

and instantly available. Similarly a trained personnel of an entirely new type of mind able to subordinate local and national demands to the international good had to be developed.

It is an extraordinary fact that this priceless organization, which many regarded as the practical groundwork for a working league of nations, threatened to fall apart immediately after the armistice. Not that the problems to be handled were any less acute; indeed, with the demands of Central Europe and Russia added they became infinitely more acute; but rather that the spirit which had forced the institution of international control during the war fell away the moment peace seemed imminent. Most extraordinary of all, it was largely due to the particularist policy of the United States itself, the nation above all others which was pressing for internationalism.

Within a very short time the American representatives on several of the most important inter-Allied boards were withdrawn. Both Mr. Hurley in the shipping situation and Mr. Hoover in the food situation seemed to feel that the United States would be better served by independence of action than by continued international action. Originally the American delegates on the International Mercantile Transport Committee had urged the inclusion in the original armistice terms of a provision that the two to three million tons of shipping tied up in German and Austrian harbors be turned over to that committee for the relief of the liberated provinces of Central Europe, but Washington disapproved this provision, with the result that not till early January was the Austrian shipping made available and German shipping brought anywhere near the vital use for which European food shortage seemed to dedicate it.

The splitting off of America from this international cooperation caused deep concern in Allied capitals, as it was obvious that without her the whole bottom would fall out of the international relief work. A return to national selfishness was deplored, especially as it was realized that the United States could build up a rather unfair political gratitude in the sections succored. For a time affairs drifted on without much action one way or the other. Fortunately, however, President Wilson arrived in Europe before it was finally too late and the belief is now expressed that the situation will be saved through his intervention. The enormous advantages of the inter-Allied war boards as clearing-houses of information and as the instrumentalities of international cooperation were fully explained to him, with the result that the disruptive tendencies previously shown were brought to an end.

President Wilson saw at once the value of a

continuance of these bodies and laid down a general policy that, while they should cease to function as war-bodies on the ground that the specific need which had called them forth had come to an end, they should be reestablished practically in toto as committees of the Peace Conference. This would mean that all the knowledge, experience, information, and trained personnel that had been developed to such an extraordinary extent in the war would go on as an integral part of the Peace Conference to solve the even larger problems of the reconstruction. The European nations are more than anxious to perpetuate these mediums of control and allocation and will make any concession possible to the United States to effect it.

This, then, will immediately vitalize the Peace Conference with channels of international government in the most essential fields of human interest. The Conference will be able to direct shipping and food and raw materials supplies, and will have at its disposal most effective weapons of international government, punishment, and reward. If previous international conferences have failed because they were purely academic, as in the case of the Hague, or purely selfish, as in the case of the Congress of Vienna, the forthcoming conferences may hope to succeed because they are made, both by power and by pooling of interests, effective forces. Those who expect to see internationalism evolve as most institutions in human life do evolve, by the gradual increase of power through steady accretion due to continued and growing exercise, look upon the assured taking over of these all-powerful but little seen war bodies by the Peace Conference as one of the most important practical milestones of international government.

ARTHUR SWEETSER.

Art versus Its Estimation

A GREAT deal has been made of the distinction between the fine and the applied arts whether the differentiation has been defended or attacked, but comparatively little attention has been paid to the distinction between the enjoyed and the "appreciated" arts. People often tell you that they are reading a story or going to a play or looking at an illustration "just for fun," whereas they read Henry James or see Ibsen or visit the current exhibitions for some other and presumably less frivolous purpose. Art is apparently important, not for the fun that one can get out of it, but for some reason that the books have a great deal to say about, which, it would seem, is rather obnoxious to common personal experience. Art, in short, has a prestige acknowledged not only by those who willingly concern themselves with it, but

also by those who do not. Everywhere we find this acknowledgment, in our educational programmes, in the press, and even in our legislatures. In fact, the thing seems so obvious to the commonest understanding that almost no one denies it, and it is one of the few subjects on which Bolshevik and plutocrat are in accord. Art is good, not merely for the fun one can get out of it, but for some reason that is bound up with the altitudes. Higher levels of art appreciation are things good in themselves and a sign of comparative worthiness. Aspiring concern with good art is meritorious and should be encouraged in every possible way. People ought to go to museums and concerts and to read good poetry, whether they like it or not, just as they ought to brush their teeth and take a reasonable amount of exercise. The purer their interest in it, the more detached from any utilitarian purposes, the more laudable is their activity. Such in effect is the current doctrine to which every actual or hypothetical lover of the beautiful will naturally subscribe, and which in the main is supposed to be beyond discussion.

