

influence of Moslem dominance. A verse of Rigveda is quoted to show that the women were comparatively free to choose their mates in Vedic times. Then follow quotations from the Code known after the name of Menu (a compilation in its present form of the early centuries of the Christian era, representing rather decadent Hinduism), showing the dependent position of woman in Hindu society. We regret the omission of all reference to a verse which says that a family which neglects to honor women soon sinks into ignominy. Later on (p. 288) we are told: "Certainly women in the epic and dramatic poetry stand out vividly in the wild luxuriance of free and unfettered action. They choose their lovers from those who have done heroic deeds in brilliant scenes of combat between rival wooers."

The last chapter gives a brief account of the rise and progress of the modern religious movements like the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Somaj, and the Rama Krishna Mission. A slight reference is made to the servants of India society of Mr. Gokhale. The Moslem organizations and the political movements are altogether ignored.

However, the book, as far as it goes, is characterized by honesty of purpose and will be useful to those who read it with care and judgment.

LAJPAT RAI.

First Aid to Writers

On the Art of Writing, by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch.
New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$1.50 net.

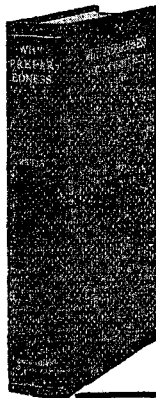
ONE cannot read these charming lectures without envying the undergraduate audience that heard Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch deliver them, at Cambridge in the season of 1913-14, as King Edward VII Professor of English Literature. Sir Arthur has made so few changes from the text as he spoke it that in his preface he apologizes for repetitions, for "arguments dropped and left at loose ends," for "certain small vivacities" and "sallies that meet fools with their folly." It is easy to excuse these signs of origin. The "vivacities" are rather good fun, and as for dropped arguments, nothing in the fabric of the book leads one to hope that arguments will be carried straight to their end. Over the business of starting and stopping each lecture a little time is wasted—but in no other way is the book the worse for having been written to be spoken.

Sir Arthur has a passion for good English, for the good English that was written long ago and lately, that men are now writing and that the future will write. "As literature is an art," he says, "and therefore not to be pondered only, but practised, so ours is a living language and therefore to be kept alive, supple, active in all honorable uses." "For all these writers were alive," he says again, "and I tell you it is an inspiring thing to be alive and trying to write English." The persuasiveness of his passion, which looks back and sees good English of many kinds, which looks forward and welcomes new words and new feeling, is the first originality of his book. The second is his love of the Latin strain in English literature. "I hazard that the most important thing in our blood is that purple drop of the imperial murex we derive from Rome." "We English," he says, "have had above all nations lying wide of the Mediterranean the instinct to refresh and renew ourselves at Mediterranean wells; . . . again and again our writers—our poets especially—have sought them as the hart panteth after the water-brooks."

Although Sir Arthur is and chooses to be in this book a persuader and stimulator, not a thinker, yet when he reflects and generalizes the result is often a remark which is of real value to writers, as when he says: "Now if you accept the argument so far as we have led it—that verse is by nature more emotional than prose—certain consequences would seem to follow: of which the first is that while the capital difficulty of verse consists in saying ordinary things, the capital difficulty of prose consists in saying extraordinary things; that while with verse, keyed for high moments, the trouble is to manage the intervals, with prose the trouble is to manage the high moments." This is useful to the poet and prosewriter who wish to be made each aware of the special difficulty he is resolved to conquer; and equally useful to the prosewriter whom it persuades to avoid high moments by keeping his prose in a low key, and to the poet who can by steering clear of narrative verse escape the inconvenience of trying to say ordinary things. In a lyric or an ode you do not have to describe a man changing his shirt.

No writer can read without shame Sir Arthur's "Interlude: On Jargon." We may never to the best of our recollections have been guilty of anything quite so bad as his worst specimens, like this one from the *London Times*: "One of the most important reforms mentioned in the rescript is the unification of the organization of judicial institutions and the guarantee for all the tribunals of the independence necessary for securing to all classes of the community equality before the law." Yet into jargon of one sort or another nearly all of us fall, especially if our business tempts us to "write apace, read somewhat seldom, think perhaps even less." In spite of "that guiltiest feeling," it is nevertheless pleasant to read the "Interlude," because Sir Arthur's dislike of jargon expresses itself mostly as a love of better English.

He gives few rules. To whom are they addressed? To narrators, explainers, instillers of conviction, self-revealers, elegiac poets or satirists? No, to all writers. At what moment in the long literary process does Sir Arthur imag-



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(3) Generally use transitive verbs, that strike their object; and use them in the active voice, eschewing the stationary passive, with its little auxiliary *is's* and *was's*, and its participles getting into the light of your adjectives, which should be few. For, as a rough law, by his use of the straight verb and by his economy of adjectives you can tell a man's style, if it be masculine or neuter, writing or "composition."

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Q. K.

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The New International Year Book. Edited by Frank Moore Colby. New York: Dodd Mead and Co.

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