

should choose the most difficult solution was in keeping with her temperament, and the fine asceticism of her religious conceptions. Moreover, a mistake to her, no less than a crime, constituted a thing rigorously to be paid for. It is the law of nature that every nature mistake should bring inevitable retribution, and the effort to escape from any natural law struck her as a piteous futility. Secondly, that the soul should shake off the yoke of any accepted responsibility would never have been accepted by her for a second."

As an example of the contrasting modern novelist's view of a soul's course in the grasp of "overwhelming materialism" the critic refers as follows to the character of Nora in Ibsen's "The Doll's House":

"Half dazed by a magnificent instant of inner illumination, Nora takes knowledge that her soul and her husband's had never communicated, that he was not her soul's husband, that her soul, indeed, was the very last thing he could realize or desire. And with a wonderful vision of the truth below all surface appearances, she goes, shutting the door behind her. Dealt with by George Eliot, she would have been kept there, to reap the seeds of the poor blind past, and to bring forth the blossoms of her soul, only through anguished endurance of the conditions created by them both.

"Nevertheless, tho the contrast is very marked between George Eliot and the idealists of to-day, there is a certain value in thinking of them together. For between the growing increase of spiritual serenity and George Eliot's thirst—not for what may be seen and foretasted, but what must be done and suffered—there is no root antagonism. They round and complete each other. George Eliot missed the smiling gaiety of those who have as in a vision realized how small an item are both the tears and the sins of earth, but she had a tragic courage, a strength and nobleness of endurance in dark places, and an immovable integrity of conscience that can never depreciate in beauty."

A VISIT TO A JAPANESE ART-SCHOOL.

IN the opinion of Mr. George Lynch, the artist, a wholesome sociological reaction is in progress in Japan. He finds, after a considerably long sojourn with the people of the country, that the blind rush to follow Western ideas is ceasing. The Japanese, he says, are beginning to see that things that come from the West are not necessarily an improvement on their own; "they are becoming reconciled to their own merits, to the charm of their own habits and customs, their dress, and their art ideals." The account which Mr. Lynch gives (in *The Magazine of Art*, October) of a visit which he paid the Art-School (Yanaka Bijitsuin) at Tokyo indicates that this tendency is strong in the artistic feeling of the country. To quote his narrative:

"When I arrived, it was about three o'clock in the afternoon; one of their 'conours' was taking place. A subject had been given out a fortnight before, and all the painter students had their resulting pictures brought in for criticism. . . . I was shown into a well-lighted room upstairs, where I found Mr. Okakura, and two of the most celebrated painters in Tokyo, in the center of a ring of about twenty students, squatting round the room. On the walls behind them their pictures were hanging. Glowing hibashis, and teapots and cups were on the spotless mats. The majority were smoking cigarettes and sipping tea. A vote had just been taken about the best picture, and the ballot papers were being opened."

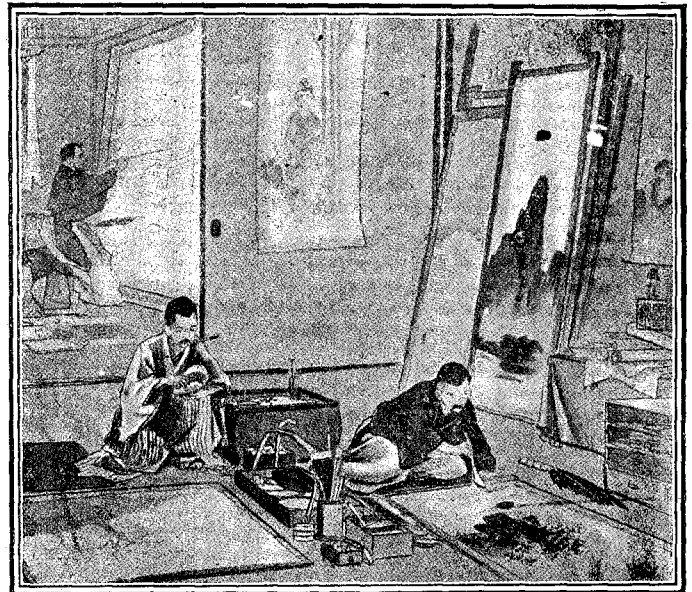
"Warmth and Gentle Gracefulness" was the theme treated in the competing pictures, and Mr. Lynch goes on to say:

