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Blood/Text Circulation: the Birth of a New Metaphor

What if Dracula had won the battle against Mina's team? Dracula's bites turn his victims into vampires who then forever crave for blood just like he himself does. If the process of vampirism were to be taken to its final stage, *Dracula* would be an eschatological book; an apocalyptic novel, for the world would then be peopled with vampires, and there would simply be nothing left of human kind. Nothing would be left of vampires either, since they would have no fuel left to remain un-dead. The end of the story would have sounded the bell of the end of history. Dracula loses one way or the other because as opposed to his opponents' fertile text cultivation (that is text reading, writing and editing) vampirism is sterile; it is a dead end. Being un-dead means not being dead, but it also implies not *belonging* to the living either, which also defines vampirism as sterile. Dracula's case is a negative definition of what existing means. What comes to an end when someone becomes a vampire is their participation in the circle of life, a circulatory system in which each individual is a link in a chain from which they get the necessary ingredients to be alive while supplying the other links of the chain with their own material. In *Dracula*, the circulation system on which life depends is the circulation of blood between individuals. Life also depends on text circulation through reading, writing, and book editing. In this article I will show how these two circulation systems are merged in the novel to give birth to a new metaphor.

Previous research works on *Dracula* have mainly focused on either the sexual aspect of the novel or on its complex and challenging narrative structure. Articles and books in the field of gender studies, psychoanalysis or socio economics have thrown light on the former aspect of Stoker's text while the later was explored through narrative discourse analysis. Seldom are the cases in which both the sexual and textual aspects are studied together as two faces of the same coin. Among the articles which do both, that of Jennifer Wicke¹ solves the paradox of the blood and text aspects by showing that a Marxist approach and a psychoanalytical one are eventually not alien but complementary provided modern sexuality be seen as consumption. Blood and text are also studied together in "*Black and White and Read All Over: Performative Textuality in Bram Stoker's Dracula*". Here, Harriet Hustis looks at the text from the recipient's point of view, using Wolfgang Iser's theories to state that performative textuality results from the act of reading which triggers the dynamic interplay between the figurative (Mina) and the imaginary (Count Dracula).

In this article, I will show that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* brings forward the modern idea that book publishing is a business human kind depends on as much as blood circulation between people. I will first show what elements in Stoker's time made blood circulation a metaphor of text circulation. Then, I will examine the case of the vampire to explain how the

¹ Wicke, Jennifer. "Typewriting : *Dracula and Its Media*" in ELH, Vol 59, N°2 (Summer, 1992), pp. 467-493. The John Hopkins University Press.

process of vampirism detaches vampires from life as a circulation system. Finally, I shall analyse the passage from the status of the writer to that of the editor through the character of Mina Harker in order to explain the major role of the editor in the text circulation system.

1. Medical progress: Dracula loses the privilege of blood transfusion

The emergence of the new metaphor which I here want to analyse in *Dracula*: that of blood circulation as an image of text circulation, was partly rendered possible by the progress of medicine and partly by that of the book publishing industry in Stoker's time. In *La Métaphore vive* Paul Ricoeur writes: "*Max Black's comparison between model and metaphor, in other words between an epistemological concept and a poetic one, will allow us to thoroughly exploit this idea which directly opposes all reduction of metaphor to a mere "ornament". If we look to the deep end of this suggestion, metaphor must be said to hold information, for it "re-describes" reality*".² Indeed, something was at stake in Stoker's time that brought the history of the book publishing industry and that of blood transfusion in a close relation as both would now partake of the vital needs for mankind to endure. This new parallel was to give a new meaning to the vampire legend. In order to sense how the two notions of blood and text circulation are intermingled, metaphor should not to be understood as a syntagm or as sentence but as a whole complex system as Ricoeur further explains: "*First the model's exact counterpart, on the poetic side, is not exactly what we have called the metaphoric utterance, that is to say a brief speech which is most of the time limited to a sentence; the model rather consists of a complex network of utterances, its exact counterpart therefore being the continued metaphor — the fable, the allegory [...]*".³

