

position ; and his opportunities for observing and experiencing life in many phases are far greater, more varied and untrammelled. Instead of being saddled with a conventional, artificial identity at the start—a superficial but fixed identity which may be entirely out of keeping with his real identity, yet is the one by which the hasty but dull world insists upon knowing and trying to judge him—he is able to form and establish and compel the world to recognise his own genuine identity as a mind and a soul. It is therefore doubly and trebly to the credit of an author when he or she produces fine and vital artistic work in spite of rich and beautiful yet conventional barriers with which circumstances have surrounded him or her.

Mrs. Katrina Trask is a woman of wealth and of high social position, but she has steadily, for a number of years now, devoted the highest and most intellectual portion of her powers to the production of strong and ennobling literature, in the form of poems and stories. These productions have become well known and have made a deep impression through their appearance in the best magazines and in book form. Her three idylls of the post-Arthurian period, entirely original and not in the least imitative of Tennyson or of any one else, but very sincere and beautiful in her own distinctive way, gathered under the title of *Under King Constantine*, have spoken for themselves, and have been received with such emphatic approval by competent critics that, when I merely mention them, I am giving the key or the pass word of her undemonstrative yet vigorous, charming, and uplifting quality as an authoress. When one can use conscientiously and with earnestness these three adjectives as truly describing an author's work, one has the privilege of saying what it is a rare pleasure to be able to say. Mrs. Trask's short stories in the magazines draw forth the same organ-stops of harmony : they are vigorous, charming, and uplifting.

John Leighton, Jr., is her first novel, and it fully confirms and carries out these characteristics of the writer. It is very strong and very simple, and absolutely without pretence of any kind. It comes to us straight from a serene and clear-seeing mind, which has studied life at first hand, and carries the resultant messages and lessons straight to

MRS. TRASK'S "JOHN LEIGHTON, JR."*

If the book, *John Leighton, Jr.*, is like its hero it will be able to make its way in the world and make it strongly, honestly, without any professional petting or friendly flattery. And this, I think, it surely will do.

The general assumption is that the poor and struggling author finds it harder to make his way and to make an impression on the world by his work than the writer who has ample means and a recognised position in business, or the professions, or society. But the truth is quite the converse of this supposition. The poor and struggling and at first unknown author has nearly everything in his favour except money. He is quite free from all the complications and heavy responsibilities of wealth and

* *John Leighton, Jr. A Novel.* By Katrina Trask, author of "*Under King Constantine.*" New York : Harper & Bros. \$1.25.

our hearts. Leighton is a hero—a hero in the romantic sense, in that he lives, suffers, endures in the great, simple way of all great natures, however feverish and distracting their inner woe and the chafing of circumstances may be. He is a romantic hero in his sincerity, the directness of his character and his strength, and in his wholesome desire to know the truth of human life and then live that truth. Yet he is prosaic and commonplace, too, in a way; for he is not sentimental, he never for a moment imagines that he is a hero—would probably laugh at the idea that he was one—and I fancy that the author perhaps chose his not very striking name precisely with the idea of emphasising (for emphasis may often be produced by non-assertion or by a neutral tint or word) this fact that he is what we call a common man, merely a man. We are not generally alive to the truth that what we call a common or ordinary man is—when he embodies all the traits of real manhood—a very *uncommon* man. Katrina Trask, in her young John Leighton, teaches this not only to those who have never guessed it, but to those who have apprehended it and thought they “knew it all.” None of us know it or can know it all, until we see it repeatedly shown in life, or, better still, in fiction; for in fiction we get the portrait of character isolated and have time to concentrate our thoughts upon it, and really *learn*.

Leighton is the son of a narrow, Calvinistic father, who is methodical and successful, rich in the world's goods, and admirable in his way, but limited, uncharitable, harsh. The young man breaks with him utterly, or rather the old man breaks with him; and John, Jr., goes out into the world to make his own way, penniless. He makes it. He has a most interesting and wonderful experience of false love and true love and of the tests of character, and he comes out whole and pure and full of innate power and energy, to which he has not been false, although at the end he is left before us in the attitude of bearing the greatest possible sorrow and loss that could have befallen him. Yet we are made to feel that he is, even then, going forth into the world with his old bright, indomitable force, and going to be a beneficent, strong man there. To feel this, and to know John Leighton

the younger—is not this enough to lead others to read the novel?

George Parsons Lathrop.