view of τετράμηνος (v.[35]) has here been adopted, the above interpretation is unaffected if we render, 'Is it not you who are saying, "Four months from now, and then harvest"?' It is still possible to refer ὁ λόγος (v.[37]) to 'what you say.' But it raises the chronological difficulty, which lies beyond the scope of this note.

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## Isaiah xiv. 19.

THE emendation of this verse proposed in the November 1928 issue of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES (p. 93), although ingenious, has its weak point in the fact that a branch be it abominable or broken does not well fit into the following 'clothed with the slain' (R.V.). I therefore suggest to read נֹשֵׂר instead of נֵעֵר. The eagle, as Lv $11^{13}$, Dt $14^{12}$ show, ranges among the fowls to be had in abomination, and is at the same time an excellent simile of the king of Babylon who said in his heart: 'I will ascend into heaven' (Is $14^{13}$). This emendation is such a slight one that one wonders why nobody has thought of it before. As far as I know from Professor Kittel, to whom I communicated this emendation some months ago, it will be noticed in the forthcoming edition of his Bible.

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# Entre Nous.

**Selma Lagerlöf's 'Jerusalem.'**

If you ask any educated Swede to-day to name the six greatest names among his countrymen, he will almost invariably begin with Gustavus Adolphus and end with Selma Lagerlöf. So far she is the only woman who holds the Nobel Prize for Literature. In awarding this prize the Swedish Academy declared they did so 'for reason of the noble idealism, the wealth of imagination, the soulful quality of style, which characterise her works.' A study of one of her books alone, her—in this country too little appreciated—*Jerusalem*, leaves one in no doubt as to her right to sit there among the immortals.

To begin with, if you wish to give a Nobel prize to the greatest living novelist, how few names there are from which to choose. Great writers, indeed, in plenty, but great novelists . . .? For if there is one thing required of a novelist it is that he should take cognizance of the whole of life as it is normally experienced by men and women. And if any part of the normal experience is out of the book, the loss to the characters in the book must be depicted. If we do not see the sunlight we must see the shadows; if there is darkness we must be made conscious that the light has been obscured: if men and women are not fed, we must see them hungry; if they are dead, their author dare not pretend that they are alive. A novelist has to depict, not puppets, but men and women, moving about in worlds not realized, an ascending race, dying to the past, conflicting with the present, reaching out towards that which is to come. And that is what Selma Lagerlöf succeeds in doing. That is one reason why she is a very great novelist, that, rather than what so many critics call her romanticism. For we are accustomed to contrast realism and romanticism in fiction, and to divide writers into one or other group. But what after all are both realism and romanticism but exclusive aspects of life: the realist writer attempts to depict material aspects of life apart from the interpreting spirit of man; the romanticist, to depict the spirit of man undisciplined by the conditions of mortality. And we have had such an eruption of clever realist fiction that when we at last get something larger and more spacious, we are apt to say it is good because it is romantic, instead of saying, as we should, that it is good because it is a picture, an interpretation, of life. 'Reading Selma Lagerlöf,' says the Swedish composer, Hugo Alfven, 'is like sitting in the dusk of a Spanish cathedral . . . afterwards one does not know whether what he has seen was dream or reality, but certainly he has been on holy ground.'

*Jerusalem* is a noble book. Under the mantle of these simple tales of the peasant aristocrats of Dalecarlia lie hidden spiritual meanings, 'truth hidden under beauteous fiction.' There is a literal pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the final section of the book, and the story of it is based upon a historic

event of last century. But in every preceding section of the book, within the masterly picture of the outward events which lead up to this pilgrimage, there are other movements made visible. Jerusalem beckons, not only to the community, but to individual souls: it comes down out of heaven from God, and enters into one simple heart after another, bringing pain and conflict and redemption.

But it is no cheap and obvious conflict we see depicted on those pages, between material and spiritual values. The fiercest battle is set, as in real life, between opposing spiritual forces. And always the moral issues are decided, not by any standardized code of conduct, but by the relationship of the choice to a personal, individual vision of the City of God. Almost, one might say, the choice is to be judged not so much by virtue of what is chosen, as by virtue of the degree of moral tension at which the choice is made. One soul may find Jerusalem through the renunciation of marriage, another through the renunciation of all that stands between himself and human love; one through loyalty to home, another through forsaking home; but all, only as they follow the gleam. Yet even on these heights of experience, indeed especially there, we are surprised again and again by the tinkle of cherubic laughter and the flash of mischievous wings. The Swedish critic, Oscar Levertin, says that Selma Lagerlöf 'has the eyes of a child, and the heart of a child.' She resembles, indeed, at times, one of those unfathomable little beings which Raphael has poised upon the bars of heaven beneath his divinest Madonna's feet, gently educating the orthodox towards the conception of a Royalty which can be amused.

But fundamentally the book is an excellent story. Great novels always are. We must proceed, as old Aristotle says, from that which we know better to that which we know not so well. First, we have the literal edifice duly and decoratively built together, then we are at liberty to discern the hidden truth. Selma Lagerlöf's literal edifice is masterly. Not for one moment does she turn aside from building that edifice till all is complete. It is a story she is writing, not a sermon, not a psychological treatise. But when she has finished the miracle has happened. Even as the black letters she has written upon white paper have summoned up those bright images of forest and river and farmhouse, of peasant youths and maidens, and toilworn fathers and mothers, so those pictures in their turn, so meticulously external and non-moralized, summon up before our inward eye a vision of spiritual conflicts and of pilgrimages of the soul, a vision which lingers on long after the literal tale is forgotten.

