

meaning of the words when they speak their own tongue. When one learns a foreign language, at first it is an affair of bare symbols, to be sure, but with increasing knowledge comes increasing significance. To learn an artificial language is to learn bare symbols only."

Mr. J. Pollen, president of the British Esperanto Association, answers Mr. Street's objection to an "artificial" language with the assertion that "he might as well argue that men and women ought not to wear clothes, and that every triumph of man over nature is an abomination." Esperanto, he adds, "will make the learning of foreign languages more easy; . . . it will do for Europe what Hindustani, a language made in much the same way, has done and is doing for India."

#### HOLMES THE "AMERICAN STERNE."

THE keynote of an estimate of the personality of Oliver Wendell Holmes, contained in a volume called "Cambridge Sketches," by Frank Preston Stearns, is given in the phrase which names him "the American Sterne;" for like his prototype, who found a vehicle for his wit in the oddities and mishaps of English middle-class domestic life, the American is shown to have sought his "in the contrasts and incongruities of a Boston boarding-house." By way of general estimate the writer says:

"He was a bright man, and possessed a peculiar mental quality of his own; but as we think of him now we can hardly call him a genius. He would evidently have liked in his youth to have made a profession of literature; but his verse lacked the charm and universality which made Longfellow popular so readily; nor did he possess the daring spirit of innovation with which Emerson startled and convinced his contemporaries. He first tried the law, and as that did not suit his taste he fell into medicine, but evidently without any natural bent or inclination for the profession. He was fond of the university, and when, after a temporary professorship at Dartmouth he was appointed lecturer on anatomy at the Harvard Medical School, his friends realized that he had found his right position."

Dr. Holmes's lecturing manner is described as "incisive and sometimes pungent, like his conversation, but always good-humored and well calculated to make an impression even on the most lymphatic temperaments." His ready fund of wit was often drawn upon to revive the drooping spirits of his audience, "and many of his jests have become a kind of legendary lore at the medical school." His literary sponsor, it appears, was James Russell Lowell, and his entrance into the field where he is widest known was accomplished in the following manner:

"The doctor was forty-eight when *The Atlantic Monthly* appeared before the public, and according to his own confession he had long since given up hope of a literary life. We hardly know another instance like it; but so much the better for him. He had no immature efforts of early life to regret; and when the cask was once tapped, the old wine came forth with a fine bouquet. When Phillips and Sampson consulted Lowell in regard to the editorship of the *Atlantic*, he said at once, 'We must get something from Oliver Wendell Holmes.' He was Lowell's great discovery, and proved to be his best card—a clear, shining light, and not an *ignis fatuus*.

"When the 'Autocrat of the Breakfast-table' first appeared, few were in the secret of its authorship, and everybody asked, Who is this new luminary? It was exactly what the more intelligent public wanted, and Holmes jumped at once into the position in literature which he has held ever since. Readers were delighted with his wit, surprised at his originality, and impressed by his proverbial wisdom. It was the advent of a sound, healthy intelligence, not unlike that of President Lincoln, which could deal with commonplace subjects in a significant and characteristic manner. The landlady's daughter, the schoolmistress, little Boston, and the young man called John are as real and tangible as the *dramatis personæ* in one of Molière's plays. They seem more real to us than many of the distinguished men and women whom we read of in the newspapers. . . .

"The Autocrat of the Breakfast-table' is an irregular panorama of human life without either a definite beginning or end—un-

less the autocrat's offering himself to the schoolmistress (an incident which only took place on paper) can be considered so; but it is by no means a patchwork. He talks of horse-racing, the Millerites, elm-trees, Dr. Johnson, the composition of poetry, and much else; but these subjects are introduced and treated with an adroitness that amounts to consummate art. He is always at the boarding-house, and if his remarks sometimes shoot over the heads of his auditors, it is only because he intends that they should. The first ten or fifteen pages of the 'Autocrat' are written in such a cold, formal, and pedantic manner that the wonder is that Lowell should have published it. After that the style suddenly changes and the doctor becomes himself. It is like a conventional call which ends in a sympathetic conversation. Dr. Holmes's humor permeates every sentence that he wrote. Even in his most serious moods we meet with it in a peculiar phrase or the use of some exceptional word. Now and then his wit is very brilliant, lighting up its surroundings like the sudden appearance of a meteor."

The common view of the Cambridge school as a solidarity whose parts are cemented by the ties of personal friendship is not borne out by the account given of Dr. Holmes in his social relations. He lived, says the essayist, amid a comparatively narrow circle of friends and acquaintances. He attended the Saturday Club, but Lowell appears to have been the only member of it with whom he was on confidential terms. He was rarely seen or heard of in Longfellow's house. "He does not speak overmuch of Emerson in his letters, and does not mention Hawthorne, Thoreau, or Alcott, so far as we know, at all. They do not appear to have attracted his attention."