"It was very interesting to compare the various renderings of it by the different artists—a clump of ripe, red maple foliage in the glow of an autumn sunset; a single big red rose; three or four pictures of prettily dressed Japanese girls; a fluffy group of little birds clustering around their nest on the branch of a cherry-tree. The walls were all aglow with soft warmth of coloring. After the voting came criticism of each picture in turn—by the students first, and finally by the master and the visiting artists.

These remarks were short and deliberate, but as a rule most severe and unsparing. It was only adverse criticism that appeared to be thought serviceable. The most brilliant artists among them were not likely to suffer from self-conceit. The great red rose was torn to fragments. An onslaught was made on the drawing of a little girl's figure alongside it. The foreshortening of her knee was the principal point of attack, whilst one of the critics went so far as to say that she was evidently no lady, and threw suspicions on her moral character by saying that she looked as if she were one of the girls who had escaped from the Yoshiwarra."

All the members of the school, Mr. Lynch says, devote one-third of the proceeds of the sales of their work to a common fund which goes to the maintenance of the school.

"Orders are frequently carried out by a number of artists together, and, at the time of my visit, one of the merchant princes



THE PAINTING CLASS.

Drawn by Otake Chikuha, a student in the Tokyo Art School.

of Tokyo, who was a great patron of art, was having an entire suite of rooms decorated by them. From a European standard of comparison their work appears extremely low in cost. There were few of the pictures in the exhibition that were priced over £15; the average would be, I think, between £8 and £10. So it was not surprising to find that about four-fifths of them had been sold."

The conclusion this writer draws from his general observation of art in Japan is as follows:

"The Japanese artists . . . have not changed their intellectual costume, and it is to be hoped that they will remain impressed by the idea that Japanese art is a thing too delightful and unique for them to dream of inflicting such a loss on the world by abandoning its traditions. The Japanese may have many things to learn from the West, but that little republic or commonwealth of art represented by the Yanaka Bijitsuin is one of the many things that might be taken by Western artists as a model well worth imitating."

Are Creative Writers the Best Literary Critics?

—In a recent discussion concerning the qualifications of a critic, Mr. Stephen Gwynn (well known himself in that capacity) asserts that the men who have written the criticism which throws most light on the subjects which they had to criticize had previously tried their own hand at the same subjects with serious creative purpose. He goes on to say in *London Literature* (October 5):

"That is the essential difference between a critic like Mr. Leslie Stephen, who discourses admirably about books, and one like

Robert Louis Stevenson, who discourses about them like an artist, making the reader feel what the writer set out to do, calling his attention to the means employed, and estimating how far the result conformed to the project. What I am asserting is merely that artists, like any other craftsmen, are the best judges of their own craft. . . . The Golden Treasury, in its original form one of the monuments of critical insight, was in that form compiled in consultation with Tennyson, who, had he not had better things to do, would certainly have been among the most instructive of critics. Passion and prejudice sway Mr. Swinburne violently, but who among critics is better than Mr. Swinburne at his best? . . . Among the critics of the first consequence—the men who can show to those who are learning to read and learning to write what the art of literature really means—critics like Lamb, Matthew Arnold, Stevenson, Taine, and Sainte-Beuve—I only recall one name which has not attached to it creative work of intrinsic value. My exception is M. Emile Faguet, and after reading M. Faguet's criticism, say, of Victor Hugo, who will believe that M. Faguet—let him publish it or no—has not written verse?

. . . . The vital point is that the critic ought to understand, from personal experience, the process which in all cases must have a certain similarity—the elaboration and shaping of an idea, the things that come by chance, the things that come easily, the things that have to be hammered into their places, the providential expedient that sometimes makes into a flower what threatened to be an ugly excrescence, the compromises that have to be accepted, the inward debate as to what degree of quickness in comprehension may be expected from a reader, the relation of an artistic work to its suggestion in nature or in fact, and so on; in a word, all the ups and downs, leaps and delays, exultations and gnashings of teeth, that go to the work of composition."

