

family must be regarded as excessive. In his palace as cardinal, beneath a picture of the Madonna, was the following inscription—

Whoever thou be who lookest at this image of the Virgin
Mother,
With a pious heart reverently say a holy Ave Maria;
And then beseech the Lord of all things under the
features of the child,
That the House of Borgia may continue to stand un-
impaired.

He made Cesar a cardinal while still in his 'teens and loaded him with many rich benefices. The marriage alliance, benefices, and fiefs offered to his sons or nephews by the Kings of Naples tell much the same story.

It is gratifying to American pride and scholarly interests to have so imposing and detailed a work on such a theme written in English and published from New York, although composed by a continental scholar and printed in Belgium. Under the circumstances a rather large number of misprints and errors in proof-reading, and of slips in English idiom are not surprising and may be the more readily pardoned. Our chance quotations have already illustrated the frequency with which split infinitives occur. Other common faults are the use of the wrong preposition or insertion of a preposition where none is needed, for example—"These gentlemen solemnly renounced to all their pretensions." These slips and the use of such unusual words as denigrate, cardinalitial, obreptitious, rather give the book a quaint charm than confuse the reader as to the intended meaning. But sometimes the effect is even ludicrous, as when it is said of the men

who threw the corpse of the Duke of Gandia into the Tiber—"they went their way and showed up no more," or when we are told—"Dark, indeed, like a Negro, Pope Alexander VI stands before us, as painted by his pious and learned enemies, before whom all else should humbly bow. . ."

The notes and bibliographies do not always contain references to the more recent literature on the subject in hand. Thus I find no mention of L. Cellier's *Les dataires du XVe siècle et les origines de la daterie apostolique*, 1910—or, in connection with the discussion of the famous bulls of demarcation, any reference to the article of H. Vander Linden—"Alexander VI and the Demarcation of the Maritime and Colonial Domains of Spain and Portugal, 1493-1494," which appeared in *The American Historical Review* for October, 1916. In this connection it may be noted that while Vander Linden speaks of only three papal bulls of May 3 and 4, 1493, Mgr. de Roo mentions four, but fails to note, as Vander Linden does, that two of them were antedated. The two authors are in conflict on another point. Vander Linden says in regard to the Treaty of Tordesillas of June 7, 1494, between the Kings of Spain and Portugal, which changed the line of demarcation to 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands—"The confirmation of the treaty was not obtained under the Pontificate of Alexander VI nor until January 24, 1506." But Mgr. de Roo asserts—"The Pope, whose object had been and ever was to secure peace among Christian princes, readily issued his bull ratifying the new partition line and the other articles of the treaty." He does not, however, adduce documentary evidence for this statement.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Commonweal invites its readers to contribute letters for publication. Ordinarily, letters should not exceed five hundred words in length. Letters exceeding this length, because of the importance of their subject matter, will, however, be printed when the necessary space can be spared. Anonymous letters will not be published.

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Ridgefield, Conn.

TO the Editor:—I have read with deep and appreciative interest *The Commonweal* since the first issue of its publication, and I sincerely believe it is an acquisition to Catholic literature, the benefit of which will be immeasurable in its influence in a field rich in soil awaiting the seed, but as yet uncultivated. I believe it is an honest and sincere effort on the part of a number of influential Catholics to lift the literature of the Catholic Church out of the "rut of sectarian isolation" of which Hilaire Belloc speaks, and give it a power and influence not unlike that of Paul preaching to the rich Athenians and the Epicurian philosophers, who asked him, saying—

"May we know what this new doctrine is, which thou speakest of."

It is, therefore, with timorous hesitation that I presume to write this letter in which exception is taken to the conclusion drawn by the Rev. T. Lawrason Riggs in his article on Religious Tolerance in the issue of November 26. I hesitate to be the first to strike that which may sound like a discordant note, when harmony is to be expected, and where there is a hearty and fundamental agreement in the object desired.

But when Father Riggs says "the real cause of the conflict seems to be racial," I beg to disagree with him, and say that the primary and direct cause is religious, and only indirectly racial; that fundamentally it is antagonism to the Catholic religion due to misconception and misunderstanding, and because the Irish Americans have been and are today the one leading and most conspicuous factor in the growth, the strength and the support of the Catholic Church in this country, and if I may say it without intending any offense to any other nationality—the bulwark of its defense and the one outstanding evidence of its vitality and influence—isn't it only natural that against these the virulent forces of intolerance and bigotry would be directed, and most frequently for the better serving

their purpose would hide their intent behind the mask of racial antagonism.

Long before "their recent absorption in the disturbance of their mother country" of which he speaks, religious intolerance against the Catholic Church permeated the whole social fabric of this country, and with a vitality that is inexplicable it has survived and survives today all the assaults that a wider and deeper education has waged and is waging against it. Nor can this present day intolerance be ascribed solely to "accidental factors" as Father Riggs says, but rather to an inherited propensity—the heritage of colonial days—the history of which is but a record of intolerance against the Catholic Church, brought from the religious conflict of the old world and instilled into succeeding generations with an intensity that defies extinction, appearing and disappearing with almost the regularity of a definite cycle.

