

THE BIRDS' BATH.

BY WALTER HERRIES POLLOCK.

Out on the lawn the birds' bath lies,
Birdkin of every kind to it flies;
Blackbird and starling and little blue tit,
By two and by three they flock to it.
They sip and they dip and they splash their fill,
And they stay or away at their own sweet will,
Till clanks me in the great tall thrush,
With a lordly look and a masterful rush;
Then only the impudent sparrow hath
Courage to share that waterspout bath.

The New-York Tribune.

ILLUSTRATED SUPPLEMENT.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1901.

"If one were fairly to take his honesty in both hands," says Mr. Howells, in the current number of "Harper's Magazine," "he would probably be able to confess that the influence of any powerful story on his mind was stupefying." If this is the case with the normal human being, and where "powerful" literature is concerned, what must happen when the scale is lowered both as to the reader and the book? The effect, Mr. Howells remarks, "is not perhaps so bad as that of morphine; but it may be something like that of cocaine, and far worse than that of cigarettes. In this sense the habit of reading inferior fiction (for out of a hundred readers ninety-nine read nothing else) is certainly a vice, without the picturesque quality of a craze." How is the vice to be eradicated? Good books, one would naturally say, are just the things to accomplish the reform. Mr. Howells is not so sure. The power to think must be developed before the change is accomplished, and, as Mr. Howells rather plainly hints, the power of thinking is not so widely diffused as most of us like to believe. Talk may help to bring about the reform. "The art of thinking is not likely to go far unless it goes hand in hand with the art of talking." Nevertheless, if the good book gets its proper chance wonders may ensue. It is no less an incentive to talk than the trash, and it is bound to help people to think. Mr. Howells speaks of beginning with "the tender mind of youth." Something may yet be done with the mature man and woman, if only authors and publishers will cease putting rubbish so incessantly into their hands that they can think of nothing else.

Who are the high and mighty judges to whom the author of the moment submits his manuscript, procuring from them a preliminary puff to be scattered broadcast and thus win for the book, when it appears, immediate and most favorable consideration? The commonest form of announcement nowadays runs something like this: "Mr. X. has just completed a new novel which will be published in the fall. Those who have been privileged to see the manuscript have no hesitation in saying that it is a remarkable production. Mr. X. himself declares that he regards it as his best work." Who in the world cares two straws what "those who have been privileged to see the manuscript" think about it? Molière thought it worth while to try the effect of his work on his cook, while it was still in manuscript, and nobody objects to the modern author doing the same thing if he chooses. But at least let him tell us if it is from his cook that he gets the testimonials he so values. Let his fair counsellor come forth and suffer herself to be admired. Or, in the name of common sense, let her keep her impertinences out of print.

An item of so-called "literary news" has lately been floating about which is very funny in its implications. Mr. Tiggs, we will say, according to this precious deliverance, "is being approached" by Miss —, and the result will be probably a new play dealing with a certain subject. Mr. Tiggs is a Poet. Gentle reader, can you not see the situation in your mind's eye? The Poet sits in his study with contracts lying all about him, and a business-like expression on his countenance. He opens the first epistolary application and tosses it aside. Next morning there is another from the same source. He becomes interested and with pencil and pad "tots up" the potentialities of the scheme. Writes to say he "will think it over." Later in the week there is a personal meeting, involving, it is to be presumed, some strenuous pleading. Applicant is dismissed with another promise that the dramatist will "think about it." Another meeting. Terms arranged. Contract drawn up. Subject of play decided upon. "Yes, you shall have it before next spring." Applicant disappears. Dramatist takes off his coat and goes to work. Time passes. Delays. Excuses. Pegasus won't do his duty. More excuses. More promises. Manuscript delivered! Play put in type. Critics warned. Climax: "The poetical drama has been enriched by another masterly work from the pen of Tiggs. Brimming over with that spontaneous inspiration for which Tiggs is noted, it bids fair to achieve a permanent position, not only upon the boards, but in the library of every lover of true verse." The poetical calling, new style, is obviously a great thing.

RICHARD WAGNER.

HOW BIOGRAPHY MAY BE EXPANDED.

LIFE OF RICHARD WAGNER. Being an Authorized English Version by William Ashton Ellis of C. F. Glasenapp's "Das Leben Richard Wagners." Vol. I. 8vo, pp. vii, 400. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd.

