NOTES OF THE WEEK.

The great question now waiting to be answered in regard to the advance of Lord Roberts is when and where will the Boers be driven to make a determined attempt to stay his further progress—where will take place the great battle which might decide the fate of the campaign? Since Brandfort was occupied on May 3 the Boers have retired from one position after another without really making any effective resistance. On the 6th Lord Roberts despatched his fresh from the Vet River. On the 6th he crossed this river and encamped at Smaldele Junction, the Boers retreating towards the Zand River. After the ZandLord Roberts also reported that they had retired from the front of Thabang which was held by General Rundle's Divisron. The day after on 7 May Winkburg was occupied by the Highland Brigade and reconnaissances on the 8th were made as far as the Zand River where the enemy were in considerable force. On the 10th Lord Roberts crossed the river and found them occupying a position twenty miles in length. In later telegrams of the same day he reported that they were in full retreat, and that the cavalry and horse artillery were pursuing on three roads. Lord Roberts was at Riet Spruit, and the cavalry and mounted infantry at Ventersburg Road, within 15 miles of Kroonstad.

As a mere matter of military geography the march of the Naval Brigade through London on Monday would hardly have been more striking than that of the guard which marches to and from the Bank morning and evening—never realises the immense significance of it on the moral side. It was because these men had helped, as Mr. Goschen said, to save the country from such a disaster as has never befallen British arms, that London made of their presence the occasion for a demonstration which is universally agreed to have been the most remarkable seen in its streets within living memory—and we have the Jubilee years for comparison. Most people who took part in it must have wondered what the demonstration will be like when the victorious army marches along the same route. It cannot be more impressive though it may be more imposing. The profoundest emotions are often aroused by the simplest externals. Suppose we saw the gallant defenders of Mafeking in our midst? Then we might have a demonstration to compare with that of the Naval Brigade.

The public and the press are right in dropping the subject of the Spion Kop despatches, for no good is done by keeping a sore open. This much however may be said. The best defence of the Government was made by the Duke of Devonshire, who admitted shortly and bluntly that he regretted Sir Redvers Buller had not taken the opportunity offered him by Lord Lansdowne and Lord Roberts of substituting for his original despatch two despatches, one a narrative of the events, the other a criticism of the officers engaged. The narrative might have been given to the man in the street, and the criticism treated as confidential by the Secretary of State. This, as the Duke of Devonshire explained, was all that was meant by the celebrated suggestion to "rewrite," which Sir Redvers Buller resisted. He could not be deaf that it would be well in future if generals in the field would put their narrative and criticism into separate documents. The Government would have cut a less sorry figure if Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Balfour had not harped upon their "personal honour." Why not, with the Duke that it was a "difference of opinion"?
of the unanimous opposition to which he was subjected: an opposition which, being as yet supported by the Home Government, he triumphantly overcame.

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**WHAT IS A SYMBOLIST?**


We have here short biographical critiques of Gérard de Nerval, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Maeterlinck, Mallarmé, and many others. Reviews are read for information as well as instruction and since there are many to whom some of these names are not familiar, let us hasten to ask—What is a Symbolist? Well, to begin with, the name does not seem to matter. Symbolist, deca
dec, or mystic, is merely a synonym for more than nicknames by which the omniscient journalist docketed a band of rebellious literatures. As for "Decadent" it signifies, let us be just and admit it, quite as much the disuse of the esoteric as the embellishment of decay, and was accepted by the Decadents themselves in a spirit of defiance. "You call me a Decadent— I am"—was the attitude. But against what then was this revolt? It was a revolt, says Mr. Symons, against "Exteriority and Rhetoric." Let us consider the latter first.

The most curious reader of literary French must feel how much it always tended to become a machine, complex and inartistic, indeed, but still a machine which it was the very object of the Academy to make still more mechanical "and to true idioms fix their doubtful speech." There was also the obsession of the rhetorical Alexandrine, analogous to our formal tyranny of the Popian couplet, and there was the valuable and pervasively personal influence of the last of the rhetoricians, Victor Hugo. These rebels suffered under the tyranny of a traditional correctness. They despised, and perhaps it was high time, to give the kaleidoscope of language a good shake up, to disintegrate the ordered notes of the linguistic temperament. Let chaos come again, said these Nihilists, but do not let us be cramped. Like a late Bishop of Peterborough they thought it better to be free than to be cramped. Upon the notorious inconsistencies of their diction we have here no space to enlarge, but, passing to the second head, Mr. Symons exultingly proclaims that their discovery of language was accompanied by an equal disorder of thought.