I do not think that it is beyond discussion. It is more nearly beneath discussion. I believe that it is false from A to Izzard, that the aesthetic is one of the least obligatory and most utilitarian things in the world, that to teach or formally to encourage the appreciation of art does more harm than good, that we have built up an enormous structure of twaddle, sophistication and bunkum concerning art, and that in the majority of the people that disseminate this nonsense there is no correspondence between their teachings and their genuine reactions. They set forth tradition instead of experience and convention instead of fact. Some of them pile up mountain heaps of scholarship that are as valuable as similar heaps in other fields—it's a great sport if you stick to the rules of the game, but it becomes mostly nonsense as soon as you let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

Sur le pont d'Avignon

Tout le monde y danse en rond.

The scholars are intrinsically the most harmless of these people, or would be if they hid their lucubrations behind what Thomas Love Peacock once called "the decent obscurity of the learned tongues," but that mode, whether for good or evil, no longer prevails, and therefore scholarship helps valorously in furthering the pandemonium of essential mendacity. It would of course be impossible to make good these assertions in one thousand five hundred words, and therefore I propose to devote a series of papers to them.

It is hard to decide just where one might best plunge into the fray. As General Kearney said at the battle of Seven Pines,

"Go in anywhere Colonel;
You'll find splendid fighting along the whole line."

But everything comes in best before everything else, and yet it is not quite intelligible unless the other thing came before it, and therefore it would be really desirable to approach the matter polyphonically. However, in plain prose this cannot be done, and a choice must be made somewhere. Perhaps some elementary notions of aesthetics would serve best to introduce the subject.

If a tired person sits down in an armchair that is soft and spacious, yet enfolding, he might say "I am comfortable," or he might say "The chair is comfortable." In this distinction lies the threshold of aesthetics. A dog or at least an infra-human creature might conceivably have some consciousness of comfort, but to transfer that notion away from oneself and make it a character of an object, is to have objectified the emotion, as Santayana said, and to have passed into the field where objects recognizedly exist to serve one's personal ends. In the case of comfort of this simple type there is an ambiguity as to whether the comfort is in oneself or in the object, and so we state it either way. In more remote cases we do not have this choice of statement, even though there is no really essential difference in the conditions.

When looking at the Venus of Milo it is not customary to say "I feel beautiful." The eye is commonly regarded as one of the aesthetic senses, but what this quite simply means is that in this case the object is so definitely detached, so definitely at a distance, that no one except a philosopher can doubt that the quality is characteristic of the object and not of the observer. But if it were not for this definite remoteness, there would be no reason for not saying "I feel beautiful." The hypothetical infra-human, for example, who saw a fire at a distance, would have a feeling that would mean rather "I shall be more comfortable if I can get close to the fire," than a feeling that it is a comfortable fire which it would be desirable to approach. In the same way the original chair as a distant and desired object would present itself to a man desirous of repose as a comfortable chair, while to a self-conscious cat, if such there be, it would appear only as a condition of its own personal comfort.

