

AMONG THE MAGAZINES

High Lights on a Few Extracts from Current Literature

MODERN RUSSIA, says Charles Johnston, in the North American Review, has given to the world many great pages of tremendous realism, none greater, vivid, more poignant, than those that have come to us, self-written, self-edited, since the Ides of March. Not Turgeneff nor Tolstoi, nor Gorki nor Verestchagin, not even Dostoyevski himself ever drew more powerful outlines or mixed more compelling colours than those that have framed themselves from the abrupt phrases of the cablegrams. And how like the handling of the great Russian realists, the whole drama has been: the figures have drawn themselves, the scenes have been set, the very persons have spoken, in the style that is unmistakably Russian, intense conviction, amazing vividness, deep religious emotion, an abiding sense of the eternal things!

Not Tolstoi nor Dostoyevski at their best conceived a more arresting figure than Rasputin: the huge, gaunt Siberian, shaggy and eloquent, half-visionary, half-charlatan, with his blazing eyes, his extraordinary power of fascinating women, his towering ambition, his wild profligacy, setting forth barefoot from primeval forests to enthrall the world; taking Petrograd by storm, for long months holding the Empire in the hollow of his hand, Church and State alike; hurled violently from power as a detected imposter; by force and craft breaking a way back again, once more appointing archbishops and ministers, dictating policies; giving himself up, drunk with insolence and wine, into the hands of Russia's most treacherous enemies, and coming within a hand's breadth of ruining the cause of the nation, the still greater cause of the Allies; finally slain by a great noble, quite openly, as a mad dog is slain; his body thrown into the icy Neva; drawn forth again, carried in state by ministers, laid in a silver coffin borne on the shoulders of the Emperor and his ministers, wept by the Empress in mourning



Uncle Sam: "And I always thought until now it was a man!"

—From London Opinion.

garments: no novelist would have dared to paint a picture like that.

JOFFRE'S SUCCESSOR.

GEN. NIVELLE'S character stands revealed by his mastery of the guns, writes Chas. Dawbarn, in the Contemporary. At the battle of the Ourcq, which prefaced the victory of the Marne, he achieved the defeat which has entered into history. The Seventh Corps, part of Manoury's army, to which Nivelle was attached, as a Colonel of a regiment of artillery, was in difficulties owing to a sharp

counter-attack by the Germans. Decimated by the fire, and nerve-racked by the heavy artillery which they encountered for the first time, the 63rd Division showed signs of wavering, and feelings of panic were not diminished by the lurid light of burning farms—their own homesteads—on the horizon. Nivelle, in such extremity, took extreme measures. Some poet must enshrine the story in Tennyson's verse. "Charge with the guns," he said, a difference in purpose as well as wording from the immortal text. To their astonishment, the broken infantry saw five batteries pass them in a flash, with the Colonel at their head. The desperadoes unlimbered in the open—happily the dusk was falling—and then in calm haste, as if on parade before a prince of the earth, they poured in a murderous fire from the 75's upon the enemy. The watching infantry in the woods, half demoralized, but fascinated, lost their sense of personal danger as they realized the daring of the exploit. They were electrified. Reforming rapidly, they swung out of the wood, and with victorious élan, crashed into the enemy, thus completing the work of the guns. Thanks to Nivelle's utter and deliberate courage, the day was won.

Nivelle's calmness in the hour of action has extraordinary effect upon the beholder. The soldiers say he is invulnerable, like the great Corsican himself. He has passed, scatheless, through the most terrifying ordeals. He has never turned a hair in the midst of great bombardments, but is calm and collected, and as capable of cool-thinking as if he were working within the luminous circle of his lamp, which, often burns, like a watchful and friendly beacon, late into the night. His sang-froid may be traced, perhaps, to his English ancestry, for his mother was a Miss Sparrow, member of a distinguished family, which has given officers to both Army and Navy.

LORD BRYCE ON CLASSICS.

VISCOUNT BRYCE, in the Fortnightly, says that the real, practical problem for all our Universities is this: How are we to find means by which the study, while dropped for those who will never make much of it, may be retained, and for ever securely maintained, for that percentage of our youth, be it 20 or 30 per cent., or be it more, who will draw sufficient mental nourishment and stimulus from the study to make it an effective factor in their intellectual growth and an unceasing spring of enjoyment through the rest of life? This part of our youth has an importance for the nation not to be measured by its numbers. It is on the best minds that the strength of a nation depends, and more than half of these will find their proper province in letters and history. It is by the best minds that nations win and retain leadership. No pains can be too great that are spent on developing such minds to the finest point of efficiency.

We shall effect a saving if we drop that study of the ancient languages in the case of those who, after a trial, show no aptitude for them. But means must be devised whereby that study shall, while made more profitable through better methods, be placed in a position of such honour and importance as will secure its being prosecuted by those who are capable of receiving from it the benefits it is fitted to confer.

For the schools the problem is, how to discover among the boys and girls those who have the kind of gift which makes it worth while to take them out of the mass and give them due facilities for pursuing these studies at the higher secondary schools, so that they may proceed thence to the universities and further prosecute them there. Many of you, as teachers, know better than I how this problem may be solved. Solved it must be, if the whole community is not to lose the benefit of our system of graded schools.

BOOM TIMES AND BAD PLAYS.

NOT within the writer's memory, complains Walter Prichard Eaton, in the American Magazine, have New York hotels been so crowded, Broadway so packed with motors, the theatres so full of people, tickets so hard to get, prices so high.

old General Prosperity so complacently stalking down the glittering Alley. It is safe to say that the season of 1916-17, in New York, was the most prosperous ever known to the theatre managers. Why, then, should it have been one of the worst, artistically? What relation is there between a fat pocket-book and a lean literature?

Standing on the corner of 42nd Street and 5th Avenue in the afternoon, or in Times Square at the theatre hour, this past winter, the least observant person could not fail to be struck by the tremendous number of motor cars. (He was lucky if he wasn't



Uncle: "For a little fellow you eat a powerful lot."

—New York Times.

struck by the motor cars themselves.) They rolled by in never-ending procession on the Avenue, and after the theatre they jammed the side streets back from Broadway for blocks, crawling up to the theatre portals, where it often seemed as if three-fourths of the audience were waiting for them. Not so many years ago, managers spoke with some awe of the "carriage crowd," and if a play attracted this class in any numbers, it was looked upon as a success. Now, every play which attracts at all attracts the "carriage crowd," and the humble theatregoer who rides home in the subway is scarcely seen as he elbows his way out of the lobby and across a curb congested with women in opera cloaks and men with fat hands.

Some of the little theatres jacked their regular prices up to three dollars a seat. Most of the popular plays asked three dollars for the Saturday evening performances, at the box office. But as you could seldom get any seats at the box office, it meant you paid from three dollars and fifty cents up, at some hotel stand, or to a speculator. "The Century Girl," a musical play at the big Century Theatre, produced by Ziegfeld and Charles Dillingham, both noted for their ability to select pulchritudinous chorus girls and exhibit their charms with the least possible sartorial interference, became the fad of the winter. Strangers to town want to see it as Americans in Paris wanted, once, to see the Moulin Rouge. As a matter of fact, it was merely an ordinary musical comedy vaudeville show on a big scale, and for the most part rather dull. But the seats in the front rows brought regularly as high as ten dollars, and over and over again you would see men at the ticket stands in the hotels planking down five dollars a chair for the inestimable privilege of witnessing this commonplace entertainment.

And after this entertainment was over, hundreds of men and women went to the roof garden shows above, or the midnight entertainments on other roofs, where they spent more money, saw more girls, and heard more ragtime.