

## LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE ARTS

### JEAN PAUL

DURING the same month, a hundred years ago, when Goethe's jubilee was being celebrated in Weimar, a man died in Bayreuth who had been one of Goethe's great rivals in the literature of the time, and who in his methods and inspiration as a writer stood almost at the opposite pole to Goethe. This man was Jean Paul Richter, always familiarly known as Jean Paul, one of the greatest of the German romantics. The centenary of his death has been the occasion for a good deal of speculation among German critics on the question whether, after a period of years when he has been read little or not at all, modern readers can go back to Jean Paul and find in his writings anything that will hold their attention and respond to their needs.

The general feeling seems to be that they can. More than one critic has expressed the feeling that the special romantic quality of Jean Paul's imagination — the charm of his ironic and disordered world — is one that we to-day can appreciate more easily perhaps than Goethe's serene synthetic universe. 'It is said,' observes E. A. Greeven in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 'that Jean Paul takes his place at the beginning of the romantic period, or that he is an imitator of Sterne; he has been called a "Gothic" writer because his works, like the turrets and arches, the vaults and arcades, of a Gothic cathedral, are full of superfluous detail, and his love embraces the tiniest mote in the sunbeam; he has

been accused of being baroque because the swollen cloak of his stormy feelings fluttered limitlessly over fantastic destinies. All this has been said, and many words of explanation have been wasted thereon, but what do all these attempts to confine Jean Paul to a label mean, except an admission that here is a man whose creative product cannot be approached with little formulas and definitions, but leaps over all boundaries and forms because he includes them all? It is not a matter of "good" or "bad," of "white" or "black," but of the chaos of the world — Heaven and earth and a kindly heart! Is this not also the essence, the unity, of that puzzling and self-contradictory child of earth whom we try to sum up in the phrase "the German character"?

'Not because he figures as a great man in the literary histories, or because in these days the flood of writing about him has risen threateningly, should we beat upon his gates and seek entrance into that world of his that has so little of the earth and so much of Heaven. We should do it for our own sakes. Because in him and in the abundance of his work we may find an answer to the difficult and portentous question, Who are we? Because from the mirror of his work our own countenance stares back at us.'

It is interesting and persuasive that a celebrated French critic, M. Edmond Jaloux, writing in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, gives utterance to almost the same judgment. 'Jean Paul's genius

was to unite all that was permanent and common in the German make-up with that magnificent outburst of the human spirit that romanticism was. Attempts have been made to see in the cleavage between classicism and romanticism a conflict of a purely literary sort, whereas in point of fact it is one of psychology: classicism is the expression of serene periods, and romanticism of troubled periods. If at this moment we are turning with confidence and sympathy to certain romantics, it is because of the turbulence of our time. . . . Will Jean Paul find echoes among our contemporaries? I think so, and I hope so. He is so near to us!

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#### THE CASALS OF THE GUITAR

'AFTER hearing in Geneva four concerts by our guitar virtuoso Andrés Segovia,' says a musical critic in the Madrid *El Sol*, 'I thought it proper to put the question to myself, What will this happy appearance do for Spanish music? An artist of the first order appeared playing the guitar as his chosen instrument — the national musical instrument of Spain. We all know what Casals did on the 'cello: by virtue of his technique he made the hearer forget about all technique. Segovia has done as much on the guitar, and more: he has enlarged the field of expression of his instrument, compared with anything that has been produced on it before, so that in his hands it expresses every shade of feeling conceived by modern music. But Segovia has had to struggle against difficulties that never stood in the path of the great Catalan 'cellist, and the greatest of these was the current prejudice against the guitar, as an instrument suitable merely for light music. This prejudice, of course, was founded solely on the fact that the guitar is the popular instrument of the Spanish people,

and therefore scarcely anything but light music has been performed on it. In short, here was just as fortuitous an association of ideas as that which connects wax with religion because wax is used for church candles. Segovia himself tells of the following incident. During a concert tour he practised in his hotel room one morning about eight o'clock, when the chambermaid entered and exclaimed in amazement: "Oh, my, *señorito!* Making merry at such an early hour!"

'As to the musical critics, their level of judgment did not greatly exceed that of the populace. I shall not easily forget the superior air of an eminent French musical expert who, upon being asked whether he knew much guitar music, answered: "Oh, yes. But nothing important." A favorable contrast is presented by Wyndham Tryon, the excellent Flemish guitarist, who wrote in the *Fanfare*: "When Flemish melodies are played upon the guitar, it has a kind of primitive sound, somewhat hard and nasal; but when Bach or Chopin are played upon it, it sounds pleasant, sentimental, and extremely sweet."

