

was born. Inevitably he took refuge in the only part of his environment that did not hurt—his own New England and its past.

Of his father he wrote, "He came of the oldest gentry of America. From the emigration about 1640, his ancestors had always married into families who foolishly or not held themselves bound by their blood to maintain the traditions of a gentle past." More and more Wendell made a cult of this "gentle past," of its remnants among "the better sort" about Boston, of the "gentleman." Even in Paris when feted as the sympathetic interpreter of the United States to France he wrote, "Imperial democracy is a tremendous fact. I think I believe in it here more confidently than amid the actual impressions of it at home." Once more at home he wrote, "We are living in an age of less liberty and less; every extension of the suffrage makes the individual less free . . . It was evil that many were once slaves of the few, if you will. It is worse evil that all should be the slaves of majorities—whatever their whims." Doubtless today it would be the "tyrannous minorities" that Wendell would fear and denounce! The effort to save the world for democracy necessarily raised qualms: of President Wilson he wrote "Certainly there is hardly a man in the country in whom I could feel much less personal confidence," which was the common opinion of Back Bay dinner tables.

That the above was not the man who will be remembered by students and colleagues and friends as a singularly lovable and unusual personality is obvious. Other aspects of Wendell occasionally flash even from the mass of personal correspondence—the histrionic Wendell (like his younger brother) acting in his own Elizabethan Raleigh in Guiana, the adventurer and possible soldier (he surely would have "emigrated" in 1640, if his ancestor had not saved him the bother!) delighting in struggle and clash, if not in strife—careers that he might well have flourished in had it not been for the accident of his revered "tradition." If a decorous account of his life might not be expected to include these latent possibilities of the character, at least more could have been made of the teacher and the craftsman that Wendell was preeminently. Through his teaching of the art of writing, both in class and in his unique English Composition, he has had a greater influence upon the craftsmanship of the writer than any other American man of letters. Whatever may be said of his rhetorical formulas he spread extraordinarily by his own teaching and that of his many pupils the idea that in order to write well the writer must be consciously trained and take pains. The immense effort put forth in American schools and colleges to teach the art of writing is more directly attributable to Barrett Wendell than to any other. If in his old age he seems to have lost faith in the method, this was but the fag of thirty and more years in the class room and office: the ideal stands. It was an ideal of unremitting industry, of practice and pains. And a vivid realization that the least of expression may yet be creation.

The reverse effort of interpreting the creation of literature in terms of humanity, as it was begotten, owes hardly less to the example and the practice of Barrett Wendell. He came into teaching at Harvard at a time when the lure of the German doctorate threatened to submerge altogether the teaching of belles lettres in the very sanctuary of American letters, and almost alone he proclaimed and testified that in literature as in life the spirit is more than the word, because the spirit is first. He accomplished this in a personal man-

ner, swaggeringly, passionately, often belittling his own very real acquisitions in scholarship. Thus he created at Harvard one of those traditional personalities that the transformation of the American university into a laboratory of technology is fast making impossible. He was one of a few very real academic "characters" of the last generation, with a rich flavor, personal and eccentric, that youth delights in, loves and remembers . . . Of these more professional aspects of Barrett Wendell, too much abridged in the present record of him in favor of trivial exchanges and amiable social relationships, two passages may be cited, one written at the opening of his career as teacher, in 1887, and the other at its close:

Over-refinement is the curse of the century—in virtue as in vice. Virility—the broad human courage that takes the world and the tasks of life as they are given to us, that knows temptations and pleasures and duties, that fights and struggles and wins and fails is more to seek than it used to be . . . There is no calling so mean that it cannot be followed with a firm purpose to follow it well. And one condition of sanely vigorous life is that there shall not be too much preliminary thinking."

To Prof. E. K. Rand in 1920:

Now nobody knows better than I that I am no scholar, and therefore no consequence to learning. Yet one thing I did in my teaching seems to me right. I tried to make pupils read things, and not weight their unsteady heads with things that had been written about things—historic, linguistic, whatever else. My task as a Harvard teacher was to give glimpses of literature to men who generally would not be concerned with it in practical life. That I never forgot. Any scholar can help to make scholars; but lots fail in the process to humanise. My real duty, as I saw it, was not scholarly but humane.

It was this vivid, persistent sense of humanity in literature as in life that made Barrett Wendell the figure he was.

ROBERT HERRICK.

A People's Houses

Sticks and Stones, A Study of American Architecture and Civilization, by Lewis Mumford. New York: Boni and Liveright. \$2.50.

DURING its picturesque career from the stern and rock-bound coast of the Pilgrim settlements to the steel-bound sky line of New York, the American people has dwelt in a great variety of houses. The houses, indeed, have been no less picturesque than the career. Whether each new mansion has been nobler than the last is, perhaps, open to question. No doubt each has been bigger and in a sense grander. Furthermore, ground rents, the unflinching indices of a certain sort of progress, have steadily appreciated. Mother earth is dearer if not more benign on Manhattan Island than she has ever deigned to be elsewhere. Accordingly, the landscape, the side yard of the American people, has altered no less than the dwellings that occupy it. The consequence is that these outward changes which the American establishment has successively undergone afford a record of our life history wherein the thoughtful observer will be able to read the secrets of our heart.

