To defy the foe, to shield himself and Walhalla, Wotan sent out the Walkyries to bring heroes, who should fight for him. The Walkyries, Wotan's daughters, formed a portion of his personality. They formed the wish for liberty; they were hostile to Fricka—hostile to her right. Their origin "in wild love" of itself denotes their opposition to convention and custom.

But Fricka still reigns. The Walkyries form only a part of Wotan; the agreements that bind him they are unable to break. They, too, must submit to Fricka's will.

Wotan is aware that only a free hero, one who starts up boldly and unhampered, will be able to defy the foe. Through such a hero he had hoped to attain what he wished. He betook himself to a noble stock which itself had sprung from him—the Wälsung. He had thrust a sacred sword into the trunk of an ash tree in such a way that only the strongest hero should be able to withdraw it. Siegmund, the Wälsung, the brave hero, he himself stimulated to the deed. Siegmund felt in himself the impulse to freedom; unhampered did his defiant spirit unfold itself. Then he found Sieglinde, his own sister, in the enemy's house, married without love, courted without affection by Hunding. The deepest love was kindled in the young pair; custom and law failed to separate them; they followed solely the true human feeling which moved the inmost recesses of their hearts.

How wrongly has this love between Siegmund and Sieglinde been interpreted! After what has been said before, it requires no further explanation that here, as in all of Wagner's creations, love is merely the symbolical expression of certain sensations; that it was in no way Wagner's purpose

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Nützte neidisch
Des Ringen Runen
Zu aller Edlen
Endloser schmach.

to glorify in this relationship the impulse of sensual love or the like, but that the myth was only made use of in an ingenious way to incorporate artistically that already discussed antithesis, unfettered human freedom and right based upon custom and convention.

Fricka, the inflexible law which deviates not from the path of tradition, the conventional form, the personified externality, is horrified at this unequalled delinquency. Wotan, the will that strives for freedom, can not see anything wrong, any misdeed in the act:

> What deed so bad
> Have these twain done,
> Whom spring united in love?
> 'Twas affection's charm
> Enraptured them;
> Why should I blame affection's might? *

Then he continues:

> Thou see'st but one thing,
> I another see,
> And the first is driven from my sight. †

They are antagonistic principles—the right that is formed by virtue of interest and convention, and the right that is based upon a truer, more purely human experience. The sharply antagonistic elements which are here dealt with, and are so sharply opposed, one might specially refer to the

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* Was so schlimmes
Schuf das Paar,
Das liebend einte der Lenz?
Der Minne Zauber
Entzückte sie,
Wer büsst mir der Minne Macht?

† Du siehst nur das Eine,
Das And're seh' ich,
Das Jenes mir jagt aus dem Blick.

These words are taken from the original draft of the text, as it had been planned before the scene was written.

moral sphere, and call illegal morality and legal immorality.

Wotan then proceeds:

Unholy
Deem I the oath
Which without love unites;
And of me in truth
Do not require
That by force I hold
What doth not cling to thee.
For where bold powers themselves array,
I must counsel open war. *

Fricka knows full well that she must regard the strong, free hero as her foe; that his triumph means her fall, her destruction, and she therefore demands of Wotan that he will deny him his countenance. She gains the day in this struggle with Wotan, and the latter is compelled to resolve upon Siegmund's end. He has to give up his own yearning; he has to will against his wish:

In my own fetters
Am I caught:
I, the least free of all!†

Such is Wotan's plaint to Brünhilde, his and Erda's daughter.

In her, the daughter of Will and Knowledge, Wotan sees

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* Unheilig
Acht' ich den Eid,
Der Unliebende eint;
Und mir wahrlich
Mute nicht zu,
Dass mit Zwang ich halte,
Was Dir nicht haftet:
Denn wo kühn Kräfte sich regen,
Da rath' ich offen zum Krieg.

† In eig'ner Fessel
Fing ich mich:
Ich unfreiester Aller!

his own will, formed through knowledge, whose free unfolding, however, he fears.

Wotan recognises that in Siegmund he merely sees himself, his own sword, his own energy, and he therefore determines upon Siegmund's death.

Brünhilde, the daughter of Knowledge, knows that Sieglinde bears already under her heart the greatest hero:

Thy wife trust to me
On account of the pledge,
Which blissful from thee she received.*

In her is kindled the struggle between Knowledge and Will; the latter gets worsted, and she determines to save Siegmund against the will of Wotan. The fettered will, Wotan, has to will against his own wish, he has to destroy with his own hand Siegmund, whom he loves. Against Wotan's spear, marked with the runes of the contract, his sword breaks, and Siegmund falls.

Wotan's wrath, however, is only greater, his passion more headstrong, his fury more savage at the disobedience of Brünhilde; for he feels only more deeply his own bondage, his own weakness and impotency.

Thus Wotan casts off his child. But his heart is softened and appeased by the prayers of the "brave, noble child." He will not yield her up as a prize "to the most cowardly man for an easy booty":

A true bridal fire
Shall burn now for thee,
As ne er hitherto for bride it has burned!
Let flaming glow
Warm the rock around;
With consuming terror
Let it cowards scare;

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* Befiehl mir dein Weib
Um des Pfandes Willen,
Das wonnig von Dir es empfing.

Let faint heart avoid
Brünhilde's rock:
For one alone woos the bride,
Who is freer than I, the god! *

Brünhilde, Wotan's glorious child, pure, unalloyed, genuine Knowledge, is sunk in a deep sleep and awaits the strong, free hero, who, uninfluenced by law and custom, free from human tradition, guided only by internal impulse to eternal perception and true beauty, shall come to awaken her.

Wotan, however, the fettered will, the denial of the will to live, resolves upon his end:

Depart, then,
Imperious pride,
Of divine splendour
Braggart disgrace!
Break all together,
What I have built!
My work I renounce;
There's but one thing still left:
The end — —
The end! — †

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* Ein bräutliches Feuer
Soll Dir nun brennen,
Wie nie einer Braut es gebrannt!
Flammende Glut
Umglühe den Fels;
Mit zehrenden Schrecken
Scheuch es den Zagen;
Der Feige fliehe
Brünhilde's Fels:
Denn einer nur freie die Braut,
Der freier als ich der Gott!

† Fahre denn hin,
Herrische Pracht,
Göttlichen Prunkes
Prahlende Schmach!
Zusammenbreche,
Was ich gebaut!
Auf geb' ich mein Werk,
Eines nur will ich noch:
Das Ende — —
Das Ende! —

At this point the tragic element of the drama reaches its climax; "the will, which would form a world after its own wish," finds a fitting destruction. But the world of the artist could not at the same time attain to a close. Borne on the wings of an artistic and enthusiastic fantasy, the artist soars in majestic flight to a height never foreseen. There he has seen it—the daring, free being "with the bright universal soul"; he has felt it, felt it deeply. In it Wagner saw the human ideal. It is the free, uninfluenced human being who acts according to the circumstances of this world without being influenced or impelled from without, whose actions are not conditioned by custom and convention, but who strives after what is highest and noblest from free inward stimulus. He only acts according to the dictates of his pure discernment, his true knowledge, and his stronger will is able to triumph over all the obstructions of the world.

Woton had longed for this hero when he said to Brünhilde:

But one has the power,
Which I ne'er had:
A knight, whom to help
I never inclined;
Strange to the god,
Free from his grace,
Unconsciously,
Without command,
From his own need
With his own weapon
Performed the act,
Which I have to fear,
'Gainst which I gave no warning,
My only wish e'en wished it.*

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* Nur einer dürfte,
Was ich nicht darf:
Ein Held dem helfend
Nie ich mich neigte;
Der fremd dem Gotte,
Frei seiner Gunst,

Siegfried was the brave, happy hero, "the real original, human being in whom every pulsation of the blood, every twitch of the energetic muscles, was to be recognised in unconfined, fresh action"—the true, free human being. The myth, which makes him one of twins, is here symbolically and poetically turned to account; even his origin points to absolute freedom from custom and convention. Siegfried instinctively recognises in Mime the enemy, the traitor. In the latter we see incorporated the lowest human passions—envy, jealousy, and crudest egoism.

For Siegfried, the strong youth, no glaive was destined, as had been the father's case. By his own strength he must form it, weld together the strong pieces of the divine glaive. The free man who is independent of conventional morality can, of course, know no fear. He alone has the courage and strength and activity to mount to the most beautiful ideal, to true human freedom. The forging of the sword is accomplished by Siegfried after a fashion quite counter to custom and in violation of every ancient rule of the craft, and his success greatly amazes Mime. The character traits with whose representatives, Mime and Faffner, we have made acquaintance, must disappear with the appearance of the ideal free man. Hence, in the drama, both are destroyed by Siegfried. With Nothung, the wonderful glaive, he slays the evil dragon before the grudge hole (Neidhöhle). The hoard of the Niebelung, and with it the Tarnhelm and the ring, now belong to Siegfried. He regards them, however, as useless toys, and does not

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Unbewusst,
Ohne Geheiss,
Aus eig'ner Not
Mit der eig'nen Wehr
Schüfe die That,
Die ich scheuen muss,
Die nie mein Rat ihm entriet,
Wünscht sich auch einzig mein Wunsch.

trouble himself about the properties of that which he possesses:

What use you are to me
I do not know.*

The beautiful, strong, free man, who is artistically embodied in Siegfried, seeks in his inner worth alone happiness and contentment, not in the heaping up of external riches and goods.

