

A Greek Tragedy

Constantine I and the Greek People, by Paxton Hibben.
New York: The Century Company.

PERSONS well versed in world-affairs recognized from the start that, whatever its origin and whatever the issues at stake, the Great War was a life-and-death struggle, and that, being such a struggle, it would inevitably be conducted as a knock-down-and-drag-out fight, with no rules, and with gouging in the clinches. Menaced in their very existence, both sets of combatants were resolved to win at all costs, and neither set was going to jeopardize its chances of victory by respecting hindrances like neutral rights—if it thought the game was worth the candle. This may be deplorable, but it is a fact. Great ruthlessness is an inevitable by-product of Great War.

This aloof viewpoint of political technicians was of course not shared by the world at large. The various warring peoples were at once overwhelmed by war psychology, whose cardinal tenet is an implicit belief that you can do no wrong and your enemy can do no right. Even the neutral peoples were more or less in the same frame of mind. The psychology of America, predominantly pro-Ally from the beginning and becoming a belligerent in the spring of 1917, approximated the psychology of the Allied nations. Accordingly, we heard all about Teutonic ruthlessness, but virtually nothing about Allied ruthlessness. But today the war is over, the ban of censorship is lifted, and we begin to see the other side of the shield. A considerable literature is springing up, revealing the sterner side of the Allies' conduct of the war. In this literature Mr. Hibben's book, *Constantine I and the Greek People*, takes a prominent place.

Mr. Hibben reveals one of the grimmest episodes of the war—the dragooning of Greece by France and England to serve their war-aims in complete disregard of Greek wishes and Greek interests. It is not a pretty story. Yet it is a story that should be told, and by telling it Mr. Hibben performs a distinct public service. Persons who criticize books like Mr. Hibben's on the ground that they are a useless and mischievous ripping open of old wounds quite miss the larger issues involved. The war has left the world in evil case. One of the prime reasons for the world's present malaise is the persistence of numerous wrongs inflicted during the war under the plea of "military necessity." These wrongs must be righted before the world can get real peace. But before we know how to right them, we must discard our one-sided war-time concepts and learn all the facts in the case. And books like Mr. Hibben's are valuable aids to the acquirement of that fuller knowledge.

Mr. Hibben was well equipped for his task. Trained by long service in our diplomatic corps and in journalism, he was Associated Press correspondent in Athens from the summer of 1915 till the beginning of 1917. As the accredited representative of the chief news service of the greatest of the then-neutral nations, all doors were open to him. Politicians, generals, the King himself, welcomed interviews by Mr. Hibben as a prime means of getting their viewpoints before the outer world. Mr. Hibben was therefore very much "in the know" as to what was going on, not only in the Greek capital, but also in other parts of Greece, in Macedonia, and in Serbia, all of which regions he personally visited. Mr. Hibben's book is thus an eye-witness's account of the Greek tragedy from its early stages to its climax in the so-called "Battle of Athens" between the Greek and Allied troops on Decem-

ber 1, 1916. It is true that King Constantine was not deposed until the following June, some months after Mr. Hibben's departure from Greece, but this was merely a belated finale which previous events had rendered inevitable.

