

the authors will learn; no question about that after such promise as is held out in this really extraordinary first effort."

Mr. H. T. Parker of the *Boston Transcript* finds that "the music of 'Mona' fails time and again to give any other impression than of a restless and resourceful effort to achieve an end that evades it." Further:

"It yields no emotion; it bears no psychological suggestion; it is without dramatic significance or theatrical force; it is not musically engrossing or moving in itself. To shear music of melody, to make it an exalting and illuminating speech by harmonies and rhythms and timbres and accent, to mate it to the minutest inflection of the text, and yet to keep it musically interesting and dramatically potent, is the task of genius. Two such have accomplished it in our time—Strauss in 'Electra' and Debussy in 'Pelléas.' But neither has foresworn melody to the degree that has Mr. Parker in 'Mona.' His fellow is the d'Albert of 'Tiefand,' and he cultivates none of Mr. Parker's high austerities, writes with none of his noble exaltations. Deliberately Mr. Parker has set himself the standards that genius achieves with less deliberate resolution. He has failed often to achieve them because he is only a composer of talent—finer and larger, urged by an ampler ambition, and flowering into higher accomplishment than in all his career. 'Mona' may prove a failure, but it has set the standard of music-drama higher for American composers and dramatists than it ever was before."

There are words of praise in the review of Mr. Aldrich, of the *New York Times*, particularly for the orchestration, wherein he differs from some of his confrères, saying:

"Perhaps the greatest distinction that belongs to the score of 'Mona,' as well as the greatest pleasure that it offers to the attentive listener, is the composer's treatment of the orchestra. The orchestration is of the greatest beauty, rich, transparent, incessantly varied and contrasted, dramatically expressive in its scale of color. It is the work of a master who understands restraint in the use of a large orchestra, such as he demands in this score, and who yet can obtain from it all that it can give, in terms of the highest beauty."

WAS THE "MONNA LISA" BURNED?—The silence into which "Monna Lisa" has retired since her disappearance from the Louvre remains unbroken. There have been rumors from time to time that she never would return. The art world of Paris, according to English newspaper correspondents, now teems with a reason that adds the final note of hopelessness. In *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London) we read:

"It is said the priceless picture never left the Louvre, was never stolen. A great deal was said and written at the time about the careless way in which the great pictures of the Louvre were taken up and down and left about in their transmission to the photographic quarters. It seems there was more in these complaints than was suspected by the general public.

"For the loss of 'Monna Lisa' is said now to be due to an accident in the photograph-room. It is declared the picture was irreparably damaged, destroyed rather, and the real state of affairs hushed up, the culprits shielded by the influence of a personage of the highest position.

"Hence the four days' delay before anything was known of the loss to the outside world, hence M. Dujardin's strange attitude at the official inquiry, hence the finding of the frame, which alone had escaped damage. This is, of course, only a rumor, but it is a stoutly affirmed one."

SNOBBERY OF HIGH PICTURE PRICES

PEOPLE NOWADAYS never confess that they "know nothing about art," and hurriedly try to save their bacon by declaring that they "know what they like." That attitude, in its day, did not elicit admiration, but it was probably honest than the one that now obtains. We like pictures and are willing to pay enormous prices for them if they have once hung on "the right nail." This phrase is attributed by the



BLESSING THE SWORDS BEFORE BATTLE.

"The druid meeting-place of the second act had its illusion of old forest, of great stones, of a sequestered, yet familiar place." *Mona*, having checked her lover's declaration by telling him "she is not woman, but a sword," prepares to lead the Britons against the Roman invaders.

New York *Evening Post* to Henri Rochefort, the French critic and collector who "lately remarked of the price of pictures that it all depends upon the nail on which they hang." *The Post* applies this remark to local conditions, and asserts that "if the nail is driven through the plush of a Fifth Avenue dealer, the dependent picture is appraised in five figures or in six; if the nail is driven through the plaster of some humbler establishment on a side street, the same picture is dear at three or four figures; if the nail belongs to a little dealer or an obscure auctioneer, the picture is worth whatever you will offer for it." The moral of all this seems to *The Post* to be that nobody really buys pictures, but that "the startling prices that are daily recorded in the press are not paid for pictures at all, but for the glamour of accredited salesrooms, the suavity of great dealers, or the notoriety of the former owners." *The Post* finds some recent events that "bear out this rather cynical theory that the high prices are a result of pure snobbery." Thus:

"William M. Chase has just sold at auction a lot of canvases collected with the taste of one who is at once a great painter and an accomplished connoisseur. Well, this elect lot of pictures, representing many of the most prized deceased artists, average to bring about \$300 apiece. And here immediately arises a paradox. For \$300 you might perhaps buy some slighter work of a young American exhibitor in the Academy, but it would require several times that sum to buy a work of any American artist of established reputation. That is, last week one could have bought good paintings by painters whose fame is already

historic for a fraction of the price of current work by actively productive men whose enduring quality is not merely problematical, but obviously doubtful. The conclusion seems obvious that most buying of modern painting must rest rather upon friendship or caprice than upon taste, or that there must have been some especial reason why Mr. Chase's treasures brought only a fraction of their value. The inference seems inevitable that in the studio of a mere painter and man of taste they had been hanging upon the wrong sort of nails.

