

WITH MALICE TOWARD NONE

NEW YORK, *February, 1920.*

THEN there's the matter of these dedications. Some time ago I received a communication. I think it was sent by Miss Katharine Lord, or maybe it was Hamlin Garland. Anyhow, it was an invitation. The upshot of this invitation was that the annual exhibit of the "best books of the year" held at the National Arts Club, New York City, under the auspices of the Joint Committee of Literary Arts, was now going—or was just about to go. Further, it was conveyed that the opening evening of the exhibit would be devoted to a reception for the authors of the books exhibited. Also, that on this evening speeches would be made by a number of distinguished persons acquainted with this matter on the subject of the idiosyncrasies of authors and editors. Further than this, this invitation made clear beyond all manner of reasonable doubt that the pleasure of the evening would be generally felt to be sadly incomplete without the presence there among the speakers of one Murray Hill.

The reasons why I was (I am sorry to say) unable to rise to this occasion were two. For one thing, I have known long and intimately a considerable number of authors and editors. Also, I have had the honor of having been several times to the National Arts Club. And (such is my tact and delicacy) I could not feel that this was

any fit place for me to discuss the (as the term is) idiosyncrasies with which a decidedly checkered career has acquainted me. Then, as to one of my own idiosyncrasies: I am like George Moore in this which he says, that he is "the only Irishman living or dead who cannot make a speech"—except that I am not an Irishman.

All of this, however, is merely picking up the threads of my thought. What I have in my eye is an idiosyncrasy of authors which doubtless I could have discussed with some propriety. That is, if I were able to discuss before an audience anything at all. Though with this subject, as many of those present were authors (who had their toes along with them) I should have had to exercise more than a little caution, and considerable skill in maintaining a honeyed amiability. Maybe this theme wouldn't have done at all either.

You see, it's this way: many people, I believe, do not read the introductions, prefaces, forewords (and whatever else such things are called) to books. I always do. Perhaps this is a habit formed during a number of years spent as a professional reviewer. If you read the introduction, preface (or whatever it's called) to a book, you can generally pick up pretty much what the author thought he was about when he wrote it, the points he intended to make in the work, the circumstances in which he wrote it, and

so on. This is a great time and labor saving procedure. All you've got to do then is to read a bit in the volume here and there to taste the style, pick up a few errors of fact or grammar, glance at the "conclusion", where the author sums up, to see whether or not he got anywhere—and as far as you are further put out by having this book on your hands, it might just as well never have been written. But I am drifting. That's one reason I can't make a speech. Never can recollect what it was I set out to say.

Oh, yes! About these dedications. Fewer people than read prefaces, I fancy, read the dedications of books. I always read 'em. I read them when I have no intention whatever of reading the volumes which they—well, dedicate. They are fine, dedications. Better, far better, than old tombstones. But never judge a book by its dedication.

I one time knew a man, of a most decidedly humorous cast of mind, who was a great spendthrift, an A 1 wastrel. He ran through everything his father left him (a very fair little fortune), and then when he had run through—in advance of that gentleman's death—everything his wife was to inherit from his father-in-law, he had no means whatever. He had a daughter. Without, it was clearly evident, the least suspicion of the pleasant humor of this, he named her Hope. She was a small child. And—it's absurd, I know; but 'tis so; there was not a particle of conscious irony in it; this child's name was the one blind spot in her father's sense of the ridiculous—her parents frequently referred to her affectionately as "little Hope".

So, quite so, with dedications. Whenever, or perhaps we had better

say frequently when a man writes a particularly worthless book, he lays the deed (in his dedication of it) onto his wife, "without whose constant devotion", etc., etc., etc., "this work would never have come into being". Or he says that it is inscribed, "To—my gentlest friend—and severest critic—my aged Grandmother". Or maybe he accuses his little daughter, "whose tiny hands have led me". Or again he may say benignantly: "To—my faithful friend—Murray Hill—who made possible this volume", or "the illumination of whose personality has lighted my way to the truth".

