

grand-daughters came into the office, and with her appeared Léon Daudet, and the conversation changed. But she asked me to come again, and very possibly I may do so, some time before the end of the century.

Léon Daudet told me yesterday that his father has decided to accept the Reform Club banquet in London. George Hugo is coming to London with the party, and so is Léon Daudet, who will represent his father on occasions where Alphonse Daudet cannot appear. Alphonse Daudet has asked me to come with him as his guest, but I told him that he would probably get sick of me in twenty-four hours, and there the matter rests at present. Madame Daudet, Lucien and Edmée Daudet will come too, and possibly M. de Goncourt. This will be at the beginning of May.

Maurice Barrés has given up the editorship of *La Cocarde*. I was sure that he would never be able to stick to journalism—and such journalism. He is a man altogether too refined for that sort of thing. I once asked him how he could stand the smell of a newspaper office and the noise, and the sight of the sort of people who collect round the printing-machines. He said, "I only go there with my carriage at the door." Journalism is very pleasant when one has a carriage at the door and swift horses in it. But even under such circumstances Barrés, as I was sure, has been unable to persist in it.

Victor Hugo was definitely interred in the Panthéon to-day. George Hugo would have nobody there but the members of the family and Paul Meurice,

and so I cannot describe the lugubrious ceremony of the transfer from the provisional coffin to the sarcophagus of the bones of the poet. To-night's evening papers have reports of the thing, but these need not be quoted.

Huysmans's last book seems the best thing that he has yet done. *En Route* continues the story of Dortal; the priest of *la messe noire* of whom we heard in *Là-Bas* gives us his reformation and his peregrinations *en route* for salvation. We have a picture of life in La Trappe, but what is most excellent in this book is the description of various Parisian churches—that is to say, of worship in these churches. The style is most captivating. It takes you by the throat from the very first page, and holds you till the book is finished, whether you like the story, such as it is, or not. Huysmans is a great master and a perfect artist, and we can take off our hats as he passes by.

Richepin is at work on a new novel which is very nearly finished. I met him *dans le monde* some nights back, and here too I found a very genial man. I had known him bitter, battlesome, and aggressive. And now he is mild and considerate and friendly. A wave of pardon and tolerance seems to have swept over the world of French writers, and charity and love reign in the stead of enmity. It is very pretty that this should be so. Let us hope to see it in England also, but I fear that we shall wait long for that consummation.

Robert H. Sherard.

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NEW BOOKS.

DEGENERATION.*

At last Herr Max Nordau's celebrated indictment against the human race in the latter part of the nineteenth century, after alarming (or amusing) the world in German and French, makes its appearance (very well translated by the way), in English. We deserved the attention; for we supply a by no means

* Degeneration. By Max Nordau. New York: D. Appleton & Co. \$3.50.

inconsiderable part of the material. Herr Nordau, with a refreshing patriotism which will not cause more than a silent chuckle in well-bred breasts, is indeed convinced that English Romantic literature is only a descendant of German, and even a descendant in the second generation, French, it seems, having preceded it. So that the wicked literary historians who represent Scott and Coleridge as dying about the time when the French Romantic movement

had just begun, and Shelley, Keats, and Byron as dying well before that date, must evidently have practised the most outrageous imposture. We further learn (with similar effect on our economy), that German lyric poetry has been, *uninterruptedly* since Goethe, the first in the world. But if English began late, and never did very much, it had the decency to degenerate early, and it has supplied Herr Nordau with material not quite so ample indeed as that provided by French, but much ampler than that given by German.

The book is a very amusing one; somehow or other books of lamentation and mourning and woe of this kind generally are, and the present reviewer has seldom felt greater regret at the cruel limits of space than while dealing with it. It has about six hundred pages of about five hundred words each; your indictment, it is well known, has a tendency to the verbose. And as Herr Nordau, with the conscientiousness of his countrymen, is not contented without a more or less elaborate analysis of each author who is had up for judgment, the total number of dicta which it would be interesting to discuss, or even to cite, is very large indeed. One might take Herr Nordau from so many different points of view. How interesting, for instance, to make a little sermon or treatise on his engaging definition of the healthy as opposed to the "degenerate" attitude of man to woman. The healthy attitude, it seems, is one of "desire toward her for the time being, and indifference when the state of desire is not present"—a gracious ideal of health. One might construct a sort of map of the scholarship of a person whose Hellenism admits such a word as *chimiotaia*, whose Latinism denies the existence of "decadence" in the Latin of the fourth and later centuries, and whose knowledge of his own literature (though Herr Nordau must be aware of, and indeed elsewhere quotes, a certain poem by a certain Wolfgang von Goethe, beginning *Ueber allen Gipfeln*) allows him to think that *pacem summa tenent* is a craze peculiar to Gautier and his followers.

