

THE SEVEN SEAS

A Book on Cardinal Mercier — André Maurois Again — Eating as an Art — A Peruvian Looks at Pussyfoot — "China Gone Mad" — Octave Aubry's Historical Romances — Pierre Mille's "Christine et Lui" — America and England through German Eyes — Schnitzler's New Book

FROM Belgium comes the news that a book on the late Cardinal Mercier is in preparation. A series of chapters is being contributed by various important persons. These will include a chapter on the Cardinal's private life by Professor Charles Mercier, and chapters on his philosophic works, his social work, his call to the priesthood, and his activities during the war, by various professors. His relations with foreign countries are dealt with by representatives of those countries. Mrs. Charles Kellogg writes for the United States and G. K. Chesterton for England.

It is intended that the book shall be "a mosaic — realizing unity in variety". It is to be profusely illustrated with autographed photographs of many celebrated people who wish to associate themselves with this tribute to the Cardinal's memory. The list of names already prepared by the committee responsible for the production of the work includes the King of the Belgians, Marshals Foch and Pétain, Mr. Hoover, Brand Whitlock, and M. Venizelos.

* * * *

Reviewers must find it difficult to keep pace with André Maurois's output. The theme of his latest volume, "Bernard Quesnay", is one which has already attracted a number of American novelists and playwrights. Which counts for most in a man's life, his

business or his love affairs? Is it possible for him to devote himself to both at the same time? In the case of Bernard Quesnay, son and grandson of a family of cloth manufacturers in Normandy, the question is a particularly difficult one. While one side of his nature is attracted by the problems involved in the management of his factory, which he considers less as a source of income than as a vital factor in the economic life of the community, another part of his brain yearns for the pleasures, intellectual and otherwise, typified by his charming Parisian mistress. In fairness to the author I shall not disclose the solution of the problem, which is developed with his usual clarity of expression.

It is interesting to recall that the issues involved in the management of the factory, for example the details of actual manufacture, the fluctuations in the sale of cloth since the war, are subjects with which M. Maurois is particularly familiar. Before he took up writing he owned and directed the operations of several large mills at Elbeuf. We may suspect, therefore, that certain passages of "Bernard Quesnay" are more or less autobiographical, or at least the result of first hand observation.

One or two of the minor characters are not altogether free from conventionality, but Quesnay himself is a notable creation. Simone too is exquisite — though we see too little of

her. The description of "Pont sur l'Eure" where the factory is situated, and the vignettes of Antwerp, London, and postwar Paris are executed with the delicacy of touch one has learned to expect from the author. At the same time, the discussion of the relations between capital and labor and the privileges and responsibilities of the head of an industrial enterprise is an interesting expression of a very definite point of view. As a story the book is absorbing and satisfying. Moreover, its abundance of carefully selected detail should make it, in years to come, a singularly vivid and expressive picture of certain phases of present day life and thought.

* * * *

In these days of Pirandellian paradox it is not surprising to find writers boldly coming forward to defend many of the frailties to which humanity is subject. Ignorance, untidiness, snobbishness, egoism, the love of malicious gossip, greediness — all find brilliantly able "devil's advocates" in Abel Bonnard, Gerard Bauer, Marcel Boulanger, Paul Souday, Abel Hermant, and Jean Louis Vaudoyer. How did the publisher happen to choose these particular authors? Did he suggest to each that he was notoriously qualified to defend such and such a *vice aimable*? At any rate, the public likely to be interested in these slim elegant little essays, each published separately, should prove a wide one, since we are all only too glad to discover excellent reasons for preserving pet weaknesses.

While each of the volumes possesses that effervescent sparkle of wit and apparently irrefutable logic so characteristic of all manifestations of *l'esprit français* at its best, Vaudoyer's "Eloge de la Gourmandise" deserves, I think, special mention. To M. Vaudoyer the

gourmet or even the gourmand is a reverent disciple of one of the major arts. His palate responds to flavors as the eye of the painter does to color, or the ear of the musician to harmony. There are various analogies to be discovered between eating and the other arts. "The canvases of Vermeer of Delft, the King of Painters, have the smoothness of foie gras, the subtlety of shad roe. Goya's blacks have at times bluish tints in them like the shell of a mussel; again, they have the velvety tones of a truffle, or the silver shimmer we find on caviar." Before a picture by Watteau the author thinks of a delicate, tender lamb chop lying on a bed of early green peas as the painter's eighteenth century shepherds and shepherdesses recline under the slim trees of a park in L'Ile de France.