'Also, Andrés Segovia has had to overcome the obstacle offered by that throng of music-lovers who, at the sight of a guitar, are overcome with sentiment and lift their eyes to the ceiling in anticipation of cheap and pleasant stuff.

'Spanish composers of modern times have already contributed to the special literature for the guitar, and the famous Falla at their head has written a beautiful elegy which seems an example of the highest in Spanish music.'

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#### GERMAN AND AMERICAN ADVERTISING

Is it true that American advertisers consistently avoid all suggestions of

pain, discomfort, or distress in their drawings and texts? Is it true that they distrust appeals to reflection, memory, or speculative thought, and confine themselves to the simple visual appeal? Is it true that the picture has become the whole thing, and that the accompanying text has sunk to the level of a mere convention? These, at least, are charges brought against what some observers regard as the great American art by a writer in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, who contrasts it with the art of German advertisers in all these respects.

'The wish to produce a unified effect,' he says, 'and an undivided desire prohibits all use of the comic and the grotesque in American advertising. This sounds like a paradox, when we think of the American love of the grotesque, but it is not so surprising as it sounds: a good advertisement must always give the impression of solidity. Grotesques are the amusement of clowns; people enjoy the one as they enjoy the other, but neither has anything to do with the serious business of life. . . .

'The American has often been designated a grown-up child, and this judgment explains the characteristics of American advertising we have mentioned. America is inhabited by a young people that possesses all the traits of such — delight in the pictorial, in the simple "thing in itself," and in sensuous experiences, and a disinclination to superfluous and complicated processes of thought. The impression is easily taken in, and it does not matter whether it has a basis in thought.'

In German advertising, on the other hand, the artist is allowed far greater liberties, and as a result too frequently goes off on a tack of his own, exploiting his own talent but neglecting and even entirely forgetting the product he is supposed to be 'selling.' Meaningless

ornamentation is allowed to play a greater rôle, and appeals to reflection are not by any means '*verboden*.' Suggestions of discomfort are allowed so much more freely that, according to this writer, an advertisement for a safety-razor blade showed a horse leaping over an exposed and upturned blade in the most dangerous manner. No American advertiser would make such a mistake.

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JAQUES-DALCROZE, CITIZEN OF GENEVA

THE celebrated Genevese composer and inventor of 'Eurythmics,' Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, has recently been honored by the city of Geneva in the most signal way at its disposal — by making him an Honorary Citizen. The Geneva weekly, *La Semaine Littéraire*, commenting on the distinction, remarks: 'From the smallest child to the wisest adult, everyone among us knows what Geneva owes to Jaques-Dalcroze. . . . When we want to give a foreign visitor an idea of our music, it is almost infallibly a song by Jaques that we strike up. You have only to listen to what young boys and girls sing in the summer on our country roads to accompany the rhythm of their walking. In the winter, when the shades are down and the fire is crackling on the hearth, don't all the heads, blonde and brunette, bend over a score by Jaques at the piano?

'Let us confess it simply — Jaques has been the smile of Geneva. It is he who has taught us to sing and to laugh.'

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WHERE BELGIAN NOVELISTS FALL  
SHORT

M. PIERRE GOEMAERE, the editor of the *Revue Belge*, in an interview with a representative of the *Nouvelles Littéraires*, puts his finger on the secret of the disesteem that Belgian novelists

suffer as compared with their French competitors. 'Not long ago I read in one of our newspapers this remark by the Vicomte Davignon, who is fairly representative, I think, of our average novelists: "In the setting of my novels, I try every time to take the reader into a different part of the country, and exhibit the landscape to him." A Belgian says this sort of thing where a Frenchman would say: "I try to take the reader into the presence of different crises and different temperaments."

'Here is a still more significant remark by the same author: "What will be my next novel? The Campine, I think, will suggest it to me: it is a very attractive part of our country for the novelist." Might we not have expected: "What will be my next painting? The Campine will suggest it to me: it is a very attractive part of our country for the painter." You see the mistake they make, and how true it is that the Belgian novel will have to find in itself the reason for its failure until it is willing to substitute the pen for the pencil.'



#### TWO ARTISTS AND A GARRET

APROPOS of the recent exhibit of Sir John Lavery's paintings at the Leicester Galleries, the *Morning Post* has this interesting note:—

'One of Sir John's pictures, Number 10, is sure to be popular when the public learns that it represents Sir James Barrie seated in his "Garret in the Adelphi" which overlooks the Embankment Gardens, the river, and Waterloo Bridge. What is not gener-

ally known is that this snuggerly was formerly the workshop of Mr. Joseph Pennell, the brilliant American artist, who for many years lived in the Adelphi and had as neighbor Mr. G. B. Shaw.