The term "Greek tragedy" is no overstatement, for the course of events in Greece during those stirring war-years 1915-17 has all the fateful urge of an ancient Athenian drama. Destiny seems to have so willed, and men move ineluctably toward a predestined goal. Two figures continuously occupy the stage—King Constantine and Greece's leading statesman, Eleutherios Venizelos. The Great War shatters their former good understanding. Once collaborators, they become protagonists of clashing policies. Venizelos urges Greece to throw herself into the war beside France and England, regardless of risks and confiding absolutely in Franco-British generosity for her reward. Constantine signifies willingness to join France and England, but only on positive Franco-British pledges of Hellenic integrity and the dispatch of enough troops to make a victory in the Near East a reasonable certainty. These pledges the Allies refused to give, and when Constantine refuses to aid them they turn more and more to Venizelos, "their man," and against Constantine, who is stigmatized as "pro-German." Gradually the drama unfolds. Venizelos tries to take matters into his own hands. Constantine dismisses him from office. Venizelos conspires against Constantine, backed by the Allies, who begin to put pressure on Greece. Allied violations of Greek neutrality, seizures of Greek territory, blockades, and attempts to disarm the Greek forces drive Constantine and his subjects into stubborn, embittered opposition, verging on hostility to the Allies. The wretched business culminates in the "Battle of Athens," where landing of Allied troops synchronizing with a Venizelist insurrection brings on bloody fighting between the Allies and the Greek loyalist troops. For the moment the Allies are repelled and the Venizelist conspirators are crushed, but the Allied vise grips Greece harder than ever, Constantine is dethroned and driven into exile, Venizelos is placed in power, and Greece submits to the Allied will.

Such, in brief, is a synopsis of the story which Mr. Hibben tells in graphic fashion and with a wealth of picturesque details. It is interesting to note that the body of the book was written immediately after the events described, in the spring of 1917, and was on the point of publication when (America having entered the war) "in certain quarters it was felt that its publication at that precise moment would embarrass our associates in the war." Its appearance was therefore postponed till the present day, though no textual changes have been made. A foreword has alone been added, explaining the reasons for its deferred publication and sketching the course of Greek events to date.

The book, as a whole, is well done. It is written in a clear, readable style, is carefully documented, and is unusually free from errors. Particularly good are the analyses of diplomatic situations, the different attitudes of parties and foreign Powers being excellently portrayed. The book's only noticeable defects arise from the reflexes of the author's own temperament. Obviously a man of strong feelings, Mr. Hibben seems occasionally to be slightly carried away by them. He makes no secret of his warm admiration for King Constantine, which sometimes appears to verge on hero-worship, while he equally does not disguise his cordial dislike to Mr. Venizelos. How-

ever, Mr. Hibben's keen insight and professional training keep his sympathies from getting the better of his judgment, while his evident intellectual honesty preserves him from any propagandist distortion of facts.

Mr. Hibben is profoundly right when he says in his foreword: "The time has come when Greece is entitled to a hearing." His book is a telling witness in that hearing. It should be read by all who are interested in Greece and the Near East.

LOTHROP STODDARD.

Modern British Poetry

Modern British Poetry, edited by Louis Untermeyer. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe.

IN a brief introduction to his anthology Mr. Untermeyer summarizes some seven "new influences and tendencies" that have emerged in English poetry since about 1885. The first of these is the decay of Victorianism and the growth of a purely decorative art, a movement of which Mr. Untermeyer makes Oscar Wilde the protagonist whereas the real revolt had flamed out in the sixties when a greater change appeared in aesthetic standards and codes than at any time since the Quantock coombs witnessed the rebirth of poetry at the end of the eighteenth century. Of Walter Pater, whose influence shaped not only Wilde's artistic creed, but the poetry of Dowson and Symonds and Johnson, no word is said. In the nineties there came the rise and decline of the aesthetic philosophy and in his account of this "tendency" Mr. Untermeyer makes no mention of the large influence of French literature and taste. As a reaction from pale aestheticism there followed the sturdy red-blooded virility of William Ernest Henley; and here too the critic fails to trace the movement to its sources, for Henley and to a less degree his followers are disciples of George Meredith and of Mr. Blunt. The fourth phenomenon of the modern period was the Celtic Revival of which Mr. Untermeyer gives an acceptable sketch, without, however, linking it up with that larger development which is known as "regionalism." Mr. Kipling is the fifth tendency; and his verse is connected, ingeniously but not convincingly, with that of Synge by their common concern for "things hitherto regarded as too commonplace for poetry." Then follows Mr. Masfield; and lastly, the "Georgians" of our own day. So far as it goes this analysis is accurate and clear, but it leaves aside one of the major "tendencies" of the time: the expression of the imperialistic idea in poetry and the protest against it. In the poems selected Henley's strong imperialism does not appear and Kipling's is implicit only, while on the contrary Sir William Watson's "little Englandism" is not illustrated and (through an oversight) Mr. Blunt is not mentioned at all.

