

LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE ARTS

How Jesus Looked

At the last session of the French Academy remarkable new evidence concerning the personal appearance and activities of Jesus was brought to light. Dr. Robert Eisler of the University of Vienna has for some time contended that the old Russian version of Josephus's *Jewish War* contained a mutilated but essentially authentic account of the life and death of Jesus. He had pointed out that the descriptions of Christ's physical appearance in Greek and Latin texts refer to 'Josephus the Jew' as their source.

The Russian version of Josephus also gives a 'most unpleasant picture of John the Baptist, saying that 'his face was that of a savage, his body was hairy all over, and where it was not covered with the man's own hair he had pasted oxhides to it.' Curiously enough, the description of Jesus in the same version lacks this malicious touch, although the author saw no reason for calling Him the Son of God or an angel. From reasonably authentic sources Dr. Eisler has at length collected enough material to be able to piece together a reconstruction of the original passage as Josephus wrote it. The fact that he gained the ear of the cautious French Academy, and of such scholars as MM. Theodore and Salomon Reinach, challenges attention. Here is Dr. Eisler's version:—

'At that time also a man came forward, if one may call a man one whom His Disciples called the Son of God. His being and His figure were quite human, a man of middle size, with a stooping back and a long face, a prominent nose, and with brows which grew

together, so that those who saw Him would get frightened; with very little hair, but parting it in the middle of His head, according to the habit of the Nazarenes (who were not allowed to cut their hair, and therefore tried to master it in this way). His looks were quite simple; only His pose was more than human, because He performed wonders through some invisible power.

'Considering, however, His quite ordinary nature, I for one shall not call Him an angel. His name was Jesus, and He was nicknamed the Messiah. By the Gentiles He was believed to be a soothsayer, but some of our people said of Him that He was our first law-giver, Moses, and had risen from the dead and was now showing forth many cures and acts. Others, however, said He was the envoy of God.

'But He opposed Himself in many things to the Law. He did not observe Sabbath, according to our ancestral law. Not that He did anything shameful or criminal Himself, but through His words He instigated everything. And many from our folk followed Him and accepted His teaching, and many souls became wavering, believing the Jewish tribes would cut themselves free from the hands of the Romans.

'Now it was His habit to stay most of the time on the Mount of Olives, before the city, and there He also avouched His cures to the people.

'And there gathered themselves to Him one hundred and fifty slaves, and of the populace a crowd. But when they saw His power, that He could accomplish everything He would by a magic word, they urged Him that He

should enter the city and hew down the Roman soldiers and Pilate, and rule over us. But when knowledge of this came to the Jewish leaders, they gathered together with the High Priest and spake: "We are powerless and too weak to withstand the Romans, and as the bow is also bent against us we will go and tell Pilate what we have heard, and be without distress, lest if he hear it from others we be robbed of our substance and ourselves be put to the sword and the children of Israel dispersed." And they went and told it to Pilate, and he sent and had many people cut down.

'As for that wonder-worker, he had Him brought before him, and after he had tried Him they took Him and crucified Him according to their ancestral custom.'

The Certified Czech

ONE of the more encouraging signs of the times is the willingness of our literary prophets to give ear to the incessant European attacks on American standardization. Thanks to the talents and convictions of men like Sinclair Lewis, we are now pretty well persuaded that the United States is little better than an enormous Ford factory. Those of us who go to Europe sometimes wonder why cafés are considered any less standardized than cafeterias, why it is so much more interesting to talk about *l'amour* with a Frenchman than about business with a Rotarian, or why Mussolini is any less ridiculous than Calvin Coolidge. For those of us who feel that Europe is just about as benighted as we are, a visit to the Sokol festivals at Prague is recommended. Not only are they more depressing than anything at home; they even cause us to wonder if it was worth making the world safe for democracy simply in order to set twenty

thousand Czechs to doing gymnastics at once.

The Sokols, be it said, are a chain of gymnastic organizations founded by that great patriot, Miroslav Tyrs, and patronized by almost every loyal Czechoslovakian. So keen is the interest in community sport that several rival organizations have been formed by groups of Radicals, though they have not gained the popularity of the authentic Sokol. Early in July the city of Prague was the scene of a vast Sokol congress in which fourteen thousand Czech athletes, witnessed by forty thousand Czech spectators, all raised their hands in the air at the same moment, leaned over, and touched the ground without bending their knees. Nor did their repertory end here. There is photographic evidence to indicate that six thousand Sokolettes (female members of the Sokols) were able to put their right hand to their right ear, extend their left arm downward at an angle of forty-five degrees; bend their right knee, and stick their left leg out behind. Although there are no photographs to support our statement, we feel safe in assuring our readers that they were able to reverse the process, putting their left hand to their left ear, and so forth. It is almost unbelievable, but there are other pictures to prove that thousands of Czechs are able to arrange themselves in closely packed lines more than a hundred yards long and wave their arms in unison. They also weave human patterns on the field, and can probably shape themselves into the Czech equivalent of Old Glory.

