

THE  
**SATURDAY REVIEW**  
 OF  
**POLITICS, LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.**

No. 2,324, Vol. 89.

12 May, 1900.

6d.

**CONTENTS.**

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
NOTES OF THE WEEK . . . . .	573	MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES ( <i>continued</i> ):		CORRESPONDENCE ( <i>continued</i> ):	
LEADING ARTICLES:		The Academy. I.—“Rude Things” . . . . .	583	Appeals to the Board of Education . . . . .	586
Parties and the Empire . . . . .	576	“Quo Vadis” and “Nil Prodicendum” . . . . .	584	Current History. By F. C. Constable . . . . .	587
The Progress of the War . . . . .	577	Insurance Improvements . . . . .	585	REVIEWS:	
The Schools and the Statesmen . . . . .	578	CORRESPONDENCE:		In Defence of Bartle Frere . . . . .	587
The Ashanti Rising . . . . .	578	The Oxford Colleges and Natural Science. By Professor E. Ray Lankester and P. Chalmers Mitchell . . . . .	586	What is a Symbolist? . . . . .	589
MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES:		The Service Rifle. By “Grey Scout” . . . . .	586	Mr. Mallock’s Case for Rome . . . . .	589
Art and Imperialism . . . . .	580	Elementary Reading Lessons. By Frank J. Adkins . . . . .	586	Madame La Mère and Elisa Napoléon . . . . .	591
Circulating-Library Religion . . . . .	581			Five Novels . . . . .	591
Cricket Prospects . . . . .	581			NEW BOOKS AND REPRINTS . . . . .	592
				THE MAY REVIEWS . . . . .	593
				GERMAN LITERATURE . . . . .	593

*We beg leave to state that we decline to return or to enter into correspondence as to rejected communications; and to this rule we can make no exception.*

**NOTES OF THE WEEK.**

The great question now waiting to be answered in regard to the advance of Lord Roberts is when and where will the Boers be driven to make a determined attempt to stay his further progress—where will take place the great battle which might decide the fate of the campaign? Since Brandfort was occupied on May 3 the Boers have retired from one position after another without really making any effective resistance. On the 5th Lord Roberts dated his despatch from the Vet River. On the 6th he crossed this river and encamped at Smaldeel Junction, the Boers retreating towards the Zand River and Kroonstad. Lord Roberts also reported that they had retired from the front of Thabanchu which was held by General Rundle’s Division. The day after on 7 May Winburg was occupied by the Highland Brigade and reconnaissances on the 8th were made as far as the Zand River where the enemy were in considerable force. On the 10th Lord Roberts crossed the river and found them occupying a position twenty miles in length. In later telegrams of the same day he reported that they were in full retreat, and that the cavalry and horse artillery were pursuing on three roads. Lord Roberts was at Riet Spruit, and the cavalry and mounted infantry at Ventersburg Road, within 25 miles of Kroonstad.

As a mere matter of military pageantry the march of the Naval Brigade through London on Monday would hardly have been more striking than that of the guard which marches to and from the Bank morning and evening. Put so, one realises the immense significance of it on the moral side. It was because these men had helped, as Mr. Goschen said, to save the country from such a disaster as has never befallen British arms, that London made of their presence the occasion for a demonstration which is universally agreed to have been the most remarkable seen in its streets within living memory—and we have the Jubilee years for comparison. Most people who took part in it must have wondered what the demonstration will be like when the victorious army marches along the same route. It cannot be more impressive though it may be more imposing. The profoundest emotions are often aroused by the simplest externals. Suppose we saw the gallant defenders of Mafeking in our midst? Then we might

have a demonstration to compare with that of the Naval Brigade.

The public and the press are right in dropping the subject of the Spion Kop despatches, for no good is done by keeping a sore open. This much however may be said. The best defence of the Government was made by the Duke of Devonshire, who admitted shortly and bluntly that he regretted Sir Redvers Buller had not taken the opportunity offered him by Lord Lansdowne and Lord Roberts of substituting for his original despatch two despatches, one a narrative of the events, the other a criticism of the officers engaged. The narrative might have been given to the man in the street, and the criticism treated as confidential by the Secretary of State. This, as the Duke of Devonshire explained, was all that was meant by the celebrated suggestion to “rewrite,” which Sir Redvers Buller resented. There can be no doubt that it would be well in future if generals in the field would put their narrative and criticism into separate documents. The Government would have cut a less sorry figure if Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Balfour had not harped upon their “personal honour.” Why not say with the Duke that it was “a difference of opinion”?