And it is this inherited weakness which is mostly responsible for the presence of that species of weakened Americanism, which every now and then manifests itself, breeding hatred and bitterness, fomenting strife and disunion not only among the ignorant, who may be excused because their ignorance makes them the easy prey of those seeking pecuniary profit or political preferment, but also among the supposedly cultured, who assume a superiority that makes the accusation of being narrow-minded an unpardonable affront. It is true that the Anti-Christ and Scarlet Woman of colonial days have passed out of the pulpit and literature of today, that the ex-priest and ex-nun of a later period have been driven from the platform as an assault on common decency, but the germ of religious prejudice inherited from such ancestry, has never been wholly eradicated, and present day outbursts only too truly make axiomatic the saying of Oliver Wendell Holmes, who when asked when the education of a child should commence, replied—"A hundred years before it is born."

The Irish Americans committed no crime "against the best interests of America or the Catholic Church" when they asked and openly agitated for American sympathy in the struggle of their mother land for self-determination, for was it not for that America, supported and assisted by Catholic and Protestant Churches and Jewish Synagogue, rose in her might and called upon her rich young blood to flow, sink in and make fertile, for the seed of liberty and democracy, the soil of powerful alien nations, holding in subjection the small weak nations around them. And if as he says, "they fêted" Protestant clergymen with Sinn Fein sympathies, was it not because they would openly and unmistakably show the absurdity of that British propaganda, which in its last desperate effort to stem the rising tide of American sympathy for the Irish cause, made use of press, pulpit and platform in this country, and sent its delegation of Protestant clergymen to appeal to and to arouse the dormant religious bigotry in America, in its malicious plea that it was not a national question but a religious issue that was at stake, that it was not for justice, liberty and humanity the Irish people were contending but for the suppression of a Protestant minority by a Catholic majority, a propaganda that was as false as it was malicious.

I am not writing this letter as an Irish-American defending the Irish-Americans, for their past and present record in this country (they need no defense from me or from any other fair minded person), but as an American Catholic citizen resenting the unjust assertion that Irish-Americans, because of their struggle for freedom and independence of their mother country, and that American Catholics because, as he would

have us believe, they are few in the higher strata of American society and as yet are lacking in inherited culture, were disturbing forces provocative of religious intolerance in this country. Racial feelings on my part do not enter into this letter, and if I stress the point at all it is only because it was intruded upon my notice by his article.

What he means by the "higher strata" and "inherited culture" is difficult of comprehension since no care is taken to define their meaning and apparently he asks his readers to give credence to this assertion solely upon his "ipse dixit." I for one refuse to be so easily convinced and would ask something more authoritative. Convinced as I am that he is honest in his convictions, and that when he penned those words—higher strata, and inherited culture—he had no intention of belittling his coreligionists, even if the big majority of them are included in the working class, as are the big majority of American Protestants, I dismiss that paragraph in his paper without further consideration except to say that in all probability he had in mind only the very select few, and likewise made the mistake of confusing real culture, mental and moral training, with that aping of gentility which Webster gives as the definition of snobbery.

R. E. SHORTELL.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AND REALITIES

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editor:—By way of correcting an erroneous statement regarding Christian Science, appearing in your issue of November 26, please permit me to say that the teachings of this religion are not animated by what you term "the pleasing illusion that words change realities." Christian Scientists, who understand their subject, know full well that realities are not subject to change. Indeed the teachings and practice of the Christian Science religion rest directly upon the demonstrable fact that realities are invariable in their nature and character. Christian Science definitely holds, however, that spirit and spiritual creation alone constitute the realities of being; while matter and its concomitants—sin, disease, and death—comprise that which it describes as the unreal; furthermore, this religion teaches and in a gratifying measure its adherents are today proving that when and as we come into an understanding of that which is spiritually true, we are able in a corresponding degree to free ourselves from that which is untrue. All of which I may add is in strict accordance with the familiar statement of the Master—"Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

CHARLES E. HEITMAN.

THE COLOMBIAN MINISTER WRITES

Washington, D. C.

TO the Editor:—With lively interest I have read the article published in *The Commonwealth* calling attention to the personality of the first diplomatic agent of Colombia, Don Manuel Torres. When it is possible definitely to locate the burial place of this eminent statesman, I am sure that the government of Colombia will desire to place upon the grave a token of the gratitude which all the Americas acknowledge to be due to his illustrious career.

ENRIQUE OLAYA,
Minister Plenipotentiary of Colombia.

THE PLAY

By R. DANA SKINNER

Two Theatre Guild Plays

NOW that the Theatre Guild is an opulent institution, with a new theatre provided for and a list of more than 9,000 annual subscribers furnishing an underwriting fund for its productions, its responsibility toward the public is proportionately more serious. Moreover, since financial success breeds spontaneously the instinct toward still greater success and frequently a lessening of artistic sincerity, it is fair to say that the Guild has reached a very critical moment in its rather amazing growth. It is beset by a sterner critical standard from without and an insidious and almost subconscious temptation from within.

