

that all modern life, rightly understood, depends upon drain-pipes. No doubt it will be hailed as scientific, psychological and profoundly true, also very "brave." But my reply is that big writers, who have what Stevenson called the antiseptic style, can and have treated all these subjects without the slightest offence. They have handled them bravely, even audaciously, without a suspicion of the prurient. But they do not peck and probe and anatomise; they tell us what they mean, and don't mean more than they dare to say. They know too much about life to suppose that men and women as a rule sit always pondering over the problem of sex. There are even coarse writers who have this antiseptic quality. Tom Jones is a venial, healthy being beside the young decadent who talks "sex" with a woman in the modern drawing-room novel.

The Defiant Man and the Revolving Woman.

The vogue of this particular variety is a thing of the past two years. Some trace the beginning to "The Yellow Aster" and "The Heavenly Twins." I wish to speak with respect of the writers of both those books, and for my own part I think they have suffered from the subsequent performances of others who have become associated with them as in a sort of school. At all events there was in the second of these books a touch of conviction, even of fanaticism, which proved it to have been written from high motives, and neither dwell exclusively upon the parts which might have been called morbid. They were long books, and they embraced a good deal of life. But still between them they began what is called the revolt of the woman, and their phenomenal success seems to determine others to go and do likewise—only more so and more so until the public also should revolt. Then, on the other side, we have the assertion of the man—the man determined to flaunt his amours, his superiority to bourgeois morality, his defiance of Sarah Grand as well as of Mrs. Grundy. So we have had a regular man and woman literature, in which both, as Mr. Davidson says, have worn their sexes on their sleeves, and both have exposed their emotions, and explored their physical natures as if there were nothing else in the world for men and women to do or think about. A quarterly review has been invented for the furtherance of this literature, and several series give it hospitality. On the man's side it is cynical as well as nasty; it assumes that there is no world except Piccadilly after dark, or perhaps the coulisses of some disreputable music-hall. It gathers scraps from the more notorious French performers in this line, and it mocks at what is supposed to be the British conscience. On the woman's side it seems at least to be in deadly earnest, but many of the assumptions are the same, *maladies antiques*, and the expression of them is even less veiled. The woman does not haunt Piccadilly, but she lives in the consuming fires of passion; she must talk of it, must yield to it, though she leaves husband and child, and if these are obstacles in her path the whole universe is assailed with her cries. These are the two main streams, but there are other tributaries.

These are the two chief classes, but there are other subsidiary classes. There is the class in which the defiant man and the revolving woman meet, with results that are indescribably turbid. There is a fourth class—bordering it seems to me, on insanity—of whirling and delirious books, which rave of fauns and satyrs, incarnate devils, and hideous scarlet and "magenta" sins. In these you seem to be frothing and bubbling on the surface of unutterable corruption, odours of the dead in your nostrils, mephitic vapours about you, and the sun turned to blood above you. These, it may be said, are comparatively harmless, but a variety of this class is the book which at first sight seems unmeaning, and at second is seen to have a meaning which is unmentionable.

Having thus mapped out the ground, I propose in subsequent articles to take the four classes of "new novels" in turn, and subject them to critical analysis.

"THE WOMAN WHO DIDN'T."

"The polling card will be sent to you," they said. But no polling card came.

"Has nothing else come for me?" was my constant query. "No polling card?" "No, only six plumbers' cards." I asked the householder next door if he had received a card. With what seemed to me sinful indifference, he said, "Oh, no, he had not," and he looked as if he thought I was mad.

Furibund householder next door. He could not grasp the fact that I was a voter for the first time in my life, and that I had been taught to consider my right to vote a duty and a privilege. "Do you think there is anything wrong about this house?" I suggested at home. "The election people don't take any notice of us." Yet we had been in the house a year; we paid, meekly and promptly, all that we were told to pay on blue rate and tax papers. In every way we did our duty. We had a sanitary dustbin, and we had frozen pipes and no water for six weeks; in fact, everything that every respectable householder is expected to have. But Saturday came, and no sign that anybody cared for my vote.

Candidly, if they had very much wished for it, I think I should have grumbled a little when, after luncheon on Saturday, it began to snow and blow, because I had to go all the way down into Wandsworth town to the polling-booth. But as they had taken no notice at all, I said, "martyrlically," when the snow-flakes were falling more thickly, "Now I must go down and vote." I meant to stand no nonsense. On the way a friend from the other ward met me.

"I was on my way to your house," he said, "to save you a needless walk." I felt hot all over, and you need more than ever for the duty and the privilege. "You are not on the register?" "And why not, pray?" "I've been in that house a year." "Yes, but it is only those who have been resident for a twelvemonth last July who have votes." "It must be a mistake," I said, "and I must at least go and convince myself, though of course I don't doubt your word." "May I come with you?" "Of course you may."

