

into a more effective agency for expressing the legislative decision of the Powers. The Fabians propose a permanent International Council to include a council of the eight great Powers, a council for the states other than the eight great Powers, a council for Europe, a council for America, and a council of all the Powers. Equality of voting is suggested for the two councils first mentioned and a scale of voting strength for the other three. The International Council is to legislate subject to ratification by the constituent states. It is proposed that the Powers agree to submit all non-justiciable controversies to the Council, and that the Council's resolution be accepted as binding if passed unanimously, or if passed by three-fourths majority, provided that it does not affect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, or internal law of the states concerned.

The proposed league to enforce peace is to be cemented by two solemn covenants. Each constituent state is to agree never to press any claim or complaint against another constituent state beyond the stage of "courteous representation" without first submitting it either to the International High Court or to the International Council, and never to resort to ultimatums, threats of aggression, mobilization, or war, except to repel attack, until the controversy has been submitted either to the High Court or the Council, and until the expiration of one year after submission.

The Fabians are wise in not making the adoption of their project dependent upon the adhesion of every independent sovereign state. There are other suggestions in the volume that will be refreshing to those who are interested in a practical program rather than nebulous speculation. General obligatory arbitration treaties are dismissed as useless and dangerous; disarmament is not advocated; a permanent international police force is described as impractical; and it is frankly admitted that it is impossible to make war impossible.

The Fabians have dealt with the conceptions of sovereignty, independence, and equality in admirable fashion. They have recognized their importance, appreciated their utility, and made an honest effort to indicate the way for their future development. They do deny that these conceptions are incompatible with a highly developed international government, and they are certainly right in this unless we are committed to the absolute notions of the ultra-legalistic philosophy. Of these extreme notions it may be remarked that they represent the shallowest of fictions and are derived almost entirely from conceptions of the state and of international society than which nothing could be more *a priori* or impractical. In rejecting the doctrine of equality in its extreme form the Fabians merely show common sense. No high court or council could possibly be constituted on such a principle. Mr. Woolf might have strengthened the Fabian position by pointing out that the extreme idea of state equality has been a doctrine of *le droit des gens théorique* and never of *le droit des gens réel*, that it was created entirely by the publicists from theoretical notions of natural law, natural equality, and the state of nature, and that its application to voting power in courts or conferences is the result of a failure to understand its true significance.

The volume is comparatively free from errors of statement, and in general is well planned. There is one obvious defect, however, that cannot be overlooked. The select bibliography is inexcusable; it is neither select nor a bibliography. In the next reprint it should either be made what it purports to be or omitted.

In both the reports and the project the Fabian Society has made a remarkable contribution to the literature of

constructive internationalism. It is a contribution that ought to be commended to the League to Enforce Peace, and to all those statesmen of vision who hope for new international relationships after this war. It will be welcomed by everyone who believes in the possibility of something better than George Canning's "wholesome state" of international relations, described as "every nation for itself, and God for us all."

EDWIN D. DICKINSON.

The Poetry of Robert Frost

Mountain Interval, by Robert Frost. New York: Henry Holt & Co. \$1.25.

THE poetry of American local life, after having been hinted at for long, made a significant appearance last year not from one, but from two quarters—from the Illinois of Edgar Lee Masters and the New England of Robert Frost. The New England book had less of a shudder, and it shows a readiness of response on the part of the public here that, with the grave and, as one might say, featureless poems in it, it had a success equal to "The Spoon River Anthology," in which, besides the poetic and dramatic appeal, there was the interest of exciting fiction. To go from "The Spoon River Anthology" to "North of Boston" is to go from the court-house into the fields. The fields are usual, and, as we have been in an unusual place, we are not at first impressed. Then we perceive that the fields, the apple-trees, the bounding hill, the frame-house have each a character of their own. We notice that the people—a few of them at all events—have the inaccessible life that Burns's and Wordsworth's people have. Such a life belongs to the woman in "A Servant to Servants." Such a life, too, belongs to the man in "The Self-seeker."

Unlike Mr. Masters, Mr. Frost seems to have no notion of satire or of social judgment. This is a terrible background to "A Servant to Servants." A bride has been brought into a house where her husband's mad brother lives as in a den and delights himself by yelling out filthy things in the night. Mr. Masters would have left a social judgment to be inscribed on a tombstone. But Mr. Frost's spirit goes into the current of a life that still moves on. And as that life expresses itself we feel only sympathy with a soul that does not judge and which is beyond our judgments. In "The Self-seeker" we come to know a student and a lover of wild flowers. His legs have been crushed in a mill, and he can never again search out the flowers he loves so well. He takes five hundred dollars' compensation. There is no satire here. Mr. Frost lets us see the reachings and the reserves of a soul, and he lets us know besides the forms and the hiding places of the wild flowers.

