

that lies in the color and surface texture of things. A few have been misguided into the belief that there is nothing beneath the surface,—but that is not an error into which the rather ponderously thoughtful Anglo-Saxon mind is apt to fall too deeply. There was a time when some poets wrote madrigals on their lady's nose and at present there are some who attempt to poetize even the color on a dying fish. Fortunately, even poets have a sense of humor, and the recovery from that sort of thing should be speedy, in fact is already largely accomplished.

And English poetry is left with a new power of vision. By necessity in the graphic arts the painter sees in terms of color and of form. Hitherto in poetry there has been a tendency to blur form by indistinct images and not to make the most of color. But our contemporaries by turning to one of the graphic arts, the Japanese Print, for inspiration have tried to correct this. In a sense the influence of the Prints represents a confusion of artistic frontiers—but who cares? A luxuriant beauty of color is our reward for crossing the forbidden barrier.

ROYALL SNOW.

To a Poet that Died Young

Minstrel, what have you to do
With this man that after you,
Sharing not your happy fate,
Sat as England's Laureate?
Vainly in these iron days
Strives the poet in your praise,
Minstrel, by whose singing side
Beauty walked, until you died.

Still, though none should hark again,
Drones the blue-fly in the pane,
Thickly crusts the blackest moss,
Blows the rose its musk across,
Floats the boat that is forgot
None the less to Camelot.

Many a bard's untimely death
Lends unto his verses breath;
Here's a song was never sung:
Growing old is dying young.
Minstrel, what is this to you:
That a man you never knew,
When your grave was far and green,
Sat and gossipped with a queen?

Thalia knows how rare a thing
Is it, to grow old and sing.
When the brown and tepid tide
Closes in on every side;
Who shall say if Shelley's gold
Had withstood it to grow old?

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY.

Social Absolutism

THE writer's ignorance is such that he is unacquainted with the works of Ratzel. His curiosity was stirred and if the truth be told his wrath also, by a quotation from Ratzel he recently read. This said that a "philosophy of the human race worth its name must be charged with the conviction that all existence is one—a single conception sustained from beginning to end upon one identical law." It sounds rather metaphysical, and like a somewhat discredited Teutonic metaphysics at that. But it must have some immediate pertinence. For it is found (I regret to say it) in an advertisement of Wells's new world history published in the journal for which this article is written. Wells's book is inaccessible where this is written. It is accordingly impossible to tell how far the book agrees in spirit with the dictum of Ratzel. But Wells can hardly be wholly innocent. For the following words are quoted from him:—"History is no exception amongst the sciences; as the gaps fill in, the outline simplifies; as the outlook broadens, the multitude of details dissolves into general laws."

Now I make bold to say that this isn't science. It is the Victorian view of science which is the same as saying that it is the semi-literary, semi-sentimental, semi-moral, popular view of science, that was fashionable in the days when it was found necessary to appeal to science in order to repair the ravages wrought by science in popular beliefs. Historically it descends from the day when Sir Isaac Newton threw the mantle of deism about the physical universe. It required Spencer with his conception of evolution fully to domesticate the idea in the English mind. Or, rather, we may say it took the Tennysonian mind to rescue evolution from its bad repute, and to capture the doctrine and set it to work in behalf of popular credulous optimism. It is no wonder that in words omitted in the passage quoted from Ratzel, the latter says that the philosophy of the human race "must begin with the heavens and descend to earth." He perhaps was thinking of the astronomical heavens. But in fact the doctrine, even in its milder Wellsian form, began in the theological heavens, and then descended to mundane affairs.

