

MR. HALL CAINE'S MISSION TO RUSSIA.

In former traditional estimates of the occasional effects of some literary work of imagination, serving to illustrate and enforce a practical object that was beginning to arouse the hearts and consciences of mankind, the "poet"—a term conventionally restricted to the writer of verse—was often credited with power to aid, if he did not precede and inspire, the efforts of philanthropy, or of patriotism, or of reforming statesmanship. Prose fiction, in these days, being pursued by a far wider circle of readers, and coming home more directly to the bosoms and business of ordinary people, has become, in the hands of writers of genius, an instrument of greater power. The authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" struck a blow at the American institution of negro slavery which probably contributed much, in the ensuing ten or twelve years, to prepare the citizens of the Northern and Western States for their resolute attitude during the Civil War and their determination that it should issue in the final abolition of that degrading and pernicious system.

A fresh example of the importance that is now ascribed to wisely directed imaginative authorship, which may be so exercised as to communicate very truthful general impressions, or just views of a large subject in the realm of existing realities, and to awaken wholesome sympathies, has recently occurred. The ill-treatment of the Jews in the barbarous Mohammedan State of Morocco has for many years past been notorious to all the world; and it will be remembered that the venerable late Sir Moses Montefiore, who visited that country expressly to inquire concerning the oppression of his co-religionists, pleaded frequently with our own and foreign Governments to use their influence in order to obtain redress. In the *Illustrated London News*, a few years ago, the internal condition of Morocco, under a degree of misgovernment scarcely equalled by that of any other Mussulman dominion, was displayed by a travelling correspondent in his full and authentic descriptions, and by the Sketches of our Special Artists, with such entire correctness that their representations have never been impugned.

The publication in our pages, during several past months, of Mr. Hall Caine's pathetic story entitled "The Scapegoat," for which he had carefully gathered materials of actual circumstance and well-accredited instances during his sojourn last year in Morocco, has been hailed by the most intelligent and influential members of the respectable Jewish community in London as a real service to the cause of justice and mercy; and they, who are perfectly acquainted with the facts concerning the actual state of the Jews both in North Africa and in Eastern Europe, feel so much reliance on this author's candour and veracity that they have invited him to undertake a special literary mission for the same cause in Russia. We also feel confident that Mr. Hall Caine, though a novelist—rather let us call him a prose poet, with powers of imaginative conception and narrative second to those of no living author—will endeavour to learn the truth with regard to the Jews in Russia, and will fairly represent the character of that great nation, which has many amiable and estimable qualities, while he will not exaggerate, though he must not palliate, the abuses



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of an official and administrative system which manifestly demands to be reformed. The problem now before the Imperial Government of Russia is one of immense magnitude and extreme difficulty, from the large numbers of its Jewish subjects, their local situation, their being involved in various occupations of trade and industry, and the social jealousy, as well as the religious antipathy, with which they are regarded by the Russian people.

