

# THE STAGE

GRAND OPERA in America has just closed a banner season. Both the Italian-French and the German companies have enjoyed unexampled prosperity. The latter organization, under Walter Damrosch's direction, gave only Wagner's works, and during their five weeks' stay at the Metropolitan in February and March, Max Alvary sang *Siegfried* for the hundredth time. A coincidence lay in the fact that it was on this same stage that he made his first appearance in the rôle, November 9, 1887.

Herr Alvary's home is in Hamburg, but he has a beautiful summer residence in Thuringia, whose windows afford him a view of the Venusberg, the mountain figuring so prominently in "Tannhäuser." This house he designed himself, for he is an architect of no mean ability. The great tenor is wholly wrapped up in his domestic happiness, and enjoys above everything else the companionship of his wife and their seven children.

Frau Rosa Sucher, the prima donna



Rosa Sucher.

*From a photograph by Schaarwächter, Berlin.*



Max Alvary.

*From a photograph by Schaarwächter, Berlin.*

of the German forces, is the daughter of a musician, and was brought up in a small Saxon town. The director of the Munich Hoftheater heard her sing in a church choir, and arranged that she should have a complete education in music. Her greatest success has been won in "Tristan and Isolde." She is the *Isolde* whenever the opera is given at Bayreuth. For years she has been the principal singer at the Royal Opera in Berlin, and since the retirement of Materna she divides with Fräulein Matten, of Dresden, the rank of leading dramatic soprano of the Fatherland.

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LILLIAN NORDICA has a boundless admiration for Frau Cosima Wagner, who

personally superintends every detail of the performance of her husband's operas at Bayreuth. "The intimate knowledge," says Madame Nordica, "that she has of every note of the music, every part of the poems, every detail of the costumes, and every gesture and movement in the action, is simply astounding."

Nordica sang in Bayreuth last summer, which left her only five weeks' vacation. This was spent in Lucerne, where she had a steam launch, and went fishing every day upon the beautiful Alpine lake. She sang during this period only once, and then as an act of charity. Her permanent home is in London, where she has a handsome house in Regent Terrace.



REJANE has come, but she can scarcely be said to have conquered—at least not the audiences who had previously seen the Pitou production of “Madame Sans Gêne” as done in English at the Broadway Theater.



James K. Hackett as “de Neipperg” in “Madame Sans Gêne.”

From a photograph by Sarony, New York.

The scenery was deplorably small for the stage of Abbey's, but this was to be expected, as it was the same that had served in the original production at the Paris Vaudeville. But it was rather surprising to find the performance go off with so little snap and spirit. The *Napoleon* of M. Duquesne was distinctly inferior to Mr. Cook's impersonation, both in make up and in the reading of the lines. Decidedly feeble in the French

version, too, was *de Neipperg*, played so excellently at the Broadway by James K. Hackett.

This young actor, who is the son of the famous “Falstaff” Hackett, started in as an amateur, making a good record in plays brought out by the College of the City of New York. He is steadily advancing in the character of the work he does, and promises to be a fitting representative of the name he bears.

To return to Madame Rejane, endowed no more with the gift of beauty than is Miss Kidder, it is only in the prologue that she excels the American delineator of *Catherine* in lending a true French sparkle to the rôle. In the deportment lesson scene of the first act, Miss Kidder's work is far more free and effective.

Henry Irving, by the way, is said to be contemplating a London production of “Madame Sans Gêne” some time next year. He intends to play *Napoleon* himself, being at present engaged in collecting data to prove that the “little corporal” was really long and lank.

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“THE FATAL CARD” enjoys the distinction of being the best cast melodrama ever produced here. It is quite unlikely, however, that its success will flood the stage with “penny dreadfuls” turned into scenic form. Charles Frohman is the only manager who has at his command people able to lift such a piece above the level, on which it would remain if it had been brought out as

most such plays are—with a reliance on the “thrilling effects” alone. W. H. Thompson, who plays the leading villain, is a most accomplished actor. The difference he makes in his appearance and manner between the first act—where he is a Rocky Mountain “tough”—and the others, which present him as the gentlemanly head of a band of criminals in London, is a gap so wide as to seem scarcely capable of



Lillian Nordica.