It is argued by devotees of this exciting sport that Czech gymnastics represent a higher form of athletic and cultural development than the Olympic Games in ancient Greece. As for the gain in the national chest-expansion and the loss in the national bellyband,

the figures probably run into hundreds of miles. Moreover, these gymnastics provide the very best basis for a musical education along rhythmic lines. But the most stirring part of the whole ceremony is attained when all the athletes raise the following chant in unison: 'Hold to the truth; love your country; refuse slavery; serve humanity and the nation.' The only thing we have that can touch it is: 'For God, for country, and for Yale.'

Culture in the Home

THAT Paris can get along without Americans, but that Americans cannot get along without Paris, is one of the more frequent complaints lodged by the sole inheritors of real culture against a nation of vulgarians. Soon the cultivated voice cracks as the arms and hands take up the burden of the conversation and wild gestures accompany further outcries against Negro jazz-bands, chewing gum, and our wasteful love of cheap display. In all humility, the best that we can do is to consult at once the self-proclaimed authorities on good taste and correct deportment, in the hope that we may learn the rudiments of civilized living from its most accomplished expositors.

Luckily we have not far to seek for our model, who is now performing in a quaint Old World music hall. She is Mademoiselle Parisys, blonde and fluffy-haired, an outstanding personality at the French capital and at Deauville. Last year she gave one of those delightful little parties that are the despair of the most elegant American hostesses. In her fifth-floor apartment she had a couple of ambassadors and half a dozen seals to dinner. It was a modest start, to be sure, the merest hint, yet there is no word from the social arbiters of Hollywood to lead us to believe that Gloria Swan-

son, in spite of her French count of a husband, has invited so much as a pollywog to the table. But Mademoiselle Parisys does not lack persistency, or imagination either. She has more recently installed a river in her rooms and invited all her friends to appear at midnight in bathing suits. The evening is enlivened still further by the presence of several hundred fish and frogs, which she got at a bargain when the Nouveau Cirque sold out its complete line of goods. Surely there is a suggestion for Mrs. Coolidge here. If she wants to impress the European diplomatic corps and make it feel at home, let her turn the Blue Room of the White House into an aquarium and stock it with some of these presidential pike.

It's an Old Spanish Custom

EVERY year the Juntas of Roncal and Barettous hold a peculiar ceremony at Pierre Saint-Martin. In other words, the Basque community between France and Spain has an annual blow-out. From the French side of the valley comes a delegation of French mayors, and from the Spanish side a contingent of alcaldes. Both these groups represent the Basque settlements that still enjoy a measure of their former republican independence. The purpose of the assembly is to recognize ceremonially the rights of these people. One by one the officials place their hands on top of each other on the frontier stone in such order that a French hand alternates with a Spanish, the last of all being the paw of the Alcalde of Isaba, the metropolis of the Valley of Roncal. This dignitary then pronounces the traditional form of words by which the French representatives swear fidelity to the ancient treaties. Three heifers are handed over by the Barettous Valley as pasturage dues to the

Spaniards, the animals first being examined by a veterinary.

Time was when the ceremony included a sham attack on France, in the course of which a volley was fired and an alcalde plunged a spear into French soil. So offensive was this little display to the delicate sensibilities of the French that it was abandoned in 1898. This year the mayors and alcaldes simply shook hands all around, and the whole thing passed off as quietly as a Republican convention.

More Broadway for London

NEW YORK's theatrical invasion of the British capital continues apace. Nearly one third of the West End theatres are now housing American plays, and even more will be polluted during the autumn. The productions sighted include *Sunny*, *Tip-Toes*, *The Gold Diggers*, *The Student Prince*, and perhaps *The Song of the Flame*. A new musical comedy which is to follow *No, No, Nanette*, is being farmed out to New York song and lyric writers, although the *Westminster Gazette* seems to feel that England is sufficiently afflicted with adepts at these arts to be able to provide words and music of her own.

Even more distressing to the Londoner than the epidemic of American drama is the exodus of British actors to the United States. Anyone who was able to sit through Cyril Maude's annual Farewell Appearance, which consisted last year of Michael Arlen's *These Charming People*, will remember Miss Edna Best as the one bright spot in a singularly depressing evening.

London may well lament her decision to play the States until next March. She tried to find a suitable play to put on in her own country, but had to give up in despair. 'If I stayed on,' she said, 'I might find something or other, but meanwhile a very good offer has come from New York, and I don't want to refuse a certainty for a remote possibility. In New York I am to appear in *Why Not?* It deals with certain subjects in an exceedingly frank and often flippant manner, and has been banned by the censor over there.' Broadway is also to be favored with Dion Titheradge — a man — and Herbert Marshall. According to the British press, New York is overrun with English talent because there is a dearth of capable Americans who can play Society rôles. What is the matter with our younger generation, anyway?

