

It was natural then that a great number of people, unable to climb to the height of abstract and unsatisfactory reasoning of the kind that the scientists had attained to, and whose emotional nature utterly rebelled against a progression which was intended constantly to violate their best instincts, should spurn science, which offered them no other compensation than freedom from personal responsibility.

It was not only the hollow arrogance of the scientists and the failure of science to fulfil the promises of its superstitious votaries which had created disgust with scientific atheism: the practical results of the anti-religious tendencies became alarmingly apparent; experience began to prove that the discarding of all personal responsibility did not produce the *ultra man—der Uebermensch*—of which the scientists claimed to be the prototypes.

Many of them had been in the habit of speaking scornfully of those selfish natures who live irreproachable lives, and who devote themselves to the promotion of the good of their fellow-men, under the impression that in a future state they would reap their reward. The atheist-scientist represented himself as a man of different metal: he was fully as moral as the religionist; he spent his life in serving humanity, well knowing that his self-control and self-sacrifice would bring him no reward; he did

his duty, not induced by any mean, religious consideration, but because he was a perfect man.

The lesser mortals, those from whose ranks the symbolists are recruited, began to entertain doubts of the infallibility of these first fruits of the religion of humanity. The very arrogance of these perfect men told against them. If they disbelieved in the rewards of a future life, they were not averse from the rewards in this, and eagerly accepted the money and the distinction their works brought them. There was especially this about them: they unhesitatingly attacked that which the masses could alone rely on for moral guidance, equanimity, consolation, and encouragement — religion — while the religion of humanity was thousands of years in the future, and thus left the people a prey to mental bewilderment, doubt, and unrestrained passions. The scientist stood accused of acting like a man depriving a cripple of his only crutch, against the promise of supplying his remote descendants with better ones.

But atheism had a far worse effect on ordinary mortals, who had not to sustain a reputation as apostles of the new scientific creed. Convinced that no personal responsibility attached to them, and caring little for what would happen to the next generation, or still less to generations thousands of years hence, they tried to persuade themselves that conscience was an inherited weakness, developed by

evolution, or a product of wrong religious teaching. Wishing to rise above such a weakness, they did their best to silence conscience, and to live for self-gratification. In this manner selfishness, if not Egomania, was strongly developed.

Capitalists and politicians strove to acquire wealth and power, regardless of other people's rights, of their own conscience, and of their sense of honour, so long as their dishonour was known only to themselves. Society became frivolous, and exhibited the same stigmata of degeneration noticed before in decaying commonwealths. Art became lascivious and corrupting; literature became realistic and offensive. In fact, a host of clever men who ought to have been benefactors of their race cared not to what extent they ruined and demoralized their fellow-beings so long as they safe-guarded their own health, their own future, and their social position.

The working classes being told by men, far superior to them in intellect and education, that their only chance was in their lives here on earth, and that death was annihilation, began to sympathize with violent Nihilists and Anarchists, and were less averse to risk their lives, if it were only to avenge themselves on those who deprived them of their terrestrial happiness.

But it was not only in the effect on their fellow-beings that the neo-Catholics, the symbolists, and

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perhaps all this, or the
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their sympathizers all over the world, beheld the results of scientific atheism. Many of these themselves became "frightful examples" of these results. Max Nordau commits a great mistake in studying the French symbolists as authors and poets. It is as children of their times that they should be studied. He looks upon them as causes of the symbolist movement, whereas we should have regarded them as the indicators of a remarkable stage in the development of our race.

It was inevitable that the theories of the scientists should have been accepted more widely in France than in any other civilized country. In the English-speaking countries the Churches and sects had not assumed the same uncompromising attitude with regard to the mediæval doctrines as the Church of Rome. They had gradually receded from one contested point after another and many of their old forms and texts were given a more liberal interpretation. Urged on by the example of the Broad Church, the Congregationalists, and especially by the Unitarians, the clergy and the ministers ceased their opposition to any established scientific facts, though they rejected scientific speculations. The influence of the scientists in the English-speaking countries tended therefore to modernize religion, instead of bringing it into contempt.

In Germany, where the people are slow to oppose

any authority, and where they are extremely shy of their real religious opinions, scientific atheism simply encouraged the free-thinkers existing there of old, and induced a mass of young men to masquerade as free-thinkers who in reality held no opinions at all, and who were destined to become devout in their old age.

In Italy and Spain the teachings of the scientists only somewhat strengthened the hands of the Liberals, but produced no effect on the Ultramontanes. In Russia, where the nobility and the middle classes had for a long time been free-thinkers, or perhaps non-thinkers, in regard to religious questions, the religion of humanity affected only that portion of the people which was already under the influence of Nihilism, and tended to render them more reckless.

In France however, and perhaps in such countries as are directly influenced by French views—for instance, Belgium and Switzerland—circumstances were different. The atheism which broke out with the first French Revolution had begun to subside, the nobility and the upper classes were the allies of Rome partly by conviction, and partly from policy. In the country districts the *curés* had resumed their influence over the peasantry, but the labouring class in the towns was divided into two camps, the free-thinkers and the Ultramontanes;

and the difference between them was emphasized by the circumstance that the Ultramontanes were generally conservative in siding with the powers that be, while the free-thinkers were more or less extreme Republicans, Socialists, or Communists.

Such was the situation in France when the influence of the scientists on religious opinion began to make itself felt there. The materialist views were eagerly taken up by the Bohemians of Paris and by the extreme wing of the Republican Press. The upper classes read, or skimmed, the English scientists, and up to the beginning of the Franco-German war the German philosophers were much in vogue amongst the upper classes and in literary circles. In this fashion the Church of Rome had to face an attack differing widely from the French Revolution. Then the corruption, and the siding of the Church with those who were regarded as the enemies of the country, exposed it to open violence prompted by strongly roused passions. During the latter days of the Second Empire it was assailed in its dogmas with arms borrowed from scientific research and speculation. The latter attack was by far the more dangerous. The discontent with the Imperial Government did much to draw the urban working classes into the ranks of the free-thinkers, where the theories of the scientists confirmed them in their new atheism.

Parisian society had become atheistic, and the whole male population of the middle class prided themselves on their freedom from all religious prejudices. What remained of religion in France was represented by the old nobility, who had a political interest in being religious; by the peasants, who were supposed to be too stupid to grasp the new scientific truths; by old men, who had not the courage to face the grave without the consolation of religion; and by the women, to whom, it was confessed even by the most debauched *roués*, religion gave an extra charm.

When the third Republic was launched it had a strong atheistic character, and the working classes in all the cities, the sincere free-thinkers, patriots, and philanthropists hoped that, under a Republican form of government the religion of humanity of the scientists would at last have a fair trial. But they were destined to bitter disappointment. The new Republic turned out to be *bourgeois* in the worst sense of the word. Politics passed into a profession. Politicians and administrators became corrupt. Scandals multiplied. Even the Press was unable to show clean hands. Wealth became all-powerful, and the plutocrats acquired an enormous influence which they did not hesitate to use to their own advantage. Speculators and adventurers pulled the strings of the home, and especially of the

colonial, policy, and in order to further private interests the indebtedness of the State was carried to such a point as to threaten the most gigantic financial catastrophe the world has ever witnessed. In the meantime the working classes and even the agriculturists naturally suffered from the result of a system of government which disregarded their interests. The proletariat of the cities grew, labour troubles became frequent, wages fell, and poverty rapidly increased.

While this growing penury invaded the homes of the working and lower middle class of a nation which has only partially realized the happiness and healthy influence flowing from decent and moral homes, scientific atheism took possession of the minds of the people, especially of the men. It urged them to make the most of their lives, and enticed them into a whirlpool of dissipation.

Scientific atheism was bound to produce a vast increase in immorality in a country like France, where the Church of Rome, in order to enhance its influence over the people, favours unhappy relations between the sexes. The clergy do all they can to estrange the sexes prior to marriage, and thus prevent pure love and love-marriages, while they encourage *mariages de convenance*. They are animated no doubt by the best intentions, but, living themselves in enforced celibacy, have no idea to

Stuff and nonsense! This atheism is science & spiritism,
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 reciprocal influence.

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what an extent they thus undermine the morality of the people.

As love counts for little in the tying of the matrimonial knot, and the *dot* counts for much, French unendowed girls stand a poor chance of ever getting married. This exclusion of an enormous number of the best women from the marriage market explains, to a large extent, the many irregular households to be met with in France. The fact that lovable and high-souled women accept the position of mistresses has largely tended to multiply mock marriages. The refusal on the part of the Church of Rome to permit divorce, and the lovelessness of the regular alliances, tend in the same direction. The sum total of all this is that a majority of Frenchwomen have to choose between an unhappy married life without love, and an immoral one with it. Those who are forced into the former in a great many cases seek consolation in an illicit *liaison*; those who drift into the latter become debauched. While thus the young, respectable, and pure-minded girls are relegated to schools and nunneries and excluded from all association with young men, among these licentious pleasure often takes the place of romantic love. Hence physically and morally unhealthy lives, absence of happiness, craving for excitement, morbid passions, pessimism, contempt for life, depraved tastes, hysteria.

Scientific atheism had however only aggravated a

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state of things created by sacerdotal influence on social habits. But it was only natural that a nation, so biassed in social questions as France, should ascribe the decay of morality and of so many other virtues to the weakening of that influence which for centuries had proclaimed itself, and had been considered by the masses as the only check upon wickedness among great and small alike.

Hosts of young men who entered life, with noble aspirations to fight for high ideals, soon perceived, when left to shift for themselves, that the society around them irresistibly opposed the realization of their hopes. They found it difficult, almost impossible, to reconcile success with self-esteem, love with morality, and their poetical aspirations with their manner of living. Many, in despair of happiness and success, or in order to forget their crumbled illusions, threw themselves into a feverish quest for excitement, in which health of body and mind were jeopardized.

Awakening to the full consciousness of the depth of their fall, they could not fail to see that the social system under which they lived was largely responsible for their miseries. In looking back over their wasted lives they saw nought but shattered hopes. What they had forfeited were a happy and vigorous youth, transports of romance, the love of a pure-minded woman, a strong and active manhood, a chivalrous

fight for the good, the pure, the true and the beautiful, the respect of their fellow-men, an ideal home.

The social conditions which they held responsible for their miserable career, and even for the regret they experienced, could not be laid at the door of an Emperor or a dynasty: for their country was governed by universal suffrage. Finding government, legislation, institutions, and social conditions vitiated, they had to blame Society. They found that Society was atheistic, and was deprived of the only check and guide that came within their ken—religion. They were filled with an intense longing to destroy the atheism which science had created, and to return to a belief which would re-endow Society with moral order, health, romance, love, purity, and beautiful emotions.

Science was the enemy, as, under the Empire, the priest was the enemy. To discredit it was the first essential step. When therefore the actual power of science, its actual possibilities, became popularized, and each successive scientific discovery rendered the prophecies of the superstitious scientists more and more preposterous, the French symbolists took up the cry that science was bankrupt.

It and faith wrong.

CHAPTER V

SYMBOLISM AND LOGIC

THE French symbolists, and all poets and artists who move in the world of emotions, are invited by Max Nordau to "take their place at the table of science, where there is room for all." Were they to accept the invitation, how would the emotional nature of our race find expression? Would it be possible, or wise, to ignore emotions in face of the fact that our lives are essentially emotional? Or does Max Nordau push his scientific superstition to such a point as to believe that human emotions can ever be investigated by means of the lancet, the microscope, and the thermometer? In spite of his sneer at Rossetti's remark regarding his indifference as to whether the sun turned round the earth or the earth turned round the sun, he cannot fail to acknowledge that what humanity yearns for is beautiful and pleasing emotions, not scientific facts. The glorious sunshine, the balmy breeze, the radiant flowers, the inscrutable attractions of woman, her love, her esteem, her faith, the affection of children, the confidence

of our fellow-beings, our trust in the good, our struggle against evil—such are the elements of life and happiness. Science acquires all its importance from being the means by which beautiful and pleasing emotions are safe-guarded, and unpleasant emotions are avoided. When science mistakes its mission, when it attempts to distort and vilify their expressions, it has become unreal and fatal. true.

Max Nordau wishes us to regard science—progressing as it has done by replacing old errors of our senses by new errors of our senses—as embodying all facts worth noticing, and to disregard emotions which are eternally unchangeable.

To turn our back upon emotions and to take our place at the table of science means to ignore all that is beautiful, lovable, ennobling, and hopeful, to shut our eyes to the charms of form, colour, motion, and our ears to music, and to concentrate our attention upon the repast spread on the table of science: the pleasure of discovering bacteria in human tissue, the curiosity of counting the throbs of a frog's heart after being torn from the living body, the sensation of ascertaining the effect of the gastric juices of the foot of a living rabbit inserted into a living dog's stomach.