*From a photograph by Dupont, New York.*

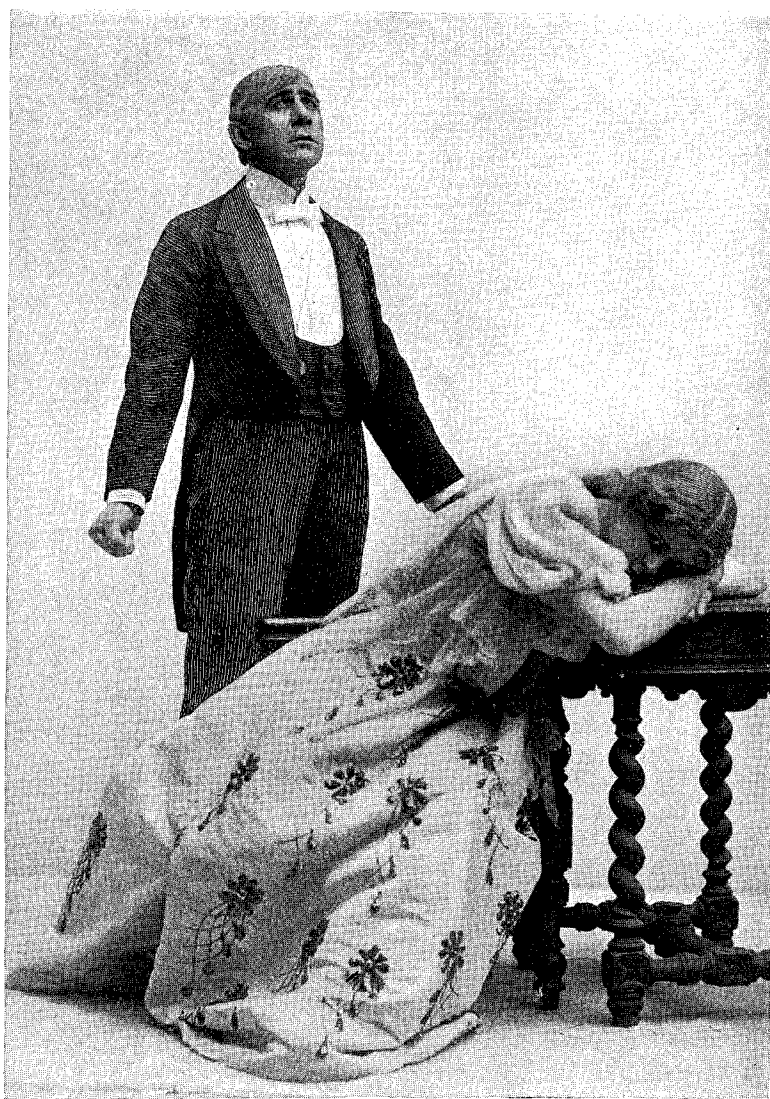
being spanned by the versatility of any one man.

Mr. Thompson is a great stickler for original thinking on the part of the player. He believes that the best work can be obtained only when the reasons for this particular bit of business, for that stress of

voice, are clearly defined in the actor's own mind. He condemns the parrot-like imitativeness of an actor who introduces his points simply because he has been taught to introduce them, or has studied the characterization entirely from a model.

"That is one great reason," Mr. Thomp-





W. H. Thompson and Amy Busby in "The Fatal Card."

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York.*

son avers, why so many actors in 'No. 2' companies fail. They are mere puppets, aping the originals without knowing why."

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THE hardest worked man in the "Fatal Card" cast is R. A. Roberts, who not only plays a part of many lines, but directs all the mechanism of the stage. It is under his personal eye that the wall falls with that tremendously effective crash in the explosion scene. This wall is built of several hundred separate blocks of wood, each heavy enough to kill a man if it struck him, and all numbered, so that they fit together like a child's

puzzle. When we are told that it requires half a day to build this up we wonder how the Saturday night performance is provided for, following so closely on the matinée, till we are informed that there are two walls, each hidden away beneath the stage and raised when required. The explosion is managed entirely by electric buttons, the pressing of one firing the cannon which supplies the noise for the bomb, while the touch of a finger to the other releases the mass of blocks and sends them clattering down.

