Germany alone, but in England and everywhere, of people whose emotional nature, whose love for the high and noble, has been compressed by that worldly wisdom which in our large crowded cities becomes prudence, and to obey which is often a duty—people who are not aware that it is not only possible, but even easy, to be both diplomatic and discreet in obedience to noble emotions and exalted aspirations, and that to root these out of our nature is degeneration.

Helmer, in his sleek reasonableness, is an excellent type of meanness, and his character is brought out in a consummately artistic way. It exasperates Max Nordau that this man, who comes so near his standard of sound-mindedness, should inspire in audiences all the world over, especially in the female element, a sense of aversion, apparently without any effort on the part of the author. Helmer has a keen eye for the main chance. His reputation and his position have his first consideration. He trembles at the idea of fighting the world without them. His love of his wife is the quintessence of selfishness. He loves her in the two only ways which Max Nordau thinks reasonable in a human being, as a companion, as a pleasant thing to toy with; and as the female of his race, at such periods when he, as the normal man of Max Nordau, is actuated by animal impulses, for ex-

ample, under the influence of champagne. Of the pure love for a woman which in a man's heart remains as a spring of living water, giving him a pang of joy each time his thoughts revert to her, and which casts a rosy tint of poetry over life, nay even over death—of such love Helmer is as incapable as Max Nordau's normal man.

Nora yearns for the higher, nobler love, and her lack of experience in character-study has left her in doubt, though in hope, regarding her husband. The moment comes when she gains certitude; and when Helmer reveals himself in his Philistine hideousness, her spirit revolts.

Though of course exaggerated for the sake of dramatic effect, she is a good type of an intelligent and emotional Norwegian woman. Norwegian girls receive a great deal of instruction, and as they have no professions to prepare for, their education is more literary and artistic than that of the men. They read voraciously the Norwegian modern writers, and sympathize consequently more than the men with the extreme nationalists. They are often strongly possessed by the *Aand*—that indefinable yearning for all that is great and noble—in Norwegian culture already alluded to. They have a fair knowledge of foreign literature, and read a great many English novels. With their admira- for English pure love, for English home life,

grafted on the grand aspirations which the new *Aand* fosters, they may well appear uncanny and troll-like to the prosaic German.

We trust that the struggle between the Norwegian and the German cultures, of which we have endeavoured to give an idea, will make it easier for students of Ibsen to understand his characters. It is in "The Doll's House" where the two inimical cultures are most clearly personified, the old Norwegian culture being represented by the uncompromising, impulsive, and intense Nora, and the imported German culture by the pedantic, commonplace, and animal Helmer.

If our interpretation is right, it is impossible that Ibsen's work could in any way indicate degeneration. It ought, on the contrary, to be evident that his pieces, rendering objective as they do the struggle for a higher and better life, based not on pedantic considerations of immediate and unworthy advantages, but on the noble impulses of a strong and healthy nation, are at once a summons to rise higher, and signals pointing the way.

CHAPTER VIII

RICHARD WAGNER

WE all have met with people who, without being degenerates to any great extent, repeat stories of their own invention so persistently, that they end by believing in them. In this kind of folly, if folly it be, there is a great deal of method when indulged in by people who are anxious, for some reason or another, that their views should *nolens volens* be accepted by others. When one comes to deal with the intellectual development of a nation or a race, and wishes to prove certain forms of progress or retrogression, it is half the battle to bring your opponent to believe in the existence of some special, well-defined psychological phenomenon or social tendency, and to give it a high-sounding name. What would astrology have been without the horoscope, or alchemy without the philosopher's stone? What would modern statecraft be without such terms as "foreign competition" and "international jealousy"? What would German socialism be without the term "revolutionary socialism"? What would bi-metallism be

without the phrase, "the stability of the currency"? And what would Max Nordau's theory of degeneration be without the "mystic movement"?

He takes for granted that there is such a thing as mysticism, as well as that it constitutes a movement, and then endeavours to explain everything as partaking of or resulting from it. According to him, Wagnerism is the reappearance in Germany of that romanticism which originated there, and afterwards travelled through France and England. It reappeared, according to him, through Wagner's degeneration, and spread in virtue of the degeneration of his contemporaries. He says that he finds in Wagner a greater abundance of degeneration than in all the other degenerates put together. "The stigmata of his morbid condition," he says, "are united in him in the most complete and most luxuriant development."

This is a bold assertion, and will appear bolder yet to any one who has read his chapter in "The Richard Wagner Cult." Wagner's dislike of the Jews, which Max Nordau calls anti-semitism, and his views on social questions, which our alienist calls Anarchism, are pointed out as unfailing stigmata of degeneration. One of the methods of our alienist is to notice and make much of certain extreme opinions in people who are actually made, or who have made themselves, intensely objectionable, and then to point out that

similar opinions and ideas are present in the mind of some celebrity, and then to draw the conclusion that this celebrity must be on the road to madness. Either he does not see himself, or he trusts his readers will not see, that by such methods every man in the world might be proved to some extent deranged. He forgets that exaggerated virtues become vices, and that some of the most prominent men in the world have had idiosyncrasies to which they have even given considerable play without at all coming within the range of degeneration.

The anti-semitism in Germany, which Max Nordau ascribes to degeneration—probably with the approval of the majority of Jews—in that country, as well as in Russia, France, and the United States, springs from causes so patent, that no man who aspires to be considered an acute observer of his time should ignore them.

Let us instance Russia first—a country where the latest wave of anti-semitism first took a violent form. Can any one who is acquainted with the typical financial history of the Russian villages wonder that the Jews in Russia should be looked upon as a scourge? What has happened in thousands of such villages is this. An energetic, clever Jew settles amongst the Russian Moujiks, who combine thriftlessness and love of an easy life with many of the good qualities and innocence of primi-

tive races. The Jew is bent on making money, and caring little about the opinion the community may form of him, and too brave to fear their enmity, he has no hesitation in taking up any kind of business, however unpopular it may render him. He willingly becomes a publican, a pawnbroker, a land-grabber, and, in combination with other Jews, a speculator and cornerer. His attention to business, his self-denial, his hardheartedness to his customers, his knowledge of the tricks of trades and finance, the ready support he gets from his co-religionists in other districts in carrying out his purposes, however derogatory they may be to the community—all this soon renders him the master of the situation. The stranger, who at first in such a friendly spirit invited his customer to drink his *vodka* and borrow his money, is soon transformed into a harsh tyrant who, by hook or by crook, came into possession of all the belongings of the villagers, and calmly makes use of their destitution to extort from them their future earnings. The Jews, as a rule, on the one hand, and the Russians on the other, form diametrically opposite views on this social phenomenon. The Jews say, and Max Nordau evidently sides with them, that this successful Jewish village tyrant has done nothing to deserve blame. He has only been more frugal, more thrifty and more intelligent than the Russians, who were bound by their inferior

character to go to the wall; and that if Russia hates the Jews, it is with that hatred against successful men common in human failures.

The ruined Russian peasants simply know that the Jew who came among them is rich and they are poor, that what used to be their possessions form his wealth, and that the means he has used to obtain it would not have been used by them under any circumstances. They think they have been robbed, and that they and their descendants would be robbed by the Jew and his descendants if they cannot be freed from him. Hence anti-semitism in Russia.

Max Nordau has no right to call the anti-semitists degenerate, even though they be wrong in their logic because he is wrong himself, and he cannot point to ruined homes and wrecked lives as a substantial foundation for his opinion.

In Germany the Jews play the same part, though under modified conditions. Though bad, German laws and German officialism are better than those of Russia, and the German people do not so easily fall a prey to the strong-minded Jew. But, on the other hand, the Jews make themselves obnoxious in other ways, both in Germany and Austria. Here they act everywhere as trade-spoilers. The Jew undersells everybody. He stops short of nothing, save breaking the law, to extend his business. He

is obsequious to those in power and in wealth, but relentlessly hard to competitors and to creditors. Many of them will take the greatest possible advantage of other people's, especially Christians', misfortunes, and will gain their end by deliberately wounding other people's feelings. It is the Jews who generally pay the lowest wages, and who are found in the ranks of the sweaters.

We hasten to state that there are in Germany a great many exceptions to the types here referred to. But either they are not numerous enough, or the Jew must possess some inability to show his better qualities, for no one acquainted with the circumstances in Germany would deny that the Jew-haters there look upon their enemies in exactly the light we have described.

But this is not all. Accusations are levelled against the Jews which are partly untrue, or else vastly exaggerated, and those who make them should be called upon to prove their statements. Whether they may be able to do this or not, the fact remains that the Jew-hating Germans believe that the Jews have formed one vast conspiracy, the object of which is to secure for the Jews large advantages at the expense of the Christians. It is alleged that the methods employed are as follows: the Jews are supposed to meet in secret conclave, in which those of them who desire to accomplish any special aim

state it to their brethren, who then combine in assisting them. Such aims may be the possession of a house or a shop in the hands of a Christian, the ruin of some obnoxious competitor, the miscarriage of some public auction of goods coveted by some Jew, and so on. With such ideas prevailing, how is it possible to ascribe Jew hatred to degeneracy? Such logic is all the more surprising as it remains a palpable fact that the fortunes of the Jewish houses are growing apace, that Jews seem to succeed no matter what they undertake, that they certainly are more charitable to their co-religionists than to Christians, and for that matter than Christians are to Christians, while at the same time poverty and misery are on the increase among the Christian masses.

Max Nordau does a bad service to the Jews of Germany when he attempts to lay the blame for anti-semitism exclusively at the door of the Christians and calls them degenerates, while he entirely exempts the Jews. This partiality, coupled with his contempt for the masses and his belief in government by the more strong-minded men, points to a future state in Germany in which the Jews should be the ruling aristocracy. His unfairness thus, instead of abating the persecution against the Jews, might easily be construed into an excuse for a more bitter anti-semitism.

This error of his is due to his besetting habit of taking his postulates from doubtful authorities and of drawing illogical conclusions. It is a common thing for men who have been successful in one branch of knowledge, and who are regarded as authorities in a specialty by others, to jump at rash conclusions with regard to subjects on which authorities differ or do not exist. This is exactly what Max Nordau does when he comes to consider facts which cannot be rightly understood without a clear insight into sociology and other social sciences. He then evinces impossible opinions, and gives us to understand that he has a ready-made scheme for reconstructing society on a new and perfect plan.

It is not difficult to see what this plan is. It is quasi-Collectivism and Communism. He wishes the State to become the universal heir of all fortunes and the universal benefactor. The absurdity and impracticability of this scheme—which, by the way, is always the very one that first enters the head of a young student who tackles social science for the first time—are obvious. As however he does not insist upon his scheme in his volume "Degeneration," it would be out of place to explain its hollowness here. We have referred to it simply to show that his superficiality regarding the anti-semitic question is not incidental. It will be evident to anybody who tackles this question with an unprejudiced mind that the

Christians in Russia and Germany are utterly at fault when they believe that they can escape from their troubles by persecuting Jews, and also that the Jews are utterly at fault when they attribute anti-semitism to the jealousy and wickedness of the Christians. Both these parties, as well as Max Nordau himself, allow their feelings instead of their intelligence to determine these questions. But they are not necessarily degenerate.