We take no side in the question of vivisection, or any other scientific methods, but without in the least minimizing the great services rendered, and to be

rendered by science to humanity, we must express our astonishment that any sound mind, knowing what scientific methods are, and must be, can seriously suggest that scientific investigation should supersede art and poetry. If we believed in degeneration, such opinions would be the first examples of it we should quote. !!!

Poets and philosophers who deal with emotions, so to say with immaterial phenomena, impalpable to every one of our senses, but demonstrated as eternally real by their effects, must needs make use of symbols, or, to be more exact, of more symbols, vaguer symbols, and bolder symbols, than those which naturally enter into language. To deny them this right is equal to denying the mathematician the use of the letter X, which stands for unknown quantities, and which is handled by him as dexterously as if it were the most familiar object in the world. If human beings were not allowed to speak about what their imagination conjures up, what their feelings prompt, and what irresistible instincts point to, they would be brought alarmingly near to the level of the beast.

The French symbolists being poets, might not have formulated into distinct thoughts what we have said above, but they have certainly felt it all, and much more. They have felt themselves surrounded by undefined and undefinable X's of far greater

moment to their lives, to their happiness, and to their best instincts, than all the known and half-known quantities of science. In attempting to give expression to their feelings and to their thoughts regarding the all-important unknown, and to evoke among their fellow-beings an interest in them, they have found themselves justified in using any means, including symbolism, for their purpose.

Max Nordau has entertained no such considerations in dealing with the French symbolists. In obedience to his professional prejudices, he looks for no other causes, no other influences, than those that can be found in the mechanism of their brains. This is all the more amazing as he over and over again recognises that external circumstances, conditions of life and habits, exercise a strong influence on the brain, or, in other words, that the mechanism which connects the *Ego* with matter may be influenced by the *Ego*. The result of his criticism presents therefore a want of fairness which to the English mind is especially objectionable.

The manner in which he pries into the private life and antecedents of Paul Verlaine, and the indelicate manner in which he refers to the personal appearance of the poet, impresses us English people as so many unfair means of giving plausibility to his conclusions. When a hunchback is good-humoured enough to make fun of his own deformity, those of

gentle feelings sympathize all the more with his misfortune, and become all the more anxious not to refer to it. When a poet, in his love of truth and in his anxiety to rouse a certain emotion, makes confessions, when he instances his own sad experiences and failings, when he, so to say, throws himself into the flames on the altar of truth, we in England count it indelicate and unfair to base criticism on facts thus revealed. Had Max Nordau read Verlaine's poetry with an unbiassed mind, he could not have failed to be struck by the extent to which the poet typifies the movement going on around him: his failings, his errors, and, maybe, his bad habits—all this is the fate of millions who have been induced by the materialist tendencies of recent times to disregard personal responsibility, and who, after rejecting such guides as the nobler instincts of humanity had proffered, attempt to follow the dictates of the lower instincts and animal impulses. His terrible remorse and despair, while he is still unmoved by religion, bear witness to aspirations which the materialist would fain deny. His instinctive groping for the consolations of religion shows to what an extent he attributes his failings to an irreligious life, and that he experiences within him yearnings for a happiness which the gratification of the senses, prompted by atheism, has never afforded him.

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 explanations.

Max Nordau would object to this expression—the gratification of his senses prompted by atheism—and would tell us that atheism ought to have implanted into Verlaine the religion of humanity, and that he should have sacrificed all his inclinations for the future happiness of his race. But, surely, it would require a good dose of hypocrisy for a man, sincerely convinced that death puts him personally beyond any consequences of his life, to persuade himself that he is practising a life-long abnegation for the good of posterity. Is it not much more likely that in so frank a nature as Verlaine's the disbelief in personal responsibility would turn him into a devil-may-care vagabond until he learned in the school of experience the dangerous mistakes of materialism? Does Max Nordau not recognise the logic and the frankness in a young man who, in the exuberance of his animal life, when convinced of personal irresponsibility, lives up to the motto of a "short life and a merry one"?

The need of love and affection—a need generally so strongly felt by all poets, Max Nordau is pleased to call eroticism, and when the poet finds that he has profaned love, implanted in his soul by God, Max Nordau fancies he has discovered in Verlaine that blending of religious fervour and morbid eroticism which, when irrational, is a sign of lunacy.

When Paul Verlaine invokes the Virgin Mary, a form of religious expression which millions of sane people indulge in daily, Max Nordau at once imagines he has discovered another trace of insanity. In order to show that we are not unfair to our alienist, we will quote one of the poems of Verlaine he refers to, and the conclusions he draws from it,—

Et comme j'étais faible, et bien méchant encore,
Aux mains lâches, les yeux éblouis des chemins,
Elle baissa mes yeux, et me joignit les mains,
Et m'enseigna les mots par lesquels on adore.

“The accents here quoted,” says Max Nordau, “are well known to the clinics of psychiatry. We may compare them to the picture which Legrain gives of some of his patients. ‘His speech continually reverts to God and the Virgin Mary, his cousin.’ (The case in question is that of a degenerate subject who was a tramway conductor.) ‘Mystical ideas complete the picture. He talks of God, of heaven, crosses himself, kneels down, and says that he is following the commandments of Christ.’ (The subject under observation is a day-labourer.) ‘The devil will tempt me, but I see God who guards me. I have asked of God that all people might be beautiful,’ etc.”

So far Max Nordau.

Because a mad tramway conductor thinks he is

cf. last line
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quoted.

cousin of the Virgin Mary, Verlaine, who symbolizes in the Virgin Mary the power that draws him towards the good, is on the road to madness! From this it follows that, if a mad tramway conductor were to believe himself the cousin of Professor Lombroso Max Nordau's quasi-worship of that authority would indicate degeneracy in Max Nordau's mind.

One of Max Nordau's characteristics is a weak or dull logical faculty, often to be observed in those who over-study for examination and in specialists fanatically inclined. Without this peculiarity he could not possibly have omitted to ask himself the question, "How about all other worshippers of Christ?" when he concludes that Verlaine's mind is degenerate because he speaks devotedly of the Virgin Mary, while a lunatic labourer says that he follows the commandments of Christ. Max Nordau does not see that in this manner he completely gives himself away, and lets us perceive that it is not the symbolist whom he considered degenerate, but the whole Christian populations of the world that have existed during two thousand years, and that still exist. Only his lack of a sense of the ridiculous, already pointed out, has prevented him from remembering that the man in his cups considers himself the only sober man of the company.

The verses which Verlaine has written in praise of a vagabond life Max Nordau holds up as a sure

sign of lurking lunacy. Are then all poets who write in praise of a vagabond life degenerates? Is not the true secret of Max Nordau's conclusion to be found in the fact that he entirely misses the satire against our modern system which underlies Verlaine's and other writers' poems on this same subject? He does the same with regard to Verlaine's poem addressed to the demented king, Louis II. of Bavaria. When we behold the follies of reigning sovereigns, who are supposed to be in the full enjoyment of their faculties, making such poor use of their opportunities, degrading and ruining their people, rousing a hatred against themselves and their dynasty, or striving at low *bourgeois* aims, or even, to use Max Nordau's own expression, selling their royalty for a big cheque; when we read of the monarchs of the past, of their crimes and their meannesses, how can we wonder that the unfortunate King Louis should inspire sympathy in a poet, and that he should satirize the so-called reasonable monarchs by eulogizing the demented one?

Max Nordau makes much of that form of mental weakness which manifests itself in echolalia, or the mania of repeating for no reason the same words and the same sentences. But to deny the poet, who aims at conveying an emotion and for that purpose wishes to create a certain mood in his listeners, the use of choruses, refrains, and cadenced repetitions,

he runs counter to the oldest literary tradition in the world. He would surely not object to repetitions in verses intended to be sung; and if we are right in placing poetry half way between speech and music in the list of the vehicles of thought, as we have done in a previous chapter, euphonies, musicalities of words and repetitions are both permissible and rational.

Many poetical emotions may be quickened by reminiscences from childhood; and a style of writing, or the use of words or sounds, reminding us of early days, might be the most effective methods of expression. Thus, for instance, a drowsy repetition of pleasant-sounding words may be very telling in a lullaby, even if they convey no scientific meaning, or do not contribute to the sense of the poem, and so long as they do not distort it. The examples of repetitions from degeneracy in Verlaine are chosen so unhappily as to place Max Nordau in the wrong and Verlaine in the right in the judgment of unbiassed persons; the one is a serenade, and the other is entitled, "Chevaux du Bois," in which the sensation of a child on a merry-go-round is suggested. Another is supposed to be sung by, or suggests, Pierrot Gamin, that is a young idiot. When Verlaine wishes to qualify a noun in a manner which is difficult to express in ordinary adjectives, he, like millions of his fellows, has recourse to the method of giving

Note.

a new, or symbolic signification, to an old adjective, and this, according to Max Nordau, is a sign of mental degeneration. To prove his case he quotes such terms as "a narrow and vast affection," "a slow landscape," "a slack liqueur," "a gilded perfume," "a terse contour," etc. He does not seem to know that the paucity of language renders such expressions not only legitimate but extremely useful in many professions and trades, let alone poetry. Has he never heard of a warm colour, a lively tint, a cold tone, etc.? Are the French wine-growers mad when they say that wine is heavy, light, full, dead, alive, slack, round, green, angular, smooth, velvety, etc.?

We are glad to see that he recognises Verlaine's ability as a poet and does not find fault with some of his poems. Thus he says of "Chanson d'Autonne" that "there are few poems in French literature that can rival" it. While rejoicing at the fairness that Nordau here displays, we must however point out the eccentricity of his logic. He desires to warn us against degeneration, and therefore points to a poet whose degeneracy has not prevented him from writing a masterpiece of literature. It should also be noticed that the "Chanson d'Autonne," which meets with such ample praise from Max Nordau, is on the same theme which underlies other pieces of poetry quoted in his work as examples of legitimate and sane poetry.

When he does intimate that a poet might burst into song over flowers, trees, brooks, and twittering birds, but not over the sympathy he feels in his consciousness with the powers that have called them forth, simply because science has not so far been able to analyse and classify those powers, he only shows that he is illogical enough to proffer his limited view of what is poetical as an infallible standard of the poetry of the world.

Max Nordau blames Verlaine and other symbolists for dealing with moods instead of with definite ideas. But is there a single poet in the past or the present who did not largely deal in moods, and who did not labour to give the world an impression of his own feelings? Max Nordau's ideal author—Goethe—has gone further. He wrote a whole novel, "Werther's Leiden," which is little else than a lengthy description of his hero's moods.

Another symbolist, Stephane Mallarmé, who in France as well as in England enjoys a reputation as a poet, or rather as an authority on poetry, is attacked by Max Nordau in a manner which suggests other motives than fair criticism. He gibes at the symbolists and at all who consider Mallarmé a poet, because he has produced only a few original works and translations. As our alienist cannot very well put this down as a sign of degeneration, having treated those who write much as graphomaniacs, he

well-but.
gives us no other reasons for placing Mallarmé among the examples of degeneration than that he has "long, pointed, faun-like ears," a fact which he seems not to have noticed personally but which he has obtained, like most of his facts, from a book.

He distinctly insinuates that the admiration for Mallarmé's poetical gift indicates degeneration, especially as Mallarmé has written so little. We meet here again with a striking example of his curious logic. He imagines that he strengthens his case by quoting from Lessing, who in "Amelia Galotti" makes Conti say that Raphael would have been the greatest genius in painting, even if he had unfortunately been born without hands. From this, English readers who happen to know nothing of Lessing or Conti would conclude that either Lessing was a lunatic or that his character, Conti, was mad. But neither is the case, and the quotation consequently tells against Max Nordau. Whoever would deny that a man cannot be a poet and an authority on poetry without publishing verse must attach an extremely narrow meaning to the word poet. If Lessing, or Conti, means by the word painter, not the craftsman, but the man with the painter's soul, the symbolist may surely be allowed to call Mallarmé a poet. Has Max Nordau never met with mute poets, blind painters, and deaf musicians? One of the greatest musicians of the world composed marvellous music while stone-

deaf. Now if we suppose that Beethoven had lost his hearing before he had mastered the technicalities of music, would he therefore not have remained a musician?