#### WAGNER'S IDEA OF ART.

RICHARD WAGNER is unique among men of genius, says Mr. Arthur Symons, inasmuch as in him "the musician, the poet, the playwright, the thinker, the administrator, all worked to a single end, built up a single structure." May we not admit, suggests Mr. Symons, that the typical art of the nineteenth century, the art for which it is most likely to be remembered, has been the art, musical and dramatic, of Richard Wagner? In *The Quarterly Review* (London) Mr. Symons reviews Wagner's theoretical writings, of which the main value, we are told, lies in the fact that they are "wholly the personal expression of an artist engaged in creative work, finding out theories by the way, as he comes upon obstacles or aids in the nature of things." It may be contended, says Mr. Symons, that only this kind of criticism, the criticism of a creative artist, is of any real value. In Wagner's "A Communication to My Friends," which is described as "an autobiography of ideas," we see the growth of a great artist, says the English critic, more clearly perhaps than we see it in any similar document. We read further:

"Wagner looked upon genius as an immense receptivity, a receptivity so immense that it filled and overflowed the being, thus forcing upon it the need to create. And he distinguished between the two kinds of artist, feminine and masculine; the feminine who absorbs only art, and the masculine who absorbs life itself, and from life derives the new material which he will turn into a new and living art. He shows us, in his own work, the gradual way in which imitation passed into production, the unconscious molding of the stuff of his art from within, as one need after another arose, the way in which every innovation in form came from a single cause: the necessity 'to convey to others as vividly and intelligibly as possible what his own mind's eye had seen.' . . . Nothing ever happens to him in vain; nothing that touches him goes by without his seizing it; he seizes nothing from which he does not wring out its secret, its secret for him. Thus his work and all his practical energies grow alike out of the very soil and substance of his life; thus they are vital, and promise continuance of vitality, as few other works and deeds of art in our time can be said to do."

Wagner's fundamental artistic ideas, says Mr. Symons, are formulated in two of the earliest of his prose writings, "The Art-work of the Future" (1849) and "Opera and Drama" (1851). Summarizing these ideas, Mr. Symons writes:

"In 'The Art-work of the Future' Wagner defines art as 'an

immediate vital act,' the expression of man, as man is the expression of nature. . . . 'Art is an inbred craving of the natural, genuine, and uncorrupted man,' not an artificial product, and not a product of mind only, which produces science, but of that deeper impulse which is unconscious. . . .

"In his consideration of art Wagner sets down two broad divisions: art as derived directly from man, and art as shaped by man from the stuff of nature. In the first division he sets dance (or motion), tone, and poetry, in which man is himself the subject and agent of his own artistic treatment; in the second, architecture, sculpture, and painting, in which man 'extends the longing for artistic portrayal to the objects of surrounding, allied, ministering nature.'

"The ground of all human art is bodily motion. Into bodily motion comes rhythm, which is 'the mind of dance and the skeleton of tone.' Tone is 'the heart of man, through which dance and poetry are brought to mutual understanding.' This organic being is 'clothed upon with the flesh of the word.' Thus, in the purely human arts, we rise from bodily motion to poetry, to which man adds himself as singer and actor; and we have at once the lyric art-work out of which comes the perfected form of lyric, drama. This, as he conceives it, is to arise when 'the pride of all three arts in their own self-sufficiency shall break to pieces and pass over into love for one another.' . . .

"Where we see tragedy supreme in Shakespeare and music supreme in Beethoven we see two great halves of one universal whole. It remains for the art of the future to combine these two halves in one; and, in the process of joining, all the other arts will find their place, as they help toward the one result."

Mr. Symonds concludes:

"Whether or no the 'art-work of the future' is to be on the lines which Wagner laid down; whether Beethoven may not satisfy the musical sense more completely on one side, and Shakespeare the dramatic sense on the other; whether, in any case, more has been demonstrated than that in Germany, the soil of music and the only soil in which drama has never taken root, music is required to give dramatic poetry life—all this matters little. A man with a genius for many arts has brought those arts, in his own work, more intimately into union than they have ever before been brought; and he has delighted the world with this combination of arts as few men of special genius have ever done with the representation of their work in special arts."