Siegfried now strides away to the mount that no craven can approach without being consumed by the blazing fire. His actions are determined solely by his own will, which strives continually after what is noble. The restraint of compacts is foreign to him. He does not, therefore, bow to the spear of Wotan marked with runes of compact, which is held in his way, and against which the glaive of the father was shattered. Wotan is not able to withstand his might; he shivers the holy spear with Nothung, his glaive welded by his own strength. All hindrances, even the ocean of fire, must yield to his power and his will. So the hero, who "fears not the point of the spear," advances, strides through the fire, his strength quenching the flaming glow, and approaches Brünhilde to awaken her from her long, inactive sleep. The beautiful, strong, free man, whom the artist sees in radiant light, awakens the world from long sleep. True knowledge, pure cognition awakens humanity to holy bliss. In self-forgetting and self-surrendering love Brünhilde demands of her lover that he leave her, and that he go out into the wide world to perform new and lordly deeds.

We now see the strong, free man in connection with the bad world, surrounded by plots and jealousy, envy and malice. In Hagen we recognise the representative of those properties for which Mime and Alberich previously stood.

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* Was ihr mir nützet
Weiss ich nicht.

He is the antithesis of Siegfried, and his nature is shown by his descent. While Siegfried is the issue of a fiery *liaison* of love contrary to conventional law, Hagen, the son of Alberich, owes his existence to a love bought with gold. Hagen says of himself:

My blood would spoil your drink;
It flows not genuine
And noble as yours,
Stubborn and cold
It curdles in me;
My cheek will not blush,
Wherefore I remain far
From the fiery bond.*

Siegfried, in his intercourse with the bad world, acts solely in conformity with his inner feelings. He believes everybody with whom he comes into contact open and true like himself. Hence all distrust is foreign to him, and he acts as the moment suggests. This is the signification of the drink of forgetfulness. Such a naïve, trustful behaviour must in the wicked world lead to ruin and destruction. Reflection, cunning calculation, and accurate recognition of the wickedness of others are the weapons necessary to self-assertion in the world. Thus Siegfried falls a sacrifice to hate, cupidity, and envy. He, to whom the slightest false motion of the heart is an impossibility, and whose soul is of divine peerage and noblest purity, becomes in the eyes of the world a criminal. He is accused of perjury, adultery, fraud, and treason, and intrigue is able to prove its charges and to require punishment therefor. But the true knowledge—the

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* Mein Blut verdärb euch den Trank;
Nicht fliesst mir's echt
Und edel wie euch,
Störrisch und kalt
Stockt's in mir;
Nicht will's die Wange mir röten,
Drum bleib' ich fern
Vom feurigen Bund.

knowledge which, standing without the world, is conditioned by nothing—Brünhilde recognises the eternal and celestial faithfulness of him she loves.

Truer than he
Swore no man oath;
More loyally than he
Held no man his pacts;
Purer than he
Loved never another.*

The ring, laden with the curse of the Nibelung, is restored by Brünhilde to the daughters of the Rhine. The Walhalla, with the old world of gods, collapses; but Brünhilde, in radiant accoutrement, bears Siegfried on high upon Grane, the courageous steed. The strife for outward glitter and display, for riches and possessions, ceases. The world, which had been governed by a will bound down to conventional ideas, collapses; and in its stead the true, free will, bound to nothing, but associated with pure knowledge and true recognition, is lord over all.

No more than Wagner intended in his Tannhäuser to teach "a specifically Christian, impotently heaven-expecting moral," did he in Parsifal, his last artistic creation, have specifically religious ideas in view. Parsifal has rightly been called a continuation of the Nibelungen trilogy. That free hero, who in the trilogy must be overthrown in combating the wicked world, but whose final victory is there only intimated, becomes in Parsifal the real saviour of humanity.

The wardens of the Holy Grail—the sensuous emblem of the highest, holiest good of humanity, the human ideal, the

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* Echter als er
Schwur keiner Eide;
Treuer als er
Hielt keiner Vorträge;
Laut'rer als er
Liebte kein and'rer.

renunciation of the sensual life, greedy for wealth, fame, and pleasure—were the knights of the Grail, who in the holy grove in the Gralsburg, or Grail castle, far from the ignoble impulses of the world, were dedicated to the service of the Holy Grail. A pure cup of crystal containing the blood of Christ was intrusted to the care of Amfortas, the king of the Grail knights. Klingsor, the representative of the element hostile to the ideal—that is, of selfishness and lust of power—himself aspired to the possession of the Holy Grail, not on account of its ideal graciousness, but from self-interest and cupidity. But it was granted to the pure alone to find the path to the relic:

Ye, who their service have attained to
By paths no sinners ever gained to,
Ye know 'tis but permitted
The pure to be admitted
'Mid those the Grail's divinely magic power
With strength for pious work doth dower.*

Klingsor, conscious of his incapacity to become the master of sinful temptations, mutilated himself and so sought to obtain the Grail:

Unable in himself to stifle thoughts of evil,
Quickly turned he his guilty hand,
Resolved to gain the Grail's command,
But scornfully was by its guardian spurned.†

Repulsed by Amfortas, Klingsor built a mighty enchanted palace in the neighbourhood of the Holy Grail

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* Die seinem Dienst ihr zugesindet
Auf Pfaden, die kein Sünder findet
Ihr wisst, dass nur dem Reinen
Vergönnt ist, sich zu einen,
Den Brüdern, die zu höchsten Rettungswerken
Des Grales heil'ge Wunderkräfte stärken.

† Ohnmächtig, in sich selbst die Sünde zu ertöten,
An sich legt er die Frevlerhand,
Die nun dem Grale zugewandt,
Verachtungsvoll dess' Hüter von sich stiess.

castle, whither he knew how to decoy the knights of the Grail, and they fell sacrifices to the seductions of sensuality.

It left Amfortas no peace. He himself sallied forth to fight the wicked enemy and to free the knights from the danger, whereupon he himself fell a victim to the seductions of the crafty one:

While near the walls from us the king was taken,
A woman fair as sin has turned his brain;
He lay in transport her enfolding—
The spear escaped his holding;
A deathly cry! I rushed anigh:—
But laughing, Klingsor fled before,
The sacred spear with him he bore.*

That holy spear, with which Amfortas might have conquered the enchanter without trouble, had once shed the blood of Christ. The spear and that holy vessel, the most precious possession of all, had been conveyed by angels to Amfortas's father, the pious Titurel. They were to be guarded in the holy castle as the holiest of holies—the highest ideals of humanity. Now Klingsor had succeeded in purloining the holy spear, and with it had inflicted upon Amfortas a bad wound, which was never to be healed:

That wound it is, which none may make to close.

Klingsor, being in possession of the mighty and holy weapon, hoped to exterminate the entire race of knights, and to get the Holy Grail as well. Sinful humanity, which found poetic shape in Kundry, is without will power in the hands of the mighty Klingsor, in the grasp of unconquerable passions. Kundry must do evil against her wish, against her

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* Schon nah dem Schloss wird uns der Held entrückt,
Ein furchtbar schönes Weib hat ihn entzückt;
In seinen Armen liegt er trunken,
Der Speer ist ihm entsunken;
Ein Todesschrei!—ich stürm' herbei:—
Von dannen Klingsor schwand,
Den heil'gen Speer hat er entwandt.

will. She certainly felt within her an impulse to unselfish conduct, and sought in constant self-sacrifice to throw off the burden of her selfish propensities; but, driven as by demoniac power, she is not mistress of her will. When, struggling with herself, she cries out, "I will not!" Klingsor answers:

Well wilt thou, for thou must.*

The sight of the Holy Grail gives rejuvenated life and renewed strength to all that are noble and pure; but that which refreshes and quickens others fills him who is condemned to guard it with ineffable agony. The pains of the frightful wound are by the holy lustre exacerbated to insufferable torments; the conscience laden with guilt can not bear the contemplation of the highest ideal. In vain Amfortas seeks means for the alleviation of his pain, for relief from his torments. There came to him one comforting prophecy of the Grail:

Before the plundered sanctuary
In pray'r impassioned lay Amfortas,
Imploring for a sign of safety;
Heavenly radiance from the Grail then floated,
A sacred phantom face
From lips divine did chase
These words, whose purport clearly could be noted:
"By pity lightened,
The guileless fool,
Waits for him
My chosen tool." †

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* Wohl willst du, denn du musst.

† Vor dem verwaisten Heiligtum
In brünst'gem Beten lag Amfortas,
Ein Rettungszeichen heiss erflehend;
Ein sel'ger Schimmer da endfloss dem Grale;
Ein heilig Traumgesicht
Nun deutlich zu ihm spricht
Durch hell erschauter Wortezeichen Male:
"Durch Mitleid wissend
Der reine Thor,

The promised, long-desired redeeming hero, Parsifal, approached, "by pity knowing, the pure fool." Solitary, unskilled in arms, he was attracted to the far desert. As Siegfried had made his glaive, so had Parsifal himself made his bow. From his mother he went out into the world, and fighting made his way. Parsifal naïvely asks: "They threatened me; were they bad? Who is good?" He has not acquired the knowledge of good and evil, he can only experience them in the depths of his human soul, whence they can also resound pure and true, without being changed by the prejudice of a conventional right. His knowledge is neither erudite nor recondite, but results from the delicacy and candour of sense and of sentiment. He approaches the castle and is present when Amfortas uncovers the Holy Grail. He is deeply seized by all the pains and torments of the king; except that of the torment of guilt, which causes those sufferings, he as yet knows nothing. For that reason Gurnemanz indignantly pushes the "fool" out of the door, whereupon the latter wends his way to the enchanted palace of Klingsor. He strikes back with strong arm the knights who oppose him; and the enticements of the lovely maidens in the odorous flower garden fail to captivate him. Kundry approaches in the magical beauty wherewith she once seduced Amfortas himself, and tries under the ban of Klingsor all her arts upon the lad. She tells him of his mother, how she has died from love and care for him. Then occurs to him what he has undertaken with his life thus far. In overpowering pain he sinks at the feet of the seductive woman:

Woe's me! woe's me! What did I? Where was I?
Mother! Sweetest, dearest mother!
Thy son, thy son must be thy murderer?
O fool! Weak and frivolous fool!

