

to communicate a supreme and sufficient bliss to the worshipper, with all those moral and saving effects which this sonnet, for instance, celebrates. The lover in his infatuation, and in the religious chastening of it, is said somehow to find God. Humbug or philosophy, this Platonic mysticism has long been a classic refuge of hopeless emotion, and Shakespeare's sonnets march conventionally in the devout procession. Such ambiguous mysteries, however, are alien to modern sentiment and to the plain man's experience, and we may shut them out without further parlarce.

Plucked of all its Elizabethan feathers, our sonnet might then present somewhat the following appearance:

When times are hard and old friends fall away
And all alone I lose my hope and pluck,
Doubting if God can hear me when I pray,
And brood upon myself and curse my luck,
Envyng some stranger for his handsome face,
His wit, his wealth, his chances, or his friends,
Desiring this man's brains and that man's place,
And vexed with all I have that makes amends,
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,—
By chance I think of you; and then my mind,

Like music from deep sullen murmurs rising
To peals and raptures, leaves the earth behind:
For if you care for me, what need I care
To own the world or be a millionaire?

The reader may laugh, but I have not made the sonnet absurd on purpose; on the contrary I have tried to keep it as good as possible under the conditions imposed. The experiment is not intended to show how an American poet would actually feel or treat Shakespeare's subject, for he would either compose fine imitative literature, with a lapse here and there which he might not be conscious of, or else he would give birth to something entirely novel. The experiment is meant only to make evident how much old finery there is in our literary baggage, and how original an original poet would have to be. Any wise man of Shakespeare's time might have prophesied that ruffs would no longer be worn in three hundred years, but only a genius could have foretold our trousers. So any critic may unfrock Shakespeare, but to dress his thought up again in the costume of a future poetry can be given only to the future poets themselves.

GEORGE SANTAYANA.

Reading Henry James in War Time

"WELL," said my companion, "shall we go down and have a look at the sea before bed?" "Let's look at the night first," I answered, "for it seems very black." We opened the hall door and stepped into such a still darkness as I have rarely felt before; save where the glamor of the sea trembled beyond the edge of the cliff, the night closed in on the land with the soft opacity of velvet. "No, it's certainly no time for a walk," said my companion. "Listen!"

We stared upwards, and then, perceiving that the gaslight from the hall was pouring out a shallow stream of radiance across the greasy garden path, ran back and shut the door. "Oh, I don't think it can be!" I exclaimed incredulously, as I fixed the bolts. "It's much more likely to be a heavy motor on the main road." "But I know," she persisted. "I saw one go up when I was at school in Germany, and it sounded just like this." I stood upright again and listened and was entirely convinced. So, smiling with a curious fixity, we returned to the fireside and discussed the proper attitude to assume to that death now circling above our heads.

The only instructions that had been issued by the authorities had advised us to descend into a cellar or basement, but there were no cellars or basements in the house.

nothing to do except to reflect on the extreme dubiety of the advantages of belonging to the sheltered sex. We have always been denied the vote because we do not take part in war; but now that the war arrives we find that this exemption applies only to the privilege of self-defence and that we enjoy to the full the right to be killed. We would have been rejected with jeers if we had tried to enlist in Kitchener's army, but indeed it would be much more satisfactory to come to an end after a fair fight in the trenches than to sit there, helpless as sheep in a slaughter house, while the protecting sex, safely out of reach, pours down death from the clouds. But that topic soon wore thin, and we each took a book and went to bed, keeping our clothes on in case the protecting sex should aim straight. I felt myself supremely fortunate in having Mr. Henry James's last volume, "Notes on Novelists," in the house, since one could hardly conceive of any author more capable of providing intellectual cover. And for a time I hid from fear quite effectually in the branching complexities of aesthetic theory, the intricate undergrowth of subtle perceptions of the earlier papers in the volume.

