

crashing into another, a number of lives were lost and a score of people maimed. This particular switch-tender evaded arrest and punishment and was the life of a firemen's ball, according to report, less than a year later. No doubt he is making similar jokes still.

It is noticeable among a large class of the employed that their own blunders are regarded either as entertaining social material or as an excellent joke upon the recipient of the incompetent service. It is also evident that the amusing little blunder is never supposed to have any effect upon the size of the tip expected.

No doubt much of the carelessness characteristic of personal service in America, the universal slipshod indifference to obligation on the part of those holding responsible positions, might be laid at the door of this infection of flippancy which is in the air, and which is a degraded, immoral

offshoot of the original American sense of humor.

It is an attitude that has come about understandably enough through our illogically achieved prosperity, a condition the very opposite of the oppressed poverty of the Russian peasant, which is reflected in their stolidity and seriousness. This abnormal prosperity of ours has its varying effect upon all classes—the native American, the immigrant, and the second-generation product that is neither American nor foreign. The result, a confusion of ideals, is the natural outcome of a situation where people are placed in an economic condition to which they are as yet unadapted.

We can only hope that this unhappy tendency is one of the inevitable defects of the transition stage, and that in another generation it will have been eradicated, whatever modifications the native type may have undergone by that time.

A FRENCH CIRCULATING LIBRARY

BY HAMILTON W. MABIE

THE Librairie Centrale is on the Rue de Nîmes in a widely known watering-place in southern France. It is a small affair, lodged in a small and very friendly shop, where books, postcards, stationery, and other necessary minor articles are sold at moderate prices. Madame sits by the door with a pleasant smile and word for every customer, and business becomes a matter of good manners and friendly feeling as well as of barter. The small shop is not only a profession in Europe; it is also an art. Many an American woman has confessed that the picture which Mrs. Alexander drew years ago in "Her Dearest Foe" has filled her with a desire to turn shopkeeper in worsteds, wools, and other soft, clean, refined materials; to be on pleasant, easy terms with the village people of all sorts and conditions; to pass through the glass door at the rear into the little parlor with its old-fashioned mahogany table in the center and its old-fashioned chairs around,

where the ritual of afternoon tea is observed with religious regularity every day at five o'clock.

Such a shop in an old English town comes to mind as these words are written; sometimes the door at the rear is open and one gets a whiff of the sweet, gentle life of the two elderly gentlewomen who keep the shop, and whose relations with the neighborhood include the family at the Hall, one of the half-dozen great fourteenth-century houses still standing, the vicar of the beautiful fourteenth-century church whose square tower rises over the gardens and is an ancient haunt of birds, and those serene women of small means who make English villages wholesome and whose ways bring the fragrance of the quiet life with them. In such surroundings, in such an atmosphere of leisure, business is very small in amount, but very large in kindness and respect. The hardness and vulgarity of trade divorced from honor and courtesy are as far away from these little

shops as easy divorce and cigarette-smoking are from the dear, old-fashioned women who keep them.

In a French town there is perhaps less intimacy of relation between the small shop and the community, but there is an ample margin of courtesy, which lines the inside of the cash drawer so that the francs fall noiselessly into their places. In a small and badly printed catalogue of this *Cabinet de Lecture* the books listed are only a few hundred, and they bear the marks of hard reading in spite of the italicized note on the cover: "*Les clients sont priés de prendre le plus grand soin possible des volumes qui leur sont confiés.*" These well-worn covers are probably trustworthy signs of the direction of French interest in fiction, and the list of titles in the catalogues is an interesting comment on the progress or retrogression of the novel in a country in which the writing of fiction has long been a fine art.

