

Editorial by Louis F. Post, Editor THE PUBLIC, April 4, 1913

Under her signature sometimes but not infrequently with no signature, Miss Colbron's contributions to The Public have long connected her with its purposes and work. Before her name found a place in its lists of advisory and contributing editors she had earned the place by helpful service. For that reason, and also because she is now carving out a career on the lecture platform, in which art and literary discussions and dramatic readings are associated in her repertoire with subjects of special interest to The Public and its readers, we wish to introduce her, both typographically and photographically, to our constituency.

That Grace Isabel Colbron was born in New York City may be an important fact to know, since so much of her life has been spent abroad; but when she was born is nobody's business but her own. "Old enough to know, young enough to feel," she is a good ways from infancy at one extreme and from old age at the other. Her influences of ancestry, birth, education and association were such as to hold her tight with conservative leading strings, so tight that there was no direct means of escape—for a woman, at least. The microbes of radicalism may have had a lodgment then in her mental and moral system, but they developed no symptoms until much later. She was a strenuous conservative, class-conscious and aggressive. During a school sojourn of several years in Berlin, however, she was startled out of this state of mind by the new apprehensions of art. She learned how much art may mean when associated with the serious business of life. Seeing the splendid municipal theatres of Germany, with their repertoire system of production, her innate love for the drama blossomed into a passion that was for many years her leading life motive.

Upon her return to this country from her school days in Germany, Miss Colbron brought into the conventional experiences of society life in New York the sheet-anchor of a love of art as a vital function; and this was supplemented, through temporary financial misfortune in her family (making society life difficult to maintain), by a disclosure to her of the utter emptiness of that kind of life. Together they set her steadily in the way of useful service.

Returning to Germany, Miss Colbron studied for the stage. For a time she acted there professionally. But, having already taken a few timid steps in literary endeavor, she drifted naturally into Berlin's literary Bohemia, which taught her about life much that is never learned by the "sheltered women" who always know where their next dinner and their next month's rent are coming from—who never think of these sordid details, in fact, since someone else provides them. But such problems were real ones to Grace Colbron, intensely real. She preferred wrestling with them, however, to running to shelter in the comfortable New York home which was always open to her.

Through the experience of these and some later years, she learned to know life as life is—and to know herself. It was good preparation for the more thorough radicalism to which she was about to be introduced and to which her student interest in art theories had given primary direction.

Her friends Lawson Purdy (now president of the Tax Department of New York) and Mrs. Purdy had given her, upon her leaving home to live in Germany, a copy of Henry George's "Progress and Poverty," in which they were then but just getting interested. Her first reading of "Progress and Poverty" was in fact with but little understanding.

Yet her emotions were stirred by George's eloquent appeal. His words justified to her the vague sense of social wrongs which, felt even before leaving her sheltered life, had deepened by association with the emotional radicalism which colored the aspirations and ideals of the younger literary set of Germany. As far as she was anything politically at this time, she was a Social Democrat. Not until some years later did her reading of George bear fruit in the rational radicalism she now represents.

The process was not rapid; for she had to approach George through Marx and Kautsky, and less by easy rejection of those teachers than by clear thinking and a more advanced and com-

plete apprehension of the truths embodied in what they taught. But if slow, the process was effectual. It made of Miss Colbron that type of social philosopher and social reformer that Henry George was, the type that distinguishes society from individual functions, the sphere of social solidarity from the sphere of personal independence, and which advocates simple but far-reaching methods of progressively promoting industrial transformation rather than arbitrary methods of readjustment.

She kept up her literary life and associations, however, going back and forth between New York and Germany. While in Germany once again representing Heinrich Conried and Elizabeth Marbury in procuring German plays for them to introduce to American audiences, Miss Colbron discovered the land reformers of that country, represented by "Bodenreform," and she worked with them. But most of her Singletax work has been done in this country. Concluding that the impulse which drew her to the stage as a form of self-expression, was in reality a force leading her on to direct work for a living cause, she has done a great deal of public speaking for the Singletax, and now turns to the lecture platform by way of climax. Glad of her stage training and experience for their technical aid, glad of her training and opportunities for literary work, since they also help, but chiefly ambitious to bear the one message which has become to her her greatest interest in life, she looks to the platform as the best place from which to deliver that message widely, persuasively, convincingly, directly and attractively.

Miss Colbron is co-author with Clayton Hamilton (now a leading dramatic critic) of "The Love that Blinds," which was produced by the Shuberts with Mary Shaw as star; and she is the translator of Schnitzler's "Liebelei," played here as "The Reckoning"; of Bracco's "Infedele," played here as "Comtesse Coquette"; of Hermann Sudermann's "Happiness in a Corner," and of Bjornsen's "A Marriage," the latter two having been played by Donald Robertson. She has herself played in the Middle West in Donald Robertson's company, and also with the Ben Greet Players. Her books include several translations from the German of Augusta Gröner, and Bjornsen's "A Lesson in Marriage"; and she was the editor and chief translator of the German and Scandinavian section of the "World's Best Mystery and Detective Stories," published by the American Review of Reviews. In Collier's "Masterpieces of Foreign Fiction," her translations of many German and Scandinavian short stories appear, and she contributes occasionally to various magazines. Some of Hamlin Garland's short stories have been turned by her into German. For a year she edited an art magazine in Germany, and for many years she was a regular book reviewer for the New York Commercial Advertiser. At present she contributes regularly to The Bookman and The Publishers' Weekly.

With such training and experience, including the faculty of expression they have given her in four languages—German, French, Dano-Norwegian and English—Miss Colbron's special ability to interest and influence American audiences is evident. Nor need her field be limited by any means to highly trained and cultured audiences—or those that think themselves so—for, as might be supposed, she has by her training and her sympathies made a distinct mark as an acceptable and effective speaker among that large class of women who earn their own living by hard work and have little leisure but what they pay for dearly.

Miss Colbron reaches to the hearts of her audiences with as tender and persuasive a touch as in her dramatic readings or in her lectures on literature and the stage.

Open to engagements to speak either in English or German, and now arranging a tour from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific, under direction The Henry George Lecture Association, F. H. Monroe, President, 538 S. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill., it may well be hoped in the interest of the message she bears that Miss Colbron's present success and future opportunities will level up to her platform abilities and charm and to her proved devotion to art in its life-serving sense.



Miss Grace Isabel Colbron
(See biographical sketch
on reverse side.)

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CHICAGO, ILL., 1-8-17.

Dear Mr. Mackendrick:-

Can you place MISS GRACE ISABEL COLBRON for one or
more lecture engagements during January, February or March?

No fee. Expenses merely nominal.

Yours very truly,

President.