

the society contemplates. Under the incubus, however, of twenty Vice-Presidents General it is difficult for the mind which has never been trained and strengthened by flights outside the ranks, to conceive how the society can be of permanent and actual usefulness.

War between nations will be an overwhelming disaster to one side or the other or even to both. The Maine explosion is a sufficient indication of the total destruction that mines and torpedoes will be able to accomplish in maritime warfare. If the impending war between our beloved country and Spain is declared, it will be the first time in history that explosives and engines of such energy have been used. One shot well directed, one mine, or one torpedo exploded in the right spot at the right time will explode the magazine and the ship and every soul on board will be blown to atoms of flesh, timbers, and fragments of metal. Such awful and sudden destruction of our seamen as well as of the innocent and brave Spanish tars, is what makes those in authority on both sides of the ocean hesitate before signing the death warrant of thousands of those who love life and whom God loves equally. If Spanish citizens blew up the Maine without the knowledge of Spain, Spain will and must make adequate material restitution. She cannot pay for the clean limbed sailors, whose splendid discipline and courage yielded not to panic even in the moment of death, but she can pay to their families a sum equal to the earning capacity of each man in an average lifetime, plus a pension for the superannuated. But to the men whose activity is confined to moving with the sun in winter and the shade in summer on the corners of Eleventh and O, whose feet are planted on the comparatively harmless sidewalks of this bucolic town and not upon the deck of a battleship which contains thousands of pounds of powder and high explosives, these suggestions for rendering a bill of damages to Spain will be denounced as unpatriotic. Although the advantages are not all on the side of peace, the horrors of total annihilation which would attend a maritime war today is giving pause to the deliberations of the administration which in the days of shoot and run they would not have had.

The advantages of war are that it unites a country divided by petty partizan hatred, and kindles patriotism; it stimulates the heroic virtues of which the signs have been almost obliterated by centuries of peace, but it does this at tremendous cost.

During this prologue of war the country needs be thankful that no jingo sits in the presidential chair but a man conservative and careful of the best interests of the country as well as jealous of its name and honor among nations.

The magazines of the month of March are unusually entertaining. Because of the universal interest in Anthony Hope's sequel to the Prisoner of Zenda now running in MacClures, that magazine will probably have the honor of emerging at the end of the month with dogs'-eared leaves and very dirty covers. In spite of the misgivings acquired from the experience of many sequels, "Rupert of Hentzau" takes precedence of all the magazine literature of the month. It is said that rights of dramatization have already been sold, but this story will be a most difficult story for the stage to tell. Most dramatized stories depend upon the assumption that the audience has read the story and that is why most of them are a failure. So

long as a literary examination is not the prerequisite to the possession of a theatre ticket, theatrical managers acknowledge the obligation that they are under of putting a play on which is complete and self-explanatory. Rupert of Hentzau opens with the reappearance of the king who wore the coronation robes, who felt the holy oil trickling on his forehead—the real king of the queen of Ruricania. The king who was never crowned by love or priest is assassinated, the coronation king, Rudolph Rassendyl, is forced, in order to save the queen from gossip to assume and to act the king once more, before he knows the uncrowned king is dead. Well, he has played the part so many times that when the news comes that the legitimate heir to the throne of Ruricania is dead, his illegitimate British cousin will have to take his place in order that black scandal darken not the lives of Sapt, Fritz Von-Tarlenheim and Queen Flavia. The story has the rapid action of The Prisoner of Zenda and comes very near causing lovers to be late at the tryst, students to be late at lectures and innumerable suppers wait while the head of the house finds out how Fritz secured the letter and how many were killed in the attempt.

DuMaurier's posthumous criticism of the three most famous contributors to Punch are finished in the March Harper's. His friendliness to readers is more than ever apparent in these critical notes of himself and his predecessors. The type is warm with kindness and goodwill to us and to those he writes of, and the *intente* easily reaches as far as the central plains of North America.

Scribner's contains the first installment of the second part of Walter Wyckoff's experimental studies called "The Worker's." Mr. Wyckoff was a peripatetic seeker for work in Chicago during the winter of 1891 when rows of hopeless laborers slept at night on the marble floors of the corridors of city and government buildings. He says: "A new phase of my experiment is begun. Hitherto I have been in the open country, and have found work with surprising readiness. Now I am in the heart of a congested labor market, and I am learning, by experience, what it is to look for work and fail to find it; to renew the search under the spur of hunger and cold, and of the animal instinct of self preservation until any employment, no matter how low in the scale of work, that would yield food and shelter, appears to you the very kingdom of heaven; and if it could suffer violence it would seem as though the strength of your desire must take that kingdom by force. But it remains impregnable to your attack, and, baffled and weakened, you are thrust back upon yourself and held down remorselessly to the cold, naked fact that you, who in all the universe are of supremest importance to yourself, are yet of no importance to the universe. You are a superfluous human being. For you there is no part in the play of the world's activity. There remains for you simply this alternative: Have you the physical and moral qualities which fit you to survive, and which will place you at last within the working of the large scheme of things, or, lacking these qualities, does there await you inevitable wreck under the onward rush of the world's great moving life?"

That, at all events, is pretty much as it appears tonight to Tom Clark and me. Clark is my "partner," and we are not in good luck nor in high spirits. We each had a ten-cent breakfast this morning, but neither has tasted food since, and tonight, after an exhausting search for work we must sleep in the station house.

