SOME NEW BOOKS.

Richard Wagner.

If the long expected autobiography of RICHARD WAGNER, *My Life* (authorized English translation published by Dodd, Mead & Co.) had appeared after the death of Cosima Wagner a cynic would have been justified in saying that the composer's widow was indulging in a posthumous revenge. Certainly nothing he ever wrote in his voluminous literary works has produced in the minds of his readers so definite an impression of meanness and mightiness as do these memoirs. The marked impression is that Wagner was more Mime and Alberich, even Fafner, than Siegfried or Tristan or Wotan. His contemporaries have described Will Shakespeare as a lovable man, both merry and melancholy in his moods. We like to think of him as a Hamlet or a Prospero. But Wagner kept all that was great, noble, poetic for his scores; in his private life he often behaved like a malicious, a malignant monkey. He lied. He whimpered when he begged, and he was always begging. He invariably deceived women attracted by his genius and a magnetic personality. And he abused every friend he ever had, abused them when living and after death in this book. A singularly repulsive, fascinating man and a brave one. What was his reason for giving to the world so unflattering a portrait of himself?

In his lifetime he made enemies daily because of his venomous tongue. Some evil fairy bestowed upon him the gift of saying aloud what was in his mind, and not infrequently he hit the nail on the head, told the truth in high places where concealment would have been a virtue. He was a moral typhoon that swept away the evil and good alike in its elemental fury.

I.

We are informed that between the years 1868 and 1873 Wagner compiled these memoirs from diaries and other memoranda which he had preserved for thirty-five years. He dictated from these notes to Cosima and, it is said, Ludwig II. of Bavaria. The book was set up by French compositors who did not understand German; twelve copies were printed and the type then distributed. Of these twelve copies eight were held by his wife and four were entrusted among some other friends. It is a significant fact that Friedrich Nietzsche read the proofs of the work, and while he never broke the seal of secrecy his knowledge of the peculiar Wagner psychology enabled him to write his later attacks on the master from superior vantage ground. Strictly speaking there is less novelty in "My Life" than we had expected. The earlier biographies by Glasenapp and Henry T. Finck, the last named being the best in English and ranking with the best in German, and others, not to mention Wagner's own writings, contain much that is here retold by the composer. The funeral ceremonies of Weber, the story of Spontini, the first performances of "Liebesverbot" and Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony" and a score of other anecdotes have long since been in print. What is fresh is the details of Wagner's childhood, his courting of and marriage with Minna Planer and the account of his first meetings with Cosima Liszt, then the wife of his dearest friend and worshipper Hans von Bülow. What he has omitted—or is it the fault of Bayreuth?—would fill two more volumes of the same size as these. He slurs over the Wesendonck affair, which is all the more curious because only a few years ago Bayreuth permitted, nay edited, the publication of the Wagner-Wesendonck correspondence, chiefly his letters. Furthermore Wagner, the friend of kings when he died, seems to have forgotten completely his share in the Dresden uprising of 1849. That he was a redhot revolutionist is proved by his "Art and Revolution." An intimate friend of that sombre, enigmatic nihilist Bakunin (Bakounine is the better spelling), Wagner it was who inducted the harmless Roeckel into the movement, and not, as he vaguely insinuates, was he led away by Roeckel. Ferdinand Praeger's "Wagner as I Knew Him" is a document of profound value, one that was not invalidated by Ashton Ellis's attack entitled "1849; a Vindication." But after all Wagner was only an amateur socialist.

All the composers of his day, the big as well as the little, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Spohr, Marschner, Spontini, Hiller, Berlioz, were attacked by Wagner, who saw with the clairvoyant's eye of hatred and with a touch of his baneful pen transformed them into mean, grotesque, even vile personalities. Heine didn't escape, nor Hebbel and Auerbach. But all this is the obverse side of the medal, as we shall presently see. This little, selfish monster of genius, sickly, puny in size, his mask of appalling ugliness, bowlegged (he wore a long cloak to hide this defect, for, as he said, he didn't wish to be taken for a Jew!), with large, protruberant blue eyes, from which at times gleamed the most extraordinary fire; this stunted man, hated and despised, nevertheless could make himself very attractive. He was full of fun and boyish antics to old age. Praeger relates that when in London conducting the stodgy Philharmonic Orchestra Wagner's exuberance took the form of standing on his head. Wagner never grew up; his was a case of arrested moral development. He retained the naive spites and vanities and savageries of his boyhood, while his intellect and emotional development had become those of a superman. He neither forgot nor forgave. He was Dantesque in his memory of personal affronts, and if he couldn't put all his adversaries in hell, as did the Italian poet, he remembered them in his autobiography, and in at least one instance he transferred the personality of a hostile critic into the scene of "Die Meistersinger"—*Beckmesser* is a portrait, exaggerated perhaps, of Eduard Hanslick, the Vienna music critic. Hanslick was present when the poem was read, and Wagner relates that he left deeply offended. It is anything to wonder over? Nor is it surprising that Hanslick too never forgot. A trait of Wagner's is his constant amazement when a man or a woman he has insulted or betrayed dares to manifest feelings of retaliation. In these matters he is genuinely childish. To the very end, despite his imperial success, he never succeeded in bringing his inner nature into harmony with the external world. A man of genius, he was a stranger in his own land to the end.