Harre sein',
Den ich erkor."

Where couldst thou have been, thus to forget her?
Thus—ah! thus to forget thee,
Faithful, fondest of mothers!*

Kundry essays in this way to force an entry to his heart:

To thee now she sends
Benediction from above,
In this first kiss of love!†

But he starts up in horror, pressing his hand strongly against his heart:

Amfortas!
The spear wound! the spear wound!
In me I feel it burning.‡

Unspeakable sympathy with the torments of the king seizes him; he feels the pains as though they were his own. By them he knows and recognises the danger of seduction, which he stoutly withstands. The holy spear which Klingsor seizes as a last recourse and hurls at him remains hovering stationary over his head. Parsifal snatches it, and before the sign of the cross Klingsor's magical magnificence decays into nothing. "By pity lightened, the guileless fool" approaches with the holy spear to bring welfare and redemption. In the baptism of Kundry he purifies the world, which lies in the bondage of sensual pleasure, and in closing with the holy spear the wound of Amfortas, he frees the world from the torment of conscious guilt. The ideal

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* Wehe! Wehe! Was that ich? Wo, war ich?
Mutter: Süsse, holde Mutter!
Dein Sohn, dein Sohn musste dich morden?
O Thor! Blöder, taumelnder Thor!
Wo irrtest Du hin, ihrer vergessend?
Deiner, deiner vergessend,
Traute treuerste Mutter?

† Als Muttersegens letzten Gruss
Der Liebe—ersten Kuss!

‡ Amfortas!
Die Wunde!—die Wunde!
Sie brennt in meinem Herzen.

of humanity, the Holy Grail, which was for a long time secluded, is unveiled anew, with its radiant lustre reburnished, its glowing light imparting new life and strength to its reanimated knights.

In contrast to the "understanding that is due to fellow-feeling" stands the schematic, conventional knowledge based on tradition, sprung from no penetrating warm sympathy for humanity, but from the frigid letter and egoistic calculation that strives after an endless accumulation of stores of knowledge, losing sight of the end of wisdom, which is the welfare of mankind. In Wagner, the assistant of Faust, Goethe has scourged this aimless, egotistic, self-admiring knowledge, which pursues no common human good:

> To study's toil have I with zeal myself addressed.
> I do know much: would I might know the rest!

Faust, on the other hand, has come to see that true, serviceable knowledge must owe its origin to sympathy with mankind. He says:

> My bosom, of the science-itch now cured,
> Henceforth is closed to no pain that's endured;
> And what to all mankind is parcelled out
> I wish with my own heart to know about,
> The highest and the lowest Mine to keep,
> Every man's weal and woe upon Me heap,
> My private self to Man's great self expand,
> Though I be wrecked, great Man to understand.

With the exception of two, we have now briefly considered all of Wagner's music dramas. The two excepted are Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg and Tristan und Isolde. In the former he has humorously painted his own position in relation to modern art. The first idea of the latter occurred to him during the musical composition of the Nibelungen-Trilogy. It impelled him to paint in a drama of his

own the ideal unselfish love that he had studied in Siegfried and Brünhilde.

Thus Wagner's poems form a coherent chain, and each of them may well be termed "a fragment of a great confession." His moods and sentiments, vehemently pressing toward artistic embodiment, formed the spring from which his art productions sprang. Wagner repeatedly and expressly declares that his art is merely the mirror of his feelings, and must therefore be all but exclusively interpreted by heart and sentiment. Hence we find in Wagner that refinement and elaboration of the heart-life, those moods often inclining toward gloom, with which we have been familiarized by the study of the subjective poets, and in particular of Goethe. "Heaven-high exulting, to death cast down," was the temperament of Wagner likewise. How often he yearned after death, and believed his only rescue was to be found in it! Wagner reminds us of those tears that Goethe shed in reading Hermann und Dorothea, when he tells us how often "in hot tears" he lamented the unavoidable severance of Lohengrin from Elsa.* Art for Wagner was simply a means of expression. It was his tongue, in which he endeavoured to impart himself. Like Goethe, he laughed at the idea of being considered the founder of a "new school," or a "new departure," or a "new aim." More than once he poked sarcastic fun at the new "tendency" that was ascribed to him. In an essay on Opera-poetry, and in Particular on Opera-composition,† he says: "Not so much the study of my works as their success seems to have led many to follow my 'tendency.' What this consists of has remained a mystery to me. Perhaps of a long-continued preference for mediæval material. The Edda and the rude North, in general, were regarded as mines of 'good texts.' But the choice and character of the opera texts seem to be

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* *Op. cit.*, iv, p. 368.

† *Op. cit.*, x, p. 224.

not the only important items of the alleged 'new departure'; much else enters into it, especially '*Durch Komponieren*,' and above all the uninterrupted interposition of the orchestra in the concerns of the singers, a practice which has been followed the more liberally as a good deal of 'departure' has arisen of late in the instrumentation, harmonization, and modulation of orchestral compositions." Interesting is Wagner's own description * of how music gradually became a mother tongue to him; of how, in composing, it could not at all be his purpose to invent beautiful and original melodies or harmonies, but how he simply expressed in this tongue what he had to say in the only way in which it could be expressed. The reader will recollect that, in the discussion of the psychology of genius, I adduced a saying of Goethe in which he gives us to understand how indispensable the gift of verse was to him, since he was governed by such manifold feelings and moods and could only find repose and satisfaction in giving them artistic shape. This impulse to give artistic shape to his sentiments was felt by Wagner in the same measure, but neither the nature of his art nor outward circumstances enabled him so easily to see his artistic creations embodied as those of the simple poet. A poem, even though its form be dramatic, is a completed artistic work as soon as it is on paper; but a piece of music, especially a musical drama, receives life and existence only when it comes to be performed. Let an artist look upon his art not as a means of gaining money and fame, but merely as a means of expressing his sentiments, and if the means of imparting them be taken from him, as was Wagner's case, owing to every imaginable obstacle being put in the way of the performance of his works, or, worse yet, and still more discouraging, if his works are arbitrarily altered and cut, and, owing to a defective understanding of them, per-

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* *Op. cit.*, iv, p. 387.

formed quite disfigured, so that what was originally intended and felt is quite lost, then it will be quite psychologically conceivable that he should feel a just resentment and aversion toward those who, partly from want of understanding and partly from envy and ill will, deprive him of what to ordinary men is one of the highest of possessions—human speech.

In spite of all the obstacles placed in his path, Wagner did not let himself be subjugated by pain, because art held him erect. When he created his greatest work, the Ring of the Nibelungen, he did not himself believe that he should ever live to see it performed. It was not his purpose to gain fame and glory by it, but it afforded him satisfaction to unburden himself, as it were, by the artistic incorporation of his ideas, and at any rate to impart them to some friends, or even only to one. In such mood he wrote to Liszt: "What I am now creating shall never, or only under quite suitable circumstances, enter into life. Upon that I will henceforth unite all my force, and all my pride, and all my resignation. If I die before these works have been performed, I bequeath them to you, and if you die without their having attained a worthy performance, burn them. That is settled."

The impulse to communicate, in some way or other, with wider circles, as well as material need and cares, drove Wagner repeatedly into the literary career. Here it is, from a psychological point of view, of great interest for us to see how the artist fatigues himself in vain in debating, from a purely theoretical standpoint, the ideas that filled him, and how vainly he labours to make himself understood in a language which is wholly incapable of expressing his meaning; for the only language of artistic sentiment is art. Would Beethoven ever have been able to express the sentiments of the heroic symphony in words?

Whoever knows the writings of Wagner, especially his

larger works on Opera and Drama, The Art of the Future, etc., will be acquainted with his inflated and often unintelligible style; will have been offended by the many repetitions and apparent contradictions; and will, perhaps, have had the feeling that what the writer wished to communicate has actually been left unsaid. He did not consider himself by any means a writer, but wrote with great reluctance, driven by necessity; and he himself perfectly recognised the cause of his shortcomings. He knew that what he had to say could be expressed in one language only—the language of art. Wagner says: "Here again, and again and again, I have only been able to express myself through the channel of writing. What trouble this method of communication gives to me I need not assure those who know me as an artist. They can see themselves by the style of the literary works in which I torture myself to express what I could so tersely, easily, and gracefully render in art, so soon as its proper sensuous appearance stood as nearly in my power as its technical notation with pen on paper. But so odious to me is the whole literary business, and the necessity which has forced writing upon me, that I would that with this communication I might appear for the last time as a *littérateur* before my friends." *

It is not my task here to inquire what the value of Wagner's art may be, nor what rank he is destined to take in the history of art. For us, however, it is important to ascertain to what psychical processes his works owe their origin, and what psychical processes they produce.

