

dopesters whisper their tips in the symbolism of the game, while the public, proudly in the know, studies the figures of past performances in the études statistiques of the pink sheet. Being ignorant of these subtleties I grow indignant and mutter to myself of oil and hospitals. But then I reflect that civilization is too complicated for reason, anyhow, or that the alternative to this people's game of chance is the royal game of sinecure. We are governed by events beyond human purview in any case. So I lapse into a thin-blooded cynicism suitable to one who cannot vote and will not read the sporting news.

C. E. A.

## Mr. Hardy's "Philosophy"

*Thomas Hardy's Universe, by Ernest Brennecke. London: Fisher Unwin. 8s. 6d.*

IN Three Philosophical Poets, Mr. Santayana observes of the Divine Comedy: "This art does not smack of life, but of somnambulism. The reason is that the intellect has been hypnotized by a legendary and verbal philosophy. It has been unmanned, curiously enough, by an excess of humanism; by the fond delusion that man and his moral nature are at the centre of the universe. Dante . . . seems to be a cosmic poet, and to have the anthropomorphic conceit of romanticism. But he has not escaped it. . . . He is, in a moral sense, still at the centre of the universe; his ideal is the cause of everything. . . ." It would seem a long way from Dante to Mr. Hardy; but Mr. Santayana's remark is almost as illuminating of the latter as of the former. Mr. Hardy, too, at first sight, would appear to be a cosmic poet, and to have escaped the anthropomorphic error of the romantics. But, like Dante, he remains carefully at the centre of the universe, viewing the world from his own moral rampart; and even when he is assiduous in demonstrating man's unimportance in the deterministic stream of things, he exalts him by exalting the vast horror of the stage on which he acts. Cherishing a hope that eventually the "Will" may become as conscious and as compassionate as Man, he makes clear a secret belief in a debatable human superiority. Again, Mr. Hardy's work has always to some extent smacked of somnambulism. His novels have the melodramatic and unreal and fitful vividness of dreams; his characters are as often as not the hollow bright people in a nightmare, vivid, but as a whole not quite apprehensible or credible, "with dreamy conventional gestures" (to quote Mr. Hardy himself), and an air of having been hypnotized. It is reasonable, I think, to see the cause of this in Mr. Hardy's perpetual preoccupation with "ideas." His obsession with the "thing to be demonstrated" is uppermost in his mind; and it is ruthless with him. A touch here and a touch there, every so often a tiny omission or interpolation, it diminishes the real in order to round the pattern; and it is precisely in this diminishing and this rounding—which Mr. Hardy terms "truth"—that he often sacrifices the real and substitutes the phantasmagoric. What this "thing to be proved" may be, Mr. Brennecke, in his essay on Hardy's "universe," seeks to make clear. He traces Hardy's intellectual growth from a belief in "crass chance," or the tyranny of "circumstance," or Fate, or Providence, to his almost complete acceptance of Schopenhauer's system with its basis of "the World as Will," and its accompaniment, in the world of phenomena, of absolute determinism. Mr. Brennecke makes an overwhelm-

ing case of it. Quoting literally, he shows that the choruses in *The Dynasts* contain a nearly perfect abstract of Schopenhauer's metaphysical theories. This is certainly a rather surprising and interesting fact. If we quarrel with Mr. Brennecke about it, it can only be because he is prolix and repetitious in the telling of it, uses a great deal too much metaphysical jargon, and is perhaps a little too inclined to take his "fact" seriously, and to leave it at that.

