

great satirist whose influence is so pervasive in most of France's later books. To be sure we know very little, indeed, about Rabelais: even the date and place of his birth have been the subject of much discussion. There are many gaps in the records; what we really know is set forth in two score pages by the French scholar, M. Plattard, in his *Etat présent des études rabelaisiennes* (Soc. d'édition Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1927). So the greater part of this book is devoted to a summary of the Gargantua and the Pantagruel, an expurgated summary, with much comment on the trail of the master through French literature. The background receives less attention than in the recent *Life of Villon* by D. B. Wyndham Lewis.

But Anatole France was too truly a hedonist to affront the labors of scholarship; he delved in old books for thrilling impressions, and to such purpose that he learned how to write the French of Rabelais's time and to expand a story of his into the comedy, *The Man who Married a Dumb Wife*. Such a talent guarantees the spirit of this popular book on Rabelais, which one reads with an interest in no wise diminished by the fact that it breaks no new ground. The translation by Ernest Boyd is well done, and the illustrations by Edy Legrand have yielded, under the hands of P. and A. Baudier, wood-cut work as vivid as that of Doré or Robida.

LEWIS PIAGET SHANKS

BRYAN by M. R. Werner (HARCOURT, BRACE, \$3.50)

WRITTEN primarily for a popular weekly magazine, Mr. Werner's biography of the Commoner is in the main a swiftly flowing narrative embellished with a considerable number of passages cut from the subject's own story, as completed by his wife. He does not seek to add or detract much from Bryan's own explanations of himself or the newspaper accounts of his untiring activities. Some few discoveries are made that have

escaped the eyes of others who have essayed estimates of the Boy Orator of the Platte, who was so long a disturbing element in the affairs of the Democratic Party. After the first defeat in 1896, Henry George cried out, "The people have lost again", but Mr. Werner holds it doubtful if the "people" would have won anything had Bryan been victor. For Bryan, much as he felt for the common man, "also believed in the capitalist system, and it was only by means of a more or less complete change in that system that the so-called people would have won anything worth winning. He would have advocated an income tax, arbitration of industrial disputes, and other palliatives, but he would not have attacked the disease, for he dared not believe it was a disease". The author, had he taken time for a little delving, might have added proof to assertion by revealing the mine-owning combination that shifted its support to Bryan after it had failed to force free silver into the Republican platform upon which William McKinley was nominated and elected. Pathetic evidence is given, however, that thousands thought the candidate brought the evangel which was to separate them from their woes. This character of a full-voiced Messiah he never lost, and not a few of his contentions won. That he took them from others does not matter. The man was a good judge of psychological moments.

For one who could and did sometimes spout sixty thousand words a day "the Great Commoner was one of the most secretive politicians who have ever played the game in America", according to Mr. Werner. This assertion is not accompanied by proof. His outward exertions were always plain. If the writer had any evidence of sleek second-story work it would have been well to produce it, and it would have added interest to the volume. Certainly he was not enough of a politician in 1912, when Theodore Roosevelt split the Republicans, to gain the nomination upon which Woodrow Wilson rode to victory, even after he had made it known

by a letter to Adrian H. Joline that he sought to have something done, "at once dignified and effective, to knock Mr. Bryan once for all into a cocked hat". To Col. E. M. House Mr. Werner accords credit for binding up the wound thus made. The *Intimate Letters* furnish the material. In Mr. Werner's excellent story of the Baltimore convention he gives no evidence of any ability on the part of Bryan to make himself effective, either secretly or openly. He was equally lacking in potential force at Madison Square Garden in 1924, even though the futile Democrats on that brainless occasion tacked his brother Charles onto the tail of the ticket headed by John W. Davis. Mr. Werner is inclined to belittle Bryan as Secretary of State in the first Wilson Cabinet and to swallow the vapid views of Washington correspondents who are usually too lazy to get anything right and prefer to recite rumors instead of waiting for results. The men he urged for appointment in many cases were of a better scale than those selected by Wilson himself, and we have lived to see his much maligned conditional peace treaties become effective as the germs for those successfully pushed through by Secretary Kellogg. If he was lampooned as ridiculous for serving grape juice at a state dinner, he lived to see the industry by which it is produced become hugely prosperous through prohibition, the next cause he was to shoulder.

"Deep down in his heart," Mr. Werner avers, "Bryan had an utter contempt for education, because it was undemocratic, and because he was, in spite of some years of formal instruction, uneducated". He "resented fiercely the activities of scientists", and this resentment led to his share in the Dayton episode and his death. The Commoner liked money and accumulated a comfortable supply. He never slept in hedgerows or uplifted without scrip or purse. When Keith, Frederick the Great's marshal, died, his brother observed: "He has left me a noble heritage. He was master of a province and his estate is seven

guineas". Bryan's was \$1,111,948.90—not a little of it gained from assisting the Florida boom. Were complaint to be lodged against Mr. Werner's work, it is that he has taken too much from others and not given his readers enough of his clever self.

DON C. SEITZ

SWINBURNE by Samuel C. Chew (LITTLE, BROWN. \$3.50)

WE MUST congratulate Professor Chew on making his *Swinburne* an honest, conscientious, scholarly work. It is not a cream puff biography or a muck-raking sensation, though it would not be too difficult to do a pseudo-Freudian exposé on Swinburne. Professor Chew very wisely leaves that to the scandal-mongers. Using the life of Swinburne as a background, the book is primarily a series of interwoven essays in literary criticism. Good use has been made of the Swinburne researches that have been especially productive in the last six years with De Reul's *L'Oeuvre de Swinburne* and Lafourcade's recent *La Jeunesse de Swinburne*. Professor Chew's book is up to the minute, treating the flaming-haired young Algernon and the more sombre bard of Putney in the light of modern findings, though the author's original contribution is singularly meagre. Even his treating Swinburne's dramas and prose works at length is not such an innovation as some reviewers would think, for Professor De Reul devoted about a quarter of his definitive books to such a task; at the same time, our author has brought a keen critical mind and a sympathetic insight to bear upon old problems.

The new view of "the greatest poet of our realms" is very readable and, while it may not convert the illiterati, it will not, at least, give an incorrect impression of the author of *Faustine* and *Dolores* and *Félice*. Professor Chew or the publishers have, however, made a mistake in cluttering the book with footnotes. At least half the notes could very well