Victor Hugo is represented by twenty-seven numbers, and these numbers stand for very shabby volumes, although critical French people speak of the author of "*Les Misérables*" with a good deal of reservation in these days when the buoyancy and audacity of the early Romanticism have long been out of fashion. Those who read "*Les Misérables*" in youth will never rid themselves of the notion that Hugo was a tremendous force, whatever he may have been as an artist. The strain of Teutonic energy and of that sense of the vastness and gloom of things which may have been bred in the northern forest ages ago obscured the clarity of his intelligence and blurred the lines of his art, so that among his rivals of purely Latin temper he stands apart. His egotism tells against his permanent popularity, as does Carlyle's against the staying power of "*Sartor Resartus*." The Titans who disturb the world by their tremendous energy rarely set their work in clear light, after the manner of the Olympians; it is their lot to struggle in half-light. Carlyle was a much more magisterial figure in his time than Emerson; but Emerson is likely to outstay him. Hugo's tremendous force gave him a great vogue in his day, but he lacked the restraint and fine sense of proportion of the masters; his house in the Place des

Vosges seems like a revolving mirror filled with distorted images of himself, so intense was his self-consciousness and so varied his power of expressing himself not only with his pen but with his pencil. The moment one begins to make these qualifications of Hugo's art, however, one recalls his beautiful lyric gift and makes reparation by classing him with the great French poets; though here also his critical French friends will not concur without reservation.

Balzac has only twelve numbers in the list, while Dumas has eighty! This is not surprising when one remembers the solidity of the work of the author of "*Père Goriot*"—its density, so to speak—and the lightness of texture of many of the stories of the author of "*The Count of Monte Cristo*." Balzac stands so securely on a foundation of solid achievement that the subsidence of the tide of popular interest is a small matter so far as his fame is concerned. In his case it is fame, and not, as in the case of many novelists, merely reputation. Reputation may slowly pass into fame, or, as generally happens, it may quietly evaporate and pass into a paragraph in a history of literature. The author of "*Père Goriot*," "*Eugénie Grandet*," the creator of that wonderful record of the French life of seventy years ago, the "*Comédie Humaine*," sometimes nods; he often assumed an occult knowledge of the signs of character; he sometimes made investigation do the work of insight; he was at times laboriously uninspired; but what command of the human drama he had, what delicate perceptions and gross instincts, what power of sentiment, and what a sense of the material values!

Balzac was a novelist by intention as well as by genius; Dumas was a born story-teller whose indifference to the art of fiction enabled him to conduct one of the most extensive writing syndicates in the history of literature. He was a kind of literary Briareus, and wrote with a hundred hands. As great an egotist as Hugo, he had also Hugo's industry. He was entirely at ease in the world; he took his pleasures where he found them, and they were of all sorts; he was an unblushing and unconscious Philistine of the unmoral type; he made great sums and spent

them lavishly; he knew all the tricks of his trade and practiced them without scruple; but what a master of the ancient art of story-telling he was! Mr. Lang is well within bounds when he calls him "Alexander the Great." He is beyond question the foremost spinner of yarns in the history of the world. He was never for a moment a moralist, as all the great novelists have been; he was an artist only in his most fortunate moments; but he had a genius for invention, for incident, for narrative, for characterization. There was something of the magician in him, as there was in Paganini; a kind of demoniac force—in a word, genius. This involves several serious limitations, which Dumas would have accepted with entire complacency; so long as people read his books the critics might hang him in effigy. As a matter of fact, they read him with avidity while they slaughtered him with gusto. "The Three Musketeers" is far and away the greatest story of adventure ever written, and its characterization is on a level with its narration. It has the brilliancy and rapidity of action of those fencing feats which it describes, in which the individual rapiers were lost in a whirl of steel. If the second half of "Monte Cristo" had been as closely knit and easily sustained as the first half, it would have been the eighth wonder of the world; but the rushing stream of invention subsides and spreads over dreary wastes of sand as it nears the end. In the region of pure wit Dumas will always remain one of the masters; his repartee had the flash and quickness of d'Artagnan's rapier, and touched the point as surely. Is there a more perfect retort on record than his answer to the question, "Monsieur, how do you grow old so gracefully?" "Madame, I give all my time to it"?