Max Nordau is very severe on several other symbolists and certainly does his best to represent them in an unfavourable light. In order to show that Charles Morice, the author of "La Littérature de tout à l'heure" is literally insane and a graphomaniac, he quotes Morice's rhapsodical conception of God, which he pretends to take as an exact definition in order to reduce it to twaddle. To any unprejudiced reader it is evident that Morice intended to convey by this wild attempt at description how impossible it is to define God. Max Nordau's prejudice against the French nation becomes palpable when speaking of the fact that the French language lends itself badly to blank verse and that a freer treatment of it in French poetry is a comparatively modern departure which by other countries was taken long ago. He says: "But to any one but a Frenchman, they merely make themselves ridiculous when they trumpet their painful hobbling after the nations, who are far in front of them, as an unheard-of discovery of new paths and opening up of new roads and as an advance inspired by the ideal into the dawn of the future." This gratuitous insult of a whole nation gives us a vivid insight into the working of his mind. He would

not have penned a sentence of such bad taste, and so marked by the echolalia he condemns in others, had he not been prompted by feelings stronger than his judgment.

CHAPTER VI

THE LIGHT OF RUSSIA

WITH regard to the Russian novelist, Count Leo Tolstoi, Max Nordau pursues the same mode of criticism as he employed against other writers. He also aims at the same object, firstly, to show that authors suffer from mental aberration; and, secondly, that the public who read their books do not do so on account of their literary merit, but because the readers are mentally afflicted in the same way as the authors.

To prove this against Tolstoi and his admirers is no light enterprise, and Max Nordau does not acquit himself of his self-imposed task without a great deal of shuffling.

He allows nothing for Tolstoi's surroundings, the social condition of the country in which he lives, and the life he has led, but lifts him out of all that tends to interpret this ultra-Russian writer, and regards him as one who has evolved some extraordinary notions in a studio far from his native land.

He who says Russia says a great deal: for the

expression denotes a vast empire, consisting of many nationalities and races, held together by a strong pressure, which seems, like the gravitation of huge heavenly bodies, to be determined by the size of the body from which it emanates. The inclusion of so many elements does not prevent Russia from remaining a great and powerful State, provided its Government soon becomes to some extent rational. The predominant nationality is made up of genuine Russians, whose characteristics are such as to render them capable of being, according to their rulers in the immediate future, an imminent danger to Europe, or a model nation to be followed by the rest of the world.

The Russian is good-tempered, patient, loyal, generous, kind-hearted, and superstitiously religious. He is extremely emotional and dangerous when aroused. His easy-going manners, his immense self-esteem, and his intense vitality, render him an easy victim to the numerous temptations which aliens are not slow to hold out to him. He is straightforward and strongly averse from hypocrisy, and when he is convinced that duty demands from him that he should assist in filling a trench with his dead body for the artillery to pass over, or to throw a bomb at the Czar, he will do it without a murmur.

His passiveness, his loyalty, and long-suffering have been cruelly taken advantage of by a long succession

of governments, chiefly consisting of aliens. In Russia the most powerful bureaucracy in the world, composed chiefly of a German element, has taken possession of the power, and holds to it in a quasi-unconscious fashion, like a bull-dog unable to relax his bite.

The Government, with such legislation as exists, has gone on for centuries with scarcely any regard for the well-being of the people, and the inevitable results are slowly but surely manifesting themselves, and point to some terrible catastrophe.

The emancipation of the serfs, from which sanguine people, unacquainted with Russian circumstances, hoped so much, shook the old institutions to their very foundations, but brought only momentary relief to the suffering people. The mir-eaters, or village usurers, have swallowed up the land of the peasants, their cattle, and their implements, and compelled large hordes of people to move about the country in search of work. Employment is scarce and labour ill paid. The tax-collectors are as implacable and the Government officials as corrupt as ever. The tendency—to be observed all over the civilized world—of dividing humanity into two classes, the wealthy and the poor, has nowhere developed to the same extent as in Russia. The rich, comparatively few in number, are becoming extremely rich, but the great mass of the people miserably poor.

Extreme poverty, intensified by the pressure of the tax-gatherer and the inhuman methods of the money-lender, have a gnawing effect on a people living in an intensely rigorous climate, in miserable villages sparsely scattered over vast monotonous plains.

The Russians being a sentimental people, it is natural that their forlorn condition should cause them to brood over their sad lives during the long and lonely winter nights, or that they should be driven to drown their consciousness in *vodka*.

Such is the stage on which alone a character like Leo Tolstoi can become intelligible.

But it is not only the powerful influences from external circumstances which give that direction to Tolstoi's mind which Max Nordau insists in interpreting as a sign of degeneracy. The mode of life and the sphere of action he has adopted, in pursuance of the large and noble traits of his character, must have been powerfully conducive to his peculiar mood and ideas. Nobody who has read his works, even if only those works Max Nordau holds to be of the smallest literary merit and fullest of signs of degeneracy, would ever conceive the idea that Tolstoi's mind was weak or distorted. But if this novelist had been driven to lunacy, it would have been extremely irrational to account for his mental aberration without con-

sidering the outward circumstances that would have produced it.

Tolstoi's sympathies were roused, as those of every noble-minded man would have been roused, by the miserable existence of a people who possess all the elements of a great nation. In Russia no such ways are open to the reformer as in free States. There is no parliament, no organized political parties, no free Press. A political career is out of the question, except in the form of a consistent toadying of those in power, and of a blind obedience to those who crush the people. Any opposition to government, or even proffered suggestions, would lead to exile in Siberia, and abruptly cut short any man's activity. Tolstoi had therefore only two courses open to him: either to expatriate himself and to thunder forth in a foreign press against the abuses of the Russian Government, unheard and unheeded by his own censor-ridden compatriots, or to adopt the line of action he did.

In the cities, where the alien element prevails, and where the scum of the Russian nation congregates, he would be out of contact with his people. His emotional nature would have revolted against the police tyranny and spying rampant in the cities, and he would soon have been landed in the clutches of the authorities. He therefore elected to live among the peasants as one of them, convinced both

by his feelings and his reason that he would thus directly benefit his surroundings by his example and form that leaven by which the whole mass might in time be leavened; while his writings simultaneously appealed to those of his countrymen who read books, and those who, outside Russia, sympathize with the Russian people.

We do not pretend to know Tolstoi's secret thoughts and his ultimate hopes, but we believe it possible that he may, without being an irrational enthusiast, or even a dreamer, have reckoned on his writings and opinions reaching the highest personages in the Russian empire through being read by all the upper classes of the world. He may have hoped that, after establishing his reputation throughout the literary world, and after having become the pride of his own nation, he would one day dare to speak such words to the rulers of all the Russians as might save him and his nation.

Whatever may have been his expectations, there can be little doubt that he has met with dire disappointment, not so much in his personal career as in his hopes for his fellow-countrymen.

To the framers of paper constitutions and to theoretical revolutionists, it may seem easy to introduce a new form of government and to regenerate a nation, but, to one who, like Tolstoi, is in close contact with the masses to be regenerated, who

here again
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has daily experienced all the frailty of the material he has to work with, who alone tries to swim against overwhelming currents,—to him, the uplifting of a nation or a race is a herculean task impossible to approach with the clap-trap of the modern agitator.

*emotional
explanation
again.*

Tolstoi, finding that it is the *morale* of the people he has to work upon, that it is in the religious tendencies of his fellow-men that their strength lies, concludes, with the full consent of his emotional being, that religious conceptions, different from the Russian orthodox Church and from the western university theology, must be the foundation on which he has to build. What therefore is more rational than that he should plunge into religious speculation, and thus expose himself to the mistake of adopting religious views which are prompted as much by the needs of the situation, the circumstances, his own and his people's characteristics, as by logical deductions. Greater men than he — Moses, Mahomet, and others—had done so before him.

Besides, as the postulates he starts from do not spring from exact knowledge, but from faith and emotion—as all religious postulates necessarily must do,—and as these, his postulates, are diametrically opposed to those which Max Nordau would presuppose, Tolstoi's conclusions must be the opposite

of his ; but to differ from Max Nordau is to be degenerate.

It is no wonder then that Tolstoi's books should be more than novels. He had a higher purpose in view than gathering in royalties and entertaining his readers. His books are jam with a considerable amount of powder in them. If, despite this, they have been widely read throughout the world, ordinary minds would conclude that in creating them their author has accomplished tasks which alone a mind of a high order could hope to perform. Our alienist, determined to come to no such conclusion, supposes that all those who read Tolstoi's works are degenerates, and that the large sale of his books is consequently a confirmation of Tolstoi's degeneracy.

Would Max Nordau apply the same kind of reasoning with regard to the sale of his own works? He would probably ; but instead of starting with the supposition that contemporary readers of books are incipient lunatics, he would very likely take for granted that the readers who approve of his works are highly intelligent, and that the great sale they have attained proves the soundness of his own mind.

In support of his view, Max Nordau, who fairly acknowledges the great qualities of Tolstoi as a writer of fiction, has the audacity to assert that it is not this great quality of his works that has se-

cured him his world-wide fame, but that it is due to his mysticism, which a degenerate race prefers to a literary and moral value. The only semblance of proof he gives for this view is that Tolstoi's best works have not contributed to his reputation so much as the "Kreutzer Sonata," "an inferior creation, which in the public opinion of the western nations placed him in the first rank of living authors." But who has decided that the "Kreutzer Sonata" is inferior to Tolstoi's other works? Only Max Nordau, whose opinion runs counter to "the western nations." If therefore there is any value in Max Nordau's argument it rests entirely on the astounding fact that the "western nations" are all degenerate and Max Nordau alone is sane.

Max Nordau, like most German bookworms, evidently believes that references to an authority, however obscure, are enough to prove any assertion. He has manifestly worked with any number of "conversations-lexicons" and encyclopedias about him, in quest of some printed confirmation of the extraordinary opinion that the "Kreutzer Sonata" is a poor book, and that the preceding works of Tolstoi alone contain those grand qualities which Max Nordau recognises. He finds that Franz Bornmüller, an author of a biographical dictionary, said in 1882 of Tolstoi: "He possesses no ordinary talent for fiction, but one devoid of due artistic finish, and

which is influenced by a certain one-sidedness in his views of life and history."

It should be noticed that Max Nordau gives this quotation in order to show that Tolstoi had not attained any European fame in 1882, that is, before the "Kreutzer Sonata" was written; but with that amazing want of logic characterizing his whole work, he does not see that this Franz Bornmüller thinks very little of the early works of Tolstoi. He consequently differs from Max Nordau, and shows every sign of sharing the opinion of the "western nations."

Max Nordau makes a sharp distinction between Tolstoi's novels as such and the philosophy they enforce. He is thereby enabled to give some plausibility to the sophistical assertion that it is not Tolstoi's novels, but his philosophy which brought him popularity. This philosophy, which is supposed to prove that Tolstoi's mind is not sound, Max Nordau sums up in the following way:—"The individual is nothing, the species is everything, the individual lives in order to do his fellow-creatures good; thought and inquiry are great evils; science is perdition; faith is salvation." Among these items there is only one which differs from the views of the bulk of humanity—from that ordinary common-sense which Max Nordau so often takes as a standard of sanity, even in the superstitious peasant. We refer to the item in which he

*It is
written* says that thought and inquiry are great evils. Nowhere in Tolstoi's writings can such a nonsensical phrase be found. It is one of those little touches that Max Nordau so dexterously applies, or which his prejudice causes him to apply, in order to strengthen his case in his readers', or perhaps in his own, eyes. He appears to ignore such works as "My Confession," "My Faith," "A Short Exposition of the Gospel," and "About my Life," all works built up by elaborate thoughts. The whole life of Tolstoi has been one of "thought and inquiry," and all his literary work is an invitation to think and to inquire. Tolstoi objects only to such thought and inquiry as vainly attempt to carry the methods of inductive science into spheres where the observation of our senses is of no avail, and where their failure tempts us to believe in the non-existence of that all-important portion of the universe into which faith alone can penetrate.

That Tolstoi should distrust science, after the presumptuous attitude which scientists have taken up, will surprise nobody who has read what we have said about this bankruptcy of science. Many scientists, including Max Nordau, have in their gratuitous attacks on religion so recklessly mixed up scientific fact with scientific speculation, that they must blame themselves if people use the term "science" when it would be more correct to employ that of "unscientific speculations."

That a thinker, who is at the same time the instructor of the ignorant masses, should look upon faith as a means of salvation, is not new, and cannot be considered as a sign of mental aberration; for millions of sane common-sense men have for thousands of years held this opinion. Even if we apply the word salvation exclusively to society in general, to the race, or to one nation, leaving out any references to individual salvation in another world, faith of some kind is the only source from which it could spring. Scientists of Max Nordau's type seem unable to understand that science means the knowledge of absolute facts which, while quite capable of undermining and destroying the foundations on which a more or less primitive religion rests, cannot possibly come into collision with faith in the widest sense of the term. When a scientist and a religionist differ about things which have not come under scientific inquiry—such as the final aim of the scheme of humanity, for example—the dispute is not between science and faith, but between two different faiths. Science therefore cannot regulate our conduct, determine our views, or save a nation. This alone can be done by faith, be it based on science, on tradition, or emotion. A great scientific knowledge might be degraded into an excuse for, and a means of, an irresponsible, selfish, and wicked life; or it might ennoble the mind, intensify the sense of responsibility, and serve as the means of rendering

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great services to humanity. All depends on the faith of the scientist.

