

## LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE ARTS

### AN HILARIOUS ENGLISH DICTIONARY

AN eminent English philologist has recently taken not one, but literally several leaves from Dr. Johnson's book. Professor Ernest Weekley has deliberately written an amusing — not to say hilarious — dictionary, although there is as little question about the lexicographer's scientific attainments as there is about his sense of humor. The new dictionary devotes itself mainly to modern English, and it is especially rich in contemporary slang and the host of new, or apparently new, words which came into use during the war.

'It has always seemed to the compiler that a dictionary without quotations is too unrelieved in its austerity,' Professor Weekley remarks in his introduction. Unrelieved austerity, however, is the very last accusation that his most severe critics bring against Professor Weekley, whose array of illustrations ranges from the Venerable Bede to H. G. Wells, and includes pretty nearly everybody in between. Mr. J. C. Squire remarks that it is 'a book, even, which one might without brutality leave lying about in one's visitors' bed-rooms.' High praise for a dictionary!

Dr. Johnson's famous work very often derives its amusing qualities from the pugnacious note in some of its definitions. Professor Weekley's is amusing because of the quotations, a good many of which are from current newspapers. Under 'Nietzscheism' he quotes from a monthly paper some extremely uncomplimentary remarks, of which he is himself the subject, and as an illustration of the word 'monger' he cites:

'Professor Weekley is well known to

our readers as the most entertaining of living word-mongers. — (*Daily News*, November 8, 1916.)'

Professor Weekley more than lives up to the reputation which the *Daily News* gives him. He illustrates the word 'value' by two quotations which together make a very pungent paragraph:

'We apologize to Mr. Wells for using the word "values" since he dislikes it. — (*Times Literary supplement*, June 5, 1919.)'

'The hooligan sees none of the values of the stranger. — (H. G. Wells, *Ob-server*, January 18, 1920.)'

He employs the one passage in English literature best suited for his purpose when he quotes Pooh-Bah's famous remark as an example of the use of 'verisimilitude,' — 'Corroborative detail intended to give artistic verisimilitude to a bald and unconvincing narrative.'

Professor Weekley illustrates 'mixed metaphor' with two surprising examples from very august sources, indeed. The *Fortnightly Review* (July, 1919) is detected in *flagrante delictu*, thus: 'In 1914 our old, regular army, crossed swords with a great numerical superiority of the cream of the German host at concert pitch and undamaged by war.' The *Times* illustrates both the mixing of metaphors and the colloquial use of 'A. 1' with the phrase (which ought to be famous), 'A proper A. 1 copper-bot-tom lie.'

Of another well-known phrase he observes: 'Mod. "To get it in the neck" appears to allude to "where the chicken got the axe." A further playful variation is "where Maggie wore the beads."'

*Punch* greets Professor Weekley in verse:

## THE MERRY LEXICOGRAPHER

(Lines inspired by PROFESSOR ERNEST WEEKLEY's *Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*)

The 'lexicographer's a drudge —  
A harmless drudge,' wrote JOHNSON bleakly;  
Yet, *pace* JOHNSON, this is fudge  
When tested by the work of WEEKLEY.

Though *Becky Sharp* could not endure  
The gift of JOHNSON's volumes meekly,  
She would have welcomed, I am sure,  
The learned levity of WEEKLEY.

He always wears a jocund guise;  
He never compromises sleekly;  
He's witty and he's also wise;  
He argues strongly though he's  
WEEKLEY.

Rich in precise linguistic lore,  
He's rich, he's positively treacly  
In the new coinages of War —  
Is our alert omniscient WEEKLEY.

So, whether you affect the high  
Palutin' style or chatter *chic*-ly,  
In either case you can rely  
Securely on the aid of WEEKLEY.

In fine, these humble rhymes to close,  
His dictionary quite uniquely  
The paramount 'importance' shows,  
And proves, 'of being ERNEST' —  
WEEKLEY.

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## SARAH BERNHARDT IN LONDON

A BURST of applause lasting until she herself brought it to a close, greeted Madame Sarah Bernhardt on her re-appearance at the Prince's Theatre, London, in the title rôle of *Daniel*, a play by her grandson, Louis Verneuil. The house was divided between young enthusiasts and those who had known the great actress when she was at her best. After the final curtain, the cheers continued, interspersed with demands for a speech, until it was announced that Madame Bernhardt, tired out, had left the theatre.

