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A SOCIAL NOTE ON THE WAR

By **MARIE CORELLI**

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**PATRIOTISM
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Patriotism.—or Self-Advertisement ?

A SOCIAL NOTE ON THE PRESENT WAR.

By **MARIE CORELLI.**

THERE is a very old book in the world, which notwithstanding its age, is always called "New." It is partly known to the clergy, and distantly recognised as existent by the middle-class laity. With the "upper circles" it is wholly out of date; and if any one should be so ill-bred as to quote from it to the frequenters of "court and society," such a person would be considered either vulgar, or what is expressively termed by the golden youth of our aristocracy as "a little bit off." There are several curious things in this ancient volume,—things which, besides being curious, are also terrible, because true. Nothing is quite so terrible as Truth, for the mere reason that it is true. And whatever is true invariably upsets our plans and causes us very general uneasiness. We are politely shocked and distressed to have the plain truth told us at any time; we dislike and are visibly afraid of strong people who insist on telling it. So that it is no wonder we find it convenient to forget this old "New" book in all the important affairs of life. Latterly, and now, in our South African troubles, when one might have thought we had occasionally referred to it, what with our proposed "Day of Contrition, Intercession, and Memorial," and our special prayers to the Almighty that He, the upholder of the sun and moon and stars and all the stupendous majesty of the Universe, will be pleased to attend to *our* particular quarrel and not take the side of our opponents, we have evinced our diplomatic oblivion of its teachings more than ever. For had we been unwise enough to consult it, we should have found this plain and straight command staring us in the face:—

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven.

“Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward!

“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.”

This is an edict of the Christian Faith, and it is generally understood that we call ourselves Christians. At any rate we “restore” old churches and build up new ones to announce and emphasize the fact. Yet, according to this our creed, which we profess to follow, we must not “sound a trumpet” before us when we give alms, nor must we be “seen of men” in the act. For that is “as the hypocrites do.” Woe to us then!—for if the Gospel is to be believed we are in a parlous state. Musn’t “sound a trumpet” musn’t we? Good Lord deliver us! We have been doing nothing else ever since the Boer ultimatum! Considering the loudness and persistency of the trumpet-blowing with which we have proclaimed throughout the land our benevolence to our own army—a benevolence which is but the simplest national duty to the men who have been setting the value of their brave lives against our worthless dross, in the fight for England’s honour—we are “hypocrites” indeed! Some of us, by this count, will never go to Heaven! For we have not only placarded our charities “*in the streets.*” that we “*may have glory of men,*” and advertised ourselves at concerts, music-halls, “*thés chantants,*” “*cafés chantants,*” and anything else “chantant” or “vantant” where the feminine portion of us can display our charms in gowns which have cost as much as the whole profits of the “chantant, vantant” business; we have not only written letters to the *Times* and *Daily Telegraph* expressing our sentiments and opinions on the War just for the sake of seeing ourselves in print; we have not only contributed to the Princess of Wales’s Hospital Ship and the American Hospital Ship; we have not only, some of us, paid hundreds of pounds away to have ourselves mentioned as “generous donors,” but we have actually degraded our Army to our vulgar uses, and have tacitly consented to let the British soldier, than whom no finer, cooler, more dauntless creature ever stepped “in khaki” or out of it, be dubbed an “absent-minded beggar” to the rest of the world; and have, by apparently approving this term, exposed him more or less to the ridicule of Europe. No more unfortunate, more unpatriotic “catch-word” could possibly

have been put in vogue than this, in the face of the severe "set-back" our men at first received in the Transvaal. It is a phrase which in all probability the Boers learned to quote with sufficiently grim humour at every "mishap by the way" occurring to our forces—mishaps due, not to any "absent-mindedness" on the part of the soldiers, but to the reprehensible mismanagement and neglect of certain members of the War Office, who dallying with a grave national emergency as though it were nothing but a "society" jest, sent out our troops at the beginning inadequately armed and insufficiently equipped for engaging in so bitter and deadly a business. When such galling facts are pressed home to us as, that after all our proud boast of British supremacy in everything, some of our guns are proved inferior to those possessed by our enemies,—when it is known that we have men in our military department who are so obtuse and short-sighted as to reject timely advance offers of cavalry, mules, and horses of the necessary breed to stand the exigencies of the South African climate,—when, above all, we do not, or will not realise that it is a lower section of our own Press, influenced from behind the scenes for party purposes and private schemes of aggrandisement, that *has* worked up, and is yet busy working up, a state of malignant feeling between peoples who might otherwise be the best of friends, and that even now cannot rest without incessantly attempting to create an injurious excitement at home by continued complaints and accusations against all existing authorities, circumstances and things—when we thus openly demonstrate our muddle-headed condition on these and similar points at issue to rival nations, while we ourselves remain to our own follies blind,—it is no wonder if the Boers should have found that ill-fated phrase "absent-minded beggar" a *bonne-bouche* of piquant flavour in their mouths, particularly when made more grotesquely ridiculous than ever by translation into Dutch.

"Beggar," says Mr. Kipling, "is a general term of endearment, and absent-minded is a term used by private soldiers themselves when they have forgotten any small duty." This may be true. In fact we do not doubt it for a moment. "Absent-minded" is a very well-known expression, used often by people who are not "private soldiers" when they likewise "have forgotten any small duty." It is quite good English—so good, in fact, that we, are surprised it should be used at all by soldiers of Mr. Kipling's "barrack-room" breed, celebrated as these fictional "Tommys" are for speaking nothing but the coarsest Billingsgate. We can only suppose, that, "when they have forgotten any small duty," they lapse into the classic

simplicity of the mother tongue, and say they are "absent-minded," just like ordinary men. But what is greatly to be regretted is that the music-hall verses lately in vogue would seem to imply to the casual, and especially to the foreign reader, that "Tommy" is so criminally "absent-minded" as to forget all those whom he loves best in the world directly he is ordered to the front, and throw them on the charity of the public. And herein he is grossly libelled. We do not know whether Mr. Kipling considers it a "small duty" to think of mothers and sisters, sweethearts and wives; but we do know that the popular rhymester's contempt for women, as displayed in his stories, not one of which includes a loveable or sympathetic feminine character, is not a code of the British Army. "Tommy" has a strong heart as well as a long memory for the dear ones at home: indeed, much of the mettle in him comes from his tenderness in this regard. And those who know him best and honour him most, will stoutly maintain that, given a fair all-round specimen of him, he is never "absent-minded" about anything which concerns his home or his family belongings. Moreover, some of these "belongings" have so much of his spirit in them that, weak women as they are, they would rather work hard from morning till night for the merest pittance, than take a penny from public charity on his behalf. This should be distinctly understood, lest, in the face of all the "beggar" uproar, the "Tommy" of other lands should judge ours as having neither pride nor independence.

Our hero is not a conscript. He enters the army of his own free will and choice. He knows exactly what he has to expect, and is prepared to accept it without grumbling, like a man. Of course, if encouraged to grumble by music-hall ranters and the fluent verbosity of the cheap press, he *will* grumble, as men in every profession will likewise do, under similar persuasion and pressure. But personally, his attitude is absolutely independent, and neither he nor his uniform should be exposed to contempt. When he returns from the present war, we shall be curious to see if he is allowed to enter a restaurant or public-house in uniform. It will be interesting to note whether any "snubbing" process will be inflicted upon him after he has done his best for the glory and honour of the country,—or whether hats will be touched as he comes and goes in places of resort and amusement, out of respect for the uniform he wears, as is the case with his brothers of Austria and Germany. So much "talk" about "Tommy" should result in deeds. A soldier of the Queen, in the Queen's uniform, should surely command as much

respect throughout the English Empire wherever he goes, as a soldier of the German Emperor in the Emperor's uniform receives in every part of the German Empire,—nay, even more, for the German "Tommy" is compelled to serve, while his English brother serves by choice. Hence to call him "beggar" even by way of "endearment" is to give him a nickname which may be misleading to the soldiers of other nations. It is a "call to arms" which savours of the lowest variety theatre, and flings, as it were a daub of slang at every brave fellow who has left home and friends, perchance for ever. War is no music-hall buffoonery. And it might be well for us all to remember that English is not the only language spoken in the world. The untrained and illiterate persons, who it would seem are nowadays employed (we suppose for the sake of cheapness) on certain of the newspapers, if we are to judge by their deplorable ignorance of history, geography, and the rudiments of grammar, to say nothing of foreign languages, appear to forget—if they ever knew—that in France the people speak French, in Germany, German, in Italy, Italian, and so on. One can easily imagine Kaiser Wilhelm promptly clapping into prison any rash and presuming ballad-monger who should dare to call the Armed Defender of the Fatherland "*der zerstreute Bettler*," which is about the equivalent of "absent-minded beggar" in German. In French, beggar is "*mendiant*," and means just what it says. Absent-minded is "*distrain*," and likewise means just what it says. Frenchmen, therefore, cannot choose but laugh at the insensate row got up over the Kipling jingle, and say "C'est un drôle de pays, l'Angleterre! Là, le soldat n'est pas jugé comme le héros qui se donne à la gloire, la victoire, l'honneur!—non!—c'est un *mendiant distrait*! Un rimeur a chanté cette sottise, et toute la nation l'applaudit!"