The true explanation of the imbroglio is as follows: The Jewish race, which might have acquired a few unpleasant characteristics by no fault of their own but through a cruel and unjust persecution for centuries, is a highly-gifted one, distinguishing itself by strong-mindedness, great will-power, remarkable powers of endurance, morality, and singleness of purpose. Deprived, in a great number of countries of social rights and the privileges of citizenship, they have for centuries found only one way open to them by which they could attain to independence, security, and consideration—the accumulation of wealth. In modern times, when social institutions and laws tend to render wealth almost omnipotent, its acquisition has become to this people of greater importance than ever. Success in a business, however small, may mean millions in the future, while failure may result in life-long misery. Consequently, the Jews apply themselves to their trades or professions with an

energy and assiduity such as few races can command.

They therefore represent a power in the development of humanity which is bound to produce far-reaching effects. Whether these will constitute a blessing or a curse to the nations among whom the Jews live and work depends entirely on the institutions and the laws of those countries. If these are such as to render the oppression of the poor, the workers, the borrowers, the tenants—in fact, all the sections of society on which the Jews now batten—a condition for the thriving of the capitalists, the employers, the lenders, the tenants, and the fortunate classes in general—if the laws are of this description, then the Jews will be conspicuous as the oppressors of others. But if, on the contrary, the laws and institutions of the countries are such as to render the success of the upper classes and leaders of trade, industry, and finance dependent on the welfare of the workers, then the Jews will be the most liberal lenders, the most generous employers, and the most accommodating landlords. In fact, the question resolves itself simply into one of demand and supply; as long as there is a greater demand for Jews' services than the Jews are able to supply, the latter will dominate; but when there are more services offered on the part of the Jews than the people can avail themselves of, these can

dictate terms to the Jews. And this relation of demand and supply depends on laws and institutions.

Even if Max Nordau's prejudices prevented him from taking this view of the anti-semitic question—which is not only the correct one but which greatly facilitates the solution of the question, and thus would prevent the disgraceful persecution which in many countries threatens to become more serious—he might have found, by simply looking at the actualities, in the different countries that anti-semitism prevails in an inverse ratio to good government. He could not have asked for a better proof of the fact that laws and institutions are at fault and not the Jews or the Christians. To take only the two extremes: in Russia, where the government, from the people's point of view, is probably the worst in Europe, anti-semitism is most vehement; in England, where the government is more influenced by the consideration of the good of the people than any other country, there is scarcely any animosity against the Jews, and this in spite of the efforts of certain politicians to promote it.

The reception of Dr. Stöcker, when he attempted to address a public meeting in London in favour of anti-semitism, would have convinced Max Nordau, had he been present, what a poor chance anti-semitism has in a country where the working classes are free to follow those instincts which Max

Nordau fears so much. We may relate that hardly had the proceedings begun when the hall was filled by labourers, who, contrary to their habit on such occasions, had not changed their dress, and who hooted Dr. Stöcker, stormed the platform, overpowered the anti-semitists, and cleared the hall.

In face of the fact that anti-semitic questions turn so entirely on prejudices and mistakes, one cannot surely accuse Wagner of madness because he sided with what may be called a national party, and approved of a movement the object of which was to stay the progressive influence of an alien race over the destiny of the Fatherland.

In several places in his work Max Nordau insists upon considering the anarchist tendencies of our age as among the stigmata of degeneration. If he were right, we should be face to face with a calamity likely to end in the brutalization or the annihilation of our race. For Anarchism in some form or another is certainly spreading rapidly. That there is Anarchism and Anarchism, seems of little importance to our alienist in his eagerness to draw his pre-conceived conclusions. He reasons as usual. Starting from the hypothesis that some of the criminal Anarchists were, to some extent, mentally deranged and morally weak, he arrives at the conclusion that Wagner was a degenerate, because he shared to some extent with the Anar-

chists the hatred of our present social system and of the injurious effects it produces on the masses of the people.

Though Max Nordau dwells far more lengthily on poetry, and art, and cognate subjects than on the graver question of Anarchism, there is no point on which it behoves us better to set him and his readers right than that of the relation between Anarchism and degeneration.

The Anarchist is not a cause. He is an effect. There is a feeling in the consciousness of almost every human being, be he a believer in a divine religion or in Max Nordau's religion of humanity, that our race is destined to a high degree of development, and to a far larger sphere of happiness than now falls to the lot of most of us. This yearning for happiness, for elevation, is not only a feeling but a conviction consequent upon our knowledge of the past stages of the development of man.

There was a time when fervent religious beliefs induced patience and resignation under suffering, and when our future destiny was left in the hands of Providence. But the French encyclopædists, and after them the modern scientists, have done their best to undermine this belief and to show us that the destiny of future generations will largely depend upon us and themselves, that science is

placing in our hands an ever-growing control over the forces of nature, and that if humanity suffers it is because the present generation has not the moral courage to throw off religious scruples and boldly shape their own destiny.

These doctrines, in unison with the general progressive spirit of the age, led to revolutions and political reforms. In the absence of a Providence the nations shifted their faith to constitutional governments. But the new faith did not last long. The more democratic the governments were the more they applied the principles of Collectivism—they yielded to those instincts which Max Nordau calls the social instincts. Under the pretext of exercising paternal kindness towards the people, the governments demanded paternal rights. Communistic and socialistic ideas spread among the masses, who, well aware that a Providence without power would be no providence at all, wanted to render the State omnipotent. When however socialistic features were introduced into the constitutions, matters did not mend, but the freedom of the individual was more and more infringed.

When detailed schemes of further socialistic development were made public, a great many freedom-loving men and women beheld with terror that the chief cause of the favour with which the progressing socialism was regarded was to be found in

the plan of complete subjection of the individual under government.

This discovery naturally caused a reaction in favour of liberty. Those who became Anarchists felt keenly the claws of the State upon them, and they foresaw that more socialism would aggravate their grievances. They took for granted that humanity had now tried all forms of government and that they had all failed, and that the salvation of the race could only be found in absolute personal freedom.

The first extreme Russian Nihilists paved the way for the Anarchist movement in Europe. They, like their first followers in France, had only one idea, that of destroying at all costs the present order of things, and thus clearing the ground for a new system to grow up free from the tyranny of governments, aristocracies, militarism, landlordism, and capitalism.

They saw that an immense mass of poor, hard-working, honest people with but a small chance of happiness for themselves, but imbued with a strong desire to see the whole of humanity happy, were oppressed by a small number of selfish people who arrogated to themselves the lion's share of the good things of life. They found that this band of selfish people attained to their immense power by a social system of slow and gradual growth.

Tracing all the troubles to the few egotists whom they regarded as criminals, they imagined that by destroying them and the system, the unselfish and humanitarian aspirations of the masses would blossom forth free and unvitiated.

The Anarchists were thus the backbone of the religion of humanity, only their faith was stronger than that of Max Nordau, for they were willing to sacrifice all, including life, for the good of the race.

If these people were, and are, degenerate, then every mistake in reasoning is a sign of degeneration, and faith in humanity and its destiny is the beginning of madness.

When Max Nordau designates Wagner as an Anarchist, he evidently ignores the fact that there are two kinds of Anarchists, the violent ones just described, and the moderate or constitutional ones. The latter call themselves simply Anarchists. Their numbers are growing rapidly in France, as well as in England, and in both these countries Max Nordau would be surprised at their moderation and common sense. The movement they represent is a reaction against the socialistic tendencies, and their programme is not violence and destruction, but the gradual abolition of all harmful and useless legislation. It is true that so far they have no precise policy. But such special measures as are advocated — partly in France, partly in

England, and partly in the United States—seem to be founded on clear and thorough reasoning, and when their leading principle is compared with the shallow chatter of socialists and communists of every school it appears as wisdom itself.

What all these people believe, what they long for, and what they hope for, is exactly what Wagner believed, longed for, and hoped for. He saw in Philistinism, in official tyranny, in police government, and in legal trammels standing in the way of trades, industries, and arts, so many impediments to the realization of the best instincts and the highest aspirations of humanity. Whatever opinions he held, they can only be judged by the few exasperated exclamations he gave vent to with regard to the corruption of modern society. It is not likely that he, with such immense works on hand, should have given sufficient attention to social questions to allow him to express himself in learned terms. But what he said and wrote on the subject shows clearly that the foundation of his social views was trust in humanity, in the sanctity of nature, and in the ennobling power of liberty. Can any one with a true love of art imagine an artist without such a creed?

What was more natural than that, fêted and praised as he was, he should have a good opinion of his own talent and consider himself a great man. If for this he deserved to be suspected of megalomania,

what are we to say about other celebrities, mediocrities, and nonenties, who imagine themselves demi-gods because they happen to be the sons of their fathers, to be born in purple, or to have a title attached to their name?

Max Nordau is extremely hard on those who have sung the praises of Wagner, and insinuates that they have been actuated by base motives when they have not been absolutely degenerated. According to him, admiration for Wagner's works is a sure sign of mental unsoundness. And yet this same Max Nordau finds reasons for praising Wagner's genius which a host of his panegyrists have overlooked. He says: "Wagner, as a dramatist is really a historical painter of the highest rank. . . . This (a fresco painter) he is in a degree never yet attained by any other dramatic author in the whole world of literature. Every action embodies itself for him in a series of most imposing pictures, which, when they are composed as Wagner has seen them with his inner eye, must overwhelm and enrapture the beholder. The reception of the guests in the hall of Wartburg; the arrival and departure of Lohengrin in the boat drawn by the swan; the gambols of the Rhine maidens in the river; the defiling of the gods over the rainbow-bridge towards the castle of Asgard; the bursting of the moonlight into Hunding's hut; the ride of the Walküre

over the battle-field; Brunhilde in the circle of fire; the final scene in "Götterdämmerung," where Brunhilde flings herself on to her horse and leaps into the midst of the funeral pyre, while Hagan throws himself into the surging Rhine, and the heavens are aflame with the glow from the burning palace of the gods; the lovefeast of the knights in the castle of the Grail; the obsequies of Titurel and the healing of Amfortas — these are pictures to which nothing in art hitherto approaches."

It is strange that Max Nordau in his love for authorities should quote Nietzsche — a German author whom, in another part of his book, he makes out to be a hopeless degenerate and charlatan—in support of his views of Wagner! But Nietzsche has written a book called "Der Fall Wagner," and that suffices. This Nietzsche calls Wagner a comedian, but Nordau insists upon his being a painter, and that "if he had been a healthy genius, endowed with intellectual equilibrium, that is what he would undoubtedly have become. His inner vision would have forced the brush into his hand, and would have constrained him to use it on canvas by means of colour."

When Max Mordau says a painter, he evidently restricts the meaning of the word to its narrowest sense, and makes it difficult to at all class a man who, like Wagner, evolved and produced pictures

of such grandeur and such beauty as those our alienist so well describes. The fact that the artist uses actual perspective, real draperies, living people, actual fire, that he selects his own light, and personally arranges this mass of objects so as to exactly reproduce the daring conception of his mind — all this should surely not be cited as so many proofs of the unhealthiness of his genius. Would he have been a greater, a sounder genius, had his ability been restricted to sketching and colouring his conceptions on cardboard or canvas? Should then a painter's genius be confined to the production of pictures suitable only to decorate Philistine houses and official galleries? Because Max Nordau's pedantic tendencies have formed such a Philistine idea about the art of painting, is it right to deny true genius to a man who has produced unapproachable pictures on a colossal scale, not by the means of brushes and pigments, but by materials infinitely more difficult to handle.