The play is a skillful bit of adaptation to the failing physical powers of the

great actress, who is now seventy-six. The Bernhardt, as Daniel Arnault, impersonates a bizarre young poet, an invalid who may die at any moment and who is not allowed to leave his chair. He receives visits one after another from Maurice Grainger, his closest friend, who entrusts him with a letter from a lady with whose husband he is to fight a duel; from his own brother, to whom he is devotedly attached, and whom he suddenly learns to be the husband; and from the wife, for whom Daniel has long cherished a passionate, though innocent love. To prevent the duel, Daniel falsely declares himself to be the lover, offering in proof the letter which has been entrusted to him, — and then dies.

Although Madame Bernhardt sits immovable through the four acts of the play, while the action sweeps over and around her, she is the central, dominant figure. The character of Daniel Arnault, the neurotic young poet who dreams himself to death over his poetry, and the hopeless passion that he cherishes, gives her opportunity to display the extraordinary range of her acting — from a tenderness that avoids sentimentality, to a grimness that is never grotesque. The beautiful tone, which was one of the great charms of her voice, is gone, but there remains the old characteristic delivery, the sharp clarity with which she hammers out her syllables.

In Daniel's death she displayed much of the old power. So vivid and realistic was Madame Bernhardt in earlier days, when she was at her best in such scenes, that during her only appearance before Abdul Hamid, in his private theatre at Constantinople, the terrified Sultan left his seat, declaring that he hoped never again to see an actress who imitated death with such overpowering realism.

*Daniel* will necessitate a revision of the estimates made some years ago by

one of the divine Sarah's devotees with a statistical turn of mind, who calculated that Madame Bernhardt had died by poison ten thousand times, by revolver shots five thousand times, and by leaping into the Seine, over seven thousand times.



#### EXILED RUSSIAN ART

RUSSIAN artist refugees are arriving in London in such numbers that a 'Russian Association of Representatives of Art and Literature' has been formed, with headquarters at the Russian Embassy. Russian actors, singers, dancers, and painters are compelled to leave their own country, not always because of politics, but because they cannot find a livelihood on the stage at home. Although the Bolsheviki have kept some theatres running, the number is apparently not sufficient to provide for all the artists of the old *régime*. One actress is reported to have been compelled by hunger to make sweets and sell them on the streets of London.

Dancers and singers have been able to find opportunities in English ballets and theatres, but the inability of the actors to speak English is a permanent bar. With the coöperation of Tamara Karsavina, Lydia Yavorska, and Vladimir Rosing, a series of plays, pantomimes, and dances are to be staged, to give occupation to the impoverished artists and raise money for them at the same time. Sir James Barrie and Sir Arthur Wing Pinero have lent their names, as patrons, to the Association.



#### THE INDUSTRIOUS MR. WELLS

NOT content with the work of revising and amplifying his *Outline of History*, which is presently to be republished in a special American edition, Mr. Wells is engaged on an addition to his long list of novels. The new book is to be

called *Secret Places of the Heart*, and may be finished in time for autumn publication. The story is said to be highly analytical and dependent for its interest upon the author's treatment of his subject, rather than upon the plot itself, something of a departure in Mr. Wells's methods.



#### THE CONVERSATION OF MONKEYS

AN incident which apparently corroborates the contention of the American zoölogist, Dr. Richard L. Garner, that the higher monkeys possess a limited vocabulary, is reported to have taken place near Calcutta. Two Englishmen killed a female jet-faced monkey of the species called *langoors*, and took her little one to their bungalow. The next morning the hunters found their dwelling surrounded by fifty or sixty monkeys, which presently went away, but returned for three successive days, always visiting and caring for the little captive, and driving the servants away from him.

Finally, an old male approached the little monkey and endeavored to release him, but was driven away with shots. After his fourth repulse, the simian knight-errant was received with an outburst of cries and gesticulations. One of the Englishmen thus describes the incident:

'The small band of female monkeys to which allusion has been made swore at the old fellow and gesticulated wildly at him, while he began to grin and wave his arms about as though to compose their anger and beseech their consideration. Whether what was said to the old fellow was a volley of abuse or a shower of encouraging words, or both alternating, I cannot say, but a few seconds afterwards, seeing he did not return to the charge, he was suddenly taken hold of by the stout old ladies and beaten mercilessly. It was a merry sight, and

he had our sympathy, for he alone knew what it was to have four revolver bullets whizz past his ears. The belaboring seemed to give him fresh courage, as he returned for a fifth time to finish his work. We fired again, and he retired, this time never more to return, for the enraged dames caught him once more, and after beating him soundly chased him out of the colony altogether.

