

Chapter XVII -- Three Great Novels.

The trilogy of Sienkiewicz is his masterpiece: With Fire and Sword, The Deluge and Pan Michael. They are the stories of the struggle by which Poland saved the Triple Alliance, and they show the black ingratitude of the three powers which was her reward. (IN this lecture, delivered fifteen years ago, Fr. Smith ventured the prediction that Poland would be the destruction of the three powers in question. He lived to see the prophecy fulfilled.)

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The theme of the first novel is love and sacrifice to duty. It is powerful, and, like his others, is replete with stirring incidents, fearful descriptions, etc. In fact, it is titanic. The theme of the second is love ruined by meanness and dissipation and returned by sacrifice. The love depicted by Dumas, in comparison with that of Sienkiewicz, is like the love of pigs. The theme of Pan Michael is love triumphant in death. Here the author has done what few authors have ever attempted, and has succeeded marvelously. The last scene is the funeral of the hero, and yet it is so admirably done that one feels better for having it so, and sees that it is the only possible end. It is one of the most powerful scenes that could be imagined.

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Romanticism and realism each had their day, and then both merged. Sienkiewicz merged the two, and his only fault was too much realism. He has been charged with indecency in Quo Vadis, but his object was to expose the neopaganism of today by showing what the real paganism was.

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His success was wonderful. He wrote as a Catholic Pole, yet he was able to overcome the hostility of the critics and the inertia of the publishers. -- His books have been published in all the European languages, and have sold in the hundreds of thousands. The right kind of Catholic literature pays.

From the Survey.

I.

A Sorin Hall student objects to the coarse language of the Bulletin, and takes specific exception to the use of the word "vomit." In spite of St. John's sanction of the word it was not used in public until after Sorin Hall students vomited in public -- after unwise libations.

II.

Law IV. writes: "I don't doubt the sincerity of many of our Notre Dame men who swell the daily Communion graphs here. I know many fellows who lead lives at college not nearly so clean morally as my own.....who are ostensibly pillars of the Church, etc..."

My dear boy: The Pharisee in the parable did not go so far as to want the Publican kept out of Church. Your frenzy has carried you beyond what Our Lord considered depravity in judging others.

What a pity your fine talents have been wasted these four years. Your case stands out in bold relief: this sketch will fill in details you omitted.