But these masterpieces of painting do not alone bear witness to Wagner's powers. His paintings are not fixed; they are movable. They represent actually an enchanting succession of pictures. The true genius *à la* Nordau gives us the pictures of figures in motion that never move, and tires us with a Quintus Curtius suspended in mid-air half way down a chasm, until we wish him at the bot-

tom of it. Such a moving picture of Wagner's is not thrust upon us suddenly in the manner of gallery pictures, but is presented to us as the fit illustration of a beautiful poem, and often as the climax of a series of other pictures which explain it, relieve it and work up our emotions for its reception.

To this must be added that the same painter-genius, the same dramatist, the same poet, has created the wondrous and enchanting music which accompanies the poem and the pictures. And because he has done all this, because he has not followed the routine of other German painters, because he has dared to, and succeeded in, transporting his audiences into the highest possible region of imagination, and given them a glimpse of real creative powers, he is to be classed as a degenerate; to rank among those of whom humanity is ashamed, and whose degraded state is to warn us of the coming decay of our race.

Can any one with a grain of humour read Max Nordau's attacks on Wagner without imagining an irascible toy-terrier barking at the moon?

Max Nordau probably feels that Wagner's anti-semitism, his Anarchism, and his ability to create transcendentally beautiful pictures, are stigmata which hardly any of his readers would accept as such, and consequently feels impelled to make much of what it pleases him to call Wagner's eroticism. Here,

as everywhere in his book, in order to impress his readers he counts on the mystical effect which the use of a high-sounding scientific word generally produces upon unscientific readers. A favourite expression of his, when speaking of some psychological phenomenon, is that science knows all about it, and he calls it megalomania, graphomania, echolalia, or some such name. With people who have only a superficial knowledge of science, and who stand in awe of its achievements, such nouns stand for a special definite thing, thoroughly investigated and explained. They do not know that these scientific names have been invented, not in order to designate something real and palpable, but simply for the purpose of bringing order into an arbitrary classification, invented so that the exchange of ideas may be facilitated on the subject thus treated. Such scientific terms might even be classed among mystical symbols, in so far as they often stand for something of which hardly anything is known, but at the same time serve the same useful end as algebraical figures. Psychologists are prone to speak of a man's consciousness, though scarcely two scientific men would agree as to what it is. But this does not prevent them from dividing consciousness up into divisions and sub-divisions, all with their special names, in order to be able to express their ideas in words. The unscientific

reader should bear in mind that consciousness has never been under the microscope, or in the crucible, and that the classification of the scientists has no counterpart in consciousness itself, and that this remains the impalpable and indivisible *Ego*, with its infinite number of attributes inseparably commingled. All the different states, conditions, faculties, perfections and defects of the *Ego* are of course known only by the results they produce in the physical world, and it is by these results that they have been classified. It is evident that such methods of classification should leave an immense margin for those who wish, or feel impelled by their own idiosyncrasies, to misuse scientific terms designating psychological phenomena.

Max Nordau indulges in this misuse of scientific terms to the fullest extent, in a way not to be easily discovered by the non-scientific reader. The word "eroticism" used by him so frequently, with all the pomposity of a scientific term, is coined from the word "erotic," a literary term which again is derived, as we all know, from Eros, the Greek god of love. It is an adjective which means pertaining to or expressive of love-passion. Such an adjective necessarily finds an enormously wide application, considering that love in one sense is the leading principle in organic creation, and, in a more psychological sense, the motive power in the

human drama. We may say that we ourselves, the outcome of love, regulate our whole life, and sometimes base our hopes of a future state on love. Consequently there is hardly anything in our lives that is not covered by the adjective "erotic."

The alienists having adopted the word "eroticism" in order to designate a state of mind which certain actions reveal to them, and which state of mind, when its existence is corroborated by other facts, may be considered as a disease, it is evident that, while they may apply the word eroticism to almost anything in the organic world and in human society, it is better for their purpose to apply it only to a certain form of a diseased mind. While a strictly logical and careful alienist might deem it irrational and confusing to use the term "eroticism," or even the adjective "erotic," outside a clearly defined case of mental disease, it cannot be considered absolutely wrong to apply such terms whenever the love-passion is in question, even a love-passion of a most legitimate kind.

We shall now show how Max Nordau manages to slip over the border within which scientific terms should be used, and applies them indiscriminately to everything; and how he, in this manner, tries to establish that Wagner suffers from erotic madness, because he looks upon love as one of the chief

motors in the human drama and the tree of knowledge for good or evil.

Max Nordau, in a flippant criticism, which he endeavours to render funny, of the behaviour of Wagner's characters on the stage, forgets his self-criticism to such an extent as to liken them to mad tom-cats—a simile which probably no sane man would accept as true. Having once conceived the idea of mad tom-cats, it at once becomes an obsession in his mind, and suggests presentations of real cases of erotic fury. He consequently, according to his habit, takes for granted that the actors on the stage must necessarily represent the exact state of mind of the author, and cries out that this state of the author's mind (which he has persuaded himself is that of a mad tom-cat) is well known to science, and is called Sadism. Then, with a regret at having to touch upon such subjects in order to make his readers understand Wagner's real mental condition, he gives a disgusting example of a maniac whose erotic madness has brought him below the level of the brute.

This is a fair sample of Max Nordau's logic. For the sake of clearness, we recapitulate the logical *tour de force* he has been compelled to exercise in order to arrive at such an absurdity: Wagner, like all poets and dramatists before him, creates a love scene. Love is an erotic emotion. Eroticism is a disease of the mind. Tom-cats are erotically in-

fluenced. The characters on the stage remind Max Nordau of tom-cats. The obsession of a "tom-cat in convulsions over a root of valerian" suggests a raving madman. Consequently Wagner is mad.

Such is the use a scientist is tempted to make of his science when he throws self-criticism overboard.

When Max Nordau says of Wagner that he has been all his life an erotic, he is fair enough to add in parenthesis, "in a psychiatric sense." But this is not enough. The word "psychiatric" is a strictly scientific word, not to be found in any ordinary English dictionary; and the ordinary reader might easily conclude that, instead of removing Wagner's eroticism into the deep recesses of his soul, it might have been used by the author, as so many scientific words have been used, in order to aggravate his charge.

In order to justify his opinion with regard to Wagner's erotic madness, he says: "The most ordinary incitements, even those farthest removed from the province of sexual instincts, never fail to awaken in his consciousness voluptuous images of an erotic character." Why "sexual instincts"? Why not love-instincts, an expression which had so much better fitted in with the scenes Wagner represents? But, as it suits Max Nordau's purpose to keep his reader's mind upon love in its lowest, most

animal form, we shall let it pass. We must however express our astonishment at the example he gives in order to show how incitements, "far removed from the province of sexual instincts," caused Wagner's mind to revert to voluptuous images. The "farthest removed incitements" which Max Nordau quotes is the description by Wagner of a ballet—a *pas de trois*—evidently intended to represent the blending of the beautiful with love, to give Wagner's own words, "Love and life, the joy and wooing of art." What on earth, then, would more arouse such eroticism that might be found in a man than a ballet representing love and life? And this especially when we consider the modern freedom with regard to the costume of ballet girls. In order to show what Max Nordau considers to be the outcome of erotic madness in Wagner's choregraphic representation of love, life, and art, we give *in extenso* the passage from "Art-Work of the Future," to which he refers:

"In the contemplation of this ravishing dance of the most genuine and noblest muses of the artistic man, we now see the three arm in arm lovingly entwined up to their necks; then this, then that one, detaching herself from the entwinement, as if to display to the others her beautiful form in complete separation, touching the hands of the others only with the extreme tips of her fingers; now the one, entwined

by a backward glance at the twin forms of her closely entwined sisters, bending towards them; then two, carried away by the allurements of the one greeting her in homage; finally all, in close embrace, breast to breast, limb to limb, in an ardent kiss of love, coalescing in one blissfully living shape. This is the love and life, the joy and wooing of art," etc.

When Max Nordau wishes to traduce the love scenes in Wagner's operas into arguments of the musician's erotic madness, he forgets many things. He forgets what he himself has given as a test of a sound mind, namely, the ability to look after one's own business. Even if Wagner had produced scenes on his stage of an utterly corrupt character in order to gain money and popularity, he having succeeded completely in such objects, could not possibly be called mad by a critic who has made material success in life a test for sound-mindedness, and who declares the belief in personal responsibility reaching beyond the grave to be a sign of madness. But he also forgets, what is more important, that there is no line of demarcation drawn to indicate how far the representation of human passions may be carried on the stage.

Even Max Nordau does not seem to have discovered an authority on this subject. He himself will not serve as an authority, because he has shown himself too apt to fall into the error of newspaper

critics, that of judging a work or a piece, not according to its merits, but according to the author who has produced it. He would praise in Goethe what he would condemn in Wagner. If we were to indiscriminately ask people how far we may go in representing human passion on the stage, we should get a mass of replies all differing according to the bias of the respondents. The Ultramontane abbé, the zealous Methodist, would differ enormously from the Bohemian artist; the prudish old maid would differ from the poet. Nay, even two artists, both painters of the nude, or two ballet girls appearing in the same costume, might hold almost opposite opinions on this subject. How then shall we judge? By leaving out of court all the extremists—those who object to theatres, ballets, and nature in art—as well as those who would clamour for indecent and obscene representations, we might considerably narrow the ground for inquiry, and elicit certain rules likely to meet the suffrages of the majority within these limits. It might be argued that emotions, playing by far the most important *rôle* in the human drama, and lying as they do at the root of all our actions, educational agencies and amusements ought to be appealed to by the arts. Also that art in affording us opportunities of giving expression to our emotions, elevates and ennobles our lives: consequently, that the passive objective

contemplation of human emotions which the stage affords us, helps us to study our own emotions and to bring them into harmony with our noblest aspirations, our future happiness, our judgment, and our will. In order to accomplish their mission, such representations should be as true to life as possible, whether they be beautiful or not. On this plea, it would be legitimate to represent on the stage erotic emotions in the full strength in which we meet with them in reality among sound-minded people. A good deal of exaggeration may be permitted to the actor as he is under the difficulty of having to convey by actions, gestures or facial expression a distinct representation of emotions which may rage in the consciousness of a human being without betraying themselves in physical signs.

From this it must be concluded that the purity of the stage depends more on what is acted than how it is acted. The author who does not wish to desecrate the drama is therefore bound to represent emotions which are the outcome of natural life, and acted upon by incidents such as we see around us, and to avoid the representation of, even if he cannot avoid the reference to, emotions which spring from a diseased mind or a morbid moral state.

