

our natures needing expression. They know that here these motions and the mood of this ceremony become formal and graver only because it is natural so to the thing expressed; that the remoteness of the expression is there only because of the remoteness and the simplification of our thought and spirit in this more ultimate region of the day's living.

And so in poetry. Acting poetic plays in our theatre is a kind of going to church, as we use the word, with all the awe, particularity, tedium and unfrequentedness implied. The very legs of those autumnal actors were stiffened with this poetic specialty, this apartness of verse; and the throats routed. But in Spain the audience scarcely knows when the play is prose and when it is verse, or when, as happens there so often, the same play passes back and forth from one to the other. Every year around Halloween in Madrid Zorilla's Don Juan Tenorio is given for five nights in all the principal theatres. And there is no actor in it but goes from prose to verse and back again without batting an eyelash and with the utmost naturalness. And in Italy the same audience and the same actors experience the gorgeous poetry of D'Annunzio or the beautiful, warm marble quality of Morselli and the realism of Giacosa and Marco Praga without any specializing whatever. And so with them the realm of poetry is ventilated, is healthy and natural.

In our theatre the health and the possibility of creating and of acting poetic drama lies in our understanding one fact: that there is no difference in kind between what we call poetic and what we call prose. No difference in kind. We may have arrangements obviously, genres if you like, in verse or in prose. But on the whole they are related to each other, the poetic and the prosaic, exactly as the moments of life are related to each other. In life, for instance, we have particular moments of deep feeling, say, or suspense. We do not separate these, hold them compartmentally off to themselves. What happens is a gradual heightening, an intensification of our beings. The pulse concentrates its stroke, it is quicker or it seems almost suspended; but its existence is deepened and made more compulsive. The body increases its life, it moves toward more complete unity. The mind is charged with a vaster region in which it dilates and seems to breathe a wider air. The whole of us, mind, body, spirit, is driven toward a simplification, a oneness. We draw more easily and luminously a radiance from ourselves and from the life of the world that we have shared. And though all this may happen in a graver or a slighter mood, the point remains the same. And that is what the poetic is, then, in our existence. It differs in no way generically from prose, exactly as the moments of a life do not differ in kind but only in completeness from one another. And that is what the poetic is in the art of the theatre. The rhythm, the word, the incident do not essentially change. They are only driven down into their inmost substances. By a heightening in vitality they are simplified; and through that at the same moment they are made more subtle. They become more accurate. They become truer to the experience expressed.

And for an actor or a producer when these plays are presented, what ought to happen means not necessarily any change in method. Even in Racine, to take an extreme case, the method changes only in the sense that it fits itself to an accepted and confessed conventionalization of idea and form. But in the poetic drama as we have it in English, most of it, all that need happen is what happens in our lives: where the intensity and accuracy of effect approaches a larger and simpler order or a more passionate

ornament in beauty and imagined grace, there the gesture, the delivery, the expression, follow. Even in the reading of verse the same holds true; there is no distinct method implied or necessary. Verse requires a better use of the tongue, the lips, the sense of tempo, the vocal tone, only because of its greater accuracy to the meaning. Good verse follows its content exactly. It is in form precisely true to its sense. To read it, then, requires no ramping about like he-muses marching to Parnassus, no startled reverence, but only an increased exactitude.

But for a sudden break to come into the actor's life, into his brain, his spine, his knees, his throat, his soul, when he hits this poetic phase of dramatic experience is for him to falsify the thing he undertakes. The only reverence worthwhile in art is not one that jerks the legs about, blows up the lungs and gets the soul on a high-horse. It is a reverence that, once under way, is scarcely conscious of itself save for the quiet amplitude or the beautiful ease or absorbing intensity or passion or elevation or clarity or spacious precision that has come into the moment.

STARK YOUNG.

Epitaph

For this she starred her eyes with salt
And scooped her temples thin,
Until her face shone pure of fault
From the forehead to the chin.

In coldest crucibles of pain
Her shrinking flesh was fired
And smoothed into a finer grain
To make it more desired.

Pain left her lips more clear than glass;
It colored and cooled her hand.
She lay a field of scented grass
Yielded as pasture land.

For this her loveliness was curved
And carved as silver is:
For this she was brave: but she deserved
A better grave than this.

ELINOR WYLIE.

Harvest Dust

The road is burnt to dust, like more dust meadow rue
Smokes in the meadow. Berries are balanced to fall
At a cowbell's echo. Apples will soon be over, nothing is
left to do
For the trees but to crook their elbows on the wall.

In the farmhouse doorway a woman husking corn
Droops to where, softer than children's hair, a yellow
heap
Of the silk fondles her hand. Under her eyes her face is
as worn
As the stone steps where she sits and has fallen asleep.

What is it all for? Why must the earth crack
Over and over beneath this searing breath?
Only that apples be ambers and berries black,
And women content and wearied unto death.

WINIFRED WELLES.

Books and Things

TO be the ideal reader of any book, no matter which, is a pleasant light exercise for the muscles of fancy. Particularly pleasant when the book is such a good one as Professor Chauncey Brewster Tinker's *Young Boswell* (Atlantic Monthly Press. \$3.50). I would suggest that one of its ideal readers is I.

Thirty-five years ago I read, in Napier's edition, *The Life of Johnson and The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, footnotes and all, as beseeemed that thirstier and more patient age. Several times since then have I read them from beginning to end. *The Life*, on Oxford India paper, taking its wonted place under the pillow of my upper berth, goes into the country with me May after May. My family will testify that I am likely, at any moment, to retard business or to break in upon pleasure by reading Boswell aloud.