Its strongest opponents have never accused the “Times” of a sense of humour. But surely in taking literally Lord Salisbury’s statement at the Academy dinner that the power of the Government had passed into the hands of Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener, Jupiter Tonans has surpassed himself. We imagine that the Prime Minister, having at an interminable feast to make one of an interminable list of speeches, bethought himself of the truth that “gentle dulness ever loves a joke,” and sought to promote the flow of soul by a mildly satirical allusion to the fact that a general in the field is a more interesting person than a Cabinet Minister, only for the moment, *bien entendu*. The “Times” takes great umbrage at this, and says, “it is not desirable to dwell on such a statement.” Chatham and Pitt, we are further informed, would not have abdicated in favour of victorious admirals or generals. So severe a strain upon allegiance is a difference of taste in jokes!

It is difficult to understand why Mr. Balfour allowed the House of Commons to vote that the letter of Messrs. Rees and Hindley, complaining of Mr. Houston’s presence on the Army Contracts Committee, was a breach of privilege, and then prevented the House from taking any further action by carrying the previous question. It would have been better surely

of the senseless opposition to which he was subjected: an opposition which, being as yet supported by the Home Government, he triumphantly overcame.

#### WHAT IS A SYMBOLIST?

"The Symbolist Movement in Literature." By Arthur Symons. London: Heinemann. 1899. 6s.

WE have here short biographical critiques of Gérard de Nerval, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Laforgue, Mallarmé, Huysmans and Maeterlinck. Reviews are read for information as well as animadversion and since there are many to whom some of these names do not convey very much, let us hasten to ask—What is a symbolist? Well, to begin with, the name does not seem to matter. Symbolist, decadent, or mystic, as Mallarmé himself said, were nothing more than nicknames by which the omniscient journalist docketed a band of rebellious litterateurs. As for "Decadent" it signified, let us be just and admit it, quite as much the dissidence of dissent as the enfeeblement of decay, and was accepted by the Decadents themselves in a spirit of defiance. "You call me a Decadent—I am"—was the attitude. But against what then was this revolt? It was a revolt, says Mr. Symons, against "Exteriority and Rhetoric." Let us consider the latter first.

The most cursory reader of literary French must feel how much it always tended to become a machine, complex and beautiful indeed, but still a machine which it was the very object of the Academy to make still more mechanical "and to true idioms fix their doubtful speech." There was also the obsession of the rhetorical Alexandrine, analogous to our former tyranny of the Popian couplet, and there was the voluble and pervasive personality of the last of the rhetoricians, Victor Hugo. These rebels suffered under the tyranny of a traditional correctitude. They aspired, and perhaps it was high time, to give the kaleidoscope of language a good shake up, to disintegrate the ordered notes of the linguistic orchestra. Let chaos come again, said these Nihilists, but do not let us be cramped. Like a late Bishop of Peterborough they thought it better to be free than sober. Upon the notorious insobrieties of their diction we have here no space to enlarge, but, passing to the second head, Mr. Symons exultingly proclaims that their disorder of language was accompanied by an equal disorder of thought.

A revolt against Exteriority sounds a big thing—but we cannot make out from this book or others that it really came to more than what has always been called Mysticism. "Open your mind and shut your eyes and see what somebody sends you" has been the immemorial attitude of the Mystic. It was the attitude of these Mystics. We are calmly asked to accept this as a movement in literature and two representatives of it are here accredited to us with solemn unction in the persons of Mr. George Moore and Mr. W. B. Yeats.