For the musician who is also a student of gastronomy "hors d'œuvres rattle against the palate like the notes of a snare drum, a chicken can be as perfect as a violin solo, while roasts have the majesty of cellos and the salad stings with the shrill sweetness of the fife."

M. Vaudoyer pursues his analogies into the field of literature and even into that of feminine psychology. Here he is most entertaining but not always translatable. It is unfortunate that the author limits himself to French or at any rate to Continental dishes. We should have enjoyed the parallels he would doubtless have established between New England pies and the philosophy of the Concord School, the short stories of Bret Harte and the taste of California fruit — to say nothing of the correlation between the temperament of a débutante and her consumption of ice cream sodas. Remembering Jurgen's catholicism in the matter of drinks, one is tempted to wonder to what gastronomic parallel

M. Vaudoyer would have been inspired by James Branch Cabell.

* * * *

By birth a Peruvian, educated in France, resident for a number of years in various parts of the United States, Victor Llona, author of "Les Pirates du Whiskey", is admirably equipped to view the phenomenon of prohibition with a truly international detachment. It is rather a pity, therefore, to find him dealing with his subject from a melodramatic and sensational angle. One cannot help suspecting that the author was thinking all the time about writing a movie scenario rather than a serious novel. This impression is strengthened by the presence of all the customary accessories. The scene on the yacht, the pursuit of the hero's launch by the revenue officers, the orgy in the artist's studio—we are spared none of these familiar episodes. Llona finds opportunities to indulge in a number of interesting generalities about American civilization, or what passes as such, in general, and the psychology of American women in particular. Some of these remarks are complimentary, some distinctly not so. All indicate a first hand knowledge of the subject and considerable study of the various types of the species.

The reception of the book in Paris was a curious one. The papers printed in English and expressing the point of view of the Anglo-Saxon colony devoted much space to the novel and considered it an entertaining story without the least partizan bias. Several French critics, on the other hand, spoke of "Les Pirates" as a vitriolic indictment of the so called "*civilisation yankee*". The author was obliged to disclaim, in an open letter to Eugene Montfort, editor of the magazine "Les Marges", this interpretation of his novel.

"China Gone Mad" (Albert Michel, Paris) is the title of Albert Londres's witty book on China of the present day. It is evident that M. Londres is not a warm partizan of the Chinese, but at the same time it would be unfair to say that he is prejudiced against them. In this book he holds up to ridicule the chaos of present day Chinese institutions; indeed, it is difficult not to laugh at his graphic picture of a republic, complete with president, existing simultaneously with an empire, emperor and empress, eunuchs and favorites. Neither president nor emperor has any real authority, nor do any ministers appear to exercise control. Neither police nor parliament function regularly, and prominent soldiers and statesmen behave much as they please. The book contains an amusing story of the ex-bandit Tsang-Tso-Lin who gave M. Londres a signed photograph, proud of the fact that he had just learned to write his name.

There is of course another and more serious side to the chaos in China, but the pen of M. Londres makes sparkling play out of the laughable aspects of the situation. Seen through this witty Parisian's eyes, the affairs of modern China are conducted on approved comic opera lines.

* * * *

I have already referred in these notes to the series of books by Octave Aubry projected by the Librairie Fayard under the general title of "Romance in History". Of these volumes, two have already appeared: "Le Roi Perdu", a romance of Louis XVII; and "Un Grand Amour Caché de Napoléon—Marie Walewska". I am able to state that the subject of M. Aubry's next historical romance in this series is Casanova. In a recent interview M. Aubry draws an interesting

comparison between the methods of Alexandre Dumas and his own. "Dumas", he says, "made use of memoirs, and chronicles of the epoch in which he proposed to lay his scene of action, then gave full rein to his imagination, indifferent to historical accuracy. What I am setting out to do, on the contrary, is to reconstruct as exactly as possible the atmosphere and the personalities of my characters, relying on authenticated documents." M. Aubry adds that the author who seems to him to have come nearest to this ideal is René Benjamin with his "Vie Prodigieuse de Balzac".

* * * *

Pierre Mille's "Christine et Lui" is an indirect attack on the artificiality of civilization. As a novel, its construction is open to criticism, but there is no denying the force of M. Mille's powerful analysis of human emotions. The story is told in the first person, a man writing his recollections of a love affair with a woman his senior by ten years. The story begins with the woman newly married and the man as a boy ten years old. There is a gap of several years, and we have a penetrating study of the virile adolescent love of a young man. The woman is chafing under the marriage tie and is temperamentally cold. His passion cannot be curbed and the idyl is spoiled. Again the story jumps, this time to Madagascar twenty years later. On the point of returning to France, the man discovers in the little port a broken down wreck of a human being — the son of Christine and her husband. The story is then enveloped in tragedy.

