

do—may seem to be the real story; while another may regard his speculations about others, his doubts and worries over trifles, such as the fit of his trousers or the color of his necktie, to be the important realities of his career. On every novelist rests alike the same obligation of truth-telling. "Realist," "naturalist," "idealist," "romancist," only that, and nothing more, can be demanded of them—that they paint life as they see it, feel it, believe it to be. The only quarrel with the "realist" is that he assumes to limit and prescribe the domain of truth for the sake of magnifying his own artistic merit. The genuine article, he would have us believe, is only found in his own little garden. All that grows outside its narrow limits is taboo, and whoever dares to call it art is in danger of being cast into the fire of his own private and self-administered place of "realistic" punishment. Whatever is not fashioned on his own prescribed models is wholly and inconceivably bad. The past and the present are only meritorious as they approximate his standards.

This arrogant assumption has had the effect which successful arrogance always has upon modest aspiration. The American novelist has always been mortally afraid of international criticism, and, instead of being encouraged to follow the lead of his own inclination, he began at once to try to borrow an approved pattern for his work. These great underlying impulses, which really give character to the American people, and ought, therefore, to have given the keynote to our contemporary fiction—these he cast aside and began to study the trepidations, doubts, uncertainties, embarrassments and gaucheries of the afternoon call or the evening "full dress rehearsal," and to call this not only life, but the only and exclusive life that fiction is permitted to depict.

As a result of these things, acting in concert with other causes, we find that nearly thirty years after the eclipse of war, our imaginative literature shows little evidence of the strength, variety, nobility, and grandeur that characterized the epoch preceding the outbreak of rebellion. Its poetry is insignificant; its fiction cramped and petty; its criticism carping rather than appreciative; its spirit dubitant rather than hopeful, and its aim, excellence in the application of imported methods, rather than self-reliant attempts to create a literature not only national, but of that supreme excellence which the conditions of our life would seem to justify the world in expecting at our hands.

ALBION W. TOURGEE.

## II.

### DECADENCE OF SONG.

It is generally conceded that many passages of Wagner's operas are almost unsingable. The sequence of tones is not only strained and unnatural for the ear, but equally so for the voice. The result of this is an extraordinary wear on the powers; and when to this harsh progression of tones is added the difficulty of producing the voice under the limitations of the German tongue, the obstacles in the path of the singer become formidable. The Italian language is peculiarly adapted to the art of singing. In the development of this "soft bastard Latin," every hard sound was dropped and the language purified in its vocalism to a degree of unequalled smoothness. It is the preëminently liquid tongue, and its vowel sounds are the elementary tones of human speech. On the other hand, German has a number of mixed tones, such as those represented by the diphthongs *au* and *ei*, and the modified vowels *ü* and *ö*, which are extremely difficult to sing, except on notes easily produced. The best German singers mar their work by the bad production of notes accompanied by these vowel sounds, while singers of fairly good ability frequently shock the ears of cultured hearers.

Since this is the case in average music, it must obviously be worse in the Wagner music-dramas, because the great German did not give sufficient consideration to the powers of the human voice. The absence, for long spaces, in his scores, of any-

thing resembling fluent melody is destructive of proper voice-production. In the famous singing-schools of Italy, in the elder days of vocal art, what the French call *la mise de voix*, or, as we roughly term it, delivery, was a study of years. Delivery consists, according to a respectable authority, "in adapting as perfectly as possible the motions of respiration to the emission of sound, so as to bring out the power of the latter, as much as the quality of the organ and the conformation of the chest will admit, without carrying it to that degree of effort which makes the sound degenerate into a cry." No singer needs to be told that these results cannot be accomplished in the singing of music constructed with little or no attention to the capabilities of the vocal organs. Wagner's carelessness in this matter has forced singers so to sin against the laws of good voice-production that only persons of unusual robustness like Materna, Lehmann, or Scaria, have been able to endure the strain long. These people, moreover, are singing actors rather than vocalists, and the extreme Wagnerites hold that in the future the singing actor must be the artist of the operatic stage. But if we had a school of composition in which the music, faithfully illustrating the truly dramatic book, should be couched in terms of fluent melody and constructed with a view to good vocal results, the kind of artist needed for the operatic stage would not be a singing actor, but an acting singer.

The world is not prepared to give up the art of finished singing. Since the days of Claudio Monteverde, the opera has been the conservatory in which blossomed the rarest flowers of song. Once let the stage lose its culture, and perfect vocalization must disappear. The concert singer and the amateur are not influential enough to counterbalance the authority of the opera. The art of *bel canto* will be lost, and we shall read of the marvellous powers of the singers of by-gone days with scepticism. Farinelli curing Philip V., of Spain, of an attack of melancholy, which threatened his reason; Raff bringing the salvation of tears to the grief-stunned Princess Belmont; Senesino forgetting his part and falling upon the neck of Farinelli after an aria; Crescentini melting Napoleon and his whole court to tears—all these things will become the incredible legends of a musical age of fable; and we shall be compelled to endure at all times, as we are now frequently, bad voice-production, harsh and unmusical declamation, and strident cries, for the sake of a particularly good facial expression and a fine dignity of movement.

W. J. HENDERSON.

### III.

#### NAMING THE NEW STATES.

SINCE the beginning of the pending discussion regarding the advisability of admitting a number of new States into the Union, a vigorous effort has been made to arouse a public sentiment hostile to the retention of the names by which several of the eligible commonwealths have been known since their organization as Territories. Mr. David Dudley Field has been foremost in this crusade against the old names, and he has apparently succeeded in convincing a portion of the press and people of the United States that it would not be advisable to have in the Union States bearing such names as North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, and New Mexico. Unfortunately for his cause, however, he has not convinced the people who are most interested, the inhabitants of the territories concerned, that a change of names would be desirable; and Dakotans, Washingtonians, and New Mexicans insist with practical unanimity that the old names of their respective commonwealths be retained.

The objections to the old names, except in the case of Washington, are purely sentimental. It is urged that the names of North Dakota, South Dakota, and New Mexico do not sound well, and that new designations should accordingly be bestowed upon those commonwealths. The additional objection that it would be productive of confusion is urged against the name of Washington. The State of Washington and the city of Washington, say the advocates of a new nomenclature, would constantly be confounded one with the other, and it is, therefore, highly desirable that Washington Territory be admitted into the Union under some other name than that