The former question finds its solution in the foregoing considerations. The latter is an affair of observation and experience. This observation is, however, not always easy; it is sometimes decidedly difficult. The success of a work of art, the applause or disapprobation of the public, establishes but a very limited conclusion in regard to the mood called

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* *Op. cit.*, iv, p. 401. See also Zukunftsmusik, vii, p. 153.

forth by it. Too many deceptive factors enter into the phenomenon, to permit us to trust to unconfirmed appearances. Experience teaches that only posterity, which allows the work of art to produce its effect unprejudiced and uninfluenced by personal considerations, is able to decide the question of the psychical effect. Along with this question posterity is judge of artistic value. Not theoretical reasons, not rules and statutes secure to a work of art enduring life, but solely its psychical effect. If the artist succeeds in exciting with his work in posterity the intended mood, its value is fixed. If we wish to-day to account to ourselves for the beauty of Beethoven's music, we find nothing more to say than that it is beautiful because we find it so. We do not ask the why and wherefore, but surrender ourselves, as Lohengrin desired Elsa to do, to love and pleasure, without inquiring for reasons.

We are to-day the beginning of Wagner's posterity. Now that the zealous flame of fanatical Wagnerianism has died out, and—at any rate in the younger generation—prejudices, personal motives, envy, and malice have passed away, the moods and sentiments that Wagner's music is able to excite come out more clearly, and it is these alone which are to give definitive judgment upon the value of this art.

Wagner himself tells us how he gradually learned to handle his art as his vernacular language, so as to communicate his sentiments without impediment. The public, too, has gradually to learn the language of the artist, and this it must do, not with the intellect, but with the heart and sentiment. This circumstance explains many things which will not escape the close external observer. Most persons who come to this art unprejudiced declare that the first impression of a given work is neutral or even repellent; but after frequent repetition the sentiment becomes greatly augmented, reaching, it may be, to high enthusiasm. But older persons, especially those who have grown up in another

definite art departure, can not readily habituate themselves to the "new departure." They are in the same situation in reference to it as they would be toward a new language, as compared with young persons and children.

Wagner, in his earlier works, was, so far as outward form goes, especially in a musical respect, very much under the influence of the art impressions under which he had grown up. Gradually and unconsciously his own temper gained greater and greater relative emphasis, until at last he was altogether free from external influence, and stood quite upon his own feet. But the further he departed from the land of tradition, the harder it necessarily became for the public to follow him and to learn the new language. Hence his earlier works, in spite of the antagonisms and difficulties which even they had to overcome, always had a better reception from the public, and were more understood, than his later compositions. Down to Lohengrin he was at all events followed; but his later works excited a veritable storm of indignation and opposition.

It is human nature to condemn whatever is not understood; and it is only at a late hour, and very often not at all, that the question occurs, Might not the cause of the want of understanding be our own incapacity? Had Wagner lived five hundred years earlier, he might very likely have been walled up alive or burned as bewitched. But in the nineteenth century, such proceedings being no longer matters of regular routine, the modern prescription for making everything clear that is not understood was applied, and Wagner was declared to be insane. The rubric was, "Tannhäuser and Lohengrin are very beautiful; but the later operas are crazy." Such was the language of the seventies.

Of course, such a diagnosis of insanity, based solely upon the fact that the subject had created works of art which were unintelligible to the public, was not a professional one. Nevertheless, the universal cry, "Wagner is insane!" was

destined to penetrate professional assemblies, until at last a "specialist in psychiatry" was found who from a scientific standpoint sought to demonstrate Wagner's insanity according to all the rules of the art. This "specialist in psychiatry," to use the designation which he expressly assumed, was Dr. Theodor Puschmann, who in the year 1873 published a work with this design.* He says: "This pamphlet is not intended to lead up to any preconceived doctrine. We are not allied to any party, and are not ranged either among the adherents or the opponents of Richard Wagner. We have never held any political or artistic relations with him whatever, and consider ourselves therefore able to preserve the perfect objectivity of our judgment, which is a prerequisite to all scientific investigation." This general proposition is quite unexceptionable; but is it a fact that Puschmann displays such objectivity of judgment? Has he limited himself to making out the psychical processes of Wagner's mind? Not at all. On the contrary, he judges of Wagner's works in a thoroughly subjective manner, as if he were the final court of appeal; and then, because Wagner's art finds no grace in his eyes, he concludes that Wagner is insane. In short, his procedure differs in but a single respect from that of a layman—namely, that he styles himself a "specialist in psychiatry." Thus he says: "Apart from some reminiscences of an earlier period, his later works bear the stamp of mental mediocrity, hurried imperfection, and a wild raggedness. The Meistersinger, Tristan und Isolde, Rheingold, etc., do not in the least attain that mental elevation, that inward nobility, which was effused upon his earlier works. In both matter and form, in words and music, they are unbeautiful, disjointed, and careless. The world has judged them with a correct instinct. While Lohengrin and Tannhäuser have won a place in the hearts of the people, his later works are

* Dr. Th. Puschmann, Practising Physician and Specialist in Psychology in Munich. Richard Wagner, eine psychiatrische Studie.

already buried before they have come to life." Is this what Dr. Puschmann calls "objectivity"? Is it the business of a "specialist in psychiatry" to render such a judgment as this upon a work of art?

In another place he says: "We have already mentioned above what poverty of ideas, what increasing mental desolation, Wagner has shown of late years. All that is beautiful and great in what he has ever accomplished was devised and completed before he reached the age of fifty. Since this time an impotent unproductivity has seized upon him. His genius is extinct, and has given place to a lamentable emptiness of mind. His wings are crippled; the heaven-storming genius has fallen from his shining pinnacle, and, like a poor, sick, pitiful bird, chattering senseless stuff not to be understood, picks up the dusty corns that he and others once rejected. . . . The long-forgotten ideas of his youth, fugitive sketches such as a gifted man often produces and as quickly tosses into the waste-basket as useless, are now raked out and set forth with a quantity of *baroque* peculiarities in words and music which snatch at originality. To these are added a brain-shattering instrumentation and the most horrible dissonances; so that, as a connoisseur says, ear nerves must be thick as cables to go through such noise undamaged and sound. Along with this is the most unheard-of prodigality of decoration and machinery, such as only the extravagant fancy of a madman rioting in transcendentalism could imagine. And all this Wagner, in his morbid delusion, declares to be such a work of art as never was, and exacts of the world that it consider this unnaturalness as genuine art, and insanity as genius." I will not "exact" of the respected reader to hear more of Puschmann's criticisms. I can only ask again, Is this the needful "objectivity" of the "specialist in psychiatry"? Every layman must see that the diagnosis of the mental condition of an artist has nothing to do with deciding whether his works are "good"

or "bad," and that the sole business of the psychiatrist is to ascertain the psychical processes by which those works have been produced. Supposing that Dr. Puschmann really were the court of last appeal in reference to the artistic value of Wagner's art, and the world had to submit to his judgment that the Meistersinger and Tristan und Isolde contain nothing but "brain-shattering noise" and "frightful dissonances," would this be a reason for a real psychiatrist to diagnose insanity?

Puschmann says: "In Tristan und Isolde we find so many reminiscences of Offenbach's Belle Hélène that we might presume an affinity of soul between the two authors." Had Herr Puschmann been a "specialist in psychiatry" in fact, and not merely upon the title-page of his pamphlet, he would have had no difficulty in conceiving the distinction between these two states of mind and soul. While we seek in vain in Puschmann's mode of passing judgment upon Wagner's artistic creations for his boasted "objectivity," we find that quality still more distinctly wanting in his mode of quoting Wagner's writings and his use of such quotations to support his assertions. Although he puts the passages between quotation marks, implying that they are given *verbatim et literatim* and that their genuineness is guaranteed, yet he alters both matter and form to suit himself. What is the name of such a proceeding in plain English? And what becomes of the "objectivity" of this "specialist in psychiatry"? Without going into details here, I refer the reader upon this point to a publication which gives the real and pretended passages from Wagner's writings in deadly parallels.*

I do not unearth Puschmann's pamphlet for the sake of refuting it, for refuted it has been to satiety for twenty years. Besides, it refutes itself by its contradictions and mendaci-

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* Richard Wagner und der "Specialist der Psychiatrie." Eine Beleuchtung der Puschmannschen Studie von C. P. Berlin, 1873.

ties. But in considering the question of how far a diagnosis of insanity can properly be based upon a work of art, it lay in my way to show into what errors one might thus be betrayed, and to give an example of how a psychiatrist should not proceed. Puschmann collects a list of morbid symptoms which Wagner is said to have suddenly manifested, such as delusion of grandeur, delusion of persecution, moral insanity, and erotomania. There really is no disease in which such an abundance of symptoms is suddenly exhibited. But independently of that, the data upon which Puschmann rests his "symptoms" are based upon falsehood and error. A few examples may be given. Referring to the friendship between King Ludwig and Wagner, Puschmann says: "The man who was so admired did not use the power which a piece of good luck had afforded him to help his fellow-men to do any good, or to produce anything great. He did not justify the confidence of his royal patron, nor did he fulfil the hopes which the world of art had built upon his gifted youth. Sunk in the soft velvet of a palace *fauteuil*, he gave himself up to the enjoyment of a torpid repose. He basked comfortably in the adulation which the fame of his past procured for him, but created nothing more; at least, nothing of importance after Lohengrin was worthy of a great master." This assertion needs no commentary. Whoever is tolerably familiar with Wagner's life and works must see its utter falsity.

