NOTES OF THE WEEK.

On the level of proximate causes and of the surface eb and flow of events, public affairs have assumed an unwonted hopeful appearance during the last week. The public mind will no doubt take on a very optimistic tone. And we are far from denying that there are grounds for encouragement, provided that their unwontedly hopeful appearance during the last week.

The public mind will no doubt take on a very optimistic tone. And we are far from denying that there are grounds for encouragement, provided that their strictly limited scope is understood, and that people are not deluded into supposing that they have any direct bearing on the solution of the really menacing problems. Chief place is necessarily claimed by the dramatic change in the Irish situation. We are not indeed out of the wood yet. Mr. de Valera has been repudiating the treaty, but happily he is not everybody, and we have always regarded him as irreconcilable and pointed out that he appears to be in the hands of forces more anxious to embarrass Britain than to liberate Ireland. It remains to be proved whether the same forces can induce Sinn Fein as a whole to accept the best compromise it can ever hope to obtain.

Fortunately the arrangement is, in its very nature, impregnable from the side of Belfast. If all goes well, the reconciliation of Ireland will go far to remove certain occasions of international friction; and we hold that the longer the development of any “crisis” in foreign affairs can be postponed, the better. Time is on the side of those who are striving to expose the foundations of Economic Imperialism, with its inevitable issue in recurring wars. If, on the other hand, we have eventually to face another war, our strength will be increased if the Collinses and Griffiths have been converted into Smutses and Bothas. But whatever happens in regard to the present negotiations, it is to be prayed that the Government may not be betrayed into fresh war in Ireland. It holds in its hands the indispensable keys; let it simply retain these, and leave Sinn Fein, within what may be called its legitimate sphere, to its own devices. It will not be long before the logic of facts compels it to come to terms of its own free will.

Events at Washington have likewise taken a favourable turn. President Harding has confidently announced, “We are going to succeed beyond our fondest hopes.” Apparently Japan is going to accept the 5-5-3 formula, in return for concessions as to Pacific naval bases. A Four-Power Agreement is to take the place of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. It would seem that it is not proving beyond the resources of civilisation to overcome French reluctance on the naval ratio, particularly in regard to submarines. We repeat that no such “settlement” can really settle anything; and it may prove actually harmful, if it deludes us into supposing that it is, in itself, any guarantee against war. We do not get rid of a nuisance by ignoring it; we have to set to work to remove it. It will be more necessary than ever to persist in urging the truth that no mere political devices can overcome the economic forces that drive nations to war. Nevertheless, no agreement can be broken the very moment it is made. A certain ceremonial must be observed by the most callously realistic of Governments. The agreement, too, in itself, tends to strengthen the sentimental influences making against war. And weak and impermanent as these are compared with the economic forces, they may exercise a retarding power. We rejoice therefore at the prospect of the moratorium which now seems almost assured; and we hope that the advocates of peace will make full use of the respite.

There is one country that is not taking kindly to the prospective outcome of the Conference. China’s very natural protests are being drowned in a chorus of contemptuous lecturing from the whole of the orthodox Press. The apologists insist that China must be “enabled” to set up a unified and stable Government; the right of her present Government to speak in her name is bluntly denied. She might well pray to be allowed to get out of her own mess in her own way. However, it is unjustly claimed that the Powers are devotedly settling to work “to give the Chinese people a real chance of regaining their rightful place.” The bald and brutal fact of course is that the Agreement is a compact for the co-operative exploitation of China by international finance. The diplomats have decided that there is enough of China to go round; and they announce the fact in decorously veiled language. It is only in the joint partaking of her economic body and blood that the Great Powers can hold peaceful communion. Her contribution to the success of the Conference is an indispensable one. Apart from the presence of such a eucharistic victim, the gathering could only have taken the form of a suicide club. As it is, it has been possible to turn it into a cannibal feast. Naturally the weakest of the big nations has had to discharge the unenviable role of the dinner. It is unpleasant for China and Japan. But what would we have? Things have an awkward way of leading to consequences; if we will a policy of Economic Imperialism...
The vampire of impending war still lurks unappeased behind the pillars of the Conference hall. Professor Soddy has lately been bearing witness, in a public lecture, to the economic truths which, in the last resort, determine international relations. He depicted vividly the enormous powers of production with which science has equipped us, and foretold further developments as probable in the near future. How, he asked, are we to dispose of this fabulous productivity? If the question is not satisfactorily answered, the only possible issue, he maintained, must before long be another world war. A very remarkable convert to these views has recently taken the field—not less a person than Mr. Henry Ford. That so prominent an industrial magnate should be raising his voice in this sense in America, the very centre, for the time being, of peace negotiations, is an event of prime importance. Mr. Ford has roundly declared that the principal causes of war are the gold standard and the present banking control. His own recent Homeric contest with Wall Street has no doubt had an enlightening effect on his mind. His remedy is the establishment of a power-unit currency. This, in fundamental principle, is obviously very closely akin to our own declared policy of basing credit on our actual productive capacities, but Mr. Ford does not appear, however, to have published the details of his proposed scheme, and we should like to know more about them before we express any opinion on its merits.

The position as to the German Reparations continues to be interesting. It is understood that the British Government will use its influence in favour of the moratorium. Meanwhile, Dr. Rottenbuhr is said to have succeeded in negotiating a loan to enable Germany to meet the instalments due in January and February. But note the point. In connection with all the suggestions that have been made as to a moratorium, a loan, guaranteed Reparation Bonds, there have repeatedly been very plain intimations that these accommodations will be made conditional on a "reform" of Germany's finances. In particular, the balancing of budgets and the closing down of the printing-press are to be insisted on. We have in fact a country that, in a scientific way, was beginning to move along a more rational path in financial matters. Its creditors, armed with superior military and political force, straightway close round it and press it back into the rigid mould of the old financial orthodoxy. We have, from time to time, pointed out indications of a great conspiracy of cosmopolitan financiers to force on the world by every available means, including the governmental authority of the leading Powers, a policy aiming at the re-establishment of the old financial orthodoxy. We have, from time to time, pointed out indications of a great conspiracy of cosmopolitan financiers to force on the world by every available means, including the governmental authority of the leading Powers, a policy aiming at the re-establishment of the gold standard. There are happily counter forces in the field. We need all the forces we can raise. A few influential rank-and-file of consumers will awake to the fact of the enormous mass-power which they potentially possess, if they would but organise themselves.

The Labour Joint Council has carried through the sorry farce of its Conference on unemployment and foreign policy. If the Conference was not intended to achieve something practical at once, it had better not have been held at all. Such a time, the curious limitation of the subject-matter is an open confession of the bankruptcy of Labour policy in regard to unemployment. In any thorough discussion of the subject, it would indeed have been necessary to include its bearing on international relations. But the chief emphasis should have been on the disturbing influence on those relations of the internal dislocation of which unemployment is a symptom. The intensification of the present crisis by incidental reactions of the international chaos is a comparatively secondary matter. The point to emphasise is that, if we went sensibly to the root of the unemployment trouble, we should thereby be doing the most effective thing that can be done to put the mutual relations of nations on a better basis. Wars and rumours of wars on the one hand and unemployment on the other are the twin children of a diseased financial system. And any powerful nation is able to set the economic maladjustment right for itself within its own borders. Furthermore, by doing so it would make it almost inevitable that the other nations should very rapidly follow its example. But the engineers of this gratuitous Conference preferred to evade the direct challenge which the crisis is forcing upon us, and seek refuge in the congenial atmosphere of the fatuities of political Liberalism. We are not surprised that there were vigorous protests. A considerable section made strenuous endeavours to move amendments. But, as invariably happens at Labour Conferences, the proceedings were ruthlessly steam-rollered by the platform, and the official resolution was produced intact, with the most rubrical correctness, at the end of the proceedings. We are glad that the unemployed themselves also insisted on putting in an appearance and told the Conference some much-needed home-truths. Labour must face the real issue, if it is to do anything at all. It must solve the riddle so forcibly propounded by Professor Soddy. Here we have a marvellously and always increasingly efficient productive machine, able to deluge society with all the commodities needed for life, and at the same time progressively dispensing with the need for human labour. What are we going to do about it? We must find a way of setting it to work at its proper job of delivering the goods, and of securing to everyone a claim to those goods—or perish. The "Right to Work" has about as much bearing on the real problem as has the Homeric Question.

