

democracy. Then came the visit to America, which he hails as the land of true freedom, despite our faults.

M. de Man's story presents in a graphic manner the conflict of temperamental impulses with the guidance of conduct by ideas and ideals. It shows how the policies of men are transformed in the crucible of reality, particularly in the hard crucible of war. It is not the story of the abandonment of principles but of their reconstruction. Right may emerge superior to might; but reality is pretty certain to emerge superior to theories. Private and public wisdom consists in the rational adjustment of realities to principles, with no diminution of the truth that the determination of progress comes from the inspiration of morally formulated ends. Not fools but wise men will continue to contend for forms of government, recognizing the congeniality of form and substance. M. de Man's idealization of the American mind results from a too complimentary acceptance of profession for reality. Our unskilled handling of unpopular doctrines bears abundant witness to the rough and ready impatience with distinctions wherein true wisdom lies.

JOSEPH JASTROW

## La Fayette Again

*The True La Fayette.* By George Morgan. J. B. Lippincott Company.

IN a footnote to the preface of this new biography of La Fayette the author prints a letter from the private secretary of General Pershing saying that the words spoken by the Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces at the tomb of La Fayette were "La Fayette, we are here." The words justify the bringing forth in this country of another biography of the French apostle of democracy. Mr. Charlemagne Tower's judicial study of La Fayette, after access to documents in France not before used, will not be displaced by Mr. Morgan's book, though the latter is the more in accord with the democratic swing of the present day. It is not La Fayette the general or La Fayette as an administrator, but La Fayette the life-long sympathizer with human liberty that appeals most strongly to Mr. Morgan. The story of La Fayette's career in America and France is here told with complete appreciation of its romantic and tragic environment. For treating such a theme Mr. Morgan's picturesque style is admirably adapted. It detracts nothing from his method that he draws upon so many associated matters, near and remote. It was Richard Henry Stoddard who wrote that in Longfellow's poetry everything was like something else. Possibly it is in deference to the eighteenth amendment to our national Constitution that the association suggested to Mr. Morgan by the church La Chaise Dieu and the Abbey of Benedictines is Tasso's celebration of the departure of the Count of Toulouse for the Holy Land, and not the alcoholic product by which the name of the Abbey has been best known to American club members.

It cannot be said that Mr. Morgan imparts to the reader any very clear idea of La Fayette's measure as a man in force of character or mental ability. Possibly the author's sympathy with the worldwide spread of democracy and the equivalent human liberty has brought to his pages an almost unconscious recognition of the possibility that the world is caring less and less for force of character and ability; that in accordance with Henry Adams's thought, energy is being diffused among the masses, who may wish to do without leaders, and that corresponding with this process, the most highly valued men may be those of a type widely different from the Alexanders, Napoleons, and Bismarcks of the past.

With something of McMaster's well-known method Mr. Morgan quotes impartially from La Fayette's apologists and his critics. As is the case in so many long-debated historical occurrences, perhaps no certain conclusion can be reached as to whether a different line of conduct on the part of La Fayette would have brought about more satisfactory results in France, for the

simple reason that other methods cannot be put to the proof. But Mr. Morgan does make plain that the love of liberty, which brought La Fayette to the fields of Brandywine, Monmouth, and Yorktown, continued with him to the end of life, a deep instinct which governed his acts and which at times gave his actions or failure to act the appearance of weakness.

With much industry Mr. Morgan has focussed the scores of lights that have been turned upon La Fayette in America and Europe, and his book is marked both by the diligence with which he has brought together his material and the unusual skill and charm with which he has shaped his narrative. The usual number of typographical errors are present, two of them conspicuous in a book published in Pennsylvania. The name of David Ramsay, the early historian, a native of Pennsylvania, and that of Governor Pennypacker are not correctly printed.

ISAAC R. PENNYPACKER

## Hamlet Without a Character

*Hamlet: An Historical and Comparative Study.* By Elmer Edgar Stoll. The University of Minnesota.