The end of what we may call the era of scientific atheism, now at hand, presents most deplorable results, as we have already pointed out, of removing the only foundations of a moral balance available to those who have not had any opportunity of drawing from scientific studies that strength of character, and those noble aspirations to be met with in scientists who have a genuine faith—a faith in their science and in humanity, if in nothing else. Tolstoi, who, like every thinking man of our time, had seen the disastrous effects which scientific atheism had produced, cannot possibly be regarded as of weak intellect because he rejected scientific superstition and proclaimed faith as the true basis of conduct and character.

Max Nordau finds traces of degeneracy in Tolstoi's question, "Wherefore am I alive?" and in the manner in which Tolstoi finds a reply to that question. It seems however that Max Nordau too has asked himself that question, for in his book "Degeneration" (page 149) he replies to it in a close, well-reasoned passage, which deserves to be read to its full extent. We shall quote only a part of it in order to compare the reply he himself obtains with the reply obtained by Tolstoi. After having shown that the aim of a man's life is necessarily involved

in the greater question—the aim of the universe—and that such an aim cannot exist objectively in time or space, he says: “But if it is not objective, if it does not exist in time and space, it must, in order to be conceivable, exist somewhere, virtually, as idea, as a plan and design. But that which contains a design, a thought, a plan, we name consciousness; and a consciousness that can conceive a plan of the universe, and for its realization designedly uses the forces of nature, is synonymous with God. If a man however believes in a God, he loses at once the right to raise the question, ‘Wherefore am I alive?’ since it is in that case an insolent presumption, an effort of small, weak man to look over God’s shoulder, to spy out God’s plan, to aspire to the height of omniscience. But neither is it in such a case necessary, since a God without the highest wisdom cannot be conceived; and if He has devised a plan for the world, this is certain to be perfect, all its parts are in harmony, and the aim to which every co-operator, from the smallest to the greatest, will devote himself is the best conceivable. Thus man can live in complete rest and confidence in the impulses and forces implanted in him by God, because, he, in every case, fulfils a high and worthy destiny by co-operating in a, to him, unknown Divine plan of the world.”

We here notice his words: “that which contains

a design, a thought, a plan, we name consciousness." Now, nobody knows better than the scientists that so far all scientific discovery has revealed plan, method and purpose, in the smallest thing and the smallest phenomena in the universe. Is it then necessary to be degenerate to believe in a self-conscious Providence? John Stuart Mill observes that the fact that we find in nature, especially in human and animal bodies, physical and mechanical problems solved in the same way as engineers had solved them long before they knew of such solutions in nature, points not only to the existence of an intelligent Creator, but to a similarity of his intelligence to that of human beings.

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no, only to common intelligence.

According to the passage from Max Nordau, then, the planning in nature proves a conscious force, a conscious force is synonymous with God, and the man who believes in God can live in complete rest in his faith. Tolstoi obtained a reply to his question in a manner which he describes in the following words :

"It was quite the same to me whether Jesus was God or not God ; whether the Holy Ghost proceeded from the one or the other. It was likely neither necessary nor important for me to know how, when, and by whom the Gospels, or any one of the parables was composed, and whether they could be ascribed to Christ or not. What to me was impor-

tant was that the light, which for eighteen hundred years was the light of the world is that light still; but what name was to be given to the source of this light, or what were its component parts, and by whom it was lighted, was quite indifferent to me."

The difference in the two replies is one of words only. If therefore Max Nordau acknowledged that a sensible man could ask such a question, and if the reply of Max Nordau we have just quoted is recognised by him as his own opinion, he and Tolstoi would stand very much in the same category. But Max Nordau does not think that a perfectly sane mind would ask such a question; and if it was asked, he has another reply. This reply is however far from being so clear as the other. "If," he says, "on the other hand, there is no belief in a God, it is also impossible to form a conception of the aim, for then the aim existing in consciousness only as an idea, in the absence of a universal consciousness, has no locus for existence; there is no place for it in nature." From this it ought to follow that, if a man does not believe in God, there is no God, and consequently there can be no aim. He then proceeds to argue that, if there be no aim, it is useless to ask the question: "Wherefore am I alive?" but that we can ask the question, "Why do we live?" His reply to this is characteristic: "We live in

obedience to the mechanical law of causality, which requires no plan and no universal consciousness."

It is curious to behold how Max Nordau cannot perceive that his question, "Why do we live?" implies the question, "Whence the mechanical law of causality?" and that his reply is simply, "We live because we live." Once he has accepted this self-delusion as a solid foundation, his reasoning again becomes rational, and does not bear on the point before us. The most astounding part of it is that Max Nordau considers Tolstoi, and all others whose instinct, whose emotion, and whose immutable reasoning point to a cause behind Max Nordau's home-made mechanical law of causality, as thereby showing signs of mental degeneration.

Max Nordau, in order to prove the confusion existing in Tolstoi's ideas, seems to take for granted that the tendency towards Pantheism, perceptible in the Russian's reasoning, is utterly at variance with Christianity. We would simply point out that Tolstoi has his own Christianity, framed on his own interpretation of the Gospels, and not any previously existing Christianity, and is therefore at liberty to proclaim a creed which has a Pantheistic tendency without exposing himself to the reproach of being inconsequent. But we consider it more important to notice the fact that the Gospels, far from laying down any dogmas, are the record of the life of a

Note
man—divine or not divine—whose mission it was to protest against dogmas. He called God “Father,” in order to speak of universal consciousness only in its relations to man, leaving it to the doctrinaires and the philosophers to agree as best they could on the question of Pantheism or no Pantheism. Besides, the Gospels certainly emphasize the omnipresence of the Creator; and if this Pantheistic tendency had not existed among the disciples, it is not likely that St. Paul would have said, “In Him we live, we move, and have our being.”

The shallow, superficial manner in which Max Nordau treats Tolstoi's ethics is certainly unworthy of him, and amounts simply to a quibble. These ethics, correctly summed up, “Resist not evil, judge not, kill not,” which correspond precisely with the teachings of Christ, Max Nordau does not regard as ethics, but proceeds solemnly to test them as expediencies in peculiar cases, and comes to the conclusion that they are ridiculous.

Must we then conclude that Max Nordau has no such ethics, but that he believes it right to return evil for evil,—vendetta fashion,—that he objects to suffer wrong for a good cause, and that he revels in indiscriminate murder? Tolstoi's ethics, as ethics should do, hold up the ideal for which we should strive, and as a practical test of them we must consider not the murder and plunder of one good

man by a bad one, but the state which would ensue if all men conformed to them. The practical moral we ought to draw from them is not that laws and law courts should be abolished, but that laws should be framed and law courts should be managed in such a way as to favour a general acceptance of such ethics. Here again Max Nordau indulges in illogical reasoning, and in contradictions of himself. He takes for granted that humanity is so utterly depraved that if "the fear of the gallows did not prevent it, throat-cutting and stealing would be the most generally adopted trade." This means that Max Nordau in one place in his book declares human beings are too good, too noble, too honest to need any belief in a hell, but in another place declares that they are far too depraved to do without the fear of the gallows. He forgets that good ethics have sprung from the good instincts of our race, and that crime has largely been fostered by bad laws, bad law courts, and bad institutions.

In one of his stories, entitled "From the Diary of Nechljudow," Tolstoi's hero, Prince Nechljudow, is a most eccentric character, created probably for the purpose of showing the absurdity of indiscriminate charity and other impulsive actions of the erratics of our day. Max Nordau gives an account of one of the instances in which the Prince's selfish way of practising charity is forcibly brought out. He evidently

does this in order that the Prince's action should be accepted as an illustration of what Tolstoi means by charity. This is both absurd and unjust. It amounts to an identification of the author with the character he represents—a way of insinuating degeneracy in authors who simply hold it up in their characters as a warning. To thus mix up authors with their characters is a mistake frequently committed by unintelligent readers, but it is surprising to find that with Max Nordau it is an habitual method.

With regard to the character Pozdnyscheff, Max Nordau does the same thing. He takes for granted that the opinions expressed by this character are those of the author. The passages he extracts from "Short Expositions," in which Tolstoi's own opinions are expressed, in no wise justify such a supposition.

Max Nordau's explanation of the enormous success Tolstoi's books have achieved is that it is due to general degeneration among the upper classes throughout the world. If he could personally meet the hundreds of thousands of English people who have read Tolstoi's works, he would be able to form an idea of the immensity of his mistake. He would find that the majority of these people belong to a middle class, consisting of persons who are not overworked and who indulge in none of the vices of the continental aristocracies. Their muscles and their

nerves have been strengthened and fortified by a healthy education, and by a love of bodily exercise, sport and even danger, and by a moral life. They live in a country where the authorities have found that to proscribe any licentious book is to promote its sale, and where consequently there is hardly any check upon morbid literature. Yet there is not a country where less of it is circulated than in England. It is true that these readers of Tolstoi have not attained to that height of intellectual development which would permit them to accept Max Nordau's "mechanical causality" as a satisfying explanation of the universe; but, on the other hand, it would be difficult to find a people so religiously inclined, and yet so free from superstition and fanaticism.

Some of them may like Rossetti's pictures, and many of them Burne Jones's, but as a rule they have an equal admiration for Raphael, Tintoretto, Correggio and others. They cannot be classed among the mystics on that account. As few of them write books, they cannot be called graphomaniacs. Nor do they show any signs of being egomaniacs. Nor have they any physical stigmata of degenerates. The heads of this class are generally beautifully shaped, and the ears of the women are by all foreigners who visit this country proclaimed to be the finest and daintiest ears in the world. Personal

beauty among this class is decidedly on the increase; for each generation seems to be better-looking, and the youngest is generally the most beautiful. The latter fact, we may mention, is no doubt due to the increasing tendency of the upper and middle classes in England to beautify their homes and to surround themselves with exquisite objects, as well as to a more intellectual education, pastimes, pleasures, and arts.

Why then must these readers of Tolstoi's works be classed as degenerate?

It is not denied that in England there are people who exhibit signs of mental degeneration, but they are to be found more in literary and political circles than in the close ranks of the upper and middle classes. We would not undertake to class them under the headings established by the alienist, and it would be difficult even for Max Nordau to do so. Perhaps they are not sufficiently advanced in degeneracy to be so classed. Such signs as they exhibit are some of them as old as the hills, and others are clearly the manifestations of that intellectual and moral daze which generally follows on the destruction of the religious foundations of belief involved in the acceptance of belief in scientific atheism. But the most prevalent form of degeneracy is that which is palpably the result of financial depression, felt not only in financial but artistic and literary circles. For reasons

which we leave to the economists to explain, England's commerce and agriculture seem to have come to a dead-lock. The result seems to be diminished incomes all round. Many artists, *littérateurs*, and politicians are at their wits' end how to make an income, and there can be little doubt that this has fostered a certain amount of demoralization. Extraordinary attempts are made to produce sensational pictures, to write eccentric poetry, to send forth books that will shock, and to treat of risky subjects on the stage. Politicians are obliged to make politics a profession, and, as popularity is indispensable to it as a profitable profession, they worship majorities. Anyone who is acquainted with London cannot doubt for a moment that these forms of demoralization spring entirely from a necessity of making a living. Artists, authors, and politicians of this class are no more inclined to lunacy than the vast class of people who do distasteful work, as well as those who have to appear before the public in dangerous but not much esteemed performances. If the financial depression is destined to disappear, there can be little doubt that the majority of these signs of demoralization will also disappear.

There are in this country, as everywhere else, real degenerates, people who have weakened their brains and moral faculties by drink, debauch, over-work, or persons who have inherited mental debility. There

are also among us, we regret to say, an alarming number of destitute people who have been driven into mental derangement by those terrible pangs that misery inflicts. But all these degenerates care as little for Tolstoi's novels as they do for Rossetti's or Burne Jones's pictures.

Though English circumstances are vastly different from continental, there can be no doubt that the causes which have rendered Tolstoi's novels popular are the same here as in other countries. The scientific atheists have introduced into literature a materialist, selfish, sceptical, pessimistic, and cynical tone which was tolerated by the public for a long time. On the continent they had Zola and his wretched imitators, whose books found their way among us, while England has produced a crop of neurotic story-tellers, playwrights and versifiers, made up for the most part of masculine women and effeminate men, who have exploited to the utmost the atheistic vein.