Of course it is quite easy to say we do not care what the French think of us,—only our actions do not approve our words. Inasmuch as we have a prominent statesman, a possible future Prime Minister, who permits himself to discourse in a species of St. Giles's Greek if the French either criticise or caricature our doings, entirely ignoring such a trifling circumstance as that we, on our side, are perpetually criticising and caricaturing the French; and a whole host of us fly rabidly into the newspapers for relief to our feelings, and write hysterical requests that "nothing French" shall be purchased by any true Briton, forgetful of the fact that, owing to the disadvantages and discouragements steadily maintained by "true Britons" against British farming, thousands of us are eating French eggs with our American bacon every morning!

Truly, for the sake of advertising ourselves, and falling into the trap of a "press-boom," we have suffered a sad loss of personal dignity. Nevertheless, if, during our headlong rush against the big newspaper hoarding marked "CHARITY" on one side, and "1,223,860 DAILY" on the other, London has appeared to the rest of the world as a sort of monster playground for the airing of lunatics, that is quite our own affair. But, while proudly exhibiting our insane war dance, in which our "professional" women and pet dogs alike have been paraded, to the amused wonderment of Europe, we might surely have spared "Tommy Atkins" some of the excessive humiliation he has been compelled to suffer at our hands. For "Tommy" is by no means the drunken, foul-mouthed, clumsy, illiterate rascal and tramp the Jester-Jongleur of the hour would make him. Hero at Sebastopol,—hero at Ladysmith,—he is one and the same enduring, dauntless, patient creature,—and never perhaps has he had these inherent qualities of his being so severely put to the proof as during the present war. Abroad, he has been marched across country which few military tacticians have appeared to know as much about as may be found in such elementary descriptions of the Transvaal as form a necessary part of a Dutch school-book; at home he has been pressed into our service as a sort of sandwich-man, to bear on breast and back different names in large print,—sometimes those of Royalty mixed up at haphazard with the "shreds and patches" of the stage,—sometimes obligingly displaying the title and trade of the latest provision-dealer enrolled in the once renowned but now inglorious order of knighthood,—sometimes unfurling "to the battle and the breeze" the proud oriflamme of certain "Stores Limited" associated with the despatch of Ten Thousand Plum Puddings for the front, a mass of "frame food" of the most unappetising and injurious quality imaginable for a hot climate,—and anon supporting the emblazonry of a certain Soap, with a statement added (in bold headlines) of the glorious fact that a half-penny on each cake of this "emollient article" sold to the public will be allotted to the relief of him in his wounds and his troubles if he should ever fall so desperately low as to need it. And while he has thus been trotted round on show, a grotesquely made-up figure of fun, metaphorically holding a "little tambourine" like the trained monkey attendant on an organ-grinder, while the Kipling barrel-tune of "Pay, pay, pay!" is supposed to give a representation of his feelings, what does he truly feel? Something of shame, we may be sure!—something of warm protest! Something too of indignation, that through the efforts of a few pushing journalists, anxious to increase the

sale of their newspapers by taking advantage of the good and genuine impulses of a too-easily gulled public, and disguising this intention under the garb of "CHARITY," he should have the taunt "Beggar!" flung in his face from one end of the world to the other.

"Make a man proud of himself and his corps," says Lord Wolseley, writing on army subjects, "and he can always be depended upon. He must believe that his duties are the noblest that ever fell to man's lot." Of course he must believe it. He does believe it. He has believed it in days gone by, and has asserted his belief, full-fronted with the death-belching mouths of the enemy's cannon. The music-hall was not then, as it is now, the chief delight of the "cultured" classes. The name and title of the Queen were not degraded into "Missis Victorier" or "The Widow of Windsor." Our banner was not called "a bloomin' old rag" by any slangster of the day. It would have been considered an insult to the country to call either the Sovereign or the Flag by any such "terms of endearment." The Press, if we may estimate its condition by looking back through old files of newspapers to the time of the Crimean War, was then apparently altogether conducted, as in its highest and most reliable quarters it is now, by gentlemen of education and refinement,—men who were tolerant, dignified, and careful of the Queens English. Their journals rigorously excluded all personal slander and vulgarity. They contained no flowery descriptions of the dresses and jewels worn by notable *demi-mondaines*, such as might excite young girls to envy or admiration, and insensibly lead them to try and emulate their dishonoured sisters. We had poets then,—that is, men who were the followers of a now forgotten noble Art, which in its grandest forms, has helped to make nations great. One among them, pure and steadfast in his life and labours, was called Alfred Tennyson. He gave us "The Charge of the Light Brigade," and infused into his immortal lines all the thunderous rush of that desperately splendid act of heroic obedience to a mistaken order. "Someone had blundered" then,—but Tom, Dick and Harry were not allowed to express their illiterate opinions on the blunder to any sort of 1,223,860 Daily. It was a glorious "charge,"—a sacrifice to duty which would be repeated again to-day with the same dash and fire, if occasion called. For the high spirit of the British soldier has not yet fallen to the "beggar" level, despite the foolish "guy" of Imperialism just now presented to the world, dressed as a "cove" with his hat on one side and a dirty clay pipe in his mouth, half drunk, and jabbering in a sort of coster's lingo. And the last Poet Laureate of the nation

(for the present one does not count, being only of the Court) recognised and honoured that spirit, and looked to it for the country's defence and safety, even while he deplored the unwholesome blight which his prophetic vision saw creeping over the "fair rose of state." To him England was—

" Grave mother of majestic works,
From her isle-altar gazing down,
Who, God-like, grasps the triple forks,
And, King-like, wears the crown :

Her open eyes desire the truth.
The wisdom of a thousand years
Is in them. May perpetual youth
Keep dry their light from tears ;

That her fair form may stand and shine,
Make bright our days and light our dreams,
Turning to scorn with lips divine
The falsehood of extremes !"

It is this very " falsehood of extremes " which so distinctly and degradingly marks some of our doings in this present epoch, the biggest extreme of all being our self-advertising mania. To gratify this, certain members of our aristocracy, who should know better, will court the loss of prestige and consent to the vulgarest ignominy. Art, science and politics, are all marred by the trail of this bill-sticker's brush. The high and honourable profession of literature is debased and disfigured by the intrusion of the " cultured " ignorant, some of whom barely know how to spell. Maladi of Paint-and-Powder and Her Grace the Duchess of Many-Wrinkles will nowadays rush, with an alacrity which might be judged as impudent, if it were not so diverting, to offer themselves as contributors to the cheaper magazines, whose editors prefer titles to talent, for the idiotic satisfaction of seeing their names appended to a mild dribble of words about nothing, resembling a ten-year-old child's first school " essay," and also to indulge themselves in the grotesque self-congratulatory idea that by writing such stuff they are somewhere near the classic height of a Brontë or a George Eliot. Bitten by the same tarantula-craze for notoriety, our married women of honourable position will permit their photographs to appear in shop windows, side by side with those of the latest stout and more than half nude " variety " dancer. Their sense of modesty has grown to be so tough and pachydermatous a thing

that it is not even pricked when the Fleet Street penny-a-liner labels them in print as "beauties," valued at so much per head, per face, per eyes, per hair, and carries their portraits in his dirty pockets to show to his fellow-pensters, and say they were "gifts" to him for his perspicacity. They willingly submit to such forms of personal disgrace for the sake of being "talked about"! Ye gods! No wonder Mr. Frederic Harrison asks "Are we Degenerating?" Even he, who deems it possible for nations to exist without religious faith, and who has advocated and still advocates a chill Positivism, may well pause on the threshold of the Unknown and recoil from the very grim and hideous Positive Plight of a God-less people, whose worship of the Divine Master has come to mean little more than a Sunday Sham. He seems dissatisfied with the present condition of things, which have, let him be assured, resulted in a great measure from the spreading of a poisonous doubt and negation of God,—doubt and negation which have received the almost enthusiastic support of certain flippant journalists, who have made it a duty, as well as a pleasure, to praise in exaggerated terms every book and every magazine article of an atheistical and materialistic tendency, commending such literature warmly to the special notice of the public.