SIGNS are not wanting that the Coleridgean interpretation of Hamlet as a chronic dreamer incapable of action is about to be returned to Germany whence it came. Though still popular in schools and on the stage, it has long been discredited among scholars, and indeed it is difficult to see how it could survive a simple, unprepossessed reading of the text, where Hamlet's promptitude in all actions save the one of his revenge is abundantly manifest. The tendency of present criticism is to lean in the opposite direction and, instead of merely refuting a false interpretation of Hamlet's character, to urge that Shakespeare was not interested in analyzing human nature but in putting on the boards a congeries of dramatic situations, artfully concealing the resultant inconsistencies in his hero's motives. Professor Stoll, for instance, is frankly skeptical of the effort to harmonize Hamlet's character on psychological principles. He is concerned rather with the realistic investigation of how Shakespeare's audience understood the tragedy, as far as this may be discerned from the conventions of contemporary revenge-plays and from the comments, scanty and ambiguous as they are, of seventeenth and early eighteenth century critics. His results afford a wholesome check to introspective and romantic criticism, and may be accepted as the starting-point for a reasoned consideration of Shakespeare's intentions.

For dramatic purposes the traditional story of Hamlet offered difficulties to tax the skill of the playwright. The duty of revenge for a dear father murdered was to be made clear in the first act and consummated in the fifth; between these points the revenger was to do nothing germane to his purpose except to ward off the attacks of his adversaries. Two ways of handling the story were open: the dramatist might either explain the inactivity of the protagonist on grounds of character, in which case the play would center on the inward struggle of Hamlet with his own weakness, or he might use all his art to slur over the difficulty and keep the attention of the audience so riveted on external events that they would never ask for an explanation of the hero's delay.

That Shakespeare adopted the latter expedient, Professor Stoll finds, was the current view of the earlier critics. Not until 1784, when sentimental romantic doctrines were beginning to prevail, did anyone suggest the possibility of a tragic weakness in Hamlet's character. To a critic like James Drake (1699) the play was simply an example of "the admirable distribution of Poetick Justice," and his opinion was supported by the consensus of earlier criticism. This conception, Professor Stoll contends, was nearer the spirit of Shakespeare's art than the theories of psychologizing critics; and such a conception, moreover, would align the play with the revenge-tragedy of Shakespeare's time, when playwrights like Kyd and Marston were clearly using the Sene-

can form, not for the exposition of character, but as a vehicle for melodramatic incident. Shakespeare's purpose, then, as his audience would understand it, was to show a hero *sans peur et sans reproche* acting as the instrument of God's revenge against murder, and the ethical point of the play lay in the punishment of the guilty by the recoiling of their stratagems upon their own heads.

Some such dramatic exhibition as this, we may admit without question, Shakespeare's audience expected to see when they went to a revenge-play. It is no doubt still possible to see in "Hamlet" merely sound and fury. But though Professor Stoll places some difficulties in the way of those who would accept such a psychological explanation of Hamlet's delay as Professor Bradley's, it is more difficult still to think of Shakespeare's greatest tragedy as merely a bit of dramaturgy, a heightened and more skilful example of what Kyd and Marston wrought. Why, for instance, should Shakespeare trouble himself and his audience with Hamlet's soliloquies unless these vivid and insistent representations of despair, bewilderment, and self-reproach were integrally connected with the action of the play? Why, if Hamlet is a blameless hero, should he, after he has let slip his golden opportunity to kill the king at prayer, utter that agonized cry upon the second apparition of the ghost:

Do you not come your tardy son to chide,  
That, laps'd in time and passion, lets go by  
The important acting of your dread command?

And how, finally, are we to explain the consistent popularity of "Hamlet," when the works no less melodramatic with which Professor Stoll associates it soon passed into oblivion, unless on the supposition that this alone of Elizabethan revenge-plays based the action squarely on the character of the hero, and revealed his tragic strength and weakness, dramatically if not verbally, in terms that have not missed the mark from Shakespeare's day to this?

GEORGE F. WHICHER

## Poetry Prattlings

*New Voices.* By Marguerite Wilkinson. The Macmillan Company.

PEOPLE who do not like gilliflowers in their gardens or hybrid forms of literature should have died before Mr. Luther Burbank and Miss Amy Lowell were born. Combination of species is the order of the day. Among other literary hybrids the anthology crossed with criticism has gained a vogue. Ever since Miss Lowell's "Tendencies in Modern American Poetry" showed how critical coloring matter might be blended with the stimulant of select lyrics to make a popular concoction, books of a similar type have tumbled from the press. Later compiling critics, however, in being less conscious of a cause than Miss Lowell have missed the piquant force of advocacy, and in attempting to improve upon her plan by being more inclusive have invited readers to comparatively aimless excursions.