We have said that the significant portions of these memoirs are set forth not in those sections that deal with the artist's psychology but in his purely human relations. Of him it might be said that nothing inhuman was foreign to him. And we propose to deal with this side of him. Mr. Finck has painted a very sympathetic portrait, while Glasenapp is too much of Bayreuth to offer the entire truth. It is a pity that the monumental life begun by the late Hon. Mrs. Burrell was not finished. It is not printed but engraved throughout and illustrated by facsimiles of every document quoted. A copy is in the British Museum, and the original is in the possession of her husband. As a critic has said, "many as have been the biographies of the composer, and loud as has been the chorus of praise bestowed upon each, it was reserved for Mrs. Burrell to establish the accurate form of his mother's maiden name." "My Life," notwithstanding its revelation of a mean, tricky, lofty soul, one that wavered along the scale from Caliban to Prospero, will rank among the great autobiographies of literature. Its place on the shelf will be between Benvenuto Cellini and Goethe. ("Wahrheit und Dichtung aus Meinem Leben"). The irresponsible sculptor and the wise poet—surely Wagner had in him something of the stuff of both. Unmoral, reckless, consumed by the loftiest of ideals, shoving aside all that opposed him, breaking faith with man and woman alike, turning his sorrows into passionate song, vainglorious and cowardly, lustful and outrageous for his ideal, always keeping his star in view, he was kin to Cellini and he was kin to Goethe. The world will not willingly let die such a book as this.

II.

Nietzsche wrote some time about 1887-88, "Was Wagner German at all? We have some reason for asking this. It is difficult to discern in him any German trait whatever. Being a great learner, he has learned to imitate much that is German; that is all. His character itself is in opposition to what has hitherto been regarded as German, not to speak of the German musician! His father was a stage player named Geyer. A Geyer is almost an Adler (Jewish names both). What has hitherto been put into circulation as the 'Life of Wagner' is fable convenue, if not worse. I confess my distrust of every point which rests solely on the testimony of Wagner himself. He had not pride enough for any truth whatever about himself, nobody was less proud; he remained just like Victor Hugo, true to himself even in biographical matters—he remained a stage player." Elsewhere Nietzsche warns us against the autobiographies of great men.

"His father was a stage player named Geyer." Coming from Nietzsche this statement is not surprising, for he had read these memoirs while at Villa Trietschen. Why then, it will be asked, does this fact not appear in the first page of the autobiography? Despite asseverations to the contrary we suspect that Bayreuth edited not wisely but too well. Others besides Nietzsche had seen the opening line of the work: "I am the son of Richard Wagner." The late Felix Mottl in the presence of several well known music critics of this city declared in 1904 that he had read the above statement. He also told the same story to German journalists. Mr. Finck as long ago as 1896 informed the present writer that at Wahnfried one could see the portrait of Ludwig Geyer, Wagner's "stepfather," and of Wagner's mother, but not a sign of the real (or putative) father. This statement we personally corroborated. Now this doesn't prove that Richard Wagner was of Jewish descent, though there is a strong reason for believing that the versatile Geyer, painter, poet, musician and actor, had Jewish blood in his veins. To tell the truth Wagner's mother displayed more marked Hebraic lineaments; her name was Bertz, as Mrs. Burrell discovered. Stranger still is the fact that Richard Geyer, as he was known at school, looks more like the Wagners than Geyer; he resembles his elder brother, a veritable Wagner, much more than he does his half (or whole) sister, Cecilia Geyer. So the physiognomists must make of this anomaly what they will. Of course the chief point of interest is Wagner's chronic hatred of the Jews, of his attack on the Jewish element in music.

If the Geyer story be the truth, then the music of Wagner, sensuous, Oriental, brilliant, pompous, richly colored, is Jewish, more Jewish than the music of Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn or Goldmark. But let us see what the original of this contention has to say himself on the subject.

Of Wagner's own opinion concerning his paternity he leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader. Before such frankness the most seasoned will quail. Sir William Davenant is said to have blackened the memory of his mother in his not very laudable endeavor to prove that he was the natural son of William Shakespeare. Possibly that is why he is known to posterity as "Rare Sir William Davenant." Perhaps Wagner too, in his anxiety to demonstrate that his father was a man of lively talents, hinted that his supposed father, Friedrich Wagner, was too much away from home of nights and that "even when the police official, his father, was spending his evenings at the theatre, the worthy actor, Ludwig Geyer, generally filled his place in the family circle, and it seems had frequently to appease my mother, who, rightly or wrongly, complained of her husband." This is simply breath catching. "Seems, good mother!" Was there ever such a Hamlet son to such a queen mother? Geyer married her and her big brood after the elder Wagner had gone to another world. Richard was not called Richard Wagner till the age of 14. He was born May 22, 1813, in Leipsic. The house was once a Judengasse, and is now the quarters of the fur merchants.

