

Again, the newspapers last year printed proposals to construct a Wagner Opera House, to cost, if I recollect rightly, £100,000—about as much as a hundred labourers may earn by fifteen or twenty years' hard work. The writers thought it would be a good thing if such an Opera House were erected and endowed. But I had a talk lately with a man who, till his health failed him, had worked as a builder in London. He told me that when he was younger he had been very fond of theatre-going, but, later, when he thought things over and considered that in almost every number of his weekly paper he read of cases of people whose death was hastened by lack of good food, he felt it was not right that so much labour should be spent on theatres.

In reply to this view it is urged that food for the mind is as important as food for the body. The labouring classes work to produce food and necessities for themselves and for the cultured, while some of the cultured class produce plays and operas. It is a division of labour. But this again invites the rejoinder that, sure enough, the labourers produce food for themselves and also food that the cultured class accept and consume, but that the artists seem too often to produce their spiritual food for the cultured only—at any rate that a singularly small share seems to reach the country labourers who work to supply the bodily food! Even were the "division of labour" shown to be a fair one, the "division of products" seems remarkably one-sided.

Once again: how is it that often when a new work is produced, neither the critics, the artists, the publishers, nor the public, seem to know whether it is valuable or worthless? Some of the most famous books in English literature could hardly find a publisher, or were savagely derided by leading critics; while other works once acclaimed as masterpieces are now laughed at or utterly forgotten. A