

OUR OWN BOOKSHELF

Héloïse and Abélard, by George Moore: New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925. 2 vols. \$5.00.

ONE is at liberty to ask about this work whether there are not places where it runs to the bawdy. The answer will certainly be that there are. Yet an author giving an account of the lovers whose passion has projected itself some eight centuries beyond the grave would hardly be true to his story if he omitted the sensual element of their desire. It is one of the merits of the age that the author can speak openly on this theme, and, in the large scope of his work and the long development of pain, sorrow, and ecstasy which the relations of Héloïse and Abélard form, lust certainly does not occupy a disproportionate place in the plan. It remains for readers to judge for themselves such scenes as those under Fulbert's roof, the canon of Notre Dame who was the uncle of Héloïse.

Again, the fabliaux and peasant concupiscences of Madelon are in character, and form part of the surroundings of the two protagonists, as do all the brilliant reflections of twelfth-century France which Mr. Moore distributes through his book — reflections of the countryside, the rivers with their barges, the monasteries, the schools, the courts of love, the gleemen, the winters with their snows and wolves, the complete romantic panorama of a vanished age of thrusting and aspiring life: a setting rich, wonderful, and real, if ever the setting of an historical novel has been wonderful and real. Of course many details of this panorama are grotesque and morally revolting; nevertheless they perhaps belong to a true rendering of the subject. The first chapters of the second volume dwell at what may be to many readers a tiresome length on gleemen, courts of love, and the vagaries of mediæval theory on the art and practice of passion. But the sublime chapters that form the bulk of the volume and bring the story to its close are ample in redemption.

The style of George Moore of course demands a word. If one picks up the book in the middle, the calculated simplicity of the diction will seem at first almost laughable, so patent is its cunning, so palpable its forethought. But of course the author has not meant to be artless, and he has written with an almost unique art. Beginning, not in the middle, but with the first page, one is

rapidly lost, absorbed, and rapt out of all other consciousness by the flow of the romance. A better vehicle for its end is not often devised than the style of *Héloïse and Abélard*. It evokes a vanished age with the magic of which guilelessness of word — or its equal in effect — and copious use of the connectives are ingredients employed by many a wordmonger. But it has more than the elementary magic that creates fresh and bright images of the touch and color and breath of things. It has psychological faithfulness and scope worthy of the 'stream-of-consciousness method,' without the violence which that school wreaks upon the art and beauty of expression. It is, in short, a style of great literary refinement and of power over life.

If this romance is read in unborn times, it will of course be read for its characterizations of Héloïse and Abélard. The story of these lovers is told to the depth of anguish and ecstasy. Héloïse is no common type, and not to be smugly expounded in a few sentences of review. With her passion for reading, she lights upon Vergil under the Canon's guidance, and learns from the Latin poet to love life as the earth gives it — the upwelling of shoots in the spring, the songs of birds, the red sails upon the river. She believes in Heaven and Hell because Abélard believes in them. She bitterly opposes marriage with him after the birth of their boy because his fame is inseparable from her idea of him and the path of advancement lies through the Church. Her complaint in the sorrow of her long sacrifice is that the cynicism of history has been fulfilled in her, and that another great man has come to grief through woman.

The intellectual agitations of Abélard and his contemporaries are skillfully introduced and treated, but a more distinguishing note of the book than intellect is its sensibility. There is a sensibility compounded of knowledge and feeling and of cultivation, which properly accompanies this romance and gives it a difference from others of its kind. As the lovers pursue their lives from the first rapture of their meeting to the long agony of separation, and the book gathers to its close with its picture of the waiting and longing Héloïse nine years among the nuns, until Abélard finds her begging in Paris, sadness gathers with it; but with increasing sadness comes increasing beauty, until at the end the reader is willing to believe that he has felt the sublime.

COMING EVENTS ABROAD

THE sixth annual British Industries Fair will be held simultaneously in London and Birmingham from February 15 to February 26, and the anniversary will be celebrated by a State Banquet for representative exhibitors and buyers, which the Prince of Wales will officially attend. For the first time, the Fair will be open during certain hours to the general public, and not merely, as hitherto, to commercial visitors.

Norwegian international winter sports competitions will take place during the month at Holmenkollen, near Oslo. On February 23 the 17-metre ski race will be held; on February 27, the 50-metre ski race; Sunday, February 28, is Holmenkollen Day, appointed for a grand ski-jumping competition.

The period from February 28 to March 10 will be known as Automobile Week at Cannes. The tennis championship of the Côte d'Azur will be contested; and there will be a Fine Art Exhibition and a Cat and Dog Show.

During the first week in March a Marathon on skis will take place at Mora, Sweden. This competition is known as the Vasa Run, and commemorates a dramatic incident in Swedish history. Mora was the town whose citizens, in 1521, first rallied to the support of Gustavus Vasa, a young Swedish nobleman who aimed at driving the Danes from the country, and who, after succeeding in this attempt, was elected King. The Marathon attracts the best ski-runners of the North, and has been the occasion of more than one record-setting event.