Geyer did not live long. He took the liveliest interest in Richard, especially when he suspected that the boy had musical ability. The mother of Wagner came from Weissenfels and she told her son that her parents had been bakers there; later authorities say mill owners. There was an air of mystery surrounding her antecedents, perhaps because of some personal caprice. She would never give the correct spelling of her name, Perthes, not Bertz, being then the accepted form. A "Weimar prince" had seen to her education at a high class Leipsic boarding school. More romantic! That she was a clever, witty, well educated woman there is no doubt. Harassed by poverty and a large family, she contrived through all of it to keep her head above water. Wagner writes that "her chief characteristics seem to have been a keen sense of humor and an amiable temper, so we need not suppose that it was merely a sense of duty toward the family of a departed comrade that afterward induced the admirable Ludwig Geyer to enter into matrimony with her when she was no longer youthful, but rather that he was impelled to that step by a sincere and warm regard for the widow of his friend." Wagner always spoke better of Geyer than of his father or mother.

The first volume is in two parts. Part I., 1813 to 1842, is devoted to his childhood and school days, musical studies, travels in Germany, first marriage and Paris, 1839 to 1842. Part II. is devoted to the years in Dresden, 1842 to 1850, and comprises descriptions of "Rienzi," "The Flying Dutchman," Liszt, Spontini, Marschner, "Tannhäuser," Franck, Schumann, Semper, the architect; Gutzkow, Auerbach, "Lohengrin," Spohr, Gluck, Heller, Devrient, his mother's death, Bakunin and the May insurrection, his flight to Weimar, Zürich, Paris, Bordeaux, Geneva and again to Zürich. The prose style of the original, not of the mediocre English translation, is free from Wagner's accustomed obscurities and clogged sentences, which we meet in his pretentious and turgid studies of music and the drama. Doubtless Cosima, aided by Nietzsche, made these memoirs presentable, for Wagner, while a copious writer, is absolutely devoid of ear for the finer harmonies of prose; indeed his prose is only one degree worse than the doggerel he too often calls poetry.

His childhood was spent in dreams. He was very sensitive to things that terrified, such as ghosts, shadows and the whole battery of German fairy tales. He read Hoffman's stories and they did him no good. He composed tragedies in the style of "Hamlet" and "Lear"; he adored Weber and "Freischütz"; but the major impression of his life was Beethoven's "Fidelio." Later came the symphonies and the string quartets; yet the opera was, musically speaking, Wagner's starting point. What will be matter of surprise to many is the fact that Wagner was no middle aged student of music, as has been generally understood. He was always studying, to be sure, only he began earlier than musical histories have told us. He was not a prodigy; he never half mastered the technique of the pianoforte, an instrument which he cursed, yet could never satisfactorily compose unless at the keyboard, and sang like a crow. He began with Müller and ended with Weinlig in theory. He had composed a pianoforte sonata by 19. He wrote songs. He longed to be a composer of opera. He was omnivorous in his reading, but passed his school examinations with difficulty if at all. In a word, a lad of genius who was determined to seek such spiritual nourishment as he craved and none other. No wonder his schoolmasters shook their heads. At the university he indulged in all the student vices. His particular adventures as a gambler, while dramatic, even thrilling, sound a trifle too much like French fiction to be credible. Petted by his sisters, alternately spoiled and neglected by a capricious though well meaning mother, Wagner's home life made up in affection what it lacked in discipline. His life long he was to feel the loss of a father, who would have shaped his conduct as well as his genius.

His mother could not endure the notion of a theatrical career for her son—her dislike of the theatre was well grounded—so she allowed him to become a musician. He literally began conducting before he could read a score. However, the operas he waved his wand over were by Auber and Donizetti, and no doubt the youthful leader used a piano partition. At Lauchstadt he met Minna Planer, a pretty, vivacious actress. Wagner was the musical director of the Magdeburg Theater Company, of which Minna was also a member. They were both young; they loved, and oddly enough it was Richard who urged a legitimate union. The lady had been imprudent so often that it did not occur to her that any one would be foolish enough to marry her. She had a past, a daughter, Nathalie, being one of its witnesses. Wagner knew this. He tells, not without a certain gusto, the sordid story of her life, her early seduction. Why in the name of all that is decent he should dwell upon such details we may only wonder. If it is to blacken the memory of an unhappy woman who was his best, his only friend through the most awful trials, well and good; base as is the motive, it is at least understandable. But while this aspersion puts Cosima on a pedestal it lowers Wagner, for he confesses he took the woman for better or worse; that after she ran away from him with a certain Dietrich he received her back; he accepted the illegitimate child; he accepted her doubtful temper, her ignorance, finally her tippling and drug eating habits. At times he behaved like an angel of light. He forgave so much that you wonder that he didn't forgive all. Minna was not a companion for a man of sensitive nerves, as was Richard. What other woman would have been? And those critics who inspired by Bayreuth attack the unfortunate actress should remember that she it was who washed his linen in Paris, during the three dark years from 1839 to 1842; who cooked, slaved and saved for him; who stood with rock bottom fortitude his terrific outbursts, his peevishness, his fickleness.