The appropriate attitude for the perusal of this book is that of adoration. The reader should be on his knees, head thrown back, hands clasped and extended, eyes turned upward. The countenance should glow with the light of perfect faith revealing unquestioned and unquestioning receptivity and acceptance. It is not a biography as other biographies are—life stories of mere men of genius; painters, poets, sculptors, musicians. This is a chapter of hagiolatry; the story of a saint. It must sooner or later go into the Acta Sanctorum. There were musicians before Richard Wagner; but they were weak vessels. They erred in judgment occasionally, were infirm of purpose at times, here and there de-

subject and help him to look like a saint. There was little or nothing of polemic in the biography printed twenty-five years ago, and nothing at all in the way of musical analysis or criticism. The new volume is crammed with refutations of every petty anecdote that has found its way into print and might haply cause somebody to see a fleck of dust upon the master's moral shirt-front. That must appear as immaculate as his music is impeccable. Also it discourses about youthful compositions which Wagner, despite his insatiable passion for writing about himself, never referred to, either because he had forgotten all about them or was willing that they should sink into oblivion. But Herr Glasenapp must needs drag them forth and find in them germs of the masterpieces that were to come. This method of expansion has been pursued so industriously that this first volume of the third edition of the biography is almost as voluminous as the two which comprised the entire work in 1876. Not content with what the author has done in this direction, Mr. Ellis contributes his quantum of padding as well; yet neither has seen fit to mention a multitude of

tor's knowledge it had never seen the light before. This, too, was the opinion of Herr Otto Lessmann, who, receiving a copy of the original from a friend in New-York, reprinted it in full in his journal. Herr Lessmann is one of the shining lights of the Wagnerian congregation in Berlin, and has published a volume of letters written by Wagner. Extracts from this letter appear in Herr Glasenapp's book, but no hint of the fact that a few months after his dramatic courtship and marriage Wagner had already come to look upon his wife as a hindrance to his artistic progress. To all familiar with Wagner's domestic life there was never a charge brought against his unhappy wife more serious than that she could not comprehend his genius or stimulate his creative activity.

Much of the padding in the book is diverting in the evidence it affords of the author's strenuous efforts to gather a nimbus around the head of his hero. Here, for instance, is the stout prop upon which his intense Teutonism is made to rest, it being borne in mind that several of Wagner's ancestors were schoolmasters:

When men begin to group themselves into communities, and distinctive names of families arise, in the very name of "Wagner" we have a hint of the old Aryan, the un-Germanic occupation of its earliest bearer. And when the hero of the German Reformation, a son of miner and peasant folk, claims from the nobles of the German nation, the dignitaries of every German city, the teaching of the poor, neglected people, the founding of schools and churches in town and country, to German men there opens out a new wide field for struggle and endeavor. However insignificant its outward aspect, this struggle is a veritable fight with dragons, housed in the caves of ignorance and superstition. The village schoolmaster becomes the actual guide and Christian educator of the folk; a notable and typical figure in seventeenth century Germany, down to its finest hamlet; for the most part cantor, organist, nay, sacristan in one, and withal the friend and counselor of the whole countryside, the link between the populace and culture of his time; nay, more—the only prop of "Deutschthum" against the overbearing Romanism of courts and high society.

This seems far fetched enough, but it is surpassed in a footnote quoted from Hans von Wolzogen, who digs Wagner (wainwright) and Weber (weaver) out of the ancient Aryan tumuli, and is all but moved to tears "to see the earliest handicrafts of our forefathers giving their names to those families whence the Germanic masters of the most German art were later to arise—families of calling from out the primal family of blood." But there were post-Aryan auguries also which foretold that Wagner was to be a composer, and would choose the legends of his people for operatic subjects. His first discoverable ancestor was Samuel Wagner, who was born in 1643. He was the great-great-great-grandfather of Richard, and was schoolmaster of Thammenhain, "near Wurzen, in the Leipsic circuit, hard by the present Prussian boundary, but then in the very heart of Saxony." Now, this name Thammenhain has been interpreted as "Damian's Grove," but a little matter of 716 years ago "it appears in the form of 'Tannenhain,' or 'Fir Grove,' so that our hero's oldest ancestor presents himself as a genuine Tann-bäuser." More than that, Wagner's great-great-grandfather, an assistant schoolmaster, sang in church on St. John's Day, 1727, "to the satisfaction of the Herr Pastor and assembled congregation." And thus you prove that the singer's great-great-grandson was predestined to compose "Die Meistersinger." Shall the auguries be multiplied? The poet-composer's grandfather matriculated as student of theology at the Leipsic University in 1759, "the year of the battle of Kunersdorf, of Schiller's birth and the death of Ewald von Kleist," and his father was born the same year with Beethoven. Moreover, Dame Nature herself experimented long and put forth a final effort of vast puissance before producing Herr Glasenapp's hero. Read, read and bow the head:

