

# NOVEL READING.

(Continued.)

(By an Occasional Contributor.)

SIR WALTER SCOTT. — Before proceeding with these few comments upon the most widely known of English novelists, we desire to recall the fact, and to impress it upon the reader, that this is not a general literary criticism of the authors or of their works. There is no attempt made to pass judgment upon either the style or character of the works, nor upon the individual or personal merits of the writers. It is merely from the Catholic standpoint and again only in regard to the young people of our Faith who may be inclined to read novels. It was in this sense that we made a brief analysis of Dickens, and it is in the same spirit that we now propose giving a few hints concerning Scott.

One author, after speaking of the use made by Scott of his early experience in his father's office, who was "writer to the Signet," a state official position, the author says: "On the other hand, from his mother he obtained the rare wealth of a rich imagination, still further enhanced by a gift of analytic power and a happy knack of apt contrast, that must strike every one who has read the Abbot, the Monastery, or the Antiquarian." Leaving aside the Antiquarian, which has little to do with affecting Catholic ideas, practices, or customs, we will simply speak of the Abbot and the Monastery. If to be true to nature and faithful to history are qualities recommendable in a writer of historical romance, decidedly Scott has been both unnatural and gravely mistaken in the great part of each of these books. In fact, he has imagined characters, situations and scenes that not only are unreal, but have not even the slightest foundation or truthfulness. Some may find an excuse for all these misrepresentations of the Catholic Church and above all of monastic institutions, in the good faith of Scott. But we are not considering the intention nor the spirit of the author; we merely take the novels as we find them. The young reader of Scott will not pause to question the sincerity or the good faith of the author when drinking such reasons in the pages of the Abbot and of the Monastery.

It has been contended that Scott regretted having made so many misrepresentations of Catholic religious bodies in the Abbot, and that he wrote the Monastery as a sequel and for the purpose of toning down the effect and influence of his former work. This is stated in a preface to the "Waverley Series" of his works, and is also remarked by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in his introduction to the "Moxon edition" of Scott's poems. If such were the case, we confess that Scott failed in his well-intended purpose, for, if anything, he only makes the situation worse by the obvious errors contained in the Monastery. However, we will turn to what an eminent Catholic critic says, in his appreciation of Scott—a passage with which we agree. It is this:—"It is not easy to exculpate the author of 'Waverley' from injustice to monastic institutions and unfair discrimination against Catholicism as a body. Still, viewing his frankness of character, the assurance that he has given us that no injustice was meant, that he described what was supposed to exist rather than anything that he knew from direct information or personal acquaintance, we may give him the benefit of the doubt. We may be grateful, however, that, in view of his failure to line up to his high level of literary excellence where Catholic topics were in question, he did not undertake any other historical work. We must also bear in mind that the Scottish branch of the Protestant Church was of an unusually virulent character. The John Knox offshoot of the Reformation was much more radical in its treatment of the Old Church than the English branches. Brought up in such an atmosphere, it would have been strange had Scott learned to be tolerant of Rome and of Roman Catholics."

This is all very true. Scott's education, his associations and his religious convictions were all calculated to render him extremely prejudiced against Catholicity and unfair in his judgments of Catholic institutions and people; a good reason for pardoning his false pen-pictures of monastic establishments, of monks and nuns; but no palliation of the work itself, and, above all, no reason why Catholic students or readers of romance should be saturated, of their

own free will, with that which libels their Church and conveys a false idea of her sacred mission. The fact of Scott having personally acknowledged that he wrote about something unknown to him and outside the range of his experience, may be an excuse for him and may tend to free him of the accusation that he purposely slandered the holy religious of a past age; but it is not a reason why his works should be read by young Catholics and accepted by them as standards of romance based upon historical facts. In fact, it is an additional reason why the study of these books, not to speak of others in his vast collection, should be discouraged and, if necessary, forbidden.

Let us put the matter to a positive and simple test. Let a young man take up a dry, authentic, historical account of a certain period in a certain country; then let him take a most elegantly written romance dealing with the exact same period; which of the two will produce the greater and more lasting impression upon him? Decidedly he will be so charmed with the romance that his appreciation of the history will dwindle to nothing. He will remember the story long years after the history is forgotten. He will base his conclusions upon the romance and not upon the cold, uninviting history. It matters not whether the author of the novel was sincere or blinded by prejudice; that does not improve the situation. The fact remains that the young reader retains the impressions of the novel and is incapable of receiving any counter impression from the history. It is in this sense that we argue when we say that the indiscriminate reading of Scott's works is decidedly injurious, is sure to create wrong impressions, is an unending source of ill-founded prejudices against the Church, is the cause of unending misconceptions regarding monastic orders, and is the creator of wrong and slanderous ideas concerning the habits, the practice, the rules of the moral characters of monks, nuns and other members of the Catholic religious body. Such being the case, we are emphatic in condemning certain of Scott's novels, from the standpoint of Catholic principles and teachings. He condemns them himself in his admissions of error and unjustifiable representations of that which he did not know from either experience or authentic information. In this we again repeat that we are not passing judgment upon the glittering merits of Scott as a marvel of romantic creations. We simply insist that there is nothing for the Catholic to gain by the reading of those novels, and we are sorry to say, in many cases there is very much to lose.

## A MOTHER'S PRAISE

FOR THE MEDICINE THAT RESTORED HER DAUGHTER'S HEALTH.

She Had Suffered From Severe Headaches, Vomiting and Extreme Nervousness, and Feared She Would Not Regain Her Strength.