It is a risky business, this judging the respective rights and wrongs of a husband and wife; nevertheless justice should be done Minna. He did not love her long; yet such a dance of death did this self-absorbed musician fiddle for his weary spouse that one reads with relief of her death, not described in these memoirs. Goethe, the superb and icy egoist, as is commonly supposed, broke down entirely at the death of his wife, Christiane Vulpius, an uneducated woman of intemperate habits, pretty but of common birth. Kneeling at her bedside and seizing her hands cold in death, this so-called impassive poet and voluptuary cried: "Thou wilt not forsake me! No, no; thou must not forsake me!" And Goethe was a greater poet than Wagner and a greater man. But Wagner was only too glad to be relieved of his matrimonial burden. He was already the lover of his friend's wife.

III.

Perhaps this lady may enlighten the world some day as to the methods she employed in managing her hitherto untamable spouse. Past 50, past the storm and stress of a life rich in miseries and economical in its distribution of favors, Wagner knew that he was in safe harbor after he became the friend of the King. Cosima knew it too. Von Bülow was an exacting husband. Ferdinand Lassalle has described Cosima as a pedant in petticoats, though a true daughter of Liszt in her brilliancy and personal charm. She saw that Von Bülow would always remain a pianist, a very dry, though intellectual artist; that the future was Wagner's. She did not hesitate to sacrifice all, her husband, her father, and she went off with Wagner. Nietzsche, who later was intimate in this circle, must there have formed his conception of supermen and superwomen. Nothing counted but personal inclination; Siegmund and Sieglinde, Siegfried and Brünnhilde, Tristan and Isolde—each a law to himself, to herself. Poor Liszt was shocked not alone because of the moral aspect of the case but because of the unhappiness brought upon his favorite pupil, Von Bülow; last and principally, Cosima to remarry had to become a Protestant.

Wagner describes his growing love for Cosima. Once it took the freakishly sentimental desire to lift her into a wheelbarrow and wheel her home. Not Teutonic this, as Nietzsche would have said. (Nietzsche did not come off without scars in his friendship for Cosima. He, so it was asserted by competent authorities, loved her more than he did the music of Richard.) Minna was cognizant of the growing intrigue between her man and the other woman. She must have been quite broken by this time, for she had gone through the Wesendonck affair and it must be confessed had come off with flying colors in that stormy encounter. After the Dresden revolution Wagner, who had only manipulated the church bells and had risked his friend Roeckel's life by sending him across the line for a water ice, the day being hot, fled to Weimar, where he enjoyed for a few days the hospitality of Franz Liszt and his Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein at their house on the hill overlooking the river Ilm, called the Altenburg. Naturally he says little of how he repaid his hosts at a banquet given in his honor. He abused all the guests, got drunk and was only brought to his senses when Liszt threatened him with expulsion if he didn't apologize to Von Bülow, Tausig, Cornelius and the others. He knew Liszt too well to hesitate and did as he was told; therefore Liszt, Liszt who gave "Lohengrin" its first production, who sent Wagner thousands, who furnished him musical ideas, also a devoted spouse, Cosima, Liszt is shown in anything but flattering colors in this book. Verily Wagner was obsessed by the evil angel of truth telling. Like the character in the play, he always saw the king naked. And this, whether we like his ingratitude or not, may constitute in the future the weightiest value to his utterances.

But, honest to the point of disgusting, he exhibits a clamlike reticence in a quarter where he might have been more expansive. Not that his comparative silence regarding his relations at Zürich with the Wesendonckś was actuated by any awakened sense of chivalry. No, his letters reveal the reverse. The truth is he cut a poor figure in that ugly episode. Minna intercepted a letter and sought an interview with Otto Wesendonck, who promptly warned Wagner to leave the town. And Wagner did leave, and in a panic. He tells his story as obliquely as he dare, but the facts are against him. There were too many witnesses for him to prevaricate, and we wonder that Frau Cosima printed this present story when the Wagner-Wesendonck letters (and Wagner's words) do so contradict the autobiography. The study of Hans Bélart entitled "Richard Wagner at Zürich" gives an unvarnished but truthful version of the scandal. How far the lady was culpable we do not know, as her letters to Wagner, except a few, have not been published. But we do know that she was the Isolde of his Tristan; that out of their great tribulation grew the marvellous music drama. And that is all we need know.

