

Booth Tarkington's New Novel

The Turmoil, by Booth Tarkington. New York: Harper & Brothers. \$1.35 net.

MR. George Primrose, meeting in Paris an old friend who had turned into an expert buyer of pictures, and asking how one became "a cognoscento so very suddenly," was told that nothing was easier: "The whole secret consisted in a strict adherence to two rules: the one, always to observe that the picture might have been better if the painter had taken more pains; and the other, to praise the works of Pietro Perugino."

Quite as simple are the rules for reviewing a new book by Mr. Booth Tarkington. You must always say that the book sounds as if Mr. Tarkington greatly enjoyed observing life and making up stories. You must add that he is a notable imaginer of talk that hits off the talker's character.

Both of these old assertions are proved again by "The Turmoil," which is a full-length portrait of an American business man against a background of smoky, sooty midland city. Sheridan, the man's name is. He has had his ups and downs, he once came rather near the penitentiary, he is playing safe now, and making the game pay. On his dinner table, when he loudly and enormously celebrates his removal to the New House, in a fashionable part of town, stands a model of the Sheridan Building, tallest of the city's skyscrapers, in icing. There too are models of the Sheridan Apartments and the Pump Works. Sheridan roars and sings through that dinner, tasteless, unperceiving, boastful. The worship and the service of bigness are his life. He can conceive the existence of no other gods. Noisily and threateningly he goes his domineering way. Blindly, also, for he crushes his second son with overwork, and doesn't even try to understand his dreamy youngest son, Bibbs.

And yet—nevertheless—somehow—after all. Sheridan, as you come to know him better, doesn't indeed force you to retract more than one or two of your earlier judgments. Most of the things you said about him were true and stay true. But you end by seeing how far they fall short of telling the whole story. You can't help respecting Sheridan's momentum. Work and grief give him a kind of dignity and a kind of touchingness. His judgments are not ungenerous—see how he understands and admires the brave girl who wouldn't marry his eldest son for money. He is boastful—but he pretends he didn't risk his life to save his youngest son's.

You begin by disliking Sheridan and end by liking him. Impossible to put your finger on the moment when the change set in. You shirk the difficulty by saying time has done the trick, paying thus a deserved compliment to Mr. Tarkington, time's imitator and rival. The gradualness of your change of mind, about Sheridan and Sheridan's city, is due to Mr. Tarkington's excellent craftsmanship. The incompleteness of the change is due to his wisdom. He does not forget that this energy he makes you respect and admire is imprisoning, that more liberal lives are lived elsewhere, not upon Sheridan's terms. Which is only a way of saying that Mr. Tarkington's heart's desire doesn't keep his imagination from understanding the desires of various hearts.

Stevenson would have liked the words Mr. Tarkington has put into Sheridan's mouth. Nearly all Sheridan's speeches, whether long-winded or short, angry or vehemently complacent, sound just like him.

most successful pictures of American business men.

A novel by Mr. Tarkington often leaves you wondering how widely or how slightly different it would have been if he had chosen to take his talent a little more seriously. "The Turmoil" does just this. It contains, besides the central figure, two sound sketches of less important business men, Sheridan's elder sons. It contains a conventional picture of an overdressed and vindictive adultress, who would not be out of place in a rather poor play. It contains a couple of negro servants whose manufacture must have cost Mr. Tarkington exactly nothing. It represents, with accuracy and without insistence, the attitude of very busy American men toward their "social superiors," and the very different attitude of these same men's wives and sisters.

And of course "The Turmoil" contains a love story. A girl whose family is in bitter need of money bravely decides to marry for money, rather nobly decides not to, and ends by getting money plus a man she loves. Love wakes an ineffective dreamer and turns him into an effective man of business. Rather a commonplace love story, made very engaging by the pleasantness of the lovers, he self-depreciative and humorous, she concise and spirited and plucky.

There is also in "The Turmoil" a figure quite as interesting as Sheridan himself, a figure the author didn't try to paint, his own. That Mr. Tarkington has an extraordinary natural gift for character-drawing, especially in dialogue, that he is a most workmanlike observer and renderer of surfaces—so much nobody can help seeing. You are almost as certain that he does not care to go very deep into the human heart; that his love of romance is rather strangely at peace with his desire to get the real look of things; that he values his finest achievements as lightly as he values his least fine, that he pleases himself while doing both and forgets both when done. Behind the artist you guess at somebody further withdrawn, generous-minded, tolerant, a lover of courage and beauty and energy, a lover of life; a man who sees with his own eyes, freshly, things that are not very new.

Hero Myths According to Freud

The Myth of the Birth of the Hero, by Dr. Otto Rank. Authorized translation from the German by Drs. F. Robbins and Smith Ely Jelliffe. New York: Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Co. \$1.00.

THAT the mind of the child comes into the world alive with racial experiences; that its early years are passed in a struggle to fix its own position; that after the first few years the record of this fixation sinks into the unconscious, only to be revived in symbolic dreams, in fancy and in imagination, all of which contain wishes, is the basis of the Freudian psychology. According to it, the infantile mind contains potentialities of everything human: its struggle to find itself reproduces all the life- and death-grapples of the race. It generally conquers—generally reaches a normal biological fixation. When the victory is not won, the struggle continues into adult life, and is manifested in the extraordinary behavior of certain neurotics.