Mr. Hardy, in his preface to *The Dynasts*, disclaims (as Mr. Brennecke admits) any attempt at a systematized philosophy. The doctrines of his "Intelligence," he says, "are but tentative." But Mr. Brennecke is not deterred by this disclaimer: he takes what he terms Mr. Hardy's "intellectual content" very seriously. Is it so "difficult" or "exhilarating" as he thinks "to come to grips with it"; or is it especially important to do so, beyond recognizing its nature? Mr. Hardy's philosophy is not original, on the whole; and the really important questions, for criticism, are the questions which Mr. Brennecke almost wholly ignores: why has Mr. Hardy, as an artist, always been so enthralled by "ideas"; and to what aesthetic use has he put them? . . . On the latter question Mr. Brennecke does throw an incidental light when he points out the very remarkable accuracy and compactness with which Mr. Hardy, in the choruses of *The Dynasts*, retails Schopenhauer's conception of the unconscious Will. This affords one an opportunity of observing Mr. Hardy's method, of watching the characteristic vigor, and austerity, and dry economy with which he converts an idea into a feeling or an action; it lights exceptionally his habit of personifying the abstract, and of abstracting the personal; but into these matters Mr. Brennecke, unfortunately, does not see fit to go.

And this is precisely where any careful criticism of Mr. Hardy *ought* to go. Without for a moment forgetting Mr. Hardy's exceptional power of thought, and the remarkable degree and variety with which he has "caught up" nineteenth-century abstract thinking, of the more sceptical sort, into poetry, we can more fruitfully concern ourselves with the interesting fact that he evinced in his work an emotional craving for a sceptical intellectual basis long before the sceptical intellectual basis took the precise shape to which Mr. Brennecke attaches such importance. The precise shape, indeed, does not particularly matter. The half-dozen intellectual viewpoints through which Mr. Hardy has travelled are metaphysically different; but it is useful to notice that they are emotionally the same. What we see here is an emotional determinism of thought which Mr. Hardy himself would probably be the first to admit, and which clearly suggests that for Mr. Hardy it is the common factor of emotion, in these successive viewpoints, which has been most necessary. Mr. Hardy was determined—by what motives we can leave a chartered psycho-analyst to ascertain—to take a tragic view. Leaving aside, then, both the personal and the philosophic aspects of this, and restricting ourselves to the æsthetic, we find in Mr. Hardy the extraordinarily interesting case of an artist with a powerful appetite for a tragic view, who, beginning with a melodrama, has gradually and laboriously sought the "rationale" which would not only permit, but actually invite, the maximum of disaster, and carry him thus from melodrama to tragedy. In *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, and in all those novels in which chance, or mere coincidence, dominates—that is, a purely external and unpredictable force—we have melodrama; but by degrees Mr. Hardy substituted a gloomy deter-

minism for chance, and thus greatly extended the dimensions of his tragic view, partly by increasing his plausibility (since the downfall of a protagonist could be derived from the defects of his own nature), but also by increasing the unity and æsthetic value of his "scene," which was now conceived not as chaos but as order. In this, the "philosophy" was perhaps simply derived from the appetite for disaster and pity. That it was the emotional implications in Schopenhauer's ideas which most signally attracted Mr. Hardy we can see clearly in the fact that he persistently "sentimentalizes" them, as, for example, in *The Dynasts*, where, instead of Schopenhauer's aseptic unemotionalism, we have the "Spirit of the Pities" and "Spirits Sinister and Ironic," and with admirable effect. If even here we feel that Mr. Hardy has not wholly replaced the melodramatic by the tragic or the grandiose by the poetic—and the same thing is yet truer of even the latest and best of the novels—we must suppose that it is due, as suggested earlier, to the fact that the artist does not sufficiently "command" the philosopher. Mr. Hardy's appetite for the disastrous and pitiful often outruns his inventive power, as his inventive power (especially in his prose) almost invariably outruns his sense of effect. The "idea" thus too often and too bleakly emerges in his prose, crippling or hypnotizing his characters, or reducing them to lifelessness. It is in poetry that the "idea" takes its place most naturally and effectively; and it is therefore not surprising that Mr. Hardy should have shown in poetry, most unmistakably and unintermittently, his tremendous power and individuality.

Mr. Brennecke's treatise suggests these and related problems; and it is extremely interesting and careful. Reduced to two chapters instead of six, it would make the very best of bases upon which to build an exact æsthetic and psychological study of Mr. Hardy's work. It is a pity that Mr. Brennecke should so painstakingly have left aside all the æsthetic implications which so clearly start from his notes on Mr. Hardy's metaphysical preoccupations. But even so he has given us something which will be useful . . . It remains only to note a misquotation from the Fore-Scene of *The Dynasts* on page 118.

