

The Saturday Review

of LITERATURE

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On High Executioners

RECENTLY there has been no little discussion as to whether a return to the "good old days" of *ruthless* criticism is not highly advisable. The present day is filled with the publicity and advertising of publishers; and in general, many claim, with indiscriminate eulogy. At this point, controversialists usually refer somewhat vaguely to the days of Gifford and Lockhart, to the old *Edinburgh Review* and to the old *Quarterly* ("so savage and tartarly"), quite forgetting the pronounced political complexion of criticism in the England of that period. For those were the days when powerful Tory periodicals lay in wait to smite down any literature of a Whig tendency (as they might adjudge it) that dared to raise its head. To-day, at least, thank Heaven, one does not play politics in reviewing,—at least, that kind of politics. And indeed far less politics of any kind is played, in comment on books, than the know-it-alls fondly imagine.

Certainly one desires actual criticism, and even drastic criticism, of current literature—without fear or favor. But a Donnybrook Fair, for the mere sake of the exhilaration in shillelah-play, is quite another matter. As it is, there is always a tendency toward intolerance, on the part both of the Right and of the Left, in the literary field—or any field. And prejudice that deals in sweeping dismissals is not criticism at all. New tendencies are always embattled against old; new schools beget their own critics,—apt, indeed, to disport themselves more as champions and showmen than as critics. Formalism frequently considers itself in the trenches, compelled to fight to the death and to "view with alarm." Neither is such an attitude criticism. There are advocates of the principle that open warfare "clears the air." Sometimes it does; but fundamentally the business of criticism is to be constructive rather than combative. If stating one's pronounced difference of opinion, as opposed to other opinions, be combative,—true, that is frequently necessary. But such an attitude is certainly not to be "devastating," or critical as the would-be high executioners would interpret the term.

"Devastating" criticism is usually half-baked criticism. Where balance and proportion are not preserved one becomes an out and out attorney for prosecution or defense. Furthermore, ire, disgust, rancor, ridicule, may often strike sparks that illuminate some particular book in a new and interesting light; but if such qualities are the only qualities possessed by a reviewer, his actual critical value is but a flash in the pan. True criticism is, in truth, an arduous business. It should be a highly disciplined performance. The critic must preserve standards susceptible of growth and inclusiveness; his fundamental common sense should be profound; his sensitivity to experiment and his ability cogently to relate it to what has been already accomplished in literature should resemble a compass needle, always oscillant to indicate the course and always returning true North. If this savor of a counsel of perfection, it is, nevertheless, the truly able critic's constant aim. In the best sense he should be no respecter of persons, but a thorough respecter of strict justice.

We have the phrase-makers to-day. We have the eulogists dealing in nebulous verbiage. We have the appreciators who scorn to "get down to cases" and calmly assume that everyone except themselves is a fool. On the other hand we have the drastic dismissers of work *in toto*, with their lordly gestures, with their narrow range of sympathies and interests, with their differing kinds of bigotry. There are innumerable snap-judgments, as it is; there are op-

Admonition

By THEODORE MAYNARD

IF clean thy heart, no bird's
Sweet voice shall shrill in vain;
And quick thine ear to catch the words
The woods sing after rain.

No willow in the wind
Shall bend and thou not see—
O sensitive and happy mind!—
Glow earth and sky for thee.

No horse shall arch his neck
And thou not dream of Troy;
And fluttering doves for thee bedeck
Venus and her Blind Boy.

No star shall ever shine
Save over Bethlehem;
Each rose shall bloom the Rose Divine;
Each bud from Jesse's stem.

Scour but thy spirit clear
Of the world's sensual rust;
Keep heart and mind and eye and ear
Sweet, candid, joyous, just.

What Then Is Art?