Innocents Abroad

THE benefits of travel as a substitute for the *Living Age* are borne out by the following item in the *Westminster Gazette* of London: —

'Fifty American students paying their first visit to England were the guests of Sir Harry Brittain, M.P., at the Houses of Parliament yesterday.

"You know," said one of the visitors, "we all came over with the same notion that English people were sort of prim and stuck up, and we've all had the greatest surprise.

"My, we just love them all, and think they're the friendliest people ever — especially the men. They're so nice-looking, and real jolly."

BOOKS ABROAD

Ulick and Soracha, by George Moore. London: The Nonesuch Press, 1926. 42s.

[*Manchester Guardian*]

MATTER, style, form, and type combine to give this book a singular effect of naturalness. Even the brownish tint of the Japon vellum upon which the long paragraphs, unbroken by quotation marks for dialogue, are printed plays its part in establishing the atmosphere of remoteness, as of something found and not made. The 'tone of time' is over the whole performance. How far the matter is derived from chronicles and how far invented it is impossible to say, but throughout the story conscious art is perfectly concealed. You slide into the story through a conversation between Mr. George Moore and one Alec Trusselby in Tom Rutledge's park at Westport. Alec asks for a story, and Mr. Moore starts with an old memory of a tale that he heard bits of from an old man of Kiltamagh; and when the telling is discontinued for a cup of tea, and again when Alec himself rounds off the story, you are still under the same spell of murmured narration. One thing brought home forcibly by the book is the right application of the realistic method. When Mr. Moore — or anybody else — writes about the present the illusion of reality is nearly always weakened, if not broken, by changes of distance from the facts due to the writer's opinions about life; without intruding his opinions he will in unconscious deference to them draw some details at a foot and others at a dozen yards, with an effect comparable to that in painting when an artist falsifies his values by altering his distance from the model, now peering and now standing off; but in this book everything is, as the photographers would say, 'at infinity,' and the result is a consistency hardly to be found out of Malory. The moral, if Mr. Moore will allow a moral to a work of art, is that no young man should attempt the realistic method, or should apply it only to distant memories.

The story itself is one of those 'old, unhappy, far-off things' which might have come from anywhere. Ulick, the natural son of Richard de Burgo, second Earl of Ulster, sees a portrait of Soracha, youngest daughter of an Irish chieftain, King O'Melaghlin, made by a traveling craftsman, and for the first time knows love without pleasure. He cannot rest until he has taken her from her convent. Incited by stories of their pagan life

together, her father leads an army against the castle, and in order to save Ireland from warfare Soracha flings herself over the battlements. Ulick, left haunted by a spirit between Heaven and Hell, swims out after 'a whiteness passing down the lake.' In his quest for Soracha, Ulick has been accompanied by his harper, Tadhg O'Dorachy, a passionless man, and the belated marrying of Tadhg, told with robust humor by Alec Trusselby, rounds off the story; and so 'The Ballinrobe cock [Mr. Moore] is outdone, and the crow is to the Westport rooster!'

But this bare outline will give little idea of what, without a word of information outside the story, is in effect an imaginative reconstruction of Ireland in the fourteenth century. The surface of the narrative is as hard as that of an ivory carving, and there is not an idle word in it, a word which does not give movement as well as picture. It is all purely creative art in prose narrative, and the printers have worked as if they crystallized the spoken words. An exquisite copperplate engraving, designed and engraved by Mr. Stephen Gooden, accompanies and illustrates the graceful dedication to Lady Cunard, and the loose cover of the book is decorated with an Irish harp quartered with the lilies of France in red, designed by Miss Marion V. Dorn.

Essai sur Marcel Proust, par Georges Gabory. Paris: Renaissance du Livre, 1926. 12 fr.

[Clive Bell in *The Nation and the Athenæum*]

THIS is a good book; so perhaps I need not add that it is the best I have read on the subject. When one comes to think of it, M. Gabory was the person indicated to write something trustworthy and intelligent about Marcel Proust. An agreeable poet, alert, well-educated, and young, acquainted — by correspondence, of course — with the master, and corrector of his *Sodome et Gomorrhe II* proofs, he was about to elucidate the text of *La Prisonnière* when the news of Proust's death gave him, as he explains, an unexpectedly — indeed an unreasonably — violent shock. Instead of continuing labors which for him had become ghoulish almost, he wrote this essay.

Perhaps M. Gabory is not so much an impressionist as a Proustian critic. He doubts. Positively, he is uncertain whether that permanent and indivisible 'personality' which most modern