

chief characteristic is the setting forth of rather shrewd observations in an exceedingly simple style—a style that assumes at times an unnatural innocence. It is pleasant in these days to turn from the ringing words of the uplifter to a man who is somewhat dubious even about himself. It is a book that does not nail the lie or lay its finger on the corrupt spot in our civilisation or prod anybody on. No magazine with a circulation of four hundred thousand could afford to print a single paper in it. There is one thing in it which must be regarded as an “important contribution to the literature of the subject.” Mr. Flandrau writes of undertakers as an expert. In his essay entitled “In the Undertaker’s Shop,” he has penetrated into the subject more deeply, we believe, than almost any other writer in his lifetime. No reader of the volume ought to overlook that admirable undertaker and we urge him to turn to this essay at the very start. So rarely are really good undertakers to be found in fiction, that we must quote this bit of description:

Just here Mr. Murksom appeared, and I saw at a glance that beneath *his* spurious melancholy one might never penetrate. He had been at it for too many years. The professional manner, thick and unctuous, enveloped him. He couldn’t have abandoned it. It clung to him, I was sure, at the lightest moments of his life. Of course, it was impossible to imagine his life as having any light moments, but assuming that such a thing could be, I felt that gayety with him would vaguely approximate only the gayety of a flag at half-mast. He would have approached the back platform of a street car in precisely the same soundless, sympathetic, discreetly afflicted way in which he approached a sobbing widow.

Sir Robert Anderson, whose reminiscences have recently appeared under the title *The Lighter Side of My Official Life*, was the London police official in charge at Scotland Yard at the time of the Whitechapel murders, and he gives some new but rather tantalising information about that famous crime. Two of the murders had taken place immediately after he assumed his

office. The others occurred during his temporary absence on sick leave. He hurried home to find himself confronted with the demand of the Secretary of State that he hold himself responsible for the finding of the murderer. Meanwhile the police had made a house-to-house search investigating every man in the district whose circumstances would permit him to go and come and remove blood stains in secret. They reached the conclusion that the murderer belonged to a low class of Polish Jews, for that class of people in the East End would never give up a criminal among them to Gentile justice. This diagnosis, says Sir Robert Anderson, proved to be correct in every point, and he adds these significant words, all to the effect that he could tell if he would, and still leaving us on the edge of the mystery, though he had solved it twenty years ago:

For I may say at once that “undiscovered murders” are rare in London, and the “Jack-the-Ripper” crimes are not within that category. And if the police here had powers such as the French police possess the murderer would have been brought to justice. Scotland Yard can boast that not even the subordinate officers will tell tales out of school, and it would ill become me to violate the unwritten rule of the service. So I will only add here that the “Jack-the-Ripper” letter which is preserved in the Police Museum in Scotland Yard is the creation of an enterprising London journalist.

Having regard to the interest attaching to this case, I am almost tempted to disclose the identity of the murderer and of the pressman who wrote the letter above referred to. But no public benefit would result from such a course, and the traditions of my old department would suffer. I will merely add that the only person who had ever had a good view of the murderer unhesitatingly identified the suspect the instant he was confronted with him; but he refused to give evidence against him. In saying that he was a Polish Jew I am merely stating a definitely ascertained fact.

There is a story, which is probably authentic, told at the expense of two New York theatrical managers who are noted for their native shrewdness, and for their entire lack of literary information and perception.

W. S. Gilbert

According to the tale, late one spring these managers, who happen to be brothers, commissioned a librettist and a composer, each with an established reputation, to prepare a comic opera to be produced the following autumn. The composer and librettist accepted the commission, but having a sound knowledge of the managers, carefully refrained from throwing aside all other interests. The wisdom of this course was soon apparent, for throughout the summer the plans and policies of the managers in the matter of the projected opera underwent startling changes from day to day. "We find we can't put it on when we thought we could." "You will have to wait till So and So comes back from Europe." Finally at the last moment, the managers sent word that they were in a position to produce, if the opera was ready. "Come out to the place in New Jersey where we have been working and hear it," was the somewhat unexpected retort. So the managers went and listened while the composer played and the librettist read. Then they shook their heads in sad disapproval. "Really," they said, "this is one of your failures. The libretto is bad and the music is worse. You will have to leave out this, change that, and try to put in a lot that's worth while. However, we will produce your opera after Christmas." "Very well, then. We will get to work at once. You see we haven't done a line or a bar yet." "Why," exclaimed the managers. "What was that we just heard?" "Oh," replied the authors in sweet explanation, "that was W. S. Gilbert's *Pinafore*."