Somewhere in or off the Merton road, a long way from our part of Wandsworth, and in an altogether new and interesting region, we turned into a narrow gate, and passed behind an iron chapel of ease into a doorway. A carriage stood at the little gate, and a daintily-dressed girl in a bright red frock held a fox-terrier on a leash in the yard. Several mongrels—I nearly said "with their hands in their pockets"—stood about. They supplied the loofer element, which, as a rule, attends such occasions. "Way in" was printed in big letters against a dirty doorway. "You'll do no good," my friend said. "But if they tell you to go to the agent's office you had better say that this is your public polling-station, and that, since the agent's office is a private place, you naturally came here." "All right," I answered, very gratefully, for, to tell you the truth, I began to feel remarkably unimportant.

A policeman kept the door, and I tried to brush past him. "No admission just now in here," he said, and waved me back. "Why not?" He did not know, nor do I, to this moment, for only half a dozen people were inside voting. Then the door opened, and out bounded a magnificent St. Bernard. I am convinced the dogs have a vote at Wandsworth—why else this canine crowd in the yard, and this beauty inside? He looked a good Progressive, anyhow. After him came two old ladies in tunny bonnets. They looked shaken by their exertions, and the old gentleman with them carried the string bag. "Now, if you please, m'm," said the policeman.

We went inside. Two workmen were voting. They did it calmly and very beautifully to my bewildered mind. "What address?" "A—road." "The other side." I went to the other side. "A—road." "What name?" "F—." A look down the printed list; another look at my face. "Not down." "Why not?" "We don't know, m'm; we are only here to look after the list. You must ask the agent." And there it ended. If I had been a man I felt I should have said "Damn the agent," but I was only a woman who didn't.

NOTES OF THE DAY.

Many Happy Returns to Lord Rosebery! It is twelve months to-day since he kissed hands on his appointment by her Majesty as Prime Minister. Nobody supposes that he has found his office a bed of roses. It would probably be a good deal nearer the truth to say that it has proved a rack. But the difficulties and the discomforts of the duty—which can hardly be realised by anybody not actually behind the scenes—are the measure of the success with which Lord Rosebery has discharged it, and of the services which he has rendered to his party and his country. They should be the measure, also, of the grateful recognition which he receives.

The most remarkable proof of the success of Lord Rosebery is the fact that his Administration—or rather the Administration which he took over from Mr. Gladstone—still survives. When he came into office, on March 5, 1894, very few Liberals, and probably no Unionists, would have given his Government a year's term of grace. But they have had it, and the end is not yet. Probably Lord Rosebery himself was not among the few sanguine prophets. We all remember what he had written in his "Pitt" a year or two before—

It would be too much to maintain that all the members of a Cabinet should feel an implicit confidence in each other; humanity—least of all political humanity—could not stand so severe a test. But between the Prime Minister in the House of Lords and the leader of the House of Commons such a confidence is indispensable. Responsibility rests so largely with the one, and articulation so greatly with the other, that unity of sentiment is the one necessary link that makes a relation, in any case difficult, in any way possible. The voice of Jacob and the hands of Esau may effect a successful imposture, but can hardly constitute a durable administration.

The difficulties have certainly not proved less than were anticipated. Yet the administration has endured. It has done so because the Prime Minister has endured also. The debt which the Liberal Party owes to his tact, his skill, and his patience is very great.

It is a piece of special ill-fortune that Lord Rosebery's official birthday has found him still a victim to the influenza. His illness has, we fear, been more serious than has appeared on the surface; though not more serious than those who appreciate the strain which has been put on the Prime Minister for the past twelve months will understand. We may hope, however, from the latest bulletins that he is now approaching convalescence. It was very unfortunate that he was prevented from taking part in the County Council elections; for there can be no doubt that his connexion with the Council, and the powerful influence which he exercised for so long in its counsels, was one of the chief assets in the Progressive account.

We can quite believe that the *Times* expresses a prevalent feeling when it suggests that the ordinary man will have watched the unfolding of the latest Irish Land Bill with feelings akin to dismay. Is there to be no end to this eternal question? In spite of the long series of Land Bills and the endless contentions in Parliament, in spite of the great scheme of three years ago whereby the Land Question was to be settled for ever by the millions of the British Exchequer, are we to start again from the beginning, and have it all over again? The mind positively recoils from the thought of spending another series of weeks upon those old subjects—judicial rents, tenants' improvements, prairie values, and town parks—while the party man frets and fumes and longs to come out with his "one man one vote" and other fine electioneering topics. We are afraid we can offer no comfort. It must be: it is our discipline and our duty, and the only consolation to be offered is that we richly deserve our fate.