Wagner's "delusion of grandeur" is described by Puschmann in the following words: "Herr Wagner suffers from a self-conceit beyond all bounds and measure, a vanity and self-boasting truly morbid, which blind him to the merits of others, and allow him to regard himself as the sole embodied ideal of the loftiest wisdom and ability. The greatest masters of his art fade to nullity in his eyes; the illustrious musicians Mozart, Gluck, and others have no importance, nor title to mention in the history of culture,

except in so far as they may have served as his forerunners; and even the immortal Beethoven is, at best, nothing more than an easel upon which can be displayed the full-length portraiture of 'the greatest master of all the ages,' Richard Wagner." Whoever has even cast a glance into Wagner's writings must recognise the total falsity of this assertion. The masters mentioned—Beethoven, Mozart, and Gluck—had no more glowing and enthusiastic worshipper than Wagner. His candid veneration for them found such oft-repeated expression in his writings that one is amazed to find the very contrary opinion thus substituted for his. In Opera und Drama we read as follows: "And here I indicate to you again the masterly musician, in whom music was quite that which it is able to be in man, when quite in the fulness of its essentiality it is music and nothing else than music. Look at Mozart!" This is only one among numberless examples.

In another place Puschmann says: "But all this was not enough for his insatiable ambition. The world must kneel suppliant at his feet, and give him incense like a god." These are empty phrases with no basis of truth. This "specialist in psychiatry" rather incongruously interchanges "ambition" and "delusion of grandeur." But that is no excuse for ascribing to Wagner motives from which he was unusually exempt. Wagner did not wish to be "supplicated" or honoured as a higher being; he only desired to be understood. For that his soul thirsted—for understanding and sympathy. It would have sufficed to be understood by some few friends; to the world at large he was entirely indifferent. He wrote to Liszt: "I feel myself more than completely recompensed for all my endeavours, for my operas, and for my art wars, when I see what impression I have made by them upon you. To be thus completely understood was my sole desire. To be understood is the blissful satisfaction of my desire!" This

longing to be understood is so natural, and agrees so well with the psychological *cadre* of the artist, that the "specialist," who should know how to enter into the psychical processes of the artist, should certainly not take offence thereat. Equally justifiable and psychologically motived are the rancour and hatred of the artist for those who, partly from want of intelligence and partly from personal resentment, envy, and ill will, work to prevent his being understood.

Wagner's hatred for the Jews, which is set forth by Puschmann as a "delusion of persecution," rests simply upon the fact that Wagner saw in the Jews, especially those whose endeavours are limited to material gain, men who had renounced ideal love—in short, his Alberich. This feeling had no affinity with modern anti-Semitism; for, as can be seen in his letters to Liszt, along with "the Jews" he always named "the Philistines," as he called the Germans who slept away their lives in slothful dreams, and were glad if people did not disturb them—in short, the Faffners. To these two he often added the Jesuits. "Let us flee from this world, where there are nothing but Jews, Philistines, and Jesuits."

What Wagner longed for was the free, natural man, whose acts were not determined by petty personal interests and lower impulses, and whose life was not passed in thoughtless slumber—that is, Siegfried. There is no delusion of persecution here; it is only the artist's ideal. What characterizes the delusion of persecution is the circumstance that the patient everywhere scents persecutors, and in the most unreasonable and typical way regards the benefits that people do him as hostile persecutions. How grateful and happy, on the other hand, was Wagner if he only saw that he was understood, or that anybody sympathized with him! Thus he wrote to Liszt: "When I consider the numerous, extended, and often very able

papers which now proceed from Weimar, and contrast them with the envious hostility which assaulted me, for example, in the reviews of Dresden, and remember with what dire consistency they almost effected a systematic embroiling of the public against me, Weimar seems to me now as a blissful asylum in whose fresh air I can at last inhale deeply and give my contracted heart room." Nobody suffering from the delusion of persecution writes in that strain. Such a person would have found in the articles about Lohengrin some deep-laid plot.

Wagner's "hatred for the Jews" is marked only in a generalized and, I might say, a symbolized sentiment. It never extended to individuals. In his personal commerce with men he knew how strictly to individualize, and was very far from converting his feeling into a principle. The proof of this is, that he was on terms of friendship with many Jews. He intrusted the leadership of his play at the opening of the theatre in Bayreuth to a Jew, which he certainly would never have done if he had been suffering under the delusion that he was persecuted by the Jews.

Herr Puschmann further thinks that erotomania must be diagnosed from Wagner's poems: "His first great *opus*, Das Liebesverbot, glorifies the triumph of free and open sensuality. Still, he there keeps within the limits of decent respectability. But in his latest works the erotic element is put into more undisguised prominence. In Tristan und Isolde he glorifies 'adultery,' in the Walküre 'incest.'" Whoever has followed my account of Wagner's poetry can judge for himself whether Wagner intends therein to glorify adultery and incest. He will perceive that in Wagner's poems the woman never signifies the physical woman, and that by love he never means sexual intercourse; that there is merely an artistic embodiment of ideal sentiments, and that only total misconstruction can lead to such conclusions as those of

Herr Puschmann. Whoever, in spite of all such commentaries, entertains the slightest doubts upon this point may set them at rest by a passage in a letter from Wagner to Liszt. Wagner sent his friend the score of Siegfried after having concluded not to bring it out for a while, and wrote: "I now impart to you readily and with good courage this poem, for now you too no longer need to lift your eyes from it to consider with careful glance your public. You have, for example, no longer any need of anxiety as to what those people shall say of the 'woman' who, when 'woman' is said, always think of their wives, or, if their power of abstraction mounts so high, of some young lady or other."

Enough of Herr Puschmann! But let it be added that this pamphlet of the "specialist in psychiatry," though it made a sensation in its day before the public, was never taken seriously in psychiatric circles, but was always considered as a thoroughly amateurish production. Twenty years have since elapsed. Wagnerian art has now spread over the whole globe, and numbers its adherents by the hundreds of thousands. Recently another specialist in nervous diseases, Herr Nordau, has made the weighty discovery that Wagner was indeed deranged and a degenerate. The whole of Puschmann's nonsense, at which every rational psychiatrist laughed twenty years ago, has been furbished up anew by Herr Nordau, and put forth as the greatest wisdom, the newest acquisition of his scientific investigations.

For the unscientific pamphlet of Puschmann there is an excuse. At that time, twenty years ago, although Wagner already had a great number of warm adherents, Puschmann might still come to the conclusion that upon matter-of-fact people Wagner's music made an impression of absurdity; that it was not capable of exciting an elevated feeling in anybody, etc. In a word, he voiced the sentiments of the majority when he assumed that Wagner's productions were

"*verrücktes Zeug*"—crazy stuff. But things are different to-day. Understanding of Wagner's art is no longer so uncommon, and on every German opera stage Wagner's works take the lead. Not only in Germany has this success been attained, but far beyond her borders, his renown has pressed. Even in the New World, in far America, there are thousands of enthusiastic Wagner lovers. How does Nordau get away from this fact? Very simply: he says all the world is "crazy," or, at any rate, "hysterical." "Wagner's mighty influence on his contemporaries is to be explained neither by his capacities as author and musician nor by any of his personal qualities, . . . but by the peculiarities in the life of the present nervous temperament. . . . He had the good fortune to endure until the general degeneration and hysteria were sufficiently advanced to supply a rich and nutritious soil for his theories and his art." *

From this, one might think that it were time for publishing new text-books of psychiatry and instructing students that there is only one "normal man" in the world—to wit, Max Nordau. Everybody who writes, composes, or paints anything that Max Nordau does not take a fancy to, is degenerate; and everybody who likes anything that Herr Nordau does not, is hysterical. So long as this platform is not universally accepted in psychiatry, Herr Nordau can not expect to find scientific support. But whoever stands upon the universal ground of science must admit that Herr Nordau is a perfect amateur in the department of psychiatry. I can hardly think that anybody, even a layman in psychiatry, although he be an opponent of Wagner's art, can possibly assent to Herr Nordau's opinions; yet for the sake of justice, we had better enter upon a brief consideration of the main points of his deductions.

Nordau's diagnosis is as follows: "Richard Wagner is

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* Degeneration, p. 205.

himself alone charged with a greater abundance of degeneration than all the degenerates put together with whom we have hitherto become acquainted. The stigmata of this morbid condition are united in him in the most complete and most luxuriant development. He displays in the general constitution of his mind the persecution mania, megalomania, and mysticism; in his instincts vague philanthropy, anarchism, a craving for revolt and contradiction; in his writings all the signs of graphomania—namely, incoherence, fugitive ideation, and a tendency to idiotic punning; and, as the groundwork of his being, the characteristic emotionalism of a colour at once erotic and religiously enthusiastic." *

Very indicative of Nordau's dilettanteism is his incidental way of throwing in the most important symptoms of developed insanity, "delusion of persecution" and "delusion of grandeur." As proof of the first, he adduces quite briefly the trite stories about the Jews, which I have already sufficiently considered. Of the latter he simply says: "His megalomania is so well known through his writings, his verbal utterances, and the whole course of his life, that a bare reference to it is sufficient." † Nordau evidently does not know what is meant by a delusive idea; otherwise, he could not talk so innocently. According to him, everybody who thinks he is persecuted has a "delusion of persecution," and everybody who thinks he can accomplish what nobody else can has a "delusion of grandeur." Supposing that Wagner had really had the degree of self-conceit which is often attributed to him—which, as I have already shown, is far from having been the case—supposing it to be true that he believed himself to be the greatest musician of all the ages, to conclude from this alone a delusion of grandeur would be unwarranted in the extreme. Overestimation of self and the delusion of grandeur are widely different things.