Love, being an emotion to which every sound-minded being may be subject, there would be no objection to represent it in the most intense manner

on the stage so long as we understand under the name of love that strong degree of affection which sometimes people of the opposite sex may conceive for each other apart from sexual emotions. What makes Max Nordau's reasoning plausible is that he does not admit that this kind of love exists. He distinguishes only two degrees, or two categories, of love, comradeship or friendship, on the one hand, and the animal instinct on the other. But no one who has gone through life with open eyes can possibly deny the reality of what we here, for want of a better expression, would call pure love. Everywhere we meet with manifestations of it. Even young children, who might have no idea of sexual emotion, often love each other with a genuine passion which sometimes lasts through life. Adults may be so absorbed in love for each other as to prefer death to separation, and yet never experience any sexual emotion in each other's company. Men and women lovers who have been separated have wasted away from sheer love of each other, and yet been remarkably chaste in character. In the English-speaking countries, where the relations between the sexes are free and natural, we find any number of proofs of the reality of pure love. Those cases alone which have ended tragically, and therefore come before the public, more than suffice to prove it. Even in countries like France, for example,

where the sexual instincts are apt to become morbid from the one-sided education of the young, it is not difficult to find examples of pure love. It is even to be found where least expected, as, for instance, between a licentious man and a fallen woman. It is true that when pure love runs its usual course it gets, so to say, inflamed by animal passion, but this is generally the case only as a result of the demonstrations by which pure love tries to manifest itself. It may also be true that there exists a mysterious, that is to say, a so far unexplained connection between the purest love and sexual instinct even in loving couples to whom sexuality may be an abomination. But all this does not disprove that, speaking from a practical and ethical point of view, there is such an emotion as pure love, and that this emotion is a powerful motor in the human drama.

If it then be a fact that this yearning to love and to be loved with a pure love exists, and ought to exist, in rational human beings, and that in running its natural course it will manifest itself in demonstrations extremely likely to rouse animal passions, the question arises how far a love scene on the stage may display those demonstrations which, while they are the only possible means of expressing pure love, at the same time suggest sexual emotions.

Here then is the point where the difference

will arise, and where we may well be careful whose decision we accept. Can we do better than Wagner did—leave the audience to decide?

Wagner's German audiences, described by Max Nordau as including wives and daughters, have, to his great bewilderment, given the verdict in favour of Wagner's most passionate scenes. "How unperverted," Max Nordau cries out, "must wives and maidens be, when they are in a state of mind to witness these pieces without blushing crimson, and sinking to the earth for shame!" No. They have not blushed in following calmly and serenely the objective representations of passions which by nature have been implanted in every breast. The very vehemence, the very naturalness of the scenes inspire that awe and reverence which great natural forces always do, and the young girl in the audience does not for a moment revert to any impure representations or animal promptings which might have come within her experience, because she is æsthetically and not sexually excited. But if Max Nordau could watch her when she reads the above quoted passage in his book, he would see her blush deeply, not at the memory of Wagner's scenes, but at the feeling of having the first seed of degeneration sown in her heart.

Among the phrases used by Max Nordau in order to inculcate his readers with the idea that

Wagner, instead of being the very essence of an artist, one of the greatest practically creative geniuses of the world, is a mere erotic maniac, is this one—" all his ideas revolve about woman." While this phrase may lead the unwary reader astray, it throws a vivid light on the extent to which Max Nordau's opinion with regard to the relation of the sexes has been influenced by his continental bias. This ought to be made clear to his readers. Such expressions, if of any use at all in Max Nordau's reasoning, presuppose that it is quite an unusual thing for the ideas of poets, dramatists, and writers of fiction to revolve about woman. For our alienist does not refer to Wagner's private life. He is speaking only of Wagner, the author. The actual fact, of course, is that love and women have from times immemorial been the subject of legends, fairy tales, troubadour songs, poems, romances, novels, and dramas. Thus, according to the gospel of our alienist, all the past and present poetical authors of the world must have been, and are " subject to erotic madness," like Wagner.

There are, of course, men who, like Faust, devote their lives to intellectual pursuits and expend all their energy in forcing nature to yield up her secrets. But such men are not only exceptions—they may be looked upon as degenerates. This is

what Faust at last discovered. He recognised that life was essentially emotional, and that by having crushed out his emotional nature he had failed to live his life. Whether Goethe intended to impart the lesson his "Faust" teaches us may be doubtful, but we can thus read it: we may suppress our emotional nature for a long time, but it will one day claim its rights, and, in its explosive escape from unnatural bondage, avenge itself on the suppressor, and hurl him to perdition. The emotions, Faust regrets, are all those inspired by women.

But the great majority of men do not suppress the emotions inspired by women, but, on the contrary, allow their whole lives to be influenced by them. To find confirmation of this fact in countries like France and Germany might not be so easy as in the English-speaking countries. Wherever the sexes are separated in youth, and where conventional marriages are the rule, the erotic impulses become over stimulated and lead to the excitement of animal passion. The love of the beautiful, all the æsthetic aspirations, the yearning for the society of women, the love of excitement, the chivalrous leanings, and the craving for pure love —all these are thrown as so much fuel into the furnace of sexual love. It is then that the struggle arises between the terrible demoniac love and pure love,—a struggle so frequently depicted in

Wagner's operas and which determines the lives of so many men on the Continent.

Part of the struggle of the continental man is to avoid the influence of women altogether, or else to look upon them after the manner of the Mahommedans. In countries therefore where pure love is left but little or no scope, the influence of women is not very marked, and certainly not acknowledged, because for a man to acknowledge it would be to avow himself an "erotic madman."

To understand the immense influence which a woman exercises over man's destiny and how closely men's minds "revolve about women," we must study the English-speaking countries where pure love has, if not free scope, freer scope than anywhere else, and where few healthy-minded men are ashamed to avow the value they place upon woman, her love, and her influence.

Despite the fact that Englishmen do not display towards women of all classes that engaging politeness, which favourably distinguishes Frenchmen, a stranger who visits England cannot fail soon to perceive in what high estimation woman is held. Her name is seldom taken in vain. There is no trace of that gross satire upon women which so often disfigures continental prints; she may be represented as sharp, worldly, extravagant, but rarely as immoral, unfaithful, or ugly. Some of

the lower-class papers are strongly influenced by French views, but they never indulge in adaptations without some modification, and such papers as have been started in order to emulate the fast journals of Paris have always been extremely short-lived.

The same respect for women is manifest in fiction as well as on the stage. Here again in consequence of French influence we meet with women who have sinned, and women with a past, but they never play such degraded parts as they often do in French novels and plays. Ladies are allowed an extensive liberty, and they are rarely insulted; and obtain, even under trying circumstances, a respectful treatment at the hands of the lowest class of labourers. We have unfortunately amongst us ruffians who beat their wives, but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred these are drunken and debauched human failures. The average working man treats his wife and his daughter with as much consideration as a nobleman could his, and their home is kept morally pure and as comfortable for the women as his resources allow. He is not ashamed to carry parcels, burdens, the children, or to perambulate the baby in public places in order to spare his wife the trouble.

The men most reluctantly suspect a woman of immorality, and generally not until there seems a

strong case against her. Indecent words and allusions are entirely excluded in the presence of ladies, and if a woman in her innocence inadvertently makes a risky remark, it passes unheeded and without producing a smile.

The average Englishman's life brings him into constant contact with women, and he is perfectly aware that he owes to them much that is bright and happy in his existence. Already as a child he is the trusted protector of his sisters, and often the cavalier of their friends. Early in life he loves some young woman, and his long courtship is to him a happy time. When he works hard, when he risks his life on the sea or in dangerous climes, it is generally with a view to marrying the girl he loves. When he is married, he wishes to succeed that he may gain his wife's approval, beautify her home, and make her life happy; while at the same time he never remains insensible to the admiration of other women. While his wife is yet young, his daughters grow up and become important features in his life and his happiness.

It may therefore be said of the men of the English-speaking countries that their "ideas revolve about women," and it will be difficult to persuade us Englishmen that respect, admiration, and love for women are the signs of a degenerate mind. Coleridge well expresses the English feeling—a

feeling which, under circumstances similar to those prevailing in England, would be universal :—

"All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame."

Wagner's music, which may be said to have been the delight of millions of people, is not approved of by Max Nordau. He condemns it on the usual ground that it is novel, and that it differs from the standards accepted before Wagner. According to him, it is the music of an unsound mind, because it contains no distinct ideas in the shape of melodies. He objects to the *Leit-motiv* and to the unending melody, but it is difficult to harmonize what he says against the one with what he says against the other. Speaking of the *Leit-motiv*, he says: "To express ideas is not the function of music. Language provides for that as completely as could be desired. When the word is accompanied by song or orchestra, it is not to make it more definite, but to reinforce it by the intervention of emotion. Music is a kind of sounding-board in which the word has to awake something like an echo from the infinite." Later on he says about melody: "It is a regular grouping of notes in a highly expressive series of tones. Melody in music corresponds to what in language is a logically constructed sentence

distinctly presenting an idea, and having a clearly marked beginning and ending."

Music being an art which exclusively appeals to emotion, it is not surprising that any attempt to measure its value by a reasoning process should result in utter failure. But this is no excuse for an author to contradict himself so flatly as Max Nordau does in the above passages. To say on one page that "*to express ideas is not the function of music*," and on another page to say that "melody is indispensable to music, because it corresponds to a logically constructed sentence *distinctly presenting an idea.*" Again he says: "Melody may be said to be an effort to say something definite," and how can this harmonize with the other mission of music: "to awake something like an echo from the infinite." The latter expression is not only a true definition of the mission of music, but also an exact description of the aim of Wagner's music.

Max Nordau feels that his scientific reasoning about music will affect no one who has heard the music of Wagner, and that those who admire it will be slow to believe that an unsound mind could have accomplished such complicated, intricate, and complete work. To prepare his reader's mind for his rash conclusion, he once more goes to the lunatic asylum for his arguments, in order to show that a man may be a lunatic and yet be a good musician.

But here again he is strangely blind to the fact that such arguments tell directly against his theory. He cites cases of lunatics who "improvised on the piano," who "sang very beautiful airs and at the same time improvised two different themes on the piano . . . who composed very beautiful, new, and melodious tunes."

The remarkable thing about the music of his maniacs is that it is tuny and melodious, and consequently the only rational music, according to Max Nordau, while Wagner's music is condemned by him, and Wagner himself is held up as a lunatic because his music is not like that of acknowledged lunatics! It stands to reason that a weak mind could follow and repeat a style of music which it has heard for years, but that it requires a strong and sound mind to break a new road in the domain of music with the full approval of millions of musical people.

Max Nordau also feels the necessity of backing up his opinion by authorities. He sees a conclusive proof of Wagner's inferiority in the criticism of professional musicians and composers. He might as well form his opinion of an actress on the criticism of her by her most dangerous rival. It seems that Hiller and Schumann would not acknowledge Wagner's musical endowment, but attributed his success to the libretti written by himself. Regard-

ing this Max Nordau exclaims: "The same old story: musicans regard him as a poet, and poets as a musician." This means that our alienist is, or pretends to be, so utterly innocent of humour and satire as to accept this very common way of minimizing the talent of a rival as a trustworthy judgment. It is the commonest thing in the world for a man to deny his rival's talent in his own speciality, and then, in order to strengthen the effect of his opinion and to give it the colour of impartiality, to acknowledge in him talents outside that speciality. Practical men, when they hear one musician run down another musician, generally conclude that the latter has a dangerous talent. Voltaire, in speaking of a writer none of whose works were in existence, said that he must have been a man of genius judging from the savage attacks made upon him by another writer.

