

the heart of the matter, and the lethargic citizens of the United States, by allowing the processes of the past ten years to continue, can raise up a mass of hatred and distrust in Latin America that will sorely plague all of us in the days to come. Mr. Root has said to the people of the Southern Hemisphere that "we deem the independence and equal rights of the smallest and weakest member of the family of nations entitled to as much respect as those of the greatest empire." But if we look to deeds instead of words it is not difficult to characterize that statement. It is not necessary to characterize it. Every school child by this time should have heard of our exploits in Haiti and Santo Domingo. There need be no appeal to sentiment or to justice. Men bent on 10 per cent and commissions pay small heed to such things. But there are practical grounds for a new policy. By alienating the Latin-American people we cut off potential markets and raise up enemies who, in the next world war when this untried empire enters the fiery furnace, will pay us back in coin like unto our own. Moreover it is bad business to allow investment banking to interfere with the slower but surer development of commodity exchange.

It is altogether fitting therefore that this should be the occasion for reviewing the life and times of James Monroe. This is true even though nothing except the "doctrine" saves him from the kind of oblivion that overwhelmed Franklin Pierce and Millard Fillmore. There is nothing dashing or attractive in Monroe's career. He was not impetuous like Hamilton or given to philosophy like Madison. Commonplace is the correct adjective to apply to him. Yet he lived in great days, was associated with great men, and managed by the fortune of politics to make his way, thanks to the Virginia succession, into the presidency. He served in the Revolutionary War, but so did many other men of more discernment and equal valor. He opposed the adoption of the Constitution, cut a rather sorry figure as a diplomat, and discharged the duties of Secretary of State in a heroic epoch without making a master stroke that anyone not a professional historian cares to remember.

When all is done and said, it is the doctrine that keeps Monroe's memory green, and there is a great diversity of opinion as to the share of credit that belongs to Monroe himself. We need not accept at par the value which John Quincy Adams placed on his own services in that connection. Neither is it necessary for us to accept with Mr. Morgan "the testimony of Calhoun that Monroe cut and shaped it with his own hand." Many men and many minds were at work on the problem presented by the independence of the Spanish colonies and the imperial ambitions of the mother country. Jefferson and Madison, both experienced and far-sighted, gave Monroe the benefit of their counsel. Our minister in London, Rush, the tireless John Quincy Adams, and many other men of affairs saw deeply and spoke sagely. From all this Monroe had the wisdom to profit. Time and circumstance made his message immortal. That was his good fortune, not a tribute to his genius.

In all these matters, Mr. Morgan is far from critical. Indeed he has not written a critical biography, but rather a genial story that will engage the interest of those who like to while away a long evening with a judicious mixture of personalia, gossip, and history. Mr. Morgan does not work according to the rules of the American historical guild. He takes things as they come to him, quoting with equal zeal from a high-school history or a primary source. Still he has read widely and seized upon many interesting episodes to enliven his pages. He goes far enough into the affairs of the family and does not overlook any significant event in Monroe's career. Even the help which Monroe gave to Thomas Paine during his days in Paris is not forgotten. There is also a large background to the canvas, for Mr. Morgan imagines that most of his readers will not recall, perhaps, the exact year in which Washington laid down the burdens of his office. Professed historians will find many things to quarrel about, and masters of taste who like their biographies done in the style of Lytton Strachey will be discontented with the plain and rather colorless narrative. Still

those who take life as it comes will discover pleasure and profit in Mr. Morgan's plain record of a very plain man.

CHARLES A. BEARD

## The Critic in the Market-Place

*The Drama and the Stage.* By Ludwig Lewisohn. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$2.

THE academic critic proud of his integrity may save his soul by closeting himself with the masterpieces and disdaining the living and imperfect world of art around him, but the critic who descends into the market-place faces two dangers. Too often he becomes subdued to the stuff he works in. He forgets the heights upon which we presume that he disciplined his judgment. He comes to accept the standards of the street, and if he retains any shreds of discretion he must be amazed many times to find that both he and the public have totally forgot some work which two years before he had pronounced immortal. And if, on the other hand, the critic escape stultification from his constant immersion in mediocrity it is likely to be at the expense of his power of fresh perception, for he grows a protective covering of disdain which no new excellence can penetrate. Disgruntled by the torrent of trash which overwhelms every age, he fails to perceive the excellence which is to be found always here and there, and dismisses all with a contemptuous gesture, thus aiding as little as his "popular" contemporary in winnowing the grain. It is these facts which make anything like genuine criticism of contemporary literature so rare, and it is because Mr. Lewisohn escapes so completely from the dilemma that he is the most significant of our dramatic critics. Forced by his integrity to be usually in the opposition, he has nevertheless kept not only his tolerance and his humor but also a remarkable power of seizing upon and of revealing the true and the beautiful wherever it may be found.

