

little decoration has some symbolic meaning. The god Ganesa, with his four arms and elephant's head, is no less costly. Plain and undecorated Ganesas can be had for £10. A bit of color slightly inaccurate in shade, or an ornament improperly placed, may render the most picturesquely hideous Ganesa or Buddha absolutely worthless to a Hindu.

Neurotic Fiction

We need, heaven knows, what the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table calls 'a professor of books.' This need was brought home to us with singular force as we recently handled, one by one, a shelf-load of the printed fiction-trash—of literary whipped cream or chili-chutnee—with which our circulating libraries are corrupting the taste, if not endangering the moral tone, of Christian homes. To some of the unwholesome and contaminated stuff—chiefly, alas! the work of women—we might apply the words that Cadurcis spoke in Beaconsfield's *Venetia*: 'I have written like a boy. I found the public bite, and so I baited on with tainted meat. I have never written for fame, but for notoriety.' This is the spirit which produces, among a class of female writers, the sort of poisonous fiction that has been aptly described as 'neurotic, erotic, tommy-rot-ic.' But there is this difference. The surfeited soul of Cadurcis revolted at length against this prostitution of mind and pen. The conscience of some of his later imitators seems to be armor-plated against the impact of remorse.

'Gibble-gabble'

'But far more numerous is the herd of such Who think too little and who talk too much.' The man who would invent a spangle to restrain unruly tongues would do more service to our race than he that would make two blades of grass to grow where only one grew before. One of the pet despairs of the anxious pastor of souls is the evil that is wrought both socially and in the moral order by the tongue-clacking of irresponsible females of both sexes. There are full many who add to the woes of this 'wale o' tears' as did Timson of *David Harum*. Talk (as David remarked to his friend and confidant John), 'must 'a ben a kind of disease with him. He didn't really mean no harm, mebbe, but he couldn't no more help lettin' out anythin' he knowed, or thought he knowed, than a settin' hen c'n help settin'. . . He was honest enough fur's money matters was concerned; but he hadn't no tack, nor no sense, an' many a time he done more mischief with his gibble-gabble than if he'd took fifty dollars out an' out. Fact is,' added David, 'the kind o' honesty that won't actually steal 's a kind of fool honesty that's common enough; but the kind that keeps a feller's mouth shut when he hadn't ought to talk 's about the skurceest thing goin'.'

And so say all of us.

Race Suicide

The advance sheets of the *New Zealand Official Year-Book* for 1908 contain, on p. 246, an interesting and instructive table showing the decrease in the legitimate birth-rate of various countries during the twenty-year period 1880-2 to 1900-2. We note the countries (or States) hereunder in the order of the rates of decrease: New South Wales, 30.6 per cent.; South Australia, 28.0; New Zealand, 24.5; Victoria, 24.2; Western Australia, 23.9; Queensland, 23.2; (the figures for Tasmania are not available); Belgium, 19.8; France, 19.7; England and Wales, 17.7; Scotland, 12.7; Denmark, 9.8; The Netherlands, 9.3; German Empire, 8.4; Sweden, 8.2; Prussia, 7.4; Switzerland, 6.4; Norway, 3.7; Italy, 2.5. Out of twenty-two countries or States mentioned in the table, only three show an increase in the legitimate birth-rate. And these are the three Catholic countries, Ireland (2.3 per cent. increase), Austria (0.8), and Spain (0.4). To these should, in all probability, be added Italy, where great numbers of true Christian marriages are held to be irregular unions by the State, and their issue illegitimate, on account of the refusal of the

contracting parties to go before the registrar or civil official. In Austria considerable numbers of Catholic marriages are treated in the same way for lack of civil sanction of another kind.

Drinking the Moon

Ludovicus Vivès tells a story of a rustic lackwit that killed his horse because (thought he) it had drunk up the moon—which the aforesaid rustic could ill spare. So it befell that he slew the luckless beast 'ut lunam redderet'—so as to make it give up the moon. 'Poor beast,' said Vivès, 'he had drunk, not the moon, but the reflection of the moon in his own water-pail!'

Across the Tasman Sea some of the wiseacres of the Protestant 'Defence' League are heavily flailing the Catholic body for having swallowed the moon—in other words, for having, at competitive public-service examinations in Victoria, carried off a bigger percentage of honors and the rest than their less well equipped rivals. This familiar incident of public examinations across the water was roundly denounced as unfair (in regard to certain questions of history) by Grand Secretary Batley. He hotly objected to the manner in which 'the political powers and positions are being grabbed by Roman Catholics,' called for an inquiry into the matter, and warned the State Premier that he had 'fallen in the esteem of trustful Protestants' (meaning those of the 'Defence' League). 'The Deputy Public Service Commissioners,' says the *Melbourne Tribune* of September 5, 'thought it advisable to explain that the examination paper was set by a member of the Church of England, and that, as the questions were taken from the prescribed text-book of English history, and from the selected period thereof—namely, from 1770 to the present time—there was no reason why a Protestant candidate should not be as well versed in the facts as a Catholic.'

The Protestant 'Defence' League (like a kindred association on this side of the Tasman Sea) spends a great deal of time and energy hunting many hares—and catching none.

DIocese OF DUNEDIN

The St. Patrick's Young Men's Social and Literary Club, South Dunedin, held its usual weekly meeting on Monday evening, when there was a fair attendance. The programme consisted of a 'question box,' and some interesting speeches were made in answer to the various questions.

There was a good attendance at the usual weekly meeting of St. Joseph's Men's Club on Friday evening, when the members of the Glee Club gave their last concert of the present season. The programme consisted of the following items:—'The village blacksmith,' 'Annie Laurie,' and 'Comrades in arms,' by the Glee Club; solos by Messrs. E. Wilkie, J. Swanson, C. Hannigan, H. Miles, G. Haydon, and O. Swanson, and a duet by Messrs. J. and O. Swanson. All the items were excellently rendered, those of the Glee Club receiving loud applause from the audience. At the conclusion of the entertainment Messrs. R. Rossbotham and J. Wilkinson, and Rev. Father Coffey, who presided, highly complimented the performers on the success which had attended their efforts, and warmly congratulated the Glee Club, which, although but a short time in existence, had made rapid strides that reflected the greatest credit on the members for the industry with which they carried on their work. Mr. E. W. Spain, on behalf of the members of the Glee Club, said their success was due entirely to the conductor, Mr. Deehan, and the musical director, Mr. F. Heley, both of whom spared no efforts in their desire to make the club a successful institution.

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

S.B.K.—There are other important conditions. Consult local clergy.

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