No synopsis can do justice to the remarkable quality of this poignant story. It ought to be translated into English, and doubtless will be.

The "Frankfurter Zeitung" is well to the fore in criticism of America and of England, in the persons of Dr. Arthur Feiler, with his "America — Europe", and Rudolf Kircher with his book on "Englishmen". Both these representatives of the famous German newspaper are illuminating critics. Although Dr. Feiler was in America for only three months he saw in that relatively short time a very great deal, in spite of the fact that he made no survey of the south. His impressions of Chicago, the vast automobile industry, American education and farming, and above all America's racial problems, are recorded intelligently and with humor, if not always sympathetically. His emphasis on the fundamental differences which exist, and are bound to exist, between America and Europe reveals the mind of an acute observer and a trained thinker. Dr. Feiler's views on the future of America are specially interesting.

Herr Kircher, as the resident London correspondent of his newspaper, is well qualified to judge English character. In a series of urbane essays he reviews the personalities of many British statesmen — Stanley Baldwin, Sir Austen Chamberlain, Lord Oxford, Winston Churchill. Other British celebrities with whom he deals entertainingly are Dean Inge, Lady Astor, Jack Hobbs, and G. K. Chesterton.

* * * *

Arthur Schnitzler's new book, "Traumnovelle", will be published this summer by Fischer of Berlin. I understand it is a shortish book, and, like "Fräulein Else", has a strong Freudian flavoring. A young Viennese doctor is the central figure of the story, which is concerned with "dreams and realities".

MICHAEL JOSEPH

THE GOSSIP SHOP

FOR the first summer in years that I can remember New York City is quiet in a literary manner of speaking. All morning long I sit and pound my faithful Jennie — the Remington — and no one arrives to bring manuscripts or to discuss books. Actually, it is lonely. The morning mail is spotted with foreign stamps and northern postmarks. Literature is being made in Italy, France, Germany, and Maine — American literature, I mean. To be sure, the charming Ellen Glasgow arrives from Richmond, meets famous critics, is as charming as ever according to hearsay, but does not let me know she is in town; to be sure, Ramon Guthrie arrives from Tucson, Arizona, with stories of John Galsworthy and Sinclair Lewis in that western metropolis of genius. In the main, however, it is only the business man who remains to enjoy the cool beauty of this summer day. Occasionally a literary lady, like the beauteous Genevieve Taggard, all clad in delicate green with a white hat, comes in to detach a rose from my desk and discuss poetry over the inkwells. Occasionally a literary agent like Ann Watkins breezes through the door, bearing the fine tan of summer home days and a bushel of ideas. The publishers are the busy ones, framing their autumn lists, polishing here, paring there, getting ready to drive home the books already planned and ready for distribution. This morning it is announced that Owen Davis has increased the list of persons on the play jury panel by four hundred. I can't understand why some of us aren't included, since our well known puritanical tendencies would recommend

us. It is bitter to be forgotten; however, we might have to see a questionable play — more than once, I mean — and that would never do. Heywood Broun, busily penning his life of Anthony Comstock, becomes lithier and more graceful with every passing month, and I hear that Mordkin, the Russian dancer, has successfully started a class for American business men in æsthetic dancing. This Broadway influence — this Russian invasion! This influence of H. L. Mencken on the masses! Did you think, oh sage of Baltimore, that you would drive Babbits to titillation of the toes?

Barney Gallant's place has closed for the summer, alas and alack! Heywood Broun discovered it to me shortly before it closed. When last seen there, Heywood was engaged in a violent discussion of Yale football with Di Gates, and the engaging leader of the orchestra was discussing English literature with Aldous Huxley. What I am still trying to find out is, who the young lady was who so violently danced the Charleston. To be sure, Patricia Salmon was there; and a clever young lady she is. Summer brings many discoveries. For one thing, I had never before been to the Château Laurier, a most interesting place on City Island overlooking the water where yachts are anchored (my companion insisted that they were rum runners), where a good orchestra plays softly, and all is as it should be. As yet, I have not visited Coney Island, nor taken a swim; but all that in time — and even golf this year. It seems that one cannot write these days without playing golf, so since my