The Irish situation would seem to necessitate a General Election before long. Assuming that Sinn Fein ratifies the treaty, it is generally taken for granted that the incident is the academic one of the House of Commons would require, as a matter of constitutional propriety, the election of a new Parliament. The Tories, it is true, are insisting that the reform of the House of Lords must be dealt with before the dissolution. But the exigencies of the moment will probably confine the process of "dealing with" to the mere laying of the Government's proposals before the House of Commons. If, again, Sinn Fein should refuse, any new policy to meet the emergency could hardly be definitely adopted without an appeal to the country. The Government's electoral prospects when the election does come will certainly be brighter than they have hitherto been at any period of its sensationally episodic career. Its stock has gone up immeasurably in the eyes of the ordinary sensible citizen and even in those of some of the ideally minded. In regard to all the matters on which its policy in the past has seemed most sinister—Russia, Germany, Ireland—its behaviour has markedly improved. Neither the Independent Liberals, nor a Liberal-Cecilian Tory coalition, nor the Labour Party can make out any case that could really settle anything that matters, he would be a great statesman. On the other hand, no rival section—not the Labour Party any more than any other— is proposing to raise the fundamental economic questions. If one of these days either a deadlock in indus-
try and finance, or a massive and organised popular demand, should force matters to an issue, true economic reform might just as well be carried out under the auspices of the present Government as under any other.

Lord Inchcape is doubtless a very capable business man. We have no doubt that he understands the affairs of the P. and O. Company admirably; we have no wish to replace him in that post either by a State bureaucrat or by any other supposedly "democratic" substitute. But we cannot recognise that his strictly limited form of technical ability gives him any peculiar right to lay down the law for the nation at large on the wider aspects of its economic affairs. "Too much Inchcape" indeed would briefly summarise our complaints against the prevailing atmosphere. He has been at it again with even more than his usual dogmatism. "We started some three years ago on the idea of building a new heaven and a new earth . . . . and we have wakened up now to the stern fact that we have no funds with which to build." "500,000 workmen's houses were to have been built at a cost of 200 millions. Fortunately the Prime Minister stepped in and he succeeded in limiting the number to the 176,000 which had been started." "Education is now costing the country over a hundred millions a year"—such are the strains of heavenly wisdom that fall on our ears as we listen to the pealing of the Inchcape Bell. If people believe these things they will deserve all they get. Happily even in the City-train Press saner counsels are occasionally to be read. The "Daily Express" has splashed into the pool with a sensational article of nearly a column full of such exclamations as, "Do not be misled by the false cry of Economy. Buy such trifles. But we are glad of any support in our appeal for a psychology of expansion rather than of contraction. We do not know whether the 'Express' realises that in calling for the freest private spending we are almost the least fitted tribunal for passing judgment in political libel actions which turn on the expression of faith in a just cause. Mr. Thomas cannot have regarded the verdict of such a Jury, whilst it may carry little conviction to Mr. Thomas's ethical justification for his position, is to spell the end of his political star in this country. As a Privy Councillor and "true and faithful servant unto the King's Majesty," Mr. Thomas appears to have had the misfortune to become involved in the leadership of a strike movement which he considered to be likely to lead to the overthrow of the Constitution. Mr. Thomas accordingly did his best to lead the movement backwards, and the Communists accordingly accused him in good round terms of being a traitor. In these circumstances no Jury in this country could be found to return a verdict against Mr. Thomas, but Mr. Thomas's ethical justification for his position can hardly be said to have been an issue in the action. In the result the Communists acclaim the verdict of a Jury, whilst it may carry little conviction to Mr. Thomas's followers. There is no doubt that a Jury drawn from the well-to-do and Conservative classes is almost the least fitted tribunal for passing judgment in political libel actions which turn on the expression of political opinion. We have little doubt that if, say, a capitalist newspaper had accused Mr. Thomas of treachery to the Constitution for his leadership of the strike movement the same Jury would have found a verdict against him. The theory of trial by jury is that a man is tried by his peers, and in this respect the equality of man lies in the equality of income. We are not in the habit of giving legal advice, but remembering the heavy damages and costs inflicted upon the "Daily Herald" in a recent action, and the enormous fine which the damages and costs in the Thomas action impose on the Communists in defending an action which has no reason.

The Birth-Rate Question.

From an Electro-Physiological Standpoint.

By Arthur E. Binek.

Author of "Studies in Electro-Physiology," "Germination in its Electrical Aspect," etc., etc.

In the discussions which are taking place throughout the civilised world on the all-important question of the birth-rate no sort of regard seems to have been taken of the fact that all living organisms are electrical in structure and must, perforce, conform to the laws governing the operation of electrical apparatus. That chemical processes, essential to life, are linked inseparably, with all vital functions does not affect the matter, once we realise that they are an effect, and not a cause, of nervous energy.

In his review of "The Law of Births and Deaths," in The New Age, "A. E. R." said: "The demonstration that germination is an electrical phenomenon, and that the phenomena of attraction and repulsion within the cell are also electrical, brings Mr. Baines into close contact with Mr. Pell's theory of fertility," and it may serve a useful purpose if we consider how closely and to what extent Mr. Pell's views coincide with mine.

Mr. Pell's theory is, I understand, based on a study of statistics. From this he deduces that, beyond a certain optimum point, intellectual development and high living contribute to sterility, and that fertility is favoured by semi-poverty and more or less manual labour. In all this he recognises the operation of a natural law, and, so far as I am able to judge, he is right.

The matter with which we are chiefly concerned, in attempting to state a case and throw light upon which is obscure, is the nature of the nervous impulse and the law underlying its propagation along a nerve. This I will endeavour to make clear.

It is not disputed that in normal conditions of weather the air is electrically positive and the earth negative—two terminals of Nature's electrical system—and it may be pointed out, although the text-book is silent on the subject, that as the atmosphere is not deprived of its electric charge before it reaches our lungs, we inspire that charge as well as the mixed gases of which air is composed.

Nor will the text-book tell us what it is that enables the newly born infant to live independently of the mother, although it should become clear, on reflection, that it is the act of breathing.

Prior to birth the circulation is not completed through the lungs; the fetus is dependent for its nourishment and its energy on the functions of the umbilical cord. With its first breath, however, oxygen is brought into association with the iron-containing haemoglobin in the lung tissue, and nerve-force, the Vis Nervosa, or whatever it may be called, is instantly generated, circulation is completed and the heart beats in response to the infant's own power.
it, but a cognate, more subtle, and, in an electrical sense, more powerful force.

That this is not mere theory but a statement of fact there are many proofs. In the space at my disposal I can give but a few of them.

The oxygen intake of man, during the daytime, is 300 cc. per minute; at night, during sleep, 200 cc. per minute. Call the observed electromotive force at 10 a.m. 5 millivolts; at night, during sleep, it will be 0.5 millivolts; a fall exactly in accordance with the diminished oxygen intake.

After great physical or mental exertion, iron—the positive substance in the blood—is largely used up.

Lack of iron in the blood and of oxygen in the air have consequences well understood.

The skin is highly resistant to the passage of electricity and provides absolute insulation of the body. Skin resistance cannot be lowered—such as by immersion of the body in water—for any appreciable period without, at least temporary, exhaustion being experienced.

As the logical outcome of many years of research work I am constrained to the opinion that all forms of life begin to live, and maintain life by means of a force, in the generation and augmentation of which iron and oxygen, together with energy from the positively charged air and from light-frequencies, are the principal factors; potassium salts playing a part as yet imperfectly understood.

I am not dealing with food in my survey, but, obviously, for the maintenance of a congeries of electro-chemical laboratories suitable pabulum must be supplied.