The noble spirit which atheism was to bring to the front somehow did not take to literature, and the reading classes of the world began to miss those pure joys which reading used to afford them. The books of the day offended their religious feelings, their sense of decency, their loftiest conceptions of the world, and their self-esteem, without amusing them. The whole literature of fiction had become stilted, and the morbid and pessimistic authors departed so widely

from nature and evinced so many signs of utter insincerity that the reading world longed to be face to face with a man who spoke his innermost thoughts. The world was therefore ready for a new departure in literature.

What wonder then that Tolstoi's works were well received. They bore witness to consummate ability, a close study of human nature. They presented a true picture of social Russia. They afforded an insight into the Russian mind. His readers experienced the intellectual treat offered by few books,—that of feeling the presence of a master-mind, and of following the thoughts of a thoroughly sincere writer, free from the cheap, ready-made materialist philosophy—a man who devotes both his life and his work, with almost superhuman energy, to the regeneration of his race.

CHAPTER VII

THE REAL IBSEN

I N reading Max Nordau's chapter on Ibsen, one cannot help wondering why our alienist has given his book the form he has. The feeling which the preceding contents of his work have more or less inspired—that there is a discrepancy between the apparent plan of the work and its execution—almost ripens into conviction on the perusal of his chapter on Ibsen.

He says in his dedication to Professor Lombroso, "Now I have undertaken the work of investigating the tendencies of the fashion in art and literature, of proving that they have their source in the degeneracy of their authors, and that the enthusiasm of their admirers is for manifestations of more or less pronounced moral insanity, imbecility, and dementia." He also says that he "ventures to fill a void in your (Lombroso's) powerful system." From what he says higher up on the same page about the power of books and works of art to influence the masses, and his many hints in other parts of the book, as, for example,

in its concluding pages, we must understand that his great object is to do what he can to arrest the downward movement of human intelligence.

He thus assumes that there is a degenerating process going on throughout civilization, but attentive readers of his book feel the whole time that this assumption, far from being proved to be correct, rests on data supplied by Max Nordau, which strongly warn his readers to accept them only with a grain of salt.

On the other hand, there are a host of indications in all civilized countries pointing to an increase in intellectual power, moral strength, and æsthetic refinement. Some of these indications would probably not be undervalued by Max Nordau himself: the rapid progress of science, the increasing education among the masses, the large number of newspapers and periodicals dealing intelligently with various branches of knowledge, professions, and trades, the wider application of scientific methods to industry, wonderful inventions, not the outcome of discovery, but of intelligent induction, the decay of superstition, love of investigation, etc. Max Nordau, having allowed that the test of a sound mind is its ability to attend rationally to one's business, ought to recognise that the growth of intellectual power is manifest in improved business methods, skill, manufacturing, complicated and daring financial schemes, ingenious co-operative systems, well-managed and disciplined

trades unions, nay, even cleverly laid plots to defraud.

An increasing moral strength is proved by the growth of the altruistic feeling, the devotion with which the cause of humanity, morality and progress is served by people who, thanks to scientific scepticism, expect no reward in another world; the greater sincerity observable in all religious bodies, the magnitude of charitable institutions, the magnificent heroism displayed by captains and crews on sinking ships, by our life-boat men in attempting to save the shipwrecked, by our colliers' efforts to rescue the victims of explosions, etc. The great victories of the Germans over the French and the complete success of the commanders' daring tactics have been largely, and probably correctly, ascribed to the moral qualities of the German army, while the utter defeat of the French cannot be ascribed to the want of moral qualities, but to bad leadership. A quarter of a century has elapsed since the Franco-German war, but there is no reason to believe that the moral qualities of the German army have degenerated. That no degeneracy has taken place in the English, French, and Italian armies has been proved by the Chitral expedition, by the French war with Madagascar, and by the Italian operations in Africa.

If, despite these manifest signs of growing intellectual power and moral strength, Max Nordau's

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deep insight into psychological matters has revealed to him a mental degeneracy in the civilized world, his way of investigating such decay, his mode of dealing with it, and especially the causes he attributes to it, are too vacillating, too contradictory, and too biassed to inspire confidence. While sometimes, as in his chapter entitled "Etiology," he refers to such causes as the increase in the consumption of spirits and tobacco, the factory system, over-work, over-crowding—all causes palpable to all who have given any attention to social questions—in the rest of his book he seems to regard certain popular writers and artists as the great cause of general degeneration who should be specially noticed. This contradiction cannot be explained away on the plea that his book is only part of a wider investigation which has already been made, or might be made, regarding the causes of degeneration, and that, so long as his work is intended to treat of the influence of literature and art, his ignoring of other causes is legitimate. If an effect is first attributed to one cause and then to another, we may be sure that there is something wrong with the reasoning. We cannot prove first that the tendency to hysteria, so common in people engaged in a certain class of business, is due to over-work, and afterwards prove that the same tendency in the same people is due to Rossetti's pictures or to Swinburne's poems.

Note | Max Nordau never furnishes an explanation of the enormous importance he attaches to the influence of writers and artists, and the small importance he attaches to the more palpable causes of degeneration, of the existence of some of which he is aware. Nor does he tell us how he reconciles the two facts, alternately insisted upon by him, that degeneration in artists is the cause of degeneration in their surroundings; and again, that the degeneration of their surroundings is the cause of degeneration in artists and authors.

If such artists and authors as Max Nordau believes to be degenerate are the effect of degeneration all round, they are surely the smallest and least deplorable results, and it was certainly not worth while to write so bulky a volume about them. Max Nordau mentions about a score; and what is a score compared to the mass of humanity, or to the five hundred million people included in western civilization? A degeneration that would not have other results than that of producing twenty degenerate men, who, though they are in many respects a source of enjoyment to many, may have a grain of insanity in their brains, would not be worth noticing. If, on the other hand, these supposed degenerates are not what, to the ordinary mind, they decidedly appear to be—the children of their time—but the actual causes of such serious psychological effects which statistics seem to reveal,

we are face to face with a phenomenon which surely demanded a different method of investigation.

The real connection between the causes and the effects should have been ascertained. For instance, the most alarming feature of degeneration in England — that weak-mindedness which leads to drunkenness — should have been connected with the mystical painters and poets, and should have been proved not to have been the result of those causes which seem palpable to every man. Then the influence of individuals on the masses in general should have been ascertained. History offers a wide field for such an investigation. If it had been found that authors and artists exercise less influence than other individuals, such as sovereigns, statesmen, prophets, reformers, revolutionary leaders, discoverers, explorers, and others, the influence of these should have at first been studied, and what could not be attributed to them might have been laid at the door of artists and authors.

? In examining history, old and new, we are struck with the extremely slight effects which have been produced by *littérateurs* and artists, and the enormous, all-powerful influence exercised by other individuals. Books have influenced books, poets have influenced poets, painters have influenced painters, but the political, social, intellectual, moral, and æsthetical development of a nation has over and over again

Roman?
"weather"?

been completely determined by men who have been neither artists nor authors.

In modern times the same fact is palpable. Has ever the world been influenced more than by such men as Cavour, Prince Bismarck, Mr. Gladstone, Napoleon III.? and how might not the fate of humanity be determined in the near future by such men as, for example, the Emperor of Germany and the Czar of Russia? On the mental qualities of the Emperor of Germany depends largely whether Germany is to be crushed under the army system; whether it is to be ruined by financial blunderings; whether there shall be peaceful development of its resources, or war to the knife between its classes; whether healthy reforms shall gradually clear away its social anomalies, or whether a revolution of unprecedented atrocity shall uproot its very foundations; whether its inhabitants shall develop those characteristics to which peace and happiness are conducive, or those which would inevitably be fostered if Germany were made the battle-field of modern armies.

On the mental qualities of the Czar depend directly the destiny of a hundred million people, and indirectly the peace of the world. Russia is only too willing to progress under an imperial leader. On the occasion of his accession to the throne and his marriage, millions of people anxiously scanned his portrait and

tried to read in his features the fate of Europe. The presence of lines supposed to indicate weak character produced prophecies of clerical domination, opposition to progress, and death to Russia; while a kindly expression of the eyes inspired many with hopes of a new era for Tolstoi's unfortunate countrymen.

It is not only personages of high rank and sovereign power whose mental state is of utmost importance to humanity. The political situation in most countries is capable of producing at any moment a man who, without being either an author or an artist, might be able to change the destiny of nations. It is not the opportunity that is wanting, it is the men. France is panting for a man. The working classes in America and in England stand in need of a good leader. In Germany Liebknecht threatens to divide the power with the Emperor. A political Tolstoi might, at the head of the Russian people, sweep the recreant bureaucrats from his Fatherland.

It is then sovereigns, politicians, and popular leaders whose mental state is of the utmost importance, and whose influence may overwhelmingly determine the mental and moral development of humanity. An answer to the question whether they are degenerates, or whether they are of mentally or morally sound mind, is momentous to the whole civilized world, especially if it be admitted that the

minds of the race are so susceptible of being moulded by the minds of influential men.

But who are the men whom Max Nordau blames for the degeneracy for which he finds the proof in statistics? Poets and artists, whose very names are known only to the educated classes, and who for the most part supply what the market demands, or simply reflect the society around them. The most surprising of all is that he himself denies any power or any talent in some of these men, calling them—to omit his worst epithets—such names as drivelling idiots, weak-minded graphomaniacs, etc.

One condition seems however necessary before a man can receive the compliment of being called names by Max Nordau—he must have attracted public attention. We have therefore said, and repeat it, that his desperate attempt to make out Ibsen to be a degenerate renders it impossible to form a clear idea of his object, or of his reasons, for the methods he has adopted.

Henrik Ibsen aims not at being a prophet, a teacher, or a regenerator of mankind either by literary or scientific methods. No one can detect in his works special ethics, or particular religious or social views. It is characteristic of his pieces—and according to many of his opponents a great fault in them—that he points no moral, that the questions involved remain at the end of the piece

exactly where they were at the beginning, that his heroes and heroines are no heroes and no heroines, and cannot serve as models of conduct. His opponents and admirers alike complain that they cannot get at his meaning, and that he will not explain himself. It is therefore surprising that there should be so much talk about the influence he exercises, and that Max Nordau himself should speak about "Ibsen's dogmas," "Ibsen's code of morals," and about Ibsen himself as a "reformer."

Those who speak about Ibsen's influence on the ethics of our time cannot, as a rule, give any explanation of their meaning which can justify the importance they attach to it. They are apt to point to his influence on the English drama and blame him for certain of its objectionable features. But to those who understand his pieces it is perfectly clear that he has not been followed by English dramatists in such things as have made him famous and popular. They have contented themselves with imitating certain situations and with referring to some objectionable feature in modern society, which Ibsen does reluctantly, compelled to do so by the situation, and in order to emphasize types of character which are only too common in every civilized country, but are so closely draped in hypocrisy as to require the great dramatist's lens to show them up. His imitators

however exemplify entirely exceptional cases and conjure up characters the prototypes of which it would be extremely hard to find. He aims at presenting stern reality; they aim at producing risky situations. Indeed, his imitators cannot be said to have been influenced by him more than has his brilliant parodist, Mr. F. Anstey.

In Germany, as in the Scandinavian countries, complaints are sometimes raised against Ibsen's influence on women, especially young women. Our daughters are getting Ibsenized, is the cry raised by a number of Philistine parents. It is perhaps natural that Ibsen's influence on women in those countries, where the staging of Ibsen's pieces recalls more familiar presentations should be greater than in England, where the Norwegian manner of life is but little known. But too much weight might easily be attached to the difference in acquaintance with Norway. There is a far more powerful reason why Ibsen's so-called influence should appear to be more marked on German and Norwegian women than on English women.

With the exception of the United States, there is no country in the world where respectable women are better treated than in England. An old adage says, with a great deal of truth, that the wife of the German is his slave, the wife of the Frenchman is his mistress, and the wife of

the Englishman is the queen of his house. The German woman certainly has of old held a position in her home which might well lead her to envy the English woman, and as the Scandinavian countries have been largely affected by Germany in their social manners and habits, the women of these countries have ample cause for dissatisfaction. Since the time of Frederika Bremer, a woman's revolt has been brewing in the Scandinavian countries, and the aspirations for more liberty, a more natural life, and more happiness, have been constantly becoming stronger, and were highly developed before Ibsen's first piece appeared. Besides, the spread of English fiction in Germany and in the northern countries of Europe has shown the women of those countries that a happier life is quite possible.

