

# THE BOOKMAN

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## CHRONICLE AND COMMENT

That America, as well as England, owes an immense debt of gratitude to the memory of Charles Dickens and His Heirs

that it is not necessary to urge. We know of no one who will be inclined to question it. Nevertheless, we are not yet ready to plunge head over heels into the plans for a Great Dickens Memorial for the purpose of raising money to present to Dickens's heirs. That the English people should do so is quite right—the expression of any opinion on that point is almost an impertinence—and if the collateral descendants of Lord Nelson are given an annual pension of five thousand pounds, there is no reason why like generosity should not be shown to the heirs of the great humourist. But of America's obligation we are not so certain, and that is a subject upon which we have every right to speak. We recall that, in the old days of transatlantic travel, while four-fifths of the cabin passengers on English ships were American, the proceeds of the ship's concerts were turned over to associations for the benefit of British seamen. Of course, in time, this was changed, but not until certain passengers were found with force of character enough to make themselves temporarily unpopular by their insistence on a fair division between the charities of the two countries and their refusal to contribute until such a course should be followed. It is quite true that the absence of an international copyright law wrought a gross injustice to Charles Dickens. But let us not forget that it also wrought injustice, and far more painful injustice, to the American writers

of the day who were forced to compete on very unequal terms with his great genius and popularity.

Dickens, after a life in which he certainly did not stint himself, was able to leave to his heirs an estate of an approximate value of half a million of dollars, and his immediate family was by no means a large one, as large families go. The fact that some of his grandchildren to-day are engaged in earning their own livelihood, and that others are receiving small pensions from the English Government does not absolutely shock us. Nor can we confess to any strong sense of national shame that the estate of Dickens was not larger. Let us not be misunderstood on this point. That his stories were printed in this country and that he did not receive his share of the profits accruing from their sale was monstrously wrong. But it was only in proportion to his popularity that the wrong was any greater to Dickens than to his contemporaries. And if to any English writer the American people tried to make reparation for an injustice, that writer was Charles Dickens. Turn to page 434 of the second volume of the standard edition of Forster's *Life* and read of the second visit to this country—the visit of 1868—and its material results.

In New York, where there were five farewell nights, three thousand two hundred and ninety-eight dollars were the receipts of the last, on the 20th of April; those of the last at Boston, on the 8th, having been three thousand four hundred and fifty-six dollars. But, on earlier nights in the same cities respectively, these sums also had been reached; and

indeed, making allowance for an exceptional night here and there, the receipts varied so wonderfully little, that a mention of the highest average returns from other places will give no exaggerated impression of the ordinary receipts throughout. Excluding fractions of dollars, the lowest were New Bedford (\$1640), Rochester (\$1906), Springfield (\$1970), and Providence (\$2140). Albany and Worcester averaged something less than \$2400; while Hartford, Buffalo, Baltimore, Syracuse, New Haven, and Portland rose to \$2600. Washington's last night was \$2610, no night there having less than \$2500. Philadelphia exceeded Washington by \$300, and Brooklyn went ahead of Philadelphia by \$200. The amount taken at the four Brooklyn readings was 11,128 dollars.



AUGUSTA GRÖNER

Mrs. Augusta Gröner, the Austrian novelist and the author of *Joe Müller, Detective*, which has been recently adapted for American readers by Miss Grace Isabel Colbron, is a woman of means and position

who can look back on a long literary career of extraordinary fertility. She has written forty volumes, and several hundred more novels and short stories which have appeared only in magazines or newspaper supplements. Mrs. Gröner's specialties in fiction are detective stories and tales for children, certainly an odd and interesting combination. This writer, who lives either in her villa on the outskirts of Vienna or in her country home, a romantic old castle in the Alps (Burg Alt-Teuffenbach in Ober-Steiermark is its official title), enjoys her work thoroughly. She has been widely translated into other tongues, and has a large following especially in the Scandinavian countries. But she is delighted now at what is her first formal introduction to the American reading public. The detective Joseph Müller, whose doings are chronicled in this first book of hers to appear in America, is her chief creation. He is the hero of a number of her most popular novels and stories.

The late Caran d'Ashe once drew a memorable series of cartoons entitled "The Evolution of War."

#### An Incident of War

The first cartoon showed two cave men locked frantically in each other's arms. The second picture represented the enemies with shields and smallswords, feinting and parrying, separated by a space of two feet. Number three brought us to the days of the crossbow, and number four to the first use of gunpowder. The fifth cartoon showed warfare as it was practised at the time of Blenheim or Fontenoy with two or three hundred yards separating the combatants. The final picture, representing modern warfare, showed the figure of a single soldier, lying by his long range rifle, while before him there stretched miles of country. But that modern war sometimes reverts to the old conditions of personal encounter is borne out by an anecdote told by Captain Charles Gilson of the British Army, whose novel, *The Refugee*, was recently published by the Century Company. Captain Gilson saw a great deal of service in the South African War and in the action at Vlakfontein was dangerously wounded in five different places.