

misstatements of fact and faults in detail, rather than fixed upon the gallantry of the performance, the freshness of spirit, and the challenge to prejudices displayed in the work.

For a fact, Cecil Chesterton did not write his history for the use of professors and their classrooms. He was filled with a great glow of enthusiasm for our people and desired that his own countrymen, his own kind of Englishman—and there are, we are glad to say, many of them,—should see our institutions in the light under which his visit here and his studies had revealed them. Even in the crush of the war, even at the front, or in the hospitals at the rear, up to the last days of his life, he labored under great difficulties in producing this work—foreseeing, prophetically it would seem, the need of the American and English people to know each other more intimately, now in the crisis of our treaty affair, in face of the question of the Monroe Doctrine and the Irish claims for independence, with which we are confronted. He says in his preface:

If I am asked why I think it desirable at this moment to attempt, however inadequately, a history of our latest Ally, I answer that at this moment the whole future of our civilization may depend upon a thoroughly good understanding between those nations which are now joined in battle for its defense and that ignorance of each other's history is perhaps the greatest menace to such an understanding.

It is perfectly true that in Mr. Chesterton's work there are many misstatements and misinterpretations, in spite of an unusual clarity of vision and extraordinary capacity for demonstration. It would indeed have been well if there had been added to the volume certain annotations, without disturbing the flow of the narrative in any way. If Mr. Chesterton were living today he would certainly not object to such a treatment of his work;

in fact he seems to foresee such an eventuality when he writes:

I believe that with all my limitations I can tell my fellow countrymen things about the history of America which they do not know. It would be absurd effrontery to pretend that I can tell Americans what they do not know. For them, whatever interest this book may possess must depend upon the value of a foreigner's interpretation of the facts.

When all is said and done, Mr. Chesterton's "History of the United States" is a work of history with obvious defects, yet with still more obvious virtues. It is readable, inspired, youthful, interesting, and appreciative of our national achievements. It is just the sort of book they have been clamoring for in South America during our recent war crisis, and we hope that very soon there will appear a Spanish version, to answer this demand, a version fortified with the proper notes and explanations.

A History of the United States. By Cecil Chesterton. George H. Doran Company.

A LAST LINK WITH THE EIGHTEEN-NINETIES

By Herbert S. Gorman

THE difficulty of saying anything new about Shakespeare's plays has been obviated in some measure by Arthur Symonds because of the attitude he has adopted toward the ten plays considered in his latest book. It is essentially a personal attitude, a somewhat impressionistic exposition of how those plays reacted on his mind. The idea of discovering any new beauties, of baring any fruitful results of excessive antiquarian research or shedding light on certain perplexing problems in regard to the composition of the dramas, is almost wholly ignored. The poet and critic rather attempts to afford the reader the photographic plate of his mind

after the play has made its impression there.

It is true that certain time-worth topics of discussion—John Fletcher's share in "Henry VIII", how much of "Titus Adronicus" is Shakespeare, for instance—are dilated upon with that easy persuasiveness that is so much a part of Arthur Symons's style. But the reader feels that these subjects are of lesser importance than what Cleopatra's subtle nature means to the critic or how the divine springtime of love is rendered for all time in "Romeo and Juliet". The critical facilities of Arthur Symons are essentially nervous. The tentacles of his mind reach out, often blindly, never fruitlessly, and what is finest and clearest in impressionistic literature is seized upon. Often the excellence he finds is made a foundation wherefrom he may build his own airy castles of curious dreaming and sophisticated conclusion. Such a writer is often bound to find material in his reading that the author never intended to put there.

The critical attitude of Arthur Symons is almost always Gallic. Beneath the musical texture of his prose, which owes so much to Walter Pater, runs that intensive, speculative curiosity of the French man of letters. It is the attitude of 1890, a gesture in which sex and sense combine. Such an attitude is bound to find its outlet in a careful study of the women of Shakespeare. Although this study be more a matter of the senses than of cerebral conclusions, its authentic value cannot remain in doubt. So few writers approach Shakespeare with this attitude that those who do, find a heightened value attached to their probings.