"Other recent facts support this interpretation. To name certain sales of the artistic remains of multimillionaires might be invidious. Suffice it to note that these sales contained many painters, the examples no better, represented in Mr. Chase's collection, and the prices were from five to ten times higher. What made the difference? Why, the knowledge that these multimillionaire pictures had hung on very expensive nails, the comforting assurance that lots of money had been spent for the pictures themselves, and perhaps a corresponding misgiving that Mr. Chase had bought his fine pictures cheap. The Italians have a proverb about the sweetness of lips that have already been kissed, and clearly the American amateur has somewhat the same predilection for pictures already consecrated by the golden shower."

The enormous prices paid for the particular pictures that happen to be hung on the right nail have lowered the general art-market, declares this writer. With more besides:

"The great run of fine pictures not technically of highest rarity bring less to-day than they did twenty years ago. The great dealers flourish while the multitude of little antiquaries who minister to collectors of taste and moderate means find it hard to make a living. For the astute amateur this spells opportunity, for art museums with limited funds it means impotence, for the general art-market a degree of demoralization. In twenty years all art objects conventionally 'of highest rarity' have appreciated about twentyfold in price, while, as we have said, the general scale of value for merely fine works of art has probably been considerably lowered. The art-market has abolished the comparative degree, and works only in the positive and superlative. The cause of this somewhat grotesque phenomenon is the presence of half a dozen collectors, mostly Americans, and none of the finest taste. They pay without question any price that is asked for what seems to them a masterpiece, and their competition has sent a narrow line of art values soaring with a speed for which the Stock Exchange itself affords inadequate parallels.

"The question is, How long will it last? Even esthetically active multimillionaires are mortal, and three or four deaths might knock the bottom out of the present inflated market. Not necessarily, however. There might be sons of like mind, or there might conceivably be new recruits of equally enthusiastic disposition toward the pictures that have hung on the right nail.

"Yet when it gets about that masterpieces of the most indisputable artistic value have all along been bought off the wrong nails for very moderate prices, the zeal for costly extraneities may wane. If this were to come about, there would certainly be temporary consternation where the right nails are at present driven, but it is hard to see that the republic would thereby take either esthetic or financial harm."

The latest newspaper art-sensation is Mr. Altman's reputed purchase of two Velasquez portraits—"Philip IV. of Spain" and "Olivares, His Minister," for a million. The sum may shrink on investigation. Hitherto the highest reputed price for a single picture sold in America was \$475,000, which Mr. Widener is supposed to have given for Rembrandt's "Mill."

PROGRESS OF SIMPLIFIED SPELLING

FOR THE TIME BEING ex-President Roosevelt is furnishing abundant topics for conversation, but not on the subject of simplified spelling. Time was when he made almost the entire English-speaking world talk about it; now he has passed on to other themes; but it must not be supposed that the cause of spelling-reform has halted on this account. The forces that make for reform in spelling are still working, it may be more under cover, but, we are assured, none the less actively. Abram Gideon, of the Colorado Teachers' College, reviewed a list of the active agencies in spelling-reform in his address before the forty-ninth annual meeting of the National Education Association held in San Francisco, the report of which has lately been published, showing what progress the movement in the United States has made up to the present time. He said:

"In the ranks of simplified spelling are actively enlisted: The Modern Language Association of America, the members of which individually and collectively have done pioneer work in the cause; the National Education Association, to whose efforts the Simplified Spelling Board owes its initial impulse; normal schools in Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin; public schools in more than eleven States; a number of eastern business colleges. Simplified spelling has been approved by the State teachers' associations of Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Among the members of the board and council are to be found our most eminent specialists in English philology and English literature, writers and other professional men, scientists and men of affairs. It is a significant fact that the names whose mention carries most weight in the domain of English scholarship figure among the most enthusiastic adherents of the cause. No authority in English in this country or abroad is known to have written or spoken against the movement, tho there may be one or another who, for practical reasons, does not care to join the ranks of the propagandists. Editors of our leading dictionaries—Webster's, the Standard, the Century, and the Oxford English Dictionary—belong to the board, as does also the eminent etymologist, Skeat, who has assumed the leadership of the English society recently organized for the advancement of simplified spelling in Great Britain. In order to promote the use of the simplified forms in print, a league of editors and publishers numbering more than three hundred members has been organized in the East. It is reported that adjustments to the new conditions are made in the publishing business without any serious inconvenience to compositors or to proof-readers. One prominent publishing-house uses the amended spellings in its business correspondence and has begun to do so in the publication department proper."

In England the movement progresses more slowly, but with certainty. The society which fosters the growth of simplified spelling has issued among other pamphlets one detailing the advantages to accrue from its adoption, not forgetting the patriotic one. Some paragraphs which we quote show its contributory value for the mastery of cognate vocal arts:

"It is easy to learn. Try for yourself. Say a sentence and then write it in simplified spelling. If you do find difficulty, it is because you have not been accustomed to distinguish the sounds you utter, because in childhood your ear-training was neglected."



RICCARDO MARTIN

In the rôle of *Gwynn*.

He is the Roman lover of *Mona*, and falls by her hand. "In the illumination of her wo. *Mona* sees that God's voice was speaking through her love for *Gwynn*, that a higher mission might have been hers than that of leading men to battle, and that she had failed to choose the better part."