

of by relating the plain facts, and there are a dozen or more other such salutary services to the truth. The man who emerges is far more interesting and charming than the old fee-faw-fum. He was not, it appears, the appalling cynic that trembling young reporters used to admire. On the contrary, he was "one of the most idealistic men that his generation produced in America"—in fact, "a great moral force, . . . for he would not lie, and truth alone mattered to him. It came to mean more than beauty; . . . it came to be the paramount value of his life."

His rages were quite natural to such a character. Doomed to live in a country in which, by God's will, honesty is rare, courage is still rarer, and honor is almost unknown, he found his pruderies outraged at every step. So he fell upon the current mountebanks, great and small, in a Berserker fury, seeking thus to sooth and secure his own integrity. That integrity, so far as I can make out, was never betrayed by compromise. Right or wrong, Bierce always stuck to the truth as he saw it. He was magnificently decent. It cost him something, but he never wavered.

I suspect that his death came just in time. Suppose he had survived into the war years: would he have stood pat, or would he have allowed the prevailing blather to fetch him? His private philosophy, of course, was all against it. He was violently opposed to democracy, and held all its heroes in contempt. Somewhere in the present book Mr. McWilliams records his blistering opinion of the absurd Jenkins, Walter Hines Page; and in another place he is denounced in his turn by that other exponent of bogus idealism, Franklin K. Lane. But would he have resisted the full pressure, once it was turned on in 1917? I am not so sure. Mark Twain, plainly enough, would have succumbed at once: his death in 1910 spared a candid world some very painful scenes. Bierce, of course, would have been harder to run amok, but that he would have held out to the end is not to be put down as certain.

Thus I find myself rather glad that the Mexicans disposed of him in 1913, before the great test really confronted him. If he had held on to the common sense and common decency of his life-long devotion the professional patriots of the time would have badgered him cruelly, and if he had compromised ever so little it would have been a sad and shameful thing.

The Art of the Printer

MODERN TYPOGRAPHY & LAYOUT, by Douglas McMurtrie. \$7.50. 12¾ x 9½; 190 pp. Chicago: The Eynco Press.

THIS stately work, at first glance, will probably be taken for a German production, for in both type and make-up it forcibly suggests the bold, somewhat raucous printing that the Germans have been doing since the war, and especially in the past few years. The influence of that printing is also widespread in the United States; in the advertising pages of the magazines one is constantly confronted by its bold black masses, its modernistic illustrations, and its harsh, angular, uncompromising faces of type. Mr. McMurtrie is strongly in favor of it, though with certain prudent reservations. He is in favor of getting the useless serifs off of letters, but he is still in some doubt about abandoning capitals. His own book is set in a new face called Stellar Bold, with headings in Ultra-Modern—this last designed by himself—but he is constrained to say that "I do not think we have yet produced a modern type suited to text or body composition." The Stellar Bold helps to prove it. It is, looked at in isolation, a remarkably clear and straightforward face, but a full page of it looks somehow harsh, and a whole volume of it grows unendurable. In type, as in life, it is not possible to be explicit all the time. There must be some softness, some vagueness.

But the new typography is not a thing of type faces alone; it depends for its character upon design in a wider sense—on what printers call layout. In the typical typographical design of the old style all

the principal lines were horizontal: they were, of course, the type lines. In order to make it clear that the thing really had two dimensions and not only one, the printer usually had recourse to borders, either plain or ornamental.

These borders, to be sure, added two to the number of his horizontal lines, but they also gave him two lines that were assertively vertical, and that was enough for those innocent days. The printer of the new style adopts bolder measures. He runs a heavy vertical line down the middle of his design, or somewhere near the middle and then arranges his type around it. Not infrequently he adds a heavy horizontal line, either near the bottom or near the top. Thus his basic design is a bold cross, as it used to be a more or less banal square. The square seemed to hedge the layout in; it obliterated any feeling of movement. But the cross makes the eye move, and so conveys the impression that the whole design moves.

That, in brief, is the essence of the new art of layout. Its aim is to seize the eye, and guide it forcibly to what is most important. To that end everything else must be sacrificed—grace, decorum, even beauty. Some of the new German advertisements, reprinted here with favorable comments by Mr. McMurtrie, are really almost brutal. With their huge black masses, their harsh, angular types, and their frequent splashes of scarlet, they do not coo and woo; they issue commands. One can think of nothing to say to them save a feeble “*Zu Befehl, Herr Oberst!*” But it is one thing to be intimidated, and another thing to buy goods.

Do these clarion calls really sell anything? Sometimes I find myself doubting it. The exercise of reading them, I suspect, is really too strenuous; the customer is fatigued beyond endurance before he can reach for an order blank. But whatever their failure as practical agents of persuasion, it is certainly no wonder that printers find them absorbing, for in the space of a very few years they have completely revo-

lutionized the art of typography. There used to be something extremely cautious and gentle about it; its appeal was to æsthetes and scholars, not to practical men. But now it becomes magnificently he, and before long, perhaps, it will grow so he that the tender-minded will be clamoring for laws to regulate and dephlogisticate it.