"Studies in the Elizabethan Drama" contains articles on "Antony and Cleo-

patra", "Macbeth", "Twelfth Night", "Measure for Measure", "The Winter's Tale", "Titus Andronicus" and the Tragedy of Blood, The Question of "Henry VIII", "Romeo and Juliet", "Cymbeline", "Troilus and Cressida", and three studies of lesser Elizabethan dramatists—Philip Massinger, John Day, and Middleton and Rowley. The omission of "Hamlet" is not so strange—no woman is paramount in that tremendous tragedy. The agonist is a man; about him circles all the action. Ophelia must be considered an episode.

It is such figures as Cleopatra, Cressida, Lady Macbeth, that spring most fatefully to Arthur Symons's mind. They suffer with that modern malady of the soul that means so much to the French writer. The abnormality of their nature is such that they transcend the action through which they move. Arthur Symons always has been an extreme individualist in letters. His poetry is the most intensely personal being written today, and his critical faculties always start from the personal attitude. Naturally those creatures of Shakespeare's mind that rise above the other figures through their uncompromising individuality must attract Symons closest.

The Shakespearean essays in the book, for the most part, retell the story with a careful perception of the psychology that underlies the action. The conclusions drawn are mainly obvious. Rarely does the critic attempt any excessive postulations that might be at divergence with those greater Shakespearean critics who have gone before. It is the personal appeal of the plays that is best expressed. Such an attitude cannot fail to draw the reader. The impressionistic reasonings of Arthur Symons rarely go far astray; often they suddenly flash forth a new comprehension

of Shakespeare, a realization that this oldest of playwrights is also, in some aspects, the most modern of writers.

Those essays not treating Shakespeare display more research. The plays of Massinger, Day, Middleton and Rowley are carefully listed and an estimation of their worth presented. Undoubtedly written to order (the Massinger essay, for instance, originally appeared as an introduction to that playwright's selected plays in the Mermaid Series years ago), they are more informative than critical.

This volume is the fourth collection of Arthur Symons's work issued within a year, although one of the books, "The Symbolist Movement in Literature", was a revised reprint. Apparently all the fugitive pieces of the poet and critic are being gathered together in definite form. This would be dangerous in the case of many writers, a distinct drawback to any general conclusions that might be drawn from the body of their work. In the case of Symons it is different. He has shown a marvelous evenness in his prose composition, as his style of thirty years ago has hardly changed throughout that period. If there is any change his style has grown a bit more mellow; time has brought him wisdom but it has not changed his attitude toward life. To use one of his own phrases, he rejoices still in that "passion of meditation". His first loves have proved to be his last. Pater is still a god; the French writers of the 'eighties and 'nineties still bear their dominant message. The studies in this latest volume are scattered over a period of years from 1887 to 1907. It is interesting to observe how little time has changed the writer's technique or his method of observing the varicolored world about him. He remains as ever one of the last links

with the 1890's, with that curious, introspective, sometimes decadent but never uninteresting group of writers who found the time-spirit blowing through their feverish souls from France—the France of Mallarmé, Baudelaire, Verlaine.

Studies in the Elizabethan Drama. By Arthur Symons. E. P. Dutton and Co.

A PERVERSE FIGURE LATELY TO THE FORE

By Stanley M. Rinehart, Jr.

TOGETHER with an old army sergeant I was standing at the door of the conscientious objectors' mess hall at Camp Sherman. The first draft had just come in and a dozen Mennonites were doing half-hearted justice to their first army meal. Long haired, with young and flourishing half-moon beards, shapeless smock coats held together with hooks and eyes—they don't use buttons—, they were pathetically out of place in that military atmosphere. My friend, the O. A. S., looked long and hard. "By God!" he declared at last, "if it don't look like that picture, 'The Last Supper'!"

That was by way of being my introduction and farewell to the army objector until Major Walter Kellogg's book "The Conscientious Objector" was published. To him is due credit for bringing some much needed light to a subject that is still to most of us far from clear. It is probably not overstating the case to say that while the first draftees were beginning to take their examinations, the United States at large was unaware of the existence of the many religious sects within the country whose basic doctrine was and is non-resistance. Of course the Friends or Quakers, whom