The question naturally arises, by what, if by any, standard is the Guild going to appraise pieces for future production? Is it going to dedicate itself to the same high type of task as several of the University presses, and bring out chiefly those plays for which it is hard to find a commercial producer? Or is it going to compete with the commercial managers and gather up wherever it may plays likely to achieve popular success? In either case, does it propose to consider forthcoming productions in the light of some fairly definite standard of ethics or solely by that most nebulous elastic and inclusive standard popularly called "art for art's sake?" The Guild management is the only source to which we may look for a satisfactory, immediate answer, but it may at least serve a useful purpose to raise the questions now, since the balance of the Guild's season will serve as one form of answer. In reviewing their entire season later on I propose to bring up these points again, and with considerable emphasis.

They are obviously not drawn out of thin air, but suggested rather forcefully by the successive production of *Fata Morgana* (initiated last season and mercifully smothered on the road this fall) and *The Guardsman*. *Fata Morgana* was an attempt to be clever and sophisticated with the decidedly sordid, serious theme of the seduction of a young man by a much older woman. The erotic material in it was handled quite without artistic restraint, and, dramatically speaking, in such pointless and inconclusive a fashion as to render its sincerity very doubtful. *The Guardsman* has a much less repulsive theme—in so far, at least, as the characters involved are all of mature age—but through selecting marital infidelity as the subject of comic treatment, it shows the same tendency to be clever at the price of abandoning all ethical standards.

In joyously proclaiming that *The Guardsman* was a new feather in the festive cap of the Theatre Guild, Mr. Alexander Woolcott spoke of it as a "gay and adult and adroit comedy." Mr. Hammond, in similar vein, pronounced it "a delicate, sophisticated comedy, fit for observation by the smarter type of drama lover." This, of course, is the daily critic's slang for something much more at home on the continental than the American stage. To this I should like to add that it would be much better to leave it at home; and this for a very clear reason which a brief outline of the plot will indicate.

The scene is in central Europe. An actor and his actress wife, after six months of married life, find themselves quarrelling bitterly. The actor, knowing that his wife has had many lovers before their marriage, suspects that she is hunting for another. He resolves to test her fidelity by impersonating a

Russian guardsman. In his new rôle, he finds his wife all too ready to listen to his pleas, but when, in the last act, he confronts her with his imposture, she laughingly tells him that she saw through his disguise from the first. The author intimates, however, that she did not see through it. The audience is pretty much left to decide this point for itself. Now if she did see the husband behind the lover's disguise, the little comedy is about as footless and futile as a dramatic pop-over. If she accepted the guardsman seriously, and only manages to lie out of the situation cleverly, then the plain object of the play is to make a deceived husband something comic and laughter-provoking. This is the common and hopelessly trite theme of about nine-tenths of the European farces, so that whichever way you take it, *The Guardsman* is trivial, and unimportant and rather boring as dramatic contrivance. If you take it in the latter sense, it adds to these faults the scouting of all ethical sense or good taste.

The Guild's second production of the season, *They Knew What They Wanted*, approaches much nearer to the standard one expects. This "comedy" in three acts by Sidney Howard has much to recommend it, in spite of defective characterization in one important place and certain little absurdities which indicate that Mr. Howard's extensive experiences as a special reporter have left him with a few blind spots in his observation.

If you search far enough in your dictionary or in learned discussions of classic drama, you will find a use of the word "comedy," as applied to any play with a happy ending, that makes the description of this play intelligible if at first glance misleading. Without attempting to be erudite, however, it is better to say at once that it is a serious piece of work. It is the story of Tony, an old and wealthy Italian fruit grower of California, who courts, by correspondence, a waitress, Amy, whom he has seen once in a San Francisco restaurant. Instead of sending her his own photograph, he sends her one of his chief farm hand, Joe, an I. W. W. fanatic of decidedly loose moral habits. When Amy arrives on her wedding day, she at first mistakes Joe for her intended husband, and then discovers her mistake when Tony is brought in with two broken legs as the result of an automobile smash-up.

After a considerable struggle, with continued poverty on one side, and a home with an aged husband on the other, Amy decides to go through with her bargain. But her resentment runs deep, and on the wedding night itself, she yields with only slight reluctance to Joe's advances. Three months later, when she finds that she is to have a child by Joe, she faces the music by confessing everything to Tony—a confession that is made all the more bitter by the fact that she had yielded to Joe only once in a moment of madness, and the further fact that she has come to love Tony sincerely. The scene of this confession is one of the best pieces of dramatic writing and acting I have seen this year, ending as it does in a triumph for Tony's greatness of heart and depth of understanding. He takes full blame on himself for his initial deception in sending the wrong photograph, and discovers and accepts at the same time the sincerity of the new love which Amy has for him.

Now it is quite understandable that, for dramatic effect, Mr. Howard should have Amy commit her one transgression on the wedding night itself. Yet I cannot but feel that it weakens the characterization greatly. In every other respect,