

let us—what shall we do? There does not seem to be much answer at hand. Many a half-thinker will confound John Ward's temperament with his faith, and glorify Helen's disposition into the religion of which she had not a scrap, but which she so sorely needed. And meanwhile the morbid conscience of him—or more likely her—who has somewhat confusedly based holy living on certain long-believed and never-scrutinized doctrines, suddenly finds itself confronted with the manœuvres of a sham battle of beliefs. Uncounted damage is like to result in the destruction of the mimic forces; in faith shaken and courage daunted by a fight that means nothing, a defeat where the enemy are but friends clothed for the time in the garments of an imaginary hostility.

Still worse harm is threatened by that other novel of the day, "Robert Elsmere." One hundred thousand copies of it are already scattering their seeds of difficulty in every sort of mental soil. People who do not know the meaning of testimony are forthwith convinced that the Scriptures are a cunningly devised fable. Men and women who never dreamed a doubt are throwing overboard the faith they have suddenly discovered it shows mental weakness to hold. The boyish student learns that intellectual "good form" requires him to be a sceptic, and that it is pure unadulterated Philistinism to believe anything. The specious and unanswered arguments of the marionettes whose lips speak the changing accents of one voice, the difficulties writ large and wanting the solution which is hidden away or pushed round the corner—these things and more of their kith and kin have set out in serried ranks to destroy the faith of the world. The fascinated reader does not stop to discover that lack of sympathetic appreciation has led the writer, with all her care, into much misrepresentation of life and thought and belief; that the dramatic necessities have enabled her to avoid real argument, and to leave great gaps in her proofs. In fact, few of her readers are trained theologians, to discover at the first glimpse that the writer herself is not, and to meet her supreme assumption with flat denial, or to remind her that many of her chief positions are long since answered and forgotten. Nor is it by any means a small matter that this novel is made a dividing line in faith. The half-convinced are carried along without reflection by its force and power to a destination they never would have reached alone, and do not at all comprehend. The doubtful are suddenly decided, they know not why. The perplexed are made sure of, they know not what. "Do you agree with Robert Elsmere?" is a sort of shibboleth for both severe creed and liberality, and for good or ill a whole is adopted or forsaken because a part seems to be true or false. Thus the gravest and most difficult questions of thought and belief are determined by the charms of a hero, or the exigencies of a plot, and religion itself becomes a matter of snap judgment.

The sensational novel is no less a firebrand in drawing-room or library than in the nursery.—*The Critic*.

THE KEEWATIN DISTRICT: A FIELD FOR ENGLISH SPORTSMEN.

In an interesting letter which Sir Charles Tupper, the High Commissioner for Canada, has just received from the Hon. John Schultz, Lieut.-Governor of Manitoba, that gentleman says he has, since his installation at Winnipeg, been trying to find out all he can regarding the resources of the district of Keewatin—that is, of the portion not usually traversed by the Hudson's Bay Company's boats, and by the winter sleigh routes. Mr. Schultz's present inquiries have led him to the conclusion that there may possibly be future wealth in that portion of this region which is now regarded as comparatively useless. It is quite certain, he says, that its fisheries will be of very great future value. In the first place, all the rivers which flow into Hudson's Bay from the west have, with one exception, breeding grounds for a variety of salmon known as "Hearne's" salmon, which differs slightly from the salmon of both the east and the west coast, though resembling the former in that it will rise to the fly, a peculiarity not possessed by the west coast salmon. Then, again, the fresh-water fisheries may become an important source of supply to those who are not content with sea-fish. White fish are now brought 300 miles to the mouth of the Red River, frozen in the summer time by artificial processes, and "shipped" in the frozen state as far south as St. Louis, a distance probably of 1,500 miles. To assist in meeting this demand for fresh-water fish (i.e., the white fish, salmon-trout, and true sturgeon—in other words, the caviare-producing sturgeon), the nearest point from which a supply could be obtained from the Keewatin district would be the lakes in the Laurentian country, which forms the west shore of Hudson's Bay. These lakes are extensive and numerous—are said, in fact, to cover no less than 33 per cent of the surface. Their waters teem with white-fish of the finest quality, and with lake-trout frequently of, from 30 lbs. to 40 lbs. weight, and are just as easy of access from the ports of Great Britain as Lake St. John in Quebec would be, were a trade to arise. "Then again," adds the Lieut.-Governor, "I do not know any way by which wealthy young Englishmen could combine more of interest, novelty, and excitement, than to come to some portion of Hudson's Bay—say, Chesterfield Inlet, which runs nearly direct west into the heart of the Barren Grounds for about 300 miles. At the mouth of this inlet, or not far from it, is to be had fishing for the smaller whales, narwhales, walrus, porpoise, and seal; and the fresh-water streams running into it are filled, it is said, with the finest of brook, silver, and lake trout. Were I a young Englishman of ample means, I should not know of any way in which the summer could be spent better than

