

must have presented some ideals to Mr. Keibel, or he could never have worked long and vigorously, as he has done, to uphold it.

Incidentally Mr. Keibel makes some interesting revelations of the relations which formerly existed between Government and the press in England. Mr. Keibel was more than half-way through his long career as a Tory publicist before journalists ceased to look to the politicians whom they supported for Government offices as rewards. These rewards were never considerable. Nothing more valuable or important than an inspectorship of factories or a consulship was ever bestowed on a journalist, although a county court judgeship was, through Beaconsfield's good offices, once offered to Mr. Keibel by Lord Chancellor Cairns. The end of the connection between Government and newspaper writers came while Mr. Keibel was still in harness. Nowadays no Government in England—Liberal or Conservative—ever dreams of bestowing Government appointments on a journalist. Journalists do not look for Government appointments any longer, because there are few appointments open to journalists which a successful newspaper editor or political editorial writer would accept. All rewards nowadays go to newspaper proprietors; and for twenty years past newspaper support of a Government has been remunerated, not by offices in the civil service, but by baronetcies or peerages. This form of reward for partisan newspaper support is now so well assured that no proprietor of a daily newspaper need stay long outside the baronetage or the peerage. This is why wealthy colliery owners and wealthy manufacturers, who know as much of journalism as they do of Greek, are found when well on in middle life carrying the financial burden of a daily newspaper. It means simply that they have accumulated sufficient wealth to found a territorial family, and that it has seemed to them that the newspaper route to a peerage was the one they could travel with ease. Both political parties reward their newspaper supporters in this way; and thus whether Liberals or Tories are in power, the peerage grows; and with every addition to the peerage, whether at the instance of a Liberal or a Tory Prime Minister, there comes, sooner or later, added strength to the Toryism of which Mr. Keibel has been for so long a newspaper exponent.

*Edward Porritt.*

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#### WRIGHT'S LIFE OF PATER<sup>1</sup>

"THE function of the æsthetic critic," says Walter Pater in the preface to *The Renaissance*, "is to distinguish, analyze, and separate from

<sup>1</sup>*The Life of Walter Pater.* By Thomas Wright. Two vols. Illustrated. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

its adjuncts the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced." In his criticism of Pater's critical method, Mr. Wright quotes the substance of this passage, representing Pater as asking himself before writing on any subject, "What is that man's or that object's real self? . . . In short, what is its Formula?" But in spite of the precept and example of his subject, Mr. Wright nowhere comes nearer to supplying us with a "formula" for Pater's peculiar excellence than to assert that he is "a painter of imaginary portraits." Obvious as this judgment is with reference to Pater's method, it is totally insufficient to characterize the substance of his contribution to literature.

But if Mr. Wright fails of producing an adequate critical formula in which we may epitomize his estimate of Pater as an artist, he has given us a number of comparisons or analogues to serve as tests of his critical acuity. Let us not dwell on his observation that Pater is "the grasshopper of English literature"; the grotesque nature of the suggestion may perhaps be set down to the account of the humorist in this biographer. Take a more sober passage, in which there is no suggestion of levity—a paragraph out of a chapter on Pater's style. Quoting the distinction of Mr. Watts-Dunton between the "two leading impulses that govern man" (broadly speaking, the romantic and the classical), he proceeds:

In what relation, we may ask, does Pater stand to the newly awakened spirit of romance? Is his work allied to the artificialities of Pope, Dryden, and Gray (for Pater is essentially a poet), or is he steeped in the fountain which is Coleridge? Well, it seems to us that Pater belongs to both schools. As a rule, he worked in the spirit of Pope; . . . his method of work was like that of Pope, only worse.

This, of the arch-Romanticist of the later nineteenth century, the man who might be called the last of the Romanticists, is at least startling. But this illuminating dictum pales beside the calm assertion that Pater was "the Alma-Tadema of English literature." And why? Because, forsooth, he loved white marble surfaces. How Mr. Wright missed calling Pater the Mark Twain of English literature, because he sometimes wrote in bed, or the Nietzsche of English literature, because he was liberally moustached, is a mystery.

Obviously, nothing of value is to be looked for in the way of criticism from a man capable of such pronouncements; these two bulky volumes mark no forward step toward a just and final evaluation of Pater's significance in literature. But this was perhaps not to be expected. Mr.

Wright is not a critic, but a professed biographer. The fact is sufficiently proclaimed in the early pages of the work, along with other matters of some interest. It is only fair to judge him on his own ground, which he has taken with evident deliberation. No one, after reading his preface, need be in doubt as to the claims he makes for his work. At the outset he puts out of court, with a wave of the hand, all earlier accounts of Pater's life. They are "crowded with the most astonishing, the most staggering errors." The chief transgressor in the eyes of Mr. Wright is, of course, Mr. A. C. Benson, the author of the monograph in the English Men of Letters Series. It would be interesting to examine in detail Mr. Benson's "principal errors of commission and omission," twelve in all; but it is not necessary to our present purpose. At least half of them are so trivial as to have no significance one way or the other. Five or six at most of the counts in Mr. Wright's indictment have interest for the student of Pater's life.