Doubtless he means well, this author. And, in most cases, highly probable it is that his magnanimous sentiments are O. K. all round. For to the minds of what would probably be called "right thinking" persons, is not having a book dedicated to you the equivalent, almost, of having a career yourself? I know a very distinguished American novelist—well, I'll tell you who he is: Booth Tarkington—who has told me this: time and again he has been relentlessly pursued by some person unknown to him who (in the belief that did he once hear it he would surely use it as material for his next book) wished to tell him the story of his life. This life, according to the communications received by the novelist, was in every case one of the most remarkable ever lived by man. It was, in every case, most extraordinary in, among a variety of other singular things, this: the abounding in it of the most amazing coincidences. And so on, and so on, and so on. One of these romantic personages nailed the novelist somewhere coming out of a doorway one day, and contrived to compel him to sit down and listen to the life-story. He was an old, old

man, this chap, and firmly convinced that the tale of his many days (as simple, commonplace, dull, and monotonous an existence as ever was conceived) was unique. Now he did not want any pay for telling his story; he had no design on any royalty to come from the great book to be made out of it; no, not at all. All he asked—and that, he thought, was fair enough—was that the book be dedicated to him. And so it was with them all, all of those with the remarkable, obscure, romantic, humdrum lives. So much for that.

Dedications run the whole gamut of the emotions. A type of author very tonic to the spirit is that one whose soul embraces not merely an individual but which enfolds in its heroic sweep a nation, a people, or some mighty idea. What, for instance, could be more vast in the grandeur of its sweep than this—which I came upon the other day in a modest little volume? "To the Children of Destiny." The Great War, which has wrought so much evil and inspired so much literature, is responsible for a flood of noble, lofty dedications. The merest snooping through a bunch of recent war books turns up, among a multitude more, the following: "To the Mothers of America." "To—the Loyalty and Patriotism—of the—American People." "To the Hour—When the Troops Turn Home." "To all the Men at the Front."

I should not affirm, of course, that there is anything new under the sun. And it is very probable that ever since this psychic literature began (when—ever it began) authors resident beyond the stars have, naturally enough, dedicated their manuscripts submitted to earthly publishers, to folks back in the old home, so to say. But with the

war, which has so greatly stimulated literary activity on the other side of life, the dedications of these (to put it so) expatriated authors have perhaps become (in a manner of speaking) loftier in tone than ever before. As a sample of the present state of exalted feeling of authors of this sort I copy the following dedication from the recently published book of a writer "gone West": "To the heroic women of the world, the mothers, wives and sweethearts who bravely sent us forth to battle for a great cause:—we who have crossed the Great Divide salute you."

I wish, I do wish, I had at hand a book which I saw a number of years ago.... As examples of persons to whom books have been dedicated may be specified the Deity, the Virgin Mary, Royalty and Dignitaries of Church and State, "the Reader", and the author himself. Many of the pleasantest dedications have been to children. Besides armies and navies, countries, states, cities and their inhabitants, books have also been dedicated to institutions and societies, to animals, to things spiritual, and to things inanimate. An attractive example of a dedication to Deity is furnished by one John Leycaeter, who, in 1649, dedicated his "Civill Warres of England, Briefly Related from his Majesties First Setting Up His Standard, 1641, to this Present Personall Hopefull Treaty"—"To the Honour and Glory of the Infinite, Immense, and Incomprehensible Majesty of Jehovah, the Fountaine of all Excellencies, the Lord of Hosts, the Giver of all Victories, and the God of Peace." He continued in a poem, "By J. O. Ley, a small crumme of mortality".

