

have conspired to foist a "fake" on the public is really a reflection on the good taste and good faith of Sir James and also of a lady. Of course, there are jests in literature, which are not intended to deceive and which "take in" only the hopelessly simple (Sir James has given us an example in "Liza, Author of the Play"—said play being *Peter Pan*). There are also more elaborate jokes, intended to mislead; but *The Young Visitors* is quite another affair. Surely the "Preface"—especially its last paragraph—would be creditable neither to Sir James nor to Miss Ashford if it were an elaborate hoax. The double-authorship theory simply comes to this, that Sir James allowed his good nature to override his good taste in order that the sale of a pseudo "child's story" (in reality, as he would know, written by a grown-up) might be promoted, and that Miss Ashford permitted it for an "elaborate jest" theory is surely out of the question. The whole charm of the book (especially its amusing disregard of the conventions) lies in its having undoubtedly been written by an innocent and ingenuous child, and Sir James is the last person in the world not to be fully appreciative of that. I put it to Mr. Hanford that "oozed" is merely a child's recollection of hearing the word "issued" and confusing it.

'Any teacher of children would tell "Lector" that small boys and girls can say the most amazing things. There is not a schoolmaster who could not give examples of what are apparently masterpieces of satire, humor, and what not, by some juvenile essayists blissfully unconscious of having produced anything satirical or humorous (I suspect the same can be said of some of the efforts of older authors). Were I rash enough to relate all the "howlers" that I have seen with my own eyes or heard with my own ears, I fear that not all my solemn affirmation plus my Roman collar would prevent my most trusting friends believing that I had invented some of them.

To end an already too lengthy letter, I may say that I have evidence which renders inferences and deductions unnecessary, and which in my belief proves beyond question that Miss Daisy Ashford wrote every word (though doubtless some phrases were copied

from books, or were overheard by a particularly observant child); but it is impossible to give it here, as I have not asked the permission of certain others to quote them publicly; so I must leave it at that.

'Yours, etc.,

'J. P. VALENTIN.'

St. Mary's Catholic Church, Hampstead.
August 18.

A MEETING of believers in Joanna Southcott was held at Camberwell recently to demand the opening of the mysterious box containing prophecies which the founder of this once fairly numerous sect is said to have left when she died in 1814, with the stipulation that it was not to be opened until its opening was demanded by 24 bishops.

It was stated that the hiding place of the box could not be divulged because the American branch of the believers was anxious to secure possession of it at all costs.

Mrs. Barnett, of Devon, denied that Joanna was an illiterate servant girl. She had, said the speaker, foretold nearly all the points about the war, including the coming of the Zeppelins and the danger to London from the skies. The speaker further stated that a message was 'delivered' through supernatural channels to the late Bishop Boyd Carpenter to the effect that in the month of October things were going to be terrible in this country unless the box was opened. It could only be opened between May and December.

Joanna Southcott was born in 1750, the daughter of a Devon farmer, and for some time was a domestic servant. She was originally a Methodist, but left that body upon becoming convinced that she had supernatural powers, and she at length had some 100,000 followers. She died of brain disease after announcing that she was about to give birth to Shiloh.

It is not possible yet to arrange cheap tours in France, for, with the great difficulty of transport, the government is not ready to encourage foreign visitors to the invaded districts. French people from other districts are going up there in great numbers—the motor-charabancs which

run from Rheims are paying handsomely — but only those English folk who have gone to France for other reasons — for business or for health — have much chance of getting to the battlefields through ordinary travel agencies, though day trips from Paris to the nearer battlefields are made three times a week.

Half-a-dozen officers who have been in France throughout the war have opened an Imperial Travel Bureau, and seem to have overcome all difficulties, for they are running four-day motor-car tours from Boulogne or Amiens at a charge of 35 guineas, and every day take over parties of people, who go to Cassel, Ypres, Lille, La Bassée, Loos, Lens, Vimy, Arras, Bapaume, Albert, and the Somme, accompanied by officer guides who know the district thoroughly. For 100 guineas longer tours are made to British, French, and American battlefields, and 35 guineas extra take the travelers to Verdun. A great number of people whose desire is to visit some special grave are doing this through the bureau, which charges 20 guineas and places a motor car at their disposal for a day. Of course, such expensive journeys are only possible for people of wealth.

THE *Morning Post* has lately been printing quaint epitaphs in its column devoted to gossip and humor. Two perfect epitaphs, one an example of the sublime and the other of the ridiculous, may be cited in the following, the first of which Dean Stanley is said to have chosen as the most beautiful of those in Westminster Abbey. It is: 'Jane Lister. Deare Childe'— simply that. The other, to Lady O'Looney (Dorset) has the true smack of the Emerald Isle:

'Here lies the body of Lady O'Looney, great niece of Burke, commonly called the Sublime. She was bland, passionate, and deeply religious. Also she painted in water-colors and sent several pictures to the exhibition. She was the first cousin to Lady Jones, and of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.'

And here are two from the United States: The first, in a Nevada burial ground, runs: 'Sacred to the Memory of Hank Monk, the Whitest, Biggest-hearted, and Best Stage-

driver of the West, who was Kind to All, Thought Ill of None. He lived in a Strange Era, and was a Hero; and the Wheels of his Coach are now Ringing on Golden Streets.' The second also belongs to the Far West: 'To Lem S. Frame, who during his life shot 89 Indians, whom the Lord delivered into his hands, and who was looking forward to making up his hundred before the end of the year, when he fell asleep in Jesus at his house at Hawk's Ferry, March 27, 1843.'

NEGOTIATIONS are in progress between the French Minister of Justice and a group of English capitalists for the sale to the latter of the important champagne business of G. H. Mumm and Company, of Rheims. The proprietor of this well-known brand of champagne was Baron de Mumm, or Baron von Mumm as he would more correctly be called, an officer in the German army who left this country in haste a few days before war was declared, accompanied by most of the principal members of his business staff, who were also enemy subjects.

The business and the whole of the large stocks of champagne stored in the vaults at Rheims were in due course placed under sequestration by the French judicial authorities and are now to be disposed of in connection with the general liquidation of enemy property in France. The price offered for the business by the British group in question is understood to be in the neighborhood of five millions sterling.

HUIS TE DOORN, which, report says, the ex-Kaiser has bought as a permanent residence, has more of the appearance of a small English country house than most of its neighbors. It stands in a pleasant park, with water and a kind of drawbridge. The neighborhood is one of summer resort. Besides country houses, some occupied throughout the year — one of a florid magnificence, recalling a modern hotel, is known as Hyde Park, really Heyde (Heath) Park — there are the summer villas of Amsterdam and other families studded round and right in the village of Doorn. This charming spot lies on the road, traversed by a light railway, from Utrecht to Arnhem. It is a tree-lined route — more or less a