

DEGENERATION OF THE DRAMA.

NORDAU'S NEW POINT OF ATTACK ON THE FRENCH STAGE.

The Latest Volume Both Bulky and Ill-Digested—Balzac Not a Realist—Studied in Jealousy and a Few Good Stories—One on Nordau Himself.

The atom of humanity named Simon Sudfeld, but known as Max Nordau, has just dropped another volume of essays, which in the French translation is called "Vus du Dehors." Like all of the critical and controversial work of Nordau, this collection is very "external," very much from the outside. An ardent believer in the flashpots of life, the pugnacious little doctor sets up for a profound psychologist. He digests, he digests, the novels and poems of his contemporaries, and then, after weighing them in the scales of a laboratory, he publishes the results. It is difficult to place his criticisms—they are neither physiological nor fiction. You read of a poet whose intellectual scheme is a novel, suddenly the shape of his ears is adduced as evidence of degeneration. He is a faun; his poetry is atavistic, deals in absurd images of experiences undergone by a cannibal ancestor. His method is very confusing.

Or a play is discussed with considerable skill—Nordau is a clever journalist—and we walk through three or four acts when, bang!—the past of the unfortunate author is hinged in to prove that a certain situation is but a memory of his aunt's fondness for young fellows in the long ago. It is quite the sort of criticism of the Nordau kind, but is it art, Maximilian?

Those who had the courage to wade through the bulky volume pompously labelled "Degeneration" found an enormous, though ill-digested, mass of facts. The writer had comprehended his subjects, and to make them fit his iron bed of a theory of universal degeneration the unfortunate artists, composers, poets, philosophers and romancers were stretched to one implacable length. If they didn't fit it, we betide them—their hair was pulled up by the roots. If too long, Surgeon Nordau calmly sawed off their head or their feet—it didn't matter which, depending, as it did, on his position at the operating table.

After the first indignation were away, the colossal impudence of the fake penetrated the brains of the fooled ones, and since then Nordau has not been taken seriously. He has a wolf at his door, a phantom wolf that growls and barks whenever he puts forth a new book. It is his "Degeneration." Now this is hardly fair to a man of brains, who writes in a lively, entertaining manner, who often has something to say. We knew that, carried away by the brilliant, sophistical theories of Cesare Lombroso, his disciple Nordau saw in every man of talent a criminal, in every man of genius a maniac. His Inferno of genius had as many circles as Dante's. He held divisions for the pseudo-genius, the *Motivo*, and it boasted sulphurous gulfs wherein such excellent men as Wagner, Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Zola, Richard Wagner, Dostoevsky, Verelaine, Maeterlinck and many other nineteenth century geniuses, more or less known, seethed and suffered for daring to be original. It was all too exact, too logical. The very standards in this case, anthropometric measurements à la Lombroso (whose name is Lev), applied to Beethoven, Michael Angelo, Dostoevsky, Goethe, would disclose insanity of some sort. Lombroso did diagnose Dante's case and found pronounced symptoms of marked epilepsy, mania of persecution and a sufferer from visions. Milton might be diagnosed, in any of the books, as a sufferer from epilepsy, mania of persecution, and a sufferer from visions.

However, when all symptoms fall these new literary man-house doctors fall back upon epilepsy, dear old epilepsy, disease of genius. All the big guns of art, literature, science, warfare, were epileptoids, from Caesar to Flaubert, Handel, Napoleon Bonaparte, Schopenhauer, Goethe, Schiller, Mahomet and many others there beautiful part-colored fits for the good of posterity. Schiller loved the smell of decaying apples—something in this, said the smiling Lombroso! And Schopenhauer—lan't his pessimism symptomatic? Hal! Let us see. Yes, he quarrelled with his mother when he was darkly disrespectful to Goethe—perhaps he had a nice Hamlet-like reason—was afraid of the cholera and detested bores. Symptoms, dangerous symptoms, all of them. But if he hadn't written "The World as Will and Representation," Schopenhauer's habits would have been set down to harmless eccentricities. Even Michael Angelo has no longer a moral leg to stand upon. See Lombroso in *Le Parle-greco's* life.