Anything more nauseating than the suggested coward crawl to God in a "Day of Contrition, Intercession and Memorial," among a people, whose magazine press has been busy for the past ten years, casting forth blasphemous articles written by supposed "men of light and leading" to deny the very existence of the Creator,—whose chiefly-praised poet, Algernon Charles Swinburne, has been tacitly permitted to call the Saviour of the world "carrion crucified" in his lewd verse, without one single manly, indignant, or righteous protest and condemnation from a church pulpit,—who have tolerated the grossest immorality in high places, and have passed over the sins which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (as they will destroy London and Paris) with apparently unseeing eyes and vacuous sycophant smile, because it was my Lord This, or Lady That, or the Prince of So-and-so who was concerned,—anything we repeat, more downright revolting to every honest mind than this feeble grovelling before a denied Creator *now*, can scarcely be imagined! Is it only *now* that Archbishops, Bishops and our clergy generally, wake up to see that, instead of foolishly arguing together about incense and candles, it were better and more in keeping with their Master's commands to guide their flocks by the Spirit of Faith rather than Form? Is it only *now*,—when the shock of war vibrates through the Empire,—that they think

they had better come to the front with "Special Prayers," lest they and their comfortable benefices, livings, and what not, be lost and forgotten in the general uproar? Is it only *now*—when brothers in the Christian Creed are at each other's throats, pouring out their life-blood in the everlasting jealous quarrel of Cain and Abel,—that the Pope totters forward from his throne, and with aged impotent hand offers to invoke peace? Only *now*?

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

"Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity!"

On the Eve of this New Year the Leader of the Positivists asked his followers, in a somewhat striking speech, to think about the condition of our national life.

"Was it growing nobler and purer? Were we coming nearer the just, the loving, the beautiful, and the true? To those questions he gave a detailed negative. In population, huge interests, in area, wealth, material prosperity, and the like, the answer might be affirmative; but humanity was not measured thus, and he declared that our immediate generation had been sinking to meaner ideas, more vulgar types of literature and art, a more open craving after wealth, and a more insolent assertion of pride and pomp. He was old enough to remember the whole reign of the Queen, and his opinion was that to-day we had lost much of the higher spirit that inspired public and private life thirty or forty years ago, making idols of things which were then the object of loathing and shame. What he meant was that there had been a gradual lowering of the moral tone, a deliberate acceptance of what is evil and base. Fashion was now at the mercy of any millionaire gambler. Our literature had declined into the short story and the problem play, taking its heroines from women with a past and its heroes from the slums. In short, the reek of the pot-house, the music-hall, the turf, and the share market infected all our doings."

True. And much of the root of the evil, if not all, can be found in the tone and teaching of a part of the national press. This great and powerful institution should be a refining, not a vulgarising element in the life of the people; but as matters stand, newspapers are frequently to blame in the working up of unworthy means to still more unworthy ends. Some of them will do anything to raise a

“boom,” which of course means a “sale” for their particular printed sheet. And there are such a number of fools in Great Britain—such good fools, such warmhearted fools, such generous fools, that it may be truly said there is no nation in the world which can catch fire at a charitable suggestion, and turn it into a general conflagration of benevolence and sympathy so quickly, as the British. For they possess Heart; other nations are mostly Intellect. Britons taken *en masse* by enthusiasm for a Cause, never stop to think—and almost any “call-word” will do to set them in a blaze. “Absent-minded Beggar” serves as well as “Jumbo” did in days gone by, when all London arose in the small hours of the morning to see that unwieldy favourite of the Zoo depart into the house of Barnum-bondage. Certain critics across Channel thought London mad at that time, not understanding it sufficiently to know that it was only “worked up” by the *Daily Telegraph* into one of its strange half child-like, half-monster-like surface sentiments. Shakepeare never wrote truer words than those which he put into the mouth of the First Grave-digger in *Hamlet*, who explains why the young Prince of “antic humour” has been sent to England. “There, his madness shall not be noticed, for all the men are as mad as he.”

But while some of the more irresponsible newspaper editors are furiously riding their separate rocking-horse toy of a Pegasus, and kicking up as much dust as possible in the eyes of the public, it is advisable that the too quickly hoodwinked “masses” should beware. It is not, as the French say, “for the love of your beautiful eyes,” good people, that your journalists give you advice on momentous questions for a halfpenny or a penny. In such a crisis as the present, attempts will be made, and are already being made, by schemers and Jew speculators on the Stock Exchange, to cause dissatisfaction, confusion and bewilderment among you, and to land the country in troubles at home as well as abroad. A preparatory note of this has been sounded though it be only on a tin whistle, which conveniently permits us to see the working of the performer’s mouth while he blows his little blast. Listen to the music!

“All of us at the present moment desire a strong and stable Government—a Government in whom the people may have the fullest confidence. The country is now broadly divided into two parties. One party desires to hold the whole Cabinet responsible for the blunders of a few individual members of it and the mistakes of its military experts, and thus bring about a complete change of Government. The other prefers, during the crisis at any rate, that the

present Government should be kept in office. By cutting away the dead wood and grafting a new branch, the Cabinet tree can be made to bear good fruit again."

"*During the crisis at any rate*" the "other party," inclusive of tin-whistles, "prefers" not to change the Government. It is wonderfully kind and nice and condescending of the "other party" to feel like this! As Hamlet says, "I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying." But the tin-whistle does not pipe its alarm without providing a remedy for disaster. Here it is:—

"The remedy, as we have said before, lies, not in propping up men who have proved themselves to be mere dummies, but by replacing them with stronger and younger individualities, able to carry the war to a successful issue, and to guide the country through a grave crisis.

"It is in the furtherance of these plans that we urge our readers to make plain their wishes to their members of Parliament. We are glad to find that our view is being taken up by a large portion of the provincial Press."

The "provincial Press" being generally supplied with a considerable amount of information and advice by certain correspondents writing from London, it is scarcely surprising that "our view" should be so "taken up." That the public should "make plain their wishes" is always most desirable,—only let them be quite sure that the wishes expressed *for* them in some quarters of the press are their very own, and not the wishes of the tin-whistle. And let them, while confiding their desires by the bushel to their harassed and anxious members of Parliament, fight shy of these "younger and stronger individualities" who are so glibly sure of "carrying the war to a successful issue and guiding the country through a grave crisis." The guidance of the country demands high statesmanship, experience, forethought, self-abnegation, discretion, and devotion to duty; it is somewhat too lofty a business to be dealt with by speculators or newspaper proprietors. Ministers have enough and more than enough to do just now, if they would fittingly fulfil their service to the Queen and Empire—and it is scarcely the time to decide whether Mr. Chamberlain is fitted to be Prime Minister or not. A newspaper proprietor with a keen eye to journalistic "profits," and a possible peerage wrenched reluctantly from the hands of the ambitious politician he has "boomed," will naturally maintain that he is "the only Joe" for the post, but the opinions of the people have yet to be taken on the subject. Bold head-lines such as "The War and the Public," leading off

a few incoherent complaints from Messrs. Brown, Jones and Robinson, will not suffice. Because, if the Public is not quite the Ass some newspaper proprietors take it for, it must know very well that its "thousands of letters" (if it writes them) can never possibly get full reading at any newspaper office, and are for the most part quietly consigned to the waste-paper basket, the editors only publishing in their columns what they are personally prepared for, and what will more or less coincide with their proprietors' opinions. If a Lie and its refutation are published in the same paper, we shall generally see the Lie presented with a prominent head-line among the special news, and the refutation in small print at the bottom of a column, somewhere near an advertisement of the latest patent pill. Knowing this, and having it exemplified to us every day, it is distinctly disloyal, unpatriotic and unfair, to hamper and hurry the Government authorities in the very midst of their gravest and most trying difficulties,—which outsiders cannot be expected to understand,—simply to be caught in the very naturally-planned "springe to catch woodcocks" set by certain newspaper proprietors in order to send up their "shares" in the market.