Hiller and Schumann are the only authorities whom Max Nordau can point to in support of his views, and he himself raises some doubts whether their dislike of Wagner's music was not due to the difficulty of immediately appreciating a tendency so novel as Wagner's. Our alienist is only able to add that Rubinstein can only make some important reservations, and that it was some time before Hanslick struck his colours. In view, then, of the enormous literature that has grown up around Wagner and

Wagnerism, Max Nordau's habit of referring to authorities in this instance simply has the effect of showing that he stands unsupported in his opinion by all musical authorities. It is irresistibly comic to notice how Max Nordau regrets that the brochure in which Nietzche—in "Der Fall Wagner"—attacks Wagner is quite as "insanely delirious" as another brochure written by the same writer twelve years before in deification of Wagner. Had it not been for this awkward circumstance, Max Nordau, it seems, would have been only too glad to exalt Nietzsche—the man whom in another part of his work he strenuously endeavours to prove an imbecile—to the rank of an authority. His amazing lack of logic prevents him from seeing that a certificate of lunacy issued by a lunatic is really a certificate of sanity, in virtue of the logical axiom that two negatives are equal to one affirmative.

Such faults and defects as may be found in Wagner's prose writings have little importance in relation—and are almost irrevelant—to the question of his supposed degeneracy. He had to deal with subjects which, though intensely real to our emotional nature, can only be treated inadequately in words. Whatever we may think of Wagner's style, there can be little doubt that he has succeeded in making himself understood by a great number of people whose emotional nature sympathizes with that of

Wagner, and whom even Max Nordau would not undertake to prove to be mentally deranged or morally degenerate. Wagner's writings have the defect, very general among German writers, and conspicuous in Max Nordau, of being verbose. They all make us crave for "Der langen Rede, kurzen Sinn."

The fundamental idea in Wagner's great work—"The Art Work of the Future"—is that the arts should co-operate, and that each individual art should attain to its perfection in conjunction with other arts. Max Nordau in no way disproves the soundness of this view by saying that "Goethe's lyric poetry and the 'Divina Commedia'" need no landscape painting, that "Michael Angelo's 'Moses' would hardly produce a deeper impression surrounded by dancers and singers," and that "the 'Pastoral Symphony' does not require a complement of words in order to exercise its full charm."

With that logic peculiar to Max Nordau, he quotes a passage from Schopenhauer in which this thinker mildly deprecates such co-ordination of the arts as was to be found in the operas of his time, and our alienist wishes us to accept this as a proof of insanity in Wagner's admiration for the opera. He forgets the important fact that Wagner's greatness is proved by the way in which he has succeeded in obliterating at least the worst defects of the opera

as it existed before him, and that he has rendered it a complete and harmonious expression of combined and elevated arts. The quoted passage from Schopenhauer could be no condemnation of Wagner's operas as it was written before they saw the light. In the operas, as they used to be, there was much that tended to disturb the imagination and even to arouse laughter. The most exasperating incongruities were indulged in. An exciting hunting chorus would be played and sung while two rows of lady supers would walk in from each side of the wings in Indian file, each bearing as a hunting implement a yard-long piece of wood surmounted by a piece of tin. The impossible dresses, the demure demeanour, the solemn faces, the absurd lances—carried like candles in a nuns' procession—all this clashed so terribly with the music and the theme as to suggest a burlesque. A band of conspirators afraid of being detected, yet shouting at the top of their voices some compromising chorus; a man with a deadly wound rising to his feet and singing a lively and complicated aria; a messenger in the hottest haste delivering a message in a slow and long-drawn recitative; an intensely modern consumptive lady dying amid ancient surroundings, trilling in her last gasps musical complexities, during a quarter of an hour, with a marvellously strong and healthy voice —such, and many other absurdities, disfigured the

opera before Wagner and Gounod, and well deserved the condemnation of Schopenhauer.

Wagner's assertion that the natural evolution of each art leads to the surrender of its independence and to its fusion with other arts is looked upon by Max Nordau as delirious. To prove this he falls back on biology, and points out that nature develops from the simple to the complex, that originally similar parts develop into separate organs of different structure and independent functions. Why on earth should there necessarily be an analogy between the growth of plants and animals, and between the development of the arts? Any other writer who had been unfortunate enough to indulge in such profound mysticism would certainly have been condemned by Max Nordau to the lunatic asylum. Even if we admit the analogy as permissible, he gains very little by it: for when he speaks of nature as always proceeding from the simple to the complex he describes exactly the development of the arts into the opera—music, poetry and dancing representing each the simple, and the opera representing the complex. What would Max Nordau think of a mad doctor who based his verdict of insanity on such reasoning.

The attentive student of Max Nordau's impeachment of Wagner cannot fail to see that, despite all his efforts to brand him as a degenerate, he has

only succeeded in throwing the grand power of that genius into bolder relief. Instead of inducing us to look upon Wagner as a sign of degeneration, he has impressed us with the fact that Wagner's work constitutes an awakening from the slumber in which Philistinism and conventionalism have so long enwrapped humanity, and opened a new vista for the ennobling mission of the arts.

While we must reject Max Nordau's clinging to that pedantry and conventionalism which limits the mission of the arts to the production of isolated pictures for public galleries and the salons of modern Mæcenases, statues for public places, and compositions of *Kammer-musik* for drawing-rooms, we at the same time do not believe that the opera, even as regenerated by the genius of a Wagner, is the highest expression of the arts. There will come a day when the illusions of the stage will be realities, when we shall dispense with the dusty sceneries, the garish footlights, the painted faces, the prudish trappings, which go to make up the mirage which heralds an ideal future. The arts, instead of being relegated to the nursery in order to make room for science, as Max Nordau prophesies, will become its aim. When science has given us health, strength, and beauty, an extended power over nature's forces, when it has solved the terrible social problem on the basis of liberty and progress, then will science

be the handmaiden of the arts. Then will the answer be granted to the poet's prayer:

"Oh! for a muse of fire that shall ascend
The highest heaven of invention;
A kingdom for a stage; princes to act;
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!"

The arts, after having demonstrated in the opera their solidarity and their independence, will leave that artificial shelter and take up their abode in our homes and in our civic buildings, in our streets, and in our public places, in our arenas and in our temples.

A new renaissance lies ahead of us, and we are all struggling to reach it. The man who thinks and writes, the artist who paints or composes, the peasant at the plough, the miner in the bowels of the earth, all are contributing to further the advent of a new era when the life, the work, the pleasure and the worship of a regenerate race shall be exalted by the arts, and present a realization of what Wagner dreamed while he created.

CHAPTER IX

THE RELIGION OF SELF

THE term egomania is a welcome present from the scientists, which enriches our language with a verbal representation of a psychological condition which is certainly characteristic of our time. We trust that Max Nordau's diagnosis of the disease will be carefully studied by its victims, especially by those who are in the stage where it appears as egoism, self-sufficiency, indifference to others, to society, to the State, and as that fashionable and superior pessimism which despairs of self as an excuse for despairing of others. For, though Max Nordau goes very minutely into the psychological aspect of egomania without indicating its origin or the remedies against it, he evidently does not reject the theory, which seems constantly to be confirmed by actualities, that mental diseases may be fostered and aggravated both by those who suffer from them, as well as by surrounding circumstances.

Putting his opinion as a psychologist together with

that of others, we seem authorized to hope that when our egotistical pessimists have learned that the aristocratic characteristic on which they pride themselves is the beginning of a mental disease, they will fly to such remedies as may be found in the study of useful science and healthy work.

Such authors as Théophile Gautier, Baudelaire, Rollinat, and others, attract especially Max Nordau's attention; but he deals with them in order to show that they individually had degenerated into egomaniacs, and he does not once try to realize the relation between their so-called degeneracy and the general tendencies of our time. Had he done so, he might have felt inclined to be less hard on these exponents of *fin de siècle* corruption. Speaking of the hints which this school of poets and writers sometimes throws out that they are not quite serious, Max Nordau comes very near to discovering their significance when he says about Baudelaire that perhaps "he sought to make himself believe that, with his Satanism, he was laughing at the Philistines." But Max Nordau does not follow up the cue he has thus accidentally dropped upon, but adds a sentence revealing the one-sidedness of his inquiry, when he says: "but such a tardy palliation does not deceive the psychologist, and it is of no importance for his judgment."

That may be so. But it is of the utmost im-

portance to humanity. That the yielding to the promptings of "unconsciousness," to the dictates of instincts bad or good, was on the part of the so-called Parnassians an experimental plunge in the dark—a challenge to those who pretended to know better to show them that they were wrong—cannot be denied by any one who has read their writings with some knowledge of the French character.

These men took up literature at a time when the world began to perceive that science could not satisfy its emotional aspirations, that it could not explain the mysteries of the Universe, or bring about that balance between our emotional and intellectual natures on which a healthy life depends. But this was not the only disillusion which humanity experienced at that time. All the hopes which the altruistic feeling had prompted us to base on democratic governments and scientific political economy had vanished. When the Utopias of the economists turned out to be a *fata morgana*, instead of the solid ladder leading up to the material heaven promised by the religion of humanity of the scientists, a Babylonian confusion arose among the people who had first been told to worship at the shrine of religion, then at the shrine of science, and now stood without any shrine whatsoever In France, more than in any other country, we meet with people whose minds are too subtle and whose emotions

are too genuine to permit them to dwell contented in that Philistinism which leans on the one side towards the scientific creed or absence of creed, in order to appear modern, and, on the other side, on religion, in order to be safe, but whose real shrine is the money-safe. These French people, mostly authors and artists, had studied both the religious and the scientific theories, and had found the causes of their miscarriage.

The Church had said, "Nature is vile, man is naturally bad, instincts are prompted by the devil, and knowledge is one of the snares of hell." But the Roman Church had not only failed in its mission to keep up the faith and render humanity virtuous and happy, but was responsible for great social troubles, superstitions, and obstacles to progress. It had good intentions, but the way in which it tried to carry them out rendered them valueless. It required power first, much power, complete power over everything, and the acquisition of power did more harm than the Church could do good when ever so powerful. The Protestant Churches in France were gloomy, prudish, anti-artistic, and appealed with difficulty to any French character. Their dogmas seemed incompatible with scientific truth, and their mission appeared to be rather to persuade their members that they were perfect than to render them perfect. Besides, a great many minds through-

out the world, accredited with scientific accomplishments, had mercilessly opposed dogmatic religion.

Science, in its turn, when asked, Where is truth? Where is the ideal? could only point to a pile of facts laboriously built up like a brick wall, and had to confess that what it wished to give instead of religion was mere speculations. The ultimate conclusion it pointed to was selfishness, personal irresponsibility, and a mere animal existence. It failed entirely to satisfy the great moving power in the scheme of humanity—emotions—and could not therefore satisfy human yearnings and aspirations.

The postulates of religion — the wickedness of nature and of man—were rejected as groundless, and the guidance of intellect and science was spurned because they were powerless to influence the emotions.