Well, after a slaughter of the innocents, magnificent in its extent and variety, Nordau set down to a serious study of the men he had attacked. The result is inflexible new book, with the addition of a series of studies on the modern French stage. It is the latter that pique our attention.

After proving to his own satisfaction that Balzac was not a realist, that Guy de Maupassant was an egomaniac, that Anatole France has the least talent, Monsieur Max starts us with favorable opinions on the work of Maurice Barrès. Now, Barrès had not written "Les Déracinés" when he first attracted the malevolent curiosity of Nordau, and his novels were sufficiently original and filled with thought stuff to merit some consideration. Nordau so for Max. Barrès was furiously assaulted in "Degeneration" as an anarchist, an immoralist, and what not. Since then he seems to have improved somewhat. Then we are treated to three studies of jealousy, superficial in character, in which are huddled the names of Shakespeare, Anatole France and Lucien Muhlfeld. Why not Nordau's also? He has suffered in his time from the worst kind of jealousy—jealousy of other men's gifts. *Othello*, it need hardly be said, is in our author's eyes a creature of the bull type, and a bull at the mating period of the year. Furious, he lowers his horns and charges at every other male of his species that approaches his sacred inclosure. But this is a physiological deal, not a psychological. Shakespeare—who, it is to be hoped, never reads Earth criticism in *Walhall*—meant a few other things with his figure of *Othello* than the mere exhibition of animal jealousy.

In Anatole France's charming novel "Les Rouges" there is a close study of jealousy by a writer, though not a Shakespeare. We confess without pride to missing the "Le Mauvais Désir" of M. Muhlfeld, whose study, so Dr. Nordau asserts, is clinical in its demonstration of the monster with the sensitive eyes. Let us pass over the reopening of the Yersin case. Nordau now makes some feeble assertions for his brutal and reckless assertions in his earlier volume. It needed no Nordau to inform the world the sort of man and poet Verlaine was, and how he was. Nordau now makes some feeble assertions for his brutal and reckless assertions in his earlier volume. It needed no Nordau to inform the world the sort of man and poet Verlaine was, and how he was. Nordau now makes some feeble assertions for his brutal and reckless assertions in his earlier volume. It needed no Nordau to inform the world the sort of man and poet Verlaine was, and how he was.

Therefore the folly of ascription to an author of all the ideas and acts of his character. Some day the worthy Nordau may realize that. He pitches into Henri de Bornier for "La Filie de l'Arélin," not because of its dullness alone, but for the selection of such a character. The one thing of interest in the article on M. de Bornier and his three or four plays is the violent attack on Ferdinand Brunetière, whose narrow-

ness of critical vision actually gets on Nordau's nerves. We all recall this solemn little man who spoke so pompously of the Bankruptcy of Science. What science? One is forced to ask. Nordau, unconsciously recognizing a kindred spirit, lashes with ink scourges the lamentable provincialisms of his share. M. de Brieux comes in for this share because he roasts with the times and utters a few platitudes. Nordau's just science in clerical circles for his plays. Suppose his scientific characters are weak in science; they furnish good subject matter for the dramatist. Paul Hervieu's powerful "Les Tenailles" and "La Loi de l'Homme," are castigated because the author poses a problem and does not offer the solution. This is very uncritical, brother Max. What has the dramatist to do with social or religious prophylaxis? Sufficient if he sets before us, according to the conventions of the theatre, a thesis dramatically considered. All the rest belongs to the pulpit.

Maurice Donnay also comes in for his share of hard knocks. He is "blagueur" of the *Chât Noir* order. He writes the *comédies roses*, and in "Le Torrent" emulates "Rommersholm," "A Doll's House" and "The Pillars of Society." That is because the death of Jean Jacques Rousseau and George Sand. There are some strong situations in "La Douleur," but Nordau won't have the piece. It is not a satire on real life; Donnay is not a painter of Parisian manners, &c., the very things for which he has been acclaimed. And Nordau's criticism of the course of a review of "Comment Finit l'Amour" speaks enthusiastically of *stratégie*, the faithful one who awaited for years the return of *Peer Gynt*—the most expressive figure that Leben has created—what's this? We rub our eyes with amazement. Praising Ibsen—Nordau? What next?