I have not chosen this instance of comfort at random. Far otherwise, because I believe that in such instances as these the essential facts of aesthetic experience are contained, that the aesthetic factor in life is entirely the element of comfort and ease, that this is precisely the element that makes it so eminently utilitarian a function and that makes the conventional and now habitual attitude

toward it so false and ineffectual. If a divorce is once accomplished between this primitive quality of the aesthetic (primitive both historically and analytically) and concern with aesthetic objects, the separation tends to become continually wider. The beautiful comes to dwell in the realms of the hifalutin, or the ideal, or whatever one chooses to call it, the distinctions between high art and low art, or fine art and applied art, come to being, and art climbs to the mountain tops, where only the pure in aesthetics are worthy to follow. All this, I repeat, is not a finer, a nobler world than that of the plain man's experiences. It is frequently something much less, for it is commonly made up in large part of knowledge about things instead of direct experience of them, and this is the very negation of aesthetics.

Of course in our present moment, when so much is being made of the theme of pure aesthetic experience and pure aesthetic purpose, when not only does the subject "not count," but when it is furthermore regarded as a limitation rather than a stimulus to creation, when we continue to exalt the works of a past that is to us dead in all the elements of its essential inspiration so that nothing but the qualities of "pure form" are any longer functional; in such a time a theory of aesthetics insisting upon so commonplace and limited a value for that element in life which is supposed to dwell apart and to be sacred from the uses of the world may seem to most particularly absurd. I believe of course that it is not so, but that the purest of aesthetic objects has the same elementary character of usefulness as that which makes an attractive form desirable in an advertisement; that rarity of occasion or complexity in the situation does in no wise affect the root matter, and that all possible usefulness of result can come from a recognition of the practical nature of aesthetics.

Of course those for whom the theory is strange or novel will easily think of many facts that seem obviously inconsistent with it. But we have to reckon, not only with the difficulties of the matter itself, but also with the methods of approach that are common in our highly sophisticated civilized life. In the first place, we do an endless lot of teaching which tries to make people see things that they do not feel. We have critics whose business is to appraise and not to realize, and many experiences are required of us, as cultured people, which we have never actually had. The mountain of this accumulated faked experience is huge beyond ordinary belief, so accustomed are we to take seeming for reality, and make-believe for actual happenings. Not satisfied with what is done in this line by the periodic press, the force of social routine, and the standards of social propriety, we make a

virtue of deliberate encouragement in every possible way. Lectureships are endowed to supplement the established practices of our institutes of learning and people are stuffed with appreciation in our art galleries, instead of looking at the pictures for "the fun of it." For one whose capacity is genuinely increased, a dozen are debauched with learning.

Besides the schools we have the market-place. The social value of property in ostensibly beautiful things is enormous. It is notoriously difficult to sell works of art to rich collectors unless the price is high. Of course the price cannot be determined by the cost of production and is in fact conditioned by a number of things, but this much is certain, that the satisfaction got by the purchaser in the direct contemplation of the purchase is the least important element. None the less the price paid does affect the spectator's vision and only very callous people can see no difference between two pictures, otherwise identical, of which one cost hundreds and the other hundreds of thousands. It is only when we have swept aside all values of prestige, all values of tradition, all values that derive from anything but what the object as it stands can do for us, that we come down to bedrock and can consider the place of the beautiful as in itself "it really is."

LEO STEIN.

In a Mountain Park

Evening

Sharp and black on the red-gold sunset
Is etched a delicate pattern of firs.
Slowly the cloud-fires fade,
Then kindle again to the northward;
The red narrows and deepens on the horizon;
It lingers, a thread of crimson light behind the distant peaks.
The gray-green dusk
Rises like an exhalation from the wooded slopes;
The deep blue mountains grow purple, and then black.
Cow-bells tinkle from the pastures;
In the spruces the west wind murmurs;
A little owl hoots softly in the woods below.

Night

Over peak and sculptured cañon is poured a flood of crystal moonlight;
It silvers the pines and spruces,
It dims the high, clear stars.
Now from everywhere and nowhere
Breaks a faint, far peal of laughter;
Strangely it ends in a long shivering wail.
Calling, answering, soulless, silvery,
Heard light, not sound,
It circles the welkin like far-off heat lightning,
Flashing up, wavering, glimmering,
The moon-song of the little wolves,
The elfin nocturne of the coyotes.

HOMER E. WOODBRIDGE.