By CHARLES A. BENNETT

WE had been talking for hours, "putting," as they say in Ireland, "putting the world through one another." It had been a real good talk, mainly about great spacious topics like Religion, Life, Progress, Art. It was now past midnight. We had got our second wind and were going strong. He, a bit of a musician, summed up an argument with the statement that music was the lowest of the arts because the enjoyment of it was purely sensuous. I, knowing nothing of music, but quick to defend a pet theory, would not agree. I said that music opened a door into the real world. "When I hear good music," I said, "I feel that I have discovered a dimension of the universe, so to speak, which science and philosophy and common sense are always leaving out. Insight, insight, that's the word!" Perhaps half an hour later, when the talk had wandered to something else, he went over to the piano and began to play, casually. He played something nice and innocuous. Then the opening chords of a thing by César Franck. "You feel the difference, don't you? Listen. . . . And now where are you? Where has he taken you to? Well, you don't know where you are, but it's the real thing, isn't it?"

"Out of your own mouth!" I exclaimed. "Reality—my word! Whatever it is, you know it's the real world that César Franck has shown you."

So we had it back and forth again. It was two o'clock when he rose to leave.

"I'll grant you this much," he said. "Music is either the lowest or the highest of the arts."

That was several years ago, and ever since, off and on, I have been wondering how I should have defended my theory if I had been harder pressed. Music, like the other arts, tells us something, I am convinced, about objective reality; but when I ask myself, in my rôle of student of philosophy, what precisely it tells, then I am "at a stand." For poetry, music, drama, and the rest, are not concerned with scientific statement or rational deduction. They make no explicit contribution to science or philosophy. Except with those pseudo-artistic forms, the fable, the allegory, the didactic play or poem, their message or their meaning cannot be reduced to logical statements. Each speaks in its own tongue and can be understood only by those who know it. So it would seem. But if all one can say about a poem is, "It means what it says," that statement may be true but it is utterly unenlightening. I insist on something more satisfying. So far I have insisted in vain. But at any rate I have reached the stage where I can formulate my difficulties. That is the purpose of this article. I am not presuming to throw a ray of light. I am asking for one.

I propose to examine briefly three theories of artistic truth and to explain why none of them seems adequate.

The first we may conveniently, if barbarously, label the subjectivist theory. It is found in its crudest and most familiar form in the attitude of the man in the street who goes to the theatre or reads a book in order to forget his troubles. Novel or drama are anodynes. Inside the covers of the book or the walls of the theatre is make-believe. It is the world outside that is real. The scientist is liable to adopt the same version of things. Science deals with hard facts, art with myth and fancy. The artist expresses some emotion, paints a pretty picture of the world as it might be but isn't, or uses his

This Week

Memoirs of Mrs. Letitia Pilkington.
An Excerpt from the Introduction
by *Iris Barry*.

Three Volumes on Psychology.
Reviewed by *S. D. House*.

"The American Philosophy of Equality."
Reviewed by *Ralph Barton Perry*.

"The A-B-C of Prohibition."
Reviewed by *Harold S. Davis*.

"An Artist in the Family."
Reviewed by *Winifred Katzin*.

"Mr. Hodge and Mr. Hazard."
Reviewed by *Lee Wilson Dodd*.

The Folder. By *Christopher Morley*.

Next Week, or Later

"The Hotel."
Reviewed by *Christopher Morley*.

posed "camps" or cliques; and there is a great deal of palaver. But rarely does one observe the accurate phrase striking like Ithuriel's spear straight to the heart of the matter; or close reasoning, with complete references—thorough illustrations—building up an incontrovertible case, for or against. It is criticism of this order that we need. We do not need mere belligerency. The exploiting of the personality of the reviewer and his own idiosyncrasies, with little pertinence to the volume under consideration, we shall doubtless have always with us. A

(Continued on page 716)

imagination to construct a wholly fictitious world. How absurd therefore to suppose that any activity so emotional and subjective can tell us anything about the truth of things! Of course all of us, even the most civilized or mature, need to play at times, to rest from our more serious concerns, to be as irresponsible as children. (One can hear the faintly patronizing note in this.) It is then that we seek the ministrations of art. But if it is fact, knowledge, truth, we want, then we must turn to science.