Now, if nerve-force is generated in the manner I have sketched it follows that the blood-stream must be the carrier of energy as well as of oxygen, and this leads us to very important conclusions:

(1) The brain, by reason of its larger blood-supply, must be assumed to be the seat of highest electric, or rather neuro-electric, potential.

(2) Inasmuch as every cell in the body has an iron-content and is in constant receipt of oxygen, a measure of intra-cellular generation must go on.

The motor and secretory paths are "open" circuits, through which impulses are, from time to time, sent by the brain, downwards, to activate muscle or stimulate gland:

Impulses along these paths are afferent and of weak electrical potential; whereas those whose minds are fully occupied during the day, lose more than 90 per cent., as against the 90 per cent. of the mental worker, of his nerve-energy, and experiencing, mainly, muscle-fatigue, does not require sleep for recovery. Nor does he eat too much.

If the neuro-electrical potential of the brain falls nine-tenths, or falls very appreciably after mental exertion, it follows that the neuro-electrical tension of every cell in the body must be correspondingly lower and that suppressing any single impulse to reach its destination, it is not probable that the sperm and germ cells, in such circumstances, be adequately electrified.

In the case of the highly fed there is a rush of blood and energy to the digestive apparatus; and lowered brain supply.

The manual labourer, on the other hand, does not, in working the same number of hours, lose more than from 40 to 50 per cent., as against the 90 per cent. of the mental worker, of his nerve-energy, and experiencing, mainly, muscle-fatigue, does not require sleep for recovery. Nor does he eat too much.

If the foregoing is accepted as a statement of fact, it would appear that better and more abundant food and the spread of education the labouring classes might cease to be exceptionally fertile, and so add to the difficulties of those who desire, and average, the number of children in each family. It may not be the case, the problem of the farmer and the manufacturer, to lighten the burden of the fertile poor, but I fail to see how they propose to find a remedy for sterility among other classes of the community.

In studying the propagation of the nervous impulse one is inevitably brought back, from speculative divergences, to the molecular theory of the propagation of electricity along a wire.

Imagine a nerve to be a tube containing a number of small spherical Leyden jars. An impulse—that is to say a neuro-electrical discharge—passes from the brain by a motor or secretory path. The cells along that path are, in normal health, already charged to the limit of their electrostatic capacity. The first cell in the anterior line receives the additional charge from the brain and, perforce, discharges it or its equivalent to the second, and the second to the third, and so on; so that there is a succession of rapid charges and discharges instead of a continuous and uninterrupted flow.

And here is a point of vital interest:

Nerve cells when normally charged pass on any additional charge they receive; if their tension is sub-normal they can only pass on any surplus remaining after their tension has been raised to normal.

In a long line of cells the tension of which had fallen it is quite conceivable that a single impulse might fail to reach its destination, until reinforced.

We may now see the bearing of this on the fertilisation of the ovum.

Sperm and ovum cells—the male and female pro-nuclei—are of opposite electrical polarity and require to be adequately electrified to exercise the attraction necessary to their fusion. Statistics go to show that sterility is favoured by intellectual development or great mental activity and by rich and abundant food, while the poorly fed and hard worked labouring classes are exceptionally fertile.

Galvanometric tests of healthy men and women, taken at different hours of the day, have shown that human electromotive force varies with the degree of mental fatigue, but is not greatly affected by manual labour.

To quote actual figures the hand to hand deflection of a person in normal health, on the scale of the galvanometer I am using, may be put at 200 millivolts at 10 a.m. If that person is engaged for seven or eight hours in some occupation or pursuit involving considerable mental effort his deflection at about 6 p.m. would not exceed 30 millivolts—a loss of nine-tenths of his energy—nor would he recover that energy without sleep. During sleep the generation of nerve-force is exactly halved.

In this category we can, in all probability, include all those whose minds are fully occupied during the day, whether with business or pleasure.

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Our Generation.

There was a passage in Mr. Lloyd George’s Guildhall Speech which, though it is now an old story, is still interesting as showing the state of mind in which a Progressive statesman is nowadays expected to be. The Premier quoted a description of the condition of England after the Napoleonic wars, “culled out of the history of the beginning of the Nineteenth Century.” The passage is as follows: “The burden of the largest debt ever as yet incurred by any nation, and the reaction of exhaustion after the sustained effort of the war, combined to produce a terrible crisis. The days of rejoicing and the nights of illumination were scarce ended when men began to find that disasters follow upon peace as well as upon war. The sudden close of a long war dislocated commerce and industry alike, in their widest extent and in their minutest details.”

This, Mr. Lloyd George remarked, “is such an accurate description of what is taking place to-day that it is a repetition of the same effects derived from similar causes.” We had imagined that between the close of the Napoleonic wars and that of the Great War a century of progress had rolled, and that in the last few years more than one sun had risen behind the Welsh hills. But such spectacular events, it seems, dazzle us rather than make us see more clearly. We are not so confused, however, that we cannot understand the argument from the other side of last century is, in the mouth of a major prophet of Progress, an argument a little unconvincing. If Mr. Chesterton were to use it, we should know that he believed in it himself; for a statement such as “We have had a whole century of progress: therefore we have made no progress” is the kind that carries immediate conviction to Mr. Chesterton’s mind. But when Mr. Lloyd George does this sort of thing we can only conclude that he is thinking too intensely of his present popularity to give any attention to the subject at all. There would be, of course, such a disastrous succession of faux pas in politics if politicians spoke “with their eye on the subject” that we are almost glad that they do not. Yet, though it is perhaps an academic task, it may be interesting to consider the content of Mr. Lloyd George’s sentences. He says in effect that we cannot handle the problems of peace any better to-day than we could a hundred years ago; “depression” followed the Napoleonic wars, and we are suffering at present from a repetition of the same effects derived from similar causes. “It is of course patently clear that we are now incompetent to meet the problems of the peace; and on this fact it seems to be useless to waste one’s breath. But, on the other hand, there was no occasion for Mr. Lloyd George to make out of our impotence a sort of consolation of politics, and to be deeply moved, and to move his audience deeply too, by remarking that a century of effort had rolled away, into history quotable by politicians, leaving men’s inability to understand and to handle problems beautifully unchanged.

Mr. Lloyd George as the herald of false dawns we can stand, for we have become accustomed to him, but Mr. Lloyd George as a sort of Harvey—was it Harvey—meditating among the tombs is rather too depressing. It is too depressing, for the Prime Minister is one of the most significant men of his time; he is confident to the extent that he will gaily find the solution for problems of which he knows nothing; and when he no longer dares to shout a way of salvation from the house-tops, we can only conclude that the problem is very much indeed beyond his comprehension. Of course, things may be much better than that; and it may be idle to object to, or to agree with, the assumptions of a man who makes so many and such contradictory assumptions as those of the Premier. What he seems to imply for the moment is that the fate of society is mechanically determined, and that a peace of a certain kind will inevitably follow a war of a certain kind, whatever men or statesmen may do. It is a theory that commits him, with the bulk of the Conservative party, to historical materialism and economic determinism. And really that seems to be the working creed of almost all statesmen. Karl Marx’s materialistic conception of history may have been after all nothing more than a psychological interpretation of historical figures. Men have always been too much determinists, consciously or unconsciously, and the real essence of Free Will has still probably to be discovered.