"The time has certainly not come," as one of our most level-headed journalists ably writes, "when we can put our fingers with certainty on any defects other than those minor departmental blunders which can be remedied almost as soon as they are brought to light. Nor is it the time for reviling and denouncing generals and officials, either at headquarters or on the scene of action, when their hands are full, their tongues tied, and the success of our arms dependent on their efforts. Least of all ought this to be done by the irresponsible scribes who have themselves been foremost in misleading the public and precipitating the present calamitous struggle, and who have placed on record their own monumental incapacity for seeing facts and anticipating the future. . . ."

"For the present, at any rate, we have accomplished some things which no other nation could have done in the time, and which we ourselves could never have done until within the last few years; and until something really goes wrong, it seems the fairer as well as the more patriotic course to give administrators and generals credit for what has been done rather than to revile and denounce them for not having accomplished impossibilities."

And few will, or can, deny that it is to the very last degree absurd for sane men and women to listen to the hysterical yellings

of any press-organ which can sink so low as to print the following "item of war news" in its columns.

* "We have received the pair of President Kruger's old boots. There seems to be doubt about their authenticity. They were forwarded to England by Mr. Grier Evans, manager of the Government tannery at Pretoria. In connection with the tannery Mr. Evans keeps a boot shop. "While I was in the shop one day," writes Mr. Evans, "the President came in, bought a pair of boots, and left these." The boots will duly appear as collecting-boxes at the bazaar auction on Friday next at Willis's Rooms."

Who in the world is so bereft of common-sense as to need assurance of the "authenticity" of Kruger's old boots! It is incredible that, in a serious crisis, such a childish statement should be gravely put forward by any responsible journal! Moreover the idea of collecting funds for the British soldier in his enemy's cast-off boots is so eminently disgusting, so many degrees below the lowest notions of the lowest music-hall, that one wonders why some creature calling itself a man, and going to Willis's Rooms on the day in question, did not kick the dirty foot-gear out of the place with the contempt such articles deserved, and glory in the consequences of his act. Even an effete London *dude* might have distinguished himself for once in this way. If we, as a nation, continue to tolerate such a farrago of nonsense in our English press, as is being daily printed and circulated all over the world, to our detriment and loss of dignity, we can scarcely be surprised at the sneers and caricatures of the foreign newspapers, which delight in a "British Reverse" with the same sort of petty glee that moves a small boy to rejoice in the temporary discomfiture of a big one. It is unbecoming to us, as a strong and resolute people, to allow ourselves to be either disquieted or confused by unreliable pressmen, who are busy working for themselves, and using the present emergency for shaping their own future. We have many journals in whose high credit, calm tone and discretion, we can place our confidence, and which can no more be "bought" or "bribed" than the Prime Minister, and which have no object whatever to serve, save to maintain the just medium of all parties in the cause of truth and equity. Again,—we know our soldiers are not "absent-minded beggars," but fine faithful men, brave as lions; we know our generals will do their grandest and best, even in desperate extremities of unpreparedness; for they are leaders who have won their laurels by high service. Hence they deserve our trust. We are not in South Africa; we cannot rightly estimate the difficulties they have to encounter.

* *Daily Mail.*

Blunders there may have been; blunders there may yet be. No human system is perfect; no human affairs were ever carried through without some mistakes. Too long a peace breeds neglect of war matters, and our very failings have sprung from our inherent virtues. Some of us had grown to believe war impossible with our brother nations. Not so very long ago the Czar was for pronouncing a perpetual peace. So trusting, so great-hearted is England, that she opens her doors to all the cast off spies and traitors of other lands, never pausing to think that they may turn and rend her, just as, in private life those who have received many benefits, often turn and rend their benefactors. Her good faith was not disturbed when, just as the Transvaal War broke out, the German Emperor set foot upon our shores. He came, so our own press assured us, at that precise moment, to pay a friendly visit to his august relatives at the English Court. So it may have been,—so it may be; but we can hardly shut our eyes to the fact that German officers have been fighting against us in the Boer ranks, and that weapons of war and stores of ammunition were set afloat, evidently bound for some immediate destination or other, on German steamers. No doubt it was all quite friendly: Kaiser Wilhelm loves us as the apple of his eye, or we will try to think he does. Our cheap press has done its level best to irritate him by every species of low lampoon and vulgarly contemptuous sneer,—he ought to feel very kindly towards us. No doubt he does. Kings and emperors always love those who insult them!

But, though we retain some of our old barbaric virtues of courage, confidence, magnanimity and loyalty, it would be foolish to disguise from ourselves that we have lost greatly on the social and ethical side of progress during the halcyon days of peace which have so long bestowed their benediction on the land. English society is not what it used to be, as our few remaining "grand" old men and matrons can testify. A distinctly unwholesome canker is in our midst; there is a smell of rotteness in the "upper" circles of domestic and social life. Since our grief-stricken Sovereign retired into the privacy of more or less perpetual mourning, and ceased to take an active part in the movements of the fashionable world, a change for the worse has crept over our manners and breeding. Our men are no longer courteous; our women are no longer modest. Vulgarities, even indecencies in conversation, are not only tolerated, but voted "smart," and it is quite an ordinary thing to hear a woman of title and position use language such as an uncultured peasant would blush to listen to. Whenever "honours" are bestowed, gifted and useful men in every

branch of science, art and literature, are frequently set aside, and their inferiors, both in work and capability are created knights, baronets or peers. Persistent self-advertisement has brought the *demi-mondaine* to the front, emboldened by the encouraging smile of Royalty; and the extent of our social hypocrisy, even as regards our feelings for "Tommy Atkins," can be somewhat gauged by the fact, that while the rooms of the "professional" lady, who makes a good time for herself by reciting "The Absent-Minded Beggar" whenever she can get a chance, are crowded with gifts and flowers from Royal and distinguished members of the "Upper Ten,"—the "Soldiers' Bishop," the Rev. Arthur Robins, of Holy Trinity Church in Windsor, one of the noblest-hearted, most God-fearing men that ever lived, one whom "Tommy" loved more than most, was carried to his last rest at the close of the past year, without a "single flower of remembrance" from those who should have most honoured him. A dead groom of the Court has often received more acknowledgment of service from the Royal household than this good man of many helpful virtues. He, who rose in the early dawn a few weeks before his death, to see some of his "children," as he called them, off to South Africa,—he, to whom the brave fellows clung tenderly as the train started, crying, "Come with us! "Come with us! Come with us!"—he who, gloried in the honour of the British arms with lifelong pride and fondness,—he, who comforted the soldier in his deeper troubles with an unwearying gentle, yet strong patience and affection, lifting him out of despondency to the cheerful contemplation of the highest and the best,—he, in the very midst of all the frenzied shouting of "luxuries for Tommy" "comforts for Tommy," and what not, was borne sorrowfully to the grave by the soldiers themselves, all of whom saw and knew that no sign of esteem from the heads of the state, no token of gratitude for useful work done in the soldiers' cause, lay on the bier of one of their truest friends. Watching by his corpse all night in Holy Trinity Church, where his genial and kindly presence, his firm encouraging voice, had so often urged them on to high duty, it is possible they thought of this, as they stood silently through the long dreary hours, stern figures of mourning, with set lips and melancholy downcast eyes. It is possible they thought their honour had been more truly cherished and maintained by the dead man they guarded, than by any popular *demi-mondaine* or rhymester of the day. And when they gathered round his coffin, escorting it with slow and solemn march, and dismal beat of muffled war-drums, through London, to the cold funeral vault, where all that

was mortal of their old friend was shut from their sight for ever, they may in their deep inward sorrow, have said "Less talk and more truth! Less advertisement and more honesty!—Our position in the world is not kept up by so ostentatiously and noisily making us the objects of public charity, but by honouring us for ourselves, and recognising that each man of us is a hero when put to the proof. None of us are cowards, and, most of us are better gentlemen than those who are advertising their benevolence at our cost."