It is because he loves the theater that he would chastise it, and when I say that he loves the theater I do not mean that he loves those tawdry mysteries which dazzle the stage-struck. He does not love the world of footlight and rouge, and even less does he love the esoteric doctrine of "play-building" and the art of distinguishing those things which are supposed to be "of the theater." What he does love is simply that irresistible impulse of man to have his say upon life and death, upon the heavens above and the earth beneath—that impulse which happens to find its medium of expression sometimes in the theater, sometimes in the printed page, and sometimes in the chipped marble or the plucked string.

Nor does Mr. Lewisohn fail to be keenly aware of the peculiar dangers of the stage, which probably tends more than any other medium to seduce the artist into conventionality and meretriciousness. He keeps constantly to the fore the fact that the significance or insignificance of any artist depends not upon his dexterity but upon his soul. Impatient of all questions of dramatic construction or technique as such, Mr. Lewisohn sweeps such things aside in order to reach that significance which every work simply has or has not at its heart, and he forgives no trifling, however solemn or artistic its pretense. In a word, he practices criticism upon an art which is discussed, for the most part, by men who, to judge from the newspapers and magazines, do not know what criticism is. For criticism is not gossip of plays and players, and no more is it the chronicling, however bright or intelligent, of the appearance of this or that play. It is an attempt to penetrate into the soul of a work and to discover what the author meant, how sincerely and passionately he meant it, and, finally, how true and how important is his meaning.

The peculiar virtue of Mr. Lewisohn's little essays—all originally published in *The Nation*—lies in the fact that, taken together, they form an approach to those realities which find expression in the theater. Time and again he reveals with ex-

traordinary finesse the innermost significance of some work, yet these specific instances are but examples of a critical method which seeks primarily not merely to discuss some particular character or problem but to indicate the most fruitful approach to character and problem. Mr. Lewisohn has his own vision of life, not dogmatic yet definite, and he recognizes quickly the insight of others because he has insight himself. He is a wise critic chiefly because he is a wise man. He takes up that most difficult ground which lies between the flippancy of the average man, the aesthete, or the dilettante, and the earnestness of the high-brow. He would stand upon the heights not because he is learned or proper or grave or cold, but because he is one of the rare ones who know that the heartiest laughter and the intensest emotion take place within the control of the mind and that the most powerful of passions is the passion of the intellect. He knows that comedy is not jokes and tragedy not deaths, but that both are fragmentary attempts to discharge that duty which man took up when he first ceased to be the accepting animal and became Criticizing Man. Mr. Lewisohn's contempt is for all who would shirk this burden in the simplifications of melodrama, sentiment, or farce, and his respect is for all who shoulder it in recognizing the complexity of the moral world.

To live in a shifting cosmos where Justice, Truth, and Virtue must be defined again and again is to lead a strenuous existence, and man loves repose. The play-builder flatters our sense of repose by assuming the conventional values as absolute; the dramatist questions and disturbs. Hence the latter is not likely, here at least, to attract the greatest audiences, for it is not to the intellect that our ideal of the strenuous life applies. Accordingly we delight in prettiness while we fear beauty, but we pay for our timidity by the tameness of our emotions. Considering things thus, it is not so difficult to understand how Mr. Lewisohn maintains so consistently his tolerance and his urbanity in the face of the philistine. For what but pity can one have for those who have known no emotion profounder than that which can be aroused by uncritical comedy or brainless melodrama—for those to whom it is never given to put away childish things and who remain to the end of their days pleased with a rattle and tickled with a straw?

J. W. KRUTCH

## Romain Rolland in Perspective

*Pages Choisies de Romain Rolland.* Avec une introduction et des notices par Marcel Martinet. Paris: Libraire Paul Ollendorff. 2 vols.