A column upon Spiritualism which recently appeared in the “Daily News” is interesting as an illustration of the level to which subjects have to be “reduced” before they can become “popular questions.” In its enthusiasm the Daily News’ perhaps overdoes the process. “Does ‘The Unseen’—one of the Grand Guignol set at the Little Theatre—convey a warning to spiritualists?” it asks. “The Unseen” is the story of a widow who “communicates” daily with her deceased husband; she undergoes hypnotic treatment, loses the power of “communication,” and it is a repetition of the same. Now this is the sort of stupid degeneration which the Press makes into a question. Should clairvoyants be hypnotised? The people whose replies the “Daily News” reports had not the sense to reply, “Ask me another.” “Mr. Engholm, of ‘Light,’” said he had never in his many cases been nearer to that in the play. He believed that where a man or woman was certain he or she was in touch with one they had loved, the last thing in the world to do was to rob them of that belief, whether it was hallucination or not.” But perhaps the most silly of the lot was “a young clergyman of the Church of England” who regarded religion apparently as a matter of “playing the game” with the Unseen. He “protested that spiritualism was disloyal to Christianity, when our Lord had given abundant assurances of life after death.” On the whole, could a subject of such interest be discussed in a manner more flat, ignorant and vulgar? The fact is that when questions are made so elementary as this there is no profit in considering them at all; although it is only when they are in this state that the Press begins to take an interest in them. Of all the newspapers, however, the “Daily News,” misled by its “idealism,” or the vagueness of its idealism, is the most unfortunate; for first it selects “improving” topics for discussion, and then it cheapens them, under the impression that somehow or other it is making form fit content. The other papers have generally the taste to select questions which are at the outset so vulgar that they cannot be vulgarised.

The amiability, and what one can only term, using a phrase too often on employers’ lips, the “willing spirit” of the Labour Party, is so ubiquitous that one really has no right to be annoyed by it. Yet Mr. Clynes’ invariable goodness has become so maddening that even when he is reasonable, his fatal eagerness to agree, to be among the first in goodwill and in virtue, is enough to give his words the opposite effect of that which they are designed to have. He has a habit, out of sheer amiability, of making every difficulty infinitely less difficult than it should be. The Labour Party as a whole should be “wicked” now and then just to prove their sincerity, and if they are incapable of doing so they should simulate it occasionally—as a political move. None of them, however—we except Mr. Neil Maclean—can endure to be thought wicked, even by those who, according to their social creed, are themselves wicked. But one finds them always doing good deeds and waiting in expectant attitudes to be praised. If they would only learn from the Ulster die-hards, stupid and and narrow-spirited as these are! But the Labour Party have not sufficient character to be unpopular, and they deserve too truly to be popular ever to be so.

Edward Moore.
A Girl in It
By Rowland Kenney.

I was just cooking a couple of two-eyed steaks when Black Mick walked in, and, noting the look in his eyes and being for some reason in an expansive mood, I offered him a sit down. After comparing notes on the various possibilities of the district with regard to job-getting, we turned on to a discussion of the relative moralities of begging and stealing. But in this, I found, Mick was not vitally interested—both were too deeply indebted for him to think of doing. For Mick was a worker. He liked work. Vagrancy to him made no appeal. To “settle down” was his one definite desire.

But jobs refused to hold him, and the road gripped him in spite of himself. So the problem presented itself to him in an abstract way only; to me there was a real—but let that go.

Mick’s respectability was uncanny. He could speculate on these things as if they were matters affecting none of us there. In that fourpenny doss-house he remained as aloof as a god, and in some vague way the personality seemed to change. His eyelids lifted, showing great, glowing eyes staring from a cold set face. His back squared, and the table, clamped to the floor, creaked protestingly as his sprawled legs were drawn under him. He was in a corner of the room, at the end of the longest table, and so incurious about the rest of the company that neither of us knew whether there were two or twenty men there. For a while Mick was absorbed in his smoke, and then I saw him slowly turn his head to the door. It was a languid movement. His dark eyes were half veiled as he watched for the entrance of someone who did not enter. All the while no one moved. We smoked silently. Mick’s manner gradually stiffened; his eyes grew more intent, and I was conscious of a sinister presence in the room. A new pollution affected me. I said, with an intended grandiloquent sweep of my hand towards the dozen derelict beds. We selected two that lay in an alcove at the end of the room farthest from the door, and turned in. In a few minutes we were both asleep.

Suddenly I awoke. A clock outside struck one. There was no sound in the room but the now subdued snoring of Twinetoes. I was at once wide awake, but I lay quite still, breathing as naturally as possible, keeping my eyes more than half closed, for I felt some sinister presence in the room. A new pollution affected the atmosphere. Bending over me was the old crone. Downstairs she had seemed aimless, shapeless, almost helpless, an object of disgusting pitifulness. Now, dark as it was, and unexpected as was the visit, I could at once see that she was as active and alert as a monkey.

On going to bed I had put my boots under my pillow, and thrown my coat over me, keeping the cuff of one sleeve forward. A practised claw slipped under my head and deftly fingered the insides of my boots: Blank. The coat pockets were next examined: Blank. Still I dog-slept. The wrinkled lips were now working angrily, churning up two specks of foam that shone white in the corner of my mouth. The running eye rained tears of rage down her left cheek; and the other empty hand dug vigorously in the bosom of her tattered coat. In an effort to go over the rest of me, I gave a half turn and a low sleep moan to warn her off. At once the left hand shot up over my head, the lean fingers roused me. One glimpse of that tortured face had shown me that I could hope for nothing; the utter folly of mercy or half measures was fully understood. Yet, effort was impossible. I was simply and completely afraid.

The head pipe did not, however, meet my skull. Hearing a slight scuffle, I peeped out to find that there were now two figures in the gloom. The Boss had crept up, seized the hag’s left arm, and was pointing to the door. She held back, and in silent pantomime showed that Mick had not been gone over yet. With her free hand she gathered her one skirt over her dirty, skinny knees and danced with rage by the side of my bed. She looked like the parody of some carrion creature seen in the nightmare of a starving man. The most terrible thing about her was her amazing silence; the mad dance of her stockinged feet on the bare boards made no sound.

The Boss loosened his hold on her wrist, but took
away the lead pipe from her, and she slipped over to Mick. Again those thin fingers went through their evolutions with uncanny silence and effect, whilst I lay, every muscle taut, ready to spring up if occasion required. My nerve had returned, and now that the piece of lead pipe was in the hands of the less fiendish partner of this strange concern, I was ready to wade in. But she found nothing, and Mick slept on. We were too poor to rob; but this only enraged her the more. Her fingers twisted themselves into the shawl at her breast, and she silently but vehemently spat at Mick's head as she moved away.

For half an hour I tried in vain to sleep, and then the Boss again appeared. This time he bore a huge bulk of patched and soiled canvas, part of an old sail, which he hung from the ceiling across the middle of the room, thus shutting off Twinetoes, Mick and myself from that part where was the door on to the stairs. He was not noisy, but he made no attempt to keep the previous death stillness of the house.

As the Boss descended the stairs, a surprising thing happened—and Mick awoke. Girlish laughter rippled through the passages, whilst I lay, every muscle taut, ready to spring up if occasion required. My nerve had returned, and now that the piece of lead pipe was in the hands of the less fiendish partner of this strange concern, I was ready to wade in. But she found nothing, and Mick slept on. We were too poor to rob; but this only enraged her the more. Her fingers twisted themselves into the shawl at her breast, and she silently but vehemently spat at Mick's head as she moved away.

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As the Boss descended the stairs, a surprising thing happened—and Mick awoke. Girlish laughter rippled up the stairs! "God Almighty," said Mick, "what's that?"

Again it came, and with it the gurgling of the old woman. It was impossible and incredible, that mingling in the fetid air of those two sounds, as if the babble of clear spring water had suddenly broken into and merged with the turgid roll of a city sewer. Mick sat up. "But this is bloody!" he said.

"Wait, I'm all right!"

We waited. Mick slipped out of bed, carefully opened his knife and made a few judicious slits in the veiling canvas. My senses had become abnormally acute. I seemed to hear every shade of sound within and without the house. I could sense, I imagined, the very position of the persons in the kitchen below. Even Twinetoes was affected by the tense atmosphere. He murmured in his sleep and seemed somewhat sobered, for his limbs took more natural positions on the bed. The darkness was no longer a barrier to vision. By now I could see quite clearly; and so, I believe, could Mick.

The old woman was mumbling to the girl. "'S aw ri', mi dear. 'Av a drink o' this. W'll fix y' up aw ri.'"