The Count's means to supply himself with blood and the choice of his victims actually synthesise the history of blood transfusion. From the fifteenth century, when the first attempt of blood transfusion was carried out, to of the turn of the twentieth century when medical progress led to successful blood transfusions, the blood circulation system was limited to each individual's body. The only way to pass one's blood onto another individual was hereditary; hence the many rich and enlightening Freudian sex/blood comparative analyses of *Dracula*. Dracula's crimes throughout the novel retrace the history of these failed experiments of blood transfusion through centuries, which already foreshadows the looming end of the vampire. Indeed medical and chemical advancement as well as the spreading and improving level of education among the masses would soon render Dracula's self-providing-blood method completely outdated. In "*The Narrative Method of Dracula*", David Seed highlights the vampire's fall from the status of the monster who inspires fear to that of a marginal creature whom humans can study and understand: "*The Less Dracula is formulated, the more of a threat he represents. Once the different accounts have been put together, Dracula begins to*

² "Le rapprochement opéré par Max Black² entre modèle et métaphore, autrement dit entre un concept épistémologique et un concept poétique, nous permettra d'exploiter à fond cette idée qui va directement à l'encontre de toute réduction de la métaphore à un simple « ornement ». Si l'on va jusqu'au bout de cette suggestion, il faut dire que la métaphore porte une information, parce qu'elle "re-décrit" la réalité. » (Ricoeur : 32)

³ "D'abord le répondant exact du modèle, du côté poétique, n'est pas exactement ce que nous avons appelé l'énoncé métaphorique, c'est-à-dire un discours bref réduit le plus souvent à une phrase; le modèle consiste plutôt en un réseau complexe d'énoncés; son vis-à-vis exact serait donc la métaphore continuée — la fable, l'allégorie [...]" (Ricoeur : 306).

diminish in stature. He turns out to be subject to Nature's laws (though only some of them) and to be a disappointingly conventional embodiment of Nordau's and Lombroso's criminal type." (Seed: 74).

Back in the fifteen century, the first attempt of blood transfusion from three boys to a pope resulted in the deaths of the four participants⁴. The reason for this was simply that the pope was given the boys' blood to drink, just as Dracula does. At that time, scientists did not yet know that our digestive and blood systems were different. In fact since Antiquity when the Greeks believed that our blood and digestive systems were one, little progress was made in centuries. Blood was also believed to convey character and thoughts (Argoud: 144). Dracula again mirrors these ancient and false beliefs as he gets hold of his victims' thoughts and knowledge once he has taken their blood. Yet, during the scientific revolution of the nineteenth century, progress sped up dramatically, which, as I will explain precipitated, the end of the fear of vampires, especially because humans were soon to be safely transfused blood too. In Stoker's days, it was therefore urgent that Dracula should be once and for all confined to a tale, his only proper place forever.

Two centuries after the first attempts to transfuse blood experiments were performed again, which involved humans and animals, the former providing blood for the latter. These attempts equally resulted in fatal issues. Indeed, Harvey successfully transfused blood from one animal to another while all the attempts to transfuse blood into a man's body remained fatal⁵. Here again, Count Dracula's refilling his blood vessels with either animals' or humans' blood was already outdated in Stoker's time. It was in the late 1810s that Blundell discovered that blood transfusions should only be performed between humans (Starr: 35). Bram Stoker's book is therefore not only modern, it looks forward into a very close future because at the time when it was published the evolution of medical sciences rendered the circulation of blood, our fluid of life possible between humans.

Blood transfusion which was then successful only in about 50% of the cases (Starr: 37), was soon to replace bleeding which gradually proved to be lethal rather than curing (Starr: 28). The opposition between pure blood (when it is red and within the body) and impure blood (when it is black and outside the body: Argoud: 136) proved invalid because blood effusion ceased to be lethal. Blood effusion could even save lives provided blood was properly channeled from one body to another. Only four years after the publication of *Dracula*, Landsteiner discovered the difference between human blood groups (Starr: 38-39) and with the apparatus earlier developed to prevent blood clotting (Starr: 30-49), blood transfusion ceased to be a danger. The success of such a process meant that from then on blood circulation would no more be limited to the intimacy of a body; it could then be passed on from one human to another. As Stoker's novel shows by the various transfusions

⁴ Not all Historians agree on this anecdote, as they could not verify it with certainty.

