

## A CENTURY'S CHANGES IN THE WORLD'S LITERATURE.

TO what general conclusions does a survey of the literary history and evolution of the nineteenth century lead the critic who tries to forecast the future of literature in the light of the past? Are there any abiding features or tendencies in modern literature which have a definite and discernible relation to the general character of the forces dominant during the century just closed? Ferdinand Brunetière, the eminent French editor and critic, has written a book on the literature of the nineteenth century in which he puts and answers these questions. The summary and concluding reflections of the volume are reproduced in the French journals, which dwell particularly upon the apparent conflict between nationalism and cosmopolitanism in literature. M. Brunetière is an ardent Nationalist, and therefore to many his strong expressions in favor of the "universalization" of literature will appear surprising. He endeavors to effect a reconciliation between the two seemingly contradictory tendencies. He claims that, while without nationalism there is not only no national literature (which is obvious), but no literature at all, we have reached the point in intellectual development where a "world-spirit" is supreme in literature and subordinates, assimilates, and utilizes every vital national element for universal human and humane ends.

This general thesis M. Brunetière elaborates at length. There has, he recognizes, been a revival of nationalism in literature; but it has not arrested the continuous, irresistible interpenetration of cultures between the nations. He asks:

"Take romanticism, realism, nationalism—have they not been European movements apart from which no literature and no writer could have, or has, stood? Are not Chateaubriand, Byron, Pushkin contemporaries; and, similarly, thirty years later, the author of 'Adam Bede,' that of 'Madame Bovary,' and that of 'Anna Karenina'? Was not all Europe at a certain time Byronian; and, again, is she not all at present Tolstoyizing? That which has thus begun will work itself out, and an intellectual cosmopolitanism will level down all the national differences."

But the result will not be sameness, monotony, mere imitation. For literature is a people's conscience. King Shakespeare, as Carlyle said, is the bond of Anglo-Saxondom. What would remain of Shakespeare or of Dante if they had written in Latin? National genius depends, perhaps chiefly, on language, and language on environment, tradition, history, natural features of a country, etc. The great authors not only express nationality, they create and arouse it; they give it self-consciousness and vitality. Ibsen and Björnson, for example, felt that they had something to say which French and German writers had not said. They published their message, and their compatriots recognized themselves in that message. A national sentiment was called into being or intensified. In a like sense Tolstoy and Dostoevsky did more for Russia than Peter the Great and Catharine. What is the upshot of all this? M. Brunetière says:

"There are no ideas in literature save general ideas; hence it is proper to wish that from one end of Europe to another the same ideas should be established. On the other hand, that the embodiment, expression, of these general ideas should be diversified by the spirit of the hour—the spirit of the moment, the *milieu*, the genius of the race and nation."

Subject to this condition of spontaneity and variety within the general and common inheritance of ideas, M. Brunetière continues, we are justified, after the progress made by the nineteenth century, in demanding a second great principle—social utility and service. To quote:

"Literature will cease to be *diverting* and dilettante. It will lose the right it has arrogated to itself—to pluck flowers in every

direction for the mere voluptuous pleasure of inhaling the perfume. It will not be esteemed except for the importance of its social function. It may protest from its height against so low, narrow, utilitarian a conception, but the protest will not be heard; it will hardly be understood. Or, if perchance heard, it will be told that of all forms of aristocracy that of intellect is the most unjustifiable in principle and the most dangerous in fact; since, instead of laboring to enlighten the benighted minds of the crowd, it abuses an opportunity purely accidental to aggravate the differences between it and the rest of humanity. In other words, we are marching toward the *socialization* of literature, or, to speak of the French more especially, toward the increasing socialization of literature, for of all literatures the French has been the most social and humane."

M. Brunetière believes that both the stage and the novel should and will concern themselves more and more with social problems. They have demonstrated their capacity along that line, he says, and all that is needed is more talent, more art. The ambition to deal with social and moral problems in plays and novels is noble, he says, but it requires, first, command of all the resources of art, and, second, a personal, an extensive, and a seasoned experience of the realities of life. With such experience for its guide, the dignity and efficacy of literature are bound to increase.—*Translation made for THE LITERARY DIGEST.*

**Sarah Bernhardt's Study of L'Aiglon.**—The old definition of genius as "an infinite capacity for taking pains" finds further corroboration in Mme. Bernhardt's account of her study of the character of the Duke of Reichstadt in Rostand's play. She speaks of her methods of study to Mr. Vance Thompson, who reports his interview in *The Saturday Evening Post* (Philadelphia). She visited, of course, the castle of Schoenbrunn, and, at night, the battle-field of Wagram. Then, after the study of the historical character, came the more difficult part of her task, of which she speaks as follows:

"Then the thing was to express it [the character]—to make myself, in walk and gesture and word, not Sarah Bernhardt, but the Duke of Reichstadt, son of the Eagle.