A revolt against Exteriority sounds a big thing—but we cannot make out from this book or others that it really came to more than what has always been called Mysticism. "Open your mind and shut your eyes and see what somebody sends you" has been the immutable attitude of the Mystic. It was the attitude of these Mystics. We are calmly asked to accept this as a movement in literature and two representatives of it are here accredited to us with solemn invocation in the persons of Mr. George Macdonald and Mr. W. Y. Yeats.

The English have had their own rebellion against the conventions of the eighteenth-century diction, nor has it been necessary to cross the Channel to find the young mystic who has to pinch himself in order to make sure that he is really alive, or thinks that the universe may be a sort of play arranged for him by angels. Even of the field which the decadents have exploited to most purpose—the field of the phrase in and for itself—they have no semblance of monopoly. Mr. A. R. Repes in a late essay on Maeterlind alludes in this connexion to the Jabberwock. But instances are not far to seek.

Lear was a symbolist when he wrote of a rascally snipe. Or, to take an instance from a very old and homely source,

"Green sleeves and pudding-pies,
Tell me where my mistress lies, Kit."

are lines which once heard we can no more forget than could Roswell, and, though the first line probably meant something to its author, it is not entirely symbo
dotic and triumphantly successful. All honour to the makers of such phrases as these. All honour to Edgar Allan Poe "Boreas Pale" because it sounded well and not in order to distinguish it from Austral and whom we make a point of mentioning here because he seems to have anticipated all the essential quality of a band of writers who have indeed by translations and otherwise acclaimed him as their master. If the general reader wishes to know what a symbolist is let him think of the more mysterious and magical utterances of Père
—and let him not omit to remember the seamy side of Poe's life. To put it thus is to put it very mildly but until Mr. Symons can point to some more convincing originality in what these writers thought and what they wrote we may defer any moral censure of them and what they did. In the meantime a subscriber to Mulke's who takes up this volume without looking at the title may imagine that the "Lives of Twelve Bad Men" has been sent to him by mistake. Lafargue indeed, as we are here told, wore the top-hat and carried the umbrella of a blameless life, and what is more he was the author of a very brilliant poem here quoted which does not how
ever seem to be in the same world as the Symbolists and the fellow movers and shakers of the world of literature. In fact, even with the help of Mr. Symons, it is as diffic
ult to see by what links these poets are connected together as it is to guess what movement—we understood it was the Irish, whatever that may mean—is represented by Messrs. Moore and Yeats. Mr. Gosses meaning it would seem to be complimentary, said of the Symbolists that they were like shy birds in a back
water, and really that is about what this "Movement" amounts to—the movement of moorhens in a rush-beds outside which perhaps some flood of real revolution never thought and literature swells to the sea. Pooterly picks up, in the case of a decadent out of all hoping, one or two stranded poems.

It is with impatience that we ask—What does it all come to? We know and love a beautiful phrase, nor, if the sound be satisfactory, will we toe peevishly insist upon the sense—we sympathise with revolts against convention in literature which if they are proper are not cynic, if they are treason, by another name—the Mystic we also know quite well and we let us say, for the sake of argument, that we love him. But if given in all—and in what we can find—why on earth are we invited to make so many bises of a cherry? Besides, when it comes to talking about movements and revolutions in literature and life and literature as he finds them are just the down
right data of every little symbolist who is born into the world alive, and, whether he accepts or rejects he will, one supposes, predecease them.

Nevertheless it would be quite unfair to the unintiated readers whom we have had for the moment in view, to let them go away with the idea that this is an unimportant book on symbolism, a thing with which they need not reckon. Names such as Mallarme and Maeterlind can take care of themselves—and so also, let us cordially add, can Mr. Symons, who is well known to too many of us not only as a poet but also as the master of a subtle and perspicacious criticism of such a character and dexterity, and criticism of contemporaries has so often in the past been found at fault that Mr. Symons, from his own point of view, it must be reasonably unimportant. Time to give him the laugh of his many assailants. He will pardon us if we have somewhat curiously empha
sised impressions which, as he well knows, have not been confined to those critics who habitually refuse to see or to admire. In the meantime, pursuers of the subject will find at the end of Mr. Symons' book an attractive bibliographical appendix of books and articles in which the symbolists, with his Proust forms and his various names, has been discussed here and on the Continent.

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**MR. MALLOCK'S CASE FOR ROME.**

"Doctrine and Doctrinal Disruption." By W. H. Mallock. London: Black. 1900. 7s. 6d. net.

MR. MALLOCK writes with characteristic vigour and point; there is not a dull page in the book. It bristles with paradox and metaphor. The subject with which it is concerned is not one of everyday acquaintance but one of immense and immeasurably important. There are lacking no elements of interest, save one, and that the only one which can give permanent value to a work on religion. Mr. Mallock is not adequately equipped for his task, and a careful and two-repeated perusal of his book leaves us doubtful whether he has grasped the gravity of his own con

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