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'The ways of Providence cannot be reasoned out by the finite mind. I cannot fathom them, yet seeking to know them is the most satisfying thing in all the world.' SELMA LAGERLÖF.

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**The Redemption of Christmas.**

'A little child . . . in the midst of them.'—Mt $18^2$.

'A talk about Christmas! So that when you are wishing "A Merry Christmas," or "A Happy Christmas," you will not be using just worn and empty words, but you will be putting a great and splendid meaning in them. We are apt to think that Christmas was one of the things that began when people stopped writing B.C. and began writing A.D.; but our Christian Christmas did not begin till a very long time after Christ was born at Bethlehem; and long, long before He was born, people made merry at the time of the year we call Christmas.

'The last week of December is the time when the sun is farthest from the earth. Since midsummer the distance has been growing greater and greater. And now winter has come when the day is dark in the afternoon, and the trees are bare and the flowers are dead. It is mid-winter. It is called the winter "solstice," the time when the sun seems to stand still for a space and then begins to come nearer to the earth again.

'Therefore people made it an occasion of rejoicing, and because the worship of the sun, which gives life and health to the world, is the oldest of all religions, it became a festival in honour of the sun-god.

'In the Norse countries they called it "Yule," which is "wheel," and means that the wheel of the year is turning from winter to summer. With great rejoicings and singing of songs, they brought in the yule-log and kindled it in honour of the sun.

'In Britain the Druids led the people out into the forests to cut the mistletoe with silver sickles.

'In Rome they worshipped the sun under the name of Saturn, and the festival was called the "Saturnalia." People sent presents to each other. They feasted and made merry. Slaves were free for the day and sat in their master's seats, and their masters waited on them and served them. Everything was topsy-turvy in a sort of mad, good-natured revel. They sang coarse songs, disguised themselves and acted nonsensical plays, dressed their homes with evergreens, and made merry.

And because Rome, and Norway, and Britain all flowed together to make our nation, all three customs came floating into our life from their far sources, so that mistletoe and holly and the yule-log, presents and songs, guisards and paper caps in crackers, and Christmas dinners all tell us where we have come from.

'Now after the old Roman world became Christian people went on keeping the Saturnalia, and although many of the songs they sang and many of the things they did were shameful and unseemly, they clung to the old customs and would not give them up. So wise Christian teachers said, "We must make this into a Christian festival. We'll gather all this rejoicing round the Birth of our Saviour, and that will put a soul into it." And so they did, and it was much better than preaching against it. Just as Jesus once put a child in the midst of His quarrelling disciples, and it made them ashamed of quarrelling, so the child Jesus in the midst of the December festival and all its coarseness, changed it into the Christian Christmas. They sang carols about the birth of Jesus, and these were so pure that the old, ugly, impure songs just disappeared. They acted plays about the shepherds and the angels, and the cradle that was a manger, and the old plays were soon forgotten. They kept all the good-nature, and the kindliness and the giving of presents to friends and gifts to the poor, but these had a new reason now—it was the birthday of Jesus they were keeping. It was the gladdest time of the year, and all were friends, not because the sun was then coming back, but because the Son of God, who is the Light of the World and the Giver of Life Eternal, came to earth then for our salvation, to bring back the summer of God's peace.

'Some people used to think that we ought not to keep Christmas, because once it was a heathen festival, but that is all the more reason to keep it; for it is one of the things the Spirit of Jesus has redeemed. It tells us that He is the Redeemer.

'It is a picture of what Jesus is doing for the world. It is a picture of what He can do to you and me: chase away the evil, and make kindness more kind and more beautiful because it is done for Christ's sake.

'We are glad, and we have good reason to be glad, then; to wish each other "A Happy Christmas," and to dream the great dream of the time when, not for one day only shall there be "peace on earth and goodwill towards men," but all the year round and over the whole earth.'

Probably you have recognized the writer of this children's address, for he is well known to all readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES — the Rev. Stuart Robertson. He has published this month a new collection with the title *Tigers' Teeth* (Hodder & Stoughton; 5s. net). A few of the addresses have already appeared in this magazine, but the bulk of them are new. Mr. Robertson has the gift *par excellence* of speaking to children, and we predict that this book will be much sought after.

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**Influence.**

'In a book called *More Reminiscences of an Old Bohemian*, by Major Fitzroy Gardner, who must have been one of the casual acquaintances who come and go and bring their generous appreciation with them, he speaks of my mother (Alice Meynell) as "no ordinary highbrow, but a very beautiful woman whose presence, as much as her writing, was an inspiration. . . . She had the face of an angel and alas! a far too frail physique. . . . She possessed an instinctively gracious dignity of manner, yet the sense of humour of a frivolous girl. Almost all her guests whom one first met on those delightful occasions one desired to meet again. I remember one Sunday evening, coming out of the house by chance with a woman of the world, more distinguished for her physical charm than for intellect. As we walked towards the Bayswater Road, talking about our hostess as if she had been some minor deity, my companion suddenly remarked, 'I feel somehow as if I must go to church and pray.'" '[1]

[1] Viola Meynell, *Alice Meynell*, 144.

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