"I had all his costumes here in the house. For three months I wore them, every moment when I was not on the stage or in the street. And think, then—my secretary, my friends, my maids, all my servants had instructions to treat me as tho I were really the Duke of Reichstadt. I went to breakfast with cloak and sword, and the butler would say, 'Your Highness is served.' And so for three months. When I awoke in the morning I saw this white costume of the young prince, his sword, and boots. At once I was not Sarah Bernhardt; I was back in that gloomy chamber in Schoenbrunn. For those three months, before the first night of 'L'Aiglon,' I lived more the life of M. Rostand's hero than I did my own. One night—this was in Versailles—I rode out booted and spurred, cloaked and armed with a sword; that night I felt as he must have felt the night of his flight. It was a trifle awkward at first, for the sword frightened my horse, but we had a wild ride, mile after mile, through the night—I say we, because that night Napoleon's son and I rode together.

"I had learned to walk and talk as he must have done. I thought as he must have thought. Really, during those three months I could not attend to my business affairs. I am quite sure I was not myself—I was that poor boy, dying, an exile, in far-away Austria."

And, Mme. Bernhardt adds: "I think, too, my face had grown a little like his!"

WE are assured by the Mohammedans, according to *La Escuela Moderna*, that the three original idioms were the Arabian, Persian, and Turkish. The three were used at the same time in the terrestrial paradise. The serpent which seduced our first parent spoke in the Arabian tongue, that eloquent, strong, persuasive language which, they were told, they would one day speak in Paradise. In speaking with each other, Adam and Eve made use of Persian, that sweet, poetical, insinuating idiom which Eve knew so well how to use in bringing about the sorrows of the human race. The Angel Gabriel, who was sent to expel them from Eden, first gave the command in Arabian, then in Persian, but without effect. He was finally obliged to make use of the harsh, threatening, forcible Turkish language, which finally compelled obedience.

## SCIENCE AND INVENTION.

## DEATH IN THE LIGHT OF SCIENCE.

IN a recently published French book entitled "The Philosophy of Longevity," death is exhibited in quite a different aspect from that usually given to it. The author, M. Jean Finot, attempts to make us view the end of life as an unimportant incident in the infinite history of the substances of which our bodies are composed. These elements do not cease to live; they have formed part of living bodies before and will do so again, time out of mind. Furthermore, dissolution is not painful; why then fear it or grieve over it? These considerations he regards as consolatory. A reviewer in the *Revue Scientifique* (December 1) points out, however, that it is not especially consoling to know that the materials of one's body are to live over and over again in some other form, so long as there is not continuity in the personality. John Smith is not to be regarded as the reincarnation of George Washington, even tho some of the lime in their bones may really be the same. In fact, M. Finot's investigation leaves the great problem of life and death about where it has been for centuries past. Still, we are told, he has written a noteworthy book. Says the reviewer:

"The terror of death comes from the fear of the unknown, nourished by legends and superstitions, by artists, by religions—a product of badly trained human thought and of incorrect definitions accepted without sufficient investigation. This terror of death, bound up with the horrors of hell and inseparable from the fearful accompaniments of departure from life . . . can be weakened, if not entirely rooted out. Death, regarded in a measure as a new phase of life and as its continuation under forms made accessible to our understanding, would contain the treasures of peace. As a source of consolation, it will defend us against pessimism. . . . As faith in the immortality of the soul grows weaker, we shall find ourselves, from the sociologic point of view, forced to make up for it by faith in the immortality of the body.

"The author . . . gives us all the solutions of this problem that the science of to-day has been able to furnish, even opening the vast and vague horizon of the science of to-morrow, by telling us of the attempts at the synthesis of living matter, of the curious experiments made recently in America on the germination of unfecundated eggs, and finally of speculations on the life of inorganic matter. It is because he has chosen to take his stand on the ground of positive science that he has perhaps not succeeded in making of death the negligible incident that he has promised.

"Thus M. Finot reminds us at the outset that the duration of life is increasing and that cases of extreme longevity are more numerous than is generally believed. Doubtless; but death will come at last, and the cases of centenarians interest us in much the same way as the numbers that draw huge prizes in a lottery. Old age, M. Metchnikoff has recently told us, is a special form of disease. Perhaps; but it is an incurable disease, and a mortal one. . . .