'When Mr. Pennell occupied this room it was the most picturesquely untidy place in London, a perfect setting for his drolly attractive figures. Now the faëry taste of Sir James has transformed it into a den of the most charming description, where its occupant may gossip in the gloaming with Peter Pan, Jas. Hook, the Admirable Crichton, or any other of the inspiring characters of his romance.'



#### 'CROSSINGS'

A ONE-ACT 'fairy play' called *Crossings*, one of Mr. Walter de la Mare's rare ventures into dramatic writing, was recently performed at the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith, with one of the rôles played by Dame Ellen Terry. The famous old actress had no lines to speak, but more than one critic remarked on the consummate skill with which she made her mere presence, her most trifling gestures, count. Her appearance, says the *Times*, was an honor that the play deserved. 'It is told with a profound quietness and gayety and insight. It is imagined with a child's mind, written with great simplicity and beauty, and has delightful music. Never do we remember having had a lovelier fairy story, or one more full of the sound of wings and laughter, told us in the theatre.'

## BOOKS ABROAD

**The A B C of Relativity**, by Bertrand Russell.  
London: Kegan Paul; New York: Harper and  
Brothers. \$2.00.

[*Times Literary Supplement*]

THERE must be some hundreds of popular expositions of relativity theory already in existence, and they continue to appear. Yet the theory of relativity, in the form given to it by Einstein ten years ago, was practically complete. It is true there have been extensions, additions, and new proofs of certain points; but the theory in all its essentials was complete ten years ago. New popular expositions are not required, as they are, for instance, in electron theory, in order to keep pace with a rapidly growing subject. It is still the old fundamentals with which every expositor concerns himself. The reason for this is that the theory of relativity has proved more recalcitrant to popular exposition, than any scientific theory has been before, and successive expositors, taught by past efforts, are in process of working out a method of exposition.

It is now clear that the theory itself cannot be popularly expounded. There is no nonmathematical equivalent for this most mathematical of physical theories. There remain two alternatives — one may describe what the theory is about, or one may describe the results of the theory. That is to say, one may show the reader the nature of the problem Einstein set himself, or one may give an account of the main ways in which the results of the theory alter our outlook on the physical universe. What one cannot do, apparently, is to show how Einstein solved his problem.

Mr. Bertrand Russell has, on the whole, adopted the second of these alternatives. He shows, for instance, what amazing results follow from assuming the paradoxical principle that the velocity of light is the same for all observers, whatever their relative motion. Space and time measurements become relative to the observer. What remains absolute — that is, the same, for all observers — is a certain combination of space and time measurements. We may speak of space-time as something objective, but not of any particular observer's space and time.

One of the aims of relativity theory is to discover laws of nature that shall be the same for all observers, whatever their relative motion. The special theory, published in 1905, considered observers in uniform motion with respect to one

another. The general theory, published in 1915, places no restrictions on the relative motions of observers. Thus the general theory succeeds in finding expressions for the laws of nature that are the same for all conceivable observers. The theory might just as well be called the theory of absolutes as the theory of relativity. Mr. Russell does good service by insisting on this point; for uninstructed people have a tendency to consider Einstein's theory as an exemplification of some vague and puerile philosophic principle that 'everything is relative.' As a matter of fact the theory distinguishes very clearly between the relative and the absolute; and its chief aim, as we have said, is to discover relations in the physical world that are the same for all observers — that is, relations that are absolute. Various particular results, which come out incidentally, are mentioned by Mr. Russell.

**Poems New and Brief**, by William Watson.  
London: Jonathan Cape. 4s. 6d.

[*Westminster Gazette*]

THERE is always hope for a writer who feels that, though the world has gone by him, the question of what will abide belongs to the future. Sir William Watson has a passing echo of that note in the epigrams of current criticism in a new sheaf of verse, representing everything he has done in these latest years: —

### THE ONLY TEST

I've lived into a different day,  
And watched the old day flee.  
The men I know not arrive each hour;  
The men who know not me.  
*Their world or mine will perish,*  
But which of them may it be?  
Have patience. In less than a hundred  
years  
'T is like enough thou 'lt see.

But we must confess to regret that a poet whose earlier work was so full of splendid felicity and a grave sense of beauty, sometimes even of resurgence, should chisel so many laments over the politics and poetry of the day. . . .

Yet there is sometimes a fine sardonic note: —

### EPITAPH ON AN OBSCURE PERSON

Stranger, these ashes were a Man  
Crushed with a grievous weight,  
He had acquired more ignorance than  
He could assimilate.