The road to the realization of such aspirations was however barred by custom and the selfish view of the question taken by the men. They had no objection to high-spirited, talented, well-dressed, and lively women, whose attractions could evoke in them romantic and ardent feelings; and a great many knew well enough that leisure, exemption from hard work, good food, plenty of exercise, suitable friends, artistic surroundings, good books, a fair amount of pleasure, and considerate treatment, were required to transform a young woman into that feminine ideal which they worshipped in their

imagination. But they repudiated entirely the idea of having such ideals in their wives. It would have clashed far too much with the traditional type of a good wife, and to marry one deviating from this type would have set the whole circle of acquaintances talking. Besides, a wife conforming to the ideal was considered an expensive luxury, leading to waste of money which could be much better employed.

Mothers of girls, well acquainted with the marriage market, consequently exerted all their energy to form their daughters for the positions they were expected to occupy. House-cleaning, washing, cooking, darning, etc., — this was what they had to learn. A demure demeanour was what they had to practise. The society of men was what they had to avoid. Romantic ideas had, above all, to be suppressed, and only such love as would come after marriage, or at least after betrothal, was considered legitimate and decent.

A great feature in their education was to closely observe the evils and troubles which followed upon poverty, and how much more comfortable life would be with a prosperous though unattractive husband than with a beloved man who might not succeed in the world. The idea of refusing a proposal of marriage from a well-to-do man, however old and prosy, was regarded as preposterous, and any re-

spectable girl dreaming of such a thing would have been considered as a romantic, ungrateful hussy.

As the men seldom married young, the girls were taught to ask no questions about their past, and were trained to sacrifice all their ideals of purity, their dreams of love, what a free woman would call her self-respect, their future happiness, their healthful youth on the altar of Philistine respectability.

There are other ways of degrading women besides yoking them with an ox to the plough, and that they were degraded and de-naturalized the thinking German and Scandinavian women had felt long before Ibsen wrote plays. The struggle for better treatment was however extremely weak and the progress towards emancipation extremely slow. Just as oppressive government, with its police persecution, gags open discontent and drives the forces of revolt under ground, so the tyranny over the German and Scandinavian women,—when tradition and prejudice prevented open manifestations,—developed in the hearts of women, especially among the most gifted, a dangerously strong spirit of revolt.

Already at the time when Ibsen began to write there were numerous but isolated outbreaks. The old treatment, which generally resulted in turning the married woman into a dull, despondent house-slave, a soured invalid, a nagging scold, or a gossiping zany, began to produce scoffing Aspasia's,

neurotic adventuresses, and here and there avenging furies.

Note
 This tendency to revolt among the women was stronger in Norway than in the other countries, because it developed parallel with that ethical awakening—the new Aand¹—which during the latter part of this century has taken possession of so many Norwegian minds; also because the strongly imaginative and contemplative character of the Norwegian people, and the intensely emotional nature of their women, led them to brood over their wrongs in a thoroughly Norwegian fashion. Better education and wide reading tended in the same direction.

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 planation.*
 Ibsen has therefore not Ibsenized the Scandinavian ladies. He has simply seized upon a social phenomenon and, understanding its gravity, has held it up to his contemporaries for a study and a warning.

Max Nordau, having committed the egregious mistake of believing that Ibsen has invented whereas he has in reality only copied, and that a social phenomenon which is natural to intellectual and moral progress is a result of Ibsen's writings, is, in his capacity of the most German of Germans, naturally wroth with Ibsen for representing as a social evil what a normal sound-minded common-

¹ Aand, the Norwegian for spirit, inspiration.

sense German—the very type of the non-degenerate—would consider as a useful and comfortable arrangement. There are several excuses for Max Nordau's belief that Ibsen misrepresents reality. The improvement in woman's status in society has no doubt advanced more in Germany than in the Scandinavian countries. It is possible that the Dowager Empress's influence as an Englishwoman has not been so great as is generally supposed, but there can be little doubt that English novels, from Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre" upwards, have considerably furthered justice towards German women. The close business connections between Germany and England, the numerous Germans who have had a long experience of English life, have no doubt done much to spread English social views in Germany.

The German women may therefore now have less cause for discontent and revolt than the Scandinavian women, and it is excusable if the Germans consider that they treat them fairly and well.

To observing Englishmen who visit Germany it is however clear that the whole Philistine idea of the housewife is still prevailing in that country. A great number of husbands consider it a distinct advantage to be able to throw off all restraint in their own homes and to compel their wives to accommodate themselves as well as they can to their whims, their habits, their

indulgences. That exasperating type, the house-tyrant, which is found in all countries, and not seldom in England, is especially prevalent in Germany.

German men are well aware that their wives have nothing in common with the fascinating ideal woman of their imagination, and they are quite satisfied that it should be so. Their work, their studies, their profession or their business demand all their attention, and they could not dream of dismissing them from their minds when they enter their homes. A woman who would distract her husband's attention from such important subjects would be an impediment to his success, while the typical housewife, by her cares and ministrations, furthers it. Like most men, Germans have chivalrous leanings, and enjoy a courteous intercourse with ladies, but it is generally not their wives who reap the advantages of this taste. It is the other ladies, those they meet in society, and not seldom do they muster all their powers of gallantry, all their means of pleasing, and all their faculty to amuse, in the company of women of light character, often in every respect inferior to their wives.

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It is those German women, who feel that their happiness and their lives have been sacrificed, not for their husbands, but to a vicious conception of married life, who sympathize with the women of Ibsen, and have thus contributed largely to the fame of that dramatist in Germany.

Ibsen has not Ibsenized the German ladies, but his pieces have revealed the existence of a grudge long harboured by German women.

It is only just to record that, though Englishwomen, especially those who live and are treated up to the English ideal, as we mentioned before, live under much happier circumstances as children, girls, *fiancées*, and wives, there are many of our countrywomen whose marriages have been a cruel disillusion. Many Englishmen marry too young, before they know their own minds, and under the feverish impulse of a first love. When such young husbands are thoughtless, selfish, or when they have made a bad choice, a miserable married life is the result. In a great number of young households happiness prevails, thanks to the strong-mindedness and tact of the young wife, who can take care of herself and of her husband also. But thousands of marriages turn out utter failures, not for want of love, but from the husband's utter ignorance of how to take care of his wife's health, beauty, and happiness.

Though it is the fashion in this country not to adapt but to translate literally Ibsen's pieces, there would be no difficulty to so adapt them as to render them exact representations of the state of many an English home. And this is sufficient to explain his fame in England. Here, as on the Continent, it is the selfish, mean, bullying husbands,

who cannot find any sense in Ibsen's pieces, and who are extremely shocked at what they consider Ibsen's perversion in attempting to enlist, by inexplicable devices, the sympathies of the audience for the erring wife, when these should be vouchsafed to the husband, who appears to be such a respectable, common-sense man.

When Ibsen thus calls attention to the importance and the gravity of the feeling of revolt which has long rankled in the minds of thinking women all over the world, and which manifested itself long before Ibsen's pieces were known outside Norway, he cannot fairly be said to be responsible for the growing discontent. In reality, he has rendered the world a great service: for the new views and aspirations of modern educated women can neither be suppressed nor ignored without considerable danger to society.

In order to understand that the demand for the purification of marriage is not a transitory whim, it will suffice to consider who made the marriage laws, and, what is more important, who inaugurated the traditional views concerning them? Men alone did. Not the young men, who would be largely swayed by the yearning for true love and by chivalrous considerations, but the law-makers of old; that is to say, elderly men of influence and fortune. In the olden times, when the foundations of social customs were laid, the rights of women were considerably less

respected than in our days ; and under such circumstances the law-makers did not feel called upon to consider woman to any large extent, but made laws, and introduced customs, which suited themselves. What they wanted was, firstly, to marry young and beautiful wives, despite all objections that might be raised against their age, their looks, or their characters, and without much troublesome courtship ; and, secondly, to keep their young wives in subjection by sheer force and legal compulsion.

It is not reasonable to suppose that the fair sex should submit for ever to such treatment, and, as the women in the English-speaking countries have already gained large concessions, it is natural that their sisters in the rest of the civilized world should struggle for reform.

It is therefore difficult to see why Max Nordau should consider Ibsen's influence so dangerous to society as to deem it necessary to hold him up as a degenerate. The enigma becomes more puzzling when we find that Max Nordau frankly allows that Ibsen has great merits and great talents. He says, for instance : " Henrik Ibsen is a poet of great verve and power." " He has the gift of depicting in an exceptionally life-like and impressive manner that which has excited his feelings." " He has the capacity for imagining situations in which the characters are forced to turn inside out their inmost nature,

in which abstract ideas transform themselves into deeds, and moods of opinion and of feeling, imperceptible to the senses but potent as causes, are made patent to sight and hearing in attitudes and gestures, in the play of feature and in words." "He knows how to group events into living frescoes possessing the charm of significant pictures . . . not like Wagner, with strange costumes and properties, architectural splendour, mechanical magic, gods and fabulous beasts, but with penetrating vision into the background of souls and the conditions of humanity." . . . "But he does not allow the imagination of the spectator to run riot in mere spectacles; he forces them into moods, he binds them by his spell in circles of ideas, through the pictures which he unrolls before them." "The power with which Ibsen, in a few rapid strokes, sketches a situation, an emotion, a dim-lit depth of the soul, is very much higher than his skill, so much extolled, of foreshortening in time" . . . "Each of the terse words which suffice him has something of the nature of a peep-hole, through which limitless vistas are obtained. The plays of all peoples of all ages have few situations at once so perfectly simple and so irresistibly affecting."

Further on he again says: "It must be acknowledged that Ibsen has created some characters possessing a truth to life and a completeness such as

are not to be met with in any poet since Shakespeare . . . None the less no poet since the illustrious Spanish master (Cervantes) has succeeded in creating such an embodiment of plain, jolly, healthy common-sense, of practical tact without anxiety as to things eternal, and of honest fulfilment of all proximate, obvious duties without a suspicion of higher moral obligations, as this Gina. . . . Hjalmar also is a perfect creation, in which Ibsen has not once succumbed to the cogent temptation to exaggerate, but has exercised most entrancingly that 'self-restraint' in every word which, as Goethe says, 'reveals the master.'"

We have quoted somewhat lengthily from this eulogy of Ibsen in order to render justice both to him and to Max Nordau. There is no passage in Max Nordau's book which displays more insight into dramatic art and a more intelligent appreciation of some of the subtle but marvellous merits of Ibsen's plays. We should not have thought it possible that so keen an appreciation could have been formed without seeing Ibsen's pieces acted in the original language. This eulogy becomes all the more valuable when we remember that it emanates from one of Ibsen's opponents—from a man who would fain restrain Ibsen from writing at all, and who evidently has not paid any attention to the slow but important social struggle which Ibsen so frequently illustrates.

Most people who have read these and other acknowledgments on the part of Max Nordau of Ibsen's talent, will be struck with the reckless manner in which Max Nordau defeats his own object. He wishes to warn the world against "degenerates" of Ibsen's type, and at the same time praises him as few writers have been praised, seemingly without considering that in this manner he inspires thousands of young writers with the ambition to be degenerates as Ibsen is.

To the average reader Max Nordau suggests the idea of the impossibility of reconciling so much power, genius, talent, and craftsmanship with decayed mental faculties. This all the more as Ibsen's pieces are financial successes, and he consequently shows a solid capacity for the management of his own affairs, which, as Max Nordau has already told us, and every alienist would tell us, is the safest test of a sound brain. The conclusion seems inevitable that Max Nordau is either utterly wrong when he sees all these merits in Ibsen's work, or else when he considers him to be degenerate.

In examining the grounds on which Max Nordau strives to establish his theory of degeneracy we shall no doubt find that the latter alternative is the true one.

Max Nordau first impeaches Ibsen's reputation for realism, but takes this term in its most literal sense.

The stage has its limitations, and the dramatist must have a certain licence in the creating of his situations. Ibsen is not called a realist because all that he represents on the stage is in closer conformity with reality than the representations of practically any other dramatist ever were, but because his characters, besides being individually true to nature, are types—strongly coloured types, it may be—but not too strongly coloured to be understood by an average audience. In a piece not intended to be played the characters may be more delicately moulded, but when they are to be grasped in a few flashes before the footlights they must, like the statue intended for an elevated position, be hewn in bold proportions.

In order to show how unreal Ibsen is, Max Nordau asks whether it is probable that the joiner, Engstrand (in "Ghosts"), wishing to open a tavern for sailors, should call upon his own daughter to be the odalisque of his "establishment"? By using the word odalisque, and by placing the word establishment between inverted commas, he gives a distorted idea of the tavern Engstrand is going to open. It is a question of a real tavern, not of an "establishment." Girls in similar taverns in Norway are of course exposed to temptations and sometimes to insults, but they are by no means necessarily unchaste. In selecting the employment in the

tavern, Ibsen succeeds in giving an insight into the Philistine character of Engstrand, who for the sake of money would risk his daughter's reputation, but who could always fall back on the excuse that he did not intend to ruin her.