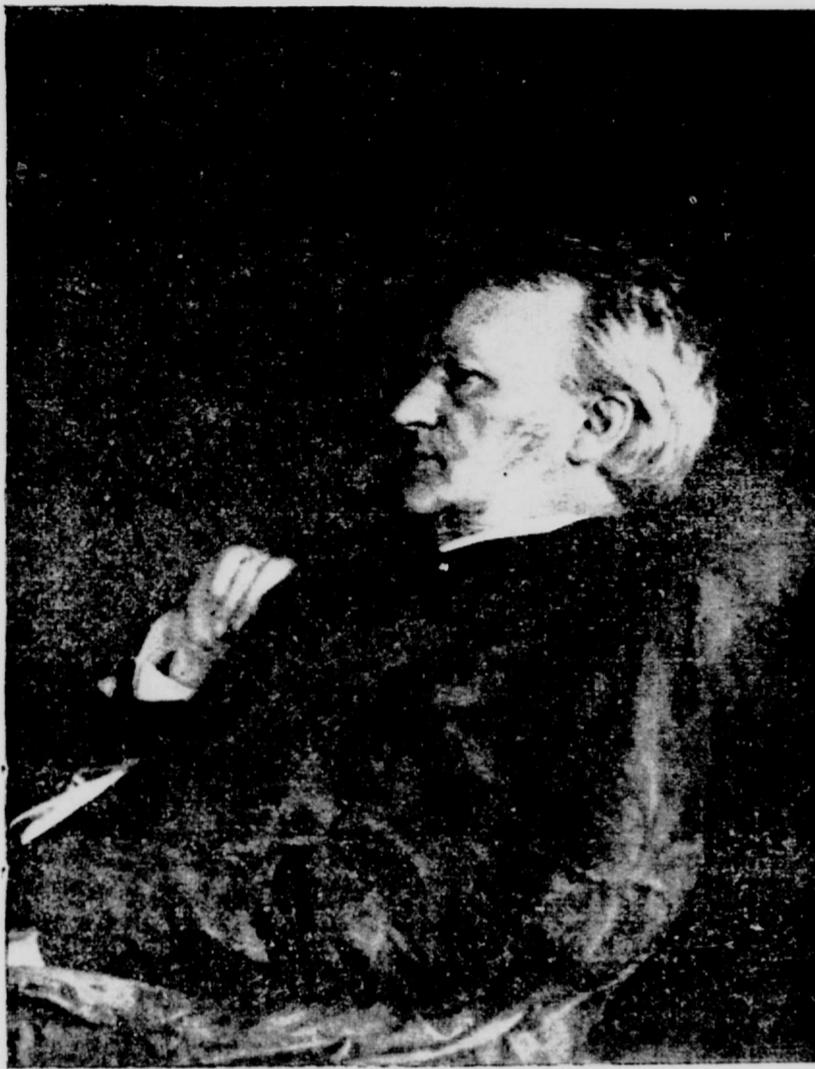
If we examine the progeny of Friedrich and Johanna Wagner from the point of view of the conditions antecedent to the birth of genius, we are struck by the fact that it was at the end of a long series, as it were, of preliminary attempts on the part of Nature that the subject of our biography was born (1813); also that he was preceded since 1804 by none but sisters, as if Nature had been husbanding her virile force for one in whose temperament it was to be so strongly manifested, just as in the case of Schiller, Mozart, Goethe, Schopenhauer and others. We find that they had sisters, indeed, but either no brothers at all or merely weaklings, whom death soon claimed.

It is a vast pity that a work bearing such marks of patience and industry as does Herr Glasenapp's biography, and having for its subject one who was indubitably one of the foremost artists of the nineteenth century, who accomplished a revolution and reformation in dramatic music the influence of which is not yet fully measured, should be marred by foolish balderdash like this, which can only delight crack-brained enthusiasts, and must make all judicious admirers of the master grieve.

