

putation of slovenly good will and bureaucratic mismanagement which so many charitable enterprises have conferred upon it. The volume is literally part of a survey of the field, an estimation of cause and effect. And it has the fascination of having been composed by people who, like Miss True, are human beings, not tabulating machines.

HERBERT J. SELIGMANN.

"Big Things" in Poetry

You and I, by Harriet Monroe. New York: The Macmillan Co. \$1.25 net.

"WHAT we think of may be enormous—the cosmic times and spaces, for example—whereas the inner state may be the most fugitive and paltry activity of mind. Yet the cosmic objects, so far as the experience yields them, are but ideal pictures of something whose existence we do not inwardly possess but only point at outwardly, while the inner state is our very experience itself. . . . It is a *full* fact, even though it be an insignificant one; it is of the *kind* to which all realities whatsoever must belong."

This passage from Professor James throws into relief one of the fallacies which have been most marked in American literature and art, and one which Miss Monroe's poems illustrate. We seem to feel that phenomena of "enormous" objective importance necessarily imply a corresponding demand on the mind of the poet and the artist. It is easy to understand how a people like ourselves, weak and confused in our understanding of the word personality and always ready to substitute an aggressive individualism for it, should have lost our bearings among all the "big" things that make up our life; but our future depends, for all that, upon disentangling "real things" from things we "point at outwardly," and upon deliberately refusing to stretch our emotional natures beyond the range of experience that is honestly ours.

Lately Miss Monroe, if we are not mistaken, pointed out the tremendous opportunity the Panama Canal opens to American poets. Such an idea comes naturally to a mind so public-spirited, progressive, and humanitarian as hers. Yet her own volume shows its unfortunate effect upon poetry. She has risen, deliberately and conscientiously, to many tremendous opportunities of this kind. The Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, the wreck of the *Titanic*, the Canal itself, the passing of the Hetch-Hetchy, have all been celebrated by her. The result is, in those poems, as in the "Letter from Peking" and others of the sort, an almost complete obliteration of personality, a substitution of muscularity for sensitiveness, a loss of elasticity, a too professional touch, a too frequent resort to rhetoric. Ode-making is never more dangerous than when it springs from a sense of patriotic obligation, especially in a country which is more remarkable for the things people do than for the things people are.

But this is merely one tendency in a collection which is large and various, and contains much that is fresh and personal. One finds, for example, such a charming lyric as "After Sunset":

The forest was a shrine for her,
A temple richly dressed;
And worshippers the tall trees were

She took to herself the waning day
Like a round twilight moon,
Serenely rising far away—
A silvery moon of June,
That whiter than the morning is
And fairer than the noon.

The dim world darkened round her—all
Was night save where she shone,
Save where she stood so slim and small
The shadowed earth upon;
As though the earth were new, and she
Would light its fires anon.

Which serves to show how much for poetry are the most fugitive things.

VAN WYCK BROOKS.

Testimony in Meeting

George Bernard Shaw: Harlequin or Patriot? by John Palmer. New York: The Century Co. 50 cents net.

NOW that Mr. Shaw has suffered the editorial condemnation of the *New York Times*, the eternal parlor discussion as to his sincerity has risen to eloquent fervor. The fact that he has not been lynched for his "Commonsense About the War" is the greatest proof, says the *Times*, of the contempt in which Englishmen hold him. Mr. Alfred Noyes suggests putting him in the Tower. The suggestion smacks of English futility in the face of satire. Shaw's grin in the Tower would be a Gargantuan and symbolic spectacle, to dissolve the boredom of many generations when they consider the early twentieth century.

To give heart to the parlor Shavians comes Mr. John Palmer, successor to Mr. Shaw and Mr. Beerbohm as dramatic critic of the *Saturday Review*. He engagingly announces, from the vantage ground of personal knowledge, that most of the popular conceptions of Shaw are quite wrong. Shaw is not an original thinker, but the popularizer of theories long taught in the universities. He really doesn't consider himself a better playwright than Shakespeare; he criticises himself impartially, and writes about himself so much merely because he is a good critic and finds ordinary criticism inadequate. Shaw is not a jester, but a carefully read and serious thinker. Shaw acquired the reputation of being a merciless rationalist only because he can use logic when he wants to and isn't afraid of it. He is not a dangerous anarchist, but a methodical man with a deep sense of responsibility. He is a passionate puritan and reformer. The magic of G. B. S. is not what he has to say, but the way he says it. He had his power and prejudice before he had his arguments. Mr. Palmer ends by excusing Mr. Shaw for his "Commonsense" on the ground that it is a mistake, but a mistake due to Shaw's greatest virtues. . . . Of course, of course—and not at all.

Well, the value of Mr. Palmer's booklet is not what he has to say, but the warmth that made him say it. He had his passion before he had his arguments. All that is true didn't need corroborative testimony: if it had, the testimony would have been incriminating. We dislike the alternative "Harlequin or Patriot." We imagine with sympathy Shaw's snort of disgust at the evaluation of his most costly and passionate candor as a lovable mistake covering a furtive but conventional patriotism. But it must

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