Deciding that the persevering devotion of the monkey's ought to have its reward, the captors carried the little *langoor* out to the band, which ceased chattering immediately and allowed him to approach. A female took the captive from his owner's arms, and handing her own young one to a neighbor, proceeded to care for him tenderly.'



#### A FRENCH POET IN AMERICA

AMERICA, which since the War has been deluged with English minor poets and literary men of greater distinction, is to receive a visit from an eminent contemporary poet of France, M. Paul Fort, the author of *Ballades Françaises*. However, it is to South America, where his work is better known than in the United States, that M. Fort is going first, even though it is probable that his tour in the Latin republics will probably be followed by a visit to the United States. In Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile he will lecture on a variety of subjects, some literary and some quite otherwise. His poems are to be recited by Germaine d'Orfer. M. Fort's visit to the United States will probably coincide with the appearance of an English translation of his works.

#### MR. WILLIAM ARCHER ON BROADWAY

IN an interview which he granted to a reporter of the London *Observer* soon after his return from the United States, Mr. William Archer, the veteran English critic whose first play, *The Green Goddess*, is now playing in this country, said that he found theatrical life much more intense in New York than in London. Pointing out that there are more theatres in New York than in London, he explained that, in spite of this fact, tickets are much easier to get in the English capital. He found a great variety of plays in the United States and regarded American managers as very hospitable to foreign work.

Mr. Archer is particularly enthusiastic over what he terms the 'side-show theatres,' to which he credits the success of Eugene O'Neill, 'a man of real originality, whose most notable work, I think, is *Beyond the Horizon*.'

'As far as one can see,' says Mr. Archer, 'there is every probability of a great advance in the American drama, and it will certainly be helped by the careful study which is being given to its theory and practice in the leading American universities, — Harvard, Yale, and Columbia.'

'Here again, America is greatly in advance of this country, for the only recognition which has been given to the living drama by any English university, is the recent appointment of Mr. Granville Barker as lecturer at Liverpool. At Harvard, Professor G. P. Baker has a regular theatrical workshop, where scenery is designed and every detail of production is carefully studied.'

## MIDNIGHT ON BROADWAY

BY SIEGFRIED SASSOON

[*The London Mercury*]

UNDER the cold, brown canopy of  
heaven  
Huge winking signs, unflickering gold  
façades,  
Relentlessly proclaim the cheap-jack  
fame  
Of Movie Stars and Chewing Gum and  
Tyres.

The heaped snow has an artificial look  
As if impersonating sifted sugar.  
Along the melting side-walks, blurred  
and trodden,  
It clogs the feet of jostling crowds that  
shuffle  
Through Broadway slush with faces  
greenish-pale,  
Each face in spot-light of magnesium  
noon.

The doors of Drama swallow and dis-  
gorge them:  
In soda-bars they sup; to-night's the  
night!  
And Time, dissolved from frozen float-  
ing lumps  
To multicolored spoonfuls of ice-cream,  
Fades on the incandescence of their  
breath,  
Whose jazz of glory is a dance of death.

But *Wrigley's Gum*, flanked by cascad-  
ing peacocks,  
Mints the one dream, 'to chew or not  
to chew.'  
If that's the question, you can solve it  
quick:  
Ten cents and your saliva do the trick!

## THE COMING OF MAY

BY MARGARET M. REDFORD

[*The Cambridge Magazine*]

Now like a well-sprung ice-ship bounds  
the world,  
Buoyant through crushing mounds of  
frozen cloud,  
To blue May waters, — now the cap-  
tain looks  
With calmed eye to the landfall; not so  
loud  
The ice-saw now, nor paddle wheel.  
The men on their hardened cheeks the  
land breeze feel;  
Above the quay, blue hills, —  
On the crescent green, daffodils.

## THE MOTHERS

BY EDWARD DAVISON

[*The Outlook*]

THE long unhappy night is done  
And God's Belovèd sleeping now  
Forgets, since she has borne a son,  
The pain that marks her patient  
brow;  
And her dark curtains downward drawn  
Refuse the peering eye of dawn.  
But even now in this sad town,  
And far more fearful than the night,  
Dawn through the window trembles  
down  
On some pale sister-mother's sight,  
Who with a weaker arm has prest  
Her new-born dead against her breast.

## EPIGRAM

[*The Cambridge Review*]

SOME balance Nature tries to hit;  
She gives self-torture to the poet.  
If you lack breeding, depth or wit,  
She takes good care you never  
know it.