

This is one of my reasons for regarding Frank Harris as among the greatest. He has never "shown off" with a set piece. The characters in his stories are never introduced for effect. Each one, however slightly sketched, is thoroughly understood, and presented with severe strong strokes. There is no waste, there is no attempt to cover up weak draughtsmanship, to conceal incapacity, or to compensate for lack of beauty by meretricious prettiness.

In the great majority of the stories of Frank Harris, however, there is no more yielding to the temptation to idealize or generalize than there is in a portrait by Holbein or Manet. It would be impossible to examine all these men and women. It may be said at once that these imaginary people possess precisely the same quality as the subjects of the Contemporary Portraits. They are real. They refuse to compromise with the exigencies of the artist. It is hard to think of any other writer who shows equal integrity. This is realism in the only right sense of the word. Robert Louis Stevenson, Wilkie Collins, Joseph Conrad and a few others occasionally reach this summit, but even they, too, often fail to be faithful.

The First Series of Contemporary Portraits is enthralling. The level of skill and interest is astonishingly well maintained. I am particularly struck with the judicial method. The arguments which assess the sitter's value to the world are imperceptibly adduced first on one side and then on the other. It is a very striking process of subtle adjustment.

The study of Ernest Dowson in the second series is one of the most beautiful things in the language. It is admirably just; nobly enthusiastic; a worthy temple to a worthy god. Dowson is not mighty among the mighty, but he is pure and brilliant with an intensity to which history finds no parallel. Harris's appreciation is consummate. The scene at the Café Royal is one of the most lyric and tragic episodes ever written; the God discovering a brother God disguised and wounded, an insignificant, weak, stammering God; a God with the grip of death on his throat and the poisoned glass dagger of love broken off in his heart. And the great God cries through his tears for the fate of his little brother: "But you have gone higher and deeper than any of us!"

This sketch, were it the only document extant, would not only put Dowson in his place in the Pantheon, the bruised reed of life, the smoking flax of love, the Adonis of Bion's Lament, not wooed

by Venus but spurned by a slut; it would also put Harris himself with the immortals, a God who could love greatly, pity passionately, adore lyrically, and, understanding the terrific tragedy of tears, could look clear-eyed upon the Universe; and, with the blood and water of his wound, stain hyacinths with purple poems.

I started this paper with the idea of reviewing the Second Series of "Contemporary Portraits"; I meant to make it the happiness of an hour, a dip in the surf! The undertow of my enthusiasm has swept me far out to sea. Judge, then, Frank Harris by his power to stir the soul.

#### SONNET

Beyond the utmost boundary of pain

He lies asleep where sleeping has no end

Nor hears the murmuring of trees that bend

Beneath the slanting arrows of the rain,

For in the silent chambers of his brain

Where God's own light and darkness ever blend

Forgetfulness leans o'er him like a friend

And all the world goes riotous in vain.

Now all desire is garnered in a dream

Of empty days and futile pageantry,

With songs of pain and make believe of mirth

Whose swift allure is but a passing gleam—

And yet I think he turns awhile to see

The Spring with spangled feet pass through  
the earth.

J. SUTTON-PATERSON.



W. H. HUDSON