Finding themselves in the plight of a ship driving about in the ocean without compass or rudder, the Parnassians, the Decadents, and many others, thought it was time to try a desperate course. Perhaps, after all, they thought, nature is good, perhaps human instincts may be trusted; let us be natural and follow our instincts. There was much to encourage the new departure. It had often been found that the purest joys were the most lasting, that the good was the most beautiful, that lives and actions prompted by the altruistic feelings best satisfied selfish yearnings, that vice was disappointing, un-

healthy, degrading, and joy-killing; that virtue improved life, increased the capacity for enjoyment, and beautified mind and body. These observations encouraged the belief in the religion of self. The *Ego* was not bad; but it required freedom to develop itself.

Like all founders of systems and philosophies, the Parnassians and Decadents sought for confirmation of their theories in the possibility of a Utopia. In imagining a state of things under which the self should have unlimited latitude for self-realization, where man could satisfy his highest aspirations and enjoy the greatest possible happiness under the guidance of his altruistic promptings, where his instincts should be so sharpened and developed as to unfailingly select the greatest and the most lasting, and therefore the noblest pleasures—in imagining such a state of things these experimentalists perceived that society, such as it was around them, offered thousands of obstacles to every attempt at practical realization of their theories. They thus came to look upon themselves as at war with society, its old standards, its prejudices, its religions, and its morals.

Their writings were at once weapons, challenges, rallying-cries. They were intended to deride, to shock, and to draw attention to the new philosophy. The distinction between good and bad was obliterated.

The artist and the poet should henceforth express their true feelings and nought else. Instinct should take the place of principles. The devil might be worshipped as well as God. Art should have no other object than art. Nature might be abhorred as well as loved. And so on.

From this moral chaos the self was to rise in all its glory. For the present it was distorted by surrounding circumstances. The ugliness and morbidness of the subjects they wrote about and the distortion of their own feelings were the proofs of the decayed state upon which humanity had entered. Characters such as Huysman's Duc des Esseintes were intended to illustrate what the present state of society was, and what its present tenets would lead to. He is intended to represent the final result of our civilization, and to show that disgust of our race may be so great as to inspire a man with the belief that by fostering evil and creating criminals he does a good action in so far as he accelerates the destruction of society.

The Parnassians and the Decadents have no proclaimed creed or any programme, and their own opinion of their philosophy is of the haziest kind. We are therefore far from asserting that we have here interpreted them as they would interpret themselves. Whatever may be said of their style and their writings, they have, at least, the merit of being

frank and unsophisticated, and we think it must be recognised that, whether they know it or not, they hold themselves up as the "frightful examples" of the chaotic state into which creeds, principles, morals are falling at the end of this century. To us the moral, both of their existence and of their writing, is that the world, and especially France, stands in sore need of better churches, of a better system of philosophy, and better principles of government. These authors have rendered a great service in tearing away the hypocritical mask which society is so anxious to maintain, and thus demonstrating the great need of regenerating agencies.

Of late, England has been considerably influenced by France, and the æsthetic revolt just referred to naturally affected the English, but merely as a faint echo.

When Max Nordau, who correctly points out the connection between the Decadents in France and the extreme æsthetes in England, insinuates that the whole of English society is affected by it, he labours under a wrong impression. We have had here—and we speak purposely in the past tense—a knot of people who have believed, as Max Nordau states, that a work of art is its own aim, that it may be immoral. But, as he himself has stated, the æsthetic awakening in England has forced art almost in the opposite direction. We

have had poets who have imitated Baudelaire and other writers of the same class, but these imitators have, by imitating many others, displayed a weakness which debars them from any great influence. There was a time with us when a thoroughly immoral decadence had a spell of influence and created a sickly literature. But the influence of this sham æstheticism is fast vanishing, since its essence has been mercilessly exposed.

While the influence of the Parnassians and Decadents in France was only small, in England the circumstances which produced them have been in existence among us and have produced effects to some extent similar. The struggle between science and religion, the distrust of both, the failure of social panaceas, and the irresistible pushing of the working class against old social barriers, have produced in a great number of educated men a peculiar state of mind which we wish that Max Nordau had noticed. Whether he would have placed those thus affected among his degenerates as egomaniacs it is impossible for us to decide, but there can be little doubt that egoism is the chief characteristic of a new religion, or a new mental disease, which has made large inroads among educated men. It becomes manifest in their pessimism and in their indifferentism. They believe that everything is bad, that the classes are bad, that the masses are bad,

that the country is in a bad state, and that everything will finish badly. At the same time they do not care. They will do nothing to avert the coming evils. They hope that none will think them foolish enough to make themselves martyrs. They wish it to be clearly understood that they care only for themselves and that they take no heed of what happens to others. They loathe the working class, and affect a desire to crush them out of existence at one blow. They belong to the few Englishmen who suspect women of vile things, except of course their mothers, sisters, *fiancées*, and wives. They think life hardly worth living, and certainly not worth any special exertions, but their main preoccupation is the state of their health. They study nothing save their own inclinations and cravings and certain excrescences of the most modern literature. Their capacity for hatred is stupendous in its scope but meek in its expression. They claim to enjoy all the benefits of social life without considering themselves obliged to perform any of its duties. They manage to be spendthrifts without being generous, and to be mean without being economical.

But we are strongly averse from classing these social phenomena among the hopeless egomaniacs. They exaggerate their egotism to such an extent as to suggest that they are rather following a foolish

fashion than undergoing moral decay, and that the existence of pinchbeck patriots, political charlatans, sham enthusiasts, and professional philanthropists, has frightened them from showing their best side and using their best abilities, and causes them to flout their pessimism and selfishness in every one's face lest they should be taken for one of these.

In spite of their infatuated posing as degenerate egomaniacs, we believe that many of them may be counted upon as part of those elements from which the future regeneration may spring, when the cloud of scepticism has cleared away, and a goal worthy to strive for is discernible.

CHAPTER X

AN ETHICAL INQUISITION

A VERY large part of the sum-total of the work accomplished by Max Nordau in "Degeneration" consists in describing scientifically the psychological phenomena which underlie the idiosyncrasies of certain authors and artists: in giving scientific names to their weaknesses, and in setting forth the relations in which such weaknesses stand to madness. These idiosyncrasies, these weaknesses and their relations to madness were well known to observant people long before Max Nordau's book was written, and to these his work is simply the technical explanation of familiar phenomena. In another chapter we shall dwell at greater length on the difference of views which Max Nordau tends to bring about. Here we wish to point out that, in spite of the mass of scientific phraseology employed by Max Nordau, and in spite of the difference of views he endeavours to bring about, in what seems to be his main object, he is entirely in accord with millions of sound-minded

people in this country. We English deplore, as deeply as any one can, the existence of artists and works of so-called art which appeal rather to the morbid than to the healthy mind; of poetry, novels, and dramas, calculated to flatter the corrupt, instead of stimulating in all a desire for elevation. We especially deplore the diabolical work done by pornographic artists and authors.

Owing to this accord in aims with Max Nordau, his work has been read, and is being read, by thousands in this country, in the hope that his vaunted science and his strong mind would show us the right remedies. But in this respect we have been sorely disappointed; for instead of meeting with that complete grasp of the subject to which English scientists have accustomed us, we meet in his proposal of remedies with that dazed and superficial logic which throughout his work clashes so strangely with his power of perceiving and of marshalling his facts.

The way he proposes to treat the "mystics, but especially ego-maniacs, and filthy pseudo-realists," forcibly reminds us of the solemn resolution of the rats to bell the cat. He says:—

"Society must unconditionally defend itself against them. Whoever believes with me that society is the natural organic form of humanity, in which alone it can exist, prosper, and continue to develop itself to higher destinies; whoever looks upon civili-

zation as a good, having value and deserving to be defended, must mercilessly crush under his thumb the anti-social vermin. To him who, with Nietzsche, is enthusiastic over the 'freely-roving, lusting beast of prey,' we cry, 'Get you gone from civilization! Rove far from us! Be a lusting beast of prey in the desert! Satisfy yourself! Level your roads, build your huts, clothe and feed yourself as you can! Our streets and our houses are not built for you; our looms have no stuffs for you; our fields are not tilled for you. All our labour is performed by men who esteem each other, have consideration for each other, mutually aid each other, and who have to curb their selfishness for the general good. There is no place among us for the lusting beast of prey; and if you dare to return to us, we will pitilessly beat you to death with clubs.'"

All this sounds very well; but if Max Nordau believes that in this passage he has given us the true method of how to defend society against its literary and artistic enemies, he labours under a delusion with regard to his own achievements that savours somewhat of megalomania. His big words, his righteous indignation and his manifold signs of exclamation are not a magic wand, are not a Saint Patrick's mitre, with power to banish toads and serpents from the country.

When he says that society should be defended, we

can understand him. But when he says that society must defend itself, he drops into the mist of commonplace and meaningless generalities. The word society stands for one of those things which will serve very well as the object of an activity, but not as a subject, because while its smallest component part may be affected, action is only possible through an organized co-operation of all its parts. To a German who has never witnessed the attempt of a free democratic community to launch out into collective activity, this difference in the active and passive positions of society may never have occurred. To him the activity of society seems an easy matter, because in his mind society is represented by a concentrated, powerful, and pragmatical administration. If Max Nordau had said "government should defend," instead of "society should defend," he would at least have been logical; but this he could not do, because, though an enemy to personal liberty, he has seen enough of German forms of government to reject the postulate of the socialists regarding the infallibility of the central power; while at the same time he has a healthy contempt for the judgment of the continental police. He therefore says that society must defend itself, and thus gives us a gratuitous piece of advice which is thousands of years old.

He calls upon all those who share his views to tell the enemies of their race to be gone from civilization.

But will they go? Why should they be more obedient than the spirits from the vasty deep? The administration of society would have to be completely centralized, and the central government would have to be absolutely despotic, in order to compel such an exodus. Even with such a government it might be extremely difficult to accomplish. The most despotic government in the world—the Russian Government—have encountered enormous difficulties in trying to expel the Jews, and this despite the fact that in this endeavour they had the sympathies of the majority of the Russian people, and could easily ascertain who were Jews and who were not.

A government, in England for example, that would attempt to expel pernicious authors and artists would have none of these facilities. They would first have to pass an Act of Parliament—the Graphomaniac, Egomaniac, Pornographomaniac Authors and Symbolist Artists Expulsion Act—and at least twenty governments would be turned out before it could get passed. But let us suppose that Parliament had decided on such an expulsion of these offenders, then the real difficulties would begin, namely, to decide who should be expelled and who should not. As to killing the returning ones with clubs, this mode of execution being abolished among us, hanging would have to be resorted to—an extremely difficult operation in our days, when the abolition of capital punish-

ment is more and more being considered as one of the first steps towards better ethics.

Max Nordau admits that judges and the police cannot help us. The reason which he gives with regard to Germany—the public contempt in which the judges and police there stand—does not apply in England where our judges are beyond reproach, and the police is a highly respected body, in consequence of being less pragmatical than any police force in the world. Experience in England has given us far stronger reasons for not using the law and the police force against authors and artists. Each time it has been done, the very works intended to be suppressed have gained a popularity and a circulation a thousand-fold greater than if they had been left alone.

