

life and who do not attempt to write but simply catch their best thoughts as they flow spontaneously when they themselves are at their best. Such as this is of course good, but we too often lose sight of the great underlying truths and become absorbed in the story only. Too often also we receive false impressions, and, our natures becoming morbid, we either overlook or pass by as too commonplace the grand tragedies and comedies that are being enacted around us daily. These being the works God brought about by destiny, are necessarily superior to fiction which is the work of man and but an imitation. As our minds become used to high coloring we seek more and more that class of literature and seek to entertain ourselves by cheap fiction when the most wonderful romances are going on about us. The villain that we hate, the lovers that we feel so interested in, the unhappy ones who are always left out, are all right around us among our friends, but we do not notice it because we are incapable of observing and have to have these things pointed out to us by some one else, or perhaps we entirely overlook them, not expecting to find them among commonplace people.

If we would only notice, persons and events come every day under our own untrained and unlimited observation that would favorably compare within those the most interesting novels. In writing this I am forcibly reminded of some characters that I met in a small town during the last summer. Although the town was small it was still old enough to have afforded a lodging place to some queer characters. There was one man from the "old states" who, on account of some domestic trouble, had left his family and friends and came to Texas to live out the remainder of his life alone. Another was an old Scotchman who had traveled a great deal and served a term in the British army, but being disappointed in a love affair and sore at heart over the oppression of his country had come to America and settled down in this spot to pass away the remainder of his life in peace and quiet surroundings.

There was also a young Englishman, who being possessed of a roving disposition, had roamed over Europe, the West Indies, the Canary Islands, and several other countries including some of the Southern states, but had finally lodged there. One case that interested me was an old bachelor, a highly educated and very cultivated man, who had been unsuccessful in business and had retired to that spot to live out his life in seclusion, "Far from the maddening crowd's ignoble strife." It is useless though to multiply examples although it could easily be done. There was the coquette with several men deeply in love with her, the cynic, the atheist, the flirt who had jilted one man to marry another, and all that assemblage from which the poets and the novelists draw so much of their character delineation. It cannot be said that these examples are from an assorted collection, for they are taken from a very small lot, selected at random. Almost anyone could give plenty of such like instances if he would only think a minute. The trouble is that we are apt to look down on our own experiences as too commonplace for notice.

We are blind to the romance of every-day life and fail to notice that grand or genial of the greatest works ever written—human life. If we would but open our eyes we would be able to enjoy nature more, to understand each other better, and to develop that higher part of our nature which is so sadly neglected. We become absorbed in the cares of every day life and forget that there is such a thing as beauty in it. Life is given to us to develop character and we should attempt to do that, if we care nothing for the pleasure. No man can be truly happy until he is able to understand others, and therefore we should try to develop ourselves until we can stand on a plane above the cares and troubles of life so that we can understand human nature and enjoy the poetry of nature and the romance of daily life.

NEMO.

Shakespeare's King John.

The King John of history was a detestable wretch. But we must not forget that he has been made even more infamous in our sight than he really was, by our inevitable habit of transporting into the mediæval period the ideas of the modern world.

To us he was not only in his actual life the blackhearted murdered and the licentious profligate, rebel to his father and traitor to his brother, but the ideal tyrant, cruel and crushing in all his relations to his people. We remember the captives whom he starved in prison. We remember the old men whom he crushed to death under copes of lead. We remember his many illegal exactions, his seizure of castles, his armies of hired freebooters, his ferocious hanging of whole garrisons of captured fortresses, his assaults on the honor of the wives and daughters of his barons. We never lose sight of the fact that to his unbearable tyranny we owe the first great charter of English liberties, the triumph of the rights of Englishmen, whether baron, abbot, or simple freeman, in fine, the union of lords and prelates against the crown in behalf of the threatened person and property of every class, not excluding even the rights of the villain.

It is not on these things that Shakespeare lays stress. There is no Runnymede in his King John. Had Milton written a play on this part of English history, we may be sure that the march of "the army of God" and the signing of the great charter would have constituted the heart of it. To Shakespeare's mind the constitutional history of England was not even faintly present. All important to him was the attitude of the "tight little isle" toward Rome and the continental powers. To him and the great body of Englishmen of his time, the same atoning grace redeemed John's memory from utter loathing that caused them to overlook the tyranny and the cruelty and the half-dozen wives of Henry VIII. It was much to them, it was everything to them, that both of these kings had defied the power of Rome and had done what they could to free the nation from foreign spiritual domination. John, it seems to me, actually wears in Shakespeare's picture of the past somewhat the aspect of martyr to the cause—not of religion, it is true, but—of national independence in the religious sphere. Be sure, that it was with a thrill of warm sympathy that the audiences of Shakespeare's time heard those spirited words of John to Pandolph:

"What earthly name to interrogatories
Can task the free breath of a sacred king?
Thou canst not, cardinal, devise a name
So slight, unworthy and ridiculous,
To charge me to an answer, as the pope.
Tell him this tale; I from the mouth of England
Add thus much more, that no Italian priest
Shall tithe or toll in our dominions;
But as we, under heaven, are supreme head,
So under him that great supremacy,
Where we do reign, we will alone uphold,
Without the assistance of a mortal hand:
So tell the pope, all reverence set apart
To him and his usurp'd authority."

—and then, in reply to King Philip's remonstrance:

"Though you and all the kings of Christendom
Are led so grossly by this meddling priest,
Dreading the curse that money may buy out;
And by the merit of vile gold, dross, dust,
Purchase corrupted pardon of a man
Who in that sale sells pardon from himself,
Though you and all the rest so grossly led
This juggling witchcraft with revenue cherish,