The article on François de Curel is long and rather interesting. Nordau believes in his aristocratic dramatics, and is at once a critic and a confessor, as the great living representative of the French literature. In solemn silence his audience heard him read the first few pages of his "Divagations"—his prose has at times the same cheerful irrelevance as Arthur Rimbaud's poetry. He is a man of letters, followed by indignation and stupefaction. What? How? Who? Why? Where? Finally a general in full uniform arose brusquely, and to the noisy clanging music of spur and sabre, left the hall, angrily crying:

"The fellow who is reading us this idiotic nonsense is either a traitor or a fool." Nordau pleasingly adds that he cannot contradict the military gentleman. Of such is the kingdom of criticism *chez Nordau*.

The other anecdote that he dug up is always worth retelling. One day when in 1879—she went to visit the Minister of Instruction. There, being detained in the ante-chamber, she fell into a pleasant conversation with a well-kept old gentleman who wore the rosette of the Legion of Honor. After a half hour's chat the unknown arose, contemplated his watch and then bowed to Mme. Sand.

"If I could always find such a charming companion I would visit the Ministry often," he gallantly said and went away. The novelist called an attendant.

"Who is that amiable old gentleman?" she asked. All that was M. Jules Sandeau, of the French Academy. And he, on being told, inquired the lady's name. George Sand! There must have been a lot of head shaking over the mutability of human affairs, particularly of love, when these former lovers reached their respective homes. Sandeau, indeed, hardly remains you was a member of the men—for whom Aurore Dudevant left her husband. And she had forgotten their very faces. Alas! Argues Nordau, for the poet's dream of love and its durability.

Having about exhausted his waiting list among contemporary poets and fiction makers, Dr. Nordau invades the theatre, with the result that in 1913 he will publish another book explaining that he was too tired to read the music of good old Jules Verne, Dumas fils, De Bornier, Brieux, Paul Hervieu, Donnay, de Curel, Jacques Normand, Octave Mirbeau, Sardou, Jules Lemaitre and Edmond Rostand, for these are the men treated. Incidentally, he hurls a large lump of mud at D'Annunzio, who is called ever again the rooster of the modern. Why? For simply daring to write as he pleases and not as Nordau wishes. But "decadent" no longer means anything—indeed, it is an honorable appellation. Usually it signifies talent of an unusual order.

One thing we can't help noting. Octave Mirbeau was called *critique* for praising Maeterlinck in 1890. He certainly overdid the compliment and the music of the "Belgian Shakespeare." Nordau foamed at the mouth—metaphorically speaking—when he considered this slip of Mirbeau's. He is a big, strong talent. He is poet, dramatist, critic and the very devil of a good fellow! Is it possible that Nordau has discovered all this through personal acquaintance? Perhaps the funniest thing in the book is the reason he gives for his attack upon the De Maupassant memorial in the Parc Monceau—the nurse girls and *filles de nuit* who were the cause of the laughing man, and what could a virtuous mamma answer?

A brief résumé of the opinions of the author on the modern French stage will not elevate one's opinion as to its critical acuity. We prefer Augustin Filon, Brander Matthews, Charles Henry Meltzer and other writers on the theme. "The Psychology of Alexander Dumas fils" opens the series. Dumas the younger, we discover, suffered from a form of *Cesaire* madness, known as delusions of grandeur. He once was unlucky enough to say that he wished he had been born a dictator. That phrase suited the Nordau horoscope. Least one wished to be a diplomat. What boy has not yearned to be an engine driver, a fireman, a President or a policeman? Nordau, furthermore, discovers the fact that Dumas all his life long inveighed against conventional marriage because he was born out of wedlock; that he sympathized with the cocotte for similar reasons, and a lot more of the same sort. Dumas wrote as he did not because of subjective "impulsions," but because he was, like most Parisian dramatists, an opportunist. If the Naquet divorce law had passed a year or two earlier, Dumas would have produced some thrilling plays on the evils of divorce in family life. What Nordau or anti-humorists of his type never see is that a dramatist is first an artist, then a social agitator. It is so with Ibsen, and so with Dumas. The shock of the battle, and the clash of situations are the desirable things. Let life manufacture them; the dramatist will fashion them for the footlights.

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A REMARKABLE MUSIC FESTIVAL A WEEK LONG.