However, we must not rely even upon the odium anti-theologism. The doctrine might conceivably be true in spite of its origin, when it is applied to nature and history. But, oh, the remoteness of the doctrine that as we learn more facts, the outline simplifies: the vague remoteness of the plea that as science learns more facts, the multitude of details dissolves into general laws! That is pre-

cisely, according to the work of every existing living science, what doesn't happen. As known details multiply, we discover laws by which we formulate them and we also find laws by which to tie laws together. Some uniformity is conceivable for every discovered and discoverable detail. That much holds good. But such a statement is radically perverted when it is thought to mean that facts dissolve into general laws. We might as well say that when we find streets by which to find our way about in clumps upon clumps of houses, the houses dissolve into the streets; it is because the houses are obdurately there that we have to make streets; and it is because facts exist in such irregular thickets that we have to use every possible clew to introduce some kind of formulation, that is, of uniformity. If one wants a rough criterion for marking off the old popular view of science from the actual work of science he can find it here. Does exposition proceed on the assumption that concrete facts melt away into laws which then melt into more general laws? Then we are in the face of a period when thought was ruled by imported pre-scientific notions "which began in the heavens." Or do we find law treated as a descriptive formula for facts, so that there is a multitude of laws terminating in the same fact, according to the point of view from which it is described? Then science is speaking in its own voice.

This is dogmatically said, and it can hardly be proved without a long technical treatise quite out of place. But it is worth saying dogmatically if only to induce a reader to question that assumption which makes it easy for him to assume a unitary and absolutistic point of view when he approaches human history. It is, to speak moderately, a little unfortunate that such a saying as that of Wells is contemporary with the relativity doctrine of Einstein which substitutes for the neat, smooth, well-ordered world of Newton a world which is full of puckers and skews. Mechanics has always been the stronghold of the facts—dissolving-into-law notions, and it now appears probable that the science of mechanics has much more to do with our way of approaching and measuring facts than it has to do with nature.

We are interested, however, in the conception in its bearing upon human history and society. In this application, it appears that the doctrine is simply a "rationalization" of social monism, that is, of the attempt to impose a single movement upon history and a single law and rule upon man. One may sympathize with a longing for some state which shall reduce international anarchy to order, and enable harmonious intercourse to take the place

of war. But even here it makes a mighty difference whether the super-state is something into which the multitude of nations is to "dissolve," or whether it is a descriptive formulation of conditions under which the multitude of local states, provinces, towns, villages, and other human groups may follow more securely their own careers, and voluntarily engage in undisturbed and fruitful conversation with each other. For the only conversation in which participants "dissolve" is the one in which some tyrant bore monopolizes discourse, while voices melt into monotony.

Mr. Wells long ago accused Americans of not being state-minded. He was right. We are (or were before the war seized us and we evolved a fair imitation of the British Dora) so far from being state-minded that we didn't even know exactly what Mr. Wells meant. It took the war and the Versailles project of a League of Nations to teach us; or we should have unanimously replied that the charge was not an accusation but a compliment. Not that the state isn't upon the whole a respectable and needed institution, but that to become state-minded instead of socially-minded is to become a fanatic, a monomaniac, and thus to lose all sense of what the state is. For a state which shall give play to diversity of human powers is a state in which the multitude of human groups and associations do *not* dissolve. It is a mechanism, up to the present a rather clumsy one, for arranging terms of interplay among the indefinite diversity of groups in which men associate and through active participation in which they become socially-minded.

There is no doubt that politics is a more reputable career than average American esteem makes it out to be, for the trained mechanic is needed in every pursuit. We have taken our cue too much from those untrained in political mechanics and skilled in personal preferment. But our depreciatory estimate of politics is nearer the truth than a glorification of a state of social unity and law in which concrete human beings dissolve. Such sayings are still dogmatism rampant. But they are intended to sharpen the issue, to make alternatives clear. For the alternatives are either variety and experiment or a single conception of life sustained from beginning to end upon one identical law. Those who like the latter kind of thing will go on liking it. But the average man is entitled to become clear upon what he likes, and to become aware of where a choice is taking him. What the average American has practically liked in the past is clear enough in spite of our failure to make it clear to ourselves intellectually. We have believed in live and let live, in giving every-