

cess." My object, of course, was to demonstrate that it was impossible to obtain a production for such a play and thereupon to expose and utterly confound the calumniators of the American drama. I submitted copies of the play to two producers. Two days later I received offers from both of them; four days later I came to terms with one of them; and three months later *On Trial* was turning 'em away. The rest, as some one has said, is silence.



BERTA RUCK

Berta Ruck (to call her by her pen name, really she is Mrs. Oliver Onions, the wife of the well-known young English writer) has published two books in this country, *His Official Financée* of last spring, and *The Wooing of Rosamond Fayre* of this autumn. Her ambition is "to write live stories that shall be as modern as the latest pattern of a biplane wing, while at the same time as full of sentiment as the old three-volume novel." She thinks that nowadays people are too much afraid of be-

ing thought "sentimental." Berta Ruck was born in India, the daughter of a soldier, though she was taken home as a baby to England on a troopship to begin her education. Her family have always been soldier folk and so her earliest recollections have been of barracks and of red-coated soldiers on a rifle-range. And as she was brought up to cherish the ideal of Universal Military Service, doubtless in the present crisis she favours conscription. Indeed she writes that she greatly admires Kipling's suggestion in "The Army of a Dream," and feels sure that military training will give a physical and mental health to the nation. She has written a number of soldier stories that have been published in England. One boy in the Engineers wrote that he took her stories into the trenches to read, and one English review says that her stories are "the best recruiting poster yet published." In *The Wooing of Rosamond Fayre* the hero is a young English officer.

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Just a year ago this month the first of a tetralogy of novels by the Dutch author, Louis Couperus, under the title of *Small Souls*, was published in this country. Now comes the second of the series, *The Later Life*, largely a continuation of the fortunes of characters introduced in the first book. The prefatory note by the translator, Mr. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos, tells us that, "In the present story, Couperus reverts, at times and in a measure, to that earlier 'sensitivist' method which he abandoned almost wholly in *Small Souls* and which he again abandons in *The Twilight of Souls* and in *Dr. Adriaan*, the third and fourth novels of the series." Couperus himself was born at The Hague in 1863, and although he is known in Holland as one of its foremost realistic novelists, his work has hitherto not achieved any great notice in the United States. *Eline Vere*, *Extasy* and *Majesty*, all translated by Mr. de Mattos and published a number of years ago, did not seem to make a lasting impres-

sion, and it is only with the publication of *Small Souls* last year that Couperus, according to his publishers, shows signs of coming into his own. Little is known about the author himself other than the bare facts recorded above and what may be gleaned from the statements of one of his characters, Paul van Lowe, who appears in both *Small Souls* and *The Later Life* and who is supposed to serve to some extent as the author's mouth-piece.

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Although it is years since the authorship of *The Bread-Winners* has ceased to be a mystery, the story of that book as told by William Roscoe Thayer

in *The Life and Letters of John Hay* (Houghton Mifflin Company) is exceedingly vivid reading. The novel was written apparently in the winter of 1882-83, for the purpose of expressing the ideas that had been revolving in Hay's mind for several years. He sent it to Mr. Howells, who, although no longer the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, was in close relations with his successor, Thomas Bailey Aldrich. Mr. Howells read the manuscript with enthusiasm, and urged Aldrich to accept it. This Aldrich was eager to do, provided the author would let his name be published. But Hay clung to anonymity, and gave the book to Mr. Gilder of the *Century*. It ran through six instalments,—the first appearing in the magazine for August, 1883,—caught the public at once, and became the novel of the year. Although the secret of its authorship must have been shared by eight or nine persons, it was never so authoritatively divulged that curiosity ceased. Any one familiar with Cleveland could not fail to recognise that city; further reasoning might have reduced the number of Clevelandites capable of writing to one—John Hay; but he, of course, gave an evasive answer.

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The success of *The Bread-Winners* during its serial publication outran that of any previous American novel. Three

things contributed to this—the cleverness of the book, the timeliness of the subject, and the mystery as to authorship. Readers and critics alike set themselves to guessing. The literary journals devoted columns to correspondents, some of whom proved that the author must be a man, while others insisted that only a woman could understand the heart of



LOUIS COUPERUS

woman as the unknown writer had done. The name of nearly every literary worker was suggested. One woman in Madison, Wisconsin, wrote that, having "barely escaped a siege of brain fever in endeavouring to pin it on to the *guilty one* by an analytical process," she would "save others from the calamity which threatened" her by suggesting that the culprit "may be, and perhaps is, the Rev. Washington Gladden." A Western Doctor of Divinity insisted that, although he was the author, the publishers had never paid him. A New York woman made a rather astonishing pro-