Six Boys Devoted to the Performance of the Profoundest of Sacred Music by the Artists and Religious Community of Moravians in the Lehigh Valley.

The typical music festival is not always a thing of beauty for a joy even for a few brief hours. But out in the little town of Bethlehem, Pa., will begin to-morrow a festival of unique nature. For six days people will listen to the works of the supreme master of the most profound and interesting form of music, the polyphonic. Bethlehem is about to hold its third festival of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, and so great was the fame of the previous two that this one is to be the most ambitious of the kind ever attempted in this country. A little over three years ago Bethlehem for more than twenty a home of religious music was unknown as such to the outer world. But on March 27, 1905, in the old Moravian Church, Bach's B minor mass was given in its entirety for the first time in America. Some wandering houndspurs of the press made record of this significant event, but it was not until the week that in May, 1907, the same church would be the scene of a three days' festival of Bach's music, in which the "Christmas Oratorio," the "St. Matthew Passion" and the B minor mass would all be performed. The festival was so successful that a second festival of the Lehigh Valley prepared such musical wonders.

This year another festival was announced, more prevalent in riches of the old time than the last previous one. Beginning to-morrow it will continue till Saturday night, and while the same three great works were heard two years ago it is the central figure, the plan is now more elaborate and interesting. The moving spirit in the enterprise and the author of the plan of the programmes is J. Fred Wolfe, the organist of the Moravian Church. He will conduct the concerts and he it was who inspired the singers with an enthusiasm quite uncommon and who made them willing to undertake a number of rehearsals appealing to the contemplative.

The festival in the course of its six days is to present music of Bach treating of the life of Christ. The first two days embody the Christmas thought, the birth of the Savior. As a sort of prelude to-morrow evening will be sung the cantata, "Sleepers Wake" and the "Magnificat." The festival will be followed on Tuesday by the great Christmas oratorio. The next two days deal with the accomplishment of the mission of Christ upon earth, the Wednesday music serving as a sort of introduction to that of Thursday. The former day will give the second Bach oratorio, the "Christmas Eve" and the two solo cantatas, "Strike, oh strike, long looked for hour," and "I with my cross staff gladly wander."

On Thursday the masterpiece of all oratorio, the marvellous "St. Matthew Passion" will be sung. The last two days deal with the Ascension and the proclamation of the faith of the church. On Friday the Easter cantata, "The heavens laugh," and the Ascension cantata, "God goeth up with shouting," will be sung, and on Saturday the festival will come to an end with the cantata "The resurrection of Christ." The festival will be followed on Sunday by the great Christmas oratorio. The next two days deal with the accomplishment of the mission of Christ upon earth, the Wednesday music serving as a sort of introduction to that of Thursday. The former day will give the second Bach oratorio, the "Christmas Eve" and the two solo cantatas, "Strike, oh strike, long looked for hour," and "I with my cross staff gladly wander."

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It is Found That a Large Part of Them Are Kindled by Locomotives.

The annual report of the State Geologist of New Jersey shows that the number of forest fires that were destroyed by fire last year. Only a few small fires occurred north of Raritan Bay, but the southern two-thirds of the State shows on the map a goodly sprinkling of black spots which mark the forest fires. The largest fire occurred on Mt. Airy in Burlington and Ocean counties, a little inland from Barnegat, where 75,000 acres were burned over, the fire extending to the coast and continuing for ten days, burning over a tract twenty miles long and from one to eight miles wide. Rain finally put it out.

The little village of Junga Neck was in great danger of being destroyed and a considerable amount of fine pine and cedar was burned. This fire was started by sparks from a locomotive near Woodmansy. The statistics of the year show that twenty-one of the sixty-five fires in fourteen counties were kindled by locomotives. Nearly all were started near railroad tracks by sparks lighting dry leaves or grass. In Tucker's ten acres of oak, hickory and another place several cords of cordwood were set on fire by a locomotive. Near Whiting's a fire due to locomotive sparks destroyed 100 acres of oak and hickory in the whole State 98,850 acres of timber land were burned over and in most cases no attempt was made to extinguish the fire.

