

tator, for he has presented his own philosophy in systematic works: *Skepticism and Animal Faith*; then the *Realms of Being*, which he has divided characteristically into *The Realm of Essence* and *The Realm of Matter*. It is well that these works, written in a style suggestive, at times, of an almost scholastic subtlety, should be in the hands of the philosophers. But to us others he has sent his youngest child—his Benjamin—which is a tribute to youth and to the ἀνὴρ πνευματικός—the spiritual man—who, in the face of disillusion, yet plays a noble part in the pathetic-heroic drama of the soul.



The Most Civilized Englishman

BY ERNEST BOYD

STUDIES IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SEX, by Havelock Ellis. Four volumes. Random House. \$15.00.

IF," WROTE H. L. MENCKEN, "the test of the personal culture of a man be the degree of his freedom from the banal ideas and childish emotions which move the great masses of men, then Havelock Ellis is undoubtedly the most civilized Englishman of his generation." One might add that, if the severest test of the culture of a civilized man—and especially of an Anglo-Saxon—be his freedom from inhibitions and superstitions concerning sex, then Havelock Ellis emerges triumphantly from that test, and stands as the one individual who has done most to enable the rest of us to achieve like emancipation. It is, therefore, a fitting tribute to his success as an emancipator that his seventy-seventh year should witness this handsome publication of his life work.

The measure of the distance we have

traveled, thus making this publication possible, is revealed in a Foreword by Mr. Ellis—first published in THE MERCURY—in which he describes the circumstances that first led him to explore the phenomena of sex, the peculiar fatality which attended the appearance of the first volume in English, and his decision to publish the work outside his own country. As a youth of sixteen in Australia, he suffered from the conventional ideas on the subject of sex, but he "viewed with contempt the hypocritical, ultra-Puritanic, sentimental, or obscurantist teaching" on the subject. "I determined that I would make it the main business of my life to get to the real natural facts of sex apart from all would-be moralistic or sentimental notions, and so spare the youth of future generations the trouble and perplexity which this ignorance had caused me." As a first step he entered medical school.

Contact with John Addington Symonds resulted in the unpremeditated choice of *Sexual Inversion* as the subject of the first volume, which was immediately translated from the manuscript and appeared in German over their joint names. This was in the year of grace 1896. Mr. Ellis had the greatest difficulty in finding even a medical publisher for the English edition, and when he finally became involved in the clutches of a swindler who purported to run the University Press at Watford, Symonds had died, and his executors would not allow his name to appear on the title page. So Ellis had to remove "the rather disjointed fragments due to Symonds" and appear as the sole author. The book was purchased by a Sumnerian snooper, the bookseller was prosecuted on the usual Comstockian grounds, and the volume was "voluntarily" withdrawn, without any hearing being given to Mr. Ellis, or to the distinguished committee

that supported him: Bernard Shaw, George Moore, Frank Harris, Grant Allen, and others. The University Press swindler persuaded Ellis to let him bring out the second volume, *The Evolution of Modesty*, in Germany. But the word Leipzig on the title page really meant Watford, so the books were seized and destroyed. Shortly afterwards this elusive publisher was arrested for another offense and committed suicide with a poison ring.

Thus ended the first chapter in Mr. Ellis' attempt to bring sexual light into darkest England. America came to the rescue, and the series as we have known it hitherto was issued in Philadelphia until the entire seven volumes were completed. They were never interfered with in this country, but the British Museum Library classified them as erotica or pornography, and therefore did not admit them to the catalogue. Both the British Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale house collections of definite erotica, but refuse to list them in the official catalogue. I remember years ago, when I discovered that Mr. Ellis was being accorded this treatment, making a bet with a couple of British Museum librarians that I could pile a table with erotica from their catalogue in a few minutes. They declared this was physically impossible, but were nonplused when I showed them extracts from a dozen or so volumes in French, German, Italian, and Spanish. It was a perfect illustration of the stupidity of censorship and a beautiful commentary on their treatment of a serious work by a distinguished English scientist and man of letters. Yet, only a couple of years after this event, I noticed the banned volumes freely displayed on the open shelves of the Department of Psychology at Johns Hopkins University.

With the exception of a few case his-

stories, all the material contained in the seven-volume Philadelphia edition is included in these four volumes, but it has been rearranged as follows: Vol. I: The Evolution of Modesty, The Phenomena of Sexual Periodicity, Auto-erotism, Analysis of the Sexual Impulse, Love and Pain, The Sexual Impulse in Women; Vol. II: Sexual Selection in Man, Sexual Inversion; Vol. III: Erotic Symbolism, The Mechanism of Detumescence, The Psychic State in Pregnancy, Eonism and Other Supplementary Studies; Vol. IV: Sex in Relation to Society. There is an invaluable cumulative index at the end of the fourth volume, in addition to the excellent indices to each one of the original seven volumes. The only omission that baffles me is that of the lengthy appendix to the French edition of *The Psychic State in Pregnancy*. Mr. Ellis admits it is an interesting document, but adds ambiguously: "It is not, however, essential to my work, and on grounds unconnected with its intrinsic interest it has been considered desirable to omit it from the English edition of these *Studies*." What reasons, I wonder, apart from intrinsic interest, have prompted this omission, especially as the almost equally lengthy *History of Florrie* is included in Volume III? Mr. Ellis refers to the fact that in 1898 the charges of obscenity were based solely on extracts from the case histories. Is it possible that this particular case history has been omitted as a measure of precaution?

