

**SOAP BUBBLES**

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Soap Bubbles by Max Nordau & Mary J. Safford

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**MAX NORDAU & MARY J. SAFFORD**

# **SOAP BUBBLES**



# SOAP BUBBLES

BY

MAX NORDAU

*Author of "Degeneration," "Comedy of Sentiment," "The Right to Love," "How Women Love," Etc.*

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TRANSLATED BY MARY J. SAFFORD

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## CANT AND HUMBUG.

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Our train had pulled out of Ostend a few minutes before. The carriage in which I had my seat contained its regular complement of six passengers, all of whom, with the exception of myself, belonged to the Anglo-Saxon race. We had scarcely left the station when tongues were loosed, and an animated general conversation began, which enabled me to recognize my companions by their shrill, loud tones and some-

what nasal accents, as Americans. The only person who took no share in the talk was a portly gentleman dressed in a traveling suit of conspicuous style, who had placed his numerous articles of baggage in the net with small regard for the effects of his fellow mortals, then settled himself comfortably in a corner by the window and, after a swift, searching glance at the other inmates of the railway carriage, began to scan the somewhat monotonous landscape. Remarks which were indirectly addressed to him were so utterly ignored that it would have been supposed he did not understand English, had he not said—when one of the Americans was preparing to light a

cigar — in unmistakable English and very emphatically :

“I object to your smoking, sir ; I am not aware that this is a smoking carriage.”

The Englishman's bluntness and reserve evidently did not suit the taste of the Americans, for they began to exchange pointed remarks about the inhospitable social customs of the “Britishers,” their awkwardness in their intercourse with others, and their punctilious formality in social, political and religious matters, of which, however, the Englishman took no more notice than he had formerly done of the indirect attempts to draw him into the conversation.

“I heard a story in London