THE creative artist who has a unified conception of life is likely to find himself in a curious predicament. His artistic instinct bids him try to give his complete works some sort of structural unity. Yet these works must be produced over a long period of time, subject to revisions of his point of view by life itself. One sees these Titans hurling mountains of various forms and sizes. Goethe grapples with this technical problem by writing the first part of "Faust" in middle life and the second part in his old age. Beethoven starts an epic sequence of symphonies in youth and keeps them going till his death. Dante produces an harmoniously ordered artistic unit in trilogy form. Milton, after his longer epic, tacks on a shorter one. Wagner and Tolstoi, possessed of this epic imagination, produce colossal works in mid-career—the "Ring" and "War and Peace"—then go on building separate edifices after their cathedrals are built.

The difficulty is that the epic form is not, properly, a one-man job. It is the product of many hands and several generations. But certain teeming and herculean intellects will not be dissuaded from having a go at it: they will attempt to produce an epic single-handed and in a single lifetime. This struggle of the artist to encompass his most grandiose conceptions one sees unconsciously expressed in the two-volume collection of excerpts from the works of Romain Rolland, very ably chosen and most skilfully joined together by the revolutionary poet, Marcel Martinet. Those "three periods" so dear to critics and biographers

are here clearly distinguishable. The first includes everything previous to "Jean-Christophe": the critical essays, the plays, and the three heroic biographies "Michelangelo," "Tolstoy," and "Beethoven." The second period is, of course, "Jean-Christophe." The third, allowing for "Colas Breugnon" as a scherzo impromptu or comic interlude, includes the essays, novels, and Aristophanic satire dealing with the war: "Above the Battle," "The Forerunners," "Liluli," "Pierre et Luce," and "Clerambault." These last three are not yet included in the present collection of excerpts, but are to be added in a forthcoming third volume.

In all this cathedral architecture "Jean-Christophe" is, of course, the spire. It is a completed epic and more than one must have wondered how its author was going to be able to prevent the rest of his life from seeming like an anticlimax. It is clear, too, from this résumé of Rolland's works that he thinks in terms of "cycles," huge canvases, whole ranges of buildings, not single statues but groups over an entire façade. The earlier cycles—the dramas and the heroic biographies—remained uncompleted. "Jean-Christophe" stands a finished work. Can the cathedral builder content himself thereafter with designing parish churches? Must the artist begin a new epic? Can he? In the pages of this collection of excerpts one sees how life answered this question for Romain Rolland, as it answered for Wagner and Tolstoi in the corresponding stage of their careers. They have ceased to be artists primarily. They have become, in one sort or another, world-figures, prophets. That part of Romain Rolland's work subsequent to "Jean-Christophe" may be less grandiose artistically. It is more significant in the history of our age. The epic turns from art to life. The word becomes flesh.

This culling and condensing of a body of work as voluminous as Romain Rolland's has now become, needed to be done, and to be done by someone as close to Rolland in time, sympathy, and personal acquaintance as Marcel Martinet; for readers of another generation, unlike us who have pounced eagerly on these works as they appeared one at a time, may hesitate before their bulk and variety. "What? Read all that?" exclaimed a scholarly I. W. W. to me of "Jean-Christophe" not so long ago. Martinet's condensation will enable the skimming reader, in some sort, to "read all that," while luring hungry minds into the works themselves. It forms, in fact, with its text and comment, a critical biography in itself.

LUCIEN PRICE

## Drama

### Plays of Old Japan

*The No-Plays of Japan.* Translated by Arthur Waley. Alfred A. Knopf. \$5.

THIS beautiful book is full of beautiful images and elegiac reflections. As a piece of translation it is manifestly in no need of praise; as a literary discovery, influence, and model its value for us is by no means equally clear. These playlets are full of wistful loveliness and subdued lamentation over "the sad ways of the world and the bitter ordinances of it." But it occurred to none of the medieval makers of the plays that these sad ways or bitter ordinances could be changed. Their art was servile, hieratical, conventional—a frozen gesture wherewith to soothe or, at most, move to a gentle dreaming the heart of the Shogun, the August Presence. The forms and the subjects and the methods of inner treatment of the No-Plays were all prescribed, so that the authors of them were not artists—proclaimers, prophets, creators—at all, but artificers who, like makers of swords or bracelets, merely varied within impersonal and narrow limits the traditional ornaments upon a changeless form.

Such is the character of the literature of our own dark and middle ages, too. But even amid the stock epithets of old English verse or the conventionalized tags of the ballad-makers there blows every now and then the prophetic wind of personal