While locomotive sparks were prominent as a cause of forest fires, careless farmers were still more culpable. According to their credit twenty-two fires that got beyond their control while they were burning corn or clover in a farmyard near Bridgeton was so foolish as to attempt to burn off a small lot on a very windy day. The result was a fire that spread over 800 acres of excellent oak and pine timber, killing most of it and involving a loss of \$12,000. Another farmer, who had a share of mischief. A party of them set fire to 800 acres of oak and chestnut on Green Pond Mountain, killing a lot of fine timber. Another party of them set fire to 1,100 acres, the loss amounting to \$4,000. In the State of New Jersey, there were four in total and 130 acres of oak and chestnut were devastated by a locomotive. The farmer who was said to be desired to see the woods burn.

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community, and toward midnight of Christmas Eve had the little congregation in singing Adam Dreese's hymn: "Not Jerusalem, Holy Bethlehem." That was given us Christ to save us.

It was a hymn written by Dreese when he was court chapel master at Anstadt and Sebastian Bach was organist. And from this hymn the little assembly on that Christmas eve took the suggestion to call their lowly settlement Bethlehem. It seemed as if the spirit of old Bach were present for the very beginning out yonder in the Lehigh Valley.

And now for the musical history of this community. It began with its birth, for the grand old Lutheran chorale came from Europe with the settlers and there came also the active missionary spirit of their Church, which leads it to endeavor to spread abroad the cultivation of religious music. As early as 1743 futes, horns and viols appeared in the service of the Church, and in 1746 began the use of the solemn and affecting quartets of trombones, which is still employed, and which is one of the most touching beauties of the festival. In 1748 the theological students of the town formed a musical club, and in 1748 the first organ entered the town. In 1748 no less a person than Benjamin Franklin wrote to his wife that he had heard very fine music in Bethlehem, which leads to the fact that the organ was associated with futes, oboes, horns and trumpets.

In 1780 Bethlehem had fifteen instrumental players on violins, violas, cellos, horns, futes, oboes and trumpets. In 1800 a bassoon came to town, and in 1806 a double bass. In 1796 a string quartet was organized and the first organ was played by Papa Haydn was its daily food, for in the same year the Rev. Emanuel Nitschman brought to Bethlehem the first copies of the quartets. He was himself a violinist and one of the first violins in the first Bethlehem Orchestra.

In 1806 was organized a society for the purpose of giving musical performances, and in thirteen years this society gave 241 concerts, though the receipts were at all times extremely small. Parts of Haydn's "Creation" were given in this society as early as 1811. In 1820 it formed the Bethlehem Philharmonic Society, and the climax of its usefulness was reached in 1873. It had in 1870 an orchestra of twenty-five. These players were amateurs, and to this day the work of amateur instrumental players is a feature of the music of Bethlehem. At the festival of 1901, most of the orchestral players were amateurs, but this year the Philharmonic Orchestra will be employed. Of this feature of the musical life of the town H. E. Krebber wrote two years ago:

"It does not appear that Bethlehem differs to any great extent from other American cities of its size in the cultivation of instrumental music, except possibly in the earnestness which has so remarkable an illustration in the willingness of amateurs to go through the drudgery of rehearsals week after week, month after month, for the sake of the festival. This earnestness, however, may be the fruit of tradition. Bethlehem's musicians, at the time when the town's specifically Moravian culture was organized, were not professional practitioners, but tradesmen, mechanics and farmers, who in their cultivation of the art performed a duty to the church, while they satisfied their artistic predilections. There was, indeed, little use for professional musicians so long as the Moravian influence were dominant. Musical instruction was given in the schools and there was no field for the theatre and dance orchestras.

It is said that though there were 100 violins in the town, dancing parties at the hotels had to send elsewhere for their music up to 1860, for dancing was forbidden by the moral code of the Church. Music remained a domestic and social pastime and a religious function, and was cultivated as a refreshment from the labors of ordinary occupations. There were six or seven other religious sects the Moravians, found some difficulty in following the dictates of their own consciences in Europe, and began to emigrate to this country. In 1741 they founded the town of Bethlehem. Though that year only one house had been built, Zinzendorf came to visit the new com-

Vertical text on the right edge of the page, including names like 'The Sun', 'New York', 'Brooklyn', and other publication information.