True, O "Tommy!"—absolutely true! There are few, if any, of your honourable profession who would condescend to the toad-level of certain millionaires who offer £150 to sit at a table next to the Prince of Wales during the progress of a charitable "War Fund" dinner. Though, for that matter, it is distinctly good that snobs should pay to sit anywhere. We wish every snob in the "social swim" would pay £150 each time he or she is permitted to sit next to a lady or gentleman. A "Snob Fund" on these lines might bring in several thousands of useful pounds, if the snobs could only be got to label themselves as such instead of "generous donors." Snobbery, effeminacy, callousness, coarseness, loss of chivalry in men and of gentleness in women, combined with levity, irreverence, and scorn for high aims and noble living, are bound to make any society despicable, and to insensibly lower the tone of national feeling. It has been sinking to a very low ebb during the past few years, but now there are not wanting strong signs that it will rise again—rise to its former height of grandeur and endeavour, and cast from it the poisonous and evil influences which have contaminated and weakened its native and finer force. Confronted with necessity, we shall meet it with resolution and dignity—not, let us hope, with our tongues in our cheeks, dancing a "break-down" to a half-penny minstrel's jig. War will do us good if it rouses us to the fact that life is not the vain and flippant thing we have lately made of it. There is something more to be got out of it than golden dust-heaps, gambling on the Stock Exchange, and low intrigues with our neighbours' wives. High feeding, luxury, sensuality, the ostentation of wealth, and the well-nigh devilish egotism bred of these, are signs of decay in a nation, and let us be devoutly thankful if, in the course of Divine Justice, we are given a chance of getting rid of our "dry-rot" and emerging clean and healthy once more. As the Last Singer of our century has said:

A Social Note on the War.

“ Why do they prate of the blessings of Peace? we have made them a curse,
 Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that is not its own ;
 And lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain, is it better or worse
 Than the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his own hearthstone ?

* * * * *

“ For I trust if an enemy's fleet came yonder round by the hill,
 And the rushing battle-bolt sang from the three decker out of the foam,
 That the smooth-faced, snubnosed rogue would leap from his counter and till
 And strike, if he could, were it but with his cheating yardwand, home !”

This has the true ring. This is better than whole booksfull of “ absent-minded beggar ” jumble-verse—we use the term advisedly and make no apology. For we suppose that Mr. Rudyard Kipling would be the last person in the world to call his effort a “ poem,” presuming that he honours the art of true poesy. So far as he personally is concerned, nothing more regrettable could have happened to him in his literary career than the music-hall “ boom ” of which he has so unfortunately been made the subject. If he had produced a real Poem, the matter would have been very different. A real poem pushed vigorously down the public throat would have made the public voice sweeter and stonger. A real poem would not only have built up a Fund but a Fame. Instead of degrading “ Tommy,” it might have improved and dignified his whole position. It is a thousand pities Mr Kipling has lost this chance. We had hoped he would have stormed Parnassus, rather than be content to stand with the mountebanks of rhyme at the foot of the Olympian hill ; for it should surely have been as easy for him to write an immortal lyric, fit to appeal to future generations as a music-hall ditty, bound to pass with the passing hour. We all know that any set of rhymes by anybody “ worked up ” in the “ Absent-minded Beggar ” style, would have “ caught on ” in the same way ; and that if they had not been so “ worked up ” they would have fallen flat and tuneless on the public ear. One cannot but be sorry that the name of Mr. Kipling, who has done so much able work, should be associated with a piece of balderdash which could have been turned out by any “ postman poet,” or versifier attached to the “ comic ” press. The fulsome and (for him) unfortunate adulation which has attended this and other inferior efforts of his pen, more than merits the following arrowy sarcasm recently launched by one of our most well-known and brilliant journalists :—

“A well-known firm of publishers has decided to Kiplingise the English classics. It is generally felt that the language of Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, and other classic authors is heavy, and has little of the human ring about it, however ingenious and even inspired their matter may be. The Kiplingised edition of the plays and sonnets of Shakespeare is already in the Press, and it is said that Mr. Beerbohm Tree will shortly bring out at Her Majesty's a play rendered according to this version. As the writers of this generation are utterly devoid of originality, the new departure will open a wide field for their energy, for it will enable them to practically rewrite the works of the celebrities of literature and to associate their names with those of the latter until the end of time. Carlyle's History of the French Revolution would be much more attractive in Kiplingese, so would Macaulay's Essays.” *An experienced costermonger who trades in the Old Kent Road, has been retained to revise the works after they have been Kiplingised, so that no error in the language used should by accident occur.*

The following extract was published in the *Times* :—

“Miss Susie M. Best, of Cincinnati, Ohio, sends us some spirited verses, under the title of ‘Bobs,’ as an American tribute to the Commander-in-Chief in South Africa. One verse runs as follows :—

There is something that's audacious
 In the very name of ‘Bobs,’
 There's a dare and dash about it,
 Makes you sort of want to shout it,
 So that all the world can hear
 When you cheer !

As the editor of the *Times* approves—and rightly approves—of those spirited lines, and as he frequently employs Mr. Rudyard Kipling himself, there is reason to hope that in the not remote future the leading articles, and possibly the legal and ecclesiastical intelligence, in that paper may be produced in Kiplingese English !”

We should have preferred Mr. Kipling, for his own sake as well as the nation's, to have written such a lyric as should have out-rivalled the finest of Thomas Campbell's—a lyric to last for all time, and ring like a clarion clearly on through English literature, when we and our generation have passed away ; not to have flung us a set of “flash” hurdy-gurdy verses, entitled by a catch-word which implies more contempt than

honour for the English arms. However, he has elected to place himself on the level of the mere newspaper poetaster, and what a man does, that he has. The "Absent-minded Beggar" stanzas will mark Mr. Kipling's name with a fatal persistency as long as he lives, cropping up with an infinite tedium and an exasperating sameness at every fresh thing he writes; and let him be wise as Solon, classic as Virgil, and strong as Samson, he shall never escape it. Like another sort of "Raven," he shall see it "sitting never flitting," on every "bust of Pallas," or new work he offers to the public; he shall demand of it, "Take thy beak from out my heart and thy form from off my door!" and its reply shall be the one monotonous devil's croak of "Nevermore!"

"Beggar," or Hero? Which is the better "term of endearment"? Which is it most fitting that we, the nation, should use in our daily thoughts and prayers? While the sullen thunder of the guns of war rolls towards us from the far distance with no uncertain clamour,—when we hear of "Tommy Atkins" facing fire with the cool courage born of his race, charging the enemy victoriously at the point of the bayonet, till he drops into the cold trenches of death, lost in the very flower of his manhood to all those who loved him,—can we not find something finer, something grander to do than to advertise our personal charity at his expense? Is it not time we left off our foolish chatter concerning puddings, "Art souvenirs," monster concerts and the like, and betook ourselves to a little serious thought as to what it all means? A little earnest consideration as to whether we should not refrain from playing our hypocritical "social" pranks under cover of the name and fame of England's army? If a crafty speculator, deeply involved in the issues of this war, pays "conscience money" to the tune of fifty thousand or more pounds to the fund for such widows and orphans as his unscrupulous schemes may have caused, need we go out of our way to praise his "benevolence," to "*sound a trumpet*" before him that he may be "*seen of men*" or exhibit a frantic desire to dine with him? Widows and orphans may be helped, but never consoled, by money. Their griefs are irremediable; and for brave lives lost, no gold can pay. Some there are who obstinately maintain that our present struggle is a fight for gold rather than honour; if so, we may be sure we shall have to pay out gold galore, for our golden victory. Increased taxation, higher prices, and a harder struggle than ever to live, will be the "home" consequences of the combat. Not that these things will hurt us. On the contrary, if luxuries have to be lessened, and the hypocrisies of the "society show" dispensed with, such a lesson of necessity will be a blessing to us all.