AN INTERESTING DISCOVERY.

From The London Morning Post.

A discovery of much interest and importance has just been made in the Paris Garde-Meuble. In a corner of the building which no one has entered for thirty years has been found a valuable collection, formerly belonging to the old museum of the Kings of France. Among the relics brought to light are one of the crowns of Charles X and that used at the funeral of Louis XVIII, the complete costume of a chevalier, the gold-cloth robe worn by the Dauphin at the last Sacrament of Rheims, the bureau arm-chair and the Tuileries throne of Napoleon the First, the sedan chair of Marie Antoinette, the cradles of the King of Rome and Comte de Chambord, and a bell of Louis XVIII, along with many other precious curiosities.



THE LAST PORTRAIT OF RICHARD WAGNER.
(From a photograph taken at Bayreuth in 1883.)

fluent in self-respect. Moral obligations weighed upon them, and when they owed money they were silly enough to believe that they were not glorified thereby, but humiliated in the eyes of their creditors, and a world degraded by that spirit of commercialism which rests upon the honorable discharge of financial obligations. Saint Richard, Herr Glasenapp would have us believe, was not of this sort. To lend him money or trust him for house-rent or provisions was a duty to be accounted a pleasure; to expect a return of the money or payment for the goods, a deplorable sign of depravity; to ask it, proof conclusive of deep obliquity. The world owed this saint whatever he chose to ask or to take without the asking—even his friend's wife. It also owes his family—so the family thinks—a special dispensation in the matter of copyright in order that the Bayreuth show may be maintained as a monopoly for the enriching of the court at Wahnfried and the degradation of Wagnerian ideals.

For twenty-five years Herr Glasenapp's biography of Richard Wagner has held its place as the foremost book devoted to its subject. Its first edition appeared in 1876, a year memorable in Wagnerian annals for the beginning of the festivals at Bayreuth. In 1882, known in those annals as "Parsifal" year, a second edition appeared, with a supplement. A year later Wagner died and gave the world reason to expect a third edition, which should bring the post-composer's life history to a close. But, says Mr. Ellis, Herr Glasenapp felt, and rightly, that no further edition ought to be issued before time, research and meditation should have enriched his work with riper thought and a far larger body of material. He waited until 1894 and then issued the first volume of the third edition, which, in its English dress, is now under review. It would be foolish to deny that Herr Glasenapp's book has gained vastly in the remoulding so far as its readability is concerned. His original biography was a staid and sober piece of writing, its color sombre brown without the splashes of garish color which have now been thrown on the canvas in the obvious belief that they would shine round the head of the

facts which had a significant bearing on Wagner's character, but which lent it no lustre. For instance, The Tribune gave an account of a letter which was in the hands of a staff correspondent in Bayreuth as long ago as 1891 which was luminously instructive on Wagner's method of wooing. It was a letter from the young musician, then chapelmaster at Königsberg, to Wilhelmine Planer, who in 1836 became his wife. The young and pretty actress had run away from the theatre at Königsberg in a pet, having been refused the part of Juliet in Shakespeare's tragedy, and was seeking, or had found, an engagement elsewhere. Wagner, deeply smitten by her charms, wrote the letter in question for the purpose of persuading her to return. He argued the case, then made a flat proposal of marriage, ending it with a threat to the effect that if she did not return and accept the hand he offered he would abandon all work, give himself up to drink and go to the devil as fast as possible. It seems scarcely probable that Herr Glasenapp was unaware of the existence of this letter, for it was in the collection of autographs owned by a most devoted friend of Wagner's, the tenor Tichatschek, who "created" the part of Rienzi, and won frantic eulogiums by refusing to permit his part to be curtailed of a single word or note after the first performance. Yet the story is significant, and we may be sure that had the ill-starred Minna threatened to kill herself unless Wagner married her the fact would have been set forth with pretty emphasis.

But grant that Herr Glasenapp never saw this letter; there is another, which he did see, which convicts him of "suppressio veri." Some two years ago this journal printed a letter from Wagner to his youthful friend the conductor Schindelmeisser, asking his aid in the procurement of a new engagement as chapelmaster. The letter was written within a year of his marriage to Minna, and stated that he was ready at any moment to leave Königsberg for a new field of activity, for his application for a divorce from his wife had already been filed in court. The Tribune printed this letter in translation and as a new contribution to Wagnerian biography. To the best of the edi-