For it is all the result of our habitual method of treating the Irish question. We concede instalments to their importunity, and we draft our concessions in so clumsy a manner that those ingenious gentlemen, the Irish Judges, discover in their abundant leisure that our Acts of Parliament mean precisely the opposite of what we intended them to mean. There is the famous case of *Adams v. Dunsath*, for instance, which has necessitated a large part of the present Bill by perpetuating one of the chief injustices which we thought we were removing in 1881—that, namely, of renting tenants on their own improvements. The incompetence of Parliament, in fact, has proved just as great an obstacle to the settlement of this question as its reluctance. Now we often hear that the House of Lords performs the invaluable function of a revising draftsman. If that is so, it will come to the rescue on these occasions, and bring its unrivalled legal talent to bear, not in destroying these Bills, but in giving full legal effect to the intentions of the Legislature. That kind of assistance we shall all appreciate.

The details of Mr. Morley's Land Bill we must leave for more detailed consideration at another time, merely remarking for the present that, while being just and effective for the tenants' purposes, it leaves no possible excuse for any wrecking tactics on the landlords' side. The point which will perhaps strike most people first of all in Mr. Morley's speech is his remarkable summary of the expenses under the Land Act of 1881. It has cost the State no less than £1,040,000 to get reductions of £1,280,000 out of the Irish landlords. These are only official expenses: what the total expenses to litigants have been we hardly dare think. In spite of it all, the Irish tenant has only got a 20 per cent. reduction against the British average of about 55 per cent. As an economic result, this is, of course, absurd; taking all things into consideration, it would have been positively cheaper to have paid the landlords the amount of the reductions from the Imperial Exchequer. As a political measure, the expenditure was absolutely necessary. It represents what we have had to pay in order to prevent the Irish landlords from involving the country in revolution by resisting reductions.

Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett should stick to jingoism and let geography be. He was splendid on the Swazi questions till he betrayed the impression that that country lies between the Transvaal and Delagoa Bay; and now he has quite spoilt the effect of his scepticism about Armenian atrocities by committing himself to boldly incorrect generalisations about the distance between various places in that country. The *Daily Telegraph*, whose despatches Sir Ellis, discredited on this ground, returns to the charge this morning fortified by an Armenian exile, and rubs in the "absurdity and gross ignorance" of "Slomors'" latest effort at map-making. Talking of geographical blunders, by the way, a well-known morning contemporary (never mind the name; we know only too well how these things creep in) gives food for Colonial sarcasm to-day by a paragraph gravely announcing the names of the staff which, when Lord Brassey takes up the Governorship of Victoria, will accompany him to *South Australia*. It is not clear whether the idea here is that South Australia and Victoria are identical, or that the latter is a town and the capital of the former.

The storm-signals are out in all quarters this morning. Here, for instance, is the *Standard's* warning—

It is recognised in all quarters of the House that, under the present

conditions, the Land Bill must, in view of its great importance and complexity, occupy a long time in Committee. It is now practically certain that the Government cannot do more than carry this Bill and the Welsh Disestablishment Bill to a third reading in the length of the ordinary Session. Other important measures in the programme stand very little chance of being seriously proceeded with.

Very well; if the Opposition are determined that no more shall be done "in the length of an ordinary Session," let it be understood early that there will be an extraordinary Session, as, for instance, in the year 1895, when the House adjourned for a few weeks in the summer and went to work again in the autumn. If it is known early that we mean at all costs to get our "One Man One Vote" Bill through the Commons before this Session closes, some of the obstructives possibly may be restrained in time to permit of Parliament rising at the "normal" period.

The *Times* storm-signal relates only to the Irish Land Bill, and concerning this it is assumed that the Lords are going to be mischievous in any case, the only question being whether they will oppose the second reading, or "reserve their opposition" to a later stage. That will depend upon how far the old question of prairie value appears to be raised when the Bill is seen in print—

The question is one of great importance, for as it involves a principle it must operate with the Unionist leaders in the House of Lords in deciding whether they will resist the second reading, or whether they will reserve their opposition for the Committee stage.

We dare not assume that the Lords will not act as indicated; they have never done anything but mischief in respect to Irish Land Bills. But we would suggest that in the time that remains a few of the more reasonable peers should devote themselves to reading with some care the dolorous history of their Chamber in respect to this matter.

