

ation of Mediæval literature on an absolute scale. We want a careful sifting of the detritus, which shall not merely eliminate the rubbish, but so lay bare the semi-precious ingredients that the precious may be discerned. In English literature between the Conquest and Chaucer that residuum would be extremely small. I cannot think that either the knightly tale of "Gawayne and the Green Knight" or the affecting elegy of the "Pearl" are more than semi-precious. A charming treatise, to do good, like the "Ancren Riwe," which a friendly cleric wrote for certain devout ladies, and a group of mystical religious lyrics full of a quaint troubadour amatoriness hardly bulk large in world literature. Even less significant must appear such excellent forthright narrative poems as "Havelok" and "King Horn" or the scanty versions of French lais or fabliaux. Even the rare mystery plays, which begin to strike a deeper note, are hardly indispensable to culture. In fine, the elimination of all Middle English literature except Chaucer and Malory would not essentially diminish the means of culture at the disposal of English readers. That it would greatly impoverish our range of historical association I admit willingly. These things have a value relative to us as of English stock. Langland is our best interpreter of the sentiment that later made English Protestantism. Gawayne is a better guide to chivalry than Malory. If we would understand the depth, fervour and extravagance of the cult of Mary, certain Middle English lyrics and legends will serve us well. As the matter stands, however, we have nobody to tell us which writings have even this relative historical value in any large measure. It is striking enough that Professor Saintsbury in his *History of English Prosody* gives incidentally a more convincing suggestion of literary excellence in the Mediæval period than Professor Schofield does in this comprehensive work.

I am far from upbraiding a gifted scholar and my good friend for not doing what he has not expressly set before himself to do, but I wish to point out a desideratum and an opportunity. We need not merely for England, but for all Mediæval Europe, an appraisal of its literature

based not on erudite, but on broad literary standards. Such criticism is scarcely at its beginnings, for the delightful historical essays of the late Gaston Paris, a man of rare critical perception, are overfreighted with learning and avowedly devoted a little narrowly to the natural history of legend. This work of reappraisal should naturally fall to a Mediævalist who also knows deeply the best literature of all periods. M. Bédier, upon whom Paris's mantle has happily fallen, has shown true capacity for this work in his essays on Tristan and the Lais of Marie de France. M. Jusserand has given a hint of what is needed. One hopes, I repeat, that some Mediævalist will take this objective and judicial attitude toward his favourite pursuits. If not, the work must be done all the same, and some critic in general literature, less fully informed than the Mediævalists, but possibly better oriented, will enter into the promised land that they have shortsightedly failed to perceive.

Frank Jewett Mather, Jr.

V

"THE HISTORY OF PAINTING"*

The need of an English translation of Dr. Muther's *Geschichte der Malerei*, published in Germany over seven years ago, has long been felt. Dr. Muther's *History of Modern Painting*, as the title of an earlier work dealing with painting in the nineteenth century is rendered in English, has long been familiar in the classroom, and the present work has attained wide popularity on the Continent. No one who has read the book, either in German or in Dr. Kriehn's very admirable translation, which preserves so successfully the author's style, will be surprised at this popularity. Dr. Muther is an easy and graceful writer; his enthusiasm is, moreover, singularly contagious. He is a student of wide erudition and his critical faculty is keen and brilliant. He pos-

*The History of Painting. From the Fourth to the Early Nineteenth Century. By Richard Muther, Ph.D. Authorized English edition. Translated from the German and edited, with annotations, by George Kriehn, Ph.D. In two volumes. Vol. I., Vol. II. Illustrated. \$5 net. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

sesses in a remarkable degree the qualities essential to one who should essay the difficult and greatly needed task of writing a history of European painting in which the general is not obscured by the particular.

In the second chapter of the first volume of Dr. Muther's *History* will be found a sentence which may well be said to give the keynote of the entire book. The author declares that "the art of a nation always develops along lines parallel with its ideas, culture and customs." Upon this belief is formed the method adopted by Dr. Muther in writing the story of European painting. In a sense it is not a new theory. Other writers have tried to show the connection between art and life. But never before has the psychological side of the growth of painting been so consistently developed as it is here. Necessarily something—possibly a good deal—has been sacrificed to the ascendancy of this dominating idea. However admirable the reconciliation of social and artistic life may be in large, however essentially true the hypothesis may be as a generality, it is a dangerous basis of a history such as this. It is inevitable that the theory triumphant is bound now and then to crush the sublimated facts into pulpy acquiescence with its laws. To many readers it must seem that, fine in many ways as this striking work is, Dr. Muther has sacrificed artistic sequence to psychological sequence. Interesting as the experiment is, one may still be doubtful of the efficiency of the principle as a permanent basis for the study of art.