to do this trip by steam-yacht, say, from the Isle of Wight, whence passage to this inlet could be made in about the same time as it could be made to Quebec. Besides the fishing which I have mentioned, there is a prospect of meeting with the polar bear, and there would be the certainty of shooting a number of caribou (the North American reindeer), with the possibility of bringing back some of the young, and of capturing the musk-ox, which is declared by the Arctic voyagers who come in contact with it to be as dangerous an animal, owing to its nimbleness, ferocity, and strength, as many that are to be met with in the jungles of India. Then, above all, there would of course be the pleasure of doing something entirely novel, at least to the present generation of young men—a fact, doubtless, of no inconsiderable importance to the young Englishman of to-day." The Lieut.-Governor concludes by remarking that it may possibly come in the High Commissioner's way to encourage some such "young parties" looking for sport to try the Keewatin district. "I would be very glad," he adds, "to save you all trouble in the matter by answering to you any specific questions they might wish to ask as regards guides, methods of inland travel, places to go to, necessary outfit, etc."—*Canadian Gazette*, London, Eng.

TAKING THE OATH.

The primary idea of taking an oath is that we call upon the Deity to bear witness to the sincerity or truth of what we assert, and so, as it were, register our oath in heaven. When Abraham, for example, raised his hands to heaven while swearing an oath to the King of Sodom, he pointed to the supposed residence of the Creator. Afterward, when men set up inferior deities of their own, they appealed to the material images or symbols that represented them, whenever an oath was administered. The most usual form of swearing among the ancients was, however, by touching the altar of the gods. Other rites, such as libations, the burning of incense and sacrifices accompanied the touching of the altar. Demosthenes swore by the souls of those who fell at Marathon. Anciently, too, mariners swore by their ships, fishermen by their nets, soldiers by their spears, and kings by their sceptres. The ancient Persians swore by the sun, which was the common object of their adoration, while the Scythians pledged themselves by the air they breathed and by their scimitars. Descending to more modern times, the Saxons pledged themselves to support their homes and privileges by their arms; and the punishment for perjury or non-fulfilment of an oath was the loss of the hand that had held the weapon at the compact. The Spartans were wont to assemble around a brazier of fire, and, pointing their short swords to the sky, call upon the gods to bear witness to the compact. Swearing by the sword, in fact, retained its significance down to the comparatively modern times, though in a slightly modified form. Thus, while the pagans extended the point of the weapon toward the supposed residence of the gods, the warriors of Christianity, after kissing it, directed the hilt—the true emblem of their faith—to heaven. A later form of oath was the pressing of the thumb upon the blade. Gradually, however, the practice became obsolete; and the kissing of the hilt, accompanying the words "By this good sword!" was handed down almost to the time when the wearing of a sword by gentlemen was abolished, as one of the strictest codes of civil honour. During the Grecian dynasty, whenever an Athenian householder made an oath, he caused his children to stand before him, and, laying his hand upon their heads, prayed that a curse might fall upon them if he swore falsely. If he had no children he pronounced destruction upon himself and his whole race, while he touched the altar of the gods or the victims upon it. Going back to Biblical times we find this curious rite in connection with the lives of Abraham and Jacob. The former says to his servant Eliezer: "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell. But thou shalt go unto my country and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." The like ceremony is performed by Joseph when Jacob makes him promise to carry him out of Egypt and bury him in the tomb of his forefathers. The explanation of this is, that placing the hand upon the thigh was equivalent to swearing by the Messiah, who was to spring from the loins of Abraham. Afterward the Jews confirmed their oaths by touching the book of the law, or their phylacteries, upon which extracts of the law are inscribed. The Mohammedans laid their hands upon the Koran. When, therefore, Christians kiss the Bible or lay their hands upon the tomb of a martyr, or any other sacred relic, the source whence the practice has been derived is at once recognized; yet it must be admitted that kissing the book is a distinctly Christian institution, founded upon the kiss upon the sword hilt by the Crusaders.—*London Standard*.

MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.

MINNIE PALMER.

