

the necessity of such modification of the Peace Treaty as to permit Germany to secure the world market price for coal. Up to the present time the Allies have been receiving coal at the German inland price. Here the French had a choice between two alternatives. Unless the Germans can profit by their coal exports sufficiently to improve their exchange they will be unable to put their finances back in order to pay subsequent indemnity demands. The French, therefore, by taking coal at a low value, now destroy the possibility of large future indemnities. They are, however, exceedingly sceptical about those future German indemnities, and therefore prefer a present return to a future hope.

This decision was a serious setback to the German groups, who had hoped to be able to reach a mutually satisfactory understanding which would assure large profits to both Allied and German capitalists. The real indication of this defeat is the fact that the mine owners are now for the first time turning to the miners and saying: "You will not let this injustice be done." The conservative papers are suddenly showing an interest in the ideas of the miners. The *Deutsche Tageszeitung* has made a discovery. "The mine owners spoke of the impossible figure of the demand," it says. "The miners, however, put their emphasis on the capacity of the workers. The diplomats can decide what they like, but the real decision is with the miners as to how much coal they will produce."

The German workmen have been watching Spa with more curiosity than anxiety. They registered a very moderate satisfaction that Otto Hue was called in, and that the chancelleries had decided to include labor as a factor in production. Their satisfaction was only moderate, however, because they foresaw that the immediate burden of the new accord will fall first on their own shoulders. One of the miners writes in the Independent Socialist paper *Freedom*: "Our capitalists will try first of all to excite us to further production by alternating sugar plums with the whip end. In this way they will seek to have us satisfy the demands of the Allies, but to do so without compromising their own interests."

The conclusion which the German miners reach is that Spa was a defeat for the German capitalists. They feel that their own mine owners are superfluous and that power is coming into their own hands. The threat of further occupation did not upset them in the way it did Stinnes, who accused the Allies of still suffering from the "malady of victory." The workmen are patriotic enough to prefer not having the Allies occupy more of Germany, but at the same time they have no love for their own Reichswehr, and between the two they

have little choice. They were not impressed by the menace of occupation. One of them said: "French nationalistic circles thought that by having Marshal Foch rattle his saber they could somehow conjure up the coal French capitalists need. But what would happen if we simply stood by, with our arms crossed? Would the soldiers be able to dig the coal themselves?"

The German miners do not regard Spa as the last word concerning coal production. They are reserving their own decision. Otto Hue, head of the Miners' Union (Socialist) said very bluntly at Spa: "The diplomats in conference can decide whatever they like. The real decision is with the miners both as to how far the demands will be met and the way this will be done." Hue went to Spa only when he was asked. He talked with Lloyd George only when the Prime Minister expressed a wish to meet him. He did not fail to make it clear that he would have preferred to talk about coal with his friend Smillie. "Our comrades from other countries will understand our needs," he said. "We miners are willing to admit that the country has incurred an obligation for the needless destruction of French mining shafts by our military command. We want to help France and other countries with coal. But the only real solution of the whole problem is that coal, iron and other commodities of first necessity be pooled so that each people gets its share." Hue was willing enough that the French get German coal. But in exchange they must give iron and foodstuffs. It may be that his thought went further. Perhaps it included American copper and American wheat. If it did, Hue did not mention it. Perhaps he has no time for distant dreams.

SANFORD GRIFFITH.

America and England: A Literary Comparison

A LITTLE while ago the Art Theatre gave a performance of Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* in London. It was not precisely a good performance, but it was certainly not a bad one. The quality of that perfect play, trembling between laughter and tears, came through to the audience. On the morning after we looked in our newspapers to see what the critics would have to say to what is indubitably the greatest of all modern plays. We are surfeited with bad ones in London nowadays; to have to see them is like being condemned to read an unending series of third-rate novels, for our dramatic hacks have only a fraction of the sheer technical ability of yours. If our managers

want a competent melodrama, they have to import it from New York. So that we could not help thinking that *The Cherry Orchard* would be manna in the desert to the critics. They had had nothing to write about for so long that they would jump at the opportunity of showing us what they are made of.