Dr. Muther's purpose is naturally synthetic rather than analytic. He has started out to weld together a vast array of elements not always easily made to assume their proper relations to each other, and, at least in the first volume, he succeeds remarkably well in the accomplishment of this difficult attempt. Yet he sometimes departs from the main theme to give wholly delightful and sympathetic interpretations of his favourite painters, in which penetration of thought and intuitive effectiveness of expression unite to produce passages which alike illuminate and charm. The book is not in the least technical. It is intended neither for a text-book for the novice nor as a treat-

ise for the professional critic or student of art. Rather is it meant for the ordinary cultivated reader with a fairly broad knowledge of pictures. To such lovers of pictures the pleasure of reading the *History of Painting* is assured. Yet a word of caution must, however ungracious it may seem, be added to this statement. Dr. Muther is always a brilliant critic; he is far from being always a judicious one. He differs more than once from other no less eminent authorities, and the reasons for his attitude are by no means always clear. He is not so safe a guide, for example, as such a writer as Mr. Berenson. Oddly enough, he seems to follow Vasari much more closely than most modern authorities, and while there is no doubt that the gossip chronicler has been too sternly repudiated, the danger of accepting his unsupported assertions has been only too frequently demonstrated. And, as has already been suggested, Dr. Muther more than once allows his ideas to run away with him and to lead him to strange conclusions. It is well to compare these deductions with those of other eminent scholars before accepting them unreservedly.

Speaking largely, the first volume is more characterised by originality of thought and phrasing than the second. The masterly opening chapters, which describe the struggle of the old formalism with the newly awakened feeling for naturalism, are among the finest portions of the work. Dr. Muther depicts with great skill the growth of the new idea of perspective, instinctively used by Massaccio and later made into a definite theory with irrefutable laws by the efforts of many different men, of whom Brunelleschi—who appears by an odd blunder as "Brunellesco"—was in a way the pioneer. We are carried along by the powerful manner in which Dr. Muther brings out the essential points and omits the unessential until we come to an assertion which is likely to provoke more discussion than almost any other in the book. He attaches an importance to the arrival in Florence of the "Adoration of the Kings," by Hugo van der Goes, which few persons will accept without some doubt. Certainly he does

not here prove the truth of his theory regarding the tremendous influence of the Flemish altar-piece, and, in the absence of such proof, the number of painters conceived by him to owe their style to the study of this picture is really unbelievable.

Much easier is it to follow Dr. Muther in his original but convincing argument regarding the ultimate effect of Savonarola's fulminations upon art. He thinks that, so far from injuring art, the great Florentine preacher performed a great service to painting, that, by "transforming the realist's love of nature to a higher, more significant beauty," he raised the whole spirit of art and made such a man as Leonardo da Vinci possible. Equally striking is the comparison of Dürer and Holbein, in which Dr. Muther describes the former in glowing terms and has, one must perceive, scant patience for the "extraordinary objectivity" of the latter, great as he admits his art to be. Another admirable piece of interpretation is the study of Titian; but his picture of Michelangelo is pitched in too consistently low a key; one feels that the gloom and dourness of disposition of the man and the anatomical passion of the artist are both somewhat exaggerated. Of Raphael he writes sanely, but not enthusiastically. Raphael's pupils and descendants have scant shrift, however. The characterisation of Giulio Romane is particularly uncompromising. With the appearance of Caravaggio Dr. Muther once more becomes interested in his subject. "The first great naturalist" is one of those always dangerous generalities which we scarcely expect to encounter in such a work as this.

With French art, in the period treated, Dr. Muther has no real sympathy; after

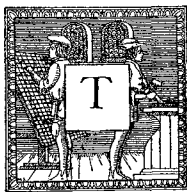
Claude and Poussin he finds little to admire. In Spain he writes brilliantly and penetratingly of Velasquez, but in keeping with his natural artistic leanings, inclines to over-accentuate the faults of Murillo's style. At their worst Murillo's pictures might be termed "elegant and mediocre," but the general application of the adjectives is rash. The studies of Rubens and Van Dyck are among the most notable critiques in the book; in the case of Rembrandt Dr. Muther fails to display his usual delicacy of perception. The sketch is drawn purely from the outside. English art is treated rather inadequately. Indeed, the whole latter portion of the second volume is inferior to the rest of the work, and gives the effect of having been written in a much more hurried and perfunctory manner.

