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Literary.

MRS. HUMPHREY WARD.

MABEL ANDERSON, '99.

Comparatively few writers have acquired fame as quickly as did Mrs. Humphrey Ward. Few books have been as widely read and discussed as hers. Of the four novels that she has written each one has become a familiar name.

Mrs. Ward is an English woman and thoroughly familiar with the life which she portrays. She may have talent and not genius. She began with a capital of thought and of experience which had been accumulated through years of study and observation; she had lived in an atmosphere rich in intellectual association and stimulus; she had inherited and she acquired culture. It was a question whether her gift was greater than the culture which it received.

One critic says, "Mrs. Ward is a victim of the Zeitgeist that scourge or that stimulant of literature as one may choose to take it. Social reform, woman politics, the relation of man and woman in the apparent re-adjustment of society, here is double evil and trouble, and Mrs. Ward puts her fagots on the fire and watches the caldron bubble."

Fiction is the prevailing form of literature and she accepts it as the inevitable. But her interest is not primarily in the men and women whom she creates, but it is in the people of the actual world in which she lives, and whom she transfers to her novel.

She is so brilliant a writer because she knows so well the world she aims to produce. She is comprehensive in her studies of English life and she is apparently at home in all manner of worlds. She introduces us to the dining rooms in Belgravia, to the libraries and smoking rooms of manor houses in the country, to the boisterous meetings of Anarchists, to the wards of London hospitals, and to the slums of Drury Lane. In literature her cultivation is wide. In art her few illusions are always suggestive and happy.

Her novels have been read and discussed by thousands and tens of thousands, yet to be understood or appreciated they require careful and earnest attention. Her subjects are serious. They are the problems of life. Her characters are representative of opinions.

Her first book published several years ago created an unusual stir and provoked an almost unprecedented amount of criticism, both favorable and the reverse.

The explanation cannot be traced to the literary or artistic merits of the book. In Robert Elsmere Mrs. Ward showed little aptitude for narrating a story or constructing a novel. She gathered up much of the floating scepticism of the day and interpreted it in the play of her fictitious characters. Her book was the embodiment of many of the thoughts which are rankling in human hearts. She gave utterance to some feeling that needed expression. The finest character delineated in the book is that of a Christian woman. While one person might read in the book an assault upon Christianity, another might find it a tribute to the practical value of the creed assailed. The peculiar crisis in human thought, the nature of the appeal, and the form in which the appeal was made, all contributed to the success of Robert Elsmere. But as a work of art the book is clumsy; as a source of entertainment, wearisome; as a theological treatise, unsatisfactory, and inconclusive.

Her next book was published in 1892. In David Grieve, Mrs. Ward returns to the same field in which she won her former fame. It, also, belongs to the class of religious novels. If David Grieve is easier reading than its predecessor it is because the subject is less theological and more human. There is greater interest, more passion, more power and more pathos.

Mrs. Ward has received her harshest criticism on these two books. One writer expresses it: "She assumes that Christianity is a wreck and attempts to build a raft." They lack the artistic finish of the last two. They carry the impression of toil. It is as if George Eliot had told us the pathetic story of Hetty Sorrel without relieving the strain by the homely and telling humor of Mrs. Poyser. As if Shakespeare had sent Lear out into the storm without the companionship of the fool.

With Marcella, published in 1894, Mrs. Ward enters a new field. In her latest work she is not less serious and moving, but far more artistic and more effective. She has mastered her subject instead of being mastered by it. She is first and foremost a novelist. She has a story to tell which deals with the most pressing and oppressive place of human experience, but she never forgets that she is dealing with literature. She reverses the order of development of George Eliot. George Eliot's latest works were philosophical and less interesting, but Mrs. Ward's increase in interest and in power.

Perhaps we can best study Mrs. Ward herself by studying the greatest character she has produced. Marcella Boyce is the heroine of the book called by her name, and also a central figure in the sequel published last year, Sir George Tressady. In Marcella Mrs. Ward worked her way through her culture and found herself. Her task is to dramatize the strife of the soul with its inheritance and its conditions. Her great interest is in character, but in character as it is moulded by the influences issuing from the turmoil of a changing England. She set herself the task of defining the development of a raw English girl with a headlong zeal for social reform into a woman of rank with social and political power. It is Marcella Boyce caught in the social maelstrom and swallowed up in it who enlists the reader's sympathy. We are concerned from first to last with the question of her fate for by her temperament Marcella is one of the children of fate and only at the end do we realize we have been reading the story of a soul as well as of a life.