Mr. Roberts likes to remember that he

has staged many of Charles Frohman's notable successes, including the first—"Shenandoah," half a dozen years ago, when, after comparative failure in Boston, the play was purchased by Mr. Frohman and brought to New York, where it ran for months to extraordinary profits at Proctor's.

those two occasions I had trodden those very boards as a super at sixpence a night."

We present two groups from "The Fatal Card," which reached its one hundredth metropolitan performance during the week of March 18 at the American Theater. It is to play in Chicago and San Francisco dur-



"The Fatal Card"—Reading the News of the Murder.

W. H. Thompson as "Marrable"—Amy Busby as "Margaret"—E. J. Ratcliffe as "Gerald Austen"—  
R. A. Roberts as "Harry Burgess."

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York.*

Another circumstance Mr. Roberts is fond of recalling is in connection with the Drury Lane Theater, London.

"I stood on the stage of that house last November," he says, "as the representative of Sir Augustus Harris, drawing a salary of twenty five pounds a week, which was exactly the sum I received for appearing on that same stage as an 'infant phenomenon' when I was five years old. And between

ing the spring, possibly returning for another New York run in the fall. Amy Busby and E. J. Ratcliffe do some of the best work of their careers in the last act. Not often do we find such a combination of personal attractiveness and dramatic ability as is displayed by these two young artists.

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MRS. LANGTRY has made something of a hit in comedy. "Gossip," the new play





Mrs. Langtry.

*From her latest photograph.*

written for her by Clyde Fitch and Leo Dietrichstein, and produced at Palmer's, March 11, affords the Jersey Lily an opportunity to bloom against a new background. She does this so agreeably that a foreground of crowded houses has been the gratifying result. Her voice, to be sure, issues from the roof of her mouth as persistently as ever; her clothes continue to claim—and receive—their equal share of applause, and there is the flavor of the divorce court about the play to remind one of the old repertoire. But there is a fresh

setting to it that is pleasing, and one comes away in good humor, which is the main thing, even if the piece draws heavily on the probabilities, and the star's gowns and diamonds outshine her pretensions as an actress. C. J. Richman's work is notably fine.

Mrs. Langtry was "discovered" by Frank Miles, an English artist. Millais gave her the name "Jersey Lily," on account of the delicacy and transparency of her complexion. She became the rage of London, was invited everywhere, and then, in the effort to keep up appearances in accord with





Grace Atwell.

*From a photograph by Elmer Chickering, Boston.*

their new environment, her husband's means gave out. He declared that they must economize, but this his wife refused to do.

"I will go on the stage and support myself," she said.

"If you do," Captain Langtry protested, "I will never live with you again."

And the breach thus made has never been healed.

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AUGUSTIN DALY is not a success as a theatrical Colossus of Rhodes, straddling the Atlantic. His past season in New York has been marked by a succession of failures. The five night run of "Heart of Ruby" had scarcely passed into oblivion when "Two Gentlemen of Verona" was sent into re-

tirement to keep it company. Not even Mr. Daly's happy thought of announcing, after the sixteenth performance, "the longest run on record of 'The Two Gentlemen,'" could prolong its life—a burden which had hitherto rested principally upon the shaggy shoulders of the little dog *Crab*.

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FIFTY parts in five years, studied and enacted by a girl not yet twenty two! Think of the hard work that stands for, ye young men and maidens who fancy a position behind the footlights to be a bed of roses. But Grace Atwell is ambitious to attain the heights, and realizes that these can be gained only by arduous climbing. And already she is far from the valley beneath.