Instead of tribunals and police, Max Nordau suggests a body similar to an association in Germany bearing the name "Association of Men for the Suppression of Immorality." As he often deals with his authorities, so he here deals with his model tribunal. He turns round and shows that they are no good. "This association, it seems, pursues disbelief more than immorality," he says. Alas! such is the way with associations of frail men. They are apt to leave undone those things which they ought to have done, and to do those things which they ought not to have done. Max Nordau here

ranges himself with the crowd of sentimental socialists who are so angry with the world because it cannot see how easily the regeneration of humanity would become by means of an infallible and almighty government. He and they cannot see that this infallible and almighty government is the very thing beyond our reach. If he had inquired logically into the causes of the disappointing results produced by the "Association of Men," he could not have failed to notice that they were more logical than himself. This "Association of Men," wanting to suppress vice by forcible action, exactly as Max Nordau would, were sensible enough to strike at the causes and not at the effects. They had found that atheism, and even free-thinking, generally coincided with immorality; and that on the other hand religious men were generally moral. Consequently, atheism was found to produce immorality, and religion morality. In upholding religion, therefore, they were upholding morality in a most effective way, because morality without religion, or at least without expressed religion, is found only in men of great intellectual powers and scientific attainments; and to educate the mass of the people to that point is, and will for a long time be, out of the question. Religion, therefore, was the only choice of Max Nordau's "Association of Men"; and, if it was right to coerce people into morality, it was surely

right to coerce them into religion. From this it should be clear that the fault does not lie in the reasoning of this "Association of Men," but in the postulate which Max Nordau has approved—namely, the coercion of anybody by an "Association of Men."

He expects the new "Society for Ethical Culture" in Berlin to do better, and wishes it to constitute itself as the voluntary guardian of the people's morality. What an extraordinary idea! One set of men guarding the morality of another set of men—a small minority, unauthorised, unrecognised and devoid of all physical power, to guard the morality of the great majority! The London authorities could tell Max Nordau a great deal about the effects of such attempts, even when the guardians of morality have the law and police at their back. But he need not come to London to learn what guarded morality is worth, and what the results of such guardianship are. The history of every country teems with illustrations of the fact that every attempt to coerce the people morally, or physically, into a moral life has invariably brought about more hypocrisy, more secret corruption, and a tone of greater immorality. If he distrusts universal experience, then he ought to know, as a psychologist, that, so long as the human mind and the human emotions are what they are, repression, supervision,

and outside interference with personal liberty must demoralize.

The composition of his society would be no guarantee whatever against deplorable effects. He proposes that it should consist of instructors, professors, authors, members of Parliament, judges and high functionaries. To begin with, authors could not be included, because they could not judge and be judged at the same time; and if the qualification of authors were sufficient, what would prevent authors of the Zola type from predominating in the association? Here, as with regard to original causes, Max Nordau fancies that he has struck solid ground when he has removed the difficulty a stage further back. The association is simply an instrument. All depends upon who forges it. Of this he says not a word. He evidently expects it to arise as a miracle like the infallible government of the socialists. Were the German Emperor to select the members of the association—which in Germany he would have to do directly or indirectly—he would take upon himself an enormous responsibility, for the fulfilment of which he would have to acquire the necessary information and the necessary means. He would simply be to ethics what the Pope is to the Catholic religion.

Max Nordau boldly asserts that such an association would have "the power to exercise an irresistible 'boycot.'" Why? He evidently thinks so

because his association would be an influential one. He clearly does not know what ought to be an axiom to any one who meddles with social questions; namely, that the circulation of a condemned book increases in an inverse ratio to the respect which the condemning authorities enjoy. Thus, if his association were to consist of nobodies and were to condemn a book, the condemnation would only increase the circulation a little; but if it were to consist of the leading men of the German Empire, the condemned book would be read all over the world. In the matter of public censors nothing is of any avail that is not absolutely despotic. By allowing government and police to exercise all kinds of violence, isolated newspaper paragraphs and leaders can be suppressed before they are published, and the open circulation of condemned books may be prevented. But once the public get hold of the contents of an article and the name of a book, a secret circulation at once sets in. Eye-witnesses who were in France when the French Government confiscated and prohibited Edmond About's "La Question Romaine" can relate the eagerness with which this book was read, and tell of the numbers of copies circulated secretly. We cite this example from the Continent, as it corroborates what always happens in England.

Max Nordau fondly imagines that the judgment

of his association would absolutely "annihilate" not only the book, but the author. The contrary would happen. As long as there is a grain of love of liberty in humanity, the condemnation by an authority of a man's book will make him the object of public sympathy. When Max Nordau says that "no respectable bookseller would keep the condemned book, no respectable paper would mention it," his meaning entirely depends on his standard of respectability—one of those standards he absolutely refuses to give us. Every one knows that there are respectable booksellers and papers, and that there are non-respectable booksellers and papers. But who could undertake to draw the line of demarcation between the two categories? In a small German town where there are only one or two booksellers this line is easily drawn. But how about places like Berlin, Hamburg, Paris, Vienna and London? Besides, a bookseller and a newspaper might be highly respectable, but differ diametrically from an association which would have Max Nordau's approval. Surely he would not push his mania so far as to deny a respectable character to all the booksellers and newspapers who, for instance, refuse to boycot Ibsen?

Max Nordau also thinks that the specialists in insanity should come out of their shells and publicly denounce the degenerate authors and artists. In England, for example, he thinks that Maudsley could

exercise a healthy influence. But he would be surprised at the small number of people in England, outside the profession, who read works on mental disease. "Degeneration" has been widely read; but this is because it levels startling accusations against well-known authors and artists, and because it purports to give a novel scientific interpretation of familiar phenomena, with the purpose of turning our opinions with regard to some branches of art and literature topsy-turvy. It is not to science alone that it owes its wide circulation, but to the clever —conscious or unconscious—sophistries it contains. English psychologists and specialists in insanity could not afford to launch out after the manner of Max Nordau. They might secure a certain number of readers; but they would lose their patients. A specialist who came before the public with Max Nordau's artless and ill-considered scheme for the defence of society against its enemies, could not hope to be taken seriously by an English public. In England we have had a too large experience of books with a tendency, of log-rolling, of veiled advertisement, and of sly party thrusts, to be influenced by such a suggestion of lunacy against political opponents as is contained in the following sentence from Max Nordau: "A Maudsley in England, a Charcot, a Magnan in France, a Lombroso, a Tonnini in Italy, have brought to vast circles of people

an understanding of the obscure phenomena in the life and the mind, and disseminated knowledge which would make it impossible in those countries for pronounced lunatics with the mania for persecution to gain an influence over hundreds of thousands of citizens."

It is impossible for us to imagine an English specialist in insanity attributing the absence of anti-semitism in England to his own writings, or those of other psychologists, as Max Nordau does in this sentence. If the German electors can believe such a wild party distortion, they are not the men we take them for. We have already explained the causes of the existence of anti-semitism in Germany, and of its absence in England. We do not expect that Max Nordau will acknowledge our view to be right. For had he not been so entirely the creature of prejudice on this, as on many other subjects outside his speciality, he would, unassisted, have discovered so obvious a truth.

Englishmen are not less anxious than he to defend society against its enemies; but only the most inexperienced and illogical Englishman would recommend such remedies as our alienist seems to consider as the height of wisdom. Though we have been slow about it, we seem at last to have grasped the not very hidden truth that if society—that is to say, the people—is moral enough to elect an association

capable of acting as an ethical censor over art and literature, we believe the people also capable of exercising that censorship directly, instead of indirectly, through an association. This censorship by the people themselves has the immense advantage of working unostentatiously and silently, and without advertising the very work that should be suppressed.

We think it futile to condemn, or even to suppress, a work; and on grounds of expediency only, regardless of principle, to club the sinning author. The source from which the condemned work sprang would yield more such works, and the circumstances which had produced the objectionable author would produce more objectionable authors. These, as well as their works, are the symptoms of a social malady, and we should treat them as such. We have ceased to apply to society the old methods, long since abandoned by the medical profession, of curing an evil by means of violent suppression of the symptoms —methods adhered to by Max Nordau with regard to society, but, let us hope, not with regard to his patients.

We leave the symptoms alone: for they allow us to diagnose the evil, and we go for the causes. In looking for them, we try to keep our minds free from such prejudices as influence Max Nordau's logic. We should not cry out for new ethical standards,

for new and impossible moral authorities, while we ruthlessly destroy a standard and an authority—religion—the practical usefulness of which could not be replaced for centuries by any new standard or authority, even if invented now.

Recognising the truth in Voltaire's flippant saying, that if God did not exist we should have to invent Him, we do not, as the superstitious scientists do, first abolish Him and then re-invent Him in the clumsy form of a "mechanical causality." We let the holders of the ominous rings—of which Nathan der Weiser told Saladin—do their utmost to prove by virtue and happiness that they hold the magic ring conferring these privileges. It matters little to us whether the genuine ring be the Christian one, the Jewish one, or the scientists', so long as the belief in the holders of each of the rings stimulates them to prove its genuineness. We would not tell the great majority who pin their faith to the Christian ring—even if we believed it to be spurious—that we can prove it to be worthless, and that the scientist's ring alone will bring salvation: for we know that this ring is beyond the reach of most of them, and that, handled in the wrong way, it will work curses instead of blessings. We limit ourselves to telling them that the rings held by the others must not be despised until the Great Competition is adjudicated.

In our quest for the causes of degeneration, we do not begin by trying to discover traces of lunacy in a small number of prominent citizens. We bear in mind that these are either isolated cases, or types of a generally prevailing tendency. In the first case, we leave them alone; in the second, we search for the cause of this tendency. If we find that the tendency, let us say, towards hysteria, or egomania, in the upper classes is being produced by a craving for excitement, unhealthy pleasures, or artificial sensations, and by a frivolous and empty life, we set about to discover the causes of this craving and this empty life.

If we again discover that the cause is found in the decay of the beliefs in personal responsibility, in the importance of philanthropy, morality, and patriotism, we try to discover why these beliefs have decayed. If it be found that they have decayed simultaneously with and in consequence of the decay of the authority of the Church, we try either to strengthen the influence of the Church by purifying and reforming it, or we replace its dogmas and its doctrines by a healthy and moral philosophy.

Should we find, on the other hand, that the deplorable state among the poorer classes—their suffering, their degradation, and their joyless lives, co-existing with large fortunes, and irremediable

under present laws and institutions—leads to the conclusion that the altruistic feelings of the wealthy are useless, and thus prompt among the upper classes selfishness and egomania, and the determination to drown their higher emotions in a giddy life, and in the poorer classes to foster destructive tendencies and the desire for revenge, we turn our attention to social remedies.

No one can turn his attention to the social state of the working-class in England, and throughout the world, without discovering a host of motors active in the production of dire misery, and all the mental and moral degradation that follows in its train—a degradation which aggravates the misery, and reacts, as we have shown, on the upper classes. Nothing will more actively stay the progress of any mental degeneration which might be going on than the removal of the causes of the awful misery suffered by such an alarming proportion of civilized humanity. Max Nordau's warning against mental decay and progression towards folly will, we hope, quicken, if not the higher emotions, at least the sense of self-preservation among the leading classes throughout the world. But it must be regretted that he, not only in his suggestions of remedies, but in many other parts of his work, displays a lack of logic and a want of clear perception as soon as he quits the narrow precincts of his special

science and the teachings of his manifold authorities, and falls back on his own reasoning powers. Had he prevented his prejudices from colouring his views, and had he not sacrificed logic for brilliancy, his work would have been of no slight assistance to those who are helping on humanity in its staggering onward movement.