But about that book I saw some time ago. You, of course, remember

that prayer in "Tom Sawyer" (or somewhere else in Mark Twain) where the great-hearted minister called upon the Lord to bless the President of the United States, the President's Cabinet, the Senate of the United States, the governors of each of the states, and their legislatures, the mayors of all the cities, and all the towns, of the United States, and the inhabitants—grandmothers and grandfathers, mothers and wives, husbands and fathers, sons and daughters, bachelors and little children—of every hamlet, town and city of the United States, also of all the countryside thereof. Well, this book of which I have been speaking,—this minister in the august range and compass of his prayer had nothing on its dedication. It was published, as I recollect, by the author; printed on very woody wood-pulp paper by a job press, and had a coarse screen, frontispiece portrait of the author, whose name has long since left me. What it was about I do not remember. That is a little matter. It lives in my mind, and should live in the memory of the world, by its dedication; which, I recall, in part was: "To the Sultan of Turkey—the Emperor of Japan—the Czar of Russia—the Emperor of Germany—the President of France—the King of England—the President of the United States—and to God."

But it was in an elder day that they really knew how to write sonorous dedications. If I should write a book (and the idea of having one to dedicate tempts me greatly) I'd pick out some important personage, such as Benjamin De Casseres, or Frank Crowninshield, or Charles Hanson Towne, or somebody like that. Then I would take as the model for my dedication that one, say, of Boswell's

to Sir Joshua Reynolds. I am afraid you have not read it lately. And so, for the joy the meeting of it again will give you, I will copy it out. It goes as follows:

MY DEAR SIR,—Every liberal motive that can actuate an Author in the dedication of his labours, concurs in directing me to you, as the person to whom the following Work should be inscribed.

If there be a pleasure in celebrating the distinguished merit of a contemporary, mixed with a certain degree of vanity not altogether inexcusable, in appearing fully sensible of it, where can I find one, in complimenting whom I can with more general approbation gratify those feelings? Your excellence not only in the Art over which you have long presided with unrivalled fame, but also in Philosophy and elegant Literature, is well known to the present, and will continue to be the admiration of future ages. Your equal and placid temper, your variety of conversation, your true politeness, by which you are so amiable in private society, and that enlarged hospitality which has long made your house a common centre of union for the great and accomplished, the learned, and the ingenious; all these qualities I can, in perfect confidence of not being accused of flattery, ascribe to you.

If a man may indulge an honest pride, in having it known to the world, that he has been thought worthy of particular attention by a person of the first eminence in the age in which he lived, whose company has been universally courted, I am justified in availing myself of the usual privilege of a Dedication, when I mention that there has been a long and uninterrupted friendship between us.

If gratitude should be acknowledged for favours received I have this opportunity, my dear Sir, most sincerely to thank you for the many happy hours which I owe to your kindness,—for the cordiality with which you have at all times been pleased to welcome me,—for the number of valuable acquaintances to whom you have introduced me,—for the *noctes canæque Deum*, which I have enjoyed under your roof.

If a work should be inscribed to one who is master of the subject of it, and whose approbation, therefore, must ensure it credit and success, the Life of Dr. Johnson is, with the greatest propriety, dedicated to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was the intimate and beloved friend of that great man; the friend, whom he declared to be "the most invulnerable man he knew, whom, if he should quarrel with him, he would find the most difficulty how to abuse". You, my dear Sir, studied him, and knew him well; you venerated and admired him. Yet,

luminous as he was upon the whole, you perceived all the shades which mingled in the grand composition; all the peculiarities and slight blemishes which marked the literary Colossus. Your very warm commendation of the specimen which I gave in my "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides", of my being able to preserve his conversation in an authentik and lively manner, which opinion the Publick has confirmed, was the best encouragement for me to persevere in my purpose of producing the whole of my stores....

I am, my dear Sir,
Your much obliged friend,
And faithful humble servant,
JAMES BOSWELL.

London,
April 20, 1791.

In a more modern style of composition the epistolary form of dedication is still employed. I wish I had not (one time when I was moving) lost that copy I had, English edition, of George Moore's book "The Lake". I have a feeling that the dedicatory letter there, in French, was an admirable example of its kind of thing. If you happen to have a copy of the book, why don't you look it up?

