



## NOTES



## Taste

According to Addison, taste is that faculty of the soul which enables us to discern the beauties of an author with pleasure and his imperfections with dislike. That is the substance of his definition, but as at least a score of years have passed since we read it last we are not going to guarantee that we are word-perfect and we hereby welcome any critic who in his superior knowledge comes to trip us up on it. Taste like an eye for color or an ear for music is a thing that seems to be born in a person: *Poeta nascitur non fit*. There are some people to whom the sound of the syllables in a verse means nothing, who think that rhyming syllables at the end is all that goes to make poetry, whose ears are deaf to internal discords in lines, who would read Irish poetry as jiltingly as they would read a stanza of "The Isles of Greece." If you are able to read Irish poetry properly, if you can feel how and why it ought to be read differently from English verse you have some taste: there is no doubt about that. If, also, you would rather read a sonnet of Shakspeare's than a ballad by Kipling there is much hope for you. Hope increases if you would rather have one old lyric lilt from Burns or Heine than all the jingling limelight sing-me-to-sleep stuff of modern drawing rooms. For a last test come down to plain prose. Do you read Robert Chambers and Charles Garvice and Katharine Tynan, or do you take kindly to Henry Harland and John Maschfield and Joseph Conrad? If you were told to select three books from a half dozen containing a novel by each which way would your choice lie? For know with certainty that if the former attract your hand you are a Philistine and there is no remotest shadow of hope for you, whereas if you take to your heart the latter you are one of the elect. Practically, we would say that if we found some of Conrad's novels among a man's shelves we would decide at once that he knew the difference between the chaff and the wheat. Indeed we make bold enough to say that a love of Conrad is as good a working test as one could invent. *Lord Jim*, *Typhoon*, *Romance*, *The Arrow of Gold*, and best of all, the *Rescue*, are the pure gold of modern fiction. There is no finer writing in a description of one of Conrad's seascapes but the man is an artist and his knowledge and sincerity and power all go to the making of a picture which is a real work, of art, as real as Millet's *Angelus* or a Lorraine landscape. On a less scale the same thing is true of Maschfield. He has the sincerity but not the genius and power of Conrad. Harland too is an artist and his books are well worth while. If we come down a step and apply the same thing to journalism we shall find no fireworks about the best craftsmen, such as Massingham, Belloc, Gardiner, and the late Arthur Griffith who had few equals and hardly any master in his profession. Turn from them to the catch-penny papers, such as the *Daily Mail*, or one of "T.P.'s" numerous brood, and you

will find all the tricks of the trade employed to attract the reader but none of the good, sound, honest writing of the other men. Men such as the first three we mentioned are almost free from what is called journalese—that abominable jargon which has come to be regarded as good English throughout the Colonies as well as in Whitechapel and Poplar. An article by Gardiner in the *Daily News*, or a leader by Griffith in *Nationality* always told you that here was a sincere, educated, thinking, honest man who was bent on telling you what he believed; but in most of the dailies we find that a farrago of words fails to conceal the fact that behind it is a man who is writing things he is paid to write without heeding in the least whether he is telling the truth or being a common liar. Taste is even more infallible than common sense in detecting such spurious stuff. Lastly, remember that when Lord Dunsany was asked how he learned to write English, he replied that his mother made him read the Bible and kept him away from the dailies!

## A Test

Here is a test by which you may judge of the culture your English reading has given you. In Ronald Knox's latest book, a game of "ghosts" is started. A lady or gentleman comes into the room, clad in a white sheet. A question is asked, and the "ghost" replies in the style of the literary personage whose *revenant* he professes to be for the moment. To a question concerning the behavior of France in the Ruhr the reply was:

Why, sir, you must consider that there is no man but thinks himself ill-used when the Jews get him. But if a fellow should want us to abolish the debtor's prison, we should call him a scoundrel.

To the question whether ghosts were in favor of degrees for women, a second *revenant* replied:

Woman ate first of the tree of knowledge, and so doing had small thanks of her posterity. Epimetheus had been as good a man as his brother, if Pandora had not pried into his wallet, and he did teign justly, that made Psyche a woman. Wherefore, they do but degrade Learning, that would make her the handmaid of Curiosity.

When asked who was the greatest man that ever lived, the third replied:

Greatness is said not univocally but equivocally; and also not absolutely but relatively, as for instance this is a great weight but not for Hercules. But what is greatness of soul has been laid down by the philosopher. But from another direction it may be gathered that, when he described the magnanimous man, the philosopher was speaking of himself. For man is the measure of all things; and all

things are in that in which they are according to the measure of their capacity. Hence we say the greatest man was Aristotle.

Any reader of average education ought to be able to detect the impersonation in the first instance almost immediately. In the second it is not so easy, but a little reflection will bring the possibilities down to two; and a little more will enable you to eliminate one of them. So easy did the author hold it that he did not think it necessary to reveal who the characters were in these two cases.

The third case is too hard for universal application as a test. But for a considerably large class it ought to be plain enough who is represented. Readers who are at a loss in this latter instance need not be astonished; but the reader who fails to identify the first and second imitations of style may murmur sadly, with regard to his education: "Reading hath not made me a full man."

Here is a sentence framed by way of parody which might make even plainer the identity of No. 1:

When asked what he would say if he heard that a Scot had been made Regius Professor, Mr. X replied: "Sir, in order to be facetious it is not necessary to be indecent."

In our remarks we have already given a hint as to the second solution, and he that runs ought to be able to read. If the third still remains hidden, it ought to be enough to say that no student of theology or philosophy ought to have any doubts about the right answer.

The game is rather interesting, and might provide some amusement for the one evening in the week on which you are not at the pictures. The trouble is that not many people would be able to give off-hand answers in anything like the style of a famous author; and still fewer would be able to identify the person represented by the "ghost."

## DIOCESE OF DUNEDIN

Mr. D. L. Poppelwell has been elected president of the Gore Racing Club, having been a member of the club for over 30 years. During the whole of that time, he has been a member of the committee and for 15 successive years was a vice-president, while he was also president for two successive terms. The congregation of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Mosgiel, met a few evenings ago to bid farewell to Mr. John H. Walls, who is leaving on the 26th inst. by the Arawa, en route to Paris, to complete his studies. Rev. Father Collins presided, and the rector of Holy Cross College (Very Rev. Father Morkane), where Mr. Walls has been studying, was present. Several members of the congregation spoke of Mr. Walls's successful career as a student, and wished him still greater success in France. They all assured him of a hearty welcome on his return to Mosgiel—his native town. He was presented with a Mosgiel rug as a token of esteem and goodwill. Mr.

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