Max Nordau may be right when he says that no Paris doctor would have told Oswald Alving in "Ghosts" that he had softening of the brain. But Ibsen does not say "softening of the brain"; he makes Alving say "a kind of softening of the brain," an expression which might very well be Oswald's interpretation of what the doctor had told him in very guarded words. Moreover it is not as an alienist that Ibsen has gained his fame; it is as a dramatist.

Max Nordau quotes as another example of unreality, the sense in which the term "society" is used by the characters in the "Pillars of Society." This is an error into which Max Nordau has evidently been led by reading a bad German translation of the piece. Ibsen's characters do not mean "social edifice," as Max Nordau pedantically will have it, but the well-to-do people in the community.

Again, he thinks that excuse very unreal which Berneck gives to his foreman, whom he has not taken into his confidence. But this unreality is precisely what Ibsen wishes the public to see, and he has evidently not accentuated the unreality sufficiently,

as this has escaped even Max Nordau. Max Nordau does not find the speech of Pastor Rörlund realistic enough. The fact is that the speech is a delightful parody, in no way exaggerated, of those addresses which toadying sycophants all the world over are in the habit of delivering to a magnate whom they desire to propitiate. Any one who has heard such a speech in Norway will be amusedly surprised by its comic realism.

It would be tiresome to go minutely into the proofs of unreality Max Nordau finds in Ibsen's pieces, and the bare mention of the following examples will suffice to show the futility of his attempt. He considers it impossible for a man of forty-three to inspire love, and this in Norway, where people develop and ripen so slowly. He thinks it unreal for an excitable girl to describe as a storm on the sea the passion which induces her to encourage her rival's suicide, and then when the rival is out of the way patiently to devote a year and a half to gaining the love for which her sin was committed. Our alienist, who displays throughout his book an utter lack of the sense of the ridiculous, finds the scene between Ellida, Wangel, and the Stranger in "The Lady from the Sea" ridiculous, a scene which thousands of audiences have followed in breathless silence and with deep emotion.

The puzzle is why Max Nordau is so anxious to

show that Ibsen is not a realist, and how his not being a realist can possibly be construed into an argument in favour of his insanity. Are then all the people who, as a matter of taste or as a matter of business, supply the public with unrealistic dramas to be considered more or less demented? If this is the case, what becomes of the mental sanity of Max Nordau's great model, Goethe, the author of the intensely unreal "Faust"?

Referring to the theory of heredity, frequently alluded to in Ibsen's works, Max Nordau says he cannot preserve his gravity when Ibsen displays his scientific or medical knowledge. Here again we are tempted to refer to the sandal-maker and the sandal-strings; but there is actually no occasion to do so, because Ibsen displaying his medical knowledge is a picture conjured up by Max Nordau's own imagination. We do not know what Ibsen does in his private life, but in his dramatic works he does not display his medical knowledge. What suits Max Nordau's purpose to give as Ibsen's opinions are the opinions of his characters, who, being true to nature, speak as their prototypes in reality speak. It suits Ibsen's dramatic purposes to make use of certain views on heredity, and he is all the more entitled to do so as such opinions are very prevalent nowadays, and not without exercising a considerable influence on people's minds. Ibsen may

have exactly the same opinion as his characters give expression to, or he may think the very opposite, but those who thoroughly understand Ibsen's method will be convinced that he would not commit the mistake, so common among dramatists, of allowing his characters to reflect the author's personality. When Regina, in "Ghosts," in reply to Mrs. Alving, who is harping on heredity, says, "What must be, must be . . . I take after my mother I dare say," she does not express Ibsen's opinion about heredity, but that fatalistic notion which is unfortunately extremely common among women, especially when in trouble or at fault, and a reference to her mother is only a confirmation of her fatalistic belief, at which she clutches that she may rid herself of her responsibility.

If we must look for a tendency in Ibsen's works, it might be found in his attempt to show up this generally prevailing weakness in will and character which Max Nordau himself finds everywhere and which he calls degeneration. Regina, as well as Oswald, are, "frightful examples," of this weakness, and, in placing them on the stage, Ibsen has the same object as Max Nordau, namely, to exhibit a deplorable defect in modern society. Ibsen may therefore be looked upon as Max Nordau's co-operator, and even precursor, because Ibsen's characters are types of that very degeneration which

Max Nordau desires to combat. In fact, the importance that our alienist attaches to Ibsen's characters suggests the idea that if there were no Ibsen, there would be no Max Nordau. By the aid of an extremely confused and distorted reasoning, he condemns Ibsen for that very weakness which he, like Max Nordau, has discovered in modern society and incarnated in his characters as a warning to his contemporaries.

If we had not a strong objection to the *tu quoque* argument, and were not resolved to avoid it, we could here say a great deal about Max Nordau's condemnation of Ibsen's supposed illogical references to heredity, while Max Nordau himself yields to the temptation of using the absurdest logic in order to discover supposed proofs in favour of his own pet theories.

Even supposing that Ibsen did believe in heredity, is he not in harmony with his time? One does not require to be an alienist or a biologist to understand that the Darwinian theory of evolution is the theory of heredity; and one does not require to be very old to have observed that the characteristics of parents often repeat themselves in their children. In his criticism of Ibsen, Max Nordau seems to go too far when he casts discredit on the theory of heredity, with regard to which he himself goes to an extreme, when he attributes to

heredity the lurking belief in a personal God in the inmost recesses of the consciousness of certain scientists. The manner in which he refers to little Hedwig's blindness will certainly induce his readers to infer that he himself does not believe in cases of hereditary blindness—an affliction which has however come within the knowledge of many. Max Nordau, in his purposeless eagerness to tear Ibsen down from his pedestal, seems to imagine that he would further his object if he could show that Ibsen is influenced by the religion of his childhood, of his youth, and of his country. To be influenced by such religion has been the case with many sane people of strong mind, especially in countries where the morality implanted in young children is based entirely on religious instruction. Even when a man ceases to believe literally all that has been taught him, it is natural that his religious thoughts should mould themselves on the early impressions, which then become symbols instead of fact. This is especially natural with people whose walk in life has precluded them from giving that absorbing attention to psychology and biology which to a sound mind is indispensable before it can master, or believe, the scientists' theories of "mechanical causality," and the annihilation of the conscious *Ego*. Max Nordau, like many other scientific enthusiasts, seems to labour under the impression that all the loud-voiced

people, who affect complete irreligiosity, and who pose as free-thinkers, are really convinced that the scientific discovery of yesterday, which might be upset by the discovery of to-morrow, sufficiently explains the world and themselves. This is far from being the case. How often when we scratch the atheist do we not find the superstitiously devout. How many men could be found in the world who are so capable of satisfying all their curiosity regarding the unknown by scientific theories that they might be quoted in support of the artificiality of religious instincts? They would certainly number very few. And yet scientists of Max Nordau's stamp are apt to regard such men as the only really sane ones, and the rest of humanity as to some extent degenerate.

But how does Max Nordau know anything about Ibsen's religious opinions? He simply studies the characters in Ibsen's pieces and takes for granted that Ibsen must necessarily hold the same opinions as his characters. This absurd assumption, indispensable to his purpose, leads him sometimes into ridiculous dilemmas from which he escapes in a not less ridiculous manner. When he finds that Ibsen has *dramatis personæ* of diametrically opposed opinions and beliefs, he does not know which of them represents Ibsen's opinions and Ibsen's beliefs. Determined not to notice the simple fact that none

of them represent Ibsen's views, he falls back on the expediency of declaring that, because his characters differ, Ibsen does not know his own mind, a fact which in our alienist's view points to degeneracy.

He quotes copiously from Ibsen's pieces in order to show that those characters who have committed evil deeds, without having resigned themselves to being utterly bad, yearn for confession. From this we must conclude that Max Nordau considers a longing for confession in those who have sinned as an obsession and as pertaining to stigmata of degeneration. To make capital out of this, Max Nordau sticks hard to his assumption that Ibsen's object is to preach some kind of creed by proclaiming his own opinions through his characters. Few people in the world really know what Ibsen's final object and real aims are; but his immediate object, it will be granted, is to show his contemporaries what they really are, and so sternly and so cogently does he pursue this object that, while other dramatists show their spectators the defects of others, Ibsen lays bare their own.

In showing sinners' yearnings for confession, Ibsen could not therefore be wrong unless a longing for confession in sinners is unreal or unusual. Far from being unusual, we find it in almost every human being, from the innocent child down to the brutal

always
criminal. The police and law-court reports in England frequently relate cases in which men and women confess crimes which would never have been discovered, simply to satisfy a conscience yearning for confession. We have nothing to do here with the question as to whether this first step towards a better life is longed for in obedience to an instinct implanted in the emotional nature of man by a Creator, or whether it is the consequence of an inherited tendency originated by religious teaching and moral civil laws. We have only to deal with the fact that the conscience of all evil-doers, and especially of those who are willing to abandon evil and return to good, prompts them to confess. Max Nordau has only to consult a Catholic priest in order to learn how strong and general this yearning is.

It must also be remembered that confession, if not to priests yet to God, is part of the Lutheran creed prevailing in Norway, and that consequently confession is regarded by the people as the test of true repentance. Though auricular confession is not a sacrament in the Lutheran Church, the Norwegian ministers could tell Max Nordau how often sinners and criminals ease their consciences by confessing to them. It is hardly possible to write a serious dramatic piece without representing a struggle between good and evil. And how then could Ibsen write dramas, true to Norwegian life, without instancing

that yearning for confession which is the outward sign of the inward struggle between good and evil?

Max Nordau instances the French assassin Avinain, who before being guillotined gave out as his life's motto "Never confess" as an example of a strong and healthy mind—or, at least, he regards this motto as one which only a strong and healthy mind can follow. On the other hand, he regards confessing men as men "in whom the mechanism of inhibition is always disordered, and who therefore cannot escape from the impulse to confess when anything of an absorbing or exciting character exists in their consciousness."

True In this comparison Max Nordau omits the chief factor—the religious opinion, or the philosophy which necessarily determines whether the confession is a sign of strength or weakness. If the murderer Avinain was a confirmed atheist, and if his emotional nature was such as to glorify murder, then he had no impulse to confess, and consequently required no strength of mind to resist confession. If the man who glories in what is good—or, to use an expression of Max Nordau's, who has social instincts, and consequently believes that confession is his duty and an heroic action—should shun the ordeal and prefer to spend the rest of his life as a self-despising hypocrite, this would be weak-mindedness. Of course Max Nordau may always argue

that to believe in the good and in personal responsibility is in itself a sign of degeneration. But this would be simply to place the question on another plane, where we have already discussed it.

What is said here about confession applies equally to what Max Nordau says about redemption. It is not, as he states, an obsession of Ibsen's, but a symbol very natural to a people of strong religious feelings. His characters could not possibly express their ideas and their emotions in any other way than that in which they have been in the habit of thinking all their lives.

Max Nordau cannot rid himself of the obsession that the dramatist must necessarily take a side in the squabble between religion and science, and between the devotees of different social panaceas, and seems exasperated because he cannot get at Ibsen's real opinion on such questions. When he persists in his egregious error of taking the opinions of Ibsen's characters as those of Ibsen, his mind gets into a maze, which leads him to the conclusion that it is Ibsen's mind, not his own, that has got into a confused state. It is very common to find a man, who by dint of study or by natural talent, has become an authority on one subject, so far losing his power of self-criticism as to believe himself a universal genius, capable of dogmatizing on every subject under the sun. It is this conceit that in-

duces successful men to imagine that their natural specialty is not that one which has rendered them famous, but some other specialty for which in reality they have no aptitude whatever. A successful comedian believes himself to be hardly dealt with because he is not acknowledged as a tragedian. A musician considers himself an authority on the drama. The poet thinks he ought to have been a politician. Biologists imagine they would shine as social reformers.

It is because Ibsen has not yielded to this weakness, because he has not the conceit to lay down the law on questions outside his own province, but simply aspires to be a dramatist, that Max Nordau complains so bitterly of Ibsen's omission to express a distinct opinion on all sorts of subjects on which Max Nordau burns to break a lance with him. He tilts against the opinions expressed by Ibsen's characters with the wasted fury of Don Quixote attacking windmills.

We are at a loss to account for the contradictions of which Max Nordau appears to be guilty. Much of what he says in the latter part of his essay on Ibsen is in direct contradiction to what he says in the earlier part, where his praise of Ibsen's talents and abilities is conspicuous. We will give an example of what we mean. He says at the beginning of his chapter, "Each of the terse words

which suffice him (Ibsen) has something of the nature of a peep-hole, through which limitless vistas are obtained." Towards the end of it he says: "Thus Ibsen's drama is like a kaleidoscope in a sixpenny bazaar. When one looks through the peep-hole, one sees at each shaking of the cardboard tube new and parti-coloured combinations. Children are amused at this toy, but adults know that it contains only splinters of coloured glass, always the same, inserted haphazard and united into mystical figures by three bits of looking-glass, and they soon tire of the expressionless arabesque."