She had again dropped into the low uncertain voice of aimless senility. The girl remained silent. Glasses clinked. The BOSS, I could hear, walked up and down the kitchen, busy with some final work of the night. A confused murmur came from another corner; but I could not distinguish the words: The dock-rats were apparently discussing something.

Again that ripple of sound ascended the stairs, but this time there was an added note of apprehension. It broke very faintly but pitifully, before dying away to the sound of light footsteps. Half a dozen stairs were pressed, then came a stumble and a girlish "A-uh." She recovered herself as the hateful voice from behind said, "'Aw ri', m'dear," and older, surer feet felt the stairs and pushed on behind the girl. Through the veiling canvas and the old walls I seemed to see the pair ascending. A few seconds more, and a slight form rounded the jamb of the door. The girl's eyes blinked in the walled twilight of the room. She hesitated on the threshold, but only for a second. The touch of a following frame impelled her forward. Her uncertain foot caught against a bed leg and a white hand gripped the steadying rail. Long-nailed claws clutched themselves in the fingers of her other hand and the old woman half drew, half twisted her into sitting down on the edge of the bed. They began to talk quietly. I examined them more closely.

The old crone still played the part of ancient childhood, numbling words of little import and obscenely fingering the girl's arms, head, and waist. Some instinct led her to veil her eyes from the girl, for from those differing orbs gleamed all the wickedness of her mangled and distorted soul. Four feet rained from her left eye, whilst the right again held that sinister glow. The girl was half drunk, and, I fancied, drugged. She swayed slightly where she sat.

She wore a small hat of a dark velvety material; a white, loose blouse, and what seemed a dark blue skirt. Round her neck hung an old-fashioned link of coral beads. Her brow was low but broad, and her hair, brushed back from the forehead, was bunched large behind, but not below, the head. Her roving eyes, gradually overcoming the clinging gloom of the place, were dark brown and unerringly bright. Half in an empty smile, her lips disclosed white but somewhat irregular teeth. Seen plainly in such surroundings, she was—to me—a pitiable and undesirable creature. I did not like the looks of her now. The mental image formed on the sound of her laughter was infinitely preferable to the sight of her. She was, I fancied, some servant girl of a romantic nature. I was right. "I don't care," she was saying, "I'll never go back. Trust me. Had enough. Slavey for four bob a week. Taint good enough. They said if I couldn't be in by artime tomorrow they'd do the door locked. And I did! They c'n keep it locked."

"'S aw ri.' You go t'sleep 'ere wi' me. W'll put yo' t' ri's. Y'll 'av a luvly dress t'morning, an' a go-time. Wait t'l see the young man we'll find y' t'mor-rice. Now go t'bed."

Those two fingers clasped the girl's hair and deftly slipped a protecting hook from an all-too-easy eye in the back of the girl's blouse.

"Three years I've been a slavey for those stuck-up pigs," said the girl in a subdued mutter, and then she went on to recount, quaintly and in a half incoherent jumble, the salient facts of her life. I glanced at Mick. He was leaning forward, peering through another slit. His face had its old set look; stern, condemnatory. Twice I had had to reach out and grip his wrist. He wanted to interfere; I was waiting—I knew not for what.

As the muttering proceeded, the busy fingers of the old woman loosened the clothes of the indifferent girl, who soon stood swaying by the side of the bed in her chemise. Deftly the dirty quilt was slipped back and the girlish form rolled onto the bed. The muttering went on for a few minutes whilst the old woman sat watching the flushed face and the tumbled hair on the pillow. The girl's right arm was thrown over the slim neck to the heavy face of the Boss and the mental image formed on the sound of her laughter was infinitely preferable to the sight of her. She was, I fancied, some servant girl of a romantic nature. I was right. "I don't care," she was saying, "I'll never go back. Trust me. Had enough. Slavey for four bob a week. Taint good enough. They said if I couldn't be in by artime tomorrow they'd do the door locked. And I did! They c'n keep it locked."

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"O! Solomon! You'd fork out a tenner for this," she said in low but clear tones. "But it's got to be proper job." Then, to the Boss, and pointing to the screen, indicating the position of our beds: "You lamming idiot! Didn't I tell yo'? Yo' sh'd take their bits an' outed 'm."

The dock rat was tip-toeing about the bed, like a starved rodent outside a wire-screened piece of food. His glance shifted from that gleaming shoulder hunched up over the slim neck to the heavy face of the Boss and then to the old woman, returning quickly to the form on the bed.
"Ou's goin' t'do it?" asked the old crone of the Boss. "You or Bill?" and she drew down the clothes, exposing the limp sprawled limbs of the sleeping girl. The Boss did not reply. He simply took a half-stride back, away from the bed. The dock rat's eyes gleamed: he had noted the movement. He ceased his tip-toeing about and looked at the Boss. "What's my share?"

"Bliny! Your share?" returned the Boss in a hoarse whisper. Then, pointing to the waiting, half-naked form: "That!"

In their contemplation of their victim they were so absorbed that they apparently forgot entirely the three of us bedded on the other side of the hanging sail. Mick and I were staggered. We looked at each other, realising at the self-same instant the whole purpose of this curious conference. By some subtle and secret processes of the mind again there seemed to be a change in the atmosphere of the room. Its sordid dinginess was no longer present to our consciousness. There was new life, heart, and vigour and, in some curious way, our mentalities seemed merged together. No longer puzzled, we were vibrant with a common purpose. At the sound of the hoarse whisper, Mick was aware, as it were, to the inmost sanctuary of his Celtic being. He manifested the last degree of outrage and insult, of agonised anger. For the moment we were cleansed of all the pettiness and grossness common to manhood, inspired only with a new-born worship of the inviolable right of the individual to the disposal of its own tokens of affection and life.

And this new spirit of ours pervaded the room. The girl moaned in her drunken sleep. Twinetoes turned restlessly in bed, and the lines of his face sharpened and deepened. Something was killing the point in both. Even the trio about the girl were momentarily moved by some new sensation.

Mick's accustomed recklessness of action was gone, he was cool and prepared to be calculating. We slipped on our boots and I moved over to Twinetoes’ bed. I touched his arm. Mumbling curses he opened his eyes. "It's Mac," I whispered, leaning over and looking steadily into his face. "Wot the 'ell . . . . " he began, but I managed to silence him. Once accustomed to the gloom, his eyes took in the situation at a glance, painfully swallowing the foul nauseas of his drunk, he calmed and quietly pulled on his boots.

The old woman had again covered up the still sleeping girl and engaged the Boss in a wrangle about money. "You'll bloody well swing yet," said the Boss irrelevantly. "Mebbe; but that don't alter it. I wants my full share 'n I means to 'av 'it."

Dispassionately, the dock rat eyed them both and hoped for the best for himself. We had ceased to exist for them.

"Goin'?" asked the dock rat as the others moved towards the stairs. They looked at him, but did not reply. So far as we were aware, though we had forgotten the entire world outside that room, there had been complete silence downstairs; but now we could hear movement. The other dock rats were evidently perturbed about the possible outcome of the row and its effect on his business; I was intent only on the fight. With a clean left-hand cut I drove him over, tore a quilt from a bed and flung it over his dazed head, then swung round to where the lead pipe was still flailing. I was concerned for Mick. Seizing the old woman's shoulders I flung her back from Mick and the sail. He would have cleared himself, but his legs were somehow effect on his business; I was intent only on the fight. His face a pitiful pulp, number one was number two dock rat tried to follow his blow, Twinetoes swung it at his wrong shoulder, then, changing his hold, taking both the man's shoulders in his hands, he drew back his head as a snake does and butted his man clean over one of the beds. . . . His face a pitiful pulp, number one was definitely out of it.

Ordinarily, the Boss would have been much too much for me; but now fate favoured me. He was considerably perturbed about the possible outcome of the row and its effect on his business; I was intent only on the fight. With a clean left-hand cut I drove him over, tore a quilt from a bed and flung it over his dazed head, then swung round to where the lead pipe was still flailing. I was concerned for Mick. Seizing the old woman's shoulders I flung her back from Mick and the sail. He would have cleared himself, but his legs were somehow mixed up with the foot of the bed in his way; he cried repeatedly, "whatever's to become of me!" The girl sobbed quietly. "Oh! Oh!" she cried repeatedly, "whatever's to become of me!"

