

woman should be eligible for president of a woman's college unless, by training several children of her own, she has passed through the enriching career which would qualify her wisely to influence younger women just when they are gazing with eyes of wonder into the land of Romance." "Feminism is the acme not only of anarchistic individualism but of gross materialism." "Woman, like man, must choose between freedom and duty. Her yearning for freedom is not discreditable. It has been shared by the world's noblest spirits. It is, indeed, say the philosophers, an intimation of immortality. But freedom, pursued after it parts company with duty, leads to destruction. And duty to the child is the supreme duty for woman, since, if she abandon that duty, the race must decline." "Woman need not depart from her own province to find abundant means of self-development, of new achievements." "I recall another dear old lady who took her last stand upon crocheted table mats, which she, breathing defiance at modern machinery, refused to abandon."

Except for the stress on divorce, I cannot see that Mr. and Mrs. John Martin differ essentially from the Rev. Knox-Little. It is true that Mr. Martin discusses industry at length and Mrs. Martin discusses domestic service. They have the air of elaborating an argument. But the degree of their enlightenment as to modern woman is similar to that of Mr. Little. Like him, and like a large proportion of the public, they shelter behind pious talk as to institutions the acceptance of a sub-human relation between the female and the male.

Woman's differences from man are worth discussing. There are many sides to the problem of economic independence, to the question of woman's place in industry, to the conflicts between the extreme feminist view as to sexual intercourse and the ordinary respectable view. The case for the established order should not be glibly dismissed. But unless minds meet there cannot be discussion, and the Martins have not given us minds to meet.

What Shaw said of the British public is true of the Martins. "They are everywhere united by the bond of their common nonsense, their invincible determination to tell and be told lies about everything, and their power of dealing acquisitively and successfully with facts whilst keeping them, like disaffected slaves, rigidly in their proper place; that is, outside the moral consciousness." Feminism has its excesses. But to discuss them in this connection would be to assume that the Martins or the Knox-Littles had been entertaining realities. Realities, indeed! In the words of Mr. Shaw, "I drop the subject with a hollow laugh."

F. H.

Artzibashef

THE widespread belief in a greater Russia, in so far as it is more than a matter of sheer mysticism, probably draws its strongest support from the achievements of Russian literature in its prime. Those of us who absorbed Tolstoi, Turgenief and Dostoevski were indeed thrilled by the new promise which these writers seemed to hold. The large canvases on which they worked, the sweep and breadth of their stroke, their penetrating analyses, came to us as a volcanic revelation of what had long been lacking in our more reserved and timid delineation of human character. Their emphasis upon the under side of humanity impressed us in proportion as we had been surfeited by what seemed, by comparison with our own writers, an exclusive concentration upon the mere veneer of human intercourse.

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We read them, as every new work of literature should at first be read, with a generous warmth of appreciation rather than with that critical reserve which too often erects a wall before our eyes ere we have had time to look over into our neighbor's garden. What we read amazed and often frightened us. Where we encountered such depths and abysses of human character we hoped also to find the noblest expressions of the human spirit. We longed for contrasts. For us who were always looking for something to come Russian literature became a literature of great expectations. We were in no mood to realize how unstable was the world in which Tolstoi's pseudo-epic figures moved, how tortured the creatures of Dostoevski's pen really were, or how often Turgenief just missed achieving a true portraiture of the mighty originals that he vainly strove to imprison in a borrowed Gallic felicity of form.

No revision of judgment is likely to shake our appreciation of the Russian novel. We may deplore the fatal legacy of nihilistic negation which Tolstoi and Turgenief fostered in the Russian *Weltanschauung* and see in Dostoevski's morbid interest in the disintegration of personality the beginning of a true decadence. It is also easy to point out that a literature which often grew tediously garrulous about the problems of the soul and God and immortality rarely rose above the platitude that death is life's inevitable sequel or to point out that the true serenity of classic literature, so imbued with a curious, arresting timelessness, was conspicuously absent in writers who dabbled in all the philosophies and re-invented all the religions. We would not naturally link their names with Goethe or Dante or the Greek dramatists. For in the final analysis they lacked what these abundantly had, a rich and balanced philosophy of life. Their philo-

sophy did not even satisfy their own generation and drove the next to sterility or to desperation. The resignation they preached too soon sounded like a madness. They have not, like a true classic, become expressive of an epoch and interpretative of a civilization. They stood out in sharp contrast from what had not yet become a civilization. They were eloquent of a chaos.

At least they gave us a standard. They had undeniable grandeur. There is nothing in our novels comparable to them. To match them at their best we must search our finest tragedies or turn to the Judaic masterpieces. More to the latter perhaps, for Russian literature is essentially a religious expression. And those of us who knew our Tolstoi, Turgenief and Dostoevski well found no difficulty in following Merejkowski, Russia's ablest literary critic, when he spoke of the decadence that followed the passing of these three writers, with Tchekoff and Gorky as transition figures. His criticism is concretely illustrated in such an epigonus writer as Andreyev, with his curious febrile quality, his chattering style and his habit of pushing undigested metaphysics *à l'outrance*. A similar deterioration is already noticeable in much of Gorky, a writer greatly appreciated in this country until some of our best people discovered that this embittered and consumptive man had for many years displayed the most exemplary marital virtues towards a woman who was not his legal wife.