Can this contradiction be the result of his great trust in authorities, and has he made use of two that clash, or does he write for writing's sake, differently each day according to the mood he happens to be in?

When Ibsen's characters give expression to their yearnings for greater personal liberty, for a revolt against social traditions which threaten to wreck their lives, and which they have beheld wrecking the lives of hundreds around them, they are intended by the dramatist to show what is going on in modern society. Max Nordau of course concludes that Ibsen is an egomaniac who resents any bonds on his worst instincts. Supposing that Ibsen shares personally that same longing for more individual freedom which Max Nordau so warmly deprecates,

it is evident that they differ simply because Max Nordau starts from the supposition that men's instincts are necessarily bad, and Ibsen from the supposition that they are good.

The fundamental difference in opinion mainly springs from the different circumstances amongst which the two men have been born and brought up. The German, who has all his life been impressed with the necessity of officialism and police government, who has lived under the impression that his castle would be attacked by a lower caste when free to follow its inclinations, would naturally attach great importance to existing institutions. If he at the same time be illogical enough to sap at the root of that great order-producing institution—religion—and beholds that this safe-guard is becoming more and more unreliable, he naturally looks for something to take its place.

The German social system, so unjust to the working classes, has naturally embittered the people and enlisted a number of working men into the revolutionary parties, and this growing army of so-called enemies to society naturally alarms the German middle-class man and prejudices him against the proletariat. Passions and destructive instincts, instilled by long suffering, he is apt to regard as human nature from which the worst must be expected. This explains many of Max Nordau's

contradictions. He wishes to abolish religion because its abolition would glorify science, but he wishes to retain the marriage laws because he fears that without them an unspeakable state of immorality would ensue. He denies a divine plan in creation which might account for the moral instinct in man, but he does not believe that morality has sprung from the only remaining source, namely, man's experience of the advantages of morality. His habit of bowing to authorities causes him to believe that morality and a pure family life are the result of the marriage laws, and not that the marriage laws are the result of man's love of morality and of a pure family life.

The Norwegian is born and brought up in a country where liberty has been the basis and safeguard of moral order; where few police are found in the cities, and where, throughout vast tracts of country, man's good instincts are the only police; where the peasant and working-classes have no desire or intention to attack the wealthy; where the people are religious because they are honest and not honest because they are religious; where self-esteem and justice would take the place of religion were it to crumble. The Norwegian has noticed that the poor are more generous than the rich, that the people are more honest than their officials, that the free man and woman are more moral than

the tied ones, and that liberty elevates and oppressive laws degrade. If the Norwegian seems to attach little importance to legal marriage, it is because, in cleansing it from mercenary considerations and other low motives, he hopes to base it on such foundations as moral instinct, love, self-respect, honour, and possibly on religious belief, and thereby make it a life-long reality. It is not to gratify low instincts and licentious passions, as Max Nordau would have it, that he wishes for reform. He may be mistaken in his motives, but this is no excuse for attributing vile motives to him.

Max Nordau is not the only one who is puzzled by the many peculiarities of Ibsen's plays. Like him, many English theatre-goers wonder why his best types and his leading characters, as a rule, are so void of nobility, fine feeling, and high principles; why he always places his scenes in small towns, and not among the romantically wild country and the picturesque peasants, as Bjørnsen and Jonas Lie have often done; why he represents the so-called respectable and official classes in so unfavourable a light; why his women seem to be morally and intellectually superior to his men.

In order to elucidate these questions and many other peculiarities in Ibsen's plays and characters, as well as some of the reasons why a German critic should disapprove of Ibsen, it should be remem-

bered that in Norway two cultures have met and struggled — the German and Scandinavian — but have not blended.

Of the Scandinavian nations, the Norwegians may be considered as the extreme type. While they differ from the Danes and Swedes considerably, they differ still more from the Germans. Their characteristics arise not only from race, but largely from surroundings and modes of life. The genuine Norwegian people have of old lived scattered over a vast area of country, separated by high fjells, and broad fjords, foaming torrents and dense woods, only sparingly communicating with each other, and still less with strangers, and hearing little of the outside world, they have grown into a silent, thinking, and deep-feeling nation. They have inherited from the old Viking times an unquenchable love of liberty, and all their institutions, their customs, their principles, have developed in freedom, and such virtues as they have and of which they are most proud, are the outcome of personal independence. Accustomed to personal danger on the snow-clad mountain-paths, in the vast forests, and in small open boats upon the stormy fjords, they have acquired an extraordinary degree of self-reliance. Unused to, and distrustful of, foreign ways, and seldom successful in foreign countries, they harbour an intense love of Norway and for anything Norwegian;

Note

and while they may conceitedly think that everything that is Norwegian is great and noble, they certainly endeavour to put a stamp of nobility and greatness on everything that is Norwegian. They are proud, generous, loyal, hospitable, and can never be persuaded that lowly circumstances or poverty could possibly be an excuse for an unroyal conduct.

Born and bred amid snow-capped mountains, deep valleys, perpendicular rocks, a jagged, stormy coast—the whole wearing an air of solemn and lonely grandeur — the Norwegians are a meditative and highly imaginative people. The stirring natural phenomena peculiar to the country cannot fail to stimulate their imagination. The snow-storms, the ice-avalanches, the light summer nights, the brilliant moonlight diffused over the abrupt mountains, the dark forests and the glittering fjords, the raging storms from the Atlantic, the flaming midnight winter skies, the sunsets which so wondrously illumine the whole coast-line — such scenes, such pictures, sink into their minds and quicken their emotions.

What wonder, then, if they are full of folk-lore and the supernatural has for them an irresistible charm? They are superstitious, and believe that their actions and lives are influenced by gnomes, fairies, and trolls. Old heathen ceremonies for the propitiation of the spirits are still in vogue. They

are deeply moved by music and poetry, and have a strong predilection for all that is heroic and great.

It is not surprising that in German translations of Norwegian writings—for which Max Nordau blames Ibsen's degeneracy—adjectives should have taken a new meaning; for in Norway they have been influenced by Nature's grandeur. When Norwegians say "great," they mean great as the fjeld, great as the boundless ocean; when they say "silent," they mean silent as the wood in the short summer night. Consequently, when a man, an action, a thing, is described to them, they are apt to measure it by the standard of nature's extremes around them. They are always disappointed when they behold the wonders of civilization described to them as great and wonderful. They would call the ruins of the Coliseum mean, and think no more of the pyramids than of ant-hills. Their ideas of a great man could probably never be realized, and their wonder is considerable at finding the mighty lords of England so unlike demi-gods.

It was the Hanseatic League that brought this stern and haughty people into contact with German culture. This remarkable federation of enterprising German merchants discovered that profits could be made out of the rough products of Norway, and they founded a German colony in Bergen, which

rose to considerable importance. German traders gradually settled in all the other important Norwegian centres, and the whole commercial life of Norway became more or less Germanized.

At the time Germany was far ahead of Norway in everything appertaining to industry, and was already then bent on doing business with foreign countries by offering them a mass of German manufactured goods of attractive appearance, but of little value, and not indispensable to a people like the Norwegians. Competition was already severe in Germany, money had acquired an immense importance, success in life was most easily attained by intense application to business, saving, and grinding. The German traders stood in the same relation to the Norwegians as that in which English traders stand to the native races whom they first approach for business purposes. The traders and agents who went as far as Norway—a long distance before the days of steamers and railways—were daring and reckless men, bent upon making money just as the pioneers of British commerce were and are in Africa. What interested them was not the great and noble aspect of the Norwegian character, but the desire on the part of these people to buy gew-gaws, and the facility with which they parted with their money and their goods.

Though Norway is a poor country, it yielded

to the not over-ambitious Germans a satisfactory harvest, and a great number of them settled permanently in the Norwegian towns. They became sufficiently numerous and influential to impress a German stamp on Norwegian urban life, on the people who worked and lived with them; and these became Germanized to no small extent.

These middle-class Germans were no doubt excellent, respectable people in their way, but they had little in common with the Norwegian country folk. They were better educated, they had more worldly wisdom, their experience in their own cities had trained them to subject their emotional nature to their intellect. In order to push on to success in their German communities, where antagonistic and powerful magnates left but little scope for daring and straightforwardness, they had learned to value diplomacy and discretion.

They had no sympathies with the natives, whom they regarded as semi-barbarians, and all their intercourse with them was diplomatic and insincere, and their sole motive was profit. The honesty, the pride, the generosity of the Norwegian peasantry were well known to them, but they took advantage of these characteristics, which they regarded as expensive luxuries.

The cities however became the seats of the educational establishments, and the Norwegian youth

their common
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who were intended for the professions came to the cities and mingled there with the German element. On the other hand, the sons of the citizens went into the country in professional capacities and created there a middle-class strongly impregnated with German culture. In this manner a sharp line of demarcation arose between the upper and middle class on the one hand and the peasantry on the other, the former being strongly influenced by German culture, the latter clinging tenaciously to the Norwegian.

It is no slur on the German character and German culture to say that it involved degeneration in no small degree. It partook of the drawbacks of our civilization, and what happened in Norway has happened in every country where modern civilization has come into contact with nations whose virtues and noble qualities have rested as much on ignorance and the absence of temptation as on inborn worth. Thanks to the historical development we have indicated, the Norwegian upper middle classes, as well as the whole of the urban populations, developed characteristics which drew upon them the contempt of the peasants. Their eagerness for profit, their love of money, their indifference to the great, the noble, and the beautiful, their cringing attitude towards authorities and towards the wealthy, their sacrifice of public interests

to private welfare, their susceptibility to the influence of foreign fashion, manners, and vices, all this tended to lower the upper and middle classes in the eyes of the peasants.

When the phenomenon, witnessed in all civilized countries—the impoverishment of the masses—made its appearance, public-spirited men began to inquire as to the causes. It was in the middle of this century, when a spirit of revolution and reform was abroad, that the yearning for a better state of things began to manifest itself. There were no aristocracy, no established Church, and no privileged class to blame for the unsatisfactory state of the country, and consequently the investigators turned their attention to the ethical condition of the people themselves. Comparison between the olden and the modern times was instituted. The discrepancy between the two classes became striking, and the corrupting influences were traced to the towns. A strong desire to revive and strengthen the old culture took possession of many men and women, who, though educated, had a keen sympathy with the peasants. To found the future development of Norway on the basis of the old Norwegian culture became the object of a new national party, including some of the best elements of the Norwegian nation. These enthusiasts found their expression in composers like Tjerulf, and in the

writings of men like Björnstjerne Björnson, Jonas Lie, and Ibsen.

The greatest mistake of these writers—the one that has entirely escaped Max Nordau—is their belief that a nation can realize its best aspirations by methods that have utterly failed in the celestial empire of China. The hope of preserving the grand feature of the old Norwegian culture by exclusiveness, by isolating Norway, and by offering a stubborn resistance to foreign influence, be it good or bad—in this they have set themselves an impossible task. A thorough national life and development produced by such artificial means would, even if attended by the highest degree of success, partake of a theatrical nature. The more it succeeded, the more it would attract foreigners, and features which in olden times sprang from the character of the people and from natural circumstances, would fall into the line of carnivals organized at the expense of the municipalities and of railways to Alpine summits.

These Norwegian enthusiasts have yet to learn that, though foreign tourists, foreign literature, and foreign art place temptations in the way of their single-minded nation, there are in every country large numbers of people who fight for progress as sedulously as themselves, and whose co-operation would outweigh the dangers of European modernity.

In the old culture, in the past life of nations, especially in nations like Norway, there are great virtues and noble features which may well serve as a goal. But to again render them a reality, to base them on lasting foundations, a people must pass through the fiery trials of modern temptations, and, instead of yielding plastically to outward circumstances, must shape their destiny through sheer strength of character. What Norway has of good and noble she should give to other nations, and freely accept their best from them. This is an exchange which, like mercy, blesses both giver and receiver.

Though the struggle against degeneration is, in Norway, hampered by the national prejudices of the leaders, it is still progressing. Ibsen's mission in the fight is to ruthlessly expose the stagnant pools of corruption. He finds them in the cities and among the middle class, where the old German Philistine features have been most distinctly preserved. Many of his characters bear German names, and those who take the part of the traditional villain wear often the garb of that respectable, common-sense, matter-of-fact, self-absorbed German whom Max Nordau would exempt from any stigma of degeneration.

Thorvald Helmer, in "The Dolls' House," has, or would have, the sympathies of millions, not in