

ending is that of the last of the three in point of date. And it might be fair to add that through this period the deplorable conditions of Russian life were themselves static.

A further word, again, on Chekhov's fluidity. This is both emotional and moral. An emotional flux almost necessarily sets architectonics to one side. Coherency becomes far from inevitable. Conclusiveness is not to be looked for. Life is an unstable equilibrium of transitory values. As for the moral side; whatever there be of hap, mishap, or non-hap, who but God can decide "which is failure and which is success?" In the circumstances that prevail, it might indeed be "strange," as Chekhov himself says, "not to forgive."

Mr. Gerhardi, after a fashion not altogether unbecoming in a young man, is a thorough-going partisan. If he is severe, inferentially, on Maupassant, he is still more severe, categorically, on Henry James, who appears to him to be at the opposite pole from Chekhov. And indeed, with the *bête humaine* once haled to the shambles, it is easy to feel that James tiptoes round the carcass with a penknife, while Chekhov, wielding the cleaver—or, better, the scalpel—makes every brief stroke count. Chekhov, whatever his fundamental and ultimate indecisiveness, never reduces language to "a spray of words."

I don't know that I go the whole way to meet the author's assumption—common in our day and perhaps increasingly peculiar to it—that verity is all, that direct transcript from life is the *sine qua non*, and that the building-up and exhibition of familiar, contemporaneous character is the *ultima ratio* of the novelist militant. What, in this case, if we give art's general canons any consideration, becomes of words in which realistic representation does not enter, or enters but subordinately? What (not to fly too high) becomes of Guido Reni's *Aurora*, or of a Haydn quartette, or even of a Gilbert libretto? Or what—putting the hand haphazard into the literary hat—becomes of Tasso, Sophocles, Racine, of Uhland, of La Fontaine, of *Paradise and the Peri*? Conception, clothed on with form, comes first. No work can be well conditioned, primarily, on a fragmental and realistic reproduction of mere actuality.

The weaving of the Chekhovian web, regarded as psychological functioning, is best to be apprehended in English, perhaps, through the stories of Katherine Mansfield. Perhaps, too, the web of his diction, none too easily to be grasped by us outsiders, though good translations increase, may best be apprehended through her texts. But the matter may be approached from the other side, along the road of contrast. The difference between silk and something-less-than-silk may be got from the pages of recent psychological studies by Mr. Masters and Mr. Anderson. As for Chekhov's cadences, we must largely take them, notwithstanding the best will in the world among his translators, on faith. We only know that few falls of speech from our own writers really please our ears.

Perhaps the best thing to be said for Chekhov, however, is that he never calls upon his reader for the exercise of that sort of faith which is known as "the suspension of belief." What he reports, *is*—and chiefly by the virtue of his reporting. We have only to open our eyes and his world will be before us. If we can accept his world as our world—as sufficiently representative of the world in general—so much the greater our gain. His own eyes would seem to look out upon it as if he held some such doctrine as that which, mysterious in its very simplicity,

caught and held the early Christians. Such a view, in its broad singleness, remains beyond the reach and capacity of most. If Chekhov really arrived at it, that will count as his great distinction.

His works have been characterized by a none too friendly native critic as tending rather toward lemonade than alcohol. Lemonade, yes—if he be compared with Dostoevski and Gorki. Yet lemonade remains a pleasant and practicable beverage—and is much nearer the fundamental *aqua pura* than the other. Perhaps Chekhov's draught will outlast the fiery potations of spirits more ardent and violent. Moderation, even when the product of uncertainty, has the quality that lasts. Perhaps it is by waiting, rather than by acting, that understanding shall be reached: in the words of *The Three Sisters*, "it seems that in another little while we shall know why we are living, why we are suffering." As Mr. Gerhardi pauses to reflect, regarding the *perpetuum mobile* called life: "Life is everywise: a struggle toward the static and simultaneous on the part of the transitory and successive, and toward transition and diversity on the part of the static and uniform." This once granted, what remains for the artist but to observe and report? Here, then, is our critic's justification for his hero. Why view and treat anything less than the whole broad body of current phenomena, as these impinge on one's sensibilities? Yet why try to determine, to judge, to direct? Such matters as free will and predestination were to await, in Chekhov's opinion, the future. Yet the newer Russia struggles on.

HENRY B. FULLER.

## The "Heathen" Turk

*An Englishwoman in Angora*, by Grace Ellison. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. \$6.00.

*The Rebirth of Turkey*, by Clair Price. New York: Thomas Seltzer. \$3.00.

*The Struggle for Power in Moslem Asia*, by E. Alexander Powell. New York: The Century Company. \$2.50.

IN spite of widespread interest in the problem, Americans as a whole have little appreciation of the true character of the situation in the Near East. Press, pulpit, and platform disseminate a heterogeneous collection of truths, half-truths, and untruths which make rational judgments difficult if not impossible. Opinions, therefore, are more likely to be based upon emotion than upon fact, and because they are emotional they are certain to be the more stubborn. Herd antipathies to the "heathen" Turk and herd loyalties to the "Christian" Armenian or Greek can usually be counted upon to make the average American take a belligerent stand in any Near Eastern crisis regardless of the merits of the case. It is said, for example, that never, not even at the time of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, have the State Department and the White House received as many letters, petitions, and telegrams urging various degrees of military action as poured in upon Secretary Hughes and President Harding immediately after the Turkish occupation of Smyrna in 1922. And yet there were comparatively few Americans who had more than the most superficial understanding of the causes of the war in Anatolia or of the nature of the Greek claims to Smyrna.

