

tics—as if it were spiritual and the world will find an end of its sorriest troubles.

There is much with which one might honestly differ in all these books, but they are significant as defenses of the supreme value of personality and of the livingness of reality by men who nevertheless are in profoundest sympathy with the scientific viewpoints of our day.

H. A. OVERSTREET

A Spanish Woman Novelist

Mariflor. By Concha Espina. Translated from the Spanish by Frances Douglas. The Macmillan Company. \$2.50.

The Red Beacon. By Concha Espina. Translated from the Spanish by Frances Douglas. D. Appleton and Company. \$2.

THERE is something in the literature of modern Spain which seems to articulate in an almost inaudible manner the frustration and the futility of its life. In Baroja, in Azorin, in Perez de Ayala, or, better still, in those early records of passion of Unamuno which his later fame has overshadowed, we invariably catch a common note: a subtle vein of melancholy, of regret, similar to, although less precise and more sophisticated than, the sober sadness over the failure of life to bloom which is, in our own literature, the leading motive of Sherwood Anderson. A time there was, amply recorded, when Spanish literature seemed to overbrim with brutal joy. The Spaniard was then assuaged through a desperate activity in chasing from his consciousness the ghost of disillusionment. And while his life was spilled in remote fields of action, his literature, reflecting the exaltation of his life, was a record of sword gashes, revenges, and a repressed lust often too violent to hide itself under the name of mysticism. Today, tired, perhaps, or perhaps spiritually as well as materially bankrupt, his literature has but one theme, disillusionment.

This is the reason why tragedy—that is to say, the failure in a vital aspiration—seldom is to be found in modern Spanish literature. The modern Spaniard—Unamuno is perhaps the only exception—has no really vital aspirations. His is the weariness of a lack of ideals. But if one does not find tragedy in modern Spanish literature, in the best of it one finds the elements of greatness. For it springs—in Baroja and Azorin this is surface clear—from an ineluctable conflict between two permanently opposed interests within the artist: from the conflict between the artist's desideratum for a truly adventurous and noble fulfilment of life and his Sancho Panza longings for comfort and safety.

In Concha Espina, however, these elements of greatness are not to be found. As a technician she seems supremely gifted. She is unusually articulate and sensitive enough to echo the subtle moods of the earth and the sky as well as the petty sufferings of her puppets. But the conflict of truly vital and radical interests, which alone lends a tale of the moment the color of permanence, cannot be found in her. The only grace that raises her from a novelist of sentimental trash into the ranks of interesting mediocrity is a faint sense, of which she seems to be seldom conscious, that the life she describes is adumbrated by the weariness of acknowledged futility. Her theme in both these books is poverty, which drives the sentimental wants of the individual to a conflict with the interests of the family and of established custom. Poverty circles over her creatures with the ever-nearing flight of a hawk, finally clawing them down to submission. It is here that she fails. Her understanding of life is too tenuous to make us feel that the failure of her victims to triumph over poverty is the tragic denouement of what might have been a nobly successful life. Her heart's desire is vulgar. There is no difference between her idea of happiness and that of the shopkeeper. This world would be, for her, the best possible if we could manage to eliminate poverty from it. Then the beautiful girl would be able

to marry the sensitive young poet, rather than sell her charms to a rich elderly man who can save her family from its dire needs. Confronted with the possibility of such a Utopia we cannot help feeling grateful that human stupidity perpetuates so mean a thing as poverty, for it occasionally lends the only glimmer of meaning to human life.

It is true that Concha Espina is "the foremost woman novelist of Spain today," as she has been called. But it should be remembered that since the death of the Countess of Pardo Bazan there has appeared no woman writer capable of doing work of permanent human significance. The fact that she is the recipient of a prize from the Academy merely attests her ideologic and artistic respectability. There is, therefore, very little excuse for the translation of these two books into English. For though writers of universal merit are few today in Spain, there are, nevertheless, several more deserving of the honor of translation than she.

The translations have been well done.

ELISEO VIVAS

Some Essayists

Modern Essays. (Second Series.) Selected by Christopher Morley. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$2.

The East Window and The Car Window. By Bert Leston Taylor. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.50.

Pearls & Pepper. By Robert Palfrey Utter. Yale University Press. \$2.50.