She irritated me. "Shut up!" I said at last, "You'll be all right." She returned. "I tricked across at Mick—she walked between us, Twinetoes on my right—and at once I saw the outcome of it all. "Stop it, blast you!" I shook her shoulder. "My pal is the best, biggest fool that ever raised a fist. He's silly enough for anything decent," answering the reproving voice of conviction born of absolute certainty of mind: "He'll never chuck you over. He'll marry you sometime, you fool!"

And he did.
Readers and Writers.

English critics are curiously silent about Romain Rolland and seem to forget him when reviewing, however disinterestedly, the literature of modern France. Perhaps some of them have a complex in the matter. Or perhaps they are not merely disinterested, but also prejudiced against the desires of their conscious minds. Whatever the cause of this neglect, an opportunity now occurs for revealing some definite attitude towards this latter-day Tolstoyan, for Messrs. Allen and Unwin have just published a translation of Stefan Zweig's comprehensive study, Rolland ("Karl May and the New Work." 16s.). One can now, I think, consider Rolland influenced by the emotions of war-time, and there is scope in the subject for a good piece of critical analysis. Unfortunately Stefan Zweig does not give us this: his work is neither criticism nor analysis, but merely exposition and description. As such it is extremely good: the book is very readable and explains, if it does not justify, Zweig's great reputation on the Continent, a reputation equivalent in kind to that of Pater or Symonds in this country. I do not say that such reputations are deserving or undeserving; I merely imply that it is not criticism in the scientific and only exact sense of the word. But let us look more closely at Zweig's advocacy of Romain Rolland. In a Dedication Rolland is described as "a great European," a personality that has loomed as the most impressive one in the mentality of our age," and the whole volume (and it is not a small one) is devoted to an elaboration of these epithets. Now, when criticism resorts to elaboration rather than to analysis, and to epithets rather than to definitions, it is very difficult to counter—that is, I suppose, its sanction. It can begin the presentation of the subject-matter in question; or one can merely oppose a counter-description. Both methods are appropriate to a more extensive treatment than is possible here: and I do not know that, except in the interests of abstract truth, there is any necessity for the effort. Rolland may be an impressive moral phenomenon, but he is not a dangerous one; he will die of his own inanition and his influence will be sterile. But there is one consideration of present interest: Rolland is exhaustingly employed in this book chiefly for his attitude during the late hostilities. His work previous to 1914 is primary, to be but a probation or preparation for the role he was to play as guardian of the conscience of Europe.

For twenty years the author's thought, his whole creative activity, had been uninterruptedly concentrated upon the contradictions between spirit and force, between freedom and the Fatherland, between victory and defeat. Through a hundred variations he had pursued the same fundamental theme, treating it dramatically, epically, and in manifold other ways. He had thus his conclusion already drawn when others were beginning an attempt to come to terms with events. As historian he had described the perpetual recurrence of war's typical accompaniments, had discussed the psychology of mass suggestion, and had shown the effects of wartime mentality upon the individual. As moralist and as citizen of the world he had long ere this formulated his creed. We may say, in fact, that Rolland's mind had been in a sense immunised against the illusions of the crowd and against infection by prevalent falsehoods.

Let us assume, therefore, that Rolland deliberately set his mind and energies against the current of herd instinct—a current the powers of which are rooted in our natures as nationalism and substituting the most romantic view of life yet produced by the Rousselian tradition. In the second place (and it is not far removed from the first) Rolland is a "gentle monk." The very physical aspect of the man is feminine. "Everything about him is gentle; his voice in its rare utterances; his figure, which, even in repose, shows traces of his sedentary life; his gestures, which are always refined and slow gone. His whole personality radiates gentleness..." It is not to be denied that this gentle; but it was the gentleness of a man of action, a gentleness that is power held in check. This fragile anchorite is otherwise: he is the prototype of that femininity in man against which we cannot too often compare Rolland's own opposition of this kind of life. Zweig often compares Rolland with Goethe. But these minds are polarised: positive and negative seeking opposite ends of the universe. Goethe had his weak moments. Rolland never has his strong ones.

The proud title of Good European is not gained so easily. It is not to be gained by affirming certain ideals of this age at the expense of certain equally confined ideals. It is not to be gained by denying an instinct so rooted in our natures as nationalism and substituting in the name of humanism an internationalism based on nothing more solid than human humanitarianism. The ideal of humanism has been energetically stated by a young German critic whose future should be worth following—Ernest Curtius. I refer particularly to an article of his which appeared in the June number of "Der Neue Merkur" (a monthly review published at Theresienstrasse, 12, Munchen, Berlin,) and which is extensively quoted by M. André Gide in the November issue of "La Nouvelle Revue Francaise." Writing on the international ideals of the Clarétian movement, as expressed by Henri Barbusse (and Rolland is the messiah of this movement) Curtius says:

With supreme naïvety, Barbusse sets forth his doctrines as unquestionable axioms. He does not seem to realise that to some extent they even contradict the elementary rules of logic. He is, of course, even more unconscious of the intellectual background of these axioms; unconscions of what in reality they are: the latest and most pitiful expression of the modern "esprit bourgeois"—its world-view, its scale of values; an elioted and completely bloodless formulation of the rationalistic ideologies of the 18th and 19th centuries.

This might pass for a description (a counter-description) of Romain Rolland. Rolland's "Declaration of the Independence of the Mind" shows an identical confusion of reason and emotion. He hates war emotionally: he says he hates it rationally and he would establish reason in opposition to war (itself an emotional or instinctive manifestation). He might, however, have remembered Spinoza's axiom: "that an emotion can only be overcome by another and a stronger emotion. But this objection apart, can we possibly adopt his conception of mind? Is it, in his vocabulary, a rational force at all?—

For humanity we work; but for humanity as a whole. We know nothing of that humanity. We know the People, unique and universal; the People that suffers, that struggles, that falls and rises to its feet once more, and that continues to advance along the rough road drenched with its sweat and blood; the People, all men, all alike our brothers. In order that they may, like ourselves, realise this brotherhood, we raise above their blind struggles the Ark of the Covenant—Mind, that is free, one and manifold, eternal.

Surely Mind has here become an emotional entity not comparable to—shall we say the Intelligence? It has become a solvent in which all distinctions of racial genius disappear. God knows, we are all sick of war, and even convinced of "the bankruptcy of our civilisation." But it is very easy to jump out of this particular frying-pan into the fire. As Curtius says:

Certainly it is good and desirable to throw bridges
The production at the Old Vic of "All's Well That Ends Well" was both interesting and disappointing. It is a play not often seen, and for that reason should challenge the originality of the producer. I saw it, I admit, under the worst circumstances; a first night, after four vile days of fog and frost, could not possibly present the play at its best. Something of the solemnity of the occasion must be attributed to the weather; even actors are not always immune from climatic conditions. But as I saw the Stage Society production of "Uncle Vanya" the same afternoon, and it was, I think, the finest performance I have ever seen, the weather cannot be blamed for everything. When an actor knows what he has to do, he can usually do it, even if he has one foot in the grave. So I return to my first impression that the producer had not composed his values rightly.

"All's Well" tells a comedy, which our newspaper critics call an inferior work, but which Hazlitt described as "one of the most pleasing of our author's comedies."

