

A Book of the Week.

"PARIS."*

THE conclusion of M. Zola's trilogy, of which Lourdes and Rome are the two former numbers, must be pronounced the least remarkable of the three. And this, primarily, for a very obvious reason. It is one thing to state a difficulty, another to offer a solution: one thing to diagnose, another to cure: one thing to "strike his finger on the place, and say "Thou ailest here, and here,"—and quite another thing to present to mankind a constructive system which shall right the wrong.

Naturally enough, M. Zola impresses us when he cries out that things are wrong: anybody can see that for himself: but his remedies leave us, to put it mildly, unconvinced.

The book is conceived and written with all his usual vigour. He does not shrink by any means from covering his palette with what Mr. Traill calls lurid colours. On the contrary, it is upon these alone that he depends for his effects. Evidently he thinks that the only way to reach the deaf ear is by shouting in it: an opinion which the personal experience of most of us would not endorse. We have plenty of the vile side of Parisian life. But Parisian life, according to M. Zola, is no viler than London life, according to Ouida, in the "Massarenes." This leads us to hope that the picture may be overdrawn. Doubtless, the author has every wish to be sincere. He wishes us to see Paris as he sees it: and, after all, we must each of us see the world from our own window. M. Zola's window overlooks the slums.

I once heard a man say that he had a very low opinion of women. "For your own sake," said a clever woman who was present, "you ought not to say so, because it is a revelation of the kind of woman you are accustomed to associate with." Something of this feeling arises within us, when we listen to M. Zola's indictment of society and of religion.

The young Abbé, Pierre Froment, who went so despairingly from Lourdes to Rome in search of something with which to bolster up his weak faith, in this latter book parts with the tattered remnants of his belief in God and takes to cycling with a charming young woman in rations, whose very limited education and experience have led her to atheism. With a want of logic, which I suppose must be considered as very human, Pierre weighs the personal views of this young woman in the scale against the whole mass of religious thought and belief for two thousand years: and finds that he is convinced. Accordingly he takes off his cassock and marries her. It is safe to say that the author of this book has never known belief in a visible Church, nor what it is to lead an inward or spiritual life: this puts him at a serious disadvantage in picturing Pierre's mental state. He has no notion what would be the anguish, nor the impulses, of a man who had known the beauty of holiness, in the awful moments of believing himself mistaken. Mrs. Humphry Ward laboured under the same disadvantage in "Robert Elsmere": and, from the dramatic point of view it is a serious one. Nobody is suprised at the apostacy of one who is felt never to have held a real grasp of truth.

* "Paris" by Emile Zola. Translated by E. A. Vizetelly. (Chatto & Windus.)

M. Zola's views of life are all based upon that idea of man's goodness held by Mr. Bellamy. Everybody would be so good, if everyone else did not try to prevent it. The weak spot in this truly remarkable creed is touched upon in "Paris": but the idea that this flaw is fatal to the whole superstructure does not seem to present itself to Pierre.

"Pierre—moved though he was—almost won over—(to his brother's dream of anarchy)—had just seen the terrible practical objection, which destroyed all hope, rise before his mind's eye. Why had not harmony asserted itself in the first days of the world, at the time of the earliest forms of society? How was it that tyranny had triumphed, delivering nations over to the oppressor? And supposing that the apparently insolvable problem of destroying everything, and beginning everything afresh, should ever be solved, who could promise, that mankind, obedient to the same laws, would not again follow the same paths as formerly? After all, mankind, nowadays, is simply what life has made it; and nothing proves that life would again make it other than it is. To begin afresh!—Ah, yes! But to attain another result! *Could that other result really come from man? Must not man himself be changed?*"

Here M. Zola fearlessly states the point which demolishes all hope of improvement on his lines. That natural proneness to evil with which the Christian faith grapples boldly, not attempting to deny what must be obvious to any reflecting person.

If anarchy be the cure he has to offer for the malady of the world, his book must be ranked among the list of failures. Yet it is a book to be read, for it shows again, in striking relief, what strange fallacies may, unperceived, underlie all independent human thought, and how much we all owe to the testimony of the ages, in enabling us to arrive at anything approaching a just estimate of our position as citizens of the world.

G. M. R.

Bookland.

Dr. Dawson Williams, who for seventeen years has been connected with the editorial department of the *British Medical Journal*—of late years as assistant editor, during the reign of the late Mr. Ernest Hart—has been unanimously appointed editor. Mr. C. Louis Taylor has been appointed as sub-editor.

Asylum News—the monthly organ of the association of Asylum Workers—is always welcome, and in treating the class for which it is written as reasonable human beings, and not congenital idiots, is in pleasant contrast to the *Nurses' Journal*—the so-called official organ of the Royal British Nurses' Association. The printing of *Asylum News* by the Lancaster County Asylum Press cannot be longer continued, so for the future this useful little journal will be printed and published by Messrs. J. H. Broad & Co., of 8, King Street, Richmond, Surrey. Dr. G. E. Shuttleworth, the editor, is to be congratulated on the fact that *Asylum News* has already a monthly issue of 3000 copies, and its guaranteed circulation exceeds 2600.

Mr. Donald has made *London!* This sounds a large order, but we allude, of course, to the weekly publication of that name, which during the past year has

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