"Only one thing interests us—our personality, made up of the consciousness of present existence and of memory; and it is just this personality which is everything and yet is nothing, which disappears in sleep and illness, which doubles and changes by hypnotism—a sort of fluorescent screen whose luminosity is connected with the processes of disaggregation and oxidation of a group of nerve-cells—this personality is just that which vanishes on the rupture of the consensus of the cells. This is why nothing in the world is so high as man, who understands vaguely the certainty of this inevitable fact.

"Doubtless matter is immortal . . . and being revived continually by solar heat, it is destined to live without end; doubtless also no form of energy is lost, and what has been vital activity will live eternally in the form of undulations and vibrations that nothing can annihilate, in the limitless spaces of the universe.

"But what man must have, what he gets with his religious creeds or what he seeks in occultism or spiritualism, is a belief in

the conservation of psychic personality, with the consciousness of existence and its train of recollections—not the deceptive metempsychosis which is all that positive science offers us, with a future in the fauna of the tomb or in some undulation of the ether.

"Still we do not reproach M. Finot with not having given us the solution desired by the man who does not want to die, and with not having solved problems that are at present insoluble and will probably remain so always. We ought rather to praise him for keeping closely within the domain of scientific fact, and for having presented to us in the most consoling light the fact that death is a stage in the evolution of living matter and that it does not end anything at all; that the living being starts on the road toward death as soon as it is born, just as a house begins to deteriorate as soon as it is built; that the passage from life, according to the most certain evidence, is neither painful nor horrible, for only illness is dangerous, and not death; and that it is not the act of wisdom to hasten death by the fear of dying."—*Translation made for THE LITERARY DIGEST.*

## HYGIENE OF THE HANDKERCHIEF.

WE are making our pockets into nests of microbes by using handkerchiefs as we do—so we are warned in the *Revue d'Hygiène* by M. Vallin. What we ought to do, he says, is to carry detachable india-rubber pockets and disinfect them at intervals, never using the same pocket both for clean and soiled handkerchiefs. The *Revue Scientifique*, in a notice of this article, says:

"The spittoon is without doubt very useful. . . ; but it has been demonstrated that expectoration hurls out to a distance of a yard or more virulent vesicles that remain floating in air like little soap-bubbles. On the other hand, the handkerchief is a repugnant object, and the Japanese make fun of Europeans who carefully preserve in their pockets the excretions of their noses, mouths, throats, and bronchial tubes. . . . M. Jorissenne remarks that the same handkerchief does service in wiping dust from the face or in removing sweat or tears from it; and in rubbing off a spot of dirt from one's clothes after moistening it with saliva; we shake it in token of joy, adieu, or admiration. . . .

"But, says M. Jorissenne, we do not limit ourselves to these eccentricities. You put your dirty handkerchief in one of your pockets, not always the same one, perhaps, with other articles. And ladies, who usually have only one pocket in a dress, thrust it in among the collection of small articles that seems to be a necessity to them. This is done by the most careful people, by those who are most easily disgusted, by the most intelligent men as well as by the foolish. Later, when it is thought necessary, the soiled handkerchief is replaced by another, a clean one, which you slide into the pocket that all your soiled handkerchiefs have previously occupied. You still regard it as a clean handkerchief when you take it out of your pocket, and you offer it to the first friend who is in need of it. Have you thought what a bacteriologist would say to this? This handkerchief that is supposed to be clean will soil your hands when you use it. Your pockets are receptacles where, in a warm, dark, and moist environment, there accumulate the germs collected by your handkerchiefs. Ah! it is not wonderful that the origin of diseases is so difficult to discover in the majority of ordinary cases. . . .

"Our fathers' handkerchiefs were huge, many-colored cloths, that dried for weeks in their vast pockets before being washed. In the time of Louis XIV. everybody did not use them, and they were regarded as luxuries; sometimes there was only one to an entire family. The Japanese are ahead of us; they have little paper handkerchiefs, made at home, and used only once; but after use they are thrown anywhere—on the floor, out of the window, in the garden, wherever it happens. These contaminated handkerchiefs are agents of propagation for a host of diseases, and so we may turn the laugh on the Japanese.

"Two forms of remedy present themselves: a small bag, easily opened and closed, or a similar pocket, impermeable and susceptible of being disinfected without rapid deterioration. India-rubber would be the most convenient material. The pocket could be fastened by a button or other device, whence it could be removed for disinfection. Clean handkerchiefs, of small size,