Every prudent mother will watch carefully the health of her young daughter at the period when she is passing from girlhood to womanhood. This period is the most critical in the young girl's life. It is then that she becomes pale, easily tired and troubled with headaches, without apparent cause. The blood becomes thin and watery, and unless prompt steps are taken to restore it to its rich, red, health-giving condition, decline, and perhaps consumption will follow. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills have cured more pale, anemic, easily tired girls than any other medicine, and mothers will make no mistake if they insist upon their growing daughters taking these pills from time to time. Mrs. P. Gage, a lady well known in Rowantown, Que., tells what these pills have done for her daughter. She says:—"My daughter, Catherine, aged fourteen years, was suffering greatly with severe headaches, vomiting and nervousness. She was so completely run down that we feared that she would not recover her strength. We tried several medicines, but they did not seem to do her any good. I then thought we would try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and the result has been up to our fondest hopes. She has fully recovered health and strength, and I shall be very glad if this experience will help some other suffering girl regain her health."

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## Denominational Schools

The school question, in so far as it concerns the religious element, is about the same in all countries. Here in Canada, over in the United States, in Great Britain, and elsewhere there are two contending parties—the one seeking separate schools, the other advocating public, or State schools. We know full well how that matter has been threshed out here, in connection with the Manitoba schools; we know how it has become a burning issue in the neighboring Republic; we also know how bitterly the battle goes on in England. One of the clearest and most statesmanlike utterance on the subject was that of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, in an address delivered at Bristol some two weeks ago, and a full report of which appeared in the London "Times."

From that report we extract the following very striking passages:—

He wished to say something upon the business which was immediately occupying the attention of the country, and which would soon again occupy the attention of Parliament—the Education Bill. He had been amazed at the virulence of the attack that had been made in certain quarters on those provisions of the Bill which related to elementary education. Those who knew best the condition of elementary education in our country appeared to be agreed that there were many elementary schools which were not as efficient as they ought to be. For this there were two main causes. The first was the incapacity of some rural School Boards to do the work, and the second was the inadequacy of the means at the disposal of the managers of many voluntary schools. Our educational system contained both undenominational and denominational schools, but there was amongst the great majority of our people a belief that to good the education must be based upon definite religious teaching. With all the advantages which our School Boards possessed, denominational schools had extended throughout the country, and they educated the majority of the children. Now the educational deficiency must be remedied in some way. Was it to be by the abolition of denominational schools? (Cries of "No.") That would be not only tyrannical, unjust, and contrary to the feelings of the people, but also the grossest waste, because of the loss to the State and education of the enormously valuable efforts of those self-sacrificing people belonging to different creeds who, for the sake of religious education, did so much for the secular education of our children. The strongest Non-conformist could not believe that Parliament would do such a thing. If that was so, then there was no other way of meeting the difficulty except on the principles of the Government Bill. He challenged the opponents of the measure to show any other way. If they could not do so, and yet opposed the Bill, then they were ranging themselves on the side of ignorance and of bad education in their hostility to the Government measure. He ridiculed the objections as to any of the rates going to denominational schools. Nobody dreamed of objecting to taxes going to them. Some people had consciences extremely tender in regard to money paid by way of rates, but consciences awfully tough in regard to money paid by taxes. So far from the Bill destroying School Boards it would not touch them at all. Taxation had long been devoted to denominational schools without the taxpayers having any control whatever over them, except what the school inspector might represent, and this even though the schools had had nothing but clerical management. But now the Bill would substitute for clerical management control of a board of managers under the local authorities, the great majority of whom must necessarily be laymen. And yet this was called the establishment of clerical domination. Anything more below, absurd, or unreasonable than the way in which this Education Bill had been opposed could hardly be conceived. In dealing with this question the two principles which should guide them were—first, that the ratepayers, through their representatives should have such a control over the secular education given in a school

as would ensure that secular education being thorough and satisfactory to them; secondly, they were bound, in justice to the managers and owners of the denominational school buildings, who represented those who had paid either in whole or largely in part for the building of those schools, who had maintained them for many years at great sacrifices of their own time and money, to see that in handing these buildings over to the local authority there should be full security that the schools should remain, as far as they could foresee, for ever schools in which religious instruction should be given according to the principles of the denomination to which they belonged. A number of sensible men like members of Parliament desirous of promoting the education of the people, face to face with these principles; and asked to combine and reconcile them, ought not to find that a very difficult task. He believed that the Bill contained the possibilities of such a combination and reconciliation now; but, if it did not contain them now, and any alteration was necessary to make it contain them, he felt confident that the Government would not stand in the way of such alteration. But, if the matter was to be settled peacefully and satisfactorily, they must have no more threats of resistance to the will of Parliament and to the payment of rates. If local authorities refused to perform their work, Parliament was quite able to entrust that work to somebody else. If ratepayers or taxpayers were to be allowed to object to the payment of rates or taxes because they happened to object to a certain part of the expenditure to which those rates or taxes were to be devoted, that would be anarchy, and not liberty, and he warned his Nonconformist democratic friends that, if they were to succeed in this crusade on behalf of anarchy, they would be preparing a rod for their own backs.

God regards not how much we do, but from how much it proceeds; he does much that loves much.

Prayer is a pasturage, a field, wherein all the virtues find their nourishment, growth and strength.

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Montreal, 6:15 p.m. Discontinued beyond

St. Jerome, 9:00 a.m., 5:15 a.m., (1) 1:45 p.m., 5:30 p.m., 4:20 p.m.

St. Agathe, 1:00 a.m., 9:15 a.m., 5:30 p.m.

Labellie, 9:00 a.m., 5:15 a.m., 5:30 p.m.

St. Catharines, 5:30 a.m., 2 p.m., 5:30 p.m., 11 p.m.

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