Eugène Sue is represented by seven titles, and "The Wandering Jew" is not among them; Octave Feuillet, whose "Romance of a Poor Young Man" most Americans who cared for romance read in the days of their youth, is credited with eight stories; while eleven numbers appear under the name of George Sand. One is glad to note that "Consuelo" and "The Countess of Rudolstadt," which were long regarded as the classic examples of the genius of Madame Dudevant, do not find

places in the list, while the more spontaneous and characteristic novels appear to hold their own in general interest. George Sand seemed terribly demoralizing to our grandfathers, and she certainly was extremely frank and elemental in dealing with the passional side of life. But that was before the days of the Decadents, with their loathsome analyses of morbid eroticism and their repulsive perversions and distortions of the physical instincts. "Indiana" is not a desirable book to put into the hands of the young person, but it is innocence and health in comparison with some of those modern medical text-books in the form of fiction which have made sexual insanity familiar to the modern world. It is necessary to connect houses with sewers, but a good deal of recent fiction has connected sewers with houses. Lowell's suggestion that the old tavern sign, "Entertainment for man and beast," describes this kind of writing was a happy one, provided the emphasis is laid on the beast. George Sand was frank enough in all conscience, but her passional ardor was exuberant health compared with some of the tales of her successors. She had great natural gifts—imagination, sentiment, love of nature, eloquence.

Alfred de Musset, whose name is recalled whenever George Sand's is spoken, is represented by four titles; a little body of work of exquisite artistic quality in which the note of disillusion, of a youth striving to assuage the immortal thirst at the shallow springs whose approaches have always been trodden into mire by eager multitudes, is sounded with pathetic distinctness. There is nothing more tragical than a delicate and sensitive genius driven back on itself—the poet turned cynic. But what exquisite skill was his, and what a rare hand on the keys of speech!

To pass from de Musset to Zola, so far as art is concerned, is like passing from a garden to a forge. Ten novels stand below Zola's name on this list, and they include his most characteristic stories: "L'Assommoir," the most tremendous temperance tract ever written; "Nana," a merciless study of a woman steadily sinking into the mire; "La Terre," a picture of pastoral life as different from

George Sand's idyllic sketches of the French peasant as Teniers's tavern scenes are from Watteau's charming vignettes of out-of-door elegance and grace. By that curious confusion of ideas which prevails concerning morality in art, Zola was long held up before Americans as the most immoral writer of the last generation. Zola was, on the contrary, a thorough-going moralist of the sledge-hammer type. His sin was not immorality, but intolerable lack of reserve, the brutal frankness which the brutes would use if they could discuss their sexual relations. But, so far as binding effects to causes, the sin to the sinner, disease, misery, and death to the seeds which men sow, is concerned, Zola was a merciless and unflinching moralist of the type to whom the hospital and the morgue are the open schools where the terrible facts of life are relentlessly set forth. A man of tremendous industry, of tireless habits of work, of unflagging zeal in the search for the facts of life as he understood them, Zola would have been a great writer if art were to be compassed by the strain of the arm and the sweat of the brow. But art flies the forge, and Zola never, save in rare and disconnected moments, exchanged drudgery for the freedom of creative power. His tremendous earnestness and energy made him a powerful figure in his day, and his influence will long be felt; but the evening has already overtaken his reputation.

In lighter mood one reads the nine titles with which Cherbuliez is credited; a novelist of no great significance, but an adroit and skillful workman who could put a story together with the art that conceals art, and who knew his business to the last detail. "Samuel Brohl et Cie" was a capital piece of work, and in another novel—"Prosper Randoce," was it not?—there was a study of a certain type of Pole as interesting though less vitally conceived than some of Tourguenieff's studies of the same eloquent, inflated, voluble, and entirely ineffective Russian type—men who inflame their own imaginations and instinctively dramatize themselves.

