

and Hermione in the *Winter's Tale*, and the opening of the Novelty by Miss Harriet Jay, with Robert Buchanan's *Blue Bells of Scotland*, are the events which stand prominently forward.

THE Paris season has already commenced; the Comédie reopened in the end of August with *Le Cid* and *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, but the honours of the evening were not for them nor for the actors, but for the iron curtain or fire screen about which there was quite a buzz of excitement. Like the ordinary green one it is only put down at the beginning and end of the performance and not between the acts. Time works wonders, and before long that terrible catastrophe of the Opera Comique will most likely be forgotten by the public; the interval which has elapsed since the closing of all the theatres has done much to quiet the general anxiety with respect to them, and the public is looking forward eagerly to the events of the coming weeks. Most of the programmes have been published, and are as attractive as possible. To begin with the Théâtre Français, the rehearsals of Pailleron's *Souris* did not commence before September; in the meanwhile *Hernani* (with Mme. Segond-Weber and M. Leitner, both débutants, cast for the characters of Dona Sol and Don Carlos) were to be produced, and *Trancillon* and *The Marquis de Villeman* alternate with pieces belonging to the classic repertoire. These include an entirely new cast of *Monsieur de Pourceaugrac*, and Molière's *Don Juan*, *Œdipe Roi*, and *Les Caprices de Marianne*. Mounet-Sully will act the principal parts in the last two. Got and Mme. Céline Monhalaud are to play *Morcadet* as soon as the subscriptions for Balzac's monument are set on foot. With a comedy of Pailleron's in prospect, there is little prospect of any other novelty being produced in the course of the winter; but M. Claretie has several in reserve, *Le pere le Bonnard*, by Jean Aicard, *La Bucheronne*, by M. Charles Edmond, and a promise of a new piece from Octave Feuillet. Worms is cast for the only male character in *La Souris*, and for the principal part in *La Bucheronne*, with Mme. Baretta, who will also play the heroine of Aicard's drama, *Le pere le Bonnard*. E. S.

CURRENT COMMENT.

Does it [American Fiction] portray men and women at the close of the nineteenth century for the most and the best that is in them? Is it deep? Does it stir the deepest feelings, bring the deepest thoughts, help the deepest convictions, feed the desire to be fed on the utmost truth and beauty and goodness that human life provides? Or does it *refuse* to be deep and broad, and *aim* to be light and narrow—and thorough? We hold to our conviction that the main essential tendency of the novel is to become broader and deeper in the study of personality, though in doing so it may become narrower in the variety of human types, and may of necessity have to deal with social types less broadly representative and powerful; and that American fiction has not yet attained the high-water-mark of previous development in any one of these respects, however far it may have gone ahead in others.—A. Southerne, in the *Critic*.

It may seem strange to those who have not studied the matter, that wood should be recommended for the floors of large apartment houses or office buildings. It is so recommended because it is well known to be more fire-proof than iron. The latter is incombustible, but not fire-proof. Wrought iron twists with heat, cast iron collapses when water touches it, and structures built with iron joists and columns disappear before a conflagration with a rapidity almost equal to that of a board house. The only fire-proof materials are bricks, terra-cotta, concrete, and stone, and the last of these is very liable to split and crumble under great heat. Wood in masses is a slow-burning material. Ordinary floors, formed of joists set on edge, with inch boards laid over and lath and plaster under, are a series of flues divided by matchwood. But turn the joists flat and cover them with boards nailed closely down upon them, and it is not possible to burn down the structure by an accidental conflagration in a room. The solid mass of wood, untraversed by air currents, does not feed the flames, but slowly chars, and remains intact when water is poured upon it. Such a floor must be supported by strong beams at intervals of ten feet or even less, but even with this addition it is cheaper as well as far more reliable than an ordinary "fire-proof" floor of iron beams and brick arches dependent upon them.—W. N. Lockington, in the *American*.

It is perfectly true that no one ever heard of a snoring savage. In fact, if the wild man of the woods and plains does not sleep quietly, he runs the risk of being discovered by his enemy, and the scalp of the snorer would soon adorn the belt of his crafty and more silent-sleeping adversary. In the natural state, then, "natural selection" weeds out those who disturb their neighbours by making night hideous with snores. With civilisation, however, we have changed all this. The impure air of our sleeping-rooms induces all manner of catarrhal affections. The nasal passages are the first to become affected. Instead of warming the inspired air on its way to the lungs, and removing from it the dangerous impurities with which it is loaded, the nose becomes obstructed. A part of the air enters and escapes by way of the mouth. The veil of the palate vibrates between the two currents—that through the mouth and the one still passing through the partially closed nostrils—like a torn sail in the wind. The snore, then, means that the sleeper's mouth is partially open, that his nose is partially closed, and that his lungs are in danger from the air not being properly warmed and purified. From the continual operation of these causes—the increase of impure air in sleeping-rooms and permitting habitual snorers to escape killing and scalping—some scientist has predicted that in future all men (and the women, too!) will snore. It goes along with decay of the teeth and bald-headedness.—*Fireside*.

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