When poems are written as dedications an established convention is followed. You affect at the beginning (in this formula) to be very humble in spirit, deeply modest in your conception of your powers. You speak, if your book is verse, of your "fragile rhyme", or (with Patmore) you "drag a rumbling wain". Again perhaps you speak (in the words of Burns) of your "wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble", or you call Southwell to witness that,—

He that high growth on cedars did bestow,
Gave also lowly mushrumps leave to grow.

And so on. At any rate, you always do this. Then you say that his (or her) eyes for whom the book was written will change the dross to gold, the "blind words" to "authentic song", the "mushrump" to a flower, or some such thing. So, after all, you skilfully con-

trive to leave your book to the reader on a rather high, confident note. Any other way of writing a dedicatory poem to a book of verse (being out of the tradition altogether) is, I take it, bad, very bad literary etiquette.

Numerous dedications have considerable fame. There is that enigmatical one to "Mr. W. H.", prefixed by Thomas Thorpe, bookseller of London, to Shakespeare's Sonnets. And Dr. Johnson's scathing definition of a patron when Lord Chesterfield fell short of Johnson's expectations in the amount which he contributed to the publication of the famous dictionary, men will not willingly let die. Another celebrated dedication is that of "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies"—"To the Rare Few, who, early in life, have rid themselves of the Friendship of the Many." Laurence Sterne's solemn "putting up fairly to public sale" to an imaginary lord a dedication to "Tristram Shandy" is not without merit. John Burroughs was felicitous in his dedication of "Bird and Bough"—"To the kinglet that sang in my evergreens in October and made me think it was May." And a very amiable dedication prefixed to "The Bashful Earthquake", by Oliver Herford, illustrated by the author, is this: "To the Illustrator, in grateful acknowledgment of his amiable condescension in lending his exquisite and delicate art to the embellishment of these poor verses, from his sincerest admirer, The Author." Mr. Herford's latest book, "This Giddy Globe", is dedicated so: "To President Wilson. [*With all his faults he quotes me still.*]"

A clever dedication, I think, is that of Christopher Morley's "Shandygaff"—"To The Miehle Printing Press—More Sinned Against Than Sinning." A dedication intended to be clever,

and one frequently seen, is, in effect, "To the Hesitating Purchaser". A certain appropriateness is presented in a recent book on advertising, "Respectfully dedicated to the men who invest millions of dollars a year in national advertising". And some nimbleness of wit is attained in the inscription of the book "Why Worry?"—"To my long-suffering family and circle of friends, whose patience has been tried by my efforts to eliminate worry, this book is affectionately dedicated."

Miss Annie Carroll Moore, supervisor of work with children at the New York Public Library, tells me that the other day a small boy inquired, "Who

was the first man to write a book to another man?" I'm sure I don't know. Perhaps this is told somewhere. A number of books and articles concerning dedications, I have heard, are to be found in studious places. I have never read any of them. I remember, however, reviewing for a newspaper a number of years ago (I think it was in 1913) a book, then just published, called "Dedications: An Anthology of the Forms Used from the Earliest Days of Bookmaking to the Present Time". It was compiled by Mary Elizabeth Brown. The volume made handy to the general reader a fairly representative collection of dedications.

MURRAY HILL

THE GARDEN

BY ALINE KILMER

AND now it is all to be done over again
And what will come of it only God can know.
What has become of the furrows ploughed by pain
And the hopes set row on row?

Where are the lines of beautiful bending trees?
The gracious springs, the depths of delicate shade?
The sunny spaces loud with the humming of bees,
And the grassy paths in the garden my life had made?

Lightning and earthquake now have blasted and riven,
Even the trees that I trusted could not stand;
Now it lies here to the bitter winds of Heaven
A barren and a desolated land.