Essentially the same theory, more impressive this time, thanks to the support of some psychologists, appears in the view of art as an "escape." Art takes us into a realm of illusions in which the mind may disport itself unconstrained by the actualities of fact or the imperatives of duty. Beauty is not a revelation of truth but an escape from it. It is nonsense to talk of the insights of art. Its insights are no more than poetical flights, wish fulfilments, "vistas for the imagination, never convictions."

This theory I believe to be wrong, but it would hardly be so common unless it contained some ingredient of truth. How may we account for its persuasiveness?



In the first place, it seems a sign of immaturity to ask about a work of art, Is it true? Did it really happen? Did Jack really kill the giant? Did Satan really fall from Heaven? Those are the child's questions. And now, when, as we hope, we have put away childish things, we realize that the questions should never have been asked. They are irrelevant. The artist is not making statements of fact. In the second place, the difficulty of telling what a work of art means is notorious. How can you state in words the meaning of a piece of music? The more you try, the more you come to feel that you are dealing with incommensurables. We have all suffered from the misguided ministrations of the persons who write the explanations in musical programmes. And I recall the remark of a composer who said, "A musical composition should have no title. Or if you must give it a name, call it 'A chunk of music in E flat' and let it go at that." And so perhaps you fall back on a theory of the uniqueness of musical meanings in particular and all esthetic meanings in general. Every work of art, you say, means what it says. And this is so perilously close to the statement that it says and means nothing at all, that it seems best to content oneself with maintaining that art asserts nothing but lives in a world of its own creations.

In spite of its plausibility the theory is open to many objections. I shall mention three.

First, it does not do justice to the seriousness of art. Surely, we say to ourselves, art is more than play and the artist more than a dreamer indulging his irresponsible fancies. Beauty, significant beauty, is not just a drug by which tired or over-sophisticated adults may be lured along the road of some infantile regression or medicined to that sweet sleep which they owned in the yesterday of a carefree childhood. No. If the word imagination suggests fancy, it suggests also insight, divination. Who has not felt that the work of art brings with it intimations of a profounder reality which lies beyond the scope of our secular perception? In the intuition of the artist the significance of some part of reality, a significance concealed from, or obscure to, everyday vision is summed up and presented to us in concentrated form. The dramatist condenses his material in accordance with the strict conventions of dramatic structure: he eliminates irrelevant or distracting details, he heightens character, he increases the tempo of life. Thus he creates a whole of character or of action which evokes from us the judgment, "This is what life means." Of course he selects, but selection is the least instructive part of the operation. How does he know what to leave out? As well describe sculpture as the elimination of superfluous marble as explain art by calling it selection. The selection is made possible by some positive insight. A good dramatist brings some truth home to you. To appreciate a good play means that you have perceived some truth about life and perceived it with a strange and exciting intensity. That is concentrated knowledge.

This holds true even in the most unlikely instance, that of the still-life picture. Surely those representations of flowers and fruits and faintly glimmering translucent glasses and choice cuts of fish that cover so many acres of wall space in the galleries of Europe confer no particular insight on the beholder. Yet listen for a moment to an enthusiastic critic describing a picture of a pumpkin:

On the further wall of the dining room . . . there was a mighty golden pumpkin, an heroic pumpkin, the father and mother of all pumpkins, painted by the modern Frenchman Vollon. And, Oh, Glory be! that pumpkin held its own. It held its own not because Vollon had sought to make it look ineffably like a pumpkin, but because his sense of color and his brush work, his technique and his style, had so operated as to lift a vegetable out of itself and to exhale beauty in something like splendor.

Now did the man who wrote that see just a good reproduction of a pumpkin or did he have a revelation?