Of these perhaps the most important is the statement that Mr. Benson does not even mention five of Pater's most intimate friends, including one Richard C. Jackson, the alleged original of Marius, with whom he was on terms of intimacy for seventeen years. The omission is bountifully rectified by Mr. Wright; he devotes perhaps half of his second volume to this intimate associate, of whom Mr. Gosse, Dr. Shadwell, Dr. Bussell, and other close friends of Pater apparently never heard. It is unfortunate that this romantic story must rest, as it does, on the practically unsupported word of Jackson himself, who thus comes into Pater's life, so to speak, a dozen years after his death. Documentary evidence confirming the intimacy is singularly lacking. This lack might be set down to the fact noted by Mr. Benson, that Pater wrote very few letters; but no, cries Mr. Wright, Pater wrote "an enormous number of letters—as many as four hundred, indeed, to one friend." Yet not one word have I been able to find quoted by Mr. Wright from any letter written to Mr. Jackson. Indeed, the only letter of Pater's mentioned in the entire second volume is the one written after Jowett's death, which was published in his *Life*. In the face of Mr. Wright's positive statement this fact is either a grave reflection on his diligence as a biographer, or—but we need not press the alternative.

One further example of Mr. Benson's "errors": "Mr. Benson tells nothing," says Mr. Wright, "about the great central event of Pater's life—his connection with the St. Austin's 'Monkery,' which is something like giving an account of Wellington and leaving out the Peninsular War and Waterloo." Now, what is the true complexion of this "central event," on Mr. Wright's own showing? Somewhere about 1878,

he tells us, Pater met, through Mr. Jackson, the Rev. Father Nugée, who had established an ecclesiastical brotherhood and a chapel, St. Austin's, with a very ornate ritual. Attracted by the service, Pater occasionally attended this chapel, as he did other elaborate services, both Catholic and Anglican. This, so far as can be discovered, was the extent of his "connection" with the St. Austin's Monastery; that it should form a "central event" or "climax" in his life is a theory too silly for notice were it not a fair example of Mr. Wright's method.

The most charitable construction to be placed on this parade of absurdities is that Mr. Wright, with a childlike trust that might be touching in a less experienced biographer, has accepted the unsupported recollections of this soi-disant friend of Pater's as sufficient to establish historical truth, however at variance with probabilities or with previously recorded facts. In short, Mr. Jackson—a sufficiently unattractive figure as here presented to us, in spite of Mr. Wright's ardent eulogies—is allowed to become the author of a substantial portion of the work, expatiating unchecked on his conception of Pater's relations and Pater's obligations to himself. In the first volume Mr. Wright similarly waives his editorial prerogative in favor of a Mr. McQueen, one of Pater's schoolmates at Canterbury.

By such means Mr. Wright has assembled the material necessary to make up—with the generous assistance of the printers—two volumes of the required size. He traces with all possible minuteness the course of Pater's uneventful life, following him through his school days at the King's School in Canterbury, thence to Oxford, accompanying him on his occasional visits to the Continent, recording his removal to London and his return to Oxford. It may safely be asserted that little exploration of this kind remains to be done by a future biographer. He has gathered, too, a number of anecdotes about Pater and his friends. A few of these are of genuine interest; others would have a certain value if properly authenticated; by far the larger number are either trivial and insignificant, or totally unconnected with Pater himself. Among the seventy illustrations, which Mr. Wright assures us are "of intense interest," there are four portraits and a caricature of Pater, three of which are unfamiliar; pictures of the various places in which he lived, views of his rooms, pictures, and inkstands. There are, besides, views of the house which was *not* the one described in *The Child in the House*; of the church which Pater occasionally attended, and the chair in which he sometimes sat when he visited his friend Jackson. Of this gentleman there are portraits in various striking attitudes and costumes; views of this and that corner in this and that room of his house; reproductions

of illustrations from books which he owned; even his pet dog is immortalized in a full-page portrait.

These irrelevancies are in themselves harmless enough. Evidently Mr. Wright was bound to produce a work of the required size and apparent importance, and not finding a sufficiency of legitimate material—for Pater lived the most uneventful and secluded of lives—he took what was to be had and made the largest possible show with it. Had he been content with this, there would be no reason for taking his book seriously. But it is not so easy to pass over in good-humored tolerance his coarse attack on Mr. Benson, his gratuitous sneer at Mr. Greenslet's suggestive little study of Pater, and his vulgar laudation of his own work. "It is," he proclaims, "the kind of work (if I may without egotism say so) in which Pater himself would have gloried." It is actually, of course, the kind of work which would have disgusted Pater beyond words. "I have spared no pains to be accurate, and my investigations have obliged me to contradict flatly (though I hope courteously) much that has been written about Pater by superficial or less privileged writers." If not inaccurate, he is at least incredibly uncritical, and his courtesy, already sufficiently illustrated, is displayed in the sentence just quoted. "I have endeavored to bear in mind that the first duty of a biographer is to try to avoid hurting the feelings of any living person." It is said that the work was published in the face of a protest from the surviving members of Pater's family. "I feel for Pater a sympathy bordering on love; . . . it [the *Life*] will seem practically an additional *Marius* or *Renaissance*—that is to say in the sense of its being a new presentment of Pater's mind." So far is this from the truth that this work will seem to many the supreme example of the tactless and unsympathetic biography. It is equally distinguished for failure to penetrate the character of the man and pitiful incapacity to appreciate the excellence of his work.

*Edward Clark Marsh.*

## THE FALLACY OF TENDENCIES IN FICTION

BY FREDERIC TABER COOPER

A GOOD deal of well-intentioned foolishness has been written regarding the tendencies which from time to time certain critics are pleased to think that they have discovered in the new fiction of a particular season. It is of course as natural and as logical to watch for changes in the form and aim of the novel and to try to determine the underlying principles of such changes as in any other branch of literature. Fiction is