

For the essential forces of Protestantism are centrifugal, not centripetal. Signs of honest divergence are signs of health.

WALTER S. HINCHMAN.

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Pirandello's Plays

A new volume of plays by Luigi Pirandello, translated by Arthur Livingston, brings still more proof of this Sicilian author's unchanging power for dramatizing a purely metaphysical situation.

EACH IN HIS OWN WAY (Dutton, \$3.50), which gives the volume its title, is really a complement to *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Externally, one is the drama of the writing of a play; the other, the drama of the production of a play. This new work is really a play within a play with a real audience looking at an audience which is in turn looking at *Each in His Own Way*. A woman in the audience, recognizing herself portrayed on the stage, rushes into the play,—which of course can no longer exist! Another Pirandello touch lies in the contradictions of individual conduct. Two characters quarrel because of different opinions of a woman. They meet only to discover that each has reached the very viewpoint he opposed before. And the woman, changing from one estimate to the other, discovers that she has not been motivated as either believed nor as she believed herself to be.

The Pleasure of Honesty is technically, if one may use such a term in connection with the great tradition demolisher, Pirandello's nearest approach to perfection. At least its action sweeps on with fewer complexities to a definite conclusion. Honesty is real and the reality of honesty is established in its revelation of the dishonesty of "respectability," which regards honesty as an illusion.

In *Naked* Pirandello has delineated one of the most poignant figures in his huge gallery of tormented human beings. A young girl, longing to be "somebody," struggles from the depths of society where life has placed her, to create for herself a definite individuality. But she is swept from each mooring, on to the sea of nothingness. Stripped of the fictions in which she has clothed herself she dies naked—

nobody. Throughout this drama, with its tragedy of elusive reality, we hear the cry of terror, blended with ironic laughter, that echoes through every Pirandello play. But above all we hear a deep note of pathos, a clear call for tolerance. No careful reader could lay aside this volume without realizing that here is constructive rather than destructive pessimism. Pirandello stirs our sympathies as well as our thoughts.

ALICE ROHE.

New York City.

Are You a Turnip?

An American recently interrogated a prominent English educator as follows: "About how much do you think the average man knows when he graduates from one of your universities?" The reply was unexpected: "Average man? We pay no attention to the average man; we are interested only in the man above the average." This conversation comes not unnaturally to mind when we notice the title of a book written expressly for the "inarticulate majority," and by an Englishman at that. Certainly there remains at least one of that aristocratic race who so rejoices in his own confessed mediocrity that he ventures to discourse informally on commonplace topics for the benefit of other like-minded if less confidential folk. (SOME CONFESSIONS OF AN AVERAGE MAN, by Richard King. Small, Maynard, \$2.00.)

Unfortunately,—if he be courting literary praise,—Mr. King has chosen to express himself through the medium of the essay; and who can seriously pass judgment on the essay without perhaps a glance back at those who have made it famous—Charles Lamb, Hazlitt, R. L. S., Emerson? Christopher Morley and L. Pearsall Smith, among others, have today given it a popular turn, and so we may perchance be excused if we steal a furtive look at the *Shandygaff* and *Trivia* on our bookshelves, as we take up the later volume. If we should stoop to a comparison, Mr. King would certainly suffer. But we refrain, remembering that such a method is oftentimes beside the point.

A mildly cynical and misanthropic note runs through Mr. King's philosophy. He

feels such contempt for the "human turnip" that he is apt to see its signal qualities in the other vegetables that grow in the selfsame garden. However, a few rays of "pagan sunshine" if focussed directly on this half-buried "root" will, Mr. King feels, cause it, Burbank-like, to emerge from the mire and burst into bloom, along with its more distinguished neighbors. This is Mr. King's panacea: dig away the imprisoning soil of years and circumstance and let in the light. These reflections on life, coming from one obviously awake to beauty and thrilled at the great adventure of living, contain a special "prescription" for every variety of turnip in this human garden, and for good measure one or two are included for him who sees himself as a peach-tree in full flower.

DALE WARREN.

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LummoX

One has the memory of large white eggish toes and a dumb desire for utterance after reading Fannie Hurst's LUMMOX (Harpers, \$2.00), which, of course, is just as it was intended. As out of earth grow flowers, so from Bertha, the lummoX, grew the musician. One is impressed with the aching absence of all that Bertha desires,—a soul of delicate beauty and sensitiveness hidden away in a body of white compelling flesh. The earthiness of the lummoX is overpowering—too emphatic—but that is what a lummoX signifies.

It isn't a good book, nor is it bad. Books of nowadays seem to be neither. As one digs in the garden and studies the earth of his farmland so one reads *LummoX*. It is an understanding book, a slice of many a woman's life, and the press of recent months has contributed numberless "women with the hoe" to literature's army of toilers. *Druida* and *My Antonia*, with the struggling horde of new immigrants introduced by Anzia Yezierska, are vivisections of the peasant woman's life, the flesh still quivering.

The symbolism of the magnolia in *LummoX* is unusually apt. Heavy fragrance, thick petals of white velvet smoothness,—the flower most emblematic of desire. That is Bertha. And yet one sees the black smutty limbs; one hears the

click of the metallic leaves; and one knows that the bruised blossom is brown and sends forth no fragrance. Herein, as somewhere in all metaphors, the similarity fails. For Bertha's soul expands as she is crushed; as life grinds her down the inner woman appears and triumphs. Still, no matter what the state of the blossom, the magnolia tree is magnificent in its height, its protecting shade, its many places for children to make play houses,—and its ever growing upward. So with Bertha.

NANCY TELFAIR.

Columbus, Ga.

Explaining Chehov

No one familiar with the peculiar charm of Chehov's literary work can fail to appreciate this excellent study, its analyses and comparisons. (ANTON CHEHOV, by William Gerhardi, Duffield, \$2.00.) Like a skilful anatomist demonstrating the marvelousness of the human skeleton, Mr. Gerhardi proceeds to lay bare to us the substructure of this Russian author's mind. But he begins delicately, telling us that "one of the chief delights of reading Chehov is the discovery that our vaguely apprehended, half-suspected thoughts concerning the fluidness, complexity, and elusiveness of life have been confirmed articulately and in print." He points out that the sincerity of Russian books strikes forcibly on English readers, who are accustomed to having life's apparent trivialities passed over. The older novelists, he says, "reported life not as it was really lived, but as they thought it should be lived, or as they thought that others thought life was, or should be, lived."

Mr. Gerhardi's long residence in Russia places him in an advantageous position as a critic; his knowledge of its language and literature enables him to wash away the dross and show the gold beneath. He quotes liberally from Chehov's works, his letters and note-books. He indicates that Chehov's short stories are apparently fragments, roughly hewn from the rock of life,—unpolished often, for he had not time to use the sandstone buffer or the chisel. Refuting the statement that Chehov is pessimist or optimist, he yet admits that he is a skeptic and something of a philosopher, metaphysically inclined.