As a conductor of sightseers Mrs. Wilkinson has a good deal of the technique of the man with the megaphone without his stentorian conciseness. She overflows with information. Facts are at her pen's point. She can name the ardent and unselfish soul who first began to "work for poetry" and tell the place and year of the poetic revival. If she has not time to settle the vexed question of rhythm, she can refer to a book which does. In fact, her happy power of ignoring intricacies leaves nothing obscure. Distinctions do not trouble her. Line in her nature is not found. Oratory and poetry, she announces casually, are the same, or at least the province of oratory has been annexed by poets, for, as she tells us, Mr. Masters's "Draw the Sword, O Republic" is "powerful, resonant speech, and, since the modern conception of poetry has been enlarged to include such speech, it is indubitably poetry." Usually, however, Mrs. Wilkinson is elaborate rather than casual in proclaiming the Pan-poetic propaganda.

Though the method of the book is disorderly, the substance of it demands a better word. Mrs. Wilkinson is at least aware of the futility of attempting a decisive judgment of contemporary writing, and while her conservative taste offset by her radical opinions prevents her from whole-hearted advocacy of any one school of poetry, she has visited all the schools and is able to recount lively impressions of each. She has heard all pleas with sympathy and repeats them accurately. One meets with sound timber in the thicket of her phrases: "Symmetry and variety . . . pull against each other and create order, design." "In the minds of great lyric singers it usually happens that emotion suggests the idea of the poem and the rhythm of it simultaneously, and that sense and sound grow together as it is made." "Like good rhythms, good images and symbols are the direct and truthful record of a poet's emotions and ideas and are capable of giving the reader a share in these ideas." "A good poet . . . must know words in families, as we know our neighbors, understanding their relationships well so that he may be able to treat them tactfully." Such first principles, if commonplaces to the student of poetry, are not so to the novice, and it is for the novice that Mrs. Wilkinson's words are designed.

## Polemics and Plain Plays

*Heliogabalus.* By H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan.

Alfred A. Knopf.

*The Army with Banners.* By Charles Rann Kennedy. B. W. Huebsch.

*Sacred and Profane Love.* By Arnold Bennett. George H. Doran Company.

*Snow.* By Stanislaw Przybyszewski. English Version by O. F. Theis. Nicholas L. Brown.

"HELIOGABALUS" is a play and a polemic, a farce and a philosophy. The authors call it a buffoonery, but Mr. Mencken, at least, is in deadly earnest. Mr. Nathan, we suspect, will not condescend to be a voice crying even in the wilderness of Puritanism. So it is perhaps not unfair to infer that he is more the playwright and Mr. Mencken more the philosopher. The playwright has a somewhat reckless energy, a cold exuberance, and moments of humor that are, in the good and authentic sense, Rabelaisian. The quality of his dialogue is below that of his comic invention. To put the slang of the day into the mouth of a Roman emperor is amusing merely today; by tomorrow it will be barely quaint, and by the next day unintelligible. But, after all, the philosophy is the thing, and "Heliogabalus" may legitimately be taken as a creative illustration of the doctrines of two vivid, self-conscious, and arresting minds. The battle they are fighting is, as this play makes clearer than ever, the age-long battle of Hellenism against Hebraism, of the expansive against the repressive forces of life, of a dynamic as opposed to a static view of the moral world. Heine fell in that battle long ago; Matthew Arnold, with many reservations and inhibitions, fought in it bravely. The wings of the phalanxes of Hellenism are still stretched out so far that often soldiers in this great army will not recognize each other at chance meetings. But the intelligence and science of the world are definitely massed beneath its banners today. What, then, can be one's quarrel with Messrs. Mencken and Nathan? It is that with all their knowledge, energy, and perspicacity, they do not quite grasp the nature of this new Hellenism. It does not fight the conventicle in the name of the "Follies," nor the rags of the hypocrite for the sake of fleshings, nor Comstockery for the cult of the "cutie." All these things it recognizes as essentially one. Nor would it seek to illustrate its vision from the very dregs and decay of the Græco-Roman world. It does not want the furtive or the defiant easements of an impossible moral order, but a new and more civilized one. It has a keen enough sympathy for the isolated intellectual aristocrat in a vulgar world. But it fixes its hope upon an inner liberation