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* *Ibid.*, p. 171.

† *Ibid.*, p. 172.

One may, for instance, make pretensions to being a thoroughly expert judge of all departments of art and science—music, painting, philosophy, and what not—so much so as to declare that every man who dissents from one's pronouncements ought to be cared for as insane; yet this does not amount to a delusion of grandeur—in the psychiatric sense of the term. No such sign of overrating himself was displayed by Wagner. He respected and honoured the masters of his art as much as any of his contemporaries ever did. Which one of the great masters of music was the greatest of all the ages the psychiatrist, as such, is not competent to say. Whoever it may have been was probably fully aware of it, and if he ever betrayed that consciousness, it was not a mark of insanity. But how very far Wagner was from overestimating himself is shown in his correspondence, which demonstrates how little he was occupied with what he had attained, and how entirely with what he had still to strive for.

Just as any artist who leaves the well-trodden roads and breaks new paths is exposed to every imaginable enmity and misunderstanding, Wagner had to combat persecutions and hostilities, which, far from being imaginary or delusive, were so real that it would have been folly to blind himself to them; and nothing but a rare and precious firmness of character, and an accurate appreciation of his own inward worth, could have carried him through all his tribulations to his eventual triumph.

He left our ruts,
But went on steadily and without deviations.

Only psychiatric amateurs—and not the most observant or wisest of them either—can possibly mistake the self-consciousness that marks the developed character for a "delusion of grandeur." Stories about boundless "vanity," a passion for "divine veneration," "incense," and so forth—easily

picked up among the valets and secretaries of any great man—have no foundation but arbitrary distortions or ignorance of the facts. As I have already proved, Wagner asked as little from the great public as did Goethe. In his creating alone, in his art itself, he found satisfaction and contentment. "Believe me implicitly," he wrote to Liszt, "when I tell you that the only reason of my continuing to live as long as I have done is the irresistible impulse to complete a series of works of art which yet have the strength to live within me. I accurately know that nothing but this creation and completion gratifies me; and as for the performance of those works and the seeing them from without, that I can dispense with well enough."

The remaining lucubrations of Nordau are limited almost exclusively to a critique, such as it is, of Wagner's works, and are shaped by the principle that whatever Max Nordau does not like is the work of an insane mind. Wagner's theoretical writings, one and all, fail to obtain Nordau's favour; therefore Wagner is insane. That Wagner himself recognised that what he had to say could not be expressed by words alone, that he saw the inflation of his own style, that his different writings were composed for special objects, and finally that Wagner, with the greatest "reluctance" and only when "driven by need," betook himself to writing—all this has little power to bend the inflexible critic. The long and short of it is that Wagner's writings do not please Nordau. Hence it appears that Wagner was a "graphomaniac." The trifling contradiction between a man's being a "graphomaniac" and his writing with "reluctance" and only when "driven by need," is apparent. Graphomania is pretty nearly the contrary of that. But what difference does that make? One contradiction more or less is a trifle when one is as well supplied with them as Herr Nordau. Here is a sample of Herr Nordau's manner of employing criticism: Concerning Wagner's idea of fusing the different arts into

one great whole, the musical drama, he says: "His art-work of the future is the art-work of times long past. What he takes for evolution is a retrogression, and a return to a primeval human—nay, to a pre-human [!] stage." One wonders what put this notion into Herr Nordau's head. Does he really believe that "pre-human" beings composed musical dramas?

Wagner, in one of his articles, speaks repeatedly of the action of the "head" in contradistinction to that of the "heart." He calls speech the language of the "head" and music that of the "heart." "The organ of the heart is music (*Ton*), and its artistically conscious language is the art of music." Every schoolboy can see what is meant. A form of speech common to all ages and all nations denotes the conative faculties by the term *heart*, as opposed to cold, calculating, speculative understanding—the action of the brain. But Herr Nordau feels himself called upon to challenge this figure of speech in the following terms: "But as his mystically disposed brain was not capable of clearly grasping the various parts of this intricate idea, and of arranging them in parallel lines, he entangled himself in the absurdity of an 'activity of the brain without activity of the heart'; . . . and finally attains to the pure twaddle of calling 'sound' the 'organ of the heart.'" *

We have already remarked that Nordau, in the department of psychiatry, is a mere amateur; so that we must not expect any accurate application of the concepts of the science in his writings. Yet, since he writes upon the subject, it might have been hoped that he would tolerably post himself in relation to it, and not publish things in the most injudicious manner. Now, Herr Nordau assures us that in all Wagner's writings there is hardly a single page "which will not puzzle the unbiassed reader, either through some non-

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* *Ibid.*, p. 176.

sensical thought or some impossible mode of expression"; whence one has a right to gather that Nordau has read those writings. But if that be the fact, how was it possible that he could totally mistake the purpose of Wagner's art as it is expressly and distinctly set forth in numerous places in his writings? Wagner declares in so many words—not once, but often, very, very often—that by the "woman" he never meant the physical, sexual woman; that it gave him pain when anybody attributed a religious moral to Tannhäuser, etc. But, notwithstanding these explicit declarations, Herr Nordau sings again the long-worn-out song about the "shameless sensuality," and with a bombastic aping of that scientific jargon which is defensible only so far as it insures precision of ideas, talks of Wagner's "erotomania." Thus he says in one place: "It certainly redounds to the high honour of German public morality that Wagner's operas could have been publicly performed without arousing the greatest scandal. How unperverted must wives and maidens be when they are in a state of mind to witness these pieces without blushing crimson and sinking into the earth for shame! How innocent must even husbands and fathers be who allow their womankind to go to these representations of 'lupanar' incidents! Evidently the German audiences entertain no misgivings concerning the actions and attitudes of Wagnerian personages; they seem to have no suspicion of the emotions by which they are excited, and what intentions their words, gestures, and acts denote; and this explains the peaceful artlessness with which these audiences follow theatrical scenes during which, among a less childlike public, no one would dare lift his eyes to his neighbour or endure his glance. With Wagner amorous excitement assumes the form of mad delirium. The lovers in his pieces behave like tomcats gone mad, rolling in contortions and convulsions over a root of valerian. They reflect a state of mind in the poet which is well known to the professional

expert. It is a form of Sadism. It is the love of those degenerates who, in sexual transport, become like wild beasts. Wagner suffered from 'erotic madness' which leads coarse natures to murder for lust, and inspires 'higher degenerates' with works like Die Walküre, Siegfried, and Tristan und Isolde." *

While Nordau passes by the most important symptoms of insanity, "the delusion of persecution" and "the delusion of grandeur," with startling levity, satisfying himself with mentioning that they are "known to everybody," he tarries to discuss with astonishing thoroughness the erotic element. Let us here adduce only one or two passages: "Mysticism is, as we know, always accompanied by eroticism, especially in the degenerate, whose emotionalism has its chief source in morbidly excited states of the sexual centres. Wagner's imagination is perpetually occupied with woman. But he never sees her relation to man in the form of healthy and natural love, which is a benefit and satisfaction for both lovers. As with all morbid erotics (we have already remarked this in Verlaine and Tolstoi), woman presents herself to him as a terrible force of Nature, of which man is the trembling, helpless victim. The woman that he knows is the gruesome Astarte of the Semites, the frightful man-eating Kali Bhagawati of the Hindoos, an apocalyptic vision of smiling bloodthirstiness, of eternal perdition and infernal torment, in demoniacally beautiful embodiment. . . . Wagner's Elisabeth, Elsa, Senta, and Gertrude are extremely instructive manifestations of erotic mysticism, in which the half-unconscious idea is struggling for form—viz., that the safety of the sexually crazy degenerate lies in purity, continence, or in the possession of a wife having no sort of individuality, no desire and no rights, and hence incapable of ever proving dangerous to the man. In one of

* *Ibid.*, p. 181.

his first compositions, as in his last, in Tannhäuser as in Parsifal, he treats of the combat between the man and his corruptress, the fly *versus* the spider, and in this way testifies that for thirty-three years—from youth to old age—the subject has never been absent from his mind. . . . Siegfried, Götterdämmerung, Tristan und Isolde, are exact repetitions of the essential content of the Walküre. It is always the dramatic embodiment of the same obsession of the terrors of love." *

These passages may suffice. At best, they bespeak at once Nordau's total misunderstanding of Wagner's artistic purpose, and his complete dilettanteism in psychiatric matters. Of the former truth, scarcely anybody who does not with might and main shut out the facts and is not ignorant of Wagner's own declarations, can be in doubt. Whoever still insists, after the observations made above, that Wagner, in the creation of his works of art, was thinking of the sensual, sexual woman, simply will not understand; and there is no help for it. As to the latter point, that a man who his whole life long never showed the slightest indication of sexual anomalies, who lived in happy marriage and was a tender husband and father, should be called an "erotomaniac" solely because love is introduced into his dramas, and that "a morbid state of excitation of his sexual centres" should be diagnosed, is the grossest and sheerest nonsense that ever was. There is scarcely a poet in the whole history of art whom one might not by the same token stamp as an "erotomaniac."