In the second place, the theory shows a strange unfamiliarity with the actual processes of artistic creation. Anyone who has read Conrad's account of the writing of "Nostromo" will recall the intensity with which he speaks of the travail and agony that went to its creation. And I take it that his experience was different only in degree from that of other artists. But why this bitter struggle if the artist is simply working off an emotion or playing with a theme? The business of producing a work of art seems much more serious and arduous than play. It does not look as if the artist were gratifying a merely personal need or moving in a void where there were no rules but those set by his own caprice. On the contrary, he scarcely seems to be his own master. He cannot do as he pleases. Necessity is laid upon him. But, if so, something external is imposing necessity upon him. That is why most artists, I think, who should pause to reflect on the meaning of their work would say that they were aiming at truth rather than at beauty. Both are objective, but truth better suggests the working of an austere and imperious necessity, and so does finer justice to the creative experience. We return therefore to our conviction that it is some vision of truth that the artist is struggling to express. A theory of art which ignores this is simply not a theory of art at all and may itself safely be ignored.

Thirdly, although to ask of a work of art, "What does it mean?" may seem a childish question, yet unless we are allowed to ask it and to press for an answer I do not see how we are going to distinguish between the genuine work of art and the imposture. Suppose I am presented with a lump of gibberish by a young gentleman who has the impertinence to call it a poem. I inspect his experiment in tortured typography and, since good manners forbid me to spank him, I ask quite naturally, "Well, now tell me what it means." He replies, "Philistine! As though the meaning of any work of art could be translated into another medium! It means what it says: no more and no less." "But," I persist, "it doesn't seem to me to mean anything." Whereupon, the outraged poet probably spins on heel and vanishes. But he leaves me still unconvinced. If it is impossible to convey any idea of the significance of a work of art, impossible even to intimate the vision or the insight it has captured, then any fashionable piece of esthetic incomprehensibility, all nerves, novelty, and rebellion, may lay claims to being a work of art.



The second theory we may call the symbolic. Art, we shall now be told, speaks truth, but speaks it in a symbolic or figurative way. Its utterances are to be received sacramentally, that is, as sensuous embodiments or evocations of philosophic truth. Thus when the poet writes:

When first my way to fair I took,
Few pence in purse had I,
And long I used to stand and look
At things I could not buy.

Now times are altered; if I care
To buy a thing I can,
The pence are here, and here's the fair,
But where's the lost young man?

To think that two and two are four,
And neither five nor three,
The heart of man has long been sore
And long 'tis like to be.

—when the poet writes thus he is not deploring the fourness of two and two nor telling you solemnly that now when he can have the things he wanted as a child he no longer wants them; trying to arouse in you a sense of the sad futility of human wishes in a world that is indifferent to them. He is using words and images in a suggestive, not a literal, way.

This theory has two points in its favor. First, it maintains that art does reveal something about the world; secondly, that its statements are not to be taken literally. But, even so, the theory is not acceptable. To begin with, it does violence to art. It imposes a distinction on the artist between literal

truth and figurative expression that is not present at all to his mind as artist. It suggests that the artist begins with some truth and then dresses it up in a fanciful costume. We know that this is false. When the poet makes a song like

Time, you old gypsy man,
Will you not stay,
Pack up your caravan
Just for one day?

he does not first say to himself, "Time flies; human happiness is transient," and then proceed to reflect, "Gypsies are transients, here to-day and gone to-morrow. I shall therefore compare time to a gypsy." No, the symbol and the thing symbolized come to him at once. They are not first separate and then conjoined.

Secondly, the theory unfortunately suggests that in any significant work of art there is a core of literal truth which can be disengaged by analysis and stated in the terms of science or philosophy. If that is what you believe, you will be eager to discover the core, and so there springs into being the esoteric school of critics, those probers after hidden wisdom, for whom all works of art worthy of the name are as occultly suggestive as the "Prophetical Books" of Blake and who remind one of Henley's contemptuous reference to the devotees of the Browning cult "who grub as for truffles" for meanings in Browning. But alas! if you persist in treating the philosophical meaning as the essential thing in the work of art, you must pay the price, and the price is that you must now regard the form of art as, at worst, so much idle decoration of the meaning, at best a temporary substitute for an adequate logical statement. In a world of articulate philosophers poetry would be superfluous. Whether that is a comment on the poet or on the philosopher is a question that the reader must decide for himself.