⁵ Starr, Douglas. *Blood, An Epic History of Medicine and Commerce*. Little, Brown and Company, London, 1998. (3-15)

completed on Lucy, blood reception ceases to be vampires' privilege. Besides, Dracula's transfusion method proves to be completely wrong, which people are soon to find out thanks to text circulation. Noble as he may be Count Dracula loses the privilege of refilling his veins with blood, but he also loses the privilege of being a well-read creature.

2. Progress in publishing: Dracula loses the privilege of reading

At the end of the nineteenth century, the book publishing edition became a go-getting business. Besides blood circulation, the circulation of books contributed in tying links between humans, thus rendering them a stronger species. This is not to say that the publishing business was born in Bram Stoker's time, but the Industrial Revolution as well as the increase of the literacy rate rendered the circulation of books easier and wider among the British population. The book industry flourished in Britain and even more in the British Empire (Weedon: 31-32). About 90% of the population of England and Wales could read by the end of the century when only half could fifty years before (Weedon: 51). If they could not all purchase books, the majority could borrow them (Weedon: 33). Book hunger increased in the 1880s and 90s, which led publishers, now equipped with powered press to increase their production massively if a book sold well and to bring its price low enough for the most modest classes to buy it. (Weedon: 159). *Dracula* is a modern novel which illustrates its time. Besides, it inaugurates the birth of a new metaphor which pictures blood circulation and text circulation as mirror systems. Just as blood circulation, book circulation has become a vital source of strength accessible to many more people. This is the very sign of Dracula's end.

When Jonathan visits him, Count Dracula has been un-dead for more than four centuries. Since he became a vampire, he has lost his place in the circle of the living which he nonetheless needs not to die. His struggle to keep this half-way position between the living and the dead is rendered manifest by the way he nourishes his body to stay alive and by the way he keeps his general knowledge and mastery of language to communicate with humans and eventually keep his power over them.

On arriving at Dracula's castle, Jonathan Harker is struck by the peculiar character he meets in the person of the Count and therefore notes what exotic or notable features he finds in him. He remarks that Dracula possesses a vast library and that he is extraordinarily well-read: "*In the library I found, to my great delight, a vast number of English books, whole shelves full of them, and bound volumes of magazines and newspapers.*" (30). The many books he has in his library are signs of the Count's wealth and of his privilege to read much and build knowledge. Dracula is now in a world that he can not conquer without knowing it and this implies being well-read: "*These companions,*" and he laid his hand on some of the books, "*have been good friends to me, and for some years past, ever since I had the idea of going to London, have given me many, many hours of pleasure.*" (31). This part of the narrative is described through Jonathan's eyes while he still ignores Dracula has been a vampire for centuries. In fact impressive as it may be, Dracula's knowledge, especially in history, is the result of over four centuries of personal experience. Dracula's ambition to conquer a country in the modern world renders reading necessary, for he has to know his victims' language and context to impose his power over them.

Now, the mass of publication is increasing so Dracula is having more and more difficulties to keep updated. The presence of periodicals in his library is an indicator of the accelerating flow of texts he has to read: “A table in the centre was littered with English magazines and newspapers, though none of them were of very recent date.” (30). This is confirmed by Mina’s scrupulous edition process. The articles that she reads in the newspapers she gives a longer lasting form by storing them as clippings in her diary: “Cutting from ‘the Dailygraph,’ 8 August (pasted in Mina Murray’s Journal)” (95). Meanwhile Dracula is reading texts that have a less permanent form (literally, periodicals) and has or takes no time to store them. It reveals that reading, which along with blood consumption was one of his major strengths is becoming his weakness because he has more and more competitors in the race to access knowledge for power.

Other characters in the novel are also well-read. Among them the only aristocrat is Lord Godalming. Dr. Seward and Professor Van Helsing are experts in medicine and they keep researching. Yet the most striking cases are that of Jonathan and Mina. They are of modest lineage and they don’t have so prestigious a job as MDs. Yet, the clerk and the training secretary will be Dracula’s most powerful enemies since their job is not only to read but also to write and order texts. Both of them are curious and endowed with a talent for observation of their environment and of texts. Mina in particular is a brilliant text analyzer and learns much more from her readings than anyone else in the novel. She is a reader of the paradigm. Not only does she read stories, she tries to get the meaning of them by constructing various networks of meaning regardless of the chronology of events or of their syntagm as her memorandum shows (417-419). She is even the bearer of the very modern idea that the reader may get more from the text than its author himself, paying minute attention to style: “I think that the cylinders which you gave me contained more than you intended me to know. But I can see that there are in your record many lights to this dark mystery.” (266). She understands along with Pr Van Helsing that the textual medium can reveal more than a discussion with the author and that there is more to a text than a mass of information. Finally, Jonathan and Mina can read more than one set of signs as they can decipher shorthand, which emphasizes their superiority over Dracula. Being more numerous and more skilled in deciphering and analysing, Dracula’s modest enemies represent a new generation of learned and learning people, which is undoing Dracula’s power as he is losing the social and cognitive monopoly of self-cultivation.