Two Frenchwomen one day paid a visit to Madame Bernhardt. For an hour the actress was quiet, demure, somewhat reti-

cent, and altogether charming. As they came away the younger said to the older, "Could any one have been more simple and delightful?" "No," was the response; "that was the most beautiful piece of acting we ever saw. She is not a character; she is a temperament." Pierre Loti, whose titles in the list run up to the goodly number of seventeen, is of temperament all compact; but it is temperament expressed in atmosphere. His view of life is the surface view; it is an impression, not a conviction. His mind is a sensitive plate which takes the color of any climate—of Japan or Iceland indifferently. But how skillfully he mixes his colors and tones his skies! If he is less subtle than Lafcadio Hearn, he has a kindred delicacy of description. His "Pêcheur d'Islande" is a wonderful piece of illusion; there is so little action and so much sea and sky in it.

Edmond About must content himself with four titles, among them the once widely read "Nose of a Notary;" but the "King of the Mountains" and "The Man with the Broken Ear," written in a style full of consideration for beginners in French, do not appear. The author of "The Nabob" holds his own, and one finds all his most characteristic stories except that collection of almost inimitable sketches "Letters from My Mill," the flower of his fine sensibility, of his quick fancy, of his sensitive artistic nature. No figure in the French literature of the last half-century is more fascinating than Daudet's, nor has the artistic temperament made any more naïve and winning confession than that which lies written in his books. The story of his coming to Paris, of the vicissitudes of his early days, and of his final success is one of the fairy tales of modern life. What he lacked in fiber and force he made up in charm, in humor, in his sensitive reading of the Parisian life of his time. No historian of the Third Empire will leave "Numa Roumestan" (which many people believe contains a portrait of Gambetta), "The Nabob," "Kings in Exile," and "Sappho" unread. "Jack" is full of hints of Dickens, and "L'Immortel" was a mistake; but "Tartarin" is one of the enduring achievements of French humor.

Guy de Maupassant contributes eleven

numbers to the list; an artist trained by the example of Flaubert, that tireless searcher for the one word predestined from the beginning to fit into a place which no other word could take, the master of the short story. In all fiction there is no pathos deeper than that which Maupassant puts into "The Necklace" and "A Piece of String;" in the whole range of biography there is no waste of talent more tragic than that of this exquisitely gifted nature shattered by insanity.

Among living writers the brilliant and eloquent Rostand finds ample recognition. "Cyrano de Bergerac," which not only stirred Paris to unwonted enthusiasm, but thrilled southern France, remains his most striking play; but "Chantecler" surpasses it in audacity. Who but Rostand would have dared dramatize a barnyard, and who but Rostand could hold a modern audience through four acts performed by cocks, hens, blackbirds, dogs, owls, rabbits, and other creatures of fur and feathers?—and yet the theater at the Porte St. Martin has seen more than two hundred performances of a play about which people have not yet made up their minds. It is surely a very uncommon drama which holds judgment suspended so long. It is, in fact, so incredible that nobody but Rostand could make you believe it, and so impossible that nobody but Rostand could force Paris to accept it. It is always on the verge of absurdity and always trembles on the edge of the ridiculous, but nobody laughs! It is brilliant, witty, eloquent. It may not be a work of art; it is certainly a marvelous feat of audacity and genius.

Anatole France, that keen observer of the reaction from idealism and faith in France, is credited with eleven titles; and Paul Bourget, who has become more and more a moralist as his study of life has borne the fruit of conviction, with twelve titles. France is an adroit and accomplished novelist who has had a long training in his craft but lacks depth of feeling,

the intuition of sympathy, the vitality of moral insight. Bourget grows more serious but lacks spontaneity, and produces the impression of close work rather than of natural force and power. The point of view of France is made clear in "Cosmopolis," a painful and repellent story; that of Bourget in "Un Divorce," a study of relaxing views of marriage and of the divergence of position between the old order and the new. In a different way this is the theme of René Bazin, whose novels are rapidly gaining readers among Americans, and are well worth the attention of those who care for sane fiction written with sincere feeling and pervaded by the quiet charm of the French landscape. The author of that pathetic tale of a little group of nuns scattered by the recent law, "L'Isolée," and of "La Terre qui Meurt," in which the inevitable conflict between the old and the new is dramatically presented, has the reverence and tenderness of the man who knows life on its higher levels.