A Boston girl, designed for a musical



career, she determined very early in life to become an actress. When her mother finally consented to let her prove, if she could, that her inclination was something more than a mere childish whim, Miss Atwell went to manager Field, of the Museum.

anxious to appear in classical drama, and after a season with "The Girl I Left Behind Me," the opportunity came to her. As leading woman with the Joseph Haworth company, she is winning a name for herself in "Hamlet," "Richelieu," and other plays of



Mabel Potter.

*From a photograph—Copyright, 1894, by J. Schloss, New York.*

There happened to be an opening for an understudy just then, and she secured it. A promotion to speaking parts was not long delayed, and for three seasons she remained at this celebrated training school of the stage. Then came an engagement with "Shenandoah," in which, during one season, Miss Atwell played four of the leading rôles, going on in two of them—*Gertrude Ellingham* and *Jenny Buckthorn*—without rehearsal.

But this aspiring artist has always been

an order that puts the supreme test to the actor's abilities.

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E. E. RICE is to make a new departure this summer. He contemplates establishing a company at Manhattan Beach for the presentation of light opera in the best manner. In a theater specially constructed for warm weather, including plenty of room between the seats, such an entertainment, with Mr. Rice as its sponsor, ought to pay.

His "Little Christopher," meanwhile,



Cissy Fitzgerald.

From a photograph—Copyright, 1894, by J. Schloss, New York.

now on its way to the 300th mark, is more attractive than ever since Bessie Bonehill infused fresh life and "go" into the title rôle. The *Two Little Jays from Indiana*, impersonated by the Melville sisters, have established themselves as prime favorites in the variety program. They are the daughters of an Indiana clergyman, and their depiction of the shy, gawky country girl is a study from the life to be found around their home; not *in* it, for off the stage the Misses Melville are not only attractive in looks,

but exceedingly bright and clever young women.

We give a portrait of Mabel Potter, who plays *Imogene*, one of *Captain Slammer's* daughters. She first appeared on the stage four years ago with the McCaull company in "Boccaccio" at Palmer's. Later she sang at the Casino in "The Vice Admiral."

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THE New York public is not to be congratulated on the success of "The Foundling." It appears to have won simply



through the audacity that permeates it. Cleverness of construction it has none; the first act is much better than the last. Some of the speeches and many of the innuendos are risqué in the extreme; but as it is farce comedy, and not society drama, nobody seems to be shocked. It appears to be assumed nowadays that a laugh covers a mul-

sey's," she said, in her attractive little apartment up town, "only it's hard to know what to talk about. I am afraid my 'impressions of America' would be rather stale, wouldn't they? But I like New York immensely. It is not as large as London—nothing is as large as London—but I like the people, they're so very hospitable. And



Cora Urquhart Potter.

From a photograph by Baker, Columbus.

titude of vulgarities. There are some very good actors in the cast, notably E. M. Holland; and Cissy Fitzgerald as *The Tricky Little Maybud* is a pleasing feature of the production. Her dance fits neatly into the story, and her attempts at acting are taken in the most friendly spirit by delighted audiences, who ask only to see her piroquette about the stage and smile.

Miss Fitzgerald, who has danced her way into the hearts of a large number of New Yorkers, is extremely pretty, and off the stage she talks in a bright, clever fashion that is very entertaining.

"It is a pleasure to talk to you for MUN-

your women are charming. They tell you just what they think of you, and that is just what the London women never do. About myself? Oh, I'm enjoying my part in 'The Foundling' thoroughly. It is so much better than the 'Gaiety Girl.' I was fearfully tired of that, after the London season. I'm sure I don't know what I'm going to do after 'The Foundling.' That's sure to have a long run, you know."

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By rather an odd coincidence, Mrs. Langtry and Mrs. Potter were playing this spring in the same week at two Broadway theaters. The point of similarity between these two

odd adjuncts of the stage are too well known to require further comment. Mrs. Potter and Mr. Kyrle Bellew have returned to us, after an eighteen months' tour of the world, with an entirely new repertoire. *Cleopatra* and her asps have been laid on the shelf, and now it is the more wholesome but more vindictive *Charlotte Corday* that engages Mrs. Potter's attention. And greater success has attended her in this play than has yet fallen to her lot. In the murder scene she really forgets Mrs. Cora Urquhart Potter, and acts.