For it is not too much to say that in the deep undergrowths of Cause, producing Effect, our own social vices and follies are to blame for the present tumult and disaster.

Too many blessings are apt to breed ingratitude in those who receive them, just as an over-abundance of wealth often makes a miser of a millionaire. Too much rest engenders, in nations as in individuals, sloth, inertia and indifference,—people get into the habit of thinking themselves too safe to need defence,—too “superior” and powerful to care about possible enemies. But as a matter of fact, no Empire in all history ever became great without having to fight for its position,—and the greater it is the more need for keeping and holding its own. And when the apathy of long ease and comfortable self-indulgence steals over a people, it is like the first sign of decay in the physique of a man. His dinner becomes his chief consideration,—he concerns himself with various “hobbies” to while away the time,—he gives up his business and seeks to be amused, provided the amusement does not give him too much trouble to obtain,—and, to put it colloquially he “can’t be bothered.” In nations these signs of “breaking up” take the form of an incessant restlessness,—a scurrying from place to place in search of new excitement;—and when excitement palls, a morbid re-action ensues, which displays itself in self-analysis, or a curious and sickly desire to examine the sources and motives of one’s own personal feelings, passions and desires. Nothing is more unwholesome than this last phase, or more dangerous to vigorous intellectual and moral sanity. It is like a consuming fever which wastes away all force,—and it is not the natural condition of the rightly-balanced brain. It creates discontent with one’s surroundings, and dislike for that Divine remedy for all evils, Work,—it is altogether a perverted state of the human system. But this disease of self-dissection has been largely fostered and increased in its disastrous effects by three new forms of literature which have received wide favour and encouragement from the London press,—the “fleshy school of poetry,” the “sexual” novel, and the “problem” play. The writers of these rankly poisonous literary aberrations generally weigh on two cardinal points of instruction,—first, that man is a mere animal, without a soul, or any possibility of a future after death, and that to gratify his animal passions after the manner of the bull, the goat or the pig, is his noblest form of expressing himself to the universe;—secondly that there is no Supreme Being higher than himself, to whom he is, or ever will be responsible. It is a matter of some difficulty to perceive when and how this pernicious form of

literary influence first began,—it seems to have been a kind of feverish re-action from the sane, clean, strong and splendid school of Charles Dickens and Thackeray. For the “fleshy school of poetry” Swinburne is mainly responsible,—but whether his contamination of the “silver fount of poesy” has suggested an equal contamination of the art of prose, would be hard to determine. In any case, books of a decidedly repulsive character, such as “Tess of the D’Urbervilles,” which turns wholly on a case of seduction, have through the indiscriminate praise of the press, been passed into the hands of some girls and women who might otherwise have remained happily unacquainted with the worsor bestialities of men, and no one can say that the said girls and women have derived any good or benefit therefrom. Striking the harsh and hopeless note of utter atheism and materialism, the “Story of an African Farm” is a blank negation of all positive or possible good in human life, and again turns upon seduction as one of its chief motives. Yet though lauded to the very skies of Olympian approval, few readers of this portrayal of wasted, miserable, sordid, godless life, will deny the depression and blighting effect it has had upon the minds of its readers,—and whenever minds are so depressed and blighted, they cannot but be weakened and injured. As for the “problem play,” the Americans have given us recently a lesson which we need, and which we thoroughly deserve, by the plain and forcible manner in which they have set themselves against revolting and unnecessary stage-representations of the life of the *demi-monde*. It is not necessary to recall the immortal Mr. Podsnap, who, in every matter, made a point of ascertaining whether it would “bring a blush to the cheek of the Young Person.” Such plays might bring a blush to the cheek of the most hardened of tough and ancient sinners, and the affected surprise of the actress who, entirely miscalculating the moral tone and temper of the American public, attempted to produce one for their entertainment, it a remarkable lesson in stage tactics. We quote the following from an interview with the lady:—“*In the course of an interview yesterday she declared that her play, although perfectly moral, cleverly written, beautifully staged, and well presented, had been vindictively assailed throughout the country, while she herself had been subjected to every kind of insult.*”

“*These insults,*” she said, “*have not stopped at my professional work. My personal character has been torn to shreds. Lies, too boldly false and pitably weak to be refuted, have filled nearly every*

newspaper in the land. Why have I been subjected to these insults? What have I done?"

This may be taken with or without comment, as the reader pleases,—but the following deserves more notice :—

"I attribute the outburst largely to the changeable, capricious American public—applauding to-day, hissing to-morrow; it is also largely due to American partisan politics.

"My recitation of 'The Absent-minded Beggar' in aid of the South African Hospital Fund aroused an intensely bitter feeling. In American partizan politics the wounded Briton deserves neither aid nor pity.

"I counted too surely upon American sympathy—a mistake many Britons have made."

* * * * *

She recently refused to appear at Newark, in New Jersey, where the mayor had actually proposed that the company should play before a jury of butchers and grocers acting as dramatic censors.

To avoid offending pro-Boer sympathisers the actress stopped reciting Kipling's poem, whereupon a new trouble arose. The hypocritical crusade against "Sapho" commenced at New York, and small country towns aping the metropolis had, said she, to have their "Sapho." She, like Miss Nethersole, was an Englishwoman, therefore selected for attack."

The "hypocritical crusade against Sapho commenced at New York" was not hypocritical at all, but simply self-respecting,—and if playwrights do not know that there are plenty of decent men and women left in the world who decline to breathe the odours of a moral pig-pail, it is time they should be forced to learn. The suggestion that the two stage ladies in question were attacked by the Americans "because they were Englishwomen" is too silly for words. The Americans are noted for their chivalry and tenderness to women of all nationalities. As for a jury of "butchers and grocers acting as dramatic censors," the idea seems a peculiarly happy one on the part of the Mayor of Newark. Butchers and grocers may not be able to draw "aesthetic" distinctions as to the exact line where virtue darkens off into vice, but they would probably gauge what is clean in the way of life, and what is dirty, more correctly than effete aristocrats who have not sufficient vigour of blood to earn their own daily bread,—and they would also be competent to judge whether, roughly speaking, certain stage-representations are fit for modest

women to see, or otherwise. The daughters of grocers and butchers may be as sweet and pure as the daughters of kings, and most likely are so. The butchers and grocers may therefore well put in a claim to decide as to whether certain theatrical representations which they pay good money to see, are fit entertainment for those same daughters. We do not want a society of contaminated women,—but of good and honest ones. The mothers of the nation can do without any instruction in the corrupt theories of the *demi-monde*. So at least some of our American cousins evidently think; though an astute American theatre-manager at present among us, is not so lost to a sense of the main chance, as to forgo the making of what profit he can out of the present low standard of English morals. Taking the golden opportunity offered him, he has set before English audiences a play which, as one of our daily newspapers plainly declares is “not a play for young people.” “It is,” says the same distinguished authority—“human, real, pathetic, convincing, *in spite of its Bohemian morality, in spite of its French atmosphere* The scene is a terrible one *in its nakedness*, its stripping off of all, *leaving nature naked*.” It is instructing to note the enthusiasm of the dramatic critic on this particular point, as he emphasizes the “nakedness” of the thing twice, as though it were a luscious morsel in his mouth, instead of a word on his pen. Yet, we tolerate all this kind of thing, and we go to see this detestable play. Young men and girls are present at it, as well as lascivious old men and women,—and we venture to maintain that what is unfit for the young is equally unfit for the old. Presuming that years bring wisdom, we fail to see why the elderly should be the dirty. No good whatever can be gained either in youth or age from the witnessing of such a brutal performance as the one in question, and much mischief may be almost unconsciously imbibed. We may be permitted to wonder a little as to the practical uses of a “Lord Chamberlain,” who would not for all the world tolerate such a refining, touching performance as the “Ober-Ammergau Passion Play” in England, so great are his pious scruples,—but who does not hesitate to allow such loathsome pictures of vice to be portrayed upon the stage of a fashionable theatre, as might have called down reproof from even a Rabelais. And so we go on and on, in the almost imperceptible ways of national demoralization and decay, and it is scarcely surprising to find one of our more fearless and less time-serving journalists than common, writing thus plainly:—“The army wants more regard to personal merit and less to princely and feminine favouritism in the allocation of lucrative commands; more study and