If readers of "My Life" when disgusted by the pettiness of the author would only recollect that this pigmy with the giant brain gave us the sublime last act of "Götterdämmerung" — as sublime as a page from Æschylus or an act from "King Lear;" gave us the Shakespearian humor, fantasy and rich humanity of "Die Meistersinger," and, finally, the glowing love poem of "Tristan and Isolde," then Wagner the sorely beset and erring mortal would be forgotten in Wagner the Titan. We smile at John Ruskin's attempt to prove that only a moral man can produce great art. Alas! What would he have said of Richard Wagner? Therefore, why should we sit in judgment on the man? His temperament was abnormal, his health wretched, though he was not the "degenerate," superior or otherwise, painted by Nordau, who stole all his critical thunder from Nietzsche's "Der Fall Wagner." "Degenerates" do not compose a "Tristan" or "The Ring." Wagner's faculty of attention was geared to a tremendous pitch, and "degenerates" are particularly feeble in this respect. He was all intellect and emotion, and if in his last years he became unduly sentimental over the sufferings of dogs and guinea pigs, also became a sloppy, vague socialist, and indulged in some decidedly queer pranks during the Ludwig affair, we had better set it down to the strain of his early years, to his age, as was the Tolstoy case, and to his protracted conflict for his ideals. And what a glorious fighter he was! In the deepest despair he would rouse himself and begin anew, and this lasted over thirty years. You forgive his childlike enjoyment of luxury when it did come, after his fiftieth year. He was a "wicked" man like Tolstoy in his youth; both ended in a vapor. Both of sentimental humanitarianism, though Wagner remained "harder"—in the Nietzschian sense.

We confess to finding the second volume—the proofreading is extremely faulty throughout—a trifle less interesting than the first. It ranges from 1850 to 1861; the entire work is over 900 pages, and deals with the Nibelungen Ring, Zürich, Liszt, Schopenhauer, London, Venice, the various stadia in the progress of "Tristan and Isolde," Weimar, Paris, and the fiasco of "Tannhäuser," Vienna, and again Zürich, Stuttgart and finally Munich. He had to flee Vienna because of debts, although he insulted a wealthy Jewish banker by borrowing 1,000 gulden from him, giving a banquet to singers and musicians and when the banker visited him, called down the stairs "No dirty Jews are admitted." This phrase "dirty Jew" was often on Wagner's tongue. He insulted the great conductor Herman Levi thus. He mocked Tichhatschek, the tenor, who originated his *Rienzi*, and retailed scandal about his early idol, Wilhelmine Schroeder-Devrient, who was too fond of handsome young officers. Wagner spared no one. Karl Ritter, whose mother did so much for him, giving him an annual pension; Van Hornstein, who refused him at the last a huge sum; Princess Metternich, Morny, Louis Napoleon, all lent him large sums, as did Otto Wesendonck, yet he mentions them coldly. His brothers-in-law, Brockhaus and Avenarius, he slights for the same reason, they refused him money. To discover the real Wagner read the Liszt-Wagner correspondence. The two men stand revealed, Liszt, the antipodes of Wagner, noble, patient, always giving, always praising or encouraging, seldom criticising. And it may be confessed that at this period Wagner's feelings toward Liszt, as shown in the letters, are edifying. He was not altogether rotten, else so many people wouldn't have loved, have worshipped him. Adversities, if they strengthened the keystone of his art, made his temper unbearable. But no idiosyncrasy can be summoned as an apology for his behavior in the Jessie Laussot affair at Bordeaux. And he tells it all so disinterestedly.

By temperament pessimistic, nevertheless in his artistic theories Wagner was an optimist. He had begun as a disciple in philosophy of Feuerbach, but a copy of "The World as Will and Representation," by Arthur Schopenhauer, topsy-turvied the composer, whose later poems became tinged with the world woe (Weltschmerz) of the cynical sage of Frankfort. This pessimism was personal in Wagner's case; it was not so much Weltschmerz as Selbstschmerz (self-pity). He sent the poem of "The Ring" to Schopenhauer, who abused it heartily to his disciples. Yet Wagner writes with smirking self-satisfaction that Schopenhauer had been much impressed. How much impressed he was we all know now. He pencilled at the end of the first act of "Die Walküre, where the stage direction is "quick curtain!"—"high time" (höchste Zeit). Schopenhauer, who admired the music of Rossini and blew plaintive melodies on the flute, disliked the incest theme in "Die Walküre," and even denied the composer any musical ability whatever. Possibly this same Schopenhauer, whose chief work also opened the eyes of Nietzsche, was at the close one of the causes of the break between Wagner and his ardent apostle, the author of that brilliant, enthusiastic book, "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth."

