

men from France, who consorted but ill with their French-Canadian second cousins.

Close to the counter there stood a fierce-looking Sicilian brigand, who, just then, was explaining to the padre about the altercation he had had with a Britisher, and how the devil was urging him to kill the Britisher; and in his endeavor to ward off the wiles of the Evil One he crossed himself continually. And lo! while he was making the sign for the tenth time, the Britisher had knocked him down.

The brigand even now was indignant; but whether his indignation was inspired by the crass British ignorance which failed to grasp the lofty motive for his passivity, or whether he resented the scurvy trick that Heaven had played him, I do not know. Anyway, he had a black eye, and he spoke excitedly, flinging all his fingers in the air.

Apart from these, there were Americans by the score, men from North and South: some who wanted you to know that they were Yankees, others who blazed if you thought they were.

And in addition to these types there were Britishers from every nook and corner of the four kingdoms.

Lastly came the Canadians proper, men from East and West, genuine sons of Our Lady of the Snows. Of these there were trappers from the Hudson River territory, and men of the Northwest Police. There were lumberjacks from Labrador way, and daredevils from the western camps. There were diggers from Alaska and the Yukon; and backwoodsmen from New Brunswick. There were ice peddlers from the city and cow-punchers from the ranch. There were business men, C.P.R. chefs, medical students, university professors, philanthropists, actors, lawyers, ministers of religion, and I know not who else — men of all creeds and

classes and nationalities — and together they stood shoulder to shoulder in the ranks of the Canadian Army.

And it was these men, each either sick or wounded, who frequented the K. of C. hut and made it what it was — a work of absorbing human interest: a place of laughter and tears.

The Tablet

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE AND HIS SPOOKS

BY E. T. RAYMOND

It is related of Congreve that in his later years he affected a disdain for his own works, and expressed annoyance when they were praised. Voltaire, visiting England, began in his innocence to congratulate the old dandy on being the only English comedy writer who could touch the skirts of Molière. Congreve replied that *The Way of the World* and *Love for Love* were only the diversions of an idle youth, and begged his visitor to think of him only as a private gentleman. The retort was prompt. 'I could have met a gentleman,' said Voltaire, 'without leaving France.'

This precise form of foppery is no longer met with, but many clever men are still afflicted with the weakness of which it was one manifestation. They are contemptuous of their strong sides, and ludicrously proud of qualities which, at the best, they share with a crowd. Born songsters pride themselves on their economics; good romancers talk bad politics; popular preachers slop about in the morasses of Higher Criticism; men with illimitable fairy tales in them argue on Socialism or the price of coal; budding Romneys deviate into all the various lunacies which end in 'ism' — and (one hopes) in bankruptcy.

But perhaps the most remarkable

case is that of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. A genuine craftsman, having found his precise medium, having achieved a success as complete as it was deserved, finds no happiness therein, thinks contemptuously of the happiness his art has brought to others, and turns with a sense of vocation to — it is difficult politely to specify what. He is not, of course, to be blamed for refusing to repeat himself to his life's end, like Nat Gould and others. He is said to have become so weary of Sherlock Holmes that he murdered the great detective with glee and resurrected him with extreme repugnance. All that is understandable; some tinge of the same feeling may have affected the most admiring reader. *Toujours perdrix* must be as monotonous for the cook as for the diner. But it is curious that an artist so considerable in the one special line never managed to strike out another fitting his peculiar gift.

Sir Arthur's incursions into historical romance cannot be called very successful. His *Micah Clark* is really a very bad kind of prig, D'Artagnan with a snuffle; *The White Company* is far from good company; *Brigadier Gerard* is too patently an Englishman who shrugs his shoulders and says 'Parly-voo!' Nor can it be honestly said that Sir Arthur shines as historian or controversialist; for neither part has he the temper nor the judgment. He is, indeed, a rather singular example of the very limited man impatient of his limits, and always wanting, like his own Dr. Watson, to be trying another person's job. Dr. Watson was not a shining success, but his patients did not seem to complain, as Sir Arthur's readers must sometimes do.