Besides, Dracula is selfish and keeps his knowledge to himself. The whole process of vampirism including blood consumption and reading once more proves to be sterile. Among Dracula’s victims for instance, Renfield and Lucy are no more learned once Dracula has bitten them. He ingests their thoughts and knowledge but transmits nothing to them. This self-centered attitude is going to weaken him too. Meanwhile, Mina breaks the seal of her husband’s journal thus throwing the first beam of light on the Dracula mystery. She continues the process with Pr Van Helsing by demanding that each member of the team read all the texts they can gather. Not one brain but a network of brains is now working on the same texts, shedding complementary lights on the evil that threatens to terminate them. Dracula is conscious that bearing knowledge is a source of power; what he ignores is that sharing

knowledge decouples strength. That is when text circulation becomes vital and Mina will set the conditions necessary to launch and spread this circulation.

"No one need ever know, shall ever know," I said in a low voice. She laid her hand on mine and said very gravely, "Ah, but they must!"

"Must! But why?" I asked.

"Because it is a part of the terrible story, a part of poor Lucy's death and all that led to it. Because in the struggle which we have before us to rid the earth of this terrible monster we must have all the knowledge and all the help which we can get. (266)

3. Nourishing blood, nourishing text

Before I get into the analysis of Mina's job as an editor, I will first inquire further into the parallel between blood and text. Having blood in our veins is vital. Nevertheless, if this blood is not provided with nourishment, it is useless. Blood conveys energy. To phrase this more appropriately here, it conveys power, but it does not generate it. That's the major difference between humans and vampires.

As a future victim, Jonathan is welcomed with a solid dinner at Dracula Castle. Here, he notes that Dracula himself does not eat and later notes his surprise at never seeing the Count eat: "*It is strange that as yet I have not seen the Count eat or drink.*" (38). Dracula's body is deprived of a digestive system. That too, defines him as undead. It means that he can take nothing from his environment but blood for survival. He has simply lost the capacity to transform food into energy. The power he gets must therefore come from others who still have this capacity. Once the energy contained in his victims' blood has run off, their blood becomes useless to him as it has no more power to convey. Therefore, the very nature of blood is transformed. As soon as it is ingested by a vampire, blood ceases to be the fluid of life and becomes a mere fuel for life instead. In this respect, vampires can be compared with modern apparatus. They are like mobile phones with batteries but no charger to refill them with power.

On the contrary, humans do have a digestive system. The team who fight Dracula are thus often represented eating solid meals. Pr Van Helsing and Mina insist that they should all eat much. Mina says: "*Breakfast is ready, and we must all eat that we may be strong.*" (352). Van Helsing gives the men order to eat much twice when Lucy needs blood: "*Now take down our brave young lover, give him of the port wine, and let him lie down a while. He must then go home and rest, sleep much and eat much, that he may be recruited of what he has so given to his love.*" (150). Later he says again: "*Now you go home, and eat much and drink enough. Make yourself strong.*" (158). They all belong to the circle of life as they have this capacity to transform matter into power. Consequently, blood transfusion is for them only a specific need in extreme cases but on a daily basis their own blood remains rich and keeps them alive. Blood in their body remains the fluid that conveys the fuel their body is capable of transforming.

This transformation of one's natural environment into power that animates humans ('animate' must here be understood both as 'breathing' and 'soul' following its Latin root '*anima*') works exactly the same when it comes to text production. All the texts which compose *Dracula* convey information in the form of speech representations resulting from

sensorial perception. This is exactly the way in which cognitive linguists as Lakoff define metaphor. These texts are journals, letters or newspaper articles. The characters who write them feel the need, specific to human nature, to represent, that is to transform what they experience into speech. Jonathan, for instance, senses the vital task he is completing in writing a detailed account of his experience in Transylvania: *"I began to fear as I wrote in this book that I was getting too diffuse. But now I am glad that I went into detail from the first, for there is something so strange about this place and all in it that I cannot but feel uneasy."* (37). By formulating their representation of the world, they convert perception into knowledge that they thus breed. This capacity to generate knowledge through perception and representation is the privilege of humans and this is precisely what Dracula lacks.