Herr Nordau might by the same right just as well have diagnosed a number of other symptoms from Wagner's poems. Why, for example, does the great musician not suffer from pyromania on the ground of the magic fire in the Walküre? Why does Nordau not declare him a klepto-

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* *Ibid.*, p. 188.

maniac, in view of the numerous thefts in Rheingold? There would have been quite as much sense in either diagnosis as in that of erotomania from Tannhäuser. Perhaps Herr Nordau has overlooked these symptoms, and perhaps he will do us the pleasure, in the next edition of his Degeneration, of dishing these up as the latest achievements of his scientific researches.

Nordau has made the important discovery that Wagner was born to be a painter, and only missed his vocation in consequence of his morbid impulses. "Wagner is no comedian," he says, "but a born painter. 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 constrained him to realize it on canvas, by means of colour. . . . He did not understand his natural impulses. Perhaps, also, with the feeling of his own deep organic feebleness, he dreaded the heavy labour of drawing and painting, and, conformably with the law of least effort, his instinct sought vent in the theatre, where his inner visions were embodied by others—the decorative painters, machinists, and actors —without requiring him to exert himself." Did anybody ever hear more luxuriant nonsense? A man who thinks the labour of painting too severe, takes up the musical drama, composing himself both the verse and the music, and thus escapes hard work! Is it possible to make a serious answer to such silly talk?

Equally astounding is the self-complacency with which Nordau passes judgment upon Wagner's music. I, too, am of the opinion that the judgment of art, especially of those arts which appeal to the sensitive heart, is not only open to the theorizing professional, but that the direct sentiment of the unprejudiced layman ought to be its touchstone. Wagner himself gives expression to this thought in the Meistersinger, where Hans Sachs says:

Yet once a year I should think it wise
That the rules themselves should be tested
Whether in custom's stupid rut
Your force and life ye were not losing:
Now whether ye of Nature
Be yet upon the right track
Can tell you only
He who knows nothing of tabulature.*

But when a person who "knows nothing of the rules of the mastersingers" declares both the judgment of an innumerable multitude of experienced masters and the sentiment of hundreds of thousands to be "morbid," solely because he himself thinks and feels otherwise than they, he only pronounces judgment upon himself.

It is well known that Wagner revolutionized the form of opera music. He banished the disconnected interpolated arias, put a stop to the inartistic license of singers in the *recitativo*, introduced a continuous music corresponding to the dramatical treatment and idea, and endeavoured through this music to express that for which the spoken word was inadequate. Of this innovation Nordau says: "It is a product of degenerate thought; it is musical mysticism. It is the form in which incapacity for attention shows itself in music." After having, in the remainder of his criticism, illuminated in a similar way the theory of Wagner's music, the *Leitmotive*, the "unending melody," etc., he reaches the conclusion that Wagner, "in the inmost depths of his nature, and by virtue of his organic constitution, was not a musician, but a confused mixture of a poet

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* Doch einmal im Jahre tänd' ich's weise,
Dass man die Regeln selbst probir',
Ob in der Gewohnheit trägem G'leise
Ihr' Kraft und Leben sich nicht verlier':
Und ob ihr der Natur
Noch seid auf rechter Spur,
Dass sagt euch nur,
Wer nichts weiss von der Tabulatur.

feeble in style and a painter lazy of brush, with a Javanese 'Gamelang' accompaniment buzzing in between." *

Concerning the theory of Wagner's art, others may dispute with Nordau, if it seems worth their while. But as to the psychiatric lucubrations by which he reaches the conclusion that Wagner was insane and a "degenerate," I believe that I have characterized them sufficiently, and that I may spare myself a more minute examination thereof.

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* *Ibid.*, p. 203.

CONCLUSION.

THE idea of a universal sickening of the people, of a progressive "degeneration" of the civilized nations, has not merely a few defenders, such as those mentioned in this work. This departure of modern science has found a multitude of adherents, and the advocates of this doctrine have made the concept of degeneration a subject of general popular interest. Beginning with this departure of psychopathology, the doctrine of a gradual retrogression of mankind, a deterioration, generation by generation, of the highly civilized peoples, has extended more and more. Not only in certain professional circles, but even in the educated lay world, we hear of a universal derangement of the nervous system, of a widespread nervous prostration, of mental and bodily deterioration of the present generation as compared with our ancestors.

Art and literature, which have ever expressed the metaphysics of the period, and which consequently now correspond in form and meaning to modern positivism, show of late a decided leaning toward the depicting of degenerative defects of humanity, especially of insanity, as if they were a characteristic of modern society. Although, from the time of Homer to our own, insanity has never dropped from the list of subjects for artistic and poetical treatment, yet each age has had its own reasons for doing so, which have always been closely connected with contemporary metaphysics. In the hallucinatory melancholia of Orestes, Æschylus painted the rage of the Furies follow-

ing and tormenting their victim : " Behold them, like Gorgons clothed in black, surrounded by the coils of many serpents." * In Ajax Fureus, who, suddenly seized with a somnambulic delirium, falls upon the herds of the Achæans and strangles them with their herdsmen, believing that he is killing the princes of the host, Sophocles exhibits the chastening hand of Athene, against whom this bold mortal had once risen in audacious defiance. The ancient poets thus painted mental derangements which obviously they had observed, and painted them in the colouring of mythology, which was the popular metaphysics of that age, as a dispensation of a higher power, a punishment of the angry divinity.

The multitudinous artistic representations of demoniac possession in the Middle Ages, in myriads of paintings, frescoes, reliefs, carvings in stone, wood, and ivory, bronzes, ironwork, goldsmith's-work, etc., the manifold scenes of conjurations and diabolic incitements, afford a clear picture of the insanity of those times. According to Charcot and Richer,† whom we have to thank for their thorough researches in this field, the dislocations and distortions of those possessed are quite typical of cases of disease that may be observed to-day.

The first poet who recognised insanity as a disease and painted it as such is Shakespeare, whose fine power of observation far outstripped his age. He who could paint the world in all its truth and reality, who was able to reproduce the most diverse characters, unfalsified and true to Nature, succeeded also in painting in a masterly way mental derangements in all their typical phenomena, just as we observe them to-day, and this at a time at which science was far from a correct recognition of psychical disorders.

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* Æschyli Choëphoræ.

† Les démoniaques dans l'art, Paris, 1887.

In Shakespeare, the derangements of King Lear, Hamlet, and Lady Macbeth are photographic reproductions of pure objective experience. They fill out certainly the world of the poet who painted all human passions with minute fidelity in his plays, and therefore undertook also to paint according to his observation the human mind under morbid obscuration. In these characters, therefore, we have neither the embodiment of any particular conception of the universe nor an artistic dressing up of any moral or doctrine.

It is very different with the portraiture of insanity in our modern literature. The doctrine of psychiatry has in the interval grown into a distinct branch of science, and the observation of the insane is carried on in an exceedingly thorough and careful manner. In order to paint a case of insanity according to Nature, an artist no longer needs, like Shakespeare, to be leagues in advance of his age. He only need copy a well-reported history of a case, and his purpose is attained. Consequently the simple description of psychical disease no longer comes within the domain of the poet; and if we leave out of view those *littérateurs* who have in the practice of their art followed the desire for originality and sensational effects, we do not find in modern literature insanity exhibited for the direct interest of it, but only in so far as it affects individual social relations and society collectively.

The idea of a universal psychical degeneration, as it is put forth by many psychiatrists, likewise has its literary defenders. I have already called Zola a "Nordau in the shape of a novelist"; and this is also true of other writers of similar theories. Frau Alving, in Ibsen's Ghosts, says: "We are all ghosts. . . . I can not take up a newspaper without seeming to see the ghosts slinking between the lines. Ghosts must live throughout the land. It seems to me they must be as the sands of the sea." We seem to be hearing

Herr Nordau pronouncing upon the immanent *Völkerdämmerung*, upon the gradual coming and increasing of universal degeneration among mankind. Nordau considers that those writers who share his own opinions show, precisely by that, an infallible mark of their being fools and degenerates. His master, Lombroso, on the other hand, acknowledges that Zola and Ibsen "teach the same thing" that he himself teaches.*

It is not Ibsen's purpose to paint mental sickenings just as they really are. They are the mere vehicles of his ideas, especially of the law of heredity, of the influence of a licentious and dissolute course of life upon the development of the next generation. Neither the painting of the maladies nor the selection of those which are represented as transmitted in procreation correspond to the real facts. But the writer did not mind that. While Nordau makes this a grave matter for reproach and even a ground for psychiatric inferences, Lombroso expressly declares that it is not right to insist upon scientific accuracy from a poet in his painting of insanity, but that it is proper for him to proceed *cum grano salis*, so as to give his idea an artistic embodiment. At any rate, the exhibition of the clinical picture, as such, is in Ibsen altogether a secondary matter, the purpose of the poetic use of nervous disorders being the moral. Oswald, in Ghosts, is the victim of the dissipations of his father. Dr. Rank, in Nora, says: "My poor innocent spine has to expiate the joyous lieutenant's life of my father." He strongly accentuates the moral: "And so such an inexorable retribution governs in one way or another every family." We thus meet in the poet the same idea that Nordau proclaims—that of a widespread hereditary sickening—a universal degeneration.

