly represent its good and evil. They have received large sums for their works, and with the exception of Bellamy, the commercial motive was as strong in their cases as in any in our day; other motives were present, no doubt; but the noticeable thing is that, from the point of view of trade, this is the sort of literature which has brought the largest immediate returns.

A more interesting, though not more important branch of the general subject, and the last which will here be touched upon, is the influence of the magazines, which to a considerable degree are the paymasters of authors both young and old. The matter is more complicated in respect to these, but one or two promi-

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nent features can be made out. The earlier reviews, the great quarterlies of the first half of the century, certainly gave to their contemporaries the best intellectual opinion of the day, and they gave to literature the essay as Macaulay conceived it in England and as Lowell wrote it among ourselves. The great popular magazines of to-day, vast as is their beneficent influence among the people, both for knowledge and for entertainment, have done nothing so notable as that, in pure literature. The "Atlantic" has an honorable record of new authors encouraged under its editorship in years past, and of established authors sustained in a high standard and brought more before the public. The other magazines have given us the dialect story in particular, and the short story in general; that is to say, this form of literature has been forced under the demand made for it, and with more or less perfection of execution it chiefly characterizes the literary product of the time. They have also fostered light verse, and especially those French metrical forms in which a young man of talent can most easily make the least of himself. The general tendency of all later magazine writing, both in verse and prose, is toward the momentary, the striking, the epigrammatic, phases and incidents at the most, and *bon mot* and *bric-à-brac* at the least. Only their literature is here spoken of, and that element in them is, except for fiction, a subordinate one. Is it not, in consequence, due to the magazines mainly that our literature is of what has been aptly styled the "cherry-stone" type? Cherry-stone literature most admirable, no doubt; but the best in this kind are but trifles, though they be now and then immortal. The magazines have some powerful attractions which, in connection with this topic, should not be forgotten. It is in their power to give an unknown writer a large audience at once, without his having earned the right to be listened to; the mere insertion of his name in the table of contents gives a kind of notoriety, insures mention in many papers and advertisements, and, in short, puts the machinery of journalistic fame at his service for the time being. The press, too, in its eagerness for personal news and the taxing of all resources to fill its issues, gives material aid in the spread of this notoriety, such as it is. It was never so easy as now for an author to be named in print

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irrespective of what he has done. He is known, if his works are not. For this the magazines are chiefly responsible, not by choice but by the necessity of the case. The natural desire of a writer for a great body of readers and for personal reputation is thus satisfied at once, and, as the magazine is his easiest road to these ends, he is willing to submit to its conditions almost without a thought; besides, if he needs money, there is the best counter for him to go to, and the cherry-stone, in story, essay, or poem, is most sure of quick purchase. So far as the working of the commercial motive is illustrated by the magazines in other departments than literature there is no question but that it secures the most authoritative knowledge in the most portable and interesting form, and parallels the service done by the same motive in the book-literature of popular knowledge. But so far as literature in the strict sense is concerned, it does not appear that the necessary conditions of a magazine for general circulation permit much substantial encouragement of it. On the contrary, if we judge by the results of the last score of years, it would seem that the magazines tend rather to emasculate literary talent by directing it to small things, except in fiction, and even in that department the influence is in the same direction.

If these generalizations upon a very broad and complex subject have any validity it must be concluded that writing for money would lead rather to hack-work for the nameless trade of the Unknown Public; or to emulation of those who must be called our literary demagogues, often no doubt sincere, as political demagogues also are—Ouida, Roe, Lew Wallace, Albert Ross, and Bellamy; or to contributing to magazines under conditions highly unfavorable to literature of a great kind. In other words, it must be thought that the commercial motive cannot be relied upon to secure literature important enough to be called national. The fact is that the book-trade, like other branches of business, consults the taste of its customers and seeks to please the largest number. The reading public is now such, so far as can be judged, that the mass of readers is too imperfectly cultivated to impose such standards, either in matter or style, as would make a national literature of the first order. Our national life has been rather of the Roman cast. Our great achievements have been

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political, military, and engineering. Our renown rests on these. Our literature has been incidental; but, modest as it is, it is much cared for by a considerable and influential part of the people. It will be welcomed in the future as it has been in the past; but great authors must still be content to write from the inner impulse and to wait for their fortunes, without much care for the money that may be gained. The notion that the copyright law will make any appreciable difference is probably a mistaken one. The increase of gain from foreign sales will be very slight, except in the case of genius, and then it will come only after the time of struggle, when encouragement is no longer needed. Copyright is justice—that is all, and that is enough. The cloud of argument, arising from other grounds, that has gathered about it may have served a purpose; there is no reason why it should longer obscure the main issue. The ground of justice is one from which advance can still be made; the ground of expediency, once admitted, ends in inevitable compromise. So far as, in the course of the agitation, it has been made to appear that literature which has greatness in it, for the author and the nation, is dependent on pecuniary gain, a little more or a little less, or is encouraged by the strengthening of the commercial motive, the argument is not only fallacious, but at the present time rather works against our chances of literature than for them. At the best this motive has operated to give us in late years humor and fiction, characteristic, it is true, but unprofitable in proportion to its excellence, and in no instance recognized with certainty to belong to the literature that lasts beyond its generation. No one well acquainted with the conditions now ruling would feel free to advise any youth, however talented, to trust to literature for his living; the chances are many against one that he would find his grave in journalism. On the other hand no one would hesitate to tell him that a condition precedent to his success in contributing to the literature of his country, even if he had genius, is to throw away all thought of money in the present, to refuse to work for it unless it comes in his way of work, and especially to resist the temptation of a little success for a little thing.

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## PROFITS OF FRUIT-CULTURE IN CALIFORNIA.

THE missionary fathers planted fruit trees and grape vines in California contemporaneously with the founding of religious and educational institutions, but merely to supply the domestic demand, and it is only within a comparatively few years that fruit-culture has been engaged in there for revenue. Its importance as a source of wealth is now fully appreciated, and its development henceforth will be very great. The fruits that are successfully grown in California are the apple, the apricot, the peach, the pear, the plum, the prune, the nectarine, the cherry, the fig, the olive, the guava, the loquat, the orange, the lemon, the lime, all the berries, grapes for the table, for raisins, and for wines, the English walnut, and the almond. These fruits do not grow equally well in every locality, and some of them are confined to particular sections. In common parlance, fruits in California are divided into two classes, the deciduous and the citrous, and for convenience they will be thus designated in this article.

Fruit-culture began in the middle portion of the State; that portion first attracted immigration. It had San Francisco for a shipping point and the Sacramento River for transportation. It has numerous rich valleys and extensive plains, it was first connected by rail with the East, and it has been more densely peopled than any other section. Naturally development and diversification of products took place earlier there than elsewhere, and therefore in all kinds of fruit to which it is adapted, it takes the lead. The citrous fruits are not successfully grown there, and cannot be, except in a few limited and favored spots, but it is claimed that the climate and soil of that part of the State give it advantages over any other section in the production of all the deciduous fruits, berries, and grapes. There can be no doubt that the people of that section practise superior methods of cultivation, and have been more careful in picking, pack-

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