The mere enumeration of the main subdivisions of the *Studies* is sufficient to indicate the scope of these three thousand-odd pages, but such enumeration does less than justice to the author's purpose and achievement. Krafft-Ebing, Stekel, Moll, Hirschfeld, and many others have treated the same subjects, but they had not the same objective. Mr. Ellis denies

that his *Studies* are "pathological", in the sense that this term can rightly be applied to such writers as Krafft-Ebing, in whose work "the whole field of normal sexuality was dismissed in half a dozen feeble and scrappy pages", and he adds: "The original inspiration of my own work and the guiding motive throughout was the study of normal sexuality." Not the least of his clarifications has been his analysis of the loose and unjustified way in which such words as "normal", "abnormal", and "pathological", have been bandied about by people totally unequipped to pass judgments. Thirty years ago Mr. Ellis insisted that reticence and secrecy were the enemies of sexual enlightenment, and he pointed out that at one time the Catholic Church alone undertook to face the facts. If the Church could probe into sexual phenomena in relation to sin, he could make similar investigations in relation to human life and happiness.

I do not consider that sexual matters concern the theologian alone, and I deny that he is competent to deal with them. In his hands, also, undoubtedly, they sometimes become prurient, as they can scarcely fail to become on the non-natural and unwholesome basis of asceticism, and as they with difficulty become in the open-air light of science. . . . We want to know what is naturally lawful under the various sexual chances that may befall man, not as the born child of sin, but as a naturally social animal. What is a venial sin against nature, what a mortal sin against nature?

Thus Mr. Ellis, at the outset of his career as a psychologist, quietly enunciates his formidable challenge to conventional morality, as defined by orthodox theology, and the whole series of these *Studies* is a patient and systematic demonstration of the innumerable fallacies, misunderstandings, and the superstitious ignorance underlying most of our sexual concepts.

Their culmination is that masterpiece of civilized thinking, *Sex in Relation to Society*, which does to the churches in their relation to Society what *The Origin of Species* did to them in their relation to Science. Mr. Ellis modestly calls this an estimate of the evolution of social traditions, but it is an estimate so wisely and dispassionately arrived at that it has been increasingly confirmed in every year of the quarter-century since it was written.

Many people imagine that such a series of studies as these must, on the whole, be rather dull reading, and I have often amused myself by proving to those unfamiliar with Mr. Ellis the engaging variety of everyday topics which he illuminates. Why, for example, do gentlemen prefer blondes? Mr. Ellis observes:

There is something to be said on the matter from the objective standpoint of aesthetic considerations. Stratz, in a chapter on beauty of coloring in women, points out that fair hair is more beautiful because it harmonizes better with the soft outlines of a woman, and, one may add, it is more brilliantly conspicuous; a golden object looks larger than a black object. . . . We may accept it as fairly certain that, so far as any objective standard of aesthetic beauty is recognizable, that standard involves the supremacy of the fair type of woman.

He points out that Venus is nearly always blonde, as was Milton's Eve. Greek sculptors gilded the hair of their statues. The Renaissance admiration for fair hair was unqualified. "Angelico and most of the pre-Raphaelite artists usually painted their women with flaxen and light-golden hair." Petrarch and Ariosto and the medieval French poets also shared this predilection.

It is a commonplace of conversation to hear people speculating as to why So-and-So fell in love with So-and-So. The most succinct answer ever given is Mr.

Ellis's: "Love springs up as a response to a number of stimuli to tumescence, the object that most adequately arouses tumescence being that which evokes love." Lest the tender-minded inquire whether that is not a mere definition of lust, the author anticipates the objection.

Love, in the sexual sense, is, summarily considered, a synthesis of lust (in the primitive and uncolored sense of sexual emotion) and friendship. It is incorrect to apply the term "love" in the sexual sense to elementary and uncomplicated sexual desire; it is equally incorrect to apply it to any variety or combination of varieties of friendship. There can be no sexual love without lust; but, on the other hand, until the currents of lust in the organism have been so irradiated as to affect other parts of the psychic organism — at least the affections and the social feelings — it is not yet sexual love.

With that simple definition in mind it ought to be easy even for a Hollywood star to attain to happy matrimony. But there is a catch even in what is usually regarded as matrimonial bliss.