Dracula writes nothing. He breeds no knowledge and is therefore sterile as he has lost his capacity to generate any representation. His own image does not even appear in a mirror anymore. He literally has no more power of reflection. The latter argument could easily be countered as Jonathan receives two notes from the Count and has communicated with his solicitor in England. Yet, no narrative passage describes him putting his quill to paper himself. The only occasion on which he expresses the need to write is when he threatens Jonathan to do it for him. Even then, Dracula's letters are not efficient as he cannot make Jonathan's speech his own. On reading these letters, though handwritten and signed by Jonathan, Mina cannot possibly identify her fiancé in this speech and senses the strangeness of both their contents and style: *"It is only a line dated from Castle Dracula, and says that he is just starting for home. That is not like Jonathan. I do not understand it, and it makes me uneasy."* (91). Dracula needs people who can write instead of him, which is a clerk's (Jonathan) or a secretary's (Mina) job. These two characters are precious to him, hence his sparing their lives several times. Yet, what he needs from them he cannot take, for he cannot appropriate their speech. This incapacity to have a speech of his own implies that he has no power of representation, no power of breeding metaphors that is his own vision of the world through which he could impose his power. Again, the bell rings that announces his end, for meanwhile Dracula is facing a new world into which many more people, be they as modest as a clerk, can decide to convey their own voice through text. Dracula is now facing a world into which even a woman can edit a book of their own.

Humans' capacity to generate knowledge, to give a representation of their experience is only efficient if at they rightly measure the vital function of text circulation. Lucy, for instance fails in getting the far-reaching stake of text production. She is therefore merely another, if delicious meal for Dracula. It doesn't matter so much if she dies as she is no metaphor breeder. Yes, Lucy writes, but her letters are full of paralipses *"I have nothing to tell you. There is really nothing to interest you."* (71), for she has nothing to say. Mina even reproaches her with not writing enough: *"Tell me all the news when you write. You have not told me anything for a long time. I hear rumours, and especially of a tall, handsome, curly-haired man???"* (71). She only writes more when she is proposed by three men because Mina has urged her to give her a detailed account of her life and she is the one who gives her the subject of the letter about her love life. In this Lucy proves no better than the vampire himself. Then she decides to write an account of her days, but it's too late. Moreover she does not even seize the reason why she is doing it; she only mimics Mina in this: *"I must imitate Mina, and keep writing things down."* (133). Wanting to be someone else, taking after someone else;

here is another of Lucy's traits which brings her closer to the vampire species than to her own. Her unconsciousness of body and above all of mind makes of her a perfect victim for Dracula.

As for Dr Seward, Jonathan and Arthur, they write, but they do not perceive the crucial need to take their work a step further by ushering their texts into a circulation system. Seward starts recording his observations of Renfield to heal his broken heart and he does not want anyone to listen to his account of Lucy's death on his phonograph: " *No! No! No! For all the world. I wouldn't let you know that terrible story!*" (264). Jonathan writes whatever appears strange to him and later gives himself his own texts for company and witnesses not to die a madman. Though he allows Mina to read his journal, he does not want her give him comments about her reading thus hindering text circulation: " *Here is the book. Take it and keep it, read it if you will, but never let me know unless, indeed, some solemn duty should come upon me to go back to the bitter hours, asleep or awake, sane or mad, recorded here.*" (129). On the contrary, Mina, along with Van Helsing insists that each member of the team must thoroughly read whatever the other parties have written.

In wanting to perfect her skills as a secretary Mina may first appears as the perfect wife varnishing in her husband's shadow. Her personal endeavour to work on existing texts as well as her own and to give them their final shape however reveal how bright she is in understanding the importance of editing a text for it to reach the greatest number of readers. By working to set the conditions necessary to put the text into circulation she becomes an editor with the power to terminate Dracula thanks to knowledge. She weakens him by narrowing the gap between the pieces of information about him that each member of her team brings. In doing so, Dracula who is a question and a source of fear at the beginning is gradually converted into a fully and logically describable object. She forces the vampire to be represented in the way that she chooses, as the all-mighty editor.