The third theory launches itself from a criticism of the other two. Both of these, it says, in effect proceed on a common assumption, the assumption that there is only one language in which truth can be communicated—the impersonal language of science and philosophy. If you want to be sure that there is something in religion or in art, that "it isn't all your imagination," you must show that their messages can be translated into the common tongue. But this assumption is sheer dogma. If we could free ourselves from its influence perhaps we should no longer suspect or be perplexed about the revelations of art on the ground that they are so difficult to translate into the scientific vernacular. So we are asked to scrutinize the dogma.

We might begin with an example of the language of science. Here is a definition of love taken from the writings of a French psychologist:

Love is a specific emotive entity, consisting of a more or less permanent variation of the affective and mental state of a subject, on the occasion of the realization—by the fortuitous exercise of a specialized mental process—of an exclusive and conscious systematization of his sexual instinct.

When you read that you ask yourself, Why does a man write like that? What is he trying to do? No one can tell for certain. But one thing is clear: he is not trying to tell anyone what love means. If he had wished to do that would he not have exclaimed:

From thee I have been absent in the Spring
When proud pied April, dressed in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything,

or something like it? Perhaps he assumes that we already know from experience what love means? Is he then trying to evoke that experience and its allied meaning? No, he must know that he will succeed only in evoking a faint nausea. Moreover, if he does assume that we know what love means his definition is evidently not an attempt to communicate that meaning. What purpose then are we to assign to scientific explanation?

That is a question upon which scientists themselves are not agreed, but we can mention one answer that has reputable support. Perhaps science is interested not so much in revealing truth as in measuring, and interested in measuring because its ultimate purpose is the control of the environment. Here is a quotation from a physicist that puts the thing with a beautiful simplicity and lucidity that one can only envy, not emulate:

The examiner, exercising his ingenuity, begins (let us say) as follows: "An elephant slides down a grassy hillside . . ." The experienced examinee knows that he need

not pay heed to this; it is only a picturesque adornment to give an air of verisimilitude to the bald essentials of the problem. He reads on: "The weight of the elephant is two tons." Now we are getting to business; henceforth the elephant can be dropped; it is "two tons" that the examinee will really have to grapple with. What exactly is this two tons—the real subject-matter of the physical problem? It denotes, according to one code, a property, which we can only vaguely describe as a *ponderosity*, occurring in a certain region of the external world. But never mind what it connotes; what *is* it? Two tons is the reading which the pointer indicated when the elephant was placed on a weighing machine; it is just a pointer-reading. Similarly with the other data of our problem. The mountain flank is replaced by an angle of 60°—the reading of a plumb-line against the divisions of a protractor; and its verdant covering is replaced by a coefficient of friction, which though perhaps not directly a pointer-reading, is of a kindred nature. No doubt there are more roundabout ways used in practice for determining the weights of elephants and the slopes of hills, but they are justified because they are known to give the same results as would be obtained by direct pointer-readings. . . .

Our discussion has already prepared us to admit that physics (or exact science) can only take within its scope certain aspects of the external world; and that there remain other aspects which have been excluded, not because they are of less importance, but because they have not the specialized property of measurability. (J. S. Eddington.)

From this point of view, then, science deals only with certain selected aspects of the real world. Of course, what it says about these is true (and not merely useful), but its statements leave room for other statements to be made about the real world which, as long as they do not contradict the assertions of science, may be taken as true. Impersonal scientific speech is not the sole language in which truth can be expressed. It takes many voices to render the whole truth of things and science is only one of them. Or, to put it differently, science, art, religion, moral experience, may each in its own way be a source of genuine insight into the nature of things, each with its appropriate medium of expression, each with its own laws of disciplined and consistent utterance. (A service of worship, a poem, a symphony,—these obey necessities no less real and compelling than those recognized in books of logic.) We must not confuse things which should be kept distinct. In trying to force art to speak some language other than its own we only do violence to the integrity of the forms of experience.