Nietzsche had outgrown Schopenhauer when the music festival of 1876 inaugurated the opening of the Bayreuth music drama. His Wagner worship had begun to wane; he saw his god in the full glare of worldly glory and he noted the feet of clay, noted that the ex-revolutionist of 1849 bowed very low to royalty, and also realized that Wagner did not propose to share his throne, not even the lowest step, with any one. He left Bayreuth thoroughly disillusionized, though he joined the Wagner family at Sorrento the following November. He published his "Thoughts Out of Season," and there were those who detected the tiny rift in the lute of friendship. Wagner too felt the coolness, but he wrote Nietzsche a brief, cordial letter. In 1878 appeared "Human, All Too Human," and henceforth Bayreuth was silent as the tomb on the name of Nietzsche. The friends never met again, and when "Parsifal" was produced in 1882 at Bayreuth Nietzsche threw overboard his Wagnerian baggage and forswore the ideals of his former master. The master had long since thrown Nietzsche to the winds. When a disciple ceased to be useful he was dropped, as were Von Bülow, Von Hornstein, Ritter and Liszt. In Meyerbeer Wagner encountered metal of his own kind; he could never catch this wily Berlin born composer off his guard. Hence his eloquent abuse.

IV.

What could he not have told us about his relations with the crazy idealist Ludwig II., who just twenty-five years ago sank in Lake Starnberg clutching in his death grasp the unfortunate Dr. von Gudden! We know that in Munich, where Wagner was detested because he helped to run the King deeper in debt, he was nicknamed "the Lola Montez of Ludwig," th us referring to the passion entertained by the King's father years earlier for that beautiful Irish adventuress. The psychopathic King spent huge sums on the composer and his letters make remarkable reading, as do those addressed to the Viennese actor Josef Kainz, published in the *Gartenlaube*. For the sake of his friend Wagner indulged in such fantistic tricks that must have made high heaven weep—or smile. He was publicly sued by the Vienna dressmaker Adèle for sumptuous dresses of silk and satin. And a delectable object he must have appeared thus attired, with his profile of a Punch and pump handle chin. "Wagner in his old days was positively feminini generis," declares Nietzsche, who saw through the millstone of the "Parsifal" problem. If those purblind, reverend gentlemen who declaimed against "Parsifal" when it was produced in this city on the score of the subject being too "sacred" for representation had only known how "sacred" its roots really were the conflict would have been tenfold greater than it was. This aspect of the Wagner case has been treated at length by German and French psychiatrists, notably Hans Fuchs in his "Richard Wagner" (Berlin, 1903), also in a sensational article by Oscar Panizza, which appeared in a well known Munich periodical. "Parsifal," which was planned years before its composer encountered Ludwig, was remodelled to suit the exigencies of the King's æstheticism. It thus became the only music drama in existence that in theme is analogous to Marlowe's "Edward II." and Otway's "Venice Preserved." And didn't Wagner say of Ludwig, "Durch ihn bin ich und verstehe ich mich"!

Books on Turkey.

The recent revolution has not exhausted the resources that the Ottoman Empire has for centuries supplied the student of politics and history or the seeker after the picturesque. Although the story of that remarkable uprising which ended the reign of Abdul Hamid is still incompletely told new works are appearing upon the Government that was established in its stead. History is being made rapidly in Turkey, but still to any one who has followed events it must seem too early to predict with any degree of precision the success or failure of the new rule. The Constitution is on trial, the Young Turks are on prehation. In the most recent books upon Turkey, *Regilding the Crescent* (J. B. Lippincott Company), by F. G. AFLALO; *The Danger Zone of Europe* (Little, Brown and Company), by H. CHARLES WOODS, and *Turkey of the Ottomans* (Charles Scribner's Sons), by LUCY M. GARNETT—the authors have apparently accepted prophecy as beyond their province and have contented themselves with presenting the principal problems that confront the Young Turks and the efforts that they are making to solve them.

In all of these works there is an attempt at impartiality and a desire to impart without prejudice the result of the writers' investigation. In all some of the facts of the revolution are presented, but there is in none an intention to retell the story entire. Mr. Woods goes into considerable detail regarding the massacres at Adana because "no other consecutive account of this awful outbreak has yet been published in English and also because of the immense effect which these massacres have had upon the non-Turkish and especially upon the Christian population of the whole empire." He likewise devotes much space to the consideration of the Cretan question, which has been dragging along for years apparently no nearer a settlement than when it first became a European menace. It would be difficult, he says, to meet any European statesman who could explain exactly the meaning of the status quo in the island; whether in fact the status quo which the Powers have promised to maintain means the status quo which existed before or after October, 1908, and whether it is conditional upon the number of Greek flags that float in Crete. "It is natural," he declares, "that the Young Turks by pressing for an early settlement of the Cretan question should attempt to avail themselves of the opportunities granted to them not only by the undecided attitude of the concert of Europe but also by the former inertness of the Athenian ruler and the inefficiency of the Greek army."

Miss Garnett has attempted to deal with the conditions, the people and the Government. She has written a much more entertaining book than the somewhat awkward title, "Turkey of the Ottomans," might promise. It is a modern view of the empire, such as in these days of freer intercommunication and acquaintance it might be expected, at least desired, should be produced. There is not so much of harem life, houris, odalisques and speculations upon mysteries as there is useful information upon the diverse races that go to make up the strangely composite empire. Miss Garnett has apparently spent considerable time in Turkey, and her descriptions of the people, their customs and manners bear more the evidence of careful research than of the blind acceptance of what had been previously written.