On March 2 a grand character-ball will be held at Nice, and on March 11 the third battle of flowers there will take place on the Promenade des Anglais. Redoute Blanche at the Municipal Casino.

During the winter and early spring, Dame Nellie Melba will be making a farewell tour of

the British Isles. On March 4 she will sing at Leicester, on March 6 at Cardiff, on March 10 at Plymouth, on March 13 at Brighton and at London.

Beuil will be the scene of races organized by the Ski Federation on March 7 and 8. At Biarritz, golf will be the occasion for several events during the month, and on March 11 the monthly medal will be awarded.

On March 13 and 14 the Grandes Fêtes Provençales will be held at Cannes. The tennis championship of the city will be contested at this time.

On Sunday, March 14, Menton will be the scene of cycle races organized by the Vélo Club Mentonnais. On March 16 the second battle of flowers will take place on the Promenade du Midi.

On March 28 the Luge races will be held at Caunterets; prize by the Syndicate of Hotel Owners. The Cup of the Ski Club of Caunterets and the Cup of the Touring Club of France will be awarded.

The Nice Horse Races Society organizes in the month of March four events (level races) and four events (trotting races), with 300 and 500 francs in prizes, respectively.

The Monte Carlo season will be diversified by a dog show during March, and the Grand Motor Car Week will be fixed for that month. The Opera Season will extend to Sunday, April 4; performances will be held on Sunday afternoons, and Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings. Yachting regattas will be events both of March and of April.

Ski-expeditions will be made from Gstaad from time to time during March.

An exposition of modern rugs manufactured at the Atelier de la Dauphine will be held at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Pavillon de Marsan, Palais du Louvre, during the month.

AMONG OUR AUTHORS

LIKE many Frenchmen with German names, Jules Sauerwein leans to chauvinism rather than away from it. He is one of the most distinguished of French journalists, having been foreign editor of the *Temps*, and is now the editor-in-chief of the *Matin*, one of the most widely circulated Paris dailies.

Angelica Balabanoff has been prominent in the Italian Labor movement for twenty-five years. After receiving her doctorate and studying at Berlin and Leipzig, she went to Rome to study with Antonio Labriola, and there entered the Socialist movement and became one of its most eloquent speakers. She was for a time on the editorial staff of *Avanti*.

C. F. Lehmann-Haupt is Professor of Archaeology and Ancient History in the University of Innsbruck, and a leading figure in the German Philological Association.

We have reason to believe that the author of 'Interviewing Mussolini' is as little open to the charge of being an English Fascist as the author of 'Trade-Unions in Russia' to the charge of being an English Communist.

If no man is a hero to his valet, an emperor is probably no demigod to his cook, and Wille Buenger clearly regards the late Kaiser from a peculiarly ironic angle. But what an exact memory he must have for culinary statistics! Or did he keep a notebook?

P. V. Shkurkin is a distinguished Russian ethnologist who has spent most of his life in Eastern Siberia. On the basis of an intimate acquaintance with Chinese and Mongolian life, history, and folklore, he has written several volumes on Oriental topics. The *Living Age* has already published two tales from his *Kitaiskia Legendy*, a collection of Chinese and Central Asiatic legends.

Léon Krajewski was until recently French Consul-General to the Hejaz, and is at present Honorary French Representative on the island of Corfu. He is a recognized authority on Near Eastern affairs.

Cecil Roberts was for a long time better known as a poet than as a novelist, having

had six separate volumes of verse and a *Collected Poems* to his credit. During the war he acted as a special correspondent with the Grand Fleet and the Dover Patrol, and afterward became Assistant-Director of Overseas Transport, correspondent with the Royal Air Force, and finally official correspondent on the Western Front. After the war he turned his energies to novel-writing, and produced two novels, — *Scissors* and *Sails of Sunset*, — which show the influence of Conrad, as might be expected, but not to the point of servility.

Joan B. Proctor, F.L.S., F.Z.S., who writes about snakes with so little of the contumely obligatory to the daughters of Eve, is curator of reptiles at the Zoölogical Gardens in London.

A generation younger than Mr. Hardy, Eden Phillpotts has done for Devonshire — in his long series of Dartmoor novels — very much what Mr. Hardy has done for other parts of the West Country, and in a vein not entirely remote from Mr. Hardy's. Though he has written nothing on quite so high a plane of tragic austerity as *Jude the Obscure*, Mr. Phillpotts has demonstrated a versatility of treatment superior to his elder's, and is in some senses undeniably a more accomplished writer. He too is a poet as well as a novelist — a dramatic poet rather than a subjective lyricist.

Edouard Combe is a regular contributor of articles on music to *La Semaine Littéraire* and other periodicals.

As a younger contemporary of men like Tennyson and Browning, Mr. Thomas Hardy no doubt finds nothing extraordinary in the fact that he continues to write verse well into his ninth decade. What differentiates him, however, from those elders of his is the fact that his poetical output is a phenomenon of his old age: it can hardly be said to be a lifelong habit, as it was with them. He is the only poet in English literature whose reputation as such was made after his sixtieth year — or at least the only one we can remember. And how much youthful energy there is in the irony of a poem like 'A Leader of Fashion'!

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