less sport; more practical regimental work and less tailor's dummy parades; more devotion to duty and less devotion to the brandy bottle; more scouting exercises and less campaigns in 'smart' boudoirs. It is due to the poor fellows who compose the rank and file to give them leaders with sufficient brain to save them from the scandalous death-traps into which certain of our regiments have recently been led." With a large section of Literature and Art devoted to the encouragement and frequent advocacy of "free love," and "soul-affinities," without regard to the marriage-tie,—with defiance of all the canons of virtue, honour and cleanly living, combined with negation of God,—we can scarcely be surprised to find many of our women of good birth and connection hopelessly vulgar, unchaste, and so lost to every sense of decency as to make the terrible sufferings of the present (and let us hope soon past) War, a mere excuse for their own vain and vicious impulses, in which they have indulged to such an extent as to draw down the just indignation of the authorities in Cape Town. The following extract from the current press speaks for itself:—"The nurse scandal has assumed disgraceful proportions in Cape Town. The city is infested with nurses whose zeal outruns their discretion, and with women who are nurses only in name. Idle "society" women have invaded the principal coast towns and organised a sort of tourist campaign, in which certain "popular" officers were "contained," and finally captured. The notorious wife of a notorious peer was recently sent back to London in consequence of conduct which was too outrageous even for those feather-brained officers who regard the campaign as a picnic of huge proportions. This lady exchanged the nurse's costume in which she had masqueraded for the uniform of a complacent admirer. Finally, Lord Kitchener sent her home, after she had played many mad pranks. Unfortunately, she was only one of scores of rich and idle women who went out to "see some fun," and who have not been at all squeamish in the selection of their amusements. It would be no exaggeration to say their conduct has been so scandalous that it has positively shocked all those devoted British ladies who have made heavy sacrifices in order to remain in South Africa to alleviate the sufferings of our soldiers. The Boers are naturally making some bitter remarks. No wonder Sir Alfred Milner is indignant!"

Some consolation, however, must have relieved and lightened the hearts of those "devoted British ladies" who *are* ladies in very truth and deed, when the eminent surgeon, Mr Treves, uttered his now

famous condemnation on "the plague of flies and women,"—a phrase as keen and cutting as the edge of his own lancet. What immeasurable contempt in the comparison "flies" and "women!" How far removed from the beautiful, noble ideals of pure, sweet womanhood, such as our greatest poets have taught us to cherish and revere, and which have been so grandly realised in the simple, brave, unostentatious life of beloved Florence Nightingale! The Treves denunciation was richly deserved; and it was hailed with positive joy by many who felt, but had no chance to speak,—many, who, behind the scenes, had watched with pain and shame, all the low little intrigues, the miserable hypocrisies, the mean subterfuges, the contemptible scheming of the *fly-women* (which, by the way, is a good name for that particular class of feminine buzzer, and is hereby solemnly patented), who sought, and still seek, to suck capital and notoriety for themselves out of the blood and tears of our soldiers. For, if we were all so lost to truth and duty and noble feeling as to permit the needs of our brave army to be made a mere placard for "society" snobs to flaunt their portraits, their names and their donations upon, without one word of protest, we should have fallen low in the trenches of the national fight indeed!

Throughout all history, Mother Nature, moved by the twin forces of Spirit and Matter has frequently exhibited her powerful abhorrence of Shams, and conflict and upheaval have ever resulted from too great an accumulation of universal lying. Ours is the fault; let us not throw it all on the shoulders of the Government we have ourselves elected, as certain "party" sharers in newspaper companies, anxious to "loot" something for themselves out of the general scramble, so strenuously urge us to do. Ours is the insatiate greed of money, the public ostentation of wealth united to private parsimony; ours is the constant feverish wish to override and trample down our brethren in every trade, profession and "social set"; ours is the fool's blind scorn of noble ideals of life lived nobly, yet linked to world's poverty; ours is the wicked un-Christian code of "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." We choose our own leaders,—not always independently, it is true, inasmuch as some of us, having no brain-power and preferring drink and smoke to thought and study, are incapable of forming a free and intelligent opinion, and are therefore influenced by the disinterested (?) advice of our pet breakfast newspaper. Consequently, if we have judged Mr. Balfour as one who was more profoundly and actively interested in the affairs of the country than in the Royal game of Golf, that is our mistake (if we are mistaken), not his. If, as certain of our journalists would have us do,

we trust Mr. Chamberlain, who as Colonial Secretary, must have known more than most of his colleagues respecting Transvaal matters, and could surely have guarded us against unpreparedness,—who in his public speeches could easily have avoided such allusions to the French nation as would only add fuel to the fire of their bitterness against us,—whose excessive “kow-tow” to the Kaiser on the occasion of his visit to our Court was far more servile than necessary,—if, as some newspaper companies desire, we are willing to accept him as Prime Minister, and with him take possible European imbroglios, we shall only have ourselves to blame, as well as the relieved and gratified newspaper companies to support. Mr. Chamberlain has shown us what he can do; we know that he was one thing and is now another—“of the chameleon’s dish,” which changes colour with the temperature of the time. Whether this is a “dish” to “set before a king,” the makers of the pie must determine. One, may ask, too, whether the nation is to have a finger in the said pie, or whether it is to be prepared, peppered, salted and baked by journalists only, for the nation to swallow? Meantime, while the “four-and-twenty blackbirds” or imps of the inkpot are chirping their various “calls” and claims, the country itself sees many breakers ahead, of difficulty and danger. If we may venture to prophesy, the policy of Parliament, judging by the various dispositions, characters, sayings and doings of some of its leading members, will possibly be to throw the responsibility of all the departmental and other regretted and regrettable blunders with which the present campaign was started, on our generals. And not only this,—but an attempt will probably be made to shield certain ‘highly-connected’ officers at the expense of those less distinguished in birth, but far braver and more experienced in war. We venture to say, that if this should happen, it will be both cowardly and unjust. Let the blame fall where it is due,—but let no previously tried and proved general be suffered to play scape-goat to a ‘distinguished’ ignoramus either ‘royal’ or aristocratic. Our generals are stanch and valorous men, who know what the Army wants, and what it should have; but they do not of themselves possess the power to obtain what their experience teaches them to demand. Government must decide the measures and vote the means. It rests with the Nation to maintain the honour of the Army, and there can be no doubt that the Nation will do so. We but lately took a high hand, and adopted an even higher moral tone, with our neighbour, France, in discussing military matters: let us not, in our turn, allow ourselves to be exposed to awkward comments from the French, on a question so fiery as this

delicate touch-word of dispute. We may deplore unpreparedness and inefficiency, but while "making plain our wishes" to our members, let us not fall into new snares set for the unwary among us. Let us not invite the fox into the poultry-yard,—or, in other words, let us not make leaders of men who are personally and financially involved in Transvaal speculations. They are not lovers of the country or the people,—they are mere self-seekers, anxious to advertise themselves under the fair guise of Patriotism. If the Government should pursue a timorous policy, let the Nation hold to a brave and just one. Let the people prove that they are not all led like sheep by time-servers and party motives. While confusion is abroad, let there not be distraction at home. The door of this great Empire must not be thrown open to a pushing crowd of Mammonites and Jew speculators. The eyes of all Europe are upon us in the present crisis; America wears a friendly smile and offers a social hand-shake,—but the most smiling friend has been known to frown upon occasion. Is there any need to break down a wall which has already a hole in it, for those who have eyes to see through? Or is the tone of the Kaiser's speech to his troops at the New Year so darkly ambiguous as not to be at all understood? If so, we are dense indeed!

"The first day of the new century sees our army—in other words, our people in arms—gathered around their standards, kneeling before the Lord of Hosts.