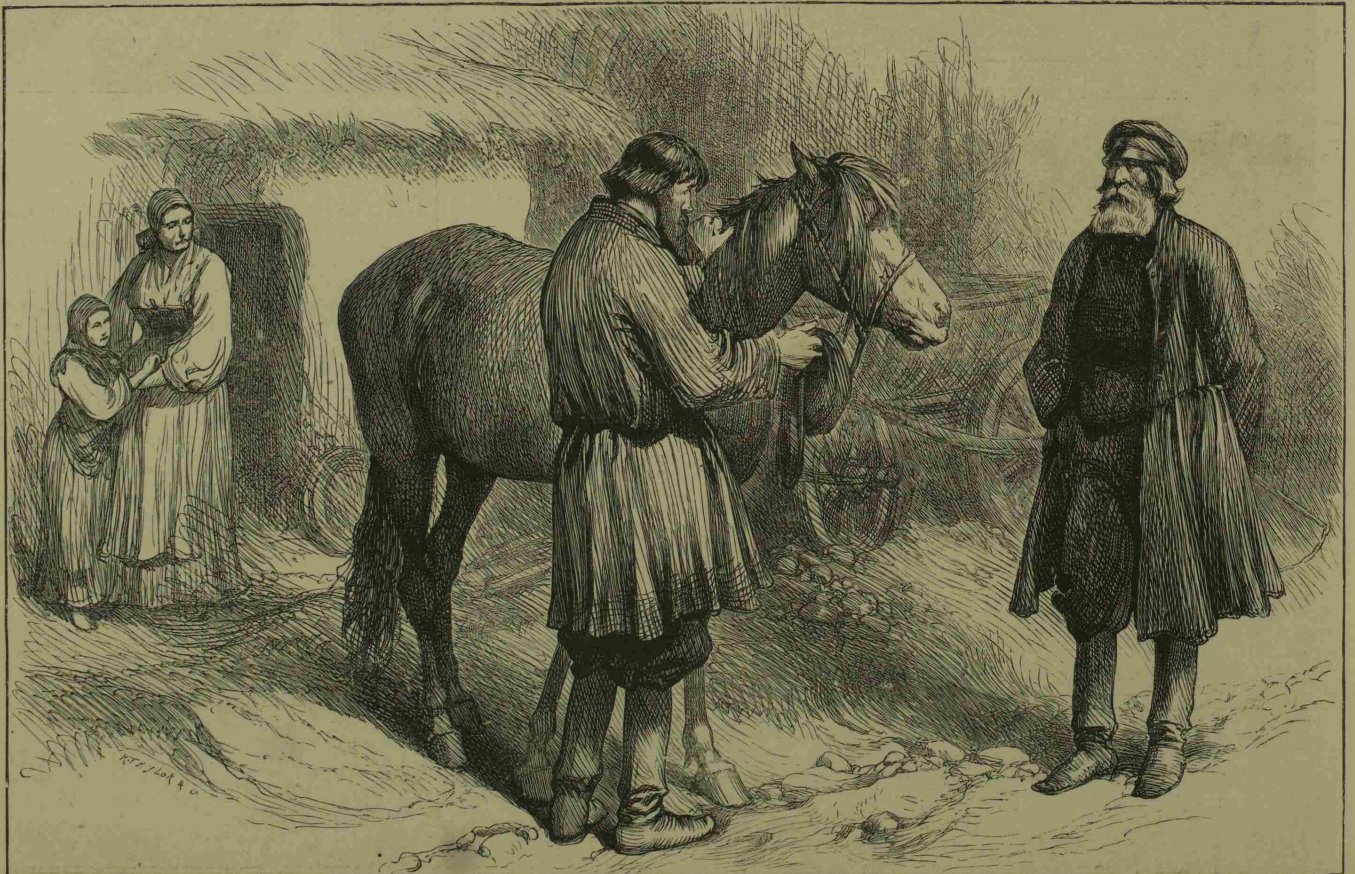
Mr. Hall Caine, in accepting the proposal of the Russo-Jewish Committee of London, conveyed through the Rev. Dr. Hermann Adler, the Chief Rabbi, to visit Russia for the purpose of ascertaining the facts, with a view to fairly and faithfully illustrating the condition of the Jews in that great country, has assumed a serious responsibility; but it is a noble task, and we doubt not that it will be honestly performed. Our confidence in his sincerity and integrity will be shared by thoughtful readers of those remarkable stories "The Deemster" and "The Bondman," preceding "The Scapegoat," which were deemed admirable not only for their high literary power

but for the sustained, intense, profoundly earnest strain of high and pure moral feeling that pervades them, yet never expressed in the tone of a preacher, but in the concrete forms of dramatic action and in the exhibition of individual characters mutually affecting each other in the stress of natural passions. Such an author is not likely to swerve from the right and true course of judgment in estimating the deplorable strife of classes, races, and religions, that seems to prevail in Russia; the humanist, the idealist, the poet may be trusted upon this ground as safely as the mere politician, and more safely than the sectarian of any church or creed.

A few details of his personal history will be acceptable to this author's multitude of readers. Mr. Hall Caine is a Manxman by parentage, and was born on May 14, 1853, of rural folk. At the age of fourteen he became pupil to a Liverpool architect. He wrote on architectural topics in the *Building News* and the *BUILDER*, also writing in one of the Manx newspapers, but at twenty years of age joined the staff of a Liverpool journal. Four or five years later, on the recommendation of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, he came to London. His first book was an edition or collection of sonnets; then he wrote two or three biographies; in 1884, while sojourning in the Isle of Wight, he produced his first novel, "The Shadow of a Crime." This at once gained him public favour; it was followed by "A Son of Hagar," and his true career was opened. As a dramatist, in his play of "Ben-my-Chree," produced by Mr. Wilson Barrett, he treated with success the peculiar features of "The Little Manx Nation." But "The Deemster," a story of the Isle of Man early in the last century, is, in our judgment, his most perfect work, from the unique character of its subject and plot, the romantic, yet home; and simple, aspects of a singularly sequestered and exceptional condition of social life, and the Titanic force of rude passions, the workings of remorse and despair, in the wild heart of Daniel Mylrea. "The Bondman" is a work of equal power; but its varying local habitation, shifting from Iceland to the Isle of Man, rather disturbs the unity of the impression. Both these fine stories were reviewed, with due appreciation, in our columns. "The Scapegoat" has so recently been put before our readers that we may defer awhile the critical notice which it merits; this story has certainly made its mark, and has drawn Mr. Hall Caine, as we see, into the region of contemporary affairs.

He will go to Russia, free from all engagements as to what he shall afterwards write, at present on a tour merely of observation, with no prejudice or preconceived opinion, and in no spirit of hostility to the Russian Empire. He has declined to write any special newspaper correspondence. Mr. Hall Caine, who resides at Keswick, will not start yet for a few weeks; his health is not strong, and he has been recruiting it at Lague, in the Isle of Man, passing much time at Port-y-Vullin and Port Mocar, with the sturdy Manx fishermen, his warm friends and admirers, who carry his Manx books to read on board their herring-boats far over the North Atlantic, from the Shetland Isles down to Kinsale.

The Portrait is from a recent photograph by Mr. G. P. Abraham, of Keswick.



THE DISTRESS IN RUSSIA: A PEASANT SELLING HIS HORSE.