This ignorance of Near Eastern affairs operates almost entirely to the disadvantage of Turkey. The Gladstonian tradition of the "unspeakable Turk," combined with the

indisputable fact of cruel hardships suffered by Greeks and Armenians in Asia Minor before and during the Great War, has fastened upon the Turks what Mr. Clair Price appropriately calls a "sorry butcher-legend" and has exalted the Christian subjects of Turkey by "an equally artificial martyr-legend." Americanized Greeks and Armenians have exploited this prejudice; journalists and publicists hesitate to disturb it; the Turks have made no organized effort to counteract it. Thus Turkish atrocities are widely advertised, whereas the systematic vandalism and organized brutality of the Greek army in Anatolia from 1919 to 1922 have been passed over. Deportations of Greeks from Asia Minor are vehemently denounced, but little or nothing has been said about the deportation of some half million Turks from Thrace during and since the Balkan Wars. The idea of a compulsory interchange of populations between Greece and Turkey originated with Mr. Venizelos and was presented to the Lausanne Conference on behalf of the League of Nations by Dr. Fridtjof Nansen; nevertheless it has been cited by frenzied relief workers and uninformed editorial writers as further conclusive proof of the innate barbarity of the Turk.

It is the purpose of Miss Ellison to present the Turk in a more favorable light. But she has overstepped the bounds of common sense and good taste. She does not serve the cause of peace in the Near East to anathematize the Greek people and canonize the Anatolian peasant. Overestimating the capacities of the Turks or being excessively enthusiastic about their virtues may well prove to be boomerang rather than boon to the Angora government. Miss Ellison apparently would be an English feminine Pierre Loti, but she falls far short of the mark as a litterateur. The pages of her book contain more dashes and exclamation points per square inch than a freshman essay. Her prejudices are so transparent as to be whimsical: her favorite saint is Mustapha Kemal, her favorite demon Lloyd George, her favorite aversions Americans, Bolsheviki, and British Laborites. Miss Ellison was in Angora, but that fact in itself scarcely qualifies her to write authoritatively on the complicated problem of the Near East.

Mr. Price and Major Powell have undertaken with greater success the laudable task of challenging certain Western preconceptions regarding the Moslem world in general and Turkey in particular. Their accounts of the rise of the New Turkey and of the existing situation in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia are based upon their observations as free-lance journalists. What they have to say is on the whole accurate, though not altogether in perspective, colorful but not colored, at once informative and entertaining. Neither of these books is likely to be of permanent value in the historical literature of the Near East; both will serve useful purposes in the discussion of contemporary international problems.

Whatever may have been their opinions during the Great War, these authors are now thoroughly disillusioned regarding the beneficent influences of Western imperialism in the Near East. In his initial chapter *Behind the Veil of Propaganda*, Mr. Powell promises his readers that he will "discard all subterfuges and euphemisms and, when the narrative requires it, substitute 'petroleum' for 'self-determination,' 'political ambitions' for 'national obligations,' 'imperialism' for 'altruism'." His discussion of the Mesopotamian Muddle, the French mandate in Syria, and the attempted subjection of Persia constitutes a severe,

but on the whole merited, indictment of Entente diplomacy in its dealings with Moslem peoples. From the record presented one might ask whether certain eminent and respectable statesmen do not better merit the title of "unspeakable" than the Turk to whom it is gratuitously awarded.

Mr. Price is not impressed with the claims of Christianity to greater consideration than Moslemism as a social force in the Near East. "Americans at home," he writes, "have not yet learned that European governments have sometimes accepted Christianity 'in principle' rather than in fact, and that only when the Christians themselves, from British Foreign Secretaries down to the humblest Greek dive-keepers in Galata, have been converted to the practice of Christianity, will the missionaries gain the understanding and respect of Islam." One of the most inexcusable aspects of Christian conduct in Turkey is the too-readily-assumed superiority of Westerners over the Oriental. "Among imperialists," says Mr. Price, "one can understand the necessity of an inflexible attitude of superiority, but among Christians it corresponds neither to reality nor to the teachings of the First Christian." Major Powell goes this statement one better by asserting that this holier-than-thou manner is crass hypocrisy. He is impatient with those Americans who prate about Eastern polygamy—which is now rare in Turkey—the while overlooking the antics of "certain American bankers and railway magnates who maintain establishments which differ in little, save their illegality and secrecy, from Turkish harems."

In short, here are two books which, although of solely temporary importance, present in a readable and unconventional manner much material that is of real interest. They frankly present the Turkish and Moslem point of view, which, as has already been indicated, needs to be presented. It will be regrettable indeed, however, if Western historians and publicists do not speedily come to realize that innately the Turk is no better and no worse than other Near Eastern peoples, all of whom react to the same stimuli in much the same way. To treat the Turk as a Pariah is to invite him to exhibit all the unlovely characteristics of such. He has his national vanities, but so have his Christian neighbors. Peace in the Near East may be effectively promoted by more widespread realization that exaggerated political and cultural nationalism of the Balkan and Anatolian peoples, aggravated by the unregulated rivalries of the Great Powers, is the real enemy of Greek, Bulgar, Turk, and Armenian alike.

EDWARD MEAD EARLE.

## Deirdre

*Deirdre*, by James Stephens. New York: The Macmillan Company. \$2.50.

THERE remain Bernard Shaw and James Joyce to write of Deirdre. First A. E. captured her pale ghost and let it flit through a twilight drama. Then Yeats gave her color and music and beauty without life. Then Synge found in the old story the greatest tragic theme in the world—the hard choice between swift and slow death—and made Deirdre unforgettable. Now comes James Stephens with the crooked mirror of his temperament and retells the ancient narrative in his own way.

It is a short book—less than half the usual novel length. It is by no means a novel. It is a series of dramatic scenes in two groups, with an interval of seven years be-