Since the advent of the Young Turk personal security has no doubt been far greater than it was during the days of absolutism. Mr. Woods says that under the old rule he was never permitted to travel in the interior without an escort of at least two gendarmes, while under the present Government he has driven across little visited districts of Furopean Turkey unaccompanied by any representative of the Turkish Government. The Ottoman peasant can now travel with more freedom and safety and can gather his crops and attend to his stock with a feeling of greater confidence than for many years. Men may meet and speak together with a certain degree of freedom. Arrests for imaginary offences are far less frequent than under the old Government.

With the establishment of constitutional government came freedom of the press. After the reign of Abdul Hamid, when liberty of expression was almost completely denied, it is scarcely to be wondered at that the Turkish press should have gone to the opposite extreme of license. During the first few weeks of the Constitution the supply of paper ran out in Constantinople and all sorts of unsuitable qualities were used pending the arrival of fresh supplies. Recently more than a hundred papers in the vernacular were published in Constantinople. The Government both for its own sake and in the interest of peace and order found it necessary to renew with modifications to suit the altered conditions the old press laws. "There was," says Mr. Aflalo, "no thought of once more stifling the voice of the press or of restoring the terrible censorship exercised by the ex-Sultan. All that the authorities aimed at was to make editors and publishers responsible for libellous statements appearing in their papers and to restrain them, as far as restraint is practicable, from spreading those false rumors which at critical moments in a land like Turkey may always inflame popular opinion and render still more difficult the task of those entrusted with the conduct of public affairs."

The fact that the parliamentary elections were unfairly "or at least more or less fairly" carried out is held responsible for much of the discontent which exists, especially among the non-Turkish element of the empire. Mr. Woods says that he does not think that anybody who knew the conditions prevailing in Turkey expected that the first Ottoman Parliament under the new Government would really represent the wishes of the majority of the inhabitants. "What was expected was that the elections would be carried out with some degree of fairness and that the Government would take the leaders of the various races into their confidence and discuss how the electoral campaign should be carried out in the best interests of the empire as a whole."

In towns where a big population was entitled to elect a considerable number of electors the district was always so divided as "to secure the Turk the majority of voters in each group destined to nominate an elector." Again, in a town containing several distinct quarters into each group of Moslem voters would be introduced a certain number of Christians, always so arranged that the Moslems were in the majority. Many men were compelled to lose their votes owing to the loss of time that was necessary for them to register their choice. Some of the voters were forced to travel six hours to record their votes when they might have taken part in an election closer at hand.

One of the greatest difficulties that the Young Turks have had is to find capable and honest officials to fill the Government appointments. If all the men who had held office under Abdul Hamid were dismissed it is evident that the affairs of the State would be directed by inexperienced men. Besides those discharged would form a large body of malcontents always ready to throw their lot in favor of reaction. If these men were allowed to remain in office there was always the danger that they would use their influence in secret against the present Government. The inexperience and inefficiency of the leaders of the Young Turk party are held responsible for most of the errors of government that have so far appeared. The nation seems to have brought to the front no man strong enough to cope with the problems of either foreign relations or internal affairs, no one broad enough to have studied all the races that make up the empire and able to formulate laws that might meet all conditions and demands. Some of the effects of the misdirected effort to Turkify the empire are evident to-day in the rebellion in Yemen, which has already cost much money and many lives, and in the Albanian insurrection, which has reached such a stage as to have brought up the question of European intervention.

The obstacles in the way of the success of the new Government are no doubt formidable. They exist within as well as without the empire. The risk of complications with the Powers of Europe is involved in the administration of Macedonia, the recurrence of massacres such as those at Adana, the treatment of Christian subjects of the Sultan and the future of Crete. The question alone of finance is serious, yet Mr. Aflalo says "it should not prove insurmountable to the owners of a province like Anatolia." In the reorganization of the customs one reform of international importance has been accomplished. The extortion of bakshees is not abolished is at least no longer countenanced. In trying to realize one of the fondest dreams of the Turkish Government, the abolition of foreign post offices, little has been done that justifies such a change. The grievance of foreigners living inland is the inefficiency of the country post. The fault lies in the general slackness of officials and the inferiority of the underpaid employees. "Unless the Young Turks give very careful attention to the management of their post offices," says Mr. Aflalo, "their proposal to do away with European establishments cannot go beyond the realm of dreams."

The question of education, involving as it does the ever present language question, is for political consideration. Many of the different races cherish the language of their fathers, and as this in most cases is not Turkish the effort to force the adoption of Turkish in the schools has met with vigorous opposition. There may be no reasonable objection to the adoption of Turkish for Parliamentary debates and for the transaction of public business generally upon the grounds that any other arrangement would bring the curse of Babel upon the Government offices, yet it is evident, again quoting Mr. Aflalo, that "the only equitable principle, if the equality promised under the Constitution is not to be a mockery, is to recognize the language spoken by the majority of residents in each district." The failure to recognize this principle has already been in part responsible for a serious misunderstanding with the Greeks and the insurrection in Albania.