The theory that I have thus sketched is in many ways the most discriminating and the most persuasive that I know. And yet, at the risk of seeming ungrateful or even mulish, I have to confess that my first obstinate questionings will not down. The theory uses the analogy of different languages, each of which conveys some portion of truth about the nature of things. It is this concept of "the nature of things" that is at the root of our trouble. For, consider what it implies. If I say "Here are four different portraits of a man by four different artists," that implies that I know what the man looks like from a point of view different from any of those adopted by the four painters. Otherwise, how could I know that they are portraits of *the same man*? And so, to say that art, science, religion, etc., grasp different aspects of the "real nature of things" implies that we have some way of knowing that real nature of things which is not the way of art, science, or religion. It implies, in short, that there is a universal language appropriate for expressing the whole truth about the nature of things (perhaps the language of philosophy rather than of science), a language commensurable with these other languages, into which they might be translated. But unfortunately the facts conflict with the logical requirements. For who can set down the philosophical meaning of a work of art? It ought to be possible, but it obviously isn't.

The difficulty may be expressed in another way. It was said that the revelations of art may be taken as genuine if they do not contradict the fundamental principles of reasoning. Now contradiction holds only between assertions. Two different emotions, or colors, or events, cannot contradict each other. If there is to be either harmony or conflict between art and the deliverances of the intellect, art must first have made assertions. And, once again, what assertions about reality does art in general or the particular work of art make? That was precisely our original question and that is the question which none of the theories has answered satisfactorily.

Therefore, as I said at the outset, I am a wanderer in esthetics, seeking light. I should be glad to know why I am lost. Is the way really hard to find? Or am I simply unfamiliar with the country?

A Lady of Adventure

MEMOIRS OF MRS. LETITIA PILKINGTON. Written by HERSELF. With an Introduction by IRIS BARRY. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1928.

AMONG the beneficiaries of Swift's friendship during the years in which he lived in retirement in Dublin was a couple by the name of Pilkington. Matthew was a curate with a turn for literature and his wife, Letitia, who had married him at eighteen, a young woman with an avid taste for reading and an astonishing memory. Swift enjoyed their open admiration, and saw in Matthew Pilkington a possible catspaw to bring about a readjustment between himself and Pope who, like himself, was a contributor to the *Miscellany* and who, he felt, was acquiring too much of the glory and profits from a publication to which the Dean was contributing much of the writing. Accordingly he dispatched Matthew Pilkington to London, ostensibly to afford him the opportunity of meeting the literary circles of the capital but actually as an agent for his own somewhat devious interests. Matthew played his game none too well, and soon alienated many of the powerful personages



FRONTISPIECE TO MRS. PILKINGTON'S "JESTS"

"It has been remarked that Dean Swift never laughed but thrice in his life; 1st, at a Merry Andrews Pranks; 2nd, at reading that part of Fielding's Tom Thumb where Tom is described killing the Ghost; 3rd, at reading Mrs. Pilkington's Jests in Manuscript."

whose support he was to gain. Moreover, the attractions of London proved too great for his strength, scandal resulted, and the Pilkingtons landed in the divorce court. Mrs. Pilkington emerged from the trial with an injured reputation and no resources. Her only reliance was upon her pen, and she forthwith began to write poetry. But Dublin, to which she returned, had been too scandalized by the revelations of the divorce suit to countenance her presence, and she returned perforce to London and a dubious career. She herself admitted that "though Nature intended her for a harmless household dove, Fate made her a lady of adventure."