CONRAD AIKEN.

## Ordeal

*Ordeal*, by Dale Collins. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.50.

HENRY JAMES discovered a formula for raising to a higher power the emotional appeal of the ghost story. It consisted in giving to the apparitions the symbolism of moral issues, and of weighting the mystery with moral horror. He appropriately entitled this discovery *The Turn of the Screw*, under which name one of the masterpieces among stories of the supernatural is known. In somewhat similar fashion Mr. Dale Collins has taken an equally common genre—the sea story—and by adding the weight of social and moral meaning he has given to it a sinister and terrible power. Superficially *Ordeal* is a tale of the sea, suggesting certain forbears and influences. There is for background the typical exaggeration of tropical nature, the darkness, the light, the heat, the rain like a solid wall. There is a storm which rivals Conrad's Typhoon. There is fighting and murder. There is thirst, hunger, heat, toil, nakedness, dirt, danger for sensitive, gently nurtured people, under which their nerves

are shattered and their morale cracks. But the effect of all this is multiplied to something monstrous and abnormal by the fact that these gentlefolk are in the power of a man of primitive cunning and brutal force—a man not of their own class—a servant.

Thus he appears in Mr. Collins's brilliant impressionism, on the first page of the book.

Ted the steward struck a match which burst a hole in the night as if he had fired a tiny bomb. The light throbbed for a moment, throwing his features into relief, and then the darkness flooded in again, blotting out the blaze and cloaking the man so that he became no more than a black mound set against the dim-seen windlass.

The memory of his face remained impressed upon the gloom like the head of a Cæsar on a coin; the sharp nose hooked down above the bitter lips, the eyes dark beneath dark brows, the chin long and blue. Across these cruel and arrogant lines, however, was smudged the cringe of his trade, and deep in the bold eyes cowardice dwelt, while the sleek black hair—emphasized by the skin's pallor—suggested obsequious bowings. Clearer than all else in the imprint was the fact that the left ear had been sliced off neatly, leaving a small round hole suggestive of nudity in its pink revelation of the machinery of hearing.

Like the Hairy Ape Ted feels a vast contempt for his masters, but he is more sophisticated than Eugene O'Neill's hero.

They're—they're—parasites. They grind down our faces so's they can play bridge. I tell you they make me fair sick. And yet there's no getting away from them for us that's got no money, no power, no chance. What can we do to get even with them—everythin' on their side: police, laws, parsons, everythin'! But they're swine just the same, damn them!

The steward with the indignities of his stewardship to avenge, with the lusts learned from his masters to satisfy, has in himself the seeds of a servile revolution, and by a logical chain of events, comes into possession of his harvest. In the derelict world of the *Spray* he is sultan, but with one vulnerable spot. The question was asked by Octave Mirbeau in his *Mémoires d'une Femme de Chambre*, why servants remain patiently in ignominious subjection, with such opportunity to attack the master class in its vulnerable part, from below. The philosophic *femme de chambre* sees that it is because they have the souls of servants. And that is why Ted breaks down in his rôle of sultan—the mark of his stewardship is too deep; he has the soul of a servant.

It should be promptly affirmed that Mr. Collins is too good a workman to thrust the significance of his tale upon us. He has no thesis—no discussion. His meaning grows steadily with the weaving of his story, which is extraordinarily swift narrative marked by energy and vividness of phrase. His objectivity in handling alike the external world and the human kind who traverse it is unbroken. There is never a touch of sentiment, of partiality. His detachment is never more masterly than when he deftly labels his characters after their terrible experience by the same standard trademark of superior humanity which they originally bore. Only a glint of malice is latent in Thorpe's last utterance—Thorpe, the owner of the *Spray* and legally in possession of the honors of the occasion—as he clamors for champagne to drink to their rescue on board the steamer which has picked them up:

"There is only one fault about this ship," said Thorpe. "The service is not what it should be."

ROBERT MORSS LOVETT.