Mrs. Ward deals with problems, but her real interest is in the problem of personal life, and the problems of the hour attract her because they are phases of that eternal problem. She presents the question of the day, the social problem, in relation to its influence on the nature and destiny of a girl of brilliant temperament, deep feeling, intense idealism and noble, but impetuous, un-

trained character. She exhibits the social revolution as it touches the personality of character. Her characters are contrasted yet the influence that they bear upon life is clearly defined. There is the English gentleman of rank and wealth, the preacher, the peasant, the agitator, the labor leader, the tragic figures who suffer and die in the slums.

Marcella's interest and zeal do not perish in the tremendous personal experience through which she passes, but she learns that civilization is greater than any special form it may wear whether for good or evil and that while the cry of the wronged for redress loses no urgency of appeal the ultimate conditions of life are not in conditions but in character. There is a personal element as well.

It cannot be said that Marcella Boyce is a merely notional woman. She tries experiments, by turns Lady Bountiful, practical socialist, and nurse, she comes as closely as possible to the lives of the men and women from whom her rank and breeding have seemed to separate her. But her great experiment is upon herself, in the test of her own womanly nature, how far she is able to acquire an independence of home, father, mother, and lover, and to lead a self-centered life, none the less self-centered because it is one of self-sacrifice. At every turn Marcella meets herself. The virtue of this novel is that Mrs. Ward is genuinely desirous of penetrating the complexity of the life she describes so as to reach the clear and simple meaning of it all. This special quality is the passion which vibrates through it, the passion of truth, the passion of sympathy, and in the end the passion of love.

Sir George Tressady is another element in Marcella's life. This book like the other is a story of politics, of the social and industrial questions. The story may seem less interesting at first but it soon carries one along with its power.

One lays these books aside with peculiar feelings. There has been pleasure in reading them. We have heard clever people talk, have become fairly well acquainted with a few persons who stand for a society which is full of interest and have been even drawn into a consideration of some very subtle movements below the surface. But there are other feelings than those of pleasure which are harder to describe. We have had a glimpse beneath the surface of this great sea that we call life. We have gained a clearer conception of what life in its varied relations means. We realize more that there are influences in the life of every one about us that we cannot understand. Then our thoughts go out to the problems and sorrows of this great world.

Marcella threw all the energies of her great nature into making life easier and happier for all about her, and to me the secret of Mrs. Ward's power is that she leaves in our hearts the question, "What doest thou here?"

FAULTS.

GRACE HAGADORN, '98.

"Men had their faults and men will have them still;
He that hath none, and lives as the Angels do
Must be an Angel."

No argument is needed to prove that man is not perfect. However, this is one of those principles more easily accepted in the abstract than applied to every case. Every day we see about us proofs of this statement. Are we just as ready to find proofs within ourselves? We will not be benefitted in any way by the one fact that failure is common to all mortals, unless we take in connection with it certain other truths.

We hear a great deal concerning the strength to be obtained by conquering a fault, the satisfaction that comes from the victory, and the power to overcome other sins. Indeed, we are even told that faults are blessings, that God put them in our characters that we might

grow stronger by living above them. All this we fully believe, yet there is, it seems to me, another side to the subject.

We are sometimes told to cease noticing the faults of others and attend to our own. Much has been said of being charitable toward the failures of those about us. We are just as fully aware that it is our duty to be kind in judging others as that it is our duty to search out our own faults and correct them. These moral obligations are well known to all of us.

Yet, just what does it mean to be charitable toward the faults of another, and how are we to be helped by the errors those about us are making? Shall we be blind to those faults and refuse to recognize them? No, it seems to me far more noble to appreciate the error and fully realize its seriousness and at the same time to keep in mind that it is the act, not the one who performs the act, from which we are to take our lesson. I know it is often said

"Be to their faults a little blind,
Be to their virtues very kind,"

yet it seems to me much might be lost by a failure to perceive a fault as such. Shakespeare says

"Condemn the fault, not the actor of it;
Why, every fault's condemned ere it is done."

