

his best. There was of course a failure of subtlety about which nothing could have been done and which stood between him and great writing. But his worst failure was due to careless and too rapid composition.

May I be pardoned if I shortly draw some contemporary morals from the career of Sir Hugh Walpole?

The first is the necessity of criticism—regular, honest, and fearless. Walpole didn't get enough—and what he did get was too hasty. The highbrows were bad tempered because he was too much praised; those who disliked innovation were too anxious to find a standard-bearer against the cranks and experimentalists; they praised him too indiscriminately. Walpole was always able, partly because of his temperament but also because the critics gave him the excuse, to set off praise against blame—and his careless writing, which the critics should have made him improve, went on unattended.

The second is that the popular books—the Ruth Parks and the Nevil Shutes—should not be shrugged aside unnoticed by the literary. It is important that such books should be valued at their true worth; but it is also desirable they should be criticised in terms which their readers will understand, and not in an allusive scornful manner. It is important that the bad (if popular) writer should be shown up, the shams and unrealities explained, so that the reader may feel the need of something better. Beyond this there is no need to irritate and offend the popular writer; often he cannot help being popular; he may have a natural gift for story-telling even if little else. He can be made into a better story-teller, and a better craftsman, by good advice; but subtlety may be for ever beyond him. In the world of literature this popular writer may be an important person—because he is a popular writer his opinions will be asked on many subjects, he will be commissioned to review books though he may be quite incompetent as a critic. It is important that no element of jealousy of his success enter into the comments of the critics. For the popular writer is in a position of power. His presence on a publisher's list may make it possible for that firm to publish much good but unremunerative work. But if he is persuaded that the