But one must refuse these tempting paths and perhaps, in a couple of columns for English readers, it may be as well to confine ourselves mainly to the English side. There is much else. Any one who is not tired of Ibsen will find

nearly forty thousand words on that master, at whom Herr Nordau alternately shivers with admiration and gesticulates with wrath. M. Zola comes in for it near the end of the book; and Count Tolstoi near the beginning. But our own "degenerates" have no reason to complain, and we may even say that some of them have reason to be not a little obliged to Herr Nordau. He begins with Rossetti, *velut ab Iove*, and we are bound to say that this is a little unfortunate, not for Rossetti, but for Herr Nordau. At the outset (for the eighty pages or so which have gone before are nothing in such a book) of a volume of literary criticism one would like to have some earnest or hansom to assure us of the critic's taste and knowledge. Now Rossetti is, beyond all question, a poet about whom there may be considerable differences of opinion. But we think it not rash to say that any one who does not recognise poetry, and poetry of the highest, in the well-known line of the "Blessed Damozel,"

"To one, it is ten years of years,"

—who does not see in it the perfect, simple, natural, unadorned, "inevitable" expression of passionate memory—really need not trouble himself to give any further opinions on poetical matters. Now to Herr Nordau this line "means absolutely nothing," though with German faith he nobly suggests that "there may exist a higher unity to which the single year may stand as one day does to a year." "The words 'years of years' therefore would signify 365 years." "But," he adds severely, "Rossetti is far from expressing the thought as intelligibly as this." On this passage, it will generally be admitted, Herr Nordau has impressed his own image and superscription so unmistakably that it is unnecessary to seek for them any further. But let us add that if he seems to take Rossetti not quite seriously enough, he repairs this fault by taking the excellent M. Joséphin Peladan and the no less excellent Mr. Oscar Wilde, though with some sadness, yet at their fullest value. The "Sar" is to Herr Nordau, though sadly degenerate, a person of "rich and beautiful cerebral activity," some of his pages are "among the most splendid productions of a contemporary pen," his characters are "thoroughly aristo-

cratic souls ;" his " gifts are extraordinary." After this the reader who has yawned over Nebo, and wearily chuckled at Paula, will quite forgive Herr Nordau for calling Rossetti an " imbecile." It is the old case of the knight who swore by his honour and was not forsworn.

The book, of course, is not so bad as its worst parts. In some of the chapters, especially those on Wagner (we are not speaking from the musical point of view), and still more those on Nietzsche, there is distinct merit. In a dim sort of way, too, Herr Nordau has got hold of the fact, undeniable if not extremely novel or important, that when schools of art and thought, either at ends, or beginnings, or middles of centuries, have lost their first freshness and their most original exponents, they are apt to degenerate into caricatures of themselves, to try to make up for the lack of strength by the presence of violence, and so forth. But his lack of really critical power of discriminating good and bad, and the essentially Teutonic doggedness with which, having got the idea of degeneracy from his " honoured master," Signor Lombroso, he hunts it through bush and through briar, have made too much of his book a silly and tedious exaggeration, not at all ill exemplifying the very weaknesses he discusses.

Indeed, we fear that by his own showing Herr Nordau is an undoubted " degenerate." In one of his latest pages he speaks of " critics who have tried to intimidate him into speechlessness." Now the mania for suspecting critical conspiracies is as well known, as well marked, as megalomania, graphomania, erotomania, and all the rest of them. There is no help for it, we fear. *Et in degeneratione Dominus Nordau!*

George Saintsbury.

A HISTORY OF THE NOVEL.*

Professor Warren's book commences with a delicious *non sequitur*, which is hereby commended to the attention of logicians who are making a collection of awful examples :

* A History of the Novel Previous to the Seventeenth Century. By F. M. Warren. New York: Henry Holt & Company. \$1.75.

"The difficulty in gaining a hearing for a treatise on the novel is apparent at the very start."

Why so? the reader innocently asks.

"It is a branch of literature which has become the most popular in depth and breadth, including all classes of writers and readers."

This seems to mean that because every one is intensely interested in fiction, no one is willing to read anything that relates to fiction! These two sentences are, in a way, characteristic of Professor Warren's whole discussion of his subject. He has evidently done a very large amount of reading; he has got together a great mass of information (much of it, apparently, at second hand), and he recognises the interest and value of his theme; but unfortunately the reading has not been systematic, the information has not been properly digested and arranged, and no clearly defined method of treatment has been carefully thought out as a preliminary to the composition of the book.

It is not easy to conceive of a more fruitful or a more timely subject than the early history of the novel, in these days when comparative literature is taking its place in every well-balanced scheme of liberal study; nor is there any field which, for the English-speaking world at least, is at once so fallow for the well-equipped investigator and so absolutely unoccupied. Professor Warren had an opportunity such as rarely falls to the literary student in modern times, when specialists have ransacked every nook and corner in search of a new subject for original investigation. Since Dunlop's now antiquated treatise, nothing of any account has been written in our language on the history of the novel, nor have the French and German writers dealt with its development in a broad way, preferring, as a rule, to put forth monographs that relate to special points or periods rather than definitive and comprehensive works. The opportunity was, therefore, a rare one, and candour compels the judgment that the opportunity has, so far as concerns Professor Warren, been absolutely thrown away.

Not to burden this review with any but the weightiest matters of the law, the fatal defects of the present volume are two: first, a lack of perspective and relativity, which would enable the author to grasp the vitally important fea-