Mr. Bellew's *Marat* is a wonderful characterization. His own personality is utterly obliterated, and he succeeds in making the famous revolutionist almost loathsomely repulsive, displaying a power that at times rises to the height of real dramatic fervor.

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"JOHN-A-DREAMS" is a curious play—just the sort of drama one would suppose to be the result of collaborate work. And yet Haddon Chambers is responsible for the whole of it. The first act—on the deck of a schooner yacht at night—is really idyllic; the languor, the indolent ease, of the life is perfectly shaded forth not only in the lines, but in the tempo in which the action is taken. Few stage situations could be more effective than the discussion of the two friends, who suddenly find themselves lovers of the same woman, while that woman's voice, singing in the cabin below, floats up and mingles with their tones.

But all this charm, alas, is lost in the second and third acts, where it would seem a foreign hand must have been at work. There is no reason in *Kate's* holding out against *Harold's* offer to marry her after both his father and himself have heard her story; the point, regarded in the light of what follows, savors too strongly of being forced in order to make possible the drugging of *Harold* by his friend. The act, however, has a redeeming feature in the fine comedy work by Elsie de Wolfe.

In the fourth act, again, the yacht picture is charming, but it takes more than charming stage pictures to make a great play. Even with the superb cast and mounting provided for it at the Empire Theater, "John-a-Dreams" will fail of making any lasting impression. Its one strong dramatic situation lacks the deft handling that carried "The Masqueraders" to triumph.

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It would be a happy sign of the times if the disappointment meted out by "John-a-Dreams" tended to turn the public's interest from the seventh commandment order of

drama. Is it not time, indeed, that we tired of it?

Announcement is made that Richard Mansfield is at last to realize his ambition, and to manage a New York theater of his own. He has leased Harrigan's, which he has decided to call the Garrick, and will give the public—the thinking, self respecting public—the best plays. When he was in the metropolis last fall, the cleverest comedy that has been presented here in years—Bernard Shaw's "Arms and the Man"—failed to please audiences that hastened to applaud the unsavory outputtings of Henry Arthur Jones.

We hope that Mr. Mansfield will not be discouraged over the reception accorded to work as clever, as clear cut, as brilliant, and as thoroughly wholesome, as Mr. Shaw's. After a winter of association with gamblers, libertines, opium victims, and women of the street, our theater goers may be ready in the spring to refresh themselves with dramas whose points are made by clever brain work, and in whose wake there lingers no trail of the serpent.

The very latest of these so called up to date plays has recently been brought out at the London Garrick, and positively oversteps all bounds of decency in the lengths to which it goes. It is by Pinero, is called "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith," and has afforded Mrs. Patrick Campbell an opportunity to make another hit.

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"TRILBY," as a play, could be only one of two things—a notable success or a direful failure. There could be no middle ground of passable mediocrity for the dramatized form of a story so widely known. To be frank, direful failure was the general prediction, but astonishing success was the result of the first performance at the Park Theater, Boston, on March 11. Paul M. Potter has done his delicate task of adaptation with great cleverness, and A. M. Palmer has provided a company of rare excellence. Virginia Harned's *Trilby* is a remarkably accurate portraiture of George du Maurier's eccentric heroine, and the *Svengali* of Wilton Lackaye, although presenting this accomplished actor in an entirely new light, leaves little to be desired in the portrayal of the arch mesmerizer. Burr McIntosh is *Taffy*, and *Zou Zou* is played by Leo Dietrichstein, one of the authors of Mrs. Langtry's new comedy, "Gossip."

Next to *Trilby* herself, the public will be interested in the impersonator of *Little Billee*. Mr. Palmer's choice for this important rôle finally fell upon Alfred Hick-



man, a young Englishman of twenty two. Mr. Hickman joined Augustin Daly's company in the fall of '93, and was the clown in "Twelfth Night" during the London season, *Biondello* in the "Shrew," and lastly, *Ivishita* in the ill fated "Heart of Ruby."