Now if the story be true, the managers were ridiculous, but ridiculous on account of ignorance rather than in their judgment of what constitutes the comic opera that will draw American audiences. Every now and then there is a revival of some Gilbert and Sullivan opera, which is usually successful because it is excellently cast and because we like to pretend an admiration for an evening or two for what delighted theatre-goers of a generation ago. But Gilbert wrote for his day and public just as Offenbach and Lecoq wrote for theirs. Take, for example, *Pinafore* and *Patience*. *Pinafore* was a

satire on the British Admiralty as it was in the seventies, and as such it won its popular success. *Patience*, in the character of Bunthorne, castigated a school which we have practically forgotten, but the eccentricities and extravagances of which George Du Maurier had made familiar to all England by his weekly pictures in *Punch*. We wish to imply no disparagement of Sir William Gilbert's invention or wit, but the fact remains that the best of his operas are now mere memories of the past, and that as a living force to-day he must be judged by *Bab Ballads* and *Savoyard Ditties*. It is not at all necessary to understand the ephemeral London humour of any certain year to enjoy the swing of:

For I'm the cook, and the captain bold and  
the mate of the Nancy brig,  
And the midshipmite, and the bo'sun tight,  
and the crew of the captain's gig.

Those lines are in the rollicking, unforgettable vein of "Il y avait un petit navire," adapted by Thackeray into "And the third he was Little Billie" or Kipling's:

For he's sort of a bloomin' Cosmopolouse  
Soldier and sailor too.

There was a time, however, when the vogue of *Pinafore* was simply amazing. It was not copyrighted and after its success in London it was pirated in the United States. This piracy was the initial cause of Gilbert's hatred of America and Americans. However, if America did not send him its dollars, it was quite ready to spread his fame. Church choirs added *Pinafore* to their repertoires, and it is recorded that one hundred thousand barrel-organs were constructed to play nothing else. Here is an ironical note from a newspaper of the time: "At present there are forty-two companies playing *Pinafore*, companies formed after six P. M. yesterday are not included." Its catch phrase, "What never? Well, hardly ever," was deadly. It is told, for instance, that one editor barred his staff from using it. "It has occurred twenty times in as many articles yesterday. Never let me see it used again." "What never?" was the unanimous question.

"Well, hardly ever," replied the wretched man.

The readiness of W. S. Gilbert's wit is well illustrated by this story told of him. He and F. C. Burnand, the editor of *Punch*, were guests at the same dinner-table, where a wise host placed the rival humourists at opposite ends of the room in the hope of distributing equally the witty table talk. Continual shouts of

In our May issue we disclaimed any knowledge of a Sherlock Holmes story entitled "The Bruce Partington Plans" and ventured the opinion that this story never appeared

**Retraction**

at all. We also said that "The Adventure of the Card Board Box," one of the earliest Sherlock Holmes stories, had never been presented to the American reading public. Since the May issue ap-



THE LATE W. S. GILBERT

laughter rose from Gilbert's corner, until Burnand, after ineffectual attempts to arouse a similar jocularly in his immediate circle and unable to conceal his chagrin, leaned forward and said in his most sarcastic manner: "I suppose Mr. Gilbert is telling some of those funny stories which he occasionally sends to *Punch* but which don't appear." To which Gilbert drily replied: "I don't know who sends the funny stories to *Punch*, but it's very true they don't appear."

peared we have been receiving letters, many of them, quite friendly as a rule, but with just a little exultant note. It seems that we were very much mistaken. "The Bruce Partington Plans" was published in *Collier's Weekly* in December, 1908, and "The Adventure of the Card Board Box" appeared in *Harper's Weekly* some time in the early nineties.

Speaking of Conan Doyle, the other day we came across an illuminating paragraph in one of his earlier books