

NEW LITERATURE AND HOW SHE IS MADE.

Chapter III -- Literary Idols

Shaw was a fad. An idol is something else yet. Literary idols are substantial phenomena, with their shrines, rituals, priests and worshippers, and the sheckels flowing into the** coffer. An idol must have some merit: the head must be of gold, even though the feet are of clay. In this it is unlike the fad, which is only gilded clay. It is a gross exaggeration of the good which begins with an idea voiced by some kind of a writer. Mrs. Eddy and King Ben are examples of idols. The characteristics of idol-worship are, first, profound adoration, then confusion, and finally complete indifference. There are real idols and would-be idols.

Victor Hugo was a real idol. He headed the Romantic Movement in France and attained a contemporaneous fame seldom equalled. He was a great genius but he began the wrong way. The people of France went crazy over his "Lucrezia Borgia," and it caused quite a disturbance abroad as well. He next attacked the Church directly in the greatest of all his works, "The Hunchback of Notre Dame."

In "The Hunchback" the Church is represented by the cathedral, and down-trodden humanity by the dwarf. He works the whole thing up ** to a terrible climax, by having the dwarf push the priest off the top of the cathedral.

This was followed by "The Man Who Laughs." It was the story of a man who, by the formation of the muscles of his face, always presented a smiling countenance. He had been leading a life of suffering in France when it was discovered that he was a British peer, and he was taken to England to take his seat in Parliament. He made a speech in that body on the wrongs of humanity, and by keeping his hat on and his ruff up, he managed to conceal his face. He worked them up to an awful pitch when in an excited moment he took off his hat and revealed his smiling countenance and the house broke into a roar of laughter. The wrongs of humanity passed off as a great English joke.

George Bernard Shaw takes off his hat when he contends, in his three-weeks dirge, Back to Methuselah, tht God made an awful mess when he created the world and that it will take a Shaw to set it right.

Hugo, when his Romanticism and attacks on the Church began to fail, turned to Humanitarianism, and produced "Les Miserables," a book that has had as great a sale as any novel of today. It is a story that develops all the humanitarian feelings of the day, but it is unnatural and inhuman.

Exiled for a political misstep, he "ups and dies." Then the vile immorality of his private life was discovered, his shrine was abandoned and given over to the batsm and there arose from his grave, "the stench of a body going to ashes and a soul decayed."

Zola was a would-be idol. As Hugo described the "most beautiful," Zola dramatized carbuncles, spontaneous combustion, anemia, etc. Zola, luckily did not succeed; and his death was as horrible as the ones he described so minutely in his books.

(To be continued)