

ness, for self-perfection, for spiritual freedom. But in consequence of a great number of complicated causes, most of the human race has not yet freed itself from its ancient fear of the mysteries of nature, has not yet learned to recognize the power of its own will, does not yet feel that it is mistress of its planet, has not yet comprehended the possibilities of vital, positive labor

which is the beginning of all beginnings.

Unquestionably, physical environment has influenced the people of the Orient since earliest days. Its effect has been to suppress the personality and the will. But in the end, man's attitude toward productive labor is what gives him his place in civilization and determines his value to the world.

EURIPIDES FOR TO-DAY

BY J. B. CHAPMAN

From *To-Day, March*
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WITH Euripides, the son of Mnesarchus from the Attic deme of Phyle, there are few readers of *To-Day* who have not at least one point in common; for Euripides was a lover of books, the first, indeed, of whom ancient records tell, and the library which he collected was a constant source of inspiration and of comfort to him. To this claim for admission into good-fellowship let it be added that the poet's whole life was spent in pursuit of the golden mean, that in him the poor and oppressed found an ever-ready champion, and that the middle classes are boldly claimed by him to be the best part of the community and the salvation of a State.

The first fifty years of the life of Euripides were coincident with the most brilliant age of Athenian history, for tradition persists in placing his birth

Like Pericles and Socrates and other bright spirits of the time, Euripides early came under the influence of Anaxagoras, whose pioneer work in science and philosophy did so much to enkindle that extraordinary blaze of spiritual life in which ancient Athens stands illumined amid the pagan darkness of her contemporaries. The studies of Anaxagoras led him to conclude that the change from chaos to cosmos in all things is the work of a conscious Power which is outside of, and forms no part of, the mass upon which it operates. This power he called *Nous* or Intelligence, and its subsequent deification by himself or his disciples swelled the stream of monotheistic belief which had begun to flow among the intellectuals of Athens, even from the beginning of that wonderful century.

Euripides, however, was not much concerned with the single or multiple nature of the unknown forces which make or mar the life of man. 'God' or 'the Gods' come indifferently from his

even on that day when Light
Wrestled with Darkness there at Salamis,
And the world trembled in the gulf of fears,
While God unseen held up the balances.

pen; but despite many instances which cause him to doubt, he maintains deep in his heart a belief in some great and guiding Power. To Euripides, life is the same enigma as it is to thinkers of every age; the solution is beyond him; the solution, indeed, can come only when this life of ours is merged into what he calls 'that other form of life,' to which man has given a strange and sinister name.

Who knoweth if the thing that we call Death
Be Life, and our Life dying who knoweth?
Save only that all we beneath the sun
Are sick and suffering, and those foregone
Not sick, nor touched with evil any more.

Euripides was nearly thirty years of age before a play of his was even accepted for production on the Athenian stage, and he was forty-three before the first prize fell to his lot. In fact, in all the fifty years of his literary activity, only five times was the leading prize awarded to him. Now, as the good burghers who were chosen each year to allocate the dramatic laurels at the festival of Dionysus must have represented with fair accuracy the opinion of their contemporaries, no further evidence than the record just given is required to indicate the unpopularity of Euripides as a playwright. One reason for his eclipse, no doubt, was that he had a life-long opponent in Sophocles, whose artistic perfection itself may have caused the younger dramatist to divagate from the traditional highway of Tragedy.

But the non-success of Euripides, comparatively speaking, is due not so much to the brilliance of his rivals as to the temperament of the man himself. The character of 'sad Electra's poet' has been dissected by scores of critics from the time of Aristotle onward, and numerous indeed are the epithets that have been coupled with his name. In the case of people who lay no claim to education, it may be pardonable to

place a label, so to speak, upon the unknown and to dismiss all further thought of it from the mind. But a phenomenon named is not necessarily a phenomenon understood, and this statement is none the less true when the phenomenon in question is a genius among men. It is curious, therefore, to find so many students of the Drama, ripe scholars most of them, endeavoring to satisfy themselves or their readers by attaching a label to a writer like Euripides. Casuist, misogynist, cynic, misanthrope, sentimentalist, mystic, realist, and rationalist are some of the inscriptions which those labels bear; and there is an element of justification for nearly every one of them, but certainly not for atheist or botcher, despite the authority of Aristophanes or of Swinburne. The mere enumeration of the foregoing epithets at once suggests that the poet was a man of so many sides, a writer of such varied attainments, that these cannot be dismissed under the brevity of any one label.

By nature Euripides was sensitive and reserved, and like most Intellectuals he was ahead of his times. Herein lies the explanation of his contemporary unpopularity and also of his posthumous fame. In democratic Athens, one sure road to favor was a mastery of the art of rhetoric. This art Euripides studied, but not to practise. He would have nothing in common with the demagogues who latterly led his city to its doom. Indeed, no one, not even Socrates himself, was more outspoken than Euripides in denouncing the glib talkers of his day.

Upon his plays, however, the persuasive art had a marked effect; and although his set speeches with their carefully balanced arguments appear sometimes rather out of place upon the stage, the dramas of Euripides in later times provided an inexhaustible supply of those 'brief sententious precepts'

by means of which, as Milton asserts, moral prudence can best be taught. Against the seven plays of Aeschylus and the seven of Sophocles which posterity took the trouble to preserve, no fewer than nineteen complete plays of Euripides and many fragments have come down to us.

