problems, and deduces the philosophical consequences from the most recent results of scientific research. He has, in addition, published more than a score of books on such varied subjects as *Le Physique de l'Amour*, the *Esthétique de la Langue Française*, *Le Probleme du Style* and *Le Latin Mystique*. An artist as well as a thinker, he has experimented with every form, has written poems and prose fiction, and has had a play, *Théodat*, produced on the stage of the *Théatre d'Art* in Paris.

There is a story that when Remy de Gourmont and Anatole France first met —for they had long known each other only through their books—each saluted the other as *maitre*, and acknowledged that he owed to him everything. This, if true, was particularly graceful on the part of the elder man, who had to wait so long for a hearing in a generation of brilliant polemists and novelists whose more strident voices tended to drown his own. For now France already finds himself somewhat eclipsed in intellectual circles, at least, by a concentric writer—one who, if he does not describe a greater arc, yet touches more points upon its circumference. At the same time, M. de Gourmont has himself been somewhat overshadowed by Anatole France, who still holds the ear of the great world—the world of women, included, to whom his peculiar sensibility, echoed in his relaxed, nerveless, yet singularly chaste and tempered style, makes a peculiar appeal—and whose handling of the fictional frame for purposes of philosophic discourse gives him an inestimable advantage over all his rivals in enabling him to attract not only more readers, but more classes of readers by his work. Perhaps M. de Gourmont's perception of this advantage has governed to a certain extent his own occasional attempts to create artistic forms for the presentation of his ideas, though as he was a literary artist even before he became critic and immoralist thinker, it is natural enough for him to combine the two currents of his thought and feeling. *Une Nuit au Luxembourg*, which most directly challenges comparison with such a work as *Thais*, for example, is at all events his most important venture in this field. It

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Remy de Gourmont's "Une Nuit au Luxembourg"*

Mr. Arthur Ransome's translation of Remy de Gourmont's *Une Nuit au Luxembourg* presents a French critic, novelist, and philosophic *causeur* who is hardly known as yet to English and American readers, but who enjoys an enormous prestige not only in France but everywhere on the Continent and throughout the Latin world. His influence on the rising generation is not lessened by the fact that he has never received any official recognition. The portals of the Academy have never been opened to him and he neither occupies a university chair nor writes for any of the older and more famous reviews. But every fortnight he conducts a department of current events (*actualités*), which he calls *Epilogues*, in the *Mercure de France*, and through these he speaks to the most widely scattered and cosmopolitan audience possessed by any modern magazine. Also he edits a magazine of his own, the *Journal des Idées*, in which he addresses a smaller intellectual elite on the more general tendencies of civilisation, discusses the latest metaphysical

*Une Nuit au Luxembourg. Translated by Arthur Ransome, with Preface and Appendix. Boston: J. W. Luce and Company.

is virtually a long dialogue, introduced into an arbitrary and conventional story setting—there are only a Preface and a Final Note to maintain the fictional interest and illusion—and interrupted by very unconventional amorous episodes.

The principal *dramatis personæ* are an American journalist living in Paris, and an enigmatic personage whom he meets one night in the church of Saint-Sulpice. A strange light shining through the window had tempted him to enter, and had led him to a chapel altar where he found the stranger standing. The mysterious visitant, who "seemed quite ordinary," but whose clothes and personal appearance the author describes with the matter-of-fact fullness, almost the minute professional particularity of a man's fashion note,—we observe that Mr. Ransome has tactfully suppressed the grey gloves, the round hat, and the cane of the original—reveals himself as a god. Not, however, as in Charles Morice's recent novel, which created such a furore in France, an individual god already known to worshippers on this earth, but a kind of Demiurge from whom all the gods in turn have received their inspiration and divine authority. Yet even he has his limitations of knowledge and power, and exists under a kind of Necessity which imposes laws upon the entire universe. Invited to talk, he proceeds to unfold to his chosen interlocutor, as they stroll arm in arm in the gardens of the Luxembourg, a system of Heraclitean and Epicurean philosophy, and to outline a course of conduct, an attitude toward life, calculated to ensure mortals the highest happiness of which they are capable. Meanwhile roses spring up on every hand, a divine light suffuses the gardens, and several charming damsels—young goddesses from another sphere—add an ideal feminine grace to the picture, and supply the motive for the love-interludes which have something of the function and effect of a musical intermezzo.

Mr. Ransome appears, from his preface, to be very much afraid that the English public will be shocked by these episodes, as well as by the blasphemous central conception of the work. But the modern reader is pretty well used to "blasphemy" by this time, and the notion of which M. de Gourmont has made use here, is one already familiar in Nietzsche and, as the translator points out, to any student of comparative religion. As to the *divertimenti*, these differ from similar scenes in the Italian romantic epic, and on the operatic stage—the whole book has something distinctly operatic about it—mainly in being more explicit. Aside from this, they sin rather more sharply in an æsthetic than in a moral sense. The descriptions offend because they are overwrought. Too much verbal art has been consciously bestowed upon them. They display a fastidiousness, an elaborateness, and an artificiality of method which is as remote as possible from that fresh and artless spontaneity, involving at least a semblance of real feeling, which alone can justify a certain license on æsthetic grounds. It is not even frank naturalism. Rather, it resembles eighteenth century French sentimental eroticism, and it strikes one as curious that, with all his virile and unadorned directlessness in dealing with ideas, M. de Gourmont should allow himself to adopt a manner as sensuously over-ornate as that of the most baroque writer of the century he most abhors on the artistic side. Acute physiological critic, child of physicists and encyclopedists, at the same time as a sentimental sensualist, like Diderot, it seems his perverse destiny to represent the revival of the spirit of the eighteenth century at its best and at its worst, at its most robust and at its most effeminate.

Here of course M. de Gourmont falls far below the level of Anatole France, whose imagination is always informed with some depth of moral feeling, and whose most *scabreux* passages are generally redeemed by a note of tender indulgence, of philosophic sadness, of deep irony, or of robust and breezy Rabelaisian humour. None of these specifically human notes is sounded by M. de Gourmont, who, when he is not the acute analyst, is apt to be the precious and affected prose poet. He is the type of writer who wins his way by the naked force of his ideas alone; and if *Une Nuit au Luxembourg* has, as we believe to be the case, gone into more editions than those of his books which are to be preferred as the

more completely characteristic products of his preëminently discursive mind—the *Promenades Littéraires, Promenades Philosophiques, La Culture des Idées,* and *Le Chemin de Velours,* it is doubtless because this book attempts more than the rest to satisfy the inevitable demand made sooner or later upon every thinker, for a systematic exposition of his ideas. Such is *Une Nuit au Luxembourg,* and as such this work, apart from its offences against Anglo-Saxon taste, is, perhaps, the one best suited to serve as a vehicle for the author's introduction to a new public. It will have performed this service satisfactorily if it leads a certain number of English and American readers to desire a closer acquaintance with a writer who, at his best, is one of the most powerful stimulants for all those to whom the life of the intellect appeals as, above every other, a life of romance and adventure.

Cleveland Palmer.