HOW "FIRST-NIGHT" PERFORMANCES AFFECT ACTORS.

MRS. MINNIE MADDERN FISKE, who is successfully enacting the principal rôle of the new play "Miranda of the Balcony" in her own theater in New York, says it needs a psychologist to analyze the temperamental phenomena developed in actors by a first-night performance. One player is stimulated by the occasion to do his best. Another is depressed by the excitement and fails to measure up to what study, ability, and purpose promised. She confesses she belongs to the latter class, and describes as follows (in *The Critic*, October) the experiences that befall such:

"To the player unhappily affected on a first night the conditions seem to be abnormal, and they are destructive of confidence and are a weight on the spirit. The excitement, the preliminary hurry, the worry over things that may go wrong, and the general nervousness—for even the players who pass through the ordeal successfully are themselves nervous before the play begins—all these things have a dispiriting, benumbing, and depressing effect. Are this depression and its concomitants the results of weakness of artistic character, or are they due to a momentary confusion of the artistic sensibilities which, in favorable circumstances, prove the possession of a higher type of artistic character? The player who on a first night may be rendered inefficient by the peculiar influences of the occasion may subsequently show

the very best that is in him. Thus the temporary weakness must be accidental rather than a characteristic fault."

Mrs. Fiske tells a story about herself to illustrate the foregoing. It concerns the presentation of "Magda," which was presented, it seems, in the face of some advance discouragement from the newspapers. To quote her again:

"As I had expected, the audience gathered to witness the production was small, and it projected that indefinable influence characteristic of many first-night audiences—a chilling influence flowing from a concrete determination that it should not like the performance. The apathy and lack of sympathy in the audience quickly communicated with the actors. The performance really was dull, stupid, and, from a popular viewpoint, a failure. The play was performed for two weeks. For several nights the original dullness continued. Suddenly there came a night of electrical and warming triumph, and that still before a small body of auditors. From that night the audiences grew in size and waxed in enthusiasm to the end of the run of the play, which closed to an overflowing, ardently demonstrative audience. It may be interesting to the student of the theater to know that the greatest success the writer ever has known in her stage career was experienced at this final performance of 'Magda.'"

Mrs. Fiske's experience with "Becky Sharp" was similar to this. The first performance was unsatisfactory. The last act in particular was received with slight favor. But, mark the sequel:

"Later in the season it became the best and most entertaining act of the play; and yet nothing in it that would explain this fact has been changed. It is only that the subtle something that vitally influences a performance and its effect was lacking on the first night and had since been potent. These are odd facts and are unconsidered by writers on the stage. They deal with some of the hidden springs that work for failure or for success in the theater."



MRS. MINNIE MADDERN FISKE.

AMERICA'S GROWING LITERARY INDEPENDENCE.

THE publishers' announcements of books for the fall and winter season, in this country, reveal a noticeable absence of those translations from foreign tongues which once upon a time formed no small proportion of the lists. Is it to be assumed from this that we, like the rest of the civilized world, are devoting ourselves to a strictly national rather than to

a world-literature? And if so, is the promise of our generation greater than that of its contemporaries in other civilized countries? An affirmative conclusion in both cases is reached by an editorial writer in the *New York Mail and Express* (October 12) who rehearses the situation in this wise:

"France has nothing to offer us; Zola alone survives of the band which twenty years ago began the invasion of Europe. No new Taine, no new Sainte-Beuve has arisen; M. Brunetière, M. Doumic, M. Jules Lemaitre are not of the stature to replace them, notwithstanding the undoubted preeminence of the first of this trio. We have wearied of Bourget's psychology and moralism, of Paul Hervieu's work; Pierre Loti has long been silent. The recent literary past of France that was so rich has been succeeded by a period of sterility. Anatole France we can not translate: his delicate art and wit are now devoted to the preservation of the national social life of his day in little masterpieces that