There are, of course, the very popular writers like "Gyp," who bravely bears off twenty-seven titles unabashed in the most distinguished company; and there are many names which are unknown to Americans outside the small circle of those who keep in touch with the minor French novelists. The humor of the collection is furnished by lists of "Traductions Anglaises" and a "Catalogue of English Romances" at the end of the little book. What would Mr. Aldrich think of "Le Crime de Stilwatre"? Dickens might be puzzled for a moment by "Le Magasin d'Antiquités." "Martin Chuzzlewit" would pray to be delivered from foreign proof-reading, and Scott would shrink from "Warverley." A title near the beginning of the list of "English Romances," "Random Shots," suggests the principle on which that extraordinary selection was made. The Catalogue is, in a way, one of the interesting books in the Librairie Centrale.

POPULAR GOVERNMENT IN OREGON¹

BY JONATHAN BOURNE, JR.

UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM OREGON

UNREST exists throughout the civilized world. People are speculating as to the causes. Daily uncertainty grows stronger as to future events. In my opinion, the basic cause is that people have lost confidence in many of their public servants and bitterly resent attempted dictatorship by would-be political bosses and representatives of special interests who desire to direct public servants and legislation for their own selfish interests rather than assist in the enactment of laws guaranteeing justice to all and special privileges to none.

Time was when a few self-constituted leaders in Oregon politics arrogated to themselves the prerogatives of government and made their assumption effective through illicit combinations and the use of money in any and every quarter where necessary to their purposes of control—that is, they commercialized conventions, legislatures, and the administrative branches of the city, county, and State government. It was not a condition peculiar to Oregon. It obtained, and I believe still obtains in a more or less flagrant degree, in every State in the Union; and it had its boldest, most unscrupulous executive genius in Boss Tweed, who, recognizing the opportunity of the crook in government by party through convention nominations, declared he did not care who elected the candidates so long as he had the power to nominate the ticket.

Revolting against these conditions, the State which I have the honor, in part, to represent, has evolved the best known system of popular government. Oregon in 1891 adopted the Australian ballot, which insures secrecy, prevents intimidation, and reduces the opportunity for bribery. This, of course, is a prerequisite to any form of popular government.

Supplementing the Australian ballot law, Oregon enacted in 1899 a registra-

tion law applying to general elections, and enlarged its scope in 1904 in the law creating a direct primary. This law requires registration prior to voting in either the general or the primary election, and provides that before voting in a party primary the voter must, under oath, register his party affiliation. Registration begins five months prior to the general election. Registration books are closed ten days prior to the primary election and opened again four days after the primary, and then kept open until about twenty days before the general election. A voter may register either by appearing at the office of the county clerk or by signing registration blanks before a notary public or justice of the peace. Upon the registration books are entered the full name of the voter, his registration number, date of registration, his occupation, age, nativity, date and place of naturalization, if any, and his place of residence. In order to guard against fraud, it is required that the voter shall give his street and number, and if he is not the head of the house he occupies, he must show that fact and give the number of the room he occupies and upon what floor of the building it is located. He must also sign the register, if he can write. If he is unable to write his name, the reason must be given. If his inability is due to a physical defect, the nature of the infirmity must be noted. If it is due to illiteracy, a physical description of the man must be noted in the register.

Any registered voter may be challenged and every non-registered voter is considered challenged. An unregistered person qualified as an elector may be permitted to vote upon signing an affidavit setting forth all the facts required in registration, and also securing the affidavits of six owners of real property to the effect that they personally know him and his residence and believe all his statements to be true.

Thus the greatest boon of American citizenship, namely, the right to participate in government, is protected, and dead

¹ This article is in large part the substance of a speech delivered by Senator Bourne in the United States Senate, May 5, 1910.