A purely social reform with which Turkey will be compelled to concern herself is the emancipation of the women. While this question is usually discussed on the basis of the veil as the outward symbol of bondage, the matter goes far deeper than the mere unveiling of the sex. The real problem is the emancipation of the women with a view to making them more capable mothers of the men the nation will require. They need education, the freedom of a wider horizon than they have had and an opportunity to take their rightful place as comrades and not longer to be regarded as furniture. "The trouble is not so much that the average Turkish woman is actually disgusted with her empty and purposeless existence as that she ought to be," is Mr. Aflalo's comment.

One of the most urgent questions is that of public works. The building of roads and railways will carry with it economic as well as political advantages to the State. Such improvements would show the people of the country that the new Government is doing something from which they will gain an advantage. The construction of public works, carrying with it employment for the people, would rob the reactionaries of the argument that the people have gained nothing from the overthrow of despotism and the establishment of constitutional government. The Young Turks having come into their inheritance are not unreasonably anxious to build their own bridges, dredge their own rivers and construct their own railways. But they lack both capital and experience for such undertakings. Few impartial critics would blame the Government if it should succeed in carrying out these improvements itself; but Europe would be very likely to become impatient if the Government, unable to make them, should decline to call in others with the necessary capital and brains. Besides there are some matters, such as the navigation of important streams, the improvements of ports, the building of roads and the extension of railway systems, that are everybody's business. The railroads are isolated and form no part of a connected system, the highways have been permitted to fall into decay, streams that might form outlets for vast agricultural regions are almost unnavigable from want of dredging. One development of the future railway enterprises that may be confidently anticipated is the doing away with the kilometric guarantee. The objections to the system, which Turkey has discovered at the cost of several million dollars, are twofold—it is a drain on the treasury and it encourages the management to keep down the receipts, as surplus profits go to the Government.

It seems to be the writers' opinion that the hope of success lies in Turkey's adaptability to the new era. She knows that she is getting her last chance and she is aware of the consequences of failure. The ruling class must realize its responsibilities and its power. There must be no repetition of the massacres, and no return to the rule of the bakshees. As for the Young Turks, their difficulties are so great that "it is impossible to see what the future may have in store for them." "Let us hope," says Mr. Aflalo, "that the Turks may come out of their shell and remodel themselves on better ideals than have heretofore sufficed them."

THE NOVELIST'S PROFESSION.

New Sensations for Francis Perry Elliott When an Auto Hit Him.

Francis Perry Elliott, author of "The Haunted Pajamas" and formerly editor of the *Home Magazine*, was searching for atmosphere at the Manhattan end of the Brooklyn Bridge a few evenings ago when he experienced two new sensations.

First, he was struck by an auto, his left foot was injured and his trousers were damaged.

Second, he found there are persons who cannot believe that novel writing is a regular method of earning a living.

The auto was driven by its owner, a Brooklyn broker, who was driving his brothers and sisters home after a day's outing. One of the wheels passed over his left foot and he was knocked down.

Patrolman Gibney helped Elliott to a seat and sent for a surgeon from the Hudson street hospital, while the Saitter party was detained until the extent of the injuries could be learned. The ambulance surgeon pronounced them slight and Mr. Elliott decided he would not make a criminal charge but would bring suit.

Saitter asked for Elliott's business card. Of course Elliott had none, but he gave his personal card and said he lived at the Hermitage, Forty-second street and Seventh avenue.

"And your business?" Saitter inquired.

"Novelist," was the reply.

"What do you work at?" demanded Gibney, notebook in hand.

"I am a novelist; I write books."

Gibney looked incredulous, but wrote it down.

Came the ambulance surgeon with his report slip to be filled.

"What did you say you did for a living?" he asked.

"I am an author, a novelist, a writer of fiction. Oh, won't somebody call a cab?"

He limped to the cab and ordered the driver to take him home while he nursed the aching foot.

"And this is fame," he muttered.

Mr. Elliott says that there are three important events in connection with the popularity of the story, which originally appeared in novelette form in a magazine. The first, he says, was when a stranger on a train handed him a magazine remarking:

"That, sir, contains the funniest story I ever read and the best—perhaps you would like to read it. It's called 'The Haunted Pajamas.'"

The second event was when a maid in a Boston hotel, pointing to his name on a parcel, asked if he were the man who wrote "The Haunted Pajamas" in the magazine.

"A lady gave me a copy," she declared, "and the whole push on this floor has read it."

The third and crowning occasion, he says, was when the news reached him that somebody, finding the magazine number sold out and unpurchasable in New York, had seized upon and stolen a thumbed and battered copy from a Turkish bath house.

No Chance for Sentiment.

From the Canadian Courier.

"What was the happiest moment of your life?" asked the sweet girl.

"The happiest moment of my life," answered the old bachelor, "was when the jeweller took back an engagement ring and gave me sleeve links in exchange."