

THE ARTS AND LETTERS

A WORLD REVIVAL OF HANDICRAFTS

WE buy a manufactured article because a machine makes the article for us more cheaply and conveniently than we can make it ourselves; thus the cloth woven in factory towns replaces the honest and laboriously-made homespun; let the machine process, however, become over-costly, more costly even than the clumsy efforts of home manufacture, and the situation will be reversed; the homespun industries will thrive, and every house will once more become a workshop. This is exactly what is taking place today all over the civilized world. To use a homely illustration, Mr. X, who used to buy his shirts ready-made at the haberdasher's, is now content to buy good cloth and let Mrs. X and her needle provide the manufactured article. The economic law, for the most part unperceived, is fulfilling itself in a thousand different ways. In fact, the world over, there is a genuine revival of the old handicrafts.

Though born of economic tribulation and not of the spirit, the revival is a pleasant thing to chronicle. We have too long suffered the mastery of the machine; we have too casually watched it robbing the articles of daily use of beauty, individuality, and humanity. For instance, compare a wooden spoon made by a Russian peasant with a wooden spoon turned out by some abominable mill. The one is a genuine creation of personal art; it has enabled a human spirit to express itself imaginatively and with beauty; its very imperfections are likable; the other is a lifeless affair whose manu-

facture has necessitated the selling of a human being into slavery — no, not the slavery of capitalism or the worse slavery of Socialism, but the soul-destroying slavery of the machine. Those who have worked in factories and understand the nature of the machine have no socialistic illusions. They know that strikes are no longer battles for better wages and hours but the cry of the distressed human soul and body in bondage to an unnatural kind of labor. If the revival of handicrafts can lessen the spiritual curse of the industrial system, it will mean a renaissance of our machinery-ridden civilization. It is an engine at hand by which the chicanery of the profiteers and the arrogance of the industrial laborer can be brought under control.

And now, if ever, the time is at hand. To be successful, a revival of handicrafts must be something more than an artist's gospel of perfection, it must be an economic possibility. Today's revival is more than possible, it is a true product of the working of an economic law. In England the movement is widespread. Ruskin as a prophet has at last come into his own; in Germany societies have been founded to encourage and develop household arts and there have been exhibitions of handicrafts at Leipzig and Berlin.

America has inherited from her colonial artisans a handicraft tradition of exceptional dignity and beauty. May these roots, which have never died, thrust out new branches.

Should they grow and bear fruit, it will mean much for human happiness.

H. B. B.

POETRY is the voice of the solitary man. The poet is always a solitary; and yet he speaks to others—he would win their attention. Thus it follows that every poem is a social act done by a solitary man. A poet is a solitary come to a king's court, since, being conscious of his high lineage, he could not mingle with any of the lesser crowds. He is courteous with anxiety and with ceremony—anxious to show that he has taken all pains. Hence the poet's artistry with which he elaborates and embroiders every phrase. And being an alien from the strange land of the solitary, he cannot be expected to admonish or to sermonize, or uplift, as it is called; and so take part in the cabals and intrigues in other lands of which he knows nothing, being himself a stranger from a strange land, the land of the solitary. People listen to him as they would to any other traveler come from distant countries, and all he asks for is courtesy even as he himself is courteous.

Inferior poets are those who forget their dignity—and, indeed, their only chance of being permitted to live—and to make friends try to enter into the lives of the people whom they would propitiate, and so become teachers and moralists and preachers. And soon for penalty of their rashness and folly they forget their own land of the solitary, and its speech perishes from their lips. The traveler's tales are of all the most precious, because he comes from a land—the poet's solitude—which no other feet have trodden and which no other feet will tread.

J. B. YEATS.

SIR J. M. BARRIE's new play, the title of which he has refused to disclose, is to be produced at the Haymarket Theatre. The cast includes Mr. Robert Loraine, Miss Fay Compton, Mr. Norman Forbes, Mr. Ernest Thesiger, Mr.

Arthur Whitby, Miss Jean Cadell, and Miss Mary Jerrold.

A NEW play by another writer of distinction, Mr. John Galsworthy, is very shortly to be produced at the St. Martin's. In this case the title is known—it is *The Skin Game*—but the date is uncertain. Here again the cast is exceeding strong, the company including Mr. Edmund Gwenn, Mr. Athole Stewart, Miss Helen Haye, Miss Mary Clare, Miss Mary Byron, Miss Blanche Stanley, and Miss Meggie Albanesi. The piece can be run at the St. Martin's for a few weeks only; the theatre being required for another production in or about Whitsun week.