As to the Memoirs, in which her experiences are recorded, no review, we believe, could so well set forth the reason for their interest as does the very excellent introduction by Iris Barry to this edition reprinted from that of 1748. In lieu of further comment we reprint, with the permission of the publishers, a portion of it. Miss Barry writes:

"The eighteenth century is not, as we lazily fancy, an age of romance. Its literature is not of a heroic or superhuman order, like that of the Elizabethans. No man was ever like Iago; no man spoke or behaved like Antonio or Troilus. They are moods or demons or states of mind: in their different human way, they masked an ideal as superhuman as that which informed the sculpture of Phidias. But Parson Andrews and Lady Kitty Crocodile, Atticus and Pomposo not only were like human beings: they were human beings. The ideal of the eighteenth century, however formalized, however far from realization, was not abstract beauty or majesty, but truth, scientific truth. Its passion was to know, and, above all, to know men: to learn

more thoroughly how they behaved. To us, who pine to know better *why* they behave as they do, the eighteenth century is elder brother, very close, very lively. And it is because Mrs. Pilkington in her own small, bright, and particular way, brings back to life, brings out from the museum and the library, the behavior and the cant, the day-to-day sentiments and reactions of her time that she is so valuable.

"Scandalous 'Memoirs' were a fashion when she wrote. Mrs. Manly, for instance, the mistress of Alderman Barber, had published the 'New Atlantis,' and found it selling like hot cakes. Lady Mary Pierrepont, afterwards Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, could hardly wait for a new volume of this compendium of anecdotes about Stauratius the Thracian (whom she and everyone knew to be the Duke of Marlborough) and all the hotch-potch of gossip, larded with moralizing about life in an imaginary kingdom (which no one imagined to be elsewhere than England). Pope's Lord Fanny was appreciated for the portrait it was, and Fielding's Lady Bellaston was universally recognized.

"Every novelist of the day drew from observation; every dramatist from the life. The current of every work of fiction is stopped again and again for some new incomer to enthrall the reader and his fellow-characters with a biography, often strongly related to the author's. The Duchess of Marlborough and Cibber shared a passion to 'explain themselves,' and looked into their motives deeper than one might expect. All men acknowledged that the proper study of mankind was man. The very artists of the day—Hogarth and Romney and Reynolds—show the belief every bit as much as that president of the age, Voltaire, and his cousin, Pope.

"But somehow or other our feeling of the age springs most to life in the obscurer figures like Mrs. Pilkington herself. She herself, her account of her own experiences, gives a groundwork for our recognition of humanity in the other figures of her time. We understand more what it was to be a writer when we read so vivid a picture of a random little hack. She goes the same way as the more famous writers; but with her we see that all this is not merely queer information: it is *true*. If she in her chintz gown trotted through the snow to beg a subscription—it is just so humbly that all the band of her fellow-writers went about a livelihood. If she associated, without shame, with the valets and laundresses of the great, it is because she and all her fellows were in their proper place in the upper servants' hall. She starved; and, when we hear of it, we see many a better writer starving, too. They deviled for other men, and wrote by the yard, and went cap in hand to ill-bred publishers, and were tempted to sell themselves to the infamous Curll, and rejoiced for days should a Stanhope or a Churchill commend them.

"Her faults and her smallness make her more real to us than more venerable people; but she also *makes them* more real. There is no need to put her on a pedestal. As a writer, she is prolix and jerky. Again and again we find a strange, confused, hysterical note in her. All the while personal grievances come cropping up and deflect the course of her narrative. She sometimes writes merely to ease her own fretted mind, protesting, giving involved explanations, making secret allusions. She talks to herself, so that it is an immense labor to follow her. Now and then she is entirely incoherent.

"But the moment she forgets her rage against her husband, the clergy in general, and her detractors in particular, the moment she becomes objective, she has command of an unusually lucid style and diction. Nothing, for example, could be clearer than her description of a journey from London to Chester by wagon in May, the horses bright with favours, and in the sunny and peaceful landscape a corpse on the gallows. Nothing could be better or more economically thrown in than her story of the rainy day in Dublin, when Swift clambered tirelessly up and down the stairs to complete the customary jog-trot constitutional which the bad weather had curtailed.

"The Victorian, the Edwardian, even the conservative Georgian essayist on the eighteenth century is always apologizing. It was a rough age, he tells us mock-modestly; men drank deep and gambled long; virtue was at a discount, and dishonesty a mode. But the closer we look at it, the more affinity it seems to have with the life of to-day. The main difference that appears is that its men and women—