

Grand Opera.

Lincoln has a reputation that Boston has spent a century listening to classic music for the sake of acquiring. Lincoln has the reputation of being musical, but when Mme. Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler, Herr Rosenthal or Signora Carreño appear here they play to the few real musicians and empty opera chairs which, at least, are not so noisy as though they were occupied by those who wish to be considered musical. Boston pretended to have cultivated a musical taste a long time before she actually developed one. There are perhaps a hundred or more real musicians in Lincoln. The others cannot conceal their delight in "There'll Be a Hot Time," and "Z zzy Ze Zum Zum." They will spend money to hear Frank Daniels, Francis Wilson and DeWolf Hopper and they fancy they are cultivating their musical taste, when it is only the American taste for buffoonery and parody they are satisfying. The organization of the Matinee Musicale and its large membership and the operation of two schools of music in the city have doubtless contributed to the establishment of this reputation, on account of which great musicians stop off at Lincoln.

There are fervid, talented musicians in the Matinee Musicale Club who are devoted to music for itself and not for the name and look of it. And there are talented teachers of music in the schools. Their fervor, devotion and talent have really given Lincoln a reputation which it does not actually deserve. These devotees of music have never claimed the credit that Lincoln wears with so much complacency, but they deserve it.

This week the Lombardi Opera Company presented "Carmen" and "Rigoletto" to only moderate audiences. Signora Estafani Collamarini—how liquid the syllables—has a mezzo-soprano of great power and purity. She is a gifted actress. In the days of Calve and Nethersole an actress who can present an original and entirely satisfactory "Carmen" has no mean endowment, and Collamarini does it. The other members of the company have fine voices. The chorus is very ugly, but possesses good voices and that fine sense of artistic effect with which romance peoples are endowed. The tenor, who was Jose in "Carmen" and the Duke in "Rigoletto," was given different names in each play by the publisher of the program, so it is difficult to identify him more exactly, but as a singer and an actor he is admirable—an adjective which only faintly expresses his performance.

Signor Bugamelli, as Rigoletto, did his voice fail him—which Fortune forbid—might still continue on the stage, so keen and true are his dramatic instincts. Signorina Sostegni has a pure and strong, if somewhat colorless, voice. She has the ingenua restlessness of arms and hands—continually and alternately thrusting them toward the audience or pressing them upon her heart in intelligible pantomime. She also flatters the audience by a recognition of individuals, which is, of course, trying to the rest of it.

The company is an excellent one. Even the press notices distributed by the advance agent do not exaggerate its merits. From the least important member of the chorus to the stars, each one is inspired by a musical ideal which they render with spirit, harmony and exquisite finish. The leader or conductor of the orchestra is a musician of energy and possesses in a high degree the confidence of the company. His tall, thin figure and inspired concentration upon the performance is an explanation of the unity and good team work of the company.

There isn't any such money in politics as there used to be, suppose not. The politicians have taken it all out.

THE PASSING SHOW
WILLA CATHER

"Oh the East is East, and the West is West, and never the twain may meet."
Rudyard Kipling.

The September "Atlantic" contains a story of more than passing interest, "The Man At the Edge of Things," by Mrs. Elia W. Peattie. It is certainly the best western story that I have chanced to read. By that I do not mean that it has more of the West in it than a good many other western stories, but I have not happened to see elsewhere so exquisite a literary effort concerning itself with the problems of life, in the middle west, and I am not forgetting some remarkably brilliant by young Wolcott Balestier. It is not by any means the first good western story that Mrs. Peattie has written, but it stands out so prominently above all her previous work that one might say it begins a new era with her. In the first place, it is good reading merely as a story, it has incident enough to attract the most indifferent eye, and that, of course is the prime essential in a short story. In constructing a story, as in building an air ship the first problem is to get something that will lift it's own weight. But the abiding delight in "The Man at the Edge of Things," is the masterly manner in which the incidents are used, the light and shade, the perspective and bold foreshortening which give the story its unusual vividness and directness. Ordinarily the most unattractive feature about western stories is their monotonous cheerlessness, a feature so indigenous to the atmosphere of a prairie country that perhaps only people that have lived there can understand its inevitable ness. This, Mrs. Peattie has deftly avoided by placing the first part of her story in the east. The story begins amid the college festivities of "Dilling Brown's" Commencement day, and jumps then to "Dilling's" old home in a quiet village in New York state, where there are comfortable maiden relatives who look after him, and nice girls who play tennis and dispense lemonade; and all the quiet, easy friendships that spring from long acquaintance and normal conditions of living. The closeness and intimacy of their quiet village life, the friendly, sheltering atmosphere created by the old home, the old box wood walks, the old china and old memories, the devoted old women who serve him, is insisted upon just enough to bring about the vigorous contrast the author wanted, and in the latter part of the story the arid airs, the scorching winds and hot horizons are haunted by vague suggestions of that sweet, cool, green spot on the Atlantic coast and the odor of box wood and mignonette. For "Dilling Brown" was not content with the narrow horizons of happiness, and he went to seek his fortune in the free grass country of California. The whole of the ranch life is treated with virility and vigor and color. Brown took up his abode at the edge of things with many hundred sheep and a few herdsmen, and a Chinese cook, living in an adobe house formerly inhabited by a luckless sheepman and his sister who had been overtaken by disaster and fled the country, leaving their shack furnished and standing empty in the painted desert. All about the room in which "Dilling Brown" slept there were reminders of that courageous woman who had lived there, and over the fire place she had written on the wall: "He, watching over Israel, slumbereth not, nor sleeps," and it occurred to him that no nice, white muslin, tennis playing girl he had ever known would have thought of writing that "in an adobe house, in a sun-cursed desert." So