LOVERS of Dumas may care to hear Mr. Gosse's account of the Dumas-Maquet controversy which has just broken out again. Nothing surprises French people more than to hear Englishmen of mature growth talking about the novels of Alexandre Dumas. In France that prolific writer holds his modest place in literary history through his romantic plays, such as *Antony* and *Charles VII.*, but his stories, though still, I believe, much read by French schoolboys, are not any longer considered to demand critical attention. This is very curious, in the face of the almost delirious admiration which they have continued to receive in this country and in America. Apparently, founded as they were on the model of Walter Scott, they appeal to the Anglo-Saxon and not to the Latin mind. Thackeray, who uses the language of hyperbole in praise of *The Three Musketeers*, had nothing but scorn for Balzac and George Sand, and does not seem to have been aware of the existence of *Stendhal*.

In later times the serious rehabilitation of Dumas was largely brought about in England by two enthusiasts

for stirring literary adventure, Andrew Lang and Robert Louis Stevenson; but there was no response in Paris to their raptures. This is not the place for a discussion of the cause of so curious a divergency of taste, which would lead us far into the recesses of national personality. If English readers of distinction prefer *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne* to *La Chartreuse de Parme*, as Andrew Lang sturdily did, and if French readers of the same class put *Monte Cristo* on a level with Eugène Sue's *Wandering Jew*, what is the use of disputing?

The admirers of Dumas being mainly Anglo-Saxons, it is of more interest to us than to Parisians that the everlasting Maquet controversy has just broken out again. We all know that Dumas was convicted in his own lifetime of manufacturing his stories by the help of a body of collaborators, whom he paid for their work, but not too lavishly. Of these the foremost was Auguste Maquet, who delightfully signed himself, in the early Romantic age, Augustus MacKeats. Between these gentlemen there were unseemly squabbles almost from the first; M. Gustave Simon has written an entertaining book on the subject, *Histoire d'une Collaboration*. In 1859 the dispute came to a head, Maquet claiming in law that his name should appear with Dumas's on every title page, and that he should share the royalties. On the former plea he lost his suit after a long trial, but the tribe of Maquettists has always remained faithful. Dumas died in 1870; Maquet, never ceasing to proclaim that he was the main author both of *The Three Musketeers* and of *Monte Cristo* lived on until 1888. His heirs possess his manuscripts, and they declare that these prove all the most famous scenes in those romances to have issued directly from the brain and pen of Auguste Maquet. The law courts, on previous occasions, ad-

mitted the right of his estate to a share in the royalties, but these will come to an end in 1924 unless the Maquet family contrive to get authority for their client's name to be printed on every first copy of the works as co-author with Dumas. It is a very pretty quarrel, which may now any day concern the Parisian advocates.

MR. J. THOMAS LOONEY has recently published a book identifying Shakespeare with Edward De Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford.

A SWEDISH male dancer of exceptional talent is appearing for the first time in Paris at the Comédie des Champs Elysées. M. Jean Borlin is *premier danseur* at the Royal Opera, Stockholm, and is the inventor of many original dances. M. Borlin dances alone and entirely unsupported, except by the orchestra, and includes in his programme some Swedish popular dances, a 'danse Tzigane' (Henry VIII Ballet, Saint-Saëns), a Dervish dance (Glazounow, Salomé dance), Harlequin (Chopin, Etudes), 'Danse Celeste' ('Lakmé'), 'Devant la Mort' (Liszt, 'St. Francis Walking on the Waves'), and lastly, and perhaps most extraordinary of all, 'Sculpture Nègre' (Scriabin, Poème-Nocturne).

In this last the dancer transforms himself into the living likeness of some rude negro sculpture, hewn out of wood, and, clad in an ashy-gray-black skin-fitting *maillot*, decorated with barbaric plumes and tufts, is able to evoke by his ungainly gestures and waddling gait the image of a primitive and loathsome creature, half-man, half-ape. M. Borlin's range of expression is great, and the best part of his performance is the skillful and accurate way in which he reproduces the 'stylistic' features of archaic and exotic art, whether he appears as a bronze Indian idol (as in the

'Danse Celeste'), or as some emaciated, haggard martyr (as in 'Devant la Mort'), with ashen skin, wild hair, and shaggy beard, clad only in a scarlet loin-cloth, as in some hectic vision of El Greco, or again as a frenzied dervish, spinning round, enveloped in his enormous floating 'skirts,' or prostrating himself, exhausted, on the ground, with staring eyes and muttering lips.

