

This literary collection was published in 1889. From the Introduction: It is so embarrassing to speak of the writers of one country to the readers of another that I sometimes wonder at the complacency with which the delicate task is entered upon. These are cases in which the difficult art of criticism becomes doubly difficult, inasmuch as they compel the critic to forfeit what I may call his natural advantages. The first of these natural advantages is that those who read him shall help him by taking a great many things for granted; shall allow him his general point of view and his terms — terms which he is not obliged to define. The relation of the American reader to the French writer, for instance, is, on the contrary, so indirect that it gives him who proposes to mediate between them a great deal more to do. Here he has in a manner to define his terms and establish his point of view. The first simplification he is prompted to effect is therefore to ask the reader to make the effort to approach the author as nearly as possible in the supposed spirit of one of his own (one of the authors) fellow-countrymen. If the author be French, remember that, as it is to Frenchmen he addresses himself, it is profitless to read him without a certain displacement of tradition. If he be German, reflect in the same way that it was far from his business to write in such a manner as would conciliate most the habits and prejudices of the English-speaking mind. There are doubtless many people all ready to regard themselves as injured by a suggestion that they should for the hour, and even in the decent privacy of the imagination, comport themselves as creatures of alien (by which we usually understand inferior) race. To them it is only to be answered that they had better never touch a foreign book on any terms, but lead a contented life in the homogeneous medium of the dear old mother-speech. That life, by compensation, they will of course endeavor to make as rich as possible; and there is one question they will always be able to ask without getting an immediate answer, so that the little inquiry will retain more or less its triumphant air. Why should we concern ourselves so much about French literature, when those who produce it concern themselves so little about ours

?.....Book Excerpts: A COWARD. In society they called him the handsome Signoles. His name was Viscount Gontran Joseph de Signoles. An orphan and the possessor of a sufficient fortune, as the saying goes, he cut a dash. He had a fine figure and bearing, enough conversation to make people credit him with cleverness, a certain natural grace, an air of nobility and of pride, a gallant mustache, and a gentle eye — a thing which pleases women. In the drawing-rooms he was in great request, much sought after as a partner for the waltz; and he inspired among men that smiling hatred which they always cherish for others of an energetic figure. He passed a happy and tranquil life, in a comfort of mind which was most complete. It was known that he was a good fencer, and as a pistol-shot even better.....

THE NECKLACE. She was one of those pretty and charming girls who are sometimes, as if by a mistake of destiny, born in a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, understood, loved, wedded, by any rich and distinguished man; and she let herself be married to a little clerk at the Ministry of Public Instruction. She dressed plainly because she could not dress well, but she was as unhappy as though she had really fallen from her proper station; since with women there is neither caste nor rank; and beauty, grace, and charm act instead of family and birth.

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