

achievement. These Nō plays that Mr. Waley has given us, supply, too, an indispensable commentary on Greek drama, its ritualistic nature, the chorus, the lyrical developments, and the heroic character of the rôles—to take the phrase strictly in the classical sense of the sublimation of the instincts of the multitude in one heroic breast.

The Nōs begin with the entrance of the assistant, the waki, the second character, who names himself, his origin, his destination at the moment. Then comes the Song of Travel, faintly drawn like an old painting on silk, to quicken the imagination so that we may travel with the speaker and be ready at last for the heroic entry. Then comes the shite, the central character, or rather the ghost of him, and tells his story. There the first part of the drama closes. In the second part the hero lives through again his great moment, the climax of his glory or sorrow or last struggle. The chorus, which has been assisting the leading actor when the words interfered with his dance movements, chants a song then that will give us some poem that emerges from the story; and the hero fades from the stage.

The subjects for the Nō are widely diverse. There is the Atsumori, in which the ghost of the young hero tells of his last fight, how he turned back his horse knee-deep in the lashing waves and struck at his enemy, and how afterward they found him lying on the shore, beside him his bamboo flute wrapped in brocade. Or there is the play about Tsunemasa, Atsumori's brother, who had died at the same battle, to whom the Emperor had given a lute called the Green Hill. And now Gyōkei the priest is taking the lute by his master's orders to dedicate it to Buddha, performing then a liturgy of flutes and strings for the salvation of Tsunemasa's soul. In the flame of the candle burning low in the almost spent night the musicians see a shadow dimly appearing, like haze over the fields, they say; it is the ghost of Tsunemasa drawn back to the world by the sound of the strings. And though they cannot see him do it in the faint light, they feel him pluck the lute strings and hear the sound of rain beating on trees and grass. In the Kagekiyo there is the exquisite motive where the unhappy girl, whose sleeve is like a flower wet with rain, and who has come to seek her father, once a hero, now a filthy outcast, to ease his shame asks him to recite the story of his great deeds at Yashima. There is the plot of the Nachi No Ki, where the hero fallen to poverty cuts down the sole treasures left to him, his three dwarf trees, the pine, cherry and plum, to warm a traveller, who turns out later to be the Emperor. Or there is the terrific story of Komachi, once a court beauty, but scornful of her lovers, and now wandering, cursed, old, foul, mad. Or the Hoka priests who avenge their father's murder. And there are plays turning on the lives of children, happy some of them, others bitter and sad. But whatever the subject they are seen in a vision the Nōs, seen always poetically. They illustrate continuously the process by which the poetic mind expresses one part of the world in terms of another; establishes the one thing in terms of the whole, catches the whole in some one happy instance; and thus reveals that kind of antiphonal radiance of all things among themselves which poetry is.

But it is by all odds the security of their essential character that makes these plays most interesting. Nine out of every ten of them, however good or bad otherwise, maintain this essential character of dramatic design. They evince a remarkable proportionment of words, movement, scenic stage details, an emphasis and a pattern of their own; and through all this they attain to a singular freedom.

Through this they are apart from all immediacy. Through this they depend on no direct attack on our emotions but are enabled to avoid it—"in plays," Sieami says, in his book on the Nō, "where a lost child is found by its parents the writer should not introduce a scene where they clutch and cling to one another, sobbing and weeping . . . plays in which children occur, even if well done, are always apt to make the audience exclaim in disgust, 'Don't harrow our feelings in this way.'" Through this security of an essential character of their own, these plays are as independent as a print of Hokusai's. All reality of men and actions and material objects is made to become theirs before these plays can use them, to suffer translation into their own terms; men and actions and objective realities, inns, palaces, temples, waysides, thrones, are turned into dreams, and dreams into reality; the human face in characters where a due degree of emotion will be passed, is hidden under the motionless and subtle incantation of the mask; and even the identity of the actor hero himself is translated into the convention of the chorus, who take his words from him and speak them for him when the fit moment comes. And whether we think them great works or not, we should have to be very ignorant of the fundamentals of dramatic art not to see the singularity and integrity of these plays so securely achieved that they need no heavier device than the dropping of the flutenote at the end of a phrase, which always before went up not down, to show that the scene is ended. And finally, to leave aside the dramatic essence and the rest of it, there is something in the general, all-round quality of these old pieces that is itself like a flutenote, and that is like the oldest painting of China, from whose poetry in fact the poetry of the Nō derives: a kind of strange, high, meagre delicacy and fortitude of the heart.

STARK YOUNG.

## Her Voice

Her eyes have already transfixed him,  
and it only remains for her mouth  
to transport him.

Her mouth just assumes the pert form  
of a cross that is dimpled, then grave,  
as she presses him on  
to the next generation.

What thought can avail to revive him,  
unless he should spy his own boy  
building blocks,  
his own girl playing house?

Herself will be busy with ferns, yes  
and plants in old pots and old vases—  
and she who might likewise be thinking  
won't have to.

The night without, peopled with silent,  
dark cypresses lured on to stars,  
had her voice—  
now the light of the dawn.

Having listened to that, now to this,  
and grown slowly bereft of himself—  
he is quiet.

ALFRED KREYMBORG.

## Books and Things

EVERYBODY who amuses himself with Johnson's Dictionary has read, under "cross-bow," Johnson's quotation from Boyle: "Testimony is like the shot of a long bow, which owes its efficiency to the force of the shooter; argument is like the shot of the cross-bow, equally forcible whether discharged by a giant or a dwarf."