Mr. McMurtrie complains that the great organs of the enlightenment in America show little interest in the new typography. Only *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*, he says, have ventured to monkey with it. He forgets that *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair* are magazines whose primary purpose is not to be read but to be looked at. What THE AMERICAN MERCURY (which he mentions with courteous sorrow) would look like in the new fashion he himself shows by giving a sample page from Jan Tschichold's “*Die Neue Typographie*,” first in the original German and then translated into English but set both times in the same serifless type. The effect is simply dreadful. The page looks like nothing so much as a table of statistics set in the precise, uncomely, despiriting type used for the numbers in telephone books. “It does not seem to me,” admits Mr. McMurtrie sadly, “to be as readable as would the same page set in Caslon, or some other traditional book face.” Another thing he forgets is that the abandonment of capitals in the headings of *Vanity Fair* is by no means an unquestioned success. So long as it is new it will seem piquant, but once it stales it will become silly. My guess is that *Vanity Fair* will go back to capitals long before Dr. Hoover says his last bitter farewell to the White House.

“*Modern Typography and Layout*” is a very interesting book. A great deal of novel matter is in it, and the author, while plainly greatly impressed by the new art, yet manages to keep his head. He presents specimens of forty-eight of the new types, mainly from Germany, and reproductions of scores of layouts and finished designs. The volume will be valuable to everyone who has to do with printing.

Ladies, Mainly Sad

A GALLERY OF WOMEN, by Theodore Dreiser.
\$5. 7½ x 5½; 2 vols.; 823 pp. New York: Horace
Liveright.

"A GALLERY OF WOMEN" is a companion to "Twelve Men," published in 1919. There are fifteen sketches, each dealing with some woman who impinged upon the author at some time in the past; if the collection is not quite as interesting as its forerunner, then that is probably because women themselves are considerably less interesting than men. Not one of them here is to be mentioned in the same breath with Dreiser's brother Paul, the shining hero of "Twelve Men," or with Muldoon the Iron Man, who plainly posed for the stupendous Culhane. Perhaps those who come closest to that high level are Regina C——, who succumbs to cynicism and morphine, and Bridget Mullanphy, almost a female Culhane. The rest are occasionally charming, but only too often their chief mark is a pathetic silliness. What ails most of them is love. They throw away everything for it, and when they can't get the genuine article they seem to be content with imitations. And if it is not love, real or bogus, that undoes them, then it is some vague dream that never takes rational form—of puerile self-expression, of gratuitous self-sacrifice, of something else as shadowy and vain.

Dreiser draws them with a surety of hand that seldom falters. He is at his best in just such character sketches, and he has a special skill at getting under the skins of women. In all of his books, indeed, the matter chiefly dealt with is female vagary, and to its elucidation he has brought an immense curiosity and no little shrewdness. As I have said, men are naturally more interesting, if only because they show a higher variability, but women remain more mysterious, and hence more romantic. Why should Regina C—— throw herself away as she does? Why should Esther Norn waste her devotion upon men who have no need of her, and set no value upon her? Why, indeed, should old Bridget Mul-

lanphy stagger through life in shackles to her loafer of a husband and her abominable daughter? The common answer is that there is something noble about that sort of immolation, but Dreiser is too wise to make it. He simply sets forth the facts as he has seen them, and leaves the philosophizing to less conscientious sages. He sees into all these women, but he would probably be the last to claim that he really sees through them. They remain figures in the eternal charade, touching always but inscrutable to the last.

Dreiser's writing continues to be painful to those who seek a voluptuous delight in words. It is not that he writes mere bald journalese, as certain professors have alleged, but that he wallows naïvely in a curiously banal kind of preciosity. He is, indeed, full of pretty phrases and arch turns of thought, but they seldom come off. The effect, at its worst, is that of a hangman's wink. He has been more or less impressed, apparently, by the familiar charge that his books are too long—that his chief sin is garrulousness. At all events, he shows a plain awareness of it: at one place he pauses in his narrative to say, "But hold! Do not despair. I am getting on." The point here, however, is not well taken. He is not actually garrulous; he always says something apposite, even though it may be obvious. What ails him is simply an incapacity to let anything go. Every detail of the human comedy interests him so immensely that he is bound to get it down. This makes, at times, for hard reading, but it has probably also made Dreiser. The thing that distinguishes him from other novelists is simply his astounding fidelity of observation. He sees every flicker of the eye, every tremor of the mouth, every change of color, every trivial gesture, every awkwardness, every wart. It is the warts, remember, that make the difference between a photograph and a human being.

Most other American novelists of his generation have been going downhill of late, but Dreiser seems to be holding on