The Mancroft Essays. By Arthur Michael Samuel. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$3.

Now That I'm Fifty. By Albert Payson Terhune. George H. Doran. \$2.

Summer Ghosts and Winter Topics. By Felix E. Schelling. J. B. Lippincott Company. \$2.

Beauty, Truth, and Humour. By Henry Charles Duffin. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 4s. 6d.

MR. MORLEY announces that he has chosen these essays for an "imaginary undergraduate," more aptly described by our grandfathers as the young person, but it is my most earnest recommendation that they be read by the generation which produced the other collections here reviewed. If there be a millionaire bootlegger anxious to emulate the Medici, I hereby urge upon him the service of distributing the "Modern Essays" to the writers under discussion—not excluding Mr. Morley—as an act worthy of the supreme patron of belles-lettres. For if they do nothing else, the essays in this volume demonstrate beyond question or doubt that it is possible to write entertainingly and significantly without imitating the two saccharine saints who opened and closed the nineteenth century. Mr. Morley shows again in his preface and slight introductions the influence of that stilted, Stevensonian geniality and the lulling, Lamb-like love of life which are considered the *sine qua non* of essay writing by most gentlemen nearing their grand climacteric. His paragraphs abound in "high-minded publishers," "nicest people," "high-spirited trade organs," and "most amiable of men." The undergraduate, male and female, is anything but imaginary to me, and I venture to proffer the opinion that the "promissory pupil" of today is sufficiently different from the collegiate literary enthusiast of Mr. Morley's year to call such "kindly humor" sentimental slush. Nevertheless, this young person will enjoy enormously nearly every one of the essays in the book, because behind the mannerism Mr. Morley chooses to affect there is genuine literary appreciation and an understanding mind.

B. L. T., "requiescat in pace," was blessed with broad sympathies and good taste, and he also possessed enough native wit to show through the dressing-gown of an adopted manner. Seated at the East window, however, he drew it close around him; when traveling he naturally discarded the encumbrance. A literary Baedeker would mark him with a double star—

modern but worth while. Mr. Utter, on the other hand, saves part of his work from the state of boredom which only the repetition of a no-longer-popular style can produce less through his modernity than by virtue of his youth. Mr. Utter is still one year shy of fifty, and there is resiliency as well as vigor in his thinking.

Fifty is such a silly season. It is the period when life is so thoroughly a matter of routine that nothing untoward happens. And this absence of accidents is set down by the smug ancients as owing to their accumulated wisdom and mellowed experience. Then out of the fulness of their maturity these mad wags dispense "wise saws and modern instances." Seated in their comfortable studies they seek to forget their commercial, political, or academic occupations by recalling their Elia and their Tusitala. Wrapped in their humorous sadness they ooze out the contemplations "blasted with antiquity," and their style is like the style of a poor relation, a fawning imitation of the patron's manner.

When in his fictitious letters he goes behind the nineteenth-century humorists to an earlier form, Mr. Samuel displays qualities of intelligent apperception and independent speculation. As for the others, "I learned," confesses Mr. Terhune, "that I have unsuspected powers as a bore." Messrs. Schelling and Duffin have not learned that yet, although it is more obvious. When an American bore puts his Touchstone philosophy into print, he is generally dull; when an English one does it, he is stupid.

JOHAN J. SMERTENKO

Tant' Alie

Tant' Alie of Transvaal; Her Diary, 1880-1902. Translated from the Taal by Emily Hobhouse. London: Allen and Unwin, Ltd. 6s.

MEVROUW ALIE BADENHORST, born de Wet, of Mahemsvlei, District Potchefstroom, Transvaal, in the year 1900 found herself alone on her farm with her children and her Kaffir servants, her husband a prisoner of war in the camp at Simonstown, and the future dark and uncertain. On April 21 she got a letter from him, describing the sea and sea-shore landscape, both so new to his inland-bred vision, and telling her of friends, of the camp life, and of his thankfulness that he had not, as yet, been told off to the batches of prisoners being dispatched to St. Helena. He closed his letter, as usual, with affectionate greetings to all his people, "From your husband, who never forgets you." Then for a year she heard no word, good or bad, and as a means of escape from the sorrow and anxiety of her life, she "began to write this book." She went back to her childhood, and put down the story of her life up to the capture of Cronje and the exile of her husband, and then carried the narrative forward until July 3, 1902, when, peace having been made, her husband and the others came home again. "In two steps I was beside him with the cry: 'How old you look, how thin! How are you, how are you?'" And with their farm in black ruin, but with hope renewed in both by the joy of their reunion, they begin again their life, and the story ends.