It was not long before I came upon certain

Mr. Henry James's latest style. I approached them in different ways. I read them as if they were written in a foreign language, treating obscurities as idioms and translating every word into my colloquialism. More desperately, as the hours grew smaller, I pretended that it was all right, and tried to send my intelligence winging up beside his soaring phrases, as though their flight was to be followed with composure. But the more I did so the stronger became the conviction that these divagations were not the gambols of a winged intellect in an element over which it had full command, but rather the disordered earthward spirals of wings so overworked that free and happy flight had become an impossibility. Every paragraph made it more clear that this later prose was the altar of a bloody sacrifice, on which everything that had in the past made Mr. James's prose living and radiant, a glorious part of the organic world, had been ruthlessly offered up to an increasing fineness of meaning. Gone was the loving command of the color of language which was shown at its most precious, perhaps, in "The Spoils of Poynton," in which we saw the bright "art tint" with which the abominable Brigstocks varnished the corridors of Waterbath, with a distinctness that, contrasting with the not less distinct glories of the Spanish altar-cloths and Maltese crosses of Poynton, gave us the final conviction of the importance of the battle which formed the idea of the story. Gone was that rhythm which made "The Altar of the Dead" sound like a solemn and consoling mass, and its worshippers seem not sentimentalists hugging an affectation, but earnest mystics.

All these aids to the ultimate significance of his work he has sacrificed to a desire to hammer out the immediate significance of each sentence to as thin a radiance as gold-leaf. He splits hairs till there are no longer any hairs to split, and the mental gesture becomes merely the making of agitated passes over a complete and disconcerting baldness. One does not deny that these excesses are incidental and that the prose still has a loveliness of its own; but it is no longer the beauty of a living thing, but rather the "made" beauty which bases its claims to admiration chiefly on its ingenuity, like those crystal clocks with jeweled works and figures that moved as the hours chimed, which were the glory of mediaeval palaces, and which so unaccountably fail to kindle our enthusiasm when we go abroad to-day.

One perceives in the essay on "The New Novel" that this forgetfulness of free and lively movement impedes his matter as well as his manner. There he takes four young English novelists, and

way from which, one would have imagined, the first reaction of his literary nerves from the stimuli of their marked though different personalities would have delivered him. Three of them are young men who are mentionable figures entirely by virtue of their ingenuous youthfulness: Mr. Hugh Walpole, engaging us chiefly by his naïve habit of trying over the formulae of older successful novelists, much as a boy rapturously practises the peculiar throw of some famous bowler; Mr. Gilbert Cannan, being at that stage of artistic adolescence which understands the recipe for realism to consist in taking up the carpets and showing the bare boards; and Mr. Compton Mackenzie, attracting our attention by his spirited attempt to reconcile in the copiousness and preciousness of "Sinister Street" those two apparently irreconcilable enthusiasms of a still earlier stage of adolescence, Balzac and the Yellow Book. Yet Mr. James treated them separately and conjointly with thousands of sentences which proliferated into less numerable parentheses, and even a few of those rare, precious italics, of delicate emphasis and accumulated to an almost choral effect of admiration and respect. And when, in the midst of our amazement, we see that Mr. D. H. Lawrence, the only author of this youngest generation who has not only written but also created, and created with such power that he would be honorable in any generation, receives nothing but a scornful parenthesis which depicts him "hanging in the dusty rear" of Mr. Cannan and Mr. Mackenzie, we realize that we have witnessed a real failure of enlightenment. How is it possible, we ask, that Mr. James should not approve an author who has given us such beauty as brims over in "Sons and Lovers"?