It will be observed that the Government's Labour Conciliation Bill was talked out by Lord Carmarthen last night. Two years ago it was blocked by the Tory Front Bench; it is now to be burked by the Tory rank and file? Except for the blindest partisan reasons, the opposition to it seems to us wholly unintelligible. There was no possible reason, and Lord Carmarthen alleged none, why it should not have been read a first time. On the contrary, he professed to want more information, and his means of getting it was apparently to prevent the Bill from being even introduced and printed. The electors will be asked in due time to note the bearing of these tactics.

L.C.C. ELECTIONS.

To the EDITOR OF THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—I quite agree with you. It is the "big drum" that has done it. The electors always punish anything like extreme tact. They dropped on the Moderates last November for listening to Mr. Atteleston Riley, and they have shown their sense of the language used by Mr. Hugh Price Hughes and Alderman Fleming Williams by deserting the Progressives now.—Yours, AVERAGE ELECTOR.

To the EDITOR OF THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

DEAR SIR,—May I be allowed to say that I had nothing whatever to do with the Municipal Watch Night Service? The whole proceedings were under the direction of the Rev. F. H. Stead.—Yours faithfully, ST. JOHN'S VICARAGE, LARCOM-STREET, WALTHAM, S.E., MARCH 4. ARTHUR W. JEPSON.

THE CONSERVATIVES AND LABOUR.

To the EDITOR OF THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

SIR,—On page 6 of your issue of this (Saturday) evening you allege that, despite all they have done, are doing, and are ready to do, the Conservatives are indifferent to labour. In proof you aver that I was absent from the House of Commons when the Home Secretary sought leave on Friday to introduce a Factory Bill. Had this been true, it would have meant nothing. But it is untrue. I entered the House at 1.55, and remained until 6.15, presenting *inter alia* a petition from 50,000 working men and women against the foreign pauper immigration, which is maintained, encouraged, and belauded by the present Ministers. To sustain them during Mr. Asquith's speech they had a few drowsy supporters. Conservative sympathy was well expressed by Mr. Matthews and Mr. Stuart Wortley. The criticism came from another quarter, conspicuous by absence, as Mr. Chamberlain said, when real work for Labour is to be done. Happily Labour now recognises as proved, by the victory upon victory being announced on the telegraph tape, that its true interests are with the Conservatives and Unionists, who will live and let live, instead of with a tyrannical, spoiling, monopolising, reckless band of aggressors.—Yours faithfully, CARLTON CLUB, MARCH 2. C. E. HOWARD VINCENT.

"DANDY DICK WHITTINGTON" AT THE AVENUE THEATRE.

Mr. G. K. Sims has called his new work an "opera route," whether the description is intended to give an idea of the character of Mr. Ivan Caryl's music or of the book we can hardly say. It cannot be said that the classification is correct in either case; this, no doubt, is to the credit of the musician since it shows that his music is not unsuitable. In truth it may be suggested that the old story which has so often served for pantomime has been turned into what may be called a burlesque. Humour is sought by bringing the pretty legend "up to date" and depositing it in a circus propter, the cat is kept in a basket, and the rats have utterly left the ship, and are not heard of at all. Morocco is changed to Siam, perhaps in order to prove that the piece owes nothing to "Morocco Bound"; there may be some debt to the luckless "Eastward Ho!" that did not run at the Opera Comique. It is too late in the day to complain of such treatment, and the only question is whether the burlesque with the ready-made plot is pleasing. It really is a "de gustibus" matter. Those who prefer quantity to quality in jokes, who do not care whether the lyrics are crude if they are in any sense comic, will be pleased, though the first act seems rather to hang fire, and the second, to use the popular phrase, "fizzles out" towards the close. There is plenty of humour of the simple, obvious order—perhaps comic business is a more correct term. Mr. Henry Wright, chief Irish comedian, works with vast energy and some ability as an Irish circus clown, and really seems a very useful addition to the class of which Mr. Looney is a representative. Mr. Robert Tate, man, as a Siamese acrobat in the English circus, did capital work of a rather finer style, and really was funny in an opium-taking scene, which burlesques the absurd episode in "John-a-Dreams." The highest pleasure was from the admirable dancing of Miss Florence Lever, her contribution really has some grace and charm. Of Mr. John Sheridan as Lady Fitzwarren, we may say what has been said of him in "Little Christopher Columbus," for his part shows little change—one makes the statement with some regret, though he caused many to laugh. Miss May Yohé, the Dandy Dick, caused enthusiastic applause in all that she did; one cannot suggest that she shows any advance in singing or acting. Miss Ethel Haydon has a pleasing voice, somewhat affected by a cold, and pretty person. The music, if not of great excellence, was certainly suitable; indeed, Mr. Ivan Caryl has certainly paid a greater compliment to the audience in the way of taking pains than Mr. G. K. Sims.

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