What can now be the feelings of those readers over the latest vagaries of their old favorite? One can imagine the devout Doylist wringing his hands over every fresh appearance of

Sir Arthur in the character of an exponent of spiritualism. For Sir Arthur the spiritualist makes cruel war on the great legend of the perfect detective. The peculiar charm of *Sherlock Holmes* is common sense penetrated with glamour; it is the romance of the ultra-prosaic. If Watson were a shade less commonplace, if the criminals were only a trifle more out-of-the-way, if the Anglo-Indian in *The Sign of Four* lived in a house less hideously real than the yellow-bricked villa at Brixton, the spell would cease to act. As things are, we are constantly hovering on the verge of skepticism and anti-climax when the requisite touch of natural stupidity or commonness assures us that it is all real, that we are veritably there in the frowsy suburban garden or the dusty attic, watching with Watson's own bewilderment the seeming irrelevances of the great consulting detective, or sharing his prejudice against the perky cocksureness of the regular man from Scotland Yard. Sherlock Holmes would be incredible if he ever deviated by a hair's-breadth from his line of inference from observation, if coincidence ever came to his help, if (in short) he were not always merely the personification of common sense, while Watson, his foil, is the personification of common stupidity.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in his new character, is the exact opposite of his creation. Instead of common sense penetrated with glamour, we have here the wildest mysticism tamed down and vulgarized by a dreadful ordinariness. In the detective stories we do feel with a shudder that No. 10 Endymion Terrace, with its smug suburban front and its bow-window with an india rubber plant in a ten-and-sixpenny vase, is authentically one with Tophet; in the spiritualistic expositions we are made to feel that Paradise is very like, say, the Hampstead Garden Suburb, full

of gramophones and Cockney jokers, with a sprinkling of superior persons.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle describes it all much as if he had just returned from a week-end. 'Happy circles,' he says, 'live in pleasant homesteads, with every nicety of beauty and of music. Beautiful gardens, lovely flowers, green woods, domestic pets — all these things are fully described in the messages of pioneer travelers who have at last got news back to those who linger in the old dingy home.' There are no tiresome laws against divorce at will such as rouse Sir Arthur's indignation here below. The sullen husband and the flighty wife are no longer the plague of their innocent partners, but find suitable 'arrangements' for their happiness. The craftsman still labors at his job, but 'for the joy of the work' — and one hopes his work gives joy to others. One hopes so, but there are obvious difficulties. For example, the joy of Mr. George Robey in his craft might mar the joy of Dr. Clifford. The joy of a critic of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle might not give joy to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle himself; if it did, the critic would have no joy, for what is the use of criticizing if the criticized, like the people in *Princess Ida*, 'votes you quite delightful'? Sir Arthur apparently appreciates smoke and drink, for, according to him, there will be the 'equivalents' of alcohol and tobacco in the Elysian fields. But will the shades of Sir Wilfrid Lawson and Mr. 'Pussyfoot' Johnson be quite happy in such circumstances?

The description need not be continued, though it goes into much monstrous detail. Sir Arthur claims to have abolished, on the evidence of the mediums, the idea of 'a grotesque hell and a fantastic Heaven.' But his notion of evidence is a little different from that accepted in the King's Bench. For example, he states most

confidently that early Christianity was simply spiritualism, and that the Founder of the Christian religion was the 'most powerful medium the world has ever seen,' who chose his disciples not because they were good or cultured but for their 'psychic powers.' 'I am convinced,' he says, as if that were an end of it. Yet he denounces as bigotry, narrow-minded obstinacy, and much else the convictions of the 'orthodox'; the dogmas of Christianity, he says, 'matter little,' and have 'added needlessly to the contentions of the world'; and he sweeps aside as of no account 'all the haggling claims and the mythical doctrines which have grown up around the name of Christ.'

When good Dr. Watson waxed too impossibly obtuse, Sherlock Holmes used to rally him with a 'Really, my dear Watson.' Is there nobody to bring up Dr. Watson's creator with a friendly remonstrance of the same kind? It appears to be called for.

The Outlook

LESSONS FROM OLD CIVILIZATIONS

BY FLINDERS PETRIE

A FEW years ago we used to indulge in an axiomatic belief that everything must interminably improve without any setback. The last five years have at least made us understand that nations cannot be born without a terrible travail of the world. A year ago there was the infatuation that everyone was to be at once more prosperous, better, and wiser than before. To-day we see little signs of more wisdom in Europe, or of more prosperity in any country. We have raged about getting forward; but our getting forward is often forward round a circle, and we get back to where we started. All human history has been going over the old round