

tent even of what is usually called style. His tales are unpleasant to read, taking "pleasant" in its usual sense as "congruous with curates and croquet." But even to really adult minds, the style seems too severely simple not to be shocking. The strokes are too swift and sharp for the ease of the reader. One is constantly jerked into alertness; it is like being shelled. Other writers smooth down all this bold brushwork, glaze it with bitumen and varnish it heavily. But, if I must choose, let me gaze on rugged Truth till the film of my tears soften down my vision to Beauty, rather than on adorned Beauty till my critical eye dig out Truth from the rouge and the frou-frou. A living Courbet is better than a dead Lawrence. Harris, in his stories, reminds me much of Courbet and Manet; there is the same vitality and passion, bold brutality and tender delicacy allied to increase each other's value, the impatient lust of creation manifest in the heroic, even gigantic, mould of the design, and then the lingering caresses of the accessory details.

"The Bomb" is a miracle of realism in the true sense of the word; it is not the factitious realism which piles Pelion of "characteristic incident" on Ossa of "local color"; the story is told just as the supposed teller would have actually told it. He emphasized the things which would seem important to him, not those which a Model Author would judge important to the story. Most writers cannot be scholars without being pedants, and make the imaginary narrator absurd by using him as the phonograph for their own records. In "The Bomb," the hero is limited in exactly the natural way; and the book is not theatricalized by one single tawdry "showman's trick," such as we find in nearly all studies of character.

This brings us to consider the Biography of Wilde, written in the light of after knowledge, and with the aid of a host of documents. It was written, moreover, in perspective.

I consider this book unequalled in all the ant-heap of biographies.

They are, nigh all of them, such welter of patient pyramid-work. But the cry is not "bricks without straw"; it is "straw without bricks"! They print a man's washing bills and suppress his love-letters, give an inventory of his bed-room furniture, and omit to describe his dining-room, because he was too refined to eat! At best, they pile up details, and miss the main design. I could never read one through, not even Frederick the Great or Boswell.

Boswell makes Johnson live, no doubt; but it is

the life of a demi-god, as faulty as any other Hagiography. Harris has the art of setting Wilde solidly down at one's fireside; every phrase is vital and necessary. There is nothing incredible in even the most startling incidents. The book rings true as books of "fact" do not; rare are they that do. Does one for obvious instance find the substance of truth in the "plain facts" of a newspaper report?

It is to me the most fascinating of the works even of Harris. The fact is the supreme test of his art; for surely no subject would be more difficult. Anybody who is not an idiot or a college professor can produce something tolerable on Shakespeare. One can always drown discords of thought in dithyrambs of fulsomeness. Problems can be pigeon-holed, and posters of pompous platitude pasted over them. One can always fold one's paws on one's paunch after lunch, and yawn to one's stenographer to look up some nice passages and quote them during one's nap. Quite a lot of people can shovel together a presentable snow-man "historical novel"; the history part saves the trouble of invention, and the novel part excuses mistakes in history. Short stories are the devil, even to write what looks like one across a fair-sized river; but at least one is free to write what pleases oneself.

But to make dry bones live, to reconstruct Hercules from his footprints—*hoc opus, hic labor est!*

The sword of Truth must be beaten from cold steel of facts, and damascened with the gold of Love, and tempered in the water of Life, and ground on the whirled wheel of style, and hilted with that Cross by virtue of which the author, his subject and his reader are known for One in Three and Three in One. This is the Cross of our essential manhood, the symbol of our divine prerogative to suffer and die. For by that shedding of blood alone is there remission of sin, the sin of accepting the Knowledge of Good and Evil. For by that sacrament alone do we guard life and sanctify it; by that death only do we learn to live.

This Book has done all this; it is a treasure and a wonder, a mighty and majestic monument not only to Oscar Wilde, but to the loyal friend whom he acknowledged in his dedication of "An Ideal Husband" in these words:

"To Frank Harris,

"A slight tribute to his power and distinction as an artist, his chivalry and nobility as a friend."

I revise this essay after a second year in Cefalù, a year of savage solitude, anxiety, and weariness of soul. The effect has been to set Frank Harris higher than ever in my estimation. Today I can