In its earliest phases the civilization that was established upon these shores was distinctly mediæval. The New England farming village, with its common pasturage which survives only in the designation of a city park as Boston "Common" or in the rows of decorative elms which mark the analogous "Common" of a historic town, was really a manorial community without the manor house. Its irregular and twisting streets were not accidental cow paths. That jibe at the oldest sections of the oldest cities arises only from ignorance of the niceties of the village economy. The streets were laid out deliberately with a careful eye to the purposes they would serve and the terrain they would traverse. Each individual house, indeed, was located so as to combine the maximum convenience of access to the outlying farm land with the maximum protection from prevailing winds. The dwellings themselves were simple as houses must be which are the direct creations of master-builders working without plans, and compact as the comfort of the occupants required in an inclement climate when central heating was not even a dream of the future. Of decoration there was very little either in the houses or in the lives conducted within their doors. Yet the purity of their design has not been equalled since. In harmony not only of line and mass but of material, use, and habit, in the brooding sense of deep stability, the primitive village of the seaboard colonies surpassed anything that has followed it.

Indeed, what has followed has been the mongrel civilization of an era of transition. Mr. Lewis Mumford brings to the study of our architectural record just such special skill and contemplative intelligence as are necessary for its interpretation. Architecture, to him, is not a matter of blue prints and elevations, nor even of the handful of showy buildings disposed about the public square like gift china upon a plate rail. It is the total expression in building of a civilization. In describing its houses he describes the people. If his analysis is sound, the degeneration of American architecture has been brought about by three principal forces: cities, machinery and eclectic sophistication. All three were perhaps inevitable. Certainly the mediæval civilization which gave form and order to the earliest American life was already crumbling when its transplantation to the new world occurred; otherwise the transplantation would not have occurred. Moreover, the first break in the isolated security of American village life was bound to come about through the accumulation of riches and the inevitable appetite of the well-to-do for the newer amenities of Europe. It makes little difference in the end that the classical style imported during the eighteenth century produced excellent and harmonious buildings; that the southern classic-colonial villa accorded well with the conditions of life of the land-owning, slave-holding planter who was, indeed, not a very different fellow from the Roman plantation owner who built the architype of the southern manor house. The classic mode was nevertheless superimposed. It was at odds with the modern requirements of light and air. It was incapable of general development. And it was accordingly corrupted with other styles of decoration, also imported, through which American building became increasingly unveracious, mixed, ephemeral, sometimes even exotic.

Veracity, indeed, was no longer possible. The town was rapidly becoming a great city, while the house itself was undergoing a still more extraordinary metamorphosis from a building into a machine. The conditions of urban life combined to crowd the dwellings even of the princes of American commerce into solid rows of city tenements dis-

tinguished, architecturally, only by their brown-stone fronts, or, as Mr. Mumford calls it, their "imperial façade." Meantime, the introduction of increasingly elaborate plumbing and heating arrangements and the later development of structural steel construction as the prevailing mode in all buildings of any size have served to make the new mechanical interior and the old architectural exterior quite irrelevant to one another. "A modern building is an establishment devoted to the manufacture of light, the circulation of air, the maintenance of a uniform temperature, and the vertical transportation of its occupants." The modern creation of structural steel is not a building at all in the established sense of the word. It is not built from the ground up. The steel frame is rivetted together like a piece of engineering and the exterior surface is hung upon it, literally a dressing of brick or stone. The product of this technology is the "draped cube." The architect has been crowded out by the engineer.

A man who had found a god worthy his worship in the infinite precision of machinery might face this outcome with equanimity. Very well, then, he would say, let's see what the engineer can do. But Mr. Mumford dislikes machinery acutely. Therefore, though he concedes the superiority of the Brooklyn Bridge to any edifice of the machine age, he inclines to sigh for a return to proper building. The suggestion of a building-machine in which even the external dressing had been finally assimilated to the structural technique would not move him to enthusiasm, any more than a scheme for resolving the chaotic monotony of the rows of city houses by the application of a single architectural scheme to an entire block, making each block a continuous and harmonious structure inhabited by some thousands of individuals. For one thing, Mr. Mumford retains from his Freeman days a single-taxing predilection for recapturing the open country by eliminating all site values.

That being the case, the alleviations which he holds out all take the form of escapes from the consequences of modern life: the garden city, the mechanically independent rural community, the household of varied occupation transformed rather than eliminated by the machine technique. That is, of course, alluring. Yet if Mr. Mumford's logic is sound it must be discounted for its essential unreality and unveracity. All talk of the handicraftsman returning to his autonomous carving upon stone is now essentially unveracious. By the logic of history which Mr. Mumford states so well, ours has become an urban mechanical civilization. The question is not how can we escape it, but what will we do with it.

C. E. AYRES.

Some Lines On Mr. Arlen

DIKRAN KOUYOUMDJIAN, who calls himself Michael Arlen—in order, as he explains, that his readers "may refer to him in the same manner at least twice running"—is undoubtedly the literary Pierrot of the minute. A succes d'estime with a few esoteric readers, begun some five years ago by the personal causerie of *The London Venture* and sustained by the sentimental tales of *The Romantic Lady* and the even more sentimental novel *Piracy*, was consolidated last year by *These Charming People*, a sheaf of stories garnered from magazines. This year, *The Green Hat* has surpassed all records by the persistence with which it has held the lead among best sellers. More than that, it has carried with it Mr. Arlen's earlier