Could we but realize how much this means, how kind it would make us in judging our friends; how much quicker we would detect the flaws in our own lives, and soon the difficulty of dealing with another's shortcoming would be lessened. There is a verse in one of our hymns that runs

"Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the faults I see;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me."

We should not grow selfish in our study of the failings of our brothers and sisters. May we always remember that charity, that love and kindness which is the highest duty we owe to our friends, and may our first motive be to help those who are striving as we are, but in so doing if we condemn the action, not the actor, we are both giving and receiving health and strength.

We are often afraid of giving our friends too much credit. Why need we fear? Not only will they be encouraged by our praise, but we will be the happier for having given it. Goethe was right in saying, "Who is the happiest of men? He who values the merits of others."

Yes, let us make a study of the faults of others. How very uncharitable such a proposition sounds. Yet may we ever be mindful of the only kind way and the only helpful way to pursue such a study. It is not easy. Did you ever stop to think how seldom you think of a human weakness without immediately connecting with it some person? This would not be were the habit of condemning the action alone, acquired.

Then, after we have, by this process of observing the actions of those about us, become familiar with faults in the abstract, how shall we treat them with reference to ourselves. First let us admit their presence. This phase of the question is certainly much hackneyed, yet it is none the less important.

Carlyle says, "The greatest fault, I should say, is to be conscious of none." We wonder how it is possible for anyone to be guilty of this, the greatest mistake of all. It does indeed seem improbable that any thoughtful person could be serenely unconscious of any imperfection. To me it seems a far more common blunder to look in the wrong place for our faults, or else in the right place for the wrong faults, often because our own vices are so ordinary we scorn them. It is sometimes very hard to own the presence of faults, but having allowed it, shall we proceed to treat them as we did those of our friends? No, we must recognize them, not simply as shortcomings, but as a part of our character, and to be dealt with accordingly.

We cannot cover up our sins from the sight of others, then why try to hide them from ourselves. This is a grave mistake and often made. By refusing

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to recognize a fault is not necessarily meant concealment by deception,
"For he who does one fault at first
And lies to hide it, makes it two."

Sometimes it is possible to convince even ourselves that there is no fault. This is a comforting frame of mind to be in, but does it help us much in making the wrong right?

Ben Jonson puts it bluntly but plainly: "Bad men excuse their faults. Good men leave them." We must admit that we often excuse our faults or bad habits simply because we do not wish to abandon them, for, as soon as we cease to apologize for our mistakes, we come into a relation with them which enables us to judge them impartially.

A less noble motive for owning our short-comings is that we make the first blunder much more noticeable by trying to smooth it over. Again let us listen to Shakespeare:

"Patches upon a little breach
Discredit more in hiding for the fault
Than did the fault before."

The world is full of faults, we are confronted by them on every side, can we not convert them into means of strength? We certainly can lessen their harm by carefully taking the first two steps toward cleaning them up. First, let us be kind hearted enough to observe the faults in another and not criticize that one as a faulty person, thus we become familiar with what we are to search for in our own hearts; second, let us, after we have discovered our weakness, seek not to hide it, but let us bravely own it and we will find that the hardest step has been taken toward that goal of perfection we are all striving to reach.

Col. J. G. Wooley, in his speech at the Neal Dow banquet in Boston, quotes the following address of the Presiding Officer of the Ohio Liquor League, at its annual meeting:

"The success of our business is dependent largely upon the creation of appetite for drink.

Men who drink liquor, like others, will die, and if there is no new appetite created our counters will be empty, as will be our coffers. Our children will go hungry, or we must change our business to some other more remunerative.

The open field for the creation of this appetite is among the boys. After men have grown and their habits are formed, they rarely ever change in this regard. It will be needful, therefore, that missionary work be done among the boys, and I make the suggestion, gentlemen, that nickles expended in treats to the boys now will return in dollars to your tills after the appetite has been formed. Above all things, create appetite."

The Michigan Central will, on December 27 and 28, sell tickets to Lansing at a rate of one fare for the round trip on account of the State Teachers' Association Annual meeting. Limited to return until December 31, inclusive.

G. W. FRANCH, Agent.