The Passing Show.

WILLA CATHER.

The two plays which are making talk in New York, "The Tree of Knowledge" and "The Coaqueros," are both pretty bad from every point of view. I saw them both in one day and about midnight I felt that life was hardly worth the trouble of respiration.

It seems a trifle incongruous to encounter such a piece as "The Tree of Knowledge" at the Lyceum theatre, the seat and stronghold of the mild domestic dramas of Messrs. Belasco and de Mille, but these are degenerate days. The plot of the piece is about as follows: Nihil Stanyon, while studying for the ministry, had fallen under the "spell" of a female vampire, Belle, her last name varied to suit the occasion. After setting him a merry pace for some months, the lady left him for some fellow with more money and he threw up his high calling and returned home to break the heart of his pretty little ward, Monica, with his selfish and rather theatric remorse.

While he is posing as a blighted being, his best friend, Brian Hollingsworth, marries and brings his wife home. Nihil meets her and of course recognizes the woman who shared his past, the fascinating Belle. This lady is portrayed by the large, large Julia Opp. I really never saw an actress quite so large. One might almost play on Miss Arthur's well known sobriquet and call Miss Opp "A Lady of Quandity." Yet her proportions are not at all of the Lillian Russell sort; she is wonderfully well made—only there is so alarmingly much of her. She is handsome, and she is a clever actress. She has an ungrateful part to play, a woman without even the kindly instincts of animals, a woman whose only task is to debase other people as much as possible and whose only grief is that she is not quite bad enough to satisfy her own imagination, a woman who is only happy when she can be actively destructive, like some hungry acid which must be burning up someone's tissues always and grows more deadly and potent by what it feeds upon. And Miss Opp plays this woman well. She dresses her, poses her just as she should be. Yet when I have said that Miss Opp is clever, I think I have given her her full mead of praise. What she does she does well, but I never saw so good an actress so completely lacking in the power of suggestion, nor so continually conscious that she was acting—and acting well. She is self-conscious, but it is a sort of triumphant self-consciousness which carries you with it. I kept feeling that she was just putting up a magnificent bluff, such a strong one that nobody dared call her. She is as totally without atmosphere and personal magnetism as a big scarlet tulip is without perfume. I doubt if she ever does better work than she is doing now, I doubt if she will ever be anything more than a big, striking looking woman, with aggressiveness and self-assurance to burn.

But to return to the "Tree." Belle quite enjoys the situation created by the discovery that her sometime annex is her husband's "dearest friend." This is so thoroughly to her taste that for a time it quite reconciles her to the monotony of country life. But not for long; she soon feels that her talents, which are of a high order, are

being wasted, and the discovery that Brian has lost all his money does not tend to stimulate her interest in rustic simplicity and love's young dream. I cannot fancy a human being more odious than this Belle in the scene in which she learns of her husband's financial embarrassments. Miss Opp's father keeps a "dive" down on the Bowery, by the way, and I fancy she doesn't see things through the rosy glasses of sentiment anyway. It seems almost too fatally easy to her to be common.

Well, when life got really too monotonous, one hot afternoon when there was nothing else interesting to do, just to amuse herself, the fair Belle tells her boy husband that she has been another man's. Conceive that, if you can! The boy simply goes daft. After his ravings have grown monotonous and have ceased to amuse, Belle advises morphine and gets him hopelessly bound to the drug. But even making morphine fiends soon loses its charm, and Belle hies her unto the ever fruitful tree of knowledge again for a new variety of experiences. When a woman goes snake-hunting the serpent usually turns up. This time he comes in the shape of Mr. Loftus Roupell, who tells Belle that he doesn't love her and has no illusions about her, and they think they will suit each other excellently and prepare to flee.

Nihil Stanyon discovers the plot and on the night of the elopement goes to the house to save his friend. He tells Belle she shall not go to her lover who awaits her, and attempts to keep her by force. Then follows one of those abominable wrestling matches which seem to be in vogue in New York theatres just now. Brian, the husband, returns and demands the meaning of this extraordinary scene. Miss Opp shelters herself in his protecting arms in the most approved manner and gasps out: "Don't let him speak! He will poison your mind against me, Brian—there has been a shadow between us all these months. I knew it, but I was helpless. I told you some of the truth, but not all. Once I almost confessed. Do you remember?"

"I told you—that before I met you, a thief had stolen from me all that a woman holds most dear. I told you so much but no more. I didn't tell you the name of the man."

"Tell it to me, now," pants Hollingsworth.

"I kept it secret; in mercy to you," she says.

"Tell me the man."

"Nihil Stanyon," she cries. "There is the thief!"

You may think that even this play could not sink any deeper into the mire of nauseating melodrama than this—but it did. After Nihil leaves them Belle twines herself about poor little Brian, who is shorter than she by half a head, and reduces him to a state of abject and maudlin adoration, then fills him up with morphine, and when he is asleep, signals to her lover and softly and silently elopes! Yes, just like the unfortunate Bakerman in the "Hunting of the Shark," she

"Softly and silently vanished away
And never was heard of again."

And I don't know any better reason than that the shark was a Boojum, like most sharks.

Now if you can conceive of anything