Though there were few people in "North of Boston" and though these people knew of few events, still the book gave the sense of a community. And the brooding of the poet gave life to the inanimate things around. We were made remember the un-lived-in Black Cottage and the wood-pile that warms "the frozen swamp as best it could with the slow, smokeless burning of decay"—we were made remember the wall that has some undiscovered enemy; the mountain that crushes the life of the village; the thousands and tens of thousands of gathered apples. In "North of Boston" Mr. Frost's real achievement was not, perhaps, the creation of men and women, but in the hint

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of mystery that he gave—in the atmosphere that he made surround the inanimate thing—"something there is that does not love a wall" he says, and, as he plods and labors after the explanation we begin to have glimpses and revelations. His very slowness and laboriousness give a hint of this earthly mystery:

"Something there is that does not love a wall,
And sends the frozen ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing;
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending time we find them there."

He has made a certain featureless blank verse his own. Using it, his men and women, who obviously have little eloquence in their natures, have a speech that sometimes lifts into beauty and tragic eloquence. "I can repeat the very words you were saying," cries the mother in "Home Burial" to her husband who has buried their child callously:

"I can repeat the very words you were saying.
'Three foggy mornings and one rainy day
Will rot the best birch fence a man can build.'
Think of it, talk like that at such a time!
What had how long it takes a birch to rot
To do with what was in the darkened parlor.
You couldn't care! The nearest friends can go
With any one to death, comes so far short
They might as well not try to go at all.
No, from the time when one is sick to death,
One is alone, and he dies more alone.
Friends make pretense of following to the grave,
But before one is in it, their minds are turned
And making the best of their way back to life
And living people, and things they understand."

Mr. Frost's recent volume, "Mountain Interval," has more of the personal, less of the communal life. Only in a few poems does he give us those detached dramatic pieces that made the bulk of "North of Boston." The sense of personal life comes from the sonnets and from the dramatic sequence that he calls "The Hill Wife." In these few dramatic lyrics there is a poetic grace that his featureless blank verse did not reveal. The poem before the last one in the sequence, "The Oft-repeated Dream" has what is rare in American poetry—the mystery-suggesting phrase:

"She had no saying dark enough
For the dark pine that kept
Forever trying the window-latch
Of the room where they slept.

The tireless but ineffectual hands
That with every futile pass
Made the great tree seem as a little bird
Before the mystery of glass.

It never had been inside the room
And only one of the two
Was afraid in an oft-repeated dream
Of what the tree might do."

The sequence and its title and its suggestions recalls "James Lee's Wife," but if it does it matches Browning's in poignancy. In "The Hill Wife" Mr. Frost, I think, attains to the finest expression of the distinctive thing he brings into literature—the tremor that comes from many haunting things.

Mr. Frost must be very much aware of this haunting, for does not one of his people cry out "Our very life depends on everything's recurring till we answer from within." For him there are no beginnings. "It would take for ever to recite all that's now new in where we find ourselves," the woman in "The Home Stretch" tells the man. And this being so, it is needful to be aware of the haunting things that try to signal to something within us. What signals to the poet of "Mountain Interval" most persistently are trees—trees by their outline, movement, sound:

"I shall set forth for somewhere,
I shall make the reckless choice
Some day when they are in voice
And tossing so as to scare
The white clouds over them on.
I shall have less to say
But I shall be gone."

Both "North of Boston" and "Mountain Interval" envelop in atmosphere things, which, as it seemed, would never be brought within the domain of poetry—kitchen-sinks, stove-pipes, telegraph-poles. But if another thinks he can create poetry by cataloguing these things he will make a mistake. Mr. Frost is a poet because he knows and because he can show us a spiritual history.

PADRAIC COLUM.

Recent Publications

Unfinished Portraits, by Jeannette Lee. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. \$1.25.

MASTERS as well as men being slaves of chance, Mrs. Lee would show how the greatest art has been diverted, transformed by mere accident. "Unfinished Portraits" include episodes, some legendary, others purely fictitious, in the lives of Leonardo, Titian, Schubert, Chopin, Bach and Dürer, each of which reveals a relationship incomplete, a masterpiece unfinished. Ingenious as this underlying motif undeniably is, it makes the path for this particular hero-worshiper unusually thorny. The well-worn tale of Leonardo and La Gioconda is legitimate and so is the less authenticated story of Zarato, Titian's "Man with the Glove," but when the analogy reaches Schubert and his Serenade, it is tenuous. Parted lovers furnish the only link. A sentimentality harmonizing best with the Bach incident vitiates in others the essence of reality. Faulty visual images contribute to the impression of artificiality, as for example when Leonardo is dead: "The French King was riding merrily. He carolled a gay chanson. . . . Francesco Melzi saluted and drew rein. He spoke a word in the monarch's ear. The two men stood with uncovered heads. A hush fell on their chatter. The windows flamed in the crimson flood." This is a long way from the Renaissance of Cellini or even Charles Reade. Something different from this facile staccato is required to revive men and eras. At best it prettifies greatness.

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