They did. There was not one of them, with the exception of Mr. St. John Ervine, in the *Observer*, and Mr. Swinnerton, in the *Nation*, who had the faintest notion that he had been to see a masterpiece. *The Cherry Orchard* was tedious; it was silly; it was a characteristic product of the country which had produced Bolshevism; it was an amateurish, long-winded version à la Russe of Mr. Galsworthy's *The Skin Game*. In short, our dramatic critics showed that they have not changed a jot since the brave old days when Ibsen was first brought to London. I have not the energy which Mr. Shaw possessed in those stirring times, or I should make a pamphlet-anthology of the critics' outpourings on *The Cherry Orchard*. But I earnestly recommend any American writer who is oppressed by the intolerable airs which we English give ourselves in matters of culture to remember the date of this astonishing exhibition of critical stupidity. The files of the daily press for July 12, 1920, will provide him with material enough for a very good bombshell to drop into literary London in 1930, when *The Cherry Orchard* will have become a classic.

Though we are too tired to begin a battle royal in London over this revelation of critical incompetence, we are not too tired to think about it; and thinking about it inevitably leads one to wonder whether they order these things better in America. For curious stories reach our ears. We learn that intelligent plays, which cannot get a hearing in London, have long and successful runs in New York; we find that some of our better books which sell a bare thousand in England have three times the sale in America; we discover that a weekly critical journal like the *New Republic* has a circulation three times as big as that of its counterpart in England. These things are disquieting; nor is their effect greatly mitigated by the knowledge that America is much bigger than England, and much richer, and that it is precisely the cultivated classes in England who are impoverished at the present time.

I confess I know absolutely nothing of the condition of dramatic criticism in New York, yet I feel tolerably certain that your critics would not have given themselves away as ours did over *The Cherry Orchard*. They might not have liked it; they might have been puzzled by it, but I think

they would have known that it ought to be considered as respectfully as, say, *The Wild Duck*. They would at least have heard of Chekhov's name and taken care that they did not commit any outrageous ineptitude about him. They would have walked warily, knowing that they were in the presence of a work of art with a world-wide reputation.

I do not intend to maintain that America at the present moment provides a more discriminating audience than England for serious work in literature; but it certainly looks as though the number of people who are prepared to give these things their respectful attention is considerably greater in America than in England, and it seems that the chances are that they will increase in numbers and discrimination in America, while they dwindle in England. As far, at least, as general critical department goes, America appears to have a decided advantage, and it would follow that a decent writer has a much better chance of making a decent living in America than in England. The number of people who will support him is greater. Whether they would support him because they appreciated him or because they thought they ought to support him is another, and on the whole, a less important matter.

What is true is that the corresponding class in England, of people who respect good literature, even though they may not appreciate it wholly, who buy good books as much with the object of educating as of pleasing themselves, has been on the decline for some years, and the decline has been hastened by the war. So recently as fifteen years ago a really enthusiastic review in the *Times Literary Supplement* or the *Athenæum* was enough to give a book not perhaps a great popular success but a palpable one. Nowadays it would be remarkable if it sold five hundred copies of the book it praised. One part of the class which used to follow the advice of the responsible critic has gained the courage of its own inferior convictions; the other part has been pauperized by the war.

If it were solely a question of the size of the audience which would support a good author, from whatever motive, America would have precedence. But support, though it is vitally important, is perhaps not the thing that the conscientious author most hungers for. Appreciation of the right kind will keep him going through a minimum of commercial success, as in fact it has kept Mr. Conrad and Mr. W. H. Hudson going. An Englishman may be pardoned for holding that in this respect England still holds the lead. I do not believe that the average standard of criticism is higher in England than America. The affair of *The Cherry Orchard* shows that that is hardly possible. But

above a certain level it seems to me that there is a greater faculty of discrimination in our criticism.