Yet never, although always intending and intending, have I tapped any source of knowledge except the *Tour* and the *Life*. Boswell's *Account of Corsica*, with *Memoirs of General Paoli*, is still unread. So are Birbeck Hill's notes. There cannot be many readers who have allowed an interest equally lively and durable to continue in this state of arrested development. Few who read Mr. Tinker's book with a charmed sense of old places revisited, old acquaintance renewed, can have at the same time my "practically virgin" mind. I have been reading *Young Boswell* at leisure and absorbed, not knowing unless Mr. Tinker tells me which parts of his book have long been accessible, and which are new material that he with his explorer's luck and his explorer's skill has brought to light. Boswell's adroit stalking of Rousseau delights me, and also the quick-stepping procession of Boswell's affairs of the heart. These things, I believe, are Mr. Tinker's greatest finds.

In his engaging pages I wish for no change, except that he remove, from his second edition or his third, a few vestiges which make one suspect that a desire to improve the occasion has passed that way. "And now note the skill with which youth goes at the management of parents"—that is the kind of thing I mean. As who should say, Here are lilies; let me give them a touch of gilt. But the traces left by this tendency are few.

The real service that Mr. Tinker has done his hero is of a kind that James Boswell would not, and that Alexander Boswell would, have resented. It consists in telling things unknown before, and in setting them, for our greater ease, among things known already to everybody who knew all that was knowable about Boswell's life and art. Yet the greatest of Boswell's benefactors is neither Mr. Tinker, nor Mr. R. B. Adam of Buffalo, nor even Birbeck Hill. Macaulay is still the greatest.

In 1831, in his review of Croker's edition of the *Life* and the *Tour*, Macaulay made his mistake about Boswell, made it with such clear-cut grossness, in colors so high and so crude, that it has become the mistake of mistakes, to be looked at respectfully on account of its size, not at present to be repeated or imitated. Dull must he be of soul who can read Macaulay without the will to dissent, to have another look at James Boswell, to see him under some one of the natural lights which play, more mercifully and more revealingly than any of the garish lights Macaulay could turn on, upon the stricken children of this world.

Macaulay expounded his theory of Boswell with that "stamping emphasis" under which, as Lord Morley has said, we "wince." Macaulay—imperishable warning to all who seek effect at any price—tried to account for genius by saying that no beatings, however severe, could keep Bos-

well out of the ring. People were always knocking him out: "How tipsy he was at Lady Cork's one evening, and how much his merriment annoyed the ladies; how impertinent he was to the Duchess of Argyle, and with what stately contempt she put down his impertinence; how Colonel Macleod sneered to his face at his impudent obtrusiveness; how his father and the very wife of his bosom laughed and fretted at his fooleries; all these things he proclaimed to all the world, as if they had been subjects for pride and ostentatious rejoicing." In Boswell's case, according to Macaulay, genius was an infinite capacity for taking the count.

It has not been sufficiently remarked—as we all say when about to say something more than usually obvious—it has, perhaps, not been sufficiently remarked that Boswell united the behavior of a thick-skinned man with the perceptions of a thin-skinned man. "You may estimate your capacity for Comic perception," says George Meredith, "by being able to detect the ridicule of them you love, without loving them less; and more by being able to see yourself somewhat ridiculous in dear eyes, and accepting the correction their image of you proposes." Boswell could not accept the correction of himself proposed by his ridiculous image in dear eyes, but he could see that image in friendly eyes and hostile. Other men have kissed the rod and profited by it. He, never profiting, painted portraits and made thumb-nail sketches and took snapshots of the men and women who laid it on. Summon up, if you can, the moment when your dentist has hurt you most. Also the moment when you most relished the differentia which marked this dentist a unique specimen of his unique class. Conceive these two moments to be one and the same, and you will have some notion of a state of mind which must often have been Boswell's, and which helped him to repeat his special miracle of breathing the breath of life into faithful reports of real life, usually such inanimate things.

Boswell was able to detect the ridicule of those he loved not only without loving them less, but also without lessening them, in his eyes or ours. He anticipated our modern feeling that no man can be great who is inhumanly and smoothly without blemish. I haven't read Mr. Bok's *Antobiography* yet. I am saving it for the day when I wish to cure myself of overestimating man's sensitiveness and of underestimating man's cheek and self-complacency. At second hand, from book reviews, I gather that Mr. Bok, who unites the behavior of a thick-skinned man with the perceptions of a man whose skin is thicker, is no Boswell.

I doubt if Boswell would have availed himself of Mr. Bok's opportunity. I am not certain he would have seized Mr. Tumulty's. Perhaps, if Boswell had lived in our day, he would not have been a biographer at all. Perhaps the dailies would have laid hands on this, the perfect interviewer. Even those talents which Macaulay thought it death not to hide would have tempted Boswell away from biography. Most of all, perhaps, the talent for going where you are not wanted and for staying there until you get what you want. The Eminent Uninsurable, because eminently unapproachable, would have raised his portcullis, would have lowered his drawbridge, at the fortieth blast upon Boswell's bugle. Among the great men who were writing the most insurance his name would often lead all the other names, whether gentile or the reverse. He would succeed where others had failed. He would coax and wheedle into the same room men who had been refusing to meet, and whose meeting would bring peace after industrial war, industrial calm after storm.

P. L.