

was impossible to leave these brief, often daily talks without an overwhelming sense of the extraordinary insight of the man, and of his abounding human kindness. To one of James's sensitive nature with his brooding temperament life must have had many painful periods. He was melancholy, was the opinion formed of him by the Club servant who attended to him well and appreciatively during his tenancy in the Reform Club. A desire to combat this feeling was perhaps one reason why he was so willing to take part in sociable meetings. More than once he came to a small and anything but highbrow tea party which, from a purely intellectual point of view, could have been of little interest to him. In fact I sometimes wonder how James, who was certainly easily bored, was either willing or able to pass so much time in social gatherings.

When his breakfast or morning talk was finished, James disappeared upstairs, where his room had been prepared and where his typist awaited him, and here he would spend the morning and sometimes part of the afternoon. Occasionally, but not regularly, he appeared again in the Club — at rather a late hour — for dinner. He would take his coffee in the quiet gallery which overhangs the fine central hall and talk for a short time if there was anyone he knew, but usually he sat there for a brief space only with an evening paper.

Henry James and the Reform Club are a singular connection, for he was little in sympathy with the life, political, legal, or commercial, of the majority of the members of that respectable society. He liked it — in his later life at any rate — rather as a convenient residence than for its opportunities of association with other

men. A last impression of him is as it were a vignette — James standing on the entrance steps of the Club about to descend into Pall Mall. Some chance remark about travel, it may have been the return from a Continental holiday or a project about to be carried out, brought forth a humorous and pathetic statement that he should not travel again. He spoke of the weak state of his heart, and then he added with a laughing glance that the difficulty and worry of knowing the right tips to give to the hotel porters disturbed his heart too much, and he tapped his chest with his fingers. This last little picture is suggestive, for it seems to emphasize James's pleasant personality and his humorous view of situations which would make most of us grumble. Certainly in James's life his sense of the humorous aspects of the social scene around him must have saved him from many intolerable and sad moments which were otherwise inevitable for one of his sensitive and perceptive temperament.

PIERRE MACORLAN

By Malcolm Cowley

With a Drawing from Life by Ivan Opffer

IT is only since the recent translation of "On Board the Morning Star" that its author has been known to the American public. In France, however, Pierre MacOrlan's reputation has been growing constantly. He writes adventure stories which are brief, rapid, and cruel; which are fantastic to the extreme and curiously matter of fact. Evidently they are hard to describe or to category. They move so swiftly

as to shame the moving pictures, but there is nothing cinematographic about them; they belong definitely to literature. They are praised by even the most difficult of French critics and read even by the crowd. But literature is hardly a paying profession in France. . . . MacOrlan has also an avocation, which he has found more profitable. He introduces contemporary foreign authors to the French public.

It is commonly said that the French are familiar with no literature except their own. On the contrary, they are eager to read foreign books. Translations appear by the hundreds: from the Russian, from the German, and, since the war especially, from the English. One of the largest publishing houses in Paris — *La Renaissance du Livre* — likes to be known as the home of international literature, and MacOrlan is literary adviser to them, supervising their foreign department.

I asked him to talk about his own novels, but he preferred to discuss the problem of translation. "To render a book from one language into another has curious effects," he said, "and nobody can forecast them, least of all the publisher." His brown eyes lighted suddenly as they do when any subject catches his interest — in other words, about four fifths of the time.

"Translation rejuvenates an author. Take Kipling for example. In England he begins to date; he is hardly considered a member of the youngest generation. Simply by translation into French he becomes a new and terrific force; a French author who imitates him is considered unconventional and extremely modern. In the same way I understand that English authors who wish to be twenty years ahead of their time are imitating

the early works of Remy de Gourmont." "But your own books?" I interrupted.

"Translation declassifies an author; I mean that it gives him entirely different values. He gains or loses. A labored stylist is at a disadvantage; most of his virtues disappear in another language. Nothing survives intact except the matter and the movement. If the movement is rapid an author is easy to translate. Jack London is better known in France, even among intellectuals, than Henry James.

"Each nation has its particular psychology, but a punch on the jaw is international.

"As one might expect, the American books which find the widest sale in France are novels of action and adventure. Mark Twain, Bret Harte, James Oliver Curwood, Nick Carter, Stewart Edward White, Upton Sinclair: the list is curious. We have also published a book of short stories by Ambrose Bierce; I admire him and have often wondered why he wasn't more popular in America."

He paused a brief moment to catch his breath; only to listen to him I had lost my own.

"Translation is becoming less and less of a task because the style of recent authors is as international as the Orient Express or the cut of a dinner jacket. Consider Paul Morand. His "*Ouvert la Nuit*" was published only a couple of years ago. Today there is a Spaniard who writes like Paul Morand, a German who writes like Paul Morand, a Swiss and an Englishman who resemble him. Not only their style but their subject matter is international. In this respect they are the opposite of Anatole France, for example, who was as purely Gallic as a vineyard in Touraine. France typified the novelists



Drawn from life for THE BOOKMAN by Ivan Opffer

Pierre MacOrlan

of thirty years ago; Morand is the type of the present."

I interrupted him again. "But your own books. . . . Have you been influenced by any of the American novelists you mention?"