True, he said that "the interest is, however, more of a serious than of a comic nature"; but that only applies to the main theme which Shakespeare adopted with very little variation from Boccaccio. The comic scenes in the play, though, are original—and here it is that I felt the chief defect of the production. Most of these comic scenes are definitely and distinctly "smutty," a characteristic which men and women discussed sexual matters in those days; it is comic, and is intended to be comic, in the grossest, fleshly English fashion. Shakespeare was a popular playwright, tickling the ears of the groundlings in such passages; and it is absurd to Bowdlerize him in spirit while giving the text. It was just the same with Mr. Andrew Leigh as the Clown; he talked of bawdry and cuckoldry with none of the suggestiveness, the will to be a little shocking, that the text demands. He really sets up a conflict in the Countess between her will to maintain morality and her unregenerate interest in natural human desires; he makes her laugh herself out of her judgment—and he does not do it by lecturing like Dryasdust on the social problem. Lubricity should lubricate the wheels of being, and reduce friction—and it needs a broader method than that employed at the Old Vic, something approximating to the style of the music-hall comedian. Mr. Ernest Milton's Parolles, though, was well conceived as the fantastic braggart, although played far too lightly; he is a sort of younger brother of Pistol, and shoudn't have much more of his Mars, even if it were retrograde, as Helena said, than he did. He should make a show of being a fighting man; Mr. Ernest Milton tamed him down to a courtier. While I think of it, Mr. Rupert Harvey's rendering of the old Lord Lafeu was the thing I have seen him do; his comedic method was perfectly suited to his part, and it was really the only finished performance in the production.

When we turn to the others, most of them were playing mezzo-forte, with very little detail. These people are quick and économique in feeling; their comedic method is one of stasis, is in extremity until Helena cures him, then he is "able to lead her a coranto"; and psychologically, he is equally a creature of extremes. Confronted with Bertram's refusal to do his will, he blazes with an overpowering wrath:

My heart's at stake; which to defeat, I must produce my power.

But Shakespeare's conception of power was Elizabethan, not Old Victorian; he thought of Tudor kings, and thought of them with the passionate heart of the poet. This was an issue of life or death, settled in a moment by a consuming wrath; and neither Mr. W. Reid Walter, nor Mr. Alan Watts, as Bertram, flamed with fire. Of course, if you are only going to recite Shakespeare to school-children, the merest hint is enough; but we, who know something of history, of poetry, and of human nature, want more convincing. It is passionate power that Mr. Atkins fails habitually to get from his actors; he has, too, a sort of statuesque convention which he imposes on every play, as though Shakespeare could be played in talking tableaux. If people shake hands, for example, as the Countess does with Bertram at the beginning of the play, they hold the picture long after it has ceased to have any meaning. If architecture is frozen music, as Ruskin said, the Old Vic stagecraft is chiefly half-baked Shakespeare.

The women, too, were played chiefly with what a sculptor calls "one-view studies." Miss Florence Buckton, as the Countess, for example, expressed the maternal dignity of the woman finely, with a real sense of character; but the quick, autocratic temper of the woman, as expressed in her scenes with Helena when she forced her to resign her love, to banished Bertram from her love, her merriment with the clown, were only indicated, not expressed. The prevailing tempo was too insistent, too slow, too heavy; and unfortunately, it affected Miss Jane Bacon, as Helen. Helen was no more all dignity and purity than the Countess was; she was sad in her remembrance of her father at the beginning (a mere mask, as she confessed, for her hopeless love of Bertram), merry, chaffing, with Parolles, a girl to the nature to achieve her purpose. One is sorry that she wasted herself on Bertram—but that is her affair;
what is Miss Bacon’s affair is to present her in all her variety of power and charm, and not to keep her in a state of solemnity varied by maudlin soliloquy.

**Views and Reviews.**

**RELIGIO GRAMMATICI.—I.**

These ten essays and addresses,* ranging in date from 1900 to 1920, and covering a considerable area of thought and feeling, are also various in their appeal and power of conviction. For Professor Murray is a poet, and when he talks, or translates, Greek poetry, he does it with the authentic power of creation. We catch fire from him just as we do from the authorised version of the Bible; there is veritably what the astrologers call “a translation of light” in both classics. Even when he reads Greek history, as represented in drama, with one eye on current political affairs, as in “Aristophanes and the War Party,” he does not produce a sense of reincarnation, as the Theosophists do vainly teach, nor of the Eternal Recurrence, as the Nietzscheans do vainly teach, but of actual living reality. Others, Maximilian Mügge, for example, have seen resemblances between Mr. Lloyd George and Clean, still others identify us with the lost tribes of Israel; but the Bible and Professor Murray’s translations show that Greece lives in us (did not Wordsworth identify the whole of Plato’s “Republic” as well as Israel; and perhaps Mr. Edwin Bevan’s “Hellenism and Christianity” published at the same time by the same publisher) could more simply be called “England—As She Thinks She Is.” The fact that both cultures appeal to us so strongly (Matthew Arnold almost identified Culture with Hellenism and Christianity) suggests that England is, after all, a major factor in civilised history; for neither Greeks nor Jews, not even Paul himself, felt this dual appeal while maintaining their own individuality. We do await the Third Kingdom that Ibsen prophesied in his “Emperor and Galilean,” in which Beauty and Righteousness are translated into action; when Hellenism and Christianity become practical politics, we shall know that The New Age is upon us.

It is here that I confess to some disappointment with Professor Murray. A man who can talk about, and translate, Greek literature as he does ought to express something more than “Religio Grammatici” as his confession of faith. Certainly, it is a great thing to be able to see the Spirit of Humanity in ancient literature, and to release it for the inspiration and service of this generation; but it is admittedly an escape from the present.

But the thing that enslaves us most, narrows the range of our thought, cramps our capacities and lowers our standards, is the mere Present—the present that is all around us, accepted and taken for granted, as we in London accept the grit in the air, and the dirt on our hands and faces. The material present, the thing that we value, the thing that enslaves us most and narrows the range of our thought is the immediate, the present. The idea of progress, the idea of the future, the idea of things that are not present. Of the future? Yes; but you cannot study the future. You can only make conjectures about it, and the conjectures will not do much good unless you have in some way studied other places and other ages. There has been hardly any great forward movement of humanity which did not draw inspiration from the knowledge, or the idealisation, of the past.

We may admit that, and yet put our finger on the spiritual failure, the fallacy of the man of letters in relation to our national destiny. Certainly you cannot “study” the future, and it is a scholar’s error to suppose that the future is thereby disposed of. The future has to be made by the actions of men. This Present of ours with all its grievances is a political creation; “I contend that from 1563 to 1824 a conspiracy concocted by the law and carried out by parties interested in its success was set to cheat the English workman of his wages, to tie him to the soil, to deprive him of hope, and to degrade him into irremediable poverty,” said Thorold Rogers in the fourteenth chapter of his “Six Centuries of Work and Wages.” In the next chapter, he returned to the charge:

“...All this, too, was done when patriots and placemen chattered about liberty and arbitrary administration, and fine ladies and gentlemen talked about the rights of man, and Rousseau, and the French Revolution, and Burke and Sheridan were denouncing the despotism of Hastings. Why, at his own doors at Beaconsfield, Burke must have daily seen serfs who had less liberty than those Robillas whose wrongs he described so pathetically and dramatically. And later:

The whole force of law was for nearly two centuries directed towards the solution of this problem, How much oppression can the English people endure, how much privation, misery, starvation, without absolutely destroying the labour on which growing rents depend?

I submit that those men did not turn away from the future because they could not “study” it, but actively brought it into being; just as in our native policy for the Colonies we have aimed at and established a similar system. Greek history can be read in at least two ways; it was a civilisation founded on slavery, and some men therefore suppose that only by reducing peoples to slavery can civilisation survive.