#### AFTER IMPRESSIONISM, WHAT?

"WE are on the morrow of something in art; are we likewise on the eve of something?" Charles Morice, with this sentence, opens in the *Mercure de France* an inquiry into the actual tendencies of the plastic arts. He reviews the present art situation, particularly in painting, points out the prevailing confusion of *genres* and virtual disappearance of schools, and essays to ascertain what ideals and ideas are influencing the work of the younger artists of the day. He has obtained interesting expressions of opinion from a considerable number of such artists, having put to them in an identical letter the following questions, among others of a more technical nature:

1. Do you feel that to-day art tends to take new directions?
2. Is impressionism dead? If so, is it possible to revive it?
3. What is the significance of Whistler, Fantin-Latour, and their coworkers? What have they left us?
4. Should the artist expect everything of nature, or should he demand of her only the means of giving form and expression to the ideas in his own mind? In his own introduction to the "symposium" Mr. Morice indicates the need of an examination and inquiry such as he has undertaken (it is not yet concluded) in the following passages, which we translate in condensed and free style:

It is manifest that in the present period the plastic arts hesitate between recollections and desires, the former weighing heavily on the latter and hindering them in their flights. There results a deep disorder, which for some time the annual expositions have plainly avowed.

The primitive masters and those of the decadence have met in a transition epoch and, as it were, walk side by side with the masters

of the age of Pericles, those of the Renaissance, those of the age of Louis XIV., and so on. All the ages seem to claim ours as a neighbor. And it is not merely the intimacy between innocence and corruption that is characteristic of our time; it is also the existence of corruption in innocence. The same soul is shared by conflicting tendencies, and lives sadly, producing fruitlessly, in this unstable equilibrium.

Mr. Morice goes on to say that in the past every artistic "revolution" was in reality a return to first principles of truth and beauty. The impressionists alone repudiated the past and claimed to have advanced, "evolved," and discovered new principles of artistic representation. Indeed, the bolder spirits have advised the closing of the museums, because of the alleged futility and worthlessness of the older art. But impressionism is already a thing of the past, and instead of revolt there is aimless anarchy. Each artist is a law unto himself; he has his own philosophy, his own method, his own dogma.

Nevertheless, is not this chaos a sign of life? Is not the absence of rigidity and routine favorable to the emergence of a new artistic order based on freedom, spontaneity, and progress? Is not art on the eve of positive, significant developments? Mr. Morice does not answer these questions in his preliminary observations. He gives first the views of the artists who have responded to his request. Some of these replies follow:

GASTON PRUNIER: "Art in our individualistic epoch turns in vicious circles and eludes all classification, baffles all prevision. Return to intimate sincerity, to the realization of the whole personality of the artist, is absolutely necessary. Weary of feats of technical virtuosity, we must go forward toward an art of human expression, of synthetic emotion. Such an art will succeed analytical impressionism, which follows a method that has no future in art. Whistler created rare harmonies and left followers whose preciosity will excite interest so long as the general principles of the system are not discredited. But there is no room for neo-impressionism, and no sense in going over the same ground again. The time is ripe for a synthetic art. Personally, I should like to arrive at intimate communion with nature, borrow her characteristic expressions, get impressions from her, in order to realize some day whatever of humanity there may be in me."

CHARLES CAMOIN: "Art, I believe, evolves constantly; it renews and revivifies itself through the diversity of temperaments. In a general way, it seems to me that the task of our generation is to complete the work begun by the impressionists. Impressionism is not dead; it was a renaissance and can not be done with, and those who are to appear will not be able to ignore it. . . . Yes, I expect everything from a study of nature."

M. E. SCHUFFENECKER: "In my view, the nineteenth century had no art; it merely had artists. I do not now see any new art except in Anglo-Saxondom. The art of this strong and self-conscious race bids fair to have interest and a future. Impression does not need to renew itself, but to complete its work. It is the logical, beautiful, wise way. . . . The artist should expect things of himself alone, of the inner flame kindled by nature. Nature, in truth, is the necessary frame, in which the artist moves, rises, and descends, has his moments of exaltation and quietude, receives and exhausts inspiration. But the whole principle of his art is in himself."

RENÉ PIOT: "No, there is no general movement; there are only anarchy and passionate individual strivings and searchings. Should a movement arise, it will not escape the law of succession, of evolution. It will be a reaction from preexisting forms, but an offspring of them at the same time. . . . It is difficult to define impressionism, there being so many shades of it, but the keen sense of life and the rejuvenation of technique we owe that movement will always remain, enriching art as romanticism has literature. Nature? All our troubles result from oscillations between nature and personality, between passive receptivity and emotional activity. Our perfect esthetic will be formed when harmony between these two forces shall have been achieved. The great quality is sincerity—not mere photographic copying of nature, that some mistake for 'sincerity,' but in the sense of personal elevation and exaltation in the presence of nature, communion with her, and capacity to receive and interpret her revelations."—*Translations made for THE LITERARY DIGEST.*