On the traditional mould of the Greek Drama, designed by Aeschylus and perfected by the genius of Sophocles, the third of the great tragedians made little formal change. True, he put the Prologue to a more definite use than his predecessors had done, gave to the choral ode the nature of a musical interlude rather than of an integral part of the play, and showed a preference for endings with a *deus ex machina* in control; but within the tragic mould Euripides set at work forces which were destined to shatter it for all time. The grandeur of Aeschylus and the idealism of Sophocles were succeeded in Euripides by a realism the influence of which may be traced through the New Comedy of Greece and its Roman derivatives, through the Renaissance literature of France and of England, down to the stage plays of to-day. The realism of Euripides in character-drawing and the romantic element which he introduced into his later plays are the progenitors of the problem play and of modern melodrama.

The curious and ironic history of the poet is well illustrated by his drama, *Medea*, first staged in the spring of 431 B.C. The three competitors to whom in that year a chorus was granted were Euphion, Sophocles, and Euripides, and the compositions submitted by them were ultimately placed by the judges in the order in which the poets have been named. But while not even

the titles survive of the plays which then brought fame to the son of Aeschylus and to Sophocles, the rejected work of Euripides has come down through the centuries as an accepted model of the Attic Drama at its best. Imitated by writers in every land to which Greek culture has penetrated, the play itself still maintains its primal vigor upon the stage of to-day, depicting as it does with unparalleled power the eternal tragedy of the 'woman scorned.'

The last years of Euripides were embittered by the protracted struggle between Athens and Sparta and by the gradual degeneration of his countrymen under the strain of war. The democracy of Athens, which had risen to greatness by following the advice of its best men, eventually became intolerant of superiority in any form, whether of breeding or intelligence; and in the end Euripides withdrew from its wrangling to seek peace, if not happiness, in the realm of Macedonia. In that land he composed his most wonderful work, the play to which — according to Macaulay — there is absolutely no equal in literature. *The Bacchae* was the swan-song of Euripides, and before it was produced upon the Athenian stage the aged poet had found an exile's grave: —

Happy he on the weary sea,
Who hath fled the tempest and won the haven;
Happy whoso hath risen free
Above his striving. For strangely graven
Is the orb of Life, that one and another
In gold or power may outpass his brother.
And men in their millions float and flow,
And seethe with a million hopes as leaven;
And they win their Will, or they miss their
Will,
And the hopes are dead, or are pined for still.
But whoe'er can know,
As the long days go,
That to live is happy, hath found his Heaven.

ATHENS: A CONTEMPORARY IMPRESSION

BY ALFONS PAQUET

From *Österreichische Rundschau*, February
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OUR almost empty train skirts the shores of the Saronic Gulf. The sea is luminous in the evening afterglow. Fields and olive groves, sloping toward the sea, surround Megara, where we discern the ruins of an ancient city that, in the days of its greatness, was more famous than Athens, and the mother-town of the Greeks who founded Byzantium. In the remote distance the stumplike hill of Acrocorinthus rises, sharply outlined against the glow of the western sky. Next comes the little railway station of Eleusis, shaded by plane trees and surrounded by factory chimneys. On our right appears Eleusis Bay, cut off by Salamis from the Ægean Sea, so that it looks like an inland lake. Turning from the coast, through a passage in the hills, the line makes a short detour, and soon we are crossing the plains immediately in front of the city. They already lie gray and formless in the early dusk.

Our train stops in a dark, deserted suburb. No one is waiting for our arrival. It is the last day of the carnival and of a celebration in honor of the royal family, and the people are in the centre of the city attending the festivities. There I find the streets packed with a dense crowd of merry-makers. Blue and white streamers canopy the streets; blue and white lights glitter in every direction. Palm fronds are waving here and there like the pinions of great birds. We drive past the brilliant show-windows of confectionery shops, flower shops, cafés, and tobacco shops, through a gesticulating, chat-

tering mob, swaying hither and thither every few moments to let an automobile pass through. A chill wind drives dust and confetti along the marble tiles of the streets, and little by little disperses the evening throng. Thousands of pennants and banners flutter from the flagstaves; garlands of white and red paper-roses sway and rustle. Groups of dancers break up. A man in a mask flees down the street pursued by a shrieking crowd of merry children. Close behind him hops another man in woman's garb, a great doll swinging and swaying on his back. At the hotel I retire to my room and regard from the open window the unclouded firmament. A white, shining cliff rises in the distance like a huge anvil. It is the brightly illumined Acropolis.

However, catching the restless contagion of the festal evening, I am soon out again upon the avenues. Brilliant show-windows and lighted signs border them, although, even at this early hour, scarcely a person remains abroad. The bannerets fluttering on the triumphal arches, the white crosses on blue fields, and the little black and white heart-shaped shields everywhere displayed, — recalling the Knights of Malta, the Hohenzollerns, and the Knights Templars, — suddenly impress me as cosmic symbols.

At the end of a street, half-concealed by the higher ground around, crouch two little churches, the last remnants of mediæval Athens. Their Byzantine walls, well toward two thousand years old, are covered with antique and early