When it comes to the body of the book, the anthology itself, the reviewer confronts the proverbially indisputable subject. "If you do not like my nosegay," Mr. Untermeyer may quite reasonably say, "make one for yourself; the garden is large and fair." But what if the nosegay offered claims to be representative of the garden? Three considerations challenge the justice of such a claim in this case. The arrangement in chronological order, instead of by "schools" or "tendencies" (as in the introduction), results in such awkward juxtapositions as that of "A. E." between Ernest Dowson and Stephen Phillips. The disproportionate amount of space allotted to the various poets gives a false emphasis: Mr. Hardy, Mr. Bridges and Mr. Russell have

each less than three pages, while Mr. Chesterton has nine and Mr. Kipling and Mr. Noyes (Mr. Noyes!) twelve each. And, even recognizing the strict limitations of a small volume, one is surprised at the omission of any samples of the work of P. B. Marston, John Payne, Eugene Lee-Hamilton, Richard Middleton, Herbert Trench, Gordon Bottomley, Maurice Hewlitt and Mary Coleridge. Particularly remarkable is the silence with which the work of Lee-Hamilton is passed over, for the wonderful sonnets of his later years and especially Mimma Bella (which the world is for the present almost ignorant of) will be remembered when the work certainly of some of the "younger men" to whom two-thirds of Mr. Untermeyer's volume is devoted, has passed into the limbo of "minor poetry." The anthologist is tolerant of many schools; but his eye is more on the present than on the immediate past.

This becomes even more apparent when one turns over the pages and considers the individual selections offered as representative of the several poets. For example, five poems by Mr. De la Mare are included; and in *The Listeners* and *Old Susan* we have admirable specimens of the best that he can accomplish in his two previous moods. Again, Ralph Hodgson has done nothing more delicate and delightful than *Eve and Time*, *You Old Gipsy Man*; and there is no evidence that Mr. Noyes will ever go further than the point he reached in *Sherwood* and *The Barrel-Organ*. Masfield, Drinkwater, Sassoon, Brooke, Sorley and others are fairly represented. The same cannot be said of the older men. What of Watson without *A Child's Hair* or *The First Skylark* in *Spring* or *The Glimpse* or any of the political poems? What of Thompson with no excerpt from the immortal *Ode* and without *To the Dead Cardinal* or *The Kingdom of God*? No one coming here upon Russell for the first time will gather any idea of the grave charm, the priestly solemnity, the mysterious insight of his moving verse. Turning to Henley we read the blatant *Invictus* but not *What Have I Done For You, England*, nor *Where Forlorn Sunsets Flare and Fade*, without which the real Henley hardly speaks. And who, in the meagre pages assigned to Mr. Hardy, will find even faint and partial indications of the scope and grandeur of his achievement in poetry?

S. C. C.

Lord Grey

Lord Grey of the Reform Bill, by G. M. Trevelyan. New York: Longmans Green and Company.

MR. TREVELYAN belongs to a great tradition; and he worthily maintains the dignity of a literary ancestry of which Macaulay is only the most eminent figure. Known wherever literature is cherished for his own superb study of Garibaldi, his *Life of John Bright* showed admirably that he was not less competent to illustrate the history of England. This latest work is not a whit less excellent. It is more than seventy years since the death of Lord Grey; and we are indeed fortunate that neither piety nor mishap stood in the way of his official life. It differs in many ways from the ordinary form of authorized biography. It is short, instead of long; it is not a strained eulogy of its subject; it does not preserve those scraps of undigested and irrelevant material which are the curse of English biographers; it has the proper historic perspective in the significance which it attaches to events. Lord Grey is a man of one great gesture. While it would be