If we try to think of couples who enjoy this state of "happy marriage" . . . we shall often find that they constitute little isolated family groups consumed by greedy absorption and cut off from all generous contact with the world; or they are couples who cherish a narrowly sensual and selfish devotion to each other of which the final impression is painful; or they are just the good, simple, primitive, undifferentiated people who are, as it was said of old, born to consume the fruits of the earth. We gaze at them as we gaze at the occupants of a pigsty, without contempt, quite cheerfully, but well aware that their happiness can hardly furnish the key to the solution of our own more complex situation.

I might continue indefinitely to quote instances of the kind of light Mr. Ellis throws on the most unexpected subjects: why, for instance, Hollywood actors will not wear beards in romantic parts; why

the Church killed the bath; why music, as a rule, affects women more than it does men. With the new cumulative index as a guide, any reader may indulge in this charming pastime with ease. I prefer to conclude with a brief reference to the fundamental tenet upon which Mr. Ellis's philosophy is based: practical, personal morality. Sex being "the central problem of life", surrounded by a thousand moral taboos, it behooves us to analyze the basis of the morality dictating these taboos, and to arrive at a genuine understanding of that constantly abused word. We must distinguish between traditional and ideal morality, which are the two kinds of theoretical morality, *i.e.*, morality which is "concerned with what people 'ought' — or what is 'right' for them — to do". Allowing for the legitimate part played by these two often, if not always, opposed kinds of morality, the one clinging to custom, the other pointing to the future, we should analyze, upon the claims of practical morality, "the question of what, as a matter of fact, people actually do. This is the really fundamental and essential morality".

It is wiser to recognize actual practice and sanction it than to urge claims that have not yet been admitted, or to invoke traditions that have long since been discarded. Specifically in the sex relation, love is as purely personal as religion, and society has no right to interfere with the sexual life of any couple, unless children are born. Then legitimacy must be assured. During the first millennium of Christianity, marriage was entirely a private matter between the two parties, subsequently celebrated by a church service. It was not until the Popes attained temporal power that the theory of the sacrament of indissoluble marriage was invented, and it has ever since be-

devilled our concept of the institution, even under the relatively more liberal Protestant interpretation of it.

Mr. Ellis holds, in opposition to the Church, that, insofar as marriage is a non-procreative, sexual relationship, it is "a private matter, the conditions of which must be left to the persons who alone are concerned in it", and in opposition to the civil contract theory he holds that it is "a fact and not a contract, though it may give rise to contracts, so long as such contracts do not touch that essential fact". In short, neither the State nor the Church has any right to inquire into the "sacred and intimate relationship" of sexual love. "Man has in recent times gained control of his own procreative powers, and that control involves a shifting of the center of gravity of marriage, insofar as marriage is an affair of the State, from the vagina to the child which is the fruit of the womb." The individual has the same right to justice as Society, thereby presenting us with these two aspects of marriage. When marriage approaches the ideal state these two aspects become one.

In the forty years which have gone into the completion of these *Studies*, much that seemed revolutionary has come to pass, much that is postulated in the final volume is still challenged, with the encouragement of the universally rising tide of obscurantism. Yet it is impossible not to feel the deepest respect and hope for the future of human intelligence as one closes this great synthesis by Havelock Ellis. His work is something more than a contribution to its specific field, as a comparison with the similar studies of his colleagues will show. Mr. Ellis relates all his observations to Society as a whole, to the general scheme of existence, and integrates his psychology of sex into a civilized philosophy of life.

The New Poetry

BY LOUIS UNTERMAYER

THAT a new vigor has come back to poetry is undeniable. That the younger men and women — principally those still in their twenties — have turned from triviality and tortuous metaphysics to rebellious reappraisal is obvious. That they possess an impressive craftsmanship must be conceded. But that they are original is highly questionable. Curiously enough, the youngest of them — Muriel Rukeyser, twenty-two — seems the most independent as well as the most mature. Yet all of them naïvely reveal their common influences. They repudiate "the destructive element" of T. S. Eliot's defeatist philosophy, but they imitate his tone; they condemn Ezra Pound's chill erudition, but their technique leans heavily on his; they mock Archibald MacLeish's musical nostalgia, but they are not above borrowing his idiom.

This, perhaps, is a confession of youth, and a more original utterance may develop after the varied ardors, dogmas, theories, and forms have integrated. Meanwhile, with the exception of Miss Rukeyser, whose work has been considered in a previous issue, the two most interesting of the newcomers are Kenneth Patchen and Edwin Rolfe. Kenneth Patchen's *Before the Brave* (Random House, \$2.00) clearly states his political and social affiliations. Unfortunately it states little else. The jacket declares that the author "scorns the devices of his poetic elders . . . and seeks new and more dynamic verse forms". The scorn and the seeking are evident, but the "new and more dynamic verse forms" are, alas, not apparent. There is some sharp and some forceful writing here, much Spender-Auden bitterness, but there