Indeed, if Mina can take the job it is because she is multi-skilled both in terms of reading, writing and in terms of gathering and shaping the papers she calls for into a powerful book. She can read shorthand and operate a phonograph. Her charm and speech inspire trust and she therefore accesses all the recordings easily. Once she has these texts into her possession, she starts giving them the conditions to endure in the text circulation system. To terminate Dracula, the greatest number of people should know about him. Mina therefore converts shorthand texts into plain English. She renders the recordings on the phonograph more accessible by typewriting their contents. She renders the medium more permanent by typewriting several copies of the texts and by keeping the newspaper articles into her diary.

Once the texts are converted into a more permanent and readable form individually there comes the time when the whole bulk must be given a narrative structure. Beyond this point, we are not informed whether the choices were made by Mina or not. Whoever decides what form the text should take to reach as many readers as possible must arrange the order of the documents so that the final text seduces the recipients. The text must be made thrilling and the order into which the fragments fall together is crucial. For instance, some parts of Mina's diary are not published in chronological order and her diary is cut in the midst of the same

entry. For instance, Dr Seward wrote an entry in his diary on November 2. Only then does, Mina's entry written on October 31 appear.

Mina also keeps the privilege of access to speech: "*But I have been more touched than I can say by your grief. That is a wonderful machine, but it is cruelly true. It told me, in its very tones, the anguish of your heart. It was like a soul crying out to Almighty God. No one must hear them spoken ever again! See, I have tried to be useful. I have copied out the words on my typewriter, and none other need now hear your heart beat, as I did.*" (266) In saying so, Mina also keeps the privilege of access to direct speech and transforms Seward's voice into a typewritten text. This means she is the master of the final text. Besides, she brings forward the idea that representation in writing renders speech less sensational but further reaching; less individual and more universal as it becomes a pure medium of knowledge transmission.

Seduction is Dracula's means to get his victims. Poetics is the type of seduction that will end him. Dracula is a seducer but the action of his charm appears as a dive into shallow water when compared with the mastery of both poetics and text circulation the editor has.

Conclusion:

Mina ends Dracula by re-usher-ing him in the circle of life by turning him into a book which describes him through the eyes of those who have had to struggle against him. In this respect, she represents the modern woman who is not limited to give birth to children but she can also train and cultivate her mind and set up a book project and manage it. She knows that text must be put into a condition of reproduction so it can be regenerated by the process of reading which itself would not go very far without that of book edition. Just as *Dracula*, Mina is a modern editor even to the present-day reader. Her questions could not apply better to our current global society in which the development of diverse and fast-evolving modes of publication threatens the long-lastingness of our text productions. This is exactly why she types Dr Seward's phonograph's recorded accounts. Indeed, it was in Stoker's time a very modern tool, but Mina realizes that it can in no way challenge the book format as it is not widely spread, not easily transportable and difficult to re-examine to find passages. Thanks to Mina's work, Dracula now belongs to mainstream culture.

Stoker wrote his book at a seminal moment. Medical progress gave people the means to share their blood. The improvements in the educational system along with the expansion of the publishing industry gave people the means to acquire more knowledge. This gave birth to a new metaphor which *Dracula* incarnates. At that time, the world of literature also opened to a greater number of authors, which was not unanimously accepted. As Count Dracula was falling, thus illustrating the end of the privilege of literature by and for a selected few, others saw these signs of democratization as signs of a bleak future for literature.

“ ‘The gentleman scholar’ who still flourished when I was young, has sunken into unimportance both as reader and writer. The bagman and the stockbroker's clerk (and their lady wives and

daughters)'ave usurped his plyce and his influence as readers; and the pressman has picked up his fallen pen, — the pressman, sir, or the presswoman” (quoted by McDonald: 1)⁶.

Whatever Gosse thought of it, the world of letters what changing in Britain, giving space to many more people to write their own book, to write their own metaphors and re-describe the world as they saw it.

⁶ McDonald here quotes Henry Harland. ‘*Books : A Letter to the Editor and an Offer of a Prize*’, YB October 1895 : 128.

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