

pears in this country, on an average, once a Year, with his stale and conventional rubbish. Where this kind of talk is sincere, if ever it is sincere—mostly it comes from those who have hitherto failed to connect literature with lucre—it rests upon a confusion of ideas. That is to say, it confuses the intellectual, artistic, literary worth of a book with its commercial value. But the former is one thing, the latter is another. They are not commensurable. The former has no value which can be expressed in guineas, any more than the beauty of a sunset or the colours of a rainbow. The latter may be taken as a measure of the popular taste, which should, but does not always, demand the best books. No one, therefore, must consider that a book necessarily fails because the demand for it is small; nor, on the other hand, is it always just or useful to deride the author of a successful book because it is successful. In the latter case the author has perhaps done his best; it is the popular judgment that should be reprov'd and the popular taste which should be led into a truer way.

A book, rightly or wrongly, then, may be a thing worth money—a property, an estate. It is the author's property unless he signs it away; and since any book, in the uncertainty of the popular judgment, may become a valuable property, it is the author's part to safeguard his property, and not to part with it without due consideration and consultation with those who have considered the problem. And it is the special function of such a Conference to lay down the *data* of the problem, and so to help in producing, if possible, a solution. But as for the question—is it sordid, is it base, for an author—a genius—to look after money? Well, a popular author is not always a genius. But even those who are admitted to have some claim to the possession of genius have generally been very careful indeed with regard to the money produced by their writings. Scott, Byron, Moore, Dickens, George Eliot, Thackeray, Trollope, Tennyson, Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade—almost every man, or woman, of real distinction in letters can be shown to have been most careful about the money side of his books. It is left for the unsuccessful, for the shallow pretenders, or for some shady publisher's hack, to cry out upon the degradation of letters when an author is advised to look after his property. Let us simply reply that what has not degraded the illustrious men who have gone before will not degrade those smaller men their successors.

The Conference called together in order to throw the light of publicity upon these and similar questions held its first meeting, its opening meeting, on the evening of Monday, July 10. The speeches were complimentary; the English delegates, Dr. Sprigge, formerly secretary of our Authors' Society, and myself, were duly welcomed, and we separated till the next morning. The subject of the first day's conference was literary copyright, under the presidency of the Hon. George E. Adams. This meeting was from the practical point of view the most useful of any. The chairman asked for a fair trial of the present International Copyright Bill; he admitted, however, that the tendency was growing more and more in favour of giving the author larger and fuller rights over his own book. Then one of the papers brought over by the English delegates was read—that by Sir Henry Bergne on the

Berne Convention of 1887, in which the author, after explaining what was meant by that convention, earnestly invited America to send a delegate to the Convention of 1894. Mr. George Cable, the novelist, of Louisiana, read a paper in which, among other points, he contended that authors have a right to demand nothing more than "what will be best for the whole people." As it is certainly best for the whole people that every man should enjoy what is his own, we may cordially agree with Mr. Cable.

Mr. Gilder, the editor of the *Century*, made a forcible appeal in his paper for an extension of the term of copyright. The important paper of the day followed; one which was for the most part quite new to the audience—that, namely, by Dr. Sprigge on the copyright question in Great Britain. No one had suspected or realized the present condition of muddle and mess in which this important subject now stands in our country. The speaker analyzed and explained the new Bill already read by Lord Monkswell in the House of Lords and drafted by the Copyright Committee of the Society of Authors. He pointed out that it is intended in this Bill to reduce 18 separate Acts, all confused and contradictory, which now contain the law of copyright, such as it is, into one comprehensive and intelligible Act. The principal clauses of that Act are (1) the adoption of a uniform term of copyright—the author's life and 30 years beyond—for every class of work; (2) the right of abridgment to remain with the author—this is the so-called "mutilation" clause, not intended to trespass at all on the fair right of fair quotation, but to protect the author from such mutilation of his work as in his opinion is calculated to injure the book or himself; (3) the right of a novelist to dramatize a story, and the converse; (4) the period for which the proprietor of a magazine may keep an article locked up to be reduced from 28 years to three; (5) registration to be compulsory; this provision, for instance, would enable officials to enforce the law of piracy by giving them a list of books which must not be pirated; at present there is no such list; (6) provision for the seizure of piratical books.

Mr. R. R. Bowker, whose paper was read on the following day, advocated, among other things, the protection of the author by making it illegal to sell a copyright for more than a limited period, so that the author should not be allowed by law to give away for a song a work which in after years may perhaps become a property of great value to himself or to his heirs.

The following day, under my own presidency, a paper was read by myself—(1) on the history of the relations between author and publisher; and (2) recent investigations of the British Society into the meaning, the extent, and the value of literary property. In this paper I ventured to offer a solution of the difficulties now existing in the administration of literary property—a solution advanced solely as a personal suggestion, and in no way pretending to represent the official opinion of our Society. Papers on the same questions were read by Mr. Maurice Thompson, a Western poet, and Mr. Stanley Waterloo, a Western novelist. Papers were read for the writers in their absence; by Sir Frederick Pollock (a paper which had already appeared in the *Pall Mall*

*Gazette*); by Mr. J. M. Lely, barrister-at-law by Mr. W. Morris Collis on "Syndicating" and by Mr. J. Stuart Glennie on "The Necessity of a Trades Union." The absence of the American publishers from this day's Conference was marked; with ominous consequence they stayed away from the discussion. It may be noted, however, that the position of the American author is not so independent of the publisher as with us. In the States literary men either have some interest in a publishing house or they are the salaried servants of publishers; with us in England it is of course, exceptional, though not unknown, to find a successful man of letters taking salary from a publisher.

These were the two meetings of the importance. Then followed other meetings at which papers were read upon purely literary points. Charles Dudley Warner (president of the Critical Section), Mr. Burroughs, Professor Moses Coit Tyler, Mr. Marian Harland, Miss Molly Seawell, Margaret Sidney, Eugene Field, George Cable, "Octave Thanet," Mrs. Catherwood, Mrs. Anna Rohlf, and Thomas Nelson Page were the Americans read papers. Among the authors papers were read from Mr. Harland, Arthur Jones, on the future of the relation from Mr. H. D. Traill on the relation of literature to journalism; and from Mr. Douglas Sladen, on realism. If it is the intention of the promoters of this Congress that the papers should be edited condensed, published, and sent to all the libraries of the United States and Great Britain, the Conference cannot fail to do great good by calling attention to the various points for which the English Society of Authors is responsible for bringing them to light.

The Congress of Literature was held in Chicago at a fitting moment. It may be taken as the inauguration of a new Literature which has just begun to spring up in the West. Literature of which I for one was profoundly ignorant until I learned about it on the spot. At present it exists chiefly in promise; but if it is a bantling, it is a vigorous bantling. In what direction this new Literature of the West will develop it would be quite impossible, even for one who knows the conditions of Western life, to predict. Enough to place on record at the moment the fact that there has sprung into existence during the last year or two a company of new writers wholly belonging to the West. All over the broad valley of the Mississippi and on the Western prairies there are farmers in vast numbers living for the most part in solitary homesteads; their chief recreation is reading; there are also small towns and villages by the thousand; places where the population is between one and two thousand in every one of which will be found a literary society and a library. The former holds meetings, receives papers, and is generally, a centre of a certain intellectual activity; for the latter, the ladies who manage endeavour to procure as many new books as possible. The whole of this enormous country together with the North-West, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Yukon contains as many readers as there are people in England and the Eastern States. They are now beginning to create their own literature. This newly-born literature there has been established in Chicago a large number