That is where Religio Grammatici fails us. We can at best only understand the past; we have to endure the present; but we can make the future; and when Professor Murray falls back on the anthropologists in an attempt to justify a disbelief in progress (as though he, too, were bitten with the madness of Catholicism), he turns his back on The Third Kingdom. For even if the anthropological evidence were trustworthy (and Dr. Bernard Hollander, in his “In search of the Soul,” has played havoc with it), and prehistoric man were proved to be equal to modern man in brain development, the fact would be of no value. The unused powers of the brain differ; prehistoric man, even if he had “a brain as large and perhaps as exquisitely voluted as our own” (and there is no evidence of the latter assertion) could not have expressed the whole of his potentialities in that environment any more than the cotton-spinner can do in his. We have to look for progress not in anthropometrical comparisons, which after all can only be made between skeletons and skulls and not the vital organs, and then have to be interpreted in the absence of any admitted theory of localisation of brain functions, but in a more general process of educability, of adaptability. I venture to think that it is easier to teach a modern man anything than it was for any aggregation of predecessors; even if we throw aside the sort of progress that consists in the improvement of tools, the discovery of new facts, the recombining of elements,” and concentrate on spiritual qualities such as courage, I think that the Canadians who suffered from the first poison-gas attack at Ypres, and faced it again and again afterwards, learned a new form of courage more quickly than any Mosliarian or even ancient Greek would have done. We might have got a new myth from the Greeks in such circumstances, a new terror would have been born for them; but would the new courage have developed so quickly, would Cockneys and Lancashire lads, and the stolid men of the shires, have gone to meet the new danger as so quickly in the Athens of Pericles? I find it impossible to believe it, and hold to my opinion that progress is demonstrable.

A. E. R.
Reviews.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

Messrs. Hill and Co., Fine Art Printers, of Bayser Street, Golden Lane, E.C.1, send us a selection from their Christmas publications and at the same time inform us that they have been in this business for over forty years. Dickens died in 1870 and the modern Christmas may be said to have been erected to his assumption. Unfortunately, her construction is very apparently accepts the black magic and white magic particular part of the forest seems to be three weeks' elaboration of authoritative testimony; but its main Father Christmas. And, judging by the specimens of memory, with Mr. Chesterton as its principal curator. Messrs. Hill and Co., after clumsy; she cannot even get her characters near this forty years. Dickens died in 1870 and the modern Street, Golden Lone, E.C.1, send us a selection from the inception of the Christian Mass, traces which in several places unfortunately such inaccuracies which in several places are not unworthy of the office.

Green Stones of Evil. By Margaret Peterson. (Melrose. 3s. 6d. net.)

This is another story of the sciomych of good and evil; but set this time in the depths of an African forest. Miss Peterson attempts, very little explanation; she apparently accepts the black magic and white magic theory, and creates her horrors very cleverly on this assumption. Unfortunately, her construction is very clumsy; she cannot even get her characters near this particular forest without sinking a liner, or even get the story going without the fabric of a fairy-tale coincidence of twin sisters (unknown to each other) meeting on the liner as stewardess and passenger, and overlooking her real story with an abortive murder mystery. It is impossible, too, to follow the author in her localisation; the particular part of the forest seems to be three weeks' journey from the mission station for the party, but it seems to be only about a day's journey for the missionary, starting from the same place. But, crudities apart, it is a breathless story of horrors that have too little contact with reality to shock. The moral, of course, is—Amor omnia vincit.

God-Eating: A Study in Christianity and Cannibalism.

By J. T. Lloyd. (The Pioneer Press. 6d.)

This little essay dissociates Jesus (on Biblical testimony) from the inception of the Christian Mass, traces which in several places unfortunately such inaccuracies which in several places are not unworthy of the office. There is argued very temperately, and with a considerable elaboration of authoritative testimony; but its main argument presents nothing new to those who are already acquainted with the evolution of religion, although it may shock a little those communicants who know no more than the modern symbolism of the ceremonies in which they participate. We recommend to Mr. Lloyd's notice an interesting chapter on the Cannibalism of the Mysteries attributed to Morbeck in the "Human Body"; and for the rest, are content that those who, like Browning's Bishop of St. Praxed's, "hear the blessed mutter of the mass, and see God made and eaten all day long," should learn the derivative history of that ceremony, and cease to blaspheme Jesus Christ.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHICHERINE.

Sir,—In Mr. C. E. Bechhofer's "Interview with Chicherine" in The New Age of November there are unfortunately such inaccuracies which in several places completely disintegrate my ideas, or make me say the contrary of what I really said. My very pleasant talk with Mr. Bechhofer was not intended to be an interview. There was nothing written down by Mr. Bechhofer. What he ascribes to me is what he extracted from my memory. He remembers, and remembers inaccurately, loose disjointed sentences, which in this way lose their real significance.

When Mr. Bechhofer says that I "admitted most of the charges he brought against the Bolshevist regime" and that I myself made "the most damaging admissions about its mistakes and crimes," the reader may think that I admitted or repeated the facts which I have four years been constantly brought against us by the reactionary Press. As a matter of fact, I admitted two things: the red terror (of course not with the fantastical exaggerations of the Bolshevist calumny) and the requisitions made during the war against interventions (of course not made by the Red Army, but by the Food Control). I did not "excuse" them, I explained their necessity. I spoke of the life and death struggle of the Revolution, when everything had to be sacrificed to the sacred cause. I reminded Mr. Bechhofer of the monstrous massacres of which Davy and his compatriots were authors. If we had flinched, unspeakable horrors would have been the result, our working masses would have been massacred by the victorious Whites in a way unheard of in history.

I never admitted and could not admit that the local Soviets with non-Communist majorities were dispersed by Communists and Red Guards, because it is not so. What I really said is that full freedom of movement and all political activities cannot be allowed to social revolutionaries and Mensheviks, as long as counter-revolution and world reaction have not laid down their arms, seeing that they are advocates of parliamentary and parliamentarism at present means world reaction. Here was one of the fundamental points of my demonstration and in Mr. Bechhofer's mind it is completely disfigured. I mentioned Belloc and Chesterton because they had dissected parliamentarism and have shown that under parliamentary make-believe and its pretended majority rule, which is a fake, capitalist oligarchy dominates. If capitalist rule is international, and parliamentarism in Russia would mean her subjection to world reaction; Sovietism is the guardian of her independence. Parliamentarism is the tool of international capitalism and anti-imperialistic world domination. I did not say and could not say that we were building up the Servile State; I said that the proletarian State we were building was not less powerful, perhaps far more powerful, than the interregnum of the tsarist State. I tried to explain to Mr. Bechhofer that State Capitalism under capitalist oligarchy and State Capitalism under Proletarian Political Rule are distinct domains. Here came the crucial point, and Mr. Bechhofer unfortunately left it out. The fundamental point in my demonstration was that we differed completely from the Guild Socialists as to the role of political power in its relation to economic power. The Proletariat, possessing political power, rules over economics; it can assign to capital and to private enterprise a distinct domain: "thus far and no further." Mr. Bechhofer quotes this phrase, but separates it completely from my exposition of the new State we were building up. We call back capitalism, we give communism to private enterprise, we assign a distinct domain of economic activity at its disposal, we guarantee certain profits to capital, we take upon ourselves definite engagements towards capital, but the working class keeps political power and says to capital "thus far and no further."

There is a Roman Majesty, I said to Mr. Bechhofer, in our Proletarian State, and the State-building spirit of the Proletariat is a wonderful thing. Communism is the State-building working class organised force which out of the general social dissolution of 1917 had built this powerful State organism. I did not plead for acquittal as to the dissolution of the Tsarist Servile Army; I said yes we had to destroy the old machine in order to create a new one. Neither did I speak of "intolerable requisitions made by the Red Army." The reader may think that I admitted or repeated the facts which I have four years been constantly brought against us by the reactionary Press. As a matter of fact, I admitted two things: the red terror (of course not with the fantastical exaggerations of the Bolshevist calumny) and the requisitions made during the war against interventions (of course not made by the Red Army, but by the Food Control). I did not "excuse" them, I explained their necessity. I spoke of the life and death struggle of the Revolution, when everything had to be sacrificed to the sacred cause. I reminded Mr. Bechhofer of the monstrous massacres of which Davy and his compatriots were authors. If we had flinched, unspeakable horrors would have been the result, our working masses would have been massacred by the victorious Whites in a way unheard of in history.

Mr. Bechhofer seemed to acquire oppo-

Published by the Proprietors, THE NEW AGE (A. R. ORAGE), 38, Curtain Street, E.C.4, and printed for them by BONNER & CO., The Chancery Lane Press, 1, 2, and 3, Rolls Passage, E.C.4.