

way. Yet on a mere technicality the House of Lords attacked the trade unions in their aspect of real groups with a real will. It tried to strangle them within the four corners of a musty contract. It is not to be wondered at that the trade unions should feel suspicion of such handling. My second instance is the differential treatment meted out on the one hand to Mr. James Larkin and on the other to Sir Edward Carson. The former, as is well known, was a labor agitator who was imprisoned for inciting to riot; but Sir Edward Carson, though guilty, as one who planned to levy war against the king's person, of constructive treason, went unpunished. Is the worker seriously to be blamed if he feels doubts of the courts which admit of such anomalous use, of law which can be so differential in its incidence? If Professor Dicey wants to remedy this danger he must make English law coincide with the spirit of modern England, instead of leaving it clad in the dignified armor of our ancestors' ideas.

Yet with all the fundamental conservatism of outlook, the yearning to stand by the ancient ways, this is a great book, for which every student of political affairs will be profoundly grateful. It goes upon the shelf with Blackstone and Bagehot, nor do they resent its company. Mr. Viner of the Abridgement would be proud indeed of his Oxford foundation could he know that it led Professor Dicey to the composition of these famous lectures.

HAROLD J. LASKI.

An Inadequate Theory

Modern Painting, by Willard Huntington Wright.
New York: John Lane Co. \$2.50 net.

"GIOTTO, El Greco, Masaccio, Tintoretto, and Rubens, the greatest of the old painters, strove continually to attain form as an abstract emotional force." "With them the organization of volumes came first, and the picture was composed as to line." "Out of this grew the subject matter," and the human figure and the recognizable natural objects were only the auxiliaries, never the sought for result. The "highest aesthetic emotion" can be aroused, and the "intensest emotive power" can be shown only through color organizations which do not represent anything—which are indeed as pure and abstract as organizations of musical tones.

These quotations from the book on modern painting by Mr. Wright indicate sufficiently the sympathies which determine the author's attitude to contemporary art. He is not only the advocate of the extreme abstractionists in painting, the men who believe that representation interferes essentially with the artist's freedom and expressive power, but in addition to this he is so obsessed by the value of his aesthetic doctrines that he cannot believe that real artists ever thought otherwise than those of his predilection do to-day. It makes no difference that none of the men he mentions in the quoted passage, nor any of their contemporaries or followers, ever expressed themselves to such effect, and that all their works give evidence of the most intense interest in dramatic representation. Mr. Wright, like many another theorist, knows better, and can recognize a slavery that the slave despite his genius could not feel. He can see that Rubens was hampered more than he was aided by the wealth of figures whose physical splendor and moral conflicts he depicted, and that Michelangelo would have been better off without the nude through which to express his passion—that an abstract form generat-

ing by its inherent logic other forms would have led to something emotionally much richer than anything we find in the Sistine ceiling.

A thesis so improbable and so remote would hardly ask for serious discussion if it had not become important through its development in various forms of contemporary art. We are likely to have in New York a number of exhibitions where all kinds of cubist, synchromist, orphist, vorticism, pictures will be shown. They all, whether dealing chiefly in color or in line, are concerned with the viewpoint of "pure art," with the notion that can best be considered in relation to the musical analogy. Can painting be compared to music? Is it possible to build color structures that have the validity of musical composition? Very few people find the cubist and synchromist pictures satisfying. Is their theory good enough to encourage hope?

This theory I shall restate in Mr. Wright's own language: "The evolution of painting from tinted illustration to an abstract art expressed wholly by the one element inherent in it—color—was a natural and inevitable progress. Music passed through the same development from the imitation of natural sounds to harmonic abstraction." "So long as painting deals with objective nature it is an impure art, for recognizability precludes the highest aesthetic emotion." Form and rhythm alone are the bases of aesthetic enjoyment, all else is superfluity. Therefore a picture, in order to represent its intensest emotive power, must be an abstract representation expressed entirely in the medium of painting, and that medium is color. "Since the art of painting is the art of color, the synchromists—according to Mr. Wright, the logical apex of painters—depended entirely on primary pigment for the complete expression of formal composition." With his freedom of distortion, Cezanne "opened up the road to abstraction"; Matisse made form even more arbitrary, and Picasso approached still nearer to the final elimination of natural objectivity. Then Synchromism, combining the progress of both Cezanne and the Cubists, took the final step in the elimination of the illustrative object, and at the same time put aside the local hues on which the art of Cezanne was dependent. Thus was brought about the final purification of painting. Form was entirely divorced from any realistic considerations, and color became an organic function. The way was opened, and it rests now with the artists to follow it.

It might be admitted that in a rough way color—with its scales, its complementaries and other stable relations—corresponds to musical tone relations. Likewise objects represented correspond to words, because in both cases the value of the form by itself is not equal to the value which the form and meaning together have. The Delphic Sibyl of Michelangelo or a portrait of Rembrandt is more than the value of its line and space arrangement—just as the word "rose" is more than what is given in the mere sound. The kind of painting that has generally prevailed could therefore be compared to the song in which values of word combinations are married to tonal organizations, and the dramatic compositions of Rubens and Tintoretto would find their analogues in acts or scenes of an opera. However, in the case of sound it has proved possible to separate words and music, developing on the one hand the art of poetry and on the other that of instrumental music. The theory set forth above claims that an analogous thing can be done with objects of sight. But is this true?