Yet with all the adverse criticisms and mental reservations that one may make, the fact still remains that this *History of Painting* is an unusual and remarkable contribution to the synthesis of the history of European painting. It may be that the more complete work which we may hope to have in translation before long will render convincing certain points which we cannot wholly understand, and in any case the interesting nature of Dr. Muther's standpoint is unquestionable, whether one agrees with it or not. In conclusion, it should be added that the two volumes are in every way suitably gotten out by the publishers, and that an abundance of full-page plates has been inserted. No serious student of art should fail to possess the work; on the other hand, he should not allow its doctrines to supplant those of other standard works without due weighing of the evidence presented on both sides.

Elizabeth Kendall.



SOME NEW NATURE BOOKS*



THE idea that supply can create demand may make certain "dismal science" expounders roll over in their graves, but it seems a fair question whether, after all, the "nature fakirs" are not chiefly responsible for the ever-increasing supply of nature books. Clearly there are many more of these books nowadays than there were before Mr. Seton began to tell us about the lions and bears he had known who had committed suicide rather than bear the ills they had; or Mr. Long watched that woodcock stand still for half an hour on one leg, waiting for the clay cast it had applied to the other broken one to get hard.

And it isn't surprising that of the mass of such matter now getting between covers an appreciable amount should be of a kind which will not stand scrutiny either as natural history, or as plain common or garden "literature."

Of the strictly bird books now under consideration, the most remarkable, so far as text is concerned, is Mrs. Gene Stratton-Porter's *What I Have Done with Birds*. If the reader expects from the form of the title to find a self-effacing account of what the author has done, he

**What I Have Done with Birds*. By Gene Stratton-Porter. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Tenants of the Trees. By Clarence Hawkes. Illustrated by Louis Rhead. Boston: L. C. Page and Company.

Nimrod's Wife. By Grace Gallatin Seton. Illustrated by Walter K. Stone. New York: Doubleday, Page and Company.

Outdoors: a Book of the Woods, Fields and Marshlands. By Ernest McGaffey. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Nature's Craftsmen: Popular Studies of Ants and Other Insects. By Henry Christopher McCook. New York: Harper and Brothers.

Bird Notes Afield: Essays on the Birds of the Pacific Coast, with Field Check List. By Charles Keeler. San Francisco and New York: Paul Elder and Company.

Grasshopper Land. By Margaret Warner Morley. Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company.

The Spirit of Nature Study. By Edward F. Bigelow. New York: A. S. Barnes and Company.

will be disappointed. "A deep love for, and a comprehension of, wild things runs through the thread [sic] of my disposition, peculiarly equipping me to do these things," modestly declares Mrs. Porter. And again: "No man has ever had the patience to remain with a bird until he has secured a real character study of it," which will be interesting news to Mr. Finley, Mr. Dugmore, Mr. Baynes, Mr. Loring, Mr. Job (of Connecticut, not of the Old Testament), and various other impatient and bungling bird-photographers. Similar self-appreciation or self-consciousness constantly reappears throughout the book. Of the illustrations, the colour photographs are mostly wretched affairs—for which the author, of course, is not to blame. The coloured plate of the male cardinal makes the bird altogether too dark a red, while the shadows have the effect of black blotches on the plumage. The "Brooding King Rail" and the "Pair of Young Bell Birds" (wood-thrushes), both coloured plates, are better, but are obviously and somewhat clumsily retouched. The cat-bird's nest and eggs, in colour, are about as bad as they could be, the nest coming out a light yellow. The half-tones are much better; some of them, indeed, are remarkably good pictures, such as those of the dusky falcon, the "chicken hawk" (a name applied at random, by farmers, to any large hawk), the kingfisher, the barn owl, the vulture, and the blue jay feeding its young. If one can be patient with the text, the book, which is very handsomely printed, is worth having.

The coloured illustrations in Mr. Hawkes's book, *Tenants of the Trees*, are also mainly pretty bad. Here we find bluebirds with the *entire under parts red*, whereas the bird has only its throat, breast and sides a reddish brown, and its belly almost pure white; while a *blue and green* 'coon is not likely to be found outside of the psychopathic ward of Bellevue, or some similar habitat. The text, too, contains some curious blunders. Speaking of young birds, Mr. Hawkes says: "In two or three *weeks* first feathers appear, and in as many *months* they