Only with such a standard and against such a background are we likely to come to any just conclusion about a writer like Artzibashef. And in order to do so we must also ignore as much as possible the current vogue for Russian fiction which just now makes almost any novel translated from the Russian a best seller. For the real value of any writer is almost inevitably obscured in an atmosphere which lays chief stress upon the bizarre and the exotic, which treats literature either as a stimulant or a narcotic. It is the more difficult to do this in the case of Artzibashef because he came to us on the wave of a *succès de scandale* which had already carried him into most of the continental countries. His "Sanine" had been altogether too grandiloquently interpreted on the basis of its supposed relation to the abortive Russian revolution of 1907. The book was said to voice the despair and desperation of young Russia at the failure to achieve the political freedom which the convocation of the Duma had seemed to herald. The youth of Russia, balked in their desire for freedom of thought and press and political action, so the interpretation ran, had here asserted their sexual freedom to indulge their passion without restraint as well as their alcoholic freedom to consume even more vodka than before. This was their answer and their defiance in the face of tyranny, and "Sanine," written by one in sympathy with their struggle and their aspirations, was their gospel.

Now unfortunately Artzibashef himself, in a prefatory letter to the "Millionaire," flatly denied this. "Sanine" had already been written in 1903, long before the revolution. It was written, moreover, by a man quite through with any faith in collective revolution or political action who had addressed himself to preaching a type of extreme individualism more or less modeled upon the writings of Max Stirner. It is true that the novel was not published until during the revolution and that it was avidly read in Russia only after it had been censored but reprieved in Germany. But it is likely that the youth of Russia would have plunged into more or less the same dissipation without "Sanine" and it would be equally unsound to blame Artzibashef as a corruptor of youth or to exalt him as a great artist on account of his supposed ability to sweep a nation

into admired excesses. In the light of these facts Gilbert Cannan's introduction to the American edition of "Sanine" is a really remarkable piece of misinformation and special pleading.

In the "Breaking Point" the author's point of view has completely changed. While in "Sanine" he still seemed to believe in a fanatical and altogether anti-social individualism he now preaches a doctrine of pure negativism, a complete passivism which arouses itself only to advocate universal suicide. In "Sanine" he had already derided political activity; here he dismisses every kind of activity. Life is always cruel, hopeless, treacherous; goodness and virtue are wasted energy against overpowering odds. The only refuge is Naumoffism, the doctrine that life must be destroyed. "The great thing is to destroy in people the superstition about life, point out to them that they have no right to protract the senseless comedy." In support of this thesis we are first shown a series of incurable invalids, all of whom die some wretched and lingering death. Then follows a veritable epidemic of suicide in the course of which, as in Stevenson's fantastic suicide club, almost all the remaining characters in the novel kill themselves. Dr. Arnold, one of the few important survivors, is asked why he does not shoot himself. His answer is, "Why should I shoot myself? I've been dead a long time as it is!"

It is very tempting, in the case of Artzibashef, to make one of those grandiose but thoroughly unsound sociological criticisms which attempt to interpret a piece of literature in terms of praise or condemnation of a whole people. Thus we might say that in a country so hopelessly oppressed as Russia there is no choice between the unbalanced and distorted individualism of "Sanine" and the equally insane surrender of life that we find in the "Breaking Point." But that would be to assume a determinism for a whole people such as we have long ago rejected as unfair and insulting towards an individual. There is really nothing inevitable about the writings of Artzibashef. They reveal him as a powerful but very limited writer whose main emotional resource lies in dilating upon the human misery of disease and the exaggerated terror of death. With such a bias he can never escape from the artistic vice of excess despite a very real genius for expression. His very power becomes a weakness, for the horror at which he aims grows mechanical and overreaches into caricature. The merest tyro can be eloquent about the sinking of the Titanic, the agony of a mother who sees her child burnt before her very eyes, the sack of a town by drunken soldiers. But only a diseased temperament will find the meaning of life in its horrors and its failure and pretend to take high philosophical grounds in declaring that it is meaningless.

The most notable of the three stories in the "Millionaire" is "Ivan Lande," a brutal but salutary parody of the Tolstolian doctrine of non-resistance carried to its logical extreme. It should be read by all Tolstoians. "Nina" tells of how the magistrate, the police commissioner and the coroner of a small Russian village, having raped and killed a pretty school teacher as the climax of drunken revelry, are called upon the next morning to investigate their own crime. They try to fasten it upon an innocent man but are soon mobbed by the suspicious villagers. Troops are sent for and in the ensuing riot a score of peasants are shot down. It is a swift and terrible story told with artistic economy and considerable restraint. Both these tales give us a glimpse of a more objective side of Artzibashef and raise the expectation that his forthcoming "Tales of the Revolution" will perhaps show us his best work.

ALFRED KUTTNER.

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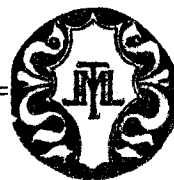
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