The circumstance that Ibsen makes a quite arbitrary

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* Ibsen's Gespenster und die Psychiatrie, Die Zukunft, Berlin, 1893, vol. iv, No. 51.

choice of diseases to exhibit his concept of heredity and degeneration is not surprising, and as poet he can the less be reproached for it that he follows in that respect the doctrines of one school of scientific men. We may smile at Ibsen's representing, in Ghosts, general paresis as an hereditary infliction; in Nora, a disease of the spine, *tabes;* in The Wild Duck, a disease of the eyes; but, after all, this entirely agrees with a certain departure which has lately found place in psychopathology.

The widespread idea of a universal "degeneration" is in great part due to the belief that every mental disease and most nervous sufferings are phenomena of "degeneration" —a belief which is not only general among the laity, but to which many psychiatrists incline. At any rate, they place psychoses in that category which do not belong there at all. It would result from this opinion that any decided increase in the frequency of insanity, disproportionate to the growth of the population, must be a "degeneration," since, according to them, almost all mental diseases are consequences of the process by which a state of "degeneration" is brought about.

The concept of "degeneration" is, as I have already explained, that of a morbid condition resulting from perturbations of growth of the psychical organ. Degenerates are at a low stage of development; the organic vehicles of their mental action are either merely at that low stage of growth or are deformed and misshapen. The degeneration of a whole people would therefore be due to a universal mental deterioration, an arrest of the psychical organ, and at last, since the completely degenerate, the extreme idiots, are incapable of procreation, if the process which gave rise to the state of degeneration progressed still further, the race would die out. But the history of insanity shows that the increase of it depends in part upon the progress of higher civilization. A heightened mental action, a refinement and elaboration of

the psychical organism, has for a consequence a greater disposition to mental derangements. But to infer from this heightened mental action, or, what comes to the same thing, from the increased number of cases of derangement which results from it, that there has been a universal retrogression of mental development, resulting in a "degeneration" of the masses, is just as erroneous as to identify the highest refinement and elaboration of the psychical organism, or genius, with insanity.

The question of a state of universal degeneration, resulting from a process of mental decay, must therefore be treated quite independently from the question of an increase of cases of insanity. Maladies contracted late in life can not be ascribed to disturbances of growth, and have nothing to do with degeneration. When Nordau avers that the diagnosis of degeneration in Baudelaire was "fortified against all attack" by the fact that he "died of general paresis,"* he simply shows that he does not know what the word degeneration means. Paresis is a disease occurring most frequently in fully developed men, seldom in degenerates, and never in idiots. Von Krafft-Ebing† says of its procatarctic cause, "It is seldom congenital, hereditary; mostly acquired." If, therefore, we limit the concept of degeneration to such morbid states as can undoubtedly be referred to perturbations of growth, an increase of mental diseases does not indicate a progressive degeneration.

The universal opinion that the sudden revolution in all modes of life, owing to the great inventions of this century—the railway, the telephone, etc.—have had a bad influence on the nervous system, has a certain amount of justification. A number of cases of nervous exhaustion have arisen owing to this unwonted and overstrained bustle of modern life. But the importance attributed to these outward causes is too

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* Degeneration, p. 285.

† *Op. cit.*, p. 670.

great by far; and there is especially too much inclination to exaggerate the sudden change of our modes of life, great as it undeniably is. From some descriptions of it, one might think that we had suddenly been carried from the merest sluggard's life to the supreme development of higher civilization. When Nordau says that "the humblest village inhabitant has to-day a wider geographical horizon, more numerous and complex intellectual interests, than the prime minister of a petty or even a second-rate state a century ago," and that to-day "a cook receives and sends more letters than a university professor did formerly," * he simply indulges in ridiculous exaggeration. I know not what intricate mental interests Herr Nordau has discovered in the "humblest village inhabitant." When he tries to prove this by saying that the villager "interests himself simultaneously in the issue of a revolution in Chili, in a bush war in east Africa, a massacre in north China, a famine in Russia, a street row in Spain, and an international exhibition in North America," † he perhaps overestimates somewhat the mental interests of the "humblest village inhabitant." I fancy that the mental interests of the peasantry to-day, as centuries ago, turn much more on the thriving of their pigs and calves than on revolutionists in Chili or bushwhackers in east Africa. At any rate, we may safely assert that the German peasants are in no present danger of overtaxing their nervous systems by their "numerous and complex intellectual interests."

We must confess that life to-day makes higher demands upon the individual than in the last century; but it is an exaggeration for Nordau to maintain that every single man does from five to five-and-twenty times as much work as he would have done half a century ago. On the whole, more is accomplished now than used to be done, because, thanks to

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* Degeneration, p. 39. † *Ibid.*

the great inventions, a workman can now do more in one hour than ten workmen could do in a whole day a century ago. But the expenditure of strength of any one man is not very much greater.

The mental work of the "upper ten thousand," who are now supposed to be in a state of degeneration, has certainly not been so monstrously increased as many are disposed to think. Besides, mere work does not wear out the nervous system nearly so much as the agitations of the emotions connected with the intensification of the battle of life. These things have, as I have elsewhere shown, an important influence upon the bodily functions, especially those of the vascular system, and thus upon the entire work of nutrition. Wundt * says: "Care and sorrow influence nutrition by enduring limitation of the entrance of air and blood." Quiet intellectual work, even if conjoined with great effort, does far less harm to the nervous system than do such emotions as affliction and anxiety.

Had we, therefore, any reason to presume a universal degeneration of the highly civilized nations, the causes of it should be sought, above all, in the intensification of the daily battle of life, with its train of depressing emotions and anxieties. The increased impressions of the senses, and the heightened demands upon the resistance of the nervous system, occasioned by the sudden revolution—when they do not bring about serious emotional disturbances, vexations, etc.—may cause some fatigue, but are matters to which the human organism quickly becomes habituated by the law of adaptation.

Our social relations undoubtedly draw more upon the powers of the individual than did those of a century ago. Yet that generation likewise thought its tasks more difficult

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* Wilhelm Wundt. Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie, third edition, Leipsic, 1887, ii, p. 457.

than those of its forefathers. We can not conceive that our grade of civilization determines the limits of human capacity. The demands which will be put upon the life of coming generations will probably be far greater yet; but the human system will contrive to adapt itself to those demands. The weak will go to the wall; the strong will mount to higher grades of development. This law of adaptation and of further development always has operated in Nature, and will still continue to do so.

The arguments of which the sectaries of universal degeneration avail themselves are, as we have seen in the course of our investigations, by no means demonstrative. They rest partly upon erroneous doctrines and partly upon a quite amateurish apprehension of psychological and psychiatrical concepts. Philosophy, art, and literature, in which Nordau thinks he sees signs of universal degeneration, are merely the expression of the modern metaphysics, of religious scepticism, and of philosophical positivism.

Moreover, by a very remarkable contradiction, Nordau himself destroys his whole theory. After having characterized modern art as the principal evidence of universal degeneration, he declares, at the conclusion of his work, that it constitutes a forward step in human development. He says: "The fable and the fairy tale were once the highest productions of the human mind. . . . To-day they represent a species of literature only cultivated for the nursery. The verse—which by rhythm, figurative expression, and rhyme, trebly betrays its origin in the stimulation of rhythmically functioning subordinate organs, in associations of ideas working according to external similitudes, and in that working according to consonance—was originally the only form of literature. To-day it is only employed for purely emotional portrayal; for all other purposes it has been conquered by prose, and indeed has almost passed into the condition of an atavistic language.

Under our very eyes the novel is being increasingly degraded, serious and highly cultivated men scarcely deeming it worthy of attention, and it appeals more and more exclusively to the young and to women."* According to this, we must presume that our art, which has already "conquered" its earlier form, stands upon a higher grade of development, so that there can be no question of degeneration in it. But the idea that the poetry of a Homer, a Dante, a Goethe, has proceeded "from the stimulation of rhythmically functioning, subordinate organs," and that it ought to-day to be considered as in "the condition of an atavistic language," is as ridiculous as the contrary thesis of the degeneration of modern art. No subordinate organs, but the idealistic universe-conception of the times, dictated the form of art in each period of the world's history.

When Nordau asserts that—in case his "therapy" is considered and humanity is thus protected from further arrest and degeneration—"after some centuries art and poetry will have become pure atavisms, and will no longer be cultivated except by the most emotional portion of humanity—by women, by the young, perhaps even by children,"† his assertion rests upon ignorance of the psychical constitution of those heroes of the mind whom we call geniuses. Whoever does not persist in the attitude of Moreau and with him stigmatizes genius as a morbid condition, will see that, with the further mental development of humanity, creative genius will continue to produce, as it always has been producing. In discussing the psychology of genius we have seen that "the artist of genius does not create because he would, but because he must." Hence art will continue to subsist as long as there are men upon the earth.

As to the form which the art of future centuries is to

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* Degeneration, p. 543.

† *Ibid.*

assume, all possibility of divining it fails us. We know that it is always dependent upon the contemporary conception of the universe. But how this will shape itself in the distant future we can not know. It were therefore a vain proceeding to discuss the subject, or to express any decided opinion about the matter.

According to our investigations, we must necessarily come to the conclusion that the authors mentioned have adduced no proof of the alleged universal degeneration in the highly civilized nations. Mankind is not in a "black plague of degeneration"; and the world has as little need to be scared by stories of the *Völkerdämmerung* as by the prophecy of Herr Falb about the immanent destruction of our planet. On the other hand, the further development of mankind will be greatly benefited if the teachings of science are attended to and the various baneful influences that act upon the nervous system are combated. In that way increase of insanity may be prevented, and a sane and well-developed posterity insured.

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