THIS charming little artist has reappeared among us, with an equally charming play. *My Brother's Sister* is a veritable little classic among light comedies, and it presents the curious anomaly of having been written for a star, and at the same time allowing her principal support so strong a part, as to quite frequently overshadow that of the star herself. Truly a singular piece of generosity on

the part of both star and manager! *My Brother's Sister* has no involved plot to cause apprehension or extreme interest on the part of the auditor, yet it works up into quite a climax at its close. Its main influence is that of rich and harmless enjoyment, which rarely shows cessation. While the *soubrette* rôle is meant to allow free play for Minnie Palmer's gifts of voice, and personal grace, it never degenerates into anything worse than a species of slang which loses in the piquant and insinuating manner of its introduction any possible objectionableness it may on cold revision be felt to contain. And it is just in this absolute freedom from any grossness in detail, and in the refinement of her comedy work that Minnie Palmer is unique. What in others would be vulgar and offensive is done by her in an irresistible saucy and challenging manner, yet she never loses that subtle grace and delicacy which is her chief charm. She is so strong in that magnetism which makes the audience friends at once, that when she sings her small voice provokes no criticism, but one only admires its sweetness and her own pretty way of singing. Many are the critics who have gone into ecstasies over Rosina Vokes' dancing in "petticoats," as well as over the richness of her comedy, but Minnie Palmer excels her great rival in these points simply by the utter absence of any of the exaggeration which accentuates Vokes' efforts. Her dancing in the second act in the long train of the day was really the "poetry of motion," was grace personified. In the last act she brought out a touch of pathetic power which left many dewy eyes in the audience.

Scarcely less strong in its boldly drawn lines is the character of the "Masher" *Waldcoffer Grosserby*, which in both its creation and its performance by Mr. R. A. Roberts was the best work of the kind seen here since the days of poor Southern. A part of such extreme fatuity and mental vacancy, yet so thoroughly funny in its presentation is a rare treat, and Mr. Roberts played it with such a spontaneity and irresistible flow of the highest order of comedy that he did not speak a line or make a movement that was not answered with a ripple of genial laughter from all over the house. A noteworthy feature of *My Brother's Sister* was that gallery and box alike shared the enjoyment at all times.

A JUST Nemesis has overtaken that arch-disappointment Mrs. Alice Shaw, the *siffluse*, at Bridgeton, Pa., in the shape of a suit for salary by one of her company.

THE St. Paul Opera House, a splendid building, was burned to the ground last week, and Miss Helen Barry's company lost all its properties, costumes and scenery.

Two new oratorios have been produced lately in Europe, and both with great success. One at Tournay, Belgium, entitled *Moïse sur le Nil*, and the other at Brussels named *Franciscus*.

AN article on "Society Actresses" was printed in the *North American Review*, some time ago, signed "Mary Anderson." Discussion and criticism has at last elicited the fact that "Our Mary" did not write it herself.

DEATH has called Dr. Franz Hereffer, the musical critic of the *London Times*. He was a scholarly musician and a rather cold critic, and while he was feared and respected, he was not admired nor loved by British composers or performers.

A NEW departure will be a lecture at the College of Music, by Mr. A. S. Vogt, on "Wagner," illustrated by organ solos by the lecturer, piano solos by Mr. Harry M. Field, and vocal selections from the great master by Mlle. Adèle Strauss and Mr. E. W. Schuch.

STILL another has been added to the list of infant prodigies of the day. This time he is only five years old, plays Chopin and Mendelssohn to the astonishment of the public, and is named Raoul Hoczalsky. He was born in Russian Poland, and made his début in St. Petersburg.

YEARS ago the great American opera and concert manager was old Max Moretzek, whose gaunt Paganini-like form will be remembered by our older concert-goers. This veteran is to receive a jubilee concert in New York on Feb. 12th, a fitting recognition of the man who gave America the best Italian opera performance it has ever had.

LILLIAN RUSSELL, who delighted us in "Dorothy," is reported to receive \$500 a week at the New York Casino, and to be accumulating more adipose than she knows what to do with. To counteract this latter evil, she has taken to using the rowing machine in the hope that its energetic use will tend to reduce her to her former beautiful proportions.

THOSE who visited the performances of the National Opera Company will hear with pleasure that Mr. William Ludwig, the excellent baritone of the company, has brought a company of Irish singers to America, and is meeting with great success in the venture. It is likely that Mr. Ludwig, whose name in private life is Ledwich, may visit Toronto.

THAT charming young singer who received her education in Toronto, Miss Attalie Claire, has been remarkably successful with the Boston Ideals in that hyper-critical city of Boston, receiving warm commendation from the press. She has talent and she has sense—a combination that is not always present—and her future in her chosen profession is very roseate in its appearance.

A NEW field of musical endeavour has been opened by the Queen's Own Rifles, who will give an entertainment in May, of which a salient feature will be a minstrel programme, performed by members of the regiment, under the direction of Mr. E. W. Schuch. That gentleman's well-known ability in handling large bodies of amateurs, and