"Trilby" will undoubtedly be playing all over the country before long. New York gets the original company, at the Garden Theater, "Little Christopher" being transferred to Palmer's to make way for it. Mr. Palmer has disposed of the rights, outside of seven large cities, to William A. Brady. We await in anxious expectancy to learn what casts will be provided for a play that is, to say the least, somewhat out of the recognized line of a gentleman chiefly known to the world as the enterprising manager of Mr. Corbett's assaults upon the drama.

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"My doctor says I must not have any serious conversation after seven," says *Lord Goring* in Oscar Wilde's "Ideal Husband."

"My brain decrees that I must only give one strong act to a play. It is really too much of a bore to do otherwise." Such would seem to be the nature of Mr. Wilde's communings with himself when planning this same "Ideal Husband." There is some clever work in the third act, which leads up to what ought to be still stronger situations in the fourth, but it all falls to pieces like a house of cards.

Daniel Frohman has staged the piece beautifully, but the only member of his company for whom it provides effective work is Rhoda Cameron, who enacts the adventurous with great ability. Mr. Gratton needs to be cautioned against anticipating his cues. At an exciting moment in the third act he exclaimed, "Who is that?" half a second or so before the noise betraying *Mrs. Cheveley's* presence in an adjoining room had been made.

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THIS magazine has always been a strong believer in the value of personality. We are more firmly convinced than ever that there is everything in the dominating influence of a clever man—or woman—since seeing "Too Much Johnson," which has been the comedy success of the season in New York. That a play which promises so much, and really gives so little, should run for six months to crowded houses, would seem unaccountable were it not for the fact that William Gillette, its author, plays the leading rôle with an imperturbability that is really colossal. There is absolutely no skill employed in working out the situa-

tions. Complications galore impend, but this is all. The climaxes are reached in helter skelter fashion, and the curtain falls on what is practically an unfinished play.

And yet we are told that Charles Frohman has made four times as much money out of "Too Much Johnson" as he received from "Charley's Aunt," itself a record breaker. But we fancy that without Gillette Mr. Frohman would find that he had indeed too much "Johnson."

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BEFORE the snow flies again New York is to have still another new theater—or rather two new theaters, for the Olympia, the great structure Oscar Hammerstein is putting up on the site of the old armory on Broadway, between Forty Fourth and Forty Fifth Street, is to include both playhouse and music hall. And over both of them is to be a vast roof garden, for summer and winter use. The site is a capital one for an enterprise of this sort, and although the metropolis already has more theaters than she can comfortably fill, the novelty of this new venture will do much to insure its success. Yvette Guilbert, the famous Paris *chanteuse*, has already been engaged for the opening of the music hall. The theater, which will be devoted to comic opera, will be an opera house on a small scale, as it will contain ninety eight private boxes. It is to be opened early in November with Rice's company in "Excelsior, Jr.," the new burlesque by R. A. Barnett, who wrote "1492."

While excavators are busy at the foundations of this new place of amusement, a very old one is being torn down. Niblo's Garden, which dates as a playhouse from 1837, closed its long and checkered career on the 23d of March, as the Metropolitan Hotel, in which it was situated, is to be razed to make room for an immense business building. Thus is blotted out the home of the early triumphs of spectacle in America.

David Henderson, the Chicago manager, appears to have a monopoly of American spectacular productions just now. His "Aladdin, Jr.," which fills out the spring season at the Broadway Theater, is a most elaborate production. John J. Burke, the comedian of the piece, stutters badly, and yet, strangely enough, this is not one of the bits of business he uses to make his *Crambo* funny. He appears to be able to master his infirmity better on the stage than off. He says himself, in speaking of his first appearance in public, "W-w-when I realized w-w-what I was going to d-do, I w-w-was too e-e-embarrassed to s-stutter."

