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ACCEPTED IN CANDIDATURE  
for the MASTER OF ARTS degree

May 15th, 1914.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHARACTERISTIC.

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The Doctrine of the Characteristic.

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" ' I have broken the law. I have sworn falsely. I have lied and I must lie more. But I have done well,' said the Minister." (1) These words mark the close of a short story in a recent magazine.

The Minister is to be married to a woman who does not love him. The evening before the appointed day a homicide escaped from ~~the~~ prison, <sup>and</sup> who had been convicted under an assumed name seeks asylum in the Minister's house and from the account he gives the Minister discovers him to be the lover of his intended bride. Presently the latter enters mentions the escape and, divining that the escaped man is in the house, urges that the searchers be notified. This the Minister opposes. The fugitive overhearing the conversation comes forward, mutual identification follows and the girl gives evidence of an utter love for the outcast. Soon the searchers reach the house but the Minister saves the situation by swearing that he has not seen the hunted man. Further, he renounces all claim to the woman and he himself unites her in matrimony to his rival and puts them in a position to get away out of the State. Neglecting the excuse the murderer pleads in mitigation of his deed, we will address ourselves to the main problem raised by the conduct of the Minister—a problem which in one form or another presents itself over a great portion of the field of literature.

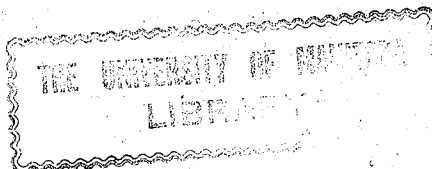
That problem in broad outline may be formulated thus: How can a story like this come within the pale of the aesthetic consciousness? Again, we might ask; How is it that we lend our sympathy to such a result? — On what basis can the Minister be justified and how does it come about that society is not dissolved through the prevalent teaching of the merits of individual action at variance with general principle and law? Such questions involve moralistic categories and hence are incidental to our inquiry which lies primarily in the field of aesthetic; if however these questions may be resolved and if their principle has a common root with the principle which determines the aesthetic question, then the aesthetic solution will be still further justified being shown to be consistent with the rationality which underlies all things and all aspects of things.

In seeking a solution for the problem how <sup>are</sup> ~~stresses~~ such as the one indicated can come within the realm of aesthetic we shall be led briefly to unfold the growth and development of the aesthetic consciousness and to penetrate to and discuss the

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(1) The trying of James Sharrow, by C.C. Andrews,

The Strand Magazine, March 1913.



(2) Kant's Kritik of Judgement, translated by J. G. Bernard  
 D.B. Trinity College, Dublin.  
 (3) Watson's Extracts from Kant, and Philosophy of Kant  
 Explained. Caird's Critical Account of the Philosophy of Kant.

Kant's problem came to him as an inheritance from this treatment of the understanding and the will. Having in the Critique of Pure Reason, (3) demonstrated that space and time are pure perceptions or forms by which the mind arranges the data of sense, Kant proceeded to show that everything which comes to the mind must come under one or both of these forms, that in the domain of understanding everything that emerges by these media and that therefore we do not know things as phenomena. Being strictly limited by its very nature and constitution to a knowledge of phenomena only the mind as understanding can never attach to the knowledge of a real

Among moderns Kant was the first philosopher to sketch a theory (2) which though in general outline only and defective in part yet constitutes the frame of true aesthetic science and liberates it explicitly, as in practice it had already been liberated implicitly, from the limitations which had been imposed upon it by ancient thinkers.

The philosophy of the beautiful is termed aesthetic. Now beauty exists in perception and except as related to perception or imagination things cannot be said to have beauty. Beauty as such for mind; the human consciousness therefore is a factor to be considered in any study of the beautiful and the development of this consciousness as a world-consciousness in relation to nature and the domain of its esthetics. The world-consciousness moves forward in great though not well defined sweeps each advance including in part and in part negating the stage from which such advance is evolved. The objective mind therefore carries with it a certain tinge of the part which forms as it were a progressively modified transcendental medium under and through which the present and all the future must be apprehended.

transcendental substrate in the ideal of the beautiful as that idea is understood by the modern world. In its proper and philosophical meaning the term transcendental gives the universal forms of pure perception, - space and time - as the medium under which all knowledge must be apprehended. In a looser but somewhat parallel sense, however, the term may be applied to that which gives to any phenomena or phenomenal group its determinant character - its enveloping medium - and without which such phenomena could not be for us that which it is. Using the term then in this latter and looser sense the purpose of this thesis is to discuss the transcendental substrate in the idea of the beautiful as that idea presents itself in the modern contrapunctuated from the ancient world.