His critics call Freud indecent and accuse him of investing the mind of the child with thoughts it could not possibly entertain. Freud replies that truth is never inde-

that they concern early phases of development only, and then, for the most part, disappear.

The theory begins with an axiom, for these early mental experiences are rarely accessible to direct examination. The proof of the final proposition is the demonstration that no subsequent conclusion conflicts with the axiom. Freud and his industrious followers may be relied on to make any such conflict improbable, for they admit no constant standard for the symbols found in dreams, although these symbols are indispensable to the method. They make symbols mean what they like. The result is that the modern dream interpreters, in explaining the fancies of others have few checks put upon their own, and oftentimes the results of their inquiries suggest revelation rather than science. But on the other hand, now and then they hit on a result so startling in its human truth that the theory or method or whatever it is cannot be brushed aside because it does not follow beaten paths or because it reveals things about ourselves or about our friends which arouse our finer feelings to revolt.

The Freudian hypotheses have resulted chiefly from analyses of individual cases of neurosis, and from these the most sweeping generalizations have been drawn. The book by Dr. Rank is one of the few serious attempts to substantiate them by a critical examination of evidence not derived exclusively by means of this method.

Hero myths of such prominent civilized peoples as the Babylonians, Hebrews, Hindoos, Iranians, Persians, Greeks, Romans and Teutons, constitute the material. It appears that the history of the birth and early life of all myth heroes is interwoven with fantastic features, and all of the stories are bafflingly similar. The author emphasizes especially the following fundamental analogies. There are obstacles to the birth of the hero who has been prophesied, and mystery and uncertainty as to his parentage. He is often exposed to the water (Moses, Perseus, etc.) and water is considered as a symbol of birth (Venus, the stork, the child carrier, Lohengrin coming and going by water). The hero, uncertainly born, is rescued by animals or shepherds or lowly people. Eventually he attains rank and honors, takes revenge on his father (Oedipus) or returns to him (Jesus). Through all there is mystery as to the parentage of the hero (the main interest in Lohengrin) and a final exaltation of him. Rank compares the essentials with those of a common phantasy of childhood, which as far as sexual rivalry is concerned is best illustrated by the Oedipus myth. Oedipus, presumably a foundling, kills his father, takes his place, and marries his mother. The child, say the Freudians, dissatisfied with his position of inferiority in the family, develops a phantasy similar in content to the Oedipus myth.

The resentment of the male child is toward his father. The child's egotistic fantasy strives for some more satisfactory position for himself, and this wish often finds its realization in the fabrications that he is superior to his environment and that as a consequence these two old people are not his real parents. That this phantasy, even though forgotten, is practically constant in most children, the Freudians claim they can show by dream analysis; and that some such idea frequently remains in conscious memory is a fact well known before Freud. The present writer has a vivid recollection of a winter day, years ago, when he missed his dinner by reason of it. He waited for hours on the snow-packed main street of a country town

where he was anxiously awaited as heir, and which was quite a different affair from the modest wooden structure in which his real parents lived. Such phantasies are accounted for by a feeling of resentment on the part of the child at his position of inequality. In the actual world he finds himself repressed, pushed aside, loved less than he should be; in his feeling of resentment and jealousy he desires a world where he shall be the central figure, the hero, and presto! he finds what he wants in the world of phantasy—the land of dreams. But in this world which his wishes construct he must lose his parents through his own exaltation; for he has become king, prince, president, millionaire, base-ball captain, a person of far greater influence than would be consistent with his humdrum surroundings.

The same exaltation is frequently achieved by the insane. Those interested in criminal cases may recall that a man named Robin, or Robinowitsch, who was tried for embezzlement in New York a few years ago, declared that the old Russian couple who had brought him to this country as a child were not his parents. The public interpreted this as additional evidence of ingratitude and depravity; but the alienists maintained that it was quite in keeping with the prisoner's ideas of grandeur. Both childhood phantasies and delusions of grandeur—which reproduce childhood phantasies—contain all the essential elements of hero myths—viz. doubt as to birth, and exaltation of self, both sprung from a feeling of resentment, this latter being shown in the myths through revenge on the father, as exemplified in the Oedipus myth.

For further details of this exposition the reader is referred to the book. The author concludes that infantile phantasy is the source of the first myth and that the first myth is a composite infantile phantasy. He rejects absolutely the interpretation which personifies the hero with the processes of nature. He calls the myth the "dream of the masses of the people." It is not constructed by the hero himself, but by adults who invest the hero with their own infantile history. The investiture is drawn, not from conscious memories, but from the fantastic dreamland of childhood, which is the chief source of creative imagination.

PEARCE BAILEY, M.D.

From Peace to Patriotism

A Belgian Christmas Eve, by Alfred Noyes. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company. \$1.00 net.

BEFORE the war, friends of Mr. Alfred Noyes took him to task for neglecting his lyric gift in order to agitate for the peace movement, expound amateur philosophy in public lectures, and undertake other duties which are well performed by many who have not the rare privilege of being able to write a poem. Mr. Noyes is said to have replied on one of these occasions that if it came to a question of alternatives, he would rather help the peace movement than create poetry. In a more consecrated poet it would have been a courageous attitude; in a less platitudinous philosopher it would have been a hopeful one.

"A Belgian Christmas Eve" was originally produced in 1913 as an anti-war play entitled "Rada." Its scene in the Balkans, it presented the contrast of war with Christianity by showing a state of belligerency in a small village on