There prevails quite generally a notion that whereas music and poetry exist only in time, painting exists only in space. This seems almost obvious; yet it is practically not so, for though a painting spread out before us all at

once, it is only in time that it can be apprehended. The eye does not see a picture at a glance, but takes in the surface by a succession of movements over the extended canvas. The total impression is the result of innumerable reviews. Anyone can find by trying that even in quite small pictures we never see the surface clearly altogether; but whereas in music and poetry there is only one direction in which to read, in the picture there are many such directions. We can elaborate almost endlessly the musical composition, because the movement from beginning to end determines what comes after what, and so simplifies the task of apprehension. In the picture there is no such compulsion. The eye passes over it in all directions. A bright spot of color may hold it at one moment and the adjacent colors will group themselves about it. At the next moment another focal point attracts, and again there is a grouping of color spots about it. The picture never comes to rest. But even Mr. Wright admits that, though form does not seek an absolute equilibrium, it does seek an approximation to stability. And this is what abstract painting never gives. It does not determine that the mind shall find the same whole thing in its various excursions across the picture's field.

There can be, so far as I can see, only two ways of attaining the necessary fixity—symmetry or the presence of recognizable objects. Symmetry is completely given in the kaleidoscope. There the eye is led inevitably to the centre because of the radially symmetrical arrangement. It makes no difference how casual or how purposeful the assemblage of elements may be; for, multiply them in such a fashion as to repeat the pattern, a stable form results. However, the aesthetic possibilities of radial symmetry are limited, and there is left only the alternative of recognizable objects. Such objects represented are found in all the pictures with which one is familiar. Color spots are held together by recognizable objects in which they inhere. As Mr. Wright has pointed out, there was in the older painting great remissness in establishing close connection between the color relations and the form relations, and the characteristic development in color throughout the nineteenth century was to make the color and form more coherent. Such color coherence and form coherence in recognizable objects is a goal that has justified itself in the achievements of nineteenth century painting, but Mr. Wright claims that this progress tends to justify their separation and leads him to a logical argument. Having reviewed the history of modern developments, he tells us that there was deformation and more deformation, till objects became almost unrecognizable, and then "in the end the illustrative obstacle was entirely done away with. This was the logical outcome of the sterilizing modern process." This means, for example, that because you can reduce the working parts of a machine, therefore the logical conclusion is that they can be made to have no weight. Of course, if they could work and still have no weight, the inference would be logical. If the service rendered by the object when distorted could be rendered by the object when it ceases to exist, this would be logical; but no logic can carry you through distortion to non-existence. What Mr. Wright has nowhere done is to examine more or less exhaustively what the object in painting really does. Instead, he has assumed that it is an inessential thing, and that his theory would be obvious.

As Mr. Wright himself insists so much upon his thesis, it is not unfair to him to insist upon its fallacy. Rather it is unfair to the reader to obscure by this insistence the value of Mr. Wright's discussion of modern art. Bad as the theory is when over-applied, it is of worth in stiffening and clari-

fying his treatment of the different painters and their relations to each other. Many of the judgments will seem to the average reader grossly unfair, but it must be remembered that the contemporary valuation of mid-nineteenth century painters has tended recently to get the sanction of definitive judgment. The high value placed on Manet, Monet, Degas, by their defenders has justified itself as against the unlimited condemnation by their detractors; but it will not necessarily maintain itself against a critical re-examination by those who are neither defenders nor detractors. Such a position is taken by Mr. Wright, and although there is distinct bias, none the less I know no other discussion of all this matter half so good. There is an unfortunate tendency to extravagant generalization, as when he says of Delacroix that "what raised him above the general run of painters, baroque and otherwise, was his slight talent for composition." His interesting chapter on Delacroix does not justify this statement; but the itch to be general, to give the values of universality, leads to such futile remarks. There is also a great deal of the superfluous omniscience of statements like the following: "The Chinese, the Greeks, the Renaissance, even that full Indian sculpture in the Chatya of Karli of the eleventh century B.C. are all in him." In spite of that, the chapter on Renoir, where this occurs, is the best thing on that painter that I know. The Cezanne chapter, making always due allowance for the "theory of non-representation," is very good; and what he has to say about more recent movements is in the main fair and discriminating. An exception must of course be made in the case of the Synchronists, with whose views he has so largely identified himself.

LEO D. STEIN.

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Lover of Locomotives

America at Work, by Joseph Husband. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. \$1.00 net.

MR. George Santayana, in addressing a California audience, once remarked that the difference between traditional American thought and present American life is embodied in the difference between our colonial mansions and our skyscrapers. Our philosophy has dwelt at ease in its old-fashioned genteel domiciles, tempered with a few surreptitiously introduced improvements, while our energy has gone dashing on, unregulated, unheeding, into the newest and most astounding enterprises. Mr. Santayana hinted that it would be a good thing if these two should somehow get on speaking terms.

Mr. Husband might easily have been a dweller in the colonial mansion. In his mind the idea always lurks above the thing, and there is some hint of a moral order in his cosmos. Yet Mr. Husband has not sat indoors playing with abstractions. He has come out to take a look at the skyscraper.

Lovers of knights-at-arms and readers of Ruskin who have never been able to admit the beauty of a locomotive should read this book. "I can see it coming," says Mr. Husband, "several miles away, its powerful headlight fingering rails and telegraph wires with a shimmer of light. Silently and slowly it seems to draw nearer; then suddenly, it is almost above me. A wild roar of steam and driving wheels, the wail of its hoarse whistle at the crossing, and then, looming black against the night sky, it smashes past." Later one of these great creatures stopped before him. "Beyond the yardlights its song rose clear and vibrant. With a flare of lofty headlights and the grind of brakes it was beside us, steel lungs panting heavily, a reek of oil sweating from heated sides." He boarded it, and it started on, "plunging like a derelict." "The fireman slid open the jaws of the fire-box, flooding the cab with light and heat. Within, the flame, white to pale daffodil in its intensity, twisted like streams of fluid in the draught. Behind the cab the black end of the tender rose high above my line of vision, rocking and swaying in contrary motion to the engine, like a bulldog twisting on a stick."

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