

this "scientific age" has yet to learn. What a hurry it is in! Boulanger goes to the country on the single vague issue, "Revision of the Constitution;" Gladstone (almost on the spur of the moment) on "Home Rule for Ireland;" and, if they were men of larger calibre, there are so-called "leaders" who would go to the country on such equally vague issues—vague, that is, in their results, if not in their theories—as total prohibition, an eight-hours' day, bimetallism, woman suffrage, payment of members of Parliament, one man one vote, confiscation of land, voluntary taxation, and so forth—any reader of the newspapers may fill out the list.

In its essence, then, what is this "New Spirit?" We shall, perhaps, find its characteristics most clearly portrayed in a branch of intellectual activity which, by many, is deemed outside the beaten tracks of human progress—in the novel namely. The novel, said the de Goncourt, is contemporary moral history. It is. And what is the characteristic of the typical modern novel? When one speaks of the "typical modern novel" the titles that rise to one's mind are, I suppose, such as "Dodo," "Trilby," "The Heavenly Twins," "A Yellow Aster" "Ideala," "The Picture of Dorian Gray"—to which we may add the modern drama, typified in Ibsen and Pinero (Sardou is still of an older school). Well, and what is the essence of these? Broadly this: Christianity and the Sermon on the Mount might, so far as they are concerned, never have existed. The "meek" and the "poor in spirit" to day are simply "not in it." No; we have travelled a long way from Christianity.

To the modern novel, too, and consequently to the new spirit, the community is everything. But, curiously enough, the individual is everything also. That is the *cruce* of the difficulty. This is evidently the age of communities: everything is "run" by the community—that is, by the majority; but, as communities are composed of individuals, and, as by the still-existing influences of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the "right of private judgment" is a factor as yet uncancelled, how the wishes of the individual and the right of the majority are to be reconciled—this is the problem which puzzles the new spirit. In the sixteenth century the problem was solved by the Church; in the seventeenth by the aristocracy; in the eighteenth by the majority; in this century we are still discussing who shall settle it. The Church has gone by the board; the aristocracy are fast going; the majority have held sway long enough; who is to decide now?

And the questions to be decided upon are no joke. There is a tremendous movement against monogamy. A writer in the Westminster Review has styled "life-long marriages" a "curse to civilization." He, apparently, would advocate the Persian system of hiring a wife as one hires a house. Writers by the half-hundred have denounced private ownership of land—though why they should denounce private ownership of land any more than private ownership of railway stock, they have not yet shown. Writers by the hundred would swear by "the State," whatever "the State" may mean. They would have "the State" educate, feed, supply with books, pension, and all but keep alive the whole community, forgetting, apparently, that "the State" is nothing but the community acting through its chosen representatives. So that in shouting for "remedial legislation" for the community by "the State," it is virtually shouting for remedial action for the community by the community—which, in the last resort, means that the community shall provide for its own food, shelter, and education—a self-evident proposition. Although what the demagogue really means by so shouting is that the few shall pay for the food, shelter, and education of the many—"the few" being, of course, the rich. Though why he who, by industry and provision, accumulates a fortune should provide for those who, by indolence and improvidence have not, does not altogether appear.

In brief the new spirit evinces itself in the antagonism of the individual to the community, much as long use of the word "democracy" may seem to have apotheosized the community to the detriment of the individual. The individual grows tired of one wife: immediately he thinks he ought to be able to get rid of her and say so, and says that "the State" should authorize him to do so. The individual is too indolent or too stupid to acquire a competence: he thinks "the State" ought to give him an eight-hours' day, and to pension him at the age of sixty, and says so. The individual has more children than he can conveniently bring up and

educate: he thinks "the State" ought to pay for their education, their luncheons, and their text-books. And the individual forgets all the time that it is the community—that is, himself and his fellow citizens, not the abstract "State," that pays.

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Parisian Affairs.

THE journals indulge in sackcloth and ashes articles upon the dying out of the French population. In the census of 1886, the total excess as compared with 1881, was 565,380 individuals. In the census taken for the corresponding period of 1896, the increase was only 138,819. "What a fall is there, my countrymen." And note, in this decreased increase are included the resident strangers, who have no fear to show their Gallic neighbours, how they obey the command to increase and multiply. Look on this picture and on this; while the population of all France only augmented by 138,819 during "five years" terminating 1896, that for Great Britain and Ireland increased by 131,320 individuals in "three months," not including the swarms of emigrants from the hive. In other words, Britain's inhabitants augment as much in ninety days ending 30th June last, as do those of France in the space of five years. That's the unpalatable and instructive comparison in a nutshell.

This deplorable situation of France will continue till manners change. But that reform is akin to expecting a river to flow back in its course, or landing the Sisyphian stone on the summit of the hill. The evil rests with the rich married couples, who wilfully remain sterile. The code does not punish that conspiracy against natality, and the slowly descending augmentation attests that moral and patriotic considerations are of no efficacy. The other classes say that children are only a luxury for the rich; the poor decline to speculate in babies. The poet says, "Ill fares the land, etc., when men decay." The rurals immigrate to the cities, to the great injury of morals and manners, and the country districts cease to be repeopled. For this immigration, obligatory military service has much to answer for; the country conscript, after serving three years under the flag, six months in as many different cities, is rendered, on being discharged, unfitted for the work of farm labour; he has imbibed the love for excitement and amusement of the towns. It is that same military obligation that makes Frenchmen when they do emigrate to avoid their own colonies and possessions. Legislator Seigfried, of Havre, has proclaimed over and over again that it was the repeal of the law of primogeniture that emasculated French emigration, by taking away from younger sons the incentive to go abroad and seek their fortune by hand and brain. The revision of the constitution; the separation of Church from State; the making paupers of all persons stained with Rothchildism; the Russian Alliance, or the evacuation of Egypt by the British, will not prevent the population in ten years from crossing the line of relative decrease to positive dwindling. No League can rescue French vitality from its destined doom, and which is accelerated owing to the sad havoc made by the frightful augmentation in the consumption of absinthe.

As it never rains but it pours, the shortage in the revenue returns for July has been 4½ million frs. And the financial is more important and immediate than the population difficulty. Instead of boldly voting the income tax with a graduated poundage, the Government inclines to a policy of makeshifts. It is apparently flirting with the project of becoming the wholesale and retail brandy dealer for the nation. Faddists allege that if the State took over the alcohol monopoly, as it does lucifer matches and the manufacture of cigars, the annual revenue would run up in a bound, like a balloon, 33 per cent. The Minister of Finance never utters a *Retro Satanas* to the tempters, as if the nation was not sufficiently injured already by the passion for fire-waters.

The impression here is that Li Hung Tchang, while being paid every official respect as the representative of a large empire—though not so "great" as Japan—has not found Lord Salisbury in any hurry to concede the demand for increased taxation of British imports. The promise of confiding the construction of warships to England, his lordship dryly reminded Li, did not relate to his department, but to