M. Borlin's technique is extremely good and he uses his arms with extraordinary effect. His style is individual, and free from Russian influences, and his ideas are stimulating and original.

The orchestra, under the direction of M. Ingelbrecht, besides accompanying the dancer, also plays an interesting selection of modern music, including 'L'Après-Midi d'un Faune' and Florent Schmitt's 'Feuillets de Voyage.'

WITHIN the last month the Paris stage has been enriched by two spectacles either of which is well worth the trouble of a journey from London. They are widely different, so widely that it seems as if the brain had separate compartments for its memory of them, and could not pigeonhole them together as plays. The first is a triumph of a single personality—the direct personality of a player; the second a triumph of many, seen through the imagination of one.

Sarah Bernhardt's return to her own stage in Paris has been long promised, twice despaired of, often put off. People who lose a leg sometimes give up active life. People who have desperate illnesses and desperate operations sometimes retire. People who are seventy-five are sometimes old. None of these banalities appeal to the Lady Chrysostom of the French stage. She is not even content with revivals, but makes her reappearance in a part she has never played before. Nor is she

content to let this part be one new to her audience, so that the interest attaching to the unknown and unexpected may support her; she selects *Athalie*, crowning character of that tragedy which Voltaire called the masterpiece of the human spirit.

Of course, she triumphs. She is Sarah, and it is impossible to imagine a Paris public that would not swallow whatever she gave them. But her triumph is not by any means primarily due to her immense reputation. Her *Athalie* is a triumph in itself. This is the real daughter of Jezebel and Ahab, in whom cruelty and pride and ruthlessness and ambition were so naturally born (seeing what a pretty couple her parents were), that she expresses them as inevitably as a rose exhales sweetness, and really is almost as innocent of wickedness as a rose is guilty of loveliness.

Yet, although she is great in her majesty when borne in a litter on to the stage, a vision of gleaming gold and jewels and shadow; although, defiant and angry and terrible, Racine's great lines of denunciation roll from her with the power of thunder; yet, she is most wonderful in her scene with the young Joas. There again we have after so long the Bernhardt smile that vies in sweetness even with the Irving smile, now vanished. There we have the grace of tender gesture. There we have, above all, the 'golden voice,' winning, seductive, rising and falling like distant bells across the evening cornfields, and giving one the same wistful enjoyment.

Athalie is being staged for very few performances. This is an opportunity not to be missed, because the single personality which dominates the whole thing must, say in a few generations, go to seek Racine on Olympus, must at some time, however full of vitality, leave us. May it be long hence.

WALKING IN SPRING

BY CYRIL GORDON TAYLOR

Walking in spring earth's joys go with
me, all
The pride of hills, trees, flow'rs, and
fields new-born;
And little streams come singing up the
morn
To run awhile beside me. Blue skies
call
Ahead, but here keep pace with me.
And small
White flocks of clouds go with me too.
And shorn
Of its mane the wind. Only the road,
in scorn,
Darts on before, hearing my slow foot-
fall.

Who lacks companionship on such a
day
Lacks the sweet surge of life within his
veins!
Goes friendless in a world of friends —
ignores
Beauty's wide nod and feels no an-
swering ray!
O, I have found more friendship in
spring lanes
Than ever came two-footed to my
doors.

THE NIGHT

BY HUMBERT WOLFE

Be quiet, bird,
Be silent all
That e'er were heard
And cease to call.

Drop perfume, rose
And flowers white,
Put off your shows,
For see, 't is night.

Soft creatures slow
Begin to pass,
And thousands grow
From out the grass.

With deep low whirr
The air is full,
And through the fir
The moon shines cool.

There is no pain:
Sorrow is dead;
Slow Charles's Wain
Wheels overhead.

There is no grief,
All things have ease;
No bough or leaf
Stirs on the trees.

[*The New Witness*]

SONNET

BY ROBERT NICHOLS

The love that to the lover said: '*I love.*'
When the proud world does most my
world despise,
Vaunting what most my human heart
must grieve,
Choosing what most I value to dis-
prize,
Deriding most that which I most
believe,
When the proud world, I say, does
most offend
The artless passion of my patient heart
Till I despair the morrow make amend
And before sunset from the sun would
part.

Then in my ruin's hour remembrance
brings
Faith to my doubt, to my intention
grace
Reminding me how feebly fall such
stings
On one whose eyes dared once your
eyes to face
And read in them, what no ill can
remove.