Almost certainly we may ascribe both this misjudgment and the deterioration in style to the same cause, which is as fundamental a thing as Mr. James's conception of the duty of an author. He belongs to the school of Flaubert, the school which held that the author's first concern was with his style; and by that they did not mean merely the treatment of their themes in an appropriate manner. One can prove that by an examination of "Madame Bovary." Assuredly Flaubert did not embark upon the study of that poor vaporish little housemaid under any illusion as to the beauty and importance of her existence. He chose it simply that he might use it as a grindstone on which to whet his qualities; he sought full knowledge of Emma's being in order that he might by that fraction be nearer to omniscience; he transmuted that trivial life to important elegance in order that he might exercise his power of refinement

portant than the effect of the book. For it was the author's duty not to discover beauty but to attain to personal magnificence; to tower above life in tranquillity, and look down upon it with infinite understanding; to be a god in one's brain. To that ambition Mr. James has—one almost wrote sacrificed himself, but it is not that. It is true that he has learned to hold the beauty of his sentences as nothing so long as he can manifest a superhuman comprehension of every aspect of his argument. It is true that he has learned to detest the ungodlike attributes of humanity so intensely that he qualifies a man of the genius of Mr. Lawrence because his youthful tongue occasionally falls into excited schoolboy stammerings about sex, while Mr. Cannan and Mr. Mackenzie gain his respect because, having nerves more stable (as they are less sensitive) than Mr. Lawrence, they attain to a greater dignity. But indeed he has succeeded as splendidly as poor Flaubert, with his museum of superb and tarnished treasures, failed. The presence of this marvelous brain, manifested

in those innumerable volumes, brings such reinforcement to our faith in the intellect as the pious would find in the company of a saint.

I had once felt it as an alienating quality of Mr. James's genius that his work showed an inhuman incapacity for enthusiasm, that he disliked and refused causes coolly as other people dislike and refuse seed-cake. But as the throb of the Zeppelin returned and I knew again the helpless rage of the non-combatant, the sick fear of instant death, I realized that enthusiasm was not so necessarily divine as I had thought. For those murderers by intent who were circling above my head in an attempt to locate the lightless town for purposes of butchery were probably burning with as pure and exalted a passion as they could conceive. This war has shown that every warm passion—loyalty, patriotism, ambition—can be perverted to obscene uses. Nothing is innocent in man except the mind.

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“On the Loose”

IN one of the stories of that excellent ethnographer, Arnold Bennett, figures an organization of one of the Five Towns called “The Going Away Club.” One day when the wife of one of its members is all but broken down by the dreary monotony and routine of her married life, a life of material pinching and spiritual starvation with never a break or diversion—one day her unyielding and saving husband flings down on the table a handful of money, a paid-up policy from the Going Away Club. On this fruit of their weekly premiums they will now, he says, take a vacation. They go to a “holiday resort,” they take in all the shows, they live *en prince*, spending as much money on one afternoon tea as they could have lived on for days at home. Then, after their week of hectic extravagance, they return home, happy and bankrupt, to go on with their monotonous life and make their regular payments to the organization that will assure them another period of debauchery another year.

It is a very graphic picture of the alternative often characteristic of toil and pleasure in primitive life—unbroken routine, unemotional repetition, and then an outburst, satiation, excess, material and emotional debauchery. We see it in the laborer who works hard all week to spend his earnings of a Saturday night in the “pub” or saloon; in the sailor or miner or back-

and have “a hell of a good time;” in the college boy who breaks training at the end of his final match, in the Australian Blackfellow who breaks through all the most binding of his tribal rules at his periodic *corrobboree*.

Thanks to different economic conditions, the daily life of the Blackfellow is not as regular as, let us say, the life of a native of the Five Towns, but it is equally undiverting and quite as habit-bound. The Australian sense of time is not as nice or as subject to control as the English, but it is even more exacting. The license of the Australian is sexual as well as dietary. English public opinion is a check along this line—at least for members of the Going Away Club. But sexual license does characterize the Anglo-Saxon outbreak against habit—consider the sex phenomena of “revivals,” or the indulgence given sailors in port and soldiers on leave. And then does not the whole system of prostitution depend in fact on the craving for an outbreak? Is it not supported by the men who in their daily life have less sex stimulus than the men who never visit a house of prostitution, by the men whose relations with women are slight or trivial or unimaginative, whose personal relationships are negligible? A man in love does not visit a house of prostitution.

The main difference between modern and primi-