I say "the story" advisedly; for although the book is virtually a diary, and though she appends by way of epilogue a special affirmation of its absolute truthfulness, Tant' Alie of Transvaal has given us a story as fascinating as any novel, a "human document," as Miss Hobhouse says Olive Schreiner called it, of unusual interest and importance. We live with her through the awful suspense, the needless suffering, the senseless indignities, the physical hardships which the Boer War brought to her and her sisters on the lonely farms and in the unspeakable concentration camps. To Tant' Alie, both her God and her country were fundamental, living realities; her passionate love of both colored and conditioned every hour of her adult life.

But in plain, vigorous phrases she gives us an unvarnished

account of war as it appears both to the fighters and to the non-combatants of the invaded country. Sacred as is to her the cause for which her men are fighting, there is no war-glamor in her mind or in her book. "O that my grief," she writes, "were engraved with a pen of iron so that our children's children might know of it."

She went through the long, terrible months with a courage and gaiety and a ready helpfulness for all who had need of it, very remarkable in consideration of her own continuous illness, and the equally continuous tension under which she lived. Always she was keenly alive to and comforted by natural beauty. Her joy in the loveliness of early morning in the veldt is moving. Product of a simpler, less sophisticated age and culture than our own, she read little but her Bible and her hymns; she shared with the rest of her people a childish horror both of the sea and of hospitals; she loved and hated and believed without analysis and without subtlety. But, in reading these pages, we realize the dignity, the mettle, and the greatness of her type and of her race.

Miss Hobhouse, whose beautiful work for the women and children in the concentration camps is not forgotten, has done the world a service by her publication of this book. Her translation reads smoothly, and she has been careful to preserve the simplicity and decision of the original manuscript.

RUTH S. ALEXANDER

Euphues His English

Last Essays of Maurice Hewlett. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$2.50.

THE career of Maurice Hewlett was curious. He began at the apogee. His early romantic novels, "The Forest Lovers," 1898, and "The Life and Death of Richard Yea-and-Nay," 1900, caught the fancy of the times, and fixed him with precision as a late nineteenth-century euphuist and romantic. Subsequently, Hewlett experienced almost an uninterrupted diminuendo until his death, though he produced a score of books of poetry, fiction, and essays. He ended in unread celebrity with the bitter complaint that he had been immolated for the sins of his youth.

At the beginning of the war Hewlett retired to "Broad Chalke" in the Wiltshire country, and occupied himself with essays and reviews, producing four volumes of fugitive pieces. The fourth now appears as a posthumous collection of "Last Essays."

That Hewlett has had somewhat less than his due, and that he has been esteemed for the wrong things, is true. Yet there is some color for his misjudgment. The character he gave himself in "The Forest Lovers" is apparent in "Last Essays," even after one remarks the lapse of twenty-five years and the difference between a costume novel and a little essay for Mr. J. C. Squire's London *Mercury*. There still lingers about his pages a faint perfume of the nineties. He still wears his erudition like a crimson cloak. And in his style, ever studied, proleptic, elliptical, there is the dexterous and unremitting effort to capture a distinctive and curious manner, calculated, like Pater's, "to bring a highly qualified matter into compass at one view." Hewlett is capable of the boldest flights of cleverness and *pastiche*. Thereby one measures the distance he falls short of finished artistry.

In "Last Essays" he says a word regarding his French interests, Beaumarchais, Cardinal de Retz, Madame de Maintenon, Pierre de L'Estoile, and La Bruyère. He touches upon the current novel and ballad-origins, daffodils and the instincts of human nature dramatized by young ladies who have babies without husbands.

One catches Mr. Hewlett best, however, in his sophisticated return to origins. Latterly he was interested aesthetically in the English peasant, turning back with Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton to the purview of history and society of a romantic Tory.

"I believe in Poverty, Love, and England," he wrote. And