To tell the truth, an English critic is often taken aback when he reads the work of his American confrère. He finds the most startling juxtapositions, the oddest names linked together. I myself have seen, for instance, an American critic who had begun to win my confidence by his method of attack, suddenly shatter it by placing on the same level Conrad, Galsworthy, W. J. Locke and Stephen McKenna. That is simply bewildering. Again, I have read with growing admiration of his vigorous style and picturesque expression a number of essays by H. L. Mencken, only to be dumb-founded by his declaring at the beginning of another that the most promising of all the younger English authors is W. L. George. To call that statement rank heresy is to put it mildly. For though it is conceivable that W. L. George is the best of the young writers Mr. Mencken has read, that would only prove he had not read enough of them to pronounce any judgment at all. A round dozen young English writers must disappear below the horizon before W. L. George's star is visible.

It may be that the American criticism which I have read is not really representative of the best, although I have been at some pains to follow the best I could find. Moreover, it may appear impertinent in me to put forward a personal opinion on these matters, yet I feel that the personal opinion may have some interest, above all, seeing that it is shared by not a few English writers known to me. The conclusions I have reached are, roughly, these. For buying and reading a good English author, America; for placing him, England is to be preferred. While the audience to which the serious literary artist may look for a livelihood is dwindling in England, it is increasing in America, where there appears, through a telescope anyhow, to be an eager and growing desire to come into contact with the best work that is being done. Again, there seems to be a more genuine tolerance of literary experiment in America than in England. The result is that a great many things appear to be taken seriously in America that we should not put up with England; on the other hand, a number of promising things are given a fair chance in America that would be stifled at birth with us.

The attitude of the ordinary Englishman of letters toward America is a compound of genuine bewilderment and faintly contemptuous indifference. The indifference comes largely, I think, from the ease with which a second-rate English writer appears to persuade an American audience to take him at his own valuation. The cause of the be-

wilderment lies in the apparent paralysis of discrimination which overtakes American criticism when it endeavors to sift out what is permanently important in contemporary English production. But it is no longer reasonable for us to try to shut ourselves up in our ivory tower. A general though indiscriminating appetite for good work in the public is more valuable to literature in the long run than the connoisseurship of a chosen few. For this reason, to one observer, at least, America rather than England seems to satisfy the conditions of literary salvation.

JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY.

Senator Harding Finds an Issue

"American markets cannot be systematically surrendered to foreign producers, however kindly we may feel toward our Allies."

"Sicilian lemons, owing to demoralized after-war conditions, distorted rates of exchange and extraordinary pressure to get business, can compete in American markets with the home product, and gain the business."

—*New York Times*, August 13th.

Never within the memory of man
(I speak advisedly, the phrase will scan)
Has such an evil threatened, such a demon
As this insidious Sicilian lemon.
My countrymen—if I may so presume
To claim (in metaphor) a common womb,
A common ancestry of normal men
Who struck again, again, and yet again
(I sacrifice exactity to style)
Against, as some one said, the durance vile
Of foreign importations at low price,—
If I may claim—I will be more precise—
A common corporation and compact
Of counter-continental thought and act,—
Then I may say, if you allow my boast,
My heart has bled for one lemon lost
More, and with deeper suritude of tears,
Than ever it has bled these troubled years
For any treaty or involved alliance
Or pact improffered for impure affiance.
Here I am I at last; my feet are firm;
The very idiom and trenchant term
Wherein I couch my anger was of old
Blazed on the banners that shall still enfold
Or drape, or say accouter, our fair land.
Unclose, or even open, that rough hand
Of honest toil and Tariff's written there.
Beside this noble issue who shall dare
To talk of social chaos or of peace,
Or oil in Mexico or state police?
Let Europe rape her Europes! Let who will
Excite unrest by recognizing ill.
I say, though we have much to love her for
(She was, I'm told, our Ally in the war)
They shall not pass, not one Sicilian seed,
Not one unripened lemon, till we're feed.
To this I pledge my strength, my party's aid,
America for American lemonade!

A. MACL.