

# THE BOOKMAN

JOHN FARRAR, *Editor*

## THE POINT OF VIEW

### FALSE FACES

"**I***s that Will Durant?*" If layout men could follow their advertisements into the homes of the land and hear how frequently this and comparable questions are asked, they would spare us unnecessary disenchantment and not jeopardize the sales of good books by printing the authors' pictures. There is nothing greatly wrong with Mr. Durant's appearance; as a matter of fact, he has a daring and insolent pair of eyes that immediately attract attention. But consider his youthful look and his inadequate pedagogical goatee. For the very simple reason that multiplied thousands of readers have already with the mind's eye envisaged a more impressive Durant, his actual likeness, seen with the physical eye, cannot be other than disappointing. Those who have read "The Story of Philosophy" either personally or by proxy would prefer to keep inviolate the picture which they themselves have derived.

What has been said of Durant applies equally to a host of other literati. Mencken of all men should never

have been photographed. It is doubtful that Christopher Morley's pictures have appreciably aided the sale of his books. Stephen Vincent Benét looks too credulous to be considered shrewd. Winston Churchill, to many, resembles a badly spoiled boy. Isa Glenn in the garb of a Filipino doesn't seem quite successful. Warwick Deeping's pipe leaves a greater impression than his amiable face. Joseph Hergesheimer —

Yet others readily occur who stand photography with great ease and even thrive under it. Sherwood Anderson's rustic muffler must have sold more books and won more devotion than his writing. Anne Parrish has no doubt prompted more than one dramatic monologue. Zona Gale probably helped to put over the Literary Guild of America; while Edna St. Vincent Millay is rather to be chosen than any daughter of Vassar. Irvin S. Cobb's picture is a trade mark.

So it goes, and so it points to one lesson: Publishers must in this day be most discriminating. Before the photograph of any woman author is placed in an advertisement it should

be presented to a board composed of Howard Chandler Christy, James Montgomery Flagg, and Rube Goldberg. If these men adjudge it worth printing either because of its impressiveness or its comicality, let it be run. Prints of men intended for publicity use should go to Neysa McMein, Rose O'Neill, and Milt Gross. If these judges reject them, the publishers should forego them. This simple plan will solve much of the present difficulty, and, more important still, it offers an excuse for two more organizations in America.

#### IF A MAN BITES A DOG

WHEN Georg Brandes visited New York early in 1914 he found us a strange and intolerable people, for, he said, one is interviewed and one must have an opinion ready on every conceivable subject. If he had returned this year just before his death he would have found us even more avid for his pronouncements — not because he was Brandes but because we have developed to a hypertrophic degree this faculty of wanting men who have gained prominence in any one field to express their views, preferably upon a subject about which they know nothing. This penchant of ours has prompted Henry Ford to go as deplorably far afield as he has.

It is not unreasonable to suppose the reporters largely guilty for this ridiculous situation in America. Commissioned by irascible city editors to get something, whatever the cost, they fall upon "Daddy" Browning or Senator Heflin or Lady Cathcart with any question which happens to come into their minds. Nay, it is not so haphazard. Reporters know that what Ford thinks of history or

of Italy's future will make good news, whereas what he thinks of his rear axle is trade stuff and of limited interest. As a matter of fact, news in America has come to mean the statement of an authority in one field on a subject in quite another field. John Roach Straton gets no great attention when he preaches on Aaron's rod; he gets, or did get, a great deal when speaking on the paleontological evidences of evolution. The late Bryan made poor copy on the tariff and free silver after the first wind of his fame had lain, but he rated a whole file of newspapers and some immortality when he delivered himself on natural selection. Even Edison is forced to celebrate his birthday by talking of religion.

Of course everyone knows that the reporters are only indirectly to blame. We ourselves are chiefly at fault, for this is only another way we have of exacting tribute from greatness. We take a celebrity's opinions as habitually as we take cereal or coffee or fruit in the mornings. That the celebrities often make themselves ridiculous is not to be marveled at, nor are they in any sense to blame. We must have their opinions. They are our intellectual zoo. By their fame they have surrendered their normal connections with society, and we require that they speak their minds unabatedly. Brandes was right. It does not do for one to be famous in America until one has acquired at least certain rough and ready ideas on this, that, and the other.

#### BAITING THE WRITER

SAD, sad the day when rejection slips are no longer with us. Already Loren Palmer of "The Delineator" has expressed his determination