Disenchantment, by C. E. Montague (London: Chatto and Windus, 7 shillings), being a book of testimony, not a book of argument, owes its efficiency to the force of the shooter. So it is worth while to remind oneself who C. E. Montague is. When the war broke out he was—he had been for a good many years—the chief leader writer on the Manchester Guardian. He enlisted in 1914, was made a sergeant in 1915, a lieutenant in 1916, a captain in 1917. He served in France, Belgium and Germany from 1915 to 1919. He was forty-seven when he enlisted. He is a mountaineer, a good one, a member of the Alpine Club. Readers of the Morning's War remember him as a lover of effort and danger in the open air. Captain Montague is one of those who "covet all things hard."

By this time—for it was published early in the year—many English reviewers must have had a go at Disenchantment. None of them, my guess would be, can have said the wrong thing in fewer words than somebody in the London Times, who found it a depressing book and one incapable of doing good. Upon reading that review I suspected, and now having reading Disenchantment I know, the reviewer to be a gentleman whose head Charles Lamb would have liked to feel. The most remarkable thing about Disenchantment is that while it "ought," as we say, to be depressing, it is in fact the reverse.

Strange that this should be so, for in Captain Montague's pages we begin by sharing the high hopes which drove the earliest volunteers into the army, by inhaling the upland air which blew tonic and keen across England in the first days of the war; we look on, while Captain Montague is adding incident to telltale incident, at the slow growth of disenchantment in the hearts of British privates and N. C. O.s, we see those hopes that were so high in the act of dwindling from less and less to almost nothing, we take our part in the process of many a generous faith's disaster. Of all these faiths, faith in the future that would be the present when the war should be over was the strongest and most wide-spread when the war broke out. It is the only one of which Captain Montague undertakes to give us a full-length picture. He does not attempt to measure the other beliefs, nor was such an attempt necessary to his purpose. He contents himself with tracing the spread of the British volunteer's disbelief in the old Regular Army—though never in its courage—in a Staff whose work "hung up whole platoons of our men, like old washing or scarecrows, to rot on uncut German wire"; in many military leaders, in the press, in the statesmen at home. As we read we see all this happening to private and N. C. O. We see an England in which now, at this moment, there are millions of men to whom this happened.

Nor does Captain Montague, being a wise man, try to tell us how many young and youngish Englishmen were in 1914, after one fashion or another, Christians; or what it was that they thought they believed, or what religion meant to any of them. He gives us, instead, bits of trench talk. Here and there we listen to soldiers describing their spiritual experiences, their mystic insights—things which they would not have recognized under these names, and

which they called "rum goes" and "queer feels." In their talk "these inexpert people," these soldiers whose minds "had recovered in some degree the penetrative simplicity of a child's," could "bring each other up to the point of feeling that little rifts had opened here and there in the screens which are hung round the life of man on earth, and that they had peeped through into some large outer world that was strange only because they were used to a small and dim one. They were prepared and expectant. If any official religion could ever refine the gold out of all that rich alluvial drift of 'obstinate questionings of sense and outward things,' now was its time. No figure of speech, among all these that I have mixed, can give the measure of the greatness of that opportunity. Nobody used it."

In *The Sheep that Were Not Fed*, the chapter from which I have just been quoting, Captain Montague tells how this opportunity was missed. "Chaplains," he says, "abounded." They were of many kinds. "There was the hero and saint, T. B. Hardy, to whom a consuming passion of human brotherhood brought, as well as rarer things, the M. C., the D. C. O., the V. C., the unaccepted invitation of the King, when he saw Hardy in France, to come home as one of his own chaplains and live, and then the death which every one had seen to be certain." Yes, there were all sorts and conditions of chaplains, "there was, in great force, the large, healthy, pleasant young curate not severely importuned by a vocation," who was "a running fountain of good cigarettes," and who "gladly frequented the least healthy parts of the line." These, says Captain Montague, "were solid merits. And yet there was something about this type of chaplain—he had his counterpart in all the churches—with which the common men-at-arms would privily and temperately find a little fault. He seemed to be only too much afraid of having it thought that he was anything more than one of themselves. He had, with a vengeance, 'no clerical nonsense about him.' The vigor with which he threw off the parson and put on the man and the brother did not always strike the original men and brothers as it was intended. Your virilist chaplain was apt to overdo, to their mind, his jolly implied disclaimers of any compromising connection with kingdoms not of this world. For one thing, he was, for the taste of people versed in carnage, a shade too fussily blood-thirsty. . . . In the whole blood-and-iron province of talk he would not only outshine any actual combatant . . . but he would outshine any colonel who lived at a base."

This justice done to the chaplains is characteristic of Disenchantment everywhere. Captain Montague is an example of what love of fair play may grow into when it strikes root in somebody whose senses are keen and who has a searching, assaying, generous mind. In him love of fair play has become a passion for equity. There is good humor in his scorn and humor even in his chivalry. He combines a hatred of war with a decided preference, when he has only himself to think of, for the tightest places.

In a chapter called *Any Cure?* Captain Montague speaks of the alternative before "the man who has gone off the rails on matters of conduct," and who has a bad habit to conquer or be killed by: "Disease and imbecility and an early and ignoble death, or else that stoic facing, through interminable days, of an easily escapable dullness that may be anything from an ache up to an agony. That is about where we stand as a nation." It is a faith that the necessary effort and stoicism will be forthcoming that makes Disenchantment an indomitable book. Its energy and beauty make its indomitable spirit contagious. P. L.