CHAPTER XI

VIGOROUS AFFIRMATIONS

IT has come to our knowledge that a great number of people in this country who have read through the whole of Max Nordau's bulky volume have carried away an impression far from pleasant. Indeed, there are few men or women in a country like England who might not, on some plea or another, come under the suspicion of mental degeneration, if all that Max Nordau says were, regardless of his contradictions, accepted as true. In this country education and morality are based entirely on religious principles, and most of the inhabitants are, either by faith or by dint of sincere philosophical inquiry, to some extent religionists. All these might think themselves included among those whom Max Nordau stigmatises as degenerates. There is also a great number who admire intensely Burne Jones, Rossetti, and many other painters of the same school, and all these have been told, with somewhat brutal frankness, that they are on the road to lunacy. The pieces of Ibsen have a great number

of admirers who have welcomed with pleasure the additional intelligence and interest which he has infused into the drama, and who consequently have been pointed out as degenerate imbeciles.

In the light of these facts there remain few educated persons among the upper classes of this country about whose intellectual soundness Max Nordau's work might not raise doubts. This all the more so as his few reservations with regard to people who have demonstrated their sanity by practical ability to conduct their own affairs, sink into insignificance among his voluminous and wholesale accusations, especially as such reservations are forgotten almost as soon as they are made.

This wholesale issue of certificates of madness would not have mattered so much if his work did not carry with it a certain power of conviction which tells especially with the weak, uninstructed mind, and with people who have not read his work with special attention. In fact, we know cases of people of sensitive mind who imagine that, thanks to Max Nordau's book, their friends will look upon them as on the road to lunacy.

There can be little doubt that the strong impression the book has made, sometimes in one way and sometimes in another, is largely due to the style adopted by its author. The secret of this style is revealed in the chapter "Prognosis," where

he describes with somewhat elephantine humour the effects in the twentieth century of the present progressing degeneration. He says, among other things, that companies of men will be formed who "by vigorous affirmations are charged to tranquillize persons afflicted with the mania of doubt, when taken by a fit of nervousness."

Such a piece of prophecy could only enter the head of a man who has had practical experience of the great effect produced on nervous people by vigorous affirmations, and, having had this experience, Max Nordau fills his volume with such "vigorous affirmations." His method has succeeded all the better as he evidently belongs to that class of powerful and strong-willed men who, when once they have formed an opinion, hold to it tenaciously, and count as nothing any conviction against their will.

Having followed Max Nordau through his vigorous crusade against that score of people whom he regards as dangerous enemies to humanity, and having pointed out a host of his logical errors, erroneous perceptions, unsound postulates, and exaggerated representations, we propose before closing this volume to examine some of the reasoning methods which give him his apparent strength.

It is to him of great moment that his readers shall not believe in the existence of the thinking

and feeling *Ego* as a person, apart from the organic mechanism which conveys impressions and presentations to the *Ego*. He uses all the arguments which that school of thinkers to which he belongs has piled up in order to show that mind is a condition of matter. He says nothing about the arguments on the other side, but treats them as the science of the past. He takes for granted, without showing a vestige of doubt, that human beings are nothing but organic mechanisms. He does not even refer to, or allow that there is, anything beyond the present scientific discoveries, and scornfully ignores the existence of what less prejudiced scientists call the Unknowable. He thus treats a question which still trembles in the balance as if it were already decided in favour of his pet theories.

The attitude which biologists and psychologists take up as such, and with the special purpose of proceeding in their investigations with perfectly unbiassed minds, Max Nordau assumes as a philosopher, and tries to persuade himself and others that he has taken his stand on absolute facts. Science proceeds on the supposition that only that is true which has been proved so by demonstrations to our senses, or through deductions from such demonstrations. This, of course, is a postulate the illogicality of which most scientific men are aware of, and is adopted mostly for the purpose,

as it were, of clearing the ground. To assume, apart from their investigating attitude, that there is nothing more to know than what is already known, would be an utterly absurd assumption, as it would, if acted upon, preclude further investigation.

Max Nordau does not, and would not, deny that there is more to learn, but he persists in the view that all future knowledge will be on the lines of our present knowledge, and never contradictory to the present prevailing scientific dogmas. He remains under this impression, because he forgets that science has progressed, progresses, and, as far as we see now, always will progress through investigations by our senses, and that this fact brings two important truths conspicuously into relief. The first, that our senses are liable to deceive us, and that consequently the difference between primitive views—the result of imperfect observation—and the scientific opinions of the day, is not one of kind, but simply one of degree. In olden times the senses deceived us very much, and nowadays they deceive us less. But to what an extent they deceive us now the future alone can reveal. The second, that science with the present methods cannot investigate anything that does not appeal to our senses.

To deny the existence of anything that does not appeal directly to our senses is absurd, because we

should have to deny all the forces of nature. The existence of these can only be detected by their effects. The more science teaches us about forces, the more the view gains adherence that the forces are not a state of matter, but a thing apart, if matter is not a state of force. Even if this view should prove to be correct, the error it would dispel, that force is a state of matter, would be pardonable, as force has only come within the perception of our senses through its effect on matter.

Psychology has to some extent succeeded in tracing and in describing certain forces which are at work in our nerves and our brains, such as, for example, reveal themselves in the reception and elaboration of presentations. But within every human being there are well-known phenomena which tell of forces — or of one general force — which so far have escaped all investigation. These phenomena are emotion, judgment, will.

Attentive readers of Max Nordau's book will have noticed that, in his scientific dissertations on the actions of the brain, these factors—emotion, judgment, will — turn up suddenly without the slightest explanation as to whence they come and what they are, though they seem to completely determine the action of the whole organism. It is with this enormous gap in their chain of reasoning that some scientists, with more learning than

logic, jump to the conclusion that the thinking and feeling *Ego* is only a state of matter.

Max Nordau, being anxious, as we have already mentioned, to magnify the importance of his psychological theories by undermining his readers' belief in the existence of anything unscientifically called "soul" or "spirit," renders his task easier by attacking religion, of which the belief in the existence of the spiritual *Ego* is a vital part. He knows that if he can compass the rejection of the idea of religion he kills two birds with one stone. He gets rid of the personal *Ego* as well as the belief in eternal life, both of which, if admitted to be realities, would strongly point to an intelligent Providence, the existence of which would be a colossal impediment to the glorification of science and of scientists.

The way in which he strives to undermine religious belief is ingenious and often effective. He trusts chiefly to the historical argument. He goes back to primitive man in order to show that he, in his ignorance of nature, attributed those natural phenomena which strongly impressed him to some man mightier than himself. Max Nordau tries to show that out of this belief arose what he would call superstition, the several forms of religion. He here of course appeals to feeling more than to reason. People do not like to feel that they have remained in the depth of ignorance of the primitive

savage, and might feel disposed to join the glorious company of the apostles of science. But if we use our reasoning powers, we cannot fail to perceive that science has merely taught us the methods by which, and the laws according to which, nature works, and that as to the forces behind the laws of nature the scientist is as ignorant as the primitive savage.

Max Nordau also pursues that diplomatic course —or commits the error—as we have already pointed out, of confounding religion with the Churches. It is easy to inspire distrust in religion if it be permitted to consider Pope Borgia, Ignatius Loyola, and Dr. Stöcker as its inevitable results. By analyzing and to some extent distorting the essence of ritual, Max Nordau seeks to point out that Christian worship is not only sheer imbecility, but also an insult to the supposed God. He never notices such discrepancies between the Churches and religion as are, for example, revealed by the anti-semitist movement in Germany, which naturally he keenly resents. From the defects, the shortcomings, the superstitions, the antiquated dogmas of the Churches, he tries to draw the sweeping conclusion that a belief in an intelligent Providence, in the existence of a soul, and in a spiritual life independent of the body, is the outcome of degenerate mental powers.

The views that by such means he endeavours to impose upon his readers mean that man, being an organic mechanism, ceases to exist when he dies. If this be so, there is no personal responsibility, and only that man would be wise, rational, undegenerate who so arranges his life that he may live long, keep in good health, and enjoy all the pleasures that he desires, be they noble or ignoble. To test, then, whether a man who is, who believes he is, or merely poses as, a disbeliever in future responsibility, we ought to examine how he regulates his life. Only in this manner can we discover to what an extent he is influenced—to use Max Nordau's own language—by the inherited tendencies to worship, lurking somewhere in the innermost recesses of his consciousness, or, to use our own language, by the instinctive feeling of personal responsibility which has characterized humanity in every stage of barbarism and civilization.

The fact that a great many scientists, including Max Nordau, do not live as if they were perfectly convinced of the non-existence of personal responsibility beyond the grave, requires quite a different kind of explanation than that generally afforded, before we abandon the belief that they are self-deceivers. The moral scientists themselves have found the necessity of some explanation, and this is what they say, though perhaps in other words:

"We do not believe in any responsibility beyond the grave, but we do what we think our duty to humanity. We should be sorry and ashamed to be actuated by a fear of punishment or the desire for reward, and not to do what is right and good for the sake of the right and the good."

This sounds very beautiful, but too boastful almost to be accepted as the bare truth. Some of them who are aware of this, or who are genuinely too modest to thus stand forward as demi-gods, add, "In living and acting as we do, and wanting others to live and to act in the same way, we are not more unselfish, nor morally better, than others. We are only wiser; in fact, more intellectually selfish. And all we desire of other people is that they should be intellectually selfish. In exercising self-control and devotion to others, we do not deprive ourselves of pleasures and enjoyments, because most of these come to us from our surroundings and from society at large. For what we do for our wives and families we get love in return; for what we do for society and the race, we get two rewards: firstly, esteem and reputation, perhaps money; and, secondly, all the social advantages which are valuable to us in the same proportion as society is in a healthy state."

This seems highly convincing, but it does not by far cover the whole ground. Whoever has studied

our times well knows that a man can secure for himself, and even for his family and friends, enormous advantages by disregarding and violating the interests and moral rights of others, and also that, when wholesale rascality succeeds, when it is productive of great wealth, great social and political power, it also secures esteem and reputation. There are, of course, men in positions, the stock-in-trade of which consists in honesty and even philanthropy; but there are others, and millions of them, who could, under the present social systems of the world, amass fortunes and rise to distinction by systematic robbery. Thousands of cases could be stated in proof of the fact that, in the absence of the belief in responsibility after death, selfishness will prompt men to hurt their fellow-beings and society in order to secure money, power and reputation for themselves. Take the case of a poor labourer who, in the usual course, will work and suffer during his whole life and die in poverty. To escape such a destiny many roads are open to him if he have courage, exceptional ability, and no belief in a hereafter. He could commit a variety of crimes in order to give him a start in life without the slightest chance of being detected, and without experiencing the smallest inconvenience during his lifetime. He might even avoid violent and vulgar crimes, and operate in a safer manner. He might blackmail a