He considered. "By Jack London, perhaps; certainly not by the others. They are too recent. . . . My great passion in English literature has been the minor Elizabethan dramatists: Webster and Ford especially. I was fascinated by their gorgeous cruelty and by their fashion, both exotic and matter of fact, of creating the atmosphere of tragedy. Critics have found the same qualities in my own work.

"Another quality which I respect in English and American authors, even the second-raters, is their fear of sentiment, their delicacy about personal affairs. I mean, if the wife of a French novelist proves unfaithful, he writes a novel around his cuckoldry; he sells, if possible, 150,000 copies of his secret heart. On the contrary an Englishman consoles himself by drinking, or by taking a trip to Africa and maybe writing a book of travels. I admire his reticence, and under the circumstances I should copy it." He chuckled at the idea, thus proving himself more Gallic than his name.

"I could safely attribute this much to my reading of Anglo-Saxon authors. But nobody could measure exactly the literary influences which have been brought to bear on me. A novelist is a sort of filter." (He began to draw a rapid diagram.) "A book, a house, a horse, a gun are ladled into his head, and there they are dissolved. They emerge not in their own shape but as a sort of transparent intellectual fluid which, in the case of an original author, has the peculiar color of his own personality. That fluid is poured into the mold of a book, and books

have an existence entirely separate from the world of things. . . . I could certainly never tell you how many of my sources were American or English; how many were Russian or German.

"In my novel 'Malice', for example, I dealt with Germany since the war. Beyond the Rhine today there is a tragically interesting phenomenon: a nation in a state of moral decomposition, praying to the East for a regenerating force which will probably never come. Germany, like the rest of Europe, wavers on the edge of an abyss, but it is a few feet, a few years nearer to disaster. France and England are wavering too; they have perhaps twenty years of safety. The bulwark of the present order is America.

"Partly for this reason I expect more and more books to reach us from the United States. If the French publishing business were not traversing a period of peculiar difficulty, we should be printing twice as many. In spite of everything a great number of American books are being published: Thoreau, Hawthorne, Waldo Frank, Gertrude Atherton; to say nothing of those I mentioned already, or of authors more familiar to us, like Cooper, the grandfather of adventure novels in France, or Poe and Whitman, who are at the basis of a large part of modern French poetry.

"Speaking of poetry, I often think that American poets are more highly rated in France than at home. Take for example this anthology of contemporary foreign poets which we recently published. Its largest division, containing nineteen poems, is devoted to the Anglo-Saxon world. Of these poems three are Irish and four English, while twelve are American. I imagine that the English critics are shocked, and perhaps even some of your own."

He handed me the volume, "Les Cinq Continents". It was edited by Ivan Goll. The American translations (they were excellent) had been written by Léon Bazalgette, the French authority on Whitman. He selected three poems by Sandburg, two by Masters, two by Pound. Amy Lowell, Vachel Lindsay, Orrick Johns, James Oppenheim, and Sherwood Anderson had each a poem to represent them. Their united work was both more various and more homogeneous than I had expected; it was not unworthy of a nation. . . . Curiously enough, the four English poems were not purely English. One of them, certainly not the least important, was written by T. S. Eliot!

"We like American poets", said MacOrlan, hammering the ashes from his Anglo-Saxon pipe.

A VISIT WITH MASEFIELD

By Charles Hanson Towne

I HAD been at Oxford with some friends for several days, when suddenly I remembered that John Masefield lived at Boar's Hill, just a little way out in the country; and I wondered why I had not thought of this before. Robert Nichols used to speak to me of the little colony they had — Masefield, Bridges, Gilbert Murray, and a few others.

With a young friend who happened along, I took a bus, and then walked at least a mile and a half, inquiring all the way if we were on the right road to the poet's house. Yes, we were — keep straight on; second house to your right beyond that hill. It was hot and dusty. No rain had fallen for days and the panorama of the valley which

spread at our feet when we reached the crest of the hill seemed burning up. The grass was like straw. The view, in normal times, must be enchanting. Today it made my heart ache.

There was his house, at last! A simple enough dwelling, the grounds of which we entered through a little gate. It was not unlike many of our suburban dwellings, with no pretense, no anxiety to be greatly different from other houses roundabout.

Yes, the poet was at home; would we step in, the maid said in answer to our query. We simply sent word by her that two American pilgrims, whose names did not matter, would like to say Good day to a writer they had long admired.

The message came back that Mr. Masefield would be happy to see us shortly; but he was at work. I wondered if we had interrupted the composition of a sonnet, and I was not pleased to be the blunt instrument which would thus cut off a magical line. "But he always comes down for tea", the maid explained; and made us comfortable in the drawing room. We looked about. The model of a ship first caught my attention. The author of "Dauber" would be certain to make one with his own hands. Then paintings of his boy and girl also held us, as well as a portrait of himself. A few books, a littered desk, a hospitable fireplace and inviting chairs — these were enough to make the room cosy and livable. Suddenly, through a French window behind us, Mrs. Masefield came in "from feeding the hens", she laughed. Her husband would be in soon. He was putting some nails in a box in the barn. So it was not a poem we had interrupted!

I told her how, on my first visit to England twelve years ago, I had read