# LITERARY CHAT

THE fact that the new Lives of Napoleon are so fashionable makes the dear public look rather foolish. Nobody pretends that they are written out of any startling new material, or that their authors are noted for profound reasoning or analytic dissection of the great man. They are simply new. Perhaps old books have to be translated every now and then into modern phraseology, to make them popular, but to the student it is merely a diluting process.

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CONAN DOYLE the other day summed up an opinion of Napoleon which will probably be of value to many who are wading through these new biographies with a weary sense of duty, determined to keep up with the times. There is nothing very heavy about it; it is modern, and fairly exact, coming out of years of study of Napoleon's times, plodded over with his sturdy thoroughness. Doyle adds to his brilliant capacity for telling a real story, an absolute correctness of historical detail, which he understands how to handle with anything but historical dullness.

"Napoleon was a wonderful man," Mr. Doyle said, "perhaps the most wonderful man that ever lived. What strikes me is the lack of finality in his character. When you make up your mind that he is a complete villain, you come on some noble trait; and then your admiration of this is lost in some act of incredible meanness. But just think of it! Here was a young fellow of thirty, a man who had had no social advantages and but slight educational training, a member of a poverty stricken family, entering a room with a troop of kings at his heels, and all the rest of them jealous if he spoke a moment longer to one than to another. There must have been a great personal charm about the man, for those intimate with him loved him. He was, too, the most amazing and talented liar that ever lived. He told the truth only to himself. The secret of his success seems to me to have been his ability to originate gigantic schemes that seemed fantastic and impossible, while his mastery of detail enabled him to bring his projects to completion where another man would have failed."

After all, that is about what you get out of the "Lives"—if you are clever enough to reason them out.

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"A PROPHET is not without honor, save in his own country." A Boston paper has been interviewing the editor of an American magazine which prints English novels almost exclusively, and he has this excuse to make for his lack of patriotism:

"There doesn't seem to be the right sort of genius in this country. I have been waiting for the home article to evolve itself; but it isn't

apparent yet. They seem to have produced a batch of story writers across the water, whose work sells at a pretty good price in America. There are no new literary geniuses in this country just now."

On the other hand, a recent letter from the editor of a well known English magazine to an American friend says, "If you Americans only knew how clever you were, and how much more brains you have than a lot of the literary carpenters over here who have such reputations in America, you would turn out the greatest literature in the world."

It is not hard for unbiased outsiders who are not enslaved to any "school" of writing to see why it is that American authors are falling short of the standard of good fiction, while not a few Englishmen are reaching it. It is simply this. The latter are stamping their work with a manly, rugged individuality which we instinctively recognize and appreciate as strength. The vast majority of our own writers, on the contrary, are men and women of moods. They revel in "vignettes," "pastels," and "etchings," and all the kindred host of misshapen forms of fiction in which the story is laid on, as it were, with one wash of milk and water. It is the easiest style and the laziest, and any one can write stories where the whole plot lies in a yearning look, or a crushed flower, or the sound of a hand organ coming in at the open window. When we have cast off this national fad of pretty writing, then, and not till then, shall we discover the unsuspected abundance of our own talent.

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WHEN Mr. Grant Allen wrote "The Woman Who Did" to satisfy, as he tells us, "his own taste and his own conscience," he no doubt had a premonition of the storm his work was destined to arouse. Whatever he has done for his own taste and conscience, it is very evident that he has grievously offended those of the critics, and they are buzzing about his head in righteous indignation. In "The Woman Who Did," Mr. Allen has dealt with dangerous topics, but he has done it with singular power. The interest grows with the progress of the story, and once taken up the book is not laid aside until the tragedy of *Herminia Barton* has been read to the very close. Miss Gilder has called Mr. Allen's work "vicious," and this it undoubtedly is, but it has the imprint of a master hand, and it is never coarse. It embodies a new theme, carefully planned and admirably worked out, but this is all that can be said in favor of "The Woman Who Did." Viewed from a moral standpoint it is unpardonable. *Herminia Barton's* creed is one that will never benefit the world one iota, one which no pure woman can fail to resent and condemn. The reader heaves a sigh of unfeigned relief at her death, the most priceless