"Dilling" fell into the habit of thinking of that woman when he was exhausted or lonely. "As the weeks went on, trailing along as slowly as wounded snakes, as the wool lengthened on the sheep, and the hair hung lower on the shoulders of the herdsmen"—and that is phrasing worth the doing, by the way—and everything grew longer but money, he turned more and more to his visionary feminine presence which haunted the place. That exaltation of femininity in the desert, that subtle, tantalizing suggestion of a woman's presence conjured up by an old glove and a few yards of white muslin, is one of the most skillful things in that skillful story, and recalls the manner in which Maupassant used to achieve effects of that kind, absolutely impalpable, yet so close and physical that they penetrate one at every pore. The tale reaches its climax when "Brown" learns that this woman's brother, his immediate predecessor at the "Edge of Things" went crazy after the manner of sheep herders, and used to drop on his knees and crop the grass with his sheep. "Brown" himself is saved from a similar fate by an old college chum and a Shakespeare-reading Frenchman who was overseer at a neighboring ranch. The story is evenly worked up from every side, the texture is close and firm, not a point has been slighted and every play scores. The Frenchman contributes nicely to the color of the thing, the grotesque comparison between the idyllic shepherds of Arcadia, garland decked and piping under soft skies and by peaceful streams, and these scorched, shaggy, vacant eyed sheep keepers of the free grass country is a piece of ironic by play that amounts to artistic cruelty, but art is generally cruel, and Mrs Peattie's almost always so.

A new translation of Maupassant's "Fort Comme la Mort" is made by a gentleman with the exotic name, Teoffo Comba, and is an unusually satisfactory piece of work as translations go, with not a few of the commendable features of Mr. Lascadio Herrera's efforts in translating French fiction. French fiction masquerading in English phraseology always reminds one of an English actress say that gifted but matronly artist, Mrs. Kendall, disporting herself as "Frou-Frou" or "Denise" or "Manon Lescaut." There is apt to be something a trifle heavy about it, a trifle brusque, a trifle too direct, and the whole is apt to resemble an attempt to flagrate in bronze. Of all the French masters, with the possible exception of Gautier, none is more difficult to render into English than Maupassant. The two mediums of expression are so essentially different that it is almost like translating the odor of violets into speech. The translator's choice is a happy one. It is a question as to just how much of Maupassant is possible or desirable in English, but no one who is inclined to take literature seriously can have any valid objections to "Fort Comme La Mort." In short, while there is no necessity to introduce it into the boarding school curriculum, it is not one of those novels which, as Mrs. Phelps-Ward once primly put it, "give more pain by their indelicacy than their art gives pleasure." Technically, the book is one of Maupassant's best. However uncertain his later work may have been, in "Notre Coeur" and "Fort Comme La Mort" he was in possession of the full measure of his power, and these two novels, at least, are constructively as flawless as the short stories which are usually considered his masterpieces. The story is that of a Parisian painter, very much in vogue, who has all his life been the lover of one woman who fortunately for his happiness and his art, has entertained for him not a caprice but an affection, genuine and constant which grew with habit and association until when he

reaches fifty and his creative power begins to fail him somewhat, he is more necessary to her than he was in his youth and the flower of his genius. In short, this affection had become domesticated and the first shadow of the coming infirmities of age but strengthened it. At this juncture the "Countess" daughter, who has spent her childhood with her grandmother, returns to Paris, and her marvellous physical resemblance to her mother is a matter of universal comment. The artist has preserved the tastes and sensibilities of a young man, or he would not be an artist. In "Annette" he finds the youth of the mother reincarnated, she seems indeed but another phase of the mother, having the same flesh and the same soul. She charms and soothes the man for whom the tragedy of age is beginning, she compensates for the domestic ties which he has missed in his own life, in her youth he lives again the romance of his own. He loves her without conscious infidelity to the mother whom she so marvellously resembles, and it is the helpless, despairing love of an old man, laying hold for the last time upon youth, and he clung to it as the old cling to youth, as the dying cling to life. "It belonged to it as a sinking ship belongs to the billows, as a burning building belongs to the flames." The situation is a supremely difficult one, but Maupassant seldom did anything which was not difficult, and like all master-craftsmen, he had a penchant for experiments in pure skill, and like all writers of modern feeling he had a passion for psychological studies the most intricate and complex. The struggle of the old painter against their Indian summer of love, the fluctuations of the two loves in his heart, his constancy and pity for the mother and himself, are handled with that delicacy and subtleness and poignant vividness always at Maupassant's command, and chastened by that sense of fitness and beauty which always restrained him. But the chief pleasure derivable from the book is an esoteric one, and lies in the simple beauty of the writing, the rare felicity of the phrasing, and the style has that integral value, that individual and exalted grace which alone gives art a right to be. A book with such phrasing as this needs no apology or explanation but itself:

"How many times a woman's dress had hung to him in passing, with the evaporated essence, a full recollection of forgotten incidents. At the bottom of old scent bottles he had also found again portions of his existence; and all the

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