The English have had their own rebellion against the conventions of the eighteenth-century diction, nor has it been necessary to cross the Channel to find the young mystic who has to pinch himself in order to make sure that he is really alive, or thinks that the universe may be a sort of play arranged for him by angels. Even of the field which the decadents have exploited to most purpose—the field of the phrase in and for itself—they have no semblance of monopoly. Mr. A. R. Ropes in a late essay on Maeterlinck alludes in this connexion to the Jabberwock. But instances are not far to seek. Lear was a symbolist when he wrote of a runcible spoon. Or, to take an instance from a very old and homely source,

"Green sleeves and pudding-pies,  
Tell me where my mistress lies, &c."

are lines which once heard we can no more forget than could Boswell, and, though the first line probably meant something to its author, it is nowadays at once entirely symbolistic and triumphantly successful. All honour to the makers of such phrases as these. All honour to Edgar Poe who said "Boreal Pole" because it sounded well and not in order to distinguish it from Austral and whom we make a point of mentioning here because he seems to have

anticipated all the essential quality of a band of writers who have indeed by translations and otherwise acclaimed him as their master. If the general reader wishes to know what a symbolist is like let him think of the more mysterious and magical utterances of Poe—and let him not omit to remember the seamy side of Poe's life. To put it thus is to put it very mildly, but until Mr. Symons can point to some more convincing originality in what these writers thought and what they wrote we may defer any moral censorship of what they did. In the meantime a subscriber to Mudie's who takes up this volume without looking at the title may imagine that the "Lives of Twelve Bad Men" has been sent to him by mistake. Laforgue indeed, as we are here told, wore the top-hat and carried the umbrella of a blameless life, and what is more he was the author of a very brilliant poem here quoted which does not however seem to be in the least like the productions of his fellow movers and shakers of the world of literature. In fact, even with the help of Mr. Symons, it is as difficult to see by what links these poets are connected together as it is to guess what movement—we understood it was the Irish, whatever that may mean—is represented by Messrs. Moore and Yeats. Mr. Gosse, meaning it would seem to be complimentary, said of the Symbolists that they were like shy birds in a back-water, and really that is about what this "Movement" amounts to—the movement of moorhens in a rush-bed outside which perhaps some flood of real revolution in thought and literature sweeps to the sea. Posterity picks up, in the case of a decadent out of all hoping lucky, one or two stranded poems.

It is with impatience that we ask—What does it all come to? We know and love a beautiful phrase, nor, if the sound be satisfactory, will we too peevishly insist upon the sense—we sympathise with revolts against convention in literature which if they prosper are called, like treason, by another name—the Mystic we also know quite well and let us say, for the sake of argument, that we love him. But if that is all—and it is all that we can find—why on earth are we invited to make so many bites of a cherry? Besides, when it comes to talking about movements and revolutions in letters, life and literature as he finds them are just the downright data of every little symbolist who is born into the world alive, and, whether he accepts or rejects he will, one supposes, predecease them.

Nevertheless it would be quite unfair to the uninitiated readers whom we have had for the moment in view, to let them go away with the idea that this is an unimportant book on symbolism, a thing with which they need not reckon. Names such as Mallarmé and Maeterlinck can take care of themselves—and so also, let us cordially add, can Mr. Symons, who is well known to many of us not only as a poet but also as the master of a subtle and persuasive prose. "Rira bien qui rira le dernier," and criticism of contemporaries has so often in the past been found at fault that Mr. Symons, from his own point of view, may quite reasonably trust to Time to give him the laugh of his many assailants. He will pardon us if we have somewhat curtly emphasised impressions which, as he well knows, have not been confined to those critics who habitually refuse to see or to admire. In the meantime, pursuers of the subject will find at the end of Mr. Symons' book an attractive bibliographical appendix of books and articles in which the symbolist, with his Protean forms and his various names, has been discussed here and on the Continent.

#### MR. MALLOCK'S CASE FOR ROME.

"Doctrine and Doctrinal Disruption." By W. H. Mallock. London: Black. 1900. 7s. 6d. net.

MR. MALLOCK writes with characteristic vigour and point: there is not a dull page in the book. It bristles with paradox and metaphor. The subject with which it is concerned is of momentous and urgent importance. There are lacking no elements of interest, save one, and that the only one which can give permanent value to a work on religion. Mr. Mallock is not adequately equipped for his task, and a careful and twice-repeated perusal of his book leaves us doubtful whether he has grasped the gravity of his own con-