In what condition did the past century at its dawn find our army? The glorious army of Frederick the Great had slept on its laurels. *Fossilised amid all the petty detail of pipe-clay, led by superannuated and inefficient generals, with its officers unaccustomed to useful work, lost in debauch, luxury and foolish arrogance, our army in a word, was not equal to its mission, which indeed, it had forgotten. Heavy was the chastisement of Heaven which overtook it and which fell upon our people. It was cast into the dust.* The glory of Frederick was extinguished and our standards were broken.

"In many long years of bitter servitude God taught our people to look to itself, and *under the pressure of the foot of a proud conqueror our people engendered in itself that most sublime thought that it is the highest honour to dedicate one's blood and purse to the Fatherland in her armed service.* Universal military service, form, and life were given to it by my great-grandfather, and new laurels crowned the newly-created army and its youthful banners. But universal military service only attained its true significance through our great departed Emperor. In quiet work he evolved the *reorganization of our army*

despite the opposition offered by ignorance. It is for you, gentlemen, to preserve and employ in the new century the old qualities by which our forefathers made the army great—namely, simplicity and modesty in daily life, unconditional devotion to the Royal service, the employment of one's whole strength of body and mind in the ceaseless work of training and developing our troops.

“And even as my grandfather laboured for his army, so will I in like manner, and unerringly, carry on and carry through *the work of reorganizing my navy, in order that it may be justified in standing by the side of my land forces*, and that by it the *German Empire may also be in a position abroad to win a place which it has not yet attained*. With the two united, I hope to be enabled, with firm trust in the guidance of God, to prove the truth of the saying of Frederick William the I. :—‘When one of this world wants to decide something, the pen will not do it unless it is supported by the strength of the sword.’”

This is not the jabber of a music-hall “cove,” but the speech of a king. It is fit for history, and will be quoted there as not unworthy of a kingly spirit. This Emperor does not apparently see the force of a “toe-and-heel” caper before the foot-lights of the world's stage, combined with an opera-bouffe address to his fighting men as “beggars.” Not by any means. He says, with singularly marked emphasis: “It is for you, *gentlemen*, to preserve and employ in the new century the old qualities by which our forefathers made the army great.” *Gentlemen*. That is the right word. Every soldier should be considered a gentleman, and when he realises that he is so considered, he will prove himself such. Then will the whole status of our Army be raised to its proper altitude of esteem and dignity.

Who among our Royalties has personally adressed himself to our troops with the fervour, feeling or intelligence of this much-sneered-at Wilhelm of Germany? Have any them said to “Tommy,” ere he left home for danger and possible death, a word worth recording? One out of the whole Throne-cluster, the Duke of Connaught, has eagerly sought to go to the front, and emulate the deeds of past great princes of England who themselves fought for the glory of the flag. All honour to him for this ardent wish to prove himself a prince in action as well as in name! Those who have refused his valorous service may have excellent reasons for their denial, but it should be remembered that when the greatness of Great Britain was first made paramount, her kings were proud to serve in person under her standard, were eager to lead, and as ready to die for her glory, as

any "Tommy" of them all. To-day, if Germany went to war, the Emperor himself would command his troops, knowing that his very presence on the field of battle would keep the enthusiasm of his men at a victorious height of action. Had the Duke of Connaught won his way, and gone to serve in the Transvaal, as he wished, his spirit and chivalry would have roused all Europe to enthusiasm.

A noble example fires the world! We want *our* example. We call for it,—we claim it,—we have a right to it. We are tired of the Sovereignty of Sham,—sick of the *demi-mondaine* apotheosis,—weary of the "problem" play, and of the general importation of the moral dustbin into the library and drawing-room. We want our "gentlemen of England,"—men of clean lives, of irreproachable honour; our gentlewomen, who prefer their English homes to foreign hotels and gambling-hells, and who make those homes happy by their charm and cheerfulness, and surround us with the refining influences of grace and "sweet content." The dudes, the drones, the effete male creatures who have their hands "manicured" and their toes trimmed,—the bankrupt aristocrats who take to the stage as a profession, for the sake of notoriety, or who accept a ten-pound note for hiring their titles and themselves out to dine with the newest imported snob from Nowhere—who will pocket a bribe for saying, in print, that they have derived benefit from a certain face-powder after shaving,—these are the scum which must be cleared. They are the "skin-peel" of the self-advertisement illness, which does more harm to the mind than either plague or influenza does to the body. Effeminacy, coupled with licentiousness, breed disease-germs in the national constitution,—germs which have, perchance, set up a cancer that needs our present cutting out by the sword.

We have come upon a dark hour, and truly it seems as if there were no strong helmsman ready to guide the ship of State. Yet, if we honestly endeavour to think for ourselves, and make for truth and justice,—if we try faithfully to disentangle personal motives from Government policy, sincere patriotism from self-serving, we shall no doubt find the silver lining to our present cloud. Only let us not lend ourselves to the scheming of irresponsible scribes. A significant hint was thrown out to the public on the arrival at the Cape of our two great heroes, Lords Roberts and Kitchener—the hint of "a stricter censorship" as to war news. This was, and always is most necessary. London is full of spies in foreign secret service, and the fatuous folly

of giving away our possible moves through our own press, for the information of traitors who, while accepting England's frank hospitality, betray her confidence at every turn, cannot be too strongly restrained. Our enemies do not make us their confidants; they shape their plans in silence. Surely all reasonable beings must admit that it is wisest to "go" with our leaders in loyalty and faith, just as if we ourselves were fighting beside them; and that if we happen to know what they are going to do next, we shall help to crown their efforts with success by keeping our tongues quiet and our hearts true. Are the complaints and cries of a few journalists, scribbling easily at home, safe in their skins, and well out of the reach of shot and flying shell, to move the public against trained and experienced generals? Are the great English people a mere flock of sheep going blindly anywhere to the tinkle of a newspaper editor's handbell? Because Mr. Snooks, of Clapham, opines that it would be well to upset the Government, and spread fresh confusion and uncertainty through the country, in order that he, Snooks, may pay to come in for a "pocket borough," is this same Mr. Snooks to be considered a representative of the Empire? Let us once for all realise that there is no other nation in the world that could have done what we have done, at a distance of *seven thousand miles away from home*. We may search all history through, and find no such amazing record! Let us be grateful that we have men who can and will do so much. We do not want a perpetual chatter about past and perhaps unavoidable mistakes; we want prompt remedial actions. We do not care whether one painted fashion-plate of a woman or the other recites "absent-minded beggar" verses or not,—our money is ready whenever or however demanded for our brave troops in emergency. But we want our arms, our army lifted high above the flippant "beggar" level to the standard of heroism, of glory, of victory! We want the self-advertisers who are pasting their names in large print on Tommy's uniform to stop billsticking while he is fighting. "Luxuries for Tommy!" He has not asked for them—does not want them: give him guns! He will thank you for plenty of ammunition rather than puddings. "Soft pillows," "woollen nightcaps," "cigars and cigarettes" for Tommy? Nay, he can do without these, for war breeds such endurance of hardship as makes him twice a man; he does not look for comforts on the battlefield. But give him weapons that will do their work and never fail him in his need; and spare him any further ignominy of the "walking advertisement" business. And when he comes home victorious, as he shortly will, let us not make him a "beggar" in vulgar earnest as well as vulgar sentiment. Let us give him honour, reward, position!

A Social Note on the War.

“Let all good things await
Him who cares not to be great
But as he saves or serves the State.”

Make him the hero of the home and heart, not of the music-hall. And when the dance of the Society Clowns is done ; when they have finally retired from the wearied public view with whatsoever worthless notoriety they have sought and obtained,—when the shrieking falsetto of “Pay, pay, pay,” strikes on our ears with more shame than satisfaction, tuned as it must be with the melancholy muffled drums that tell us of our brave Dead, we shall perhaps turn to the contemplation of that Higher Spirit of things which grants both peace and war as fits the course of Divine Justice,—that Spirit

“Whom we see not, but revere ;
We revere, and we refrain
From talk of battles loud and vain,
And brawling memories all too free
For such a wise humility
As befits a solemn fane !”

PROF. N. J. BRÜMMER,
MENSLAGE,
STELLENBOSCH.

