

But Mr. Lubbock gets bravely over it. After all, he finds perfectly definite problems to solve and he succeeds in solving them quite definitely. If he is metaphysically apologetic in his first chapter, he is metaphysically precise and clear in dealing with his actual subject matter later, and the difficulty of remembering the form of a story does not figure much, except in the introduction.

A philosophic gift is needed, for few things are more baffling to the average intellect than is the relation between the novelist's mind and his subject. But Mr. Lubbock is able to secure the great advantage of starting at the right point. "What is the subject?" he says. "What is the story *about*? . . . this is the question to press." And again: "The best form is that which makes the most of its subject—there is no other definition of form in fiction."

In other words, *purpose* is the key to right art and right criticism, as it is to most other things as well. We are not able to judge of any form of human endeavor, or even to define it, until we have discovered its purpose. It is well that this point is not lost sight of, as it so often is, in a sophisticated discussion of technique.

After applying this criterion of subject, or purpose, to one or two well-chosen masterpieces, the author goes on to the consideration of the various methods by which the novelist makes his form fit the theme he has undertaken. He draws, in the first place, a valid and illuminating distinction between the panoramic method (the picture-making or objectifying faculty of the novelist) and the dramatic method. For the sake of its greater intensity the dramatic method tends always to be preferred. The first step in this direction is the telling of the story in the first person—the substitution of a "characterized 'I'" for the meaningless "I" of the narrator in the background. But there are later refinements, culminating in the device of allowing the reader to watch, not the mere acts, but the thoughts, of the protagonist in the story—the author still *telling* nothing—and of then, by a sleight of art hardly perceptible to the reader, regarding this same protagonist once more objectively, to be *seen*, like any other person in the narrative. Mr. Lubbock ingeniously simplifies these subtleties, showing at the same time their practical importance.

This book about the novelist's craft is neither purely professional nor purely academic in attitude. It is as far from being over-literary as it is from being "popular" in style. If one is a bit surprised to find a discussion of the art of novel-writing confined so closely to the question of the point of view in narration, still one can hardly question the supreme importance of this phase of the subject as the author develops it.

MORE THAT MUST BE TOLD. By Sir Philip Gibbs. New York: Harper and Brothers.

What gives interest to Sir Philip Gibbs's new book is really his downright and slashing attack upon the political leaders of Europe—the "Old Gang" as

he calls them. His other points are neither novel nor phenomenally effective in the mode of their setting forth. A certain faith in humanity, a certain none too well substantiated faith in the reformation of Germany, the thesis that Germany was not *exclusively* to blame for conditions leading up to the war—these attitudes are familiar. They are set forth by Sir Philip with great eloquence, but they seem to be impressions rather than fully developed convictions, and there is generally a noticeable tendency to assert somewhat more than the facts produced seem to warrant.

Of the German people he says: "Their revolution had been real to a degree which we do not even yet admit. It had replaced the Emperor by Ebert the tailor, and all the other kings of Germany had fled. More than that, it did represent a great change in the moral and spiritual outlook of the German people. Gone were the arrogant officers swaggering along the sidewalks and thrusting civilians to the gutter. Gone was all the military pomp and pride which had assumed so great a place in their national life. The immensity of their losses in men and wealth, the staggering figures of their national debts, the inevitability and enormity of the price they would have to pay, shocked the soul of Germany to its innermost recesses, uprooted the very foundations of their old faith and gave them an entirely new vision regarding their past history and their future place."

Perhaps.

But if Sir Philip does not always convince one when he writes of what might have been, one does feel that it is good for us to have someone acute enough and courageous enough to attack the leadership of the old school in Sir Philip's slashing, large-minded, unpartizan way. It is good reading, too. An acute critic, not merely a writer of political broadsides, the author demonstrates his skill not merely by his attempt to discover the weakness of the Prime Minister but also by his subtle and not too laudatory sketch of Mr. H. G. Wells. If Sir Philip had not an emotional conscience, he could be a wonderful satirist.

One likes the spirit of this later book, on the whole, better than that of *Now It Can be Told*. There is less of the rawness of outraged feeling in it. Its point of view is clear from the start, and Sir Philip quite successfully carries his reader along with him through most of his discourse.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INTERPRETATION NOT ATHEISM

SIR:

I cannot restrain an impulse to applaud the suggestions made in the article of Herbert D. Miles in a recent number of the *REVIEW*.

We certainly need a new Bible, one that will outline the essential principles of Christianity. I, and most of my acquaintances, believe in the moral and ethical principles which Christ taught and to that extent can be considered Christian. I have never joined a church because I could not do so without misrepresenting myself by the act itself.

When I first discovered that I could not accept a literal interpretation of the Bible I supposed, of course, I was therefore an atheist. I supposed this until I read some atheistic works. I then discovered I was no atheist. I have long since given up the idea that it is necessary to belong to any particular "school" of thought or hold any creed that agrees in every particular with that of any group. I have found comfort and satisfaction in a creed of my own.

A new Bible would save many a man years of groping in spiritual darkness.

W. W. GOULD.

San José, Costa Rica.

THE MOVIES AND ART

SIR:

I feel that attention should be drawn to a recent article, entitled *Movies as Dope*, by Elizabeth Robins Pennell. Certainly thinking people do wish that the moving pictures were improved, but those reading Mrs. Pennell's article must find it difficult to understand, much less to agree with, the exaggerated statements used as hypotheses for the conclusions she has reached.

To quote: "It has not been art, but the love of make-believe that has driven people to the play, the desire to throw off the boredom of the real for the enchantment of the unreal. . . . The dramatic artist fills the stage not with life, but the semblance of life."

Mrs. Pennell's objection here is evidently not against "movies" themselves, but against this love of make-believe. She condemns it, as well as amusement, without telling us why, yet admitting this desire has its roots deep down in human nature. Surely such an observation should lead one to examine the truth of a conclusion so at variance with nature. And, in so doing, would one not be confronted with the problem of how to distinguish between

the "real" and the "unreal"? In the final analysis this desire we all share is a yearning toward the fulfillment of our ideals, and it is the nature of this ideal and "unreal" world that shapes our destinies.

Mrs. Pennell says, in support of her argument that the camera can never be an instrument of art, that "it cannot create or compose or design". And, further, "the photographer selects his subject, he does not arrange it . . . the machine does the work, and what the machine manufactures is a record of fact". First an understanding of the word "art" is necessary. Might it not be expressed in this way: "Art" is that piece of work which bespeaks the personality and genius of its producer,—which "lives" because of that "something" imparted to it from the very life and soul of its originator, that "something" being imaginary in that it cannot be analyzed, yet is more real than the facts of which it is composed? If it be a landscape, this beauty is not alone due to the actual trees in the scene, nor to the exact truthfulness of the presentation, but to the imagery, the vital touch imparted to that piece by the artist.

If Mrs. Pennell agrees with this definition of art and the further interpretation of the artist's relation to life, she must understand my objection to her condemnation of the love of make-believe. Though the facts of a story may be untrue as actual history, it still can be real, full of imagery, true values—though new combinations of life—even to the point of "art". It can be of no matter how that story is told,—whether by the vehicle of spoken or written words, or by painting or sculpture, or by stage or film,—for, in this world, matter is the medium for all expression. When the spirit of the artist is stamped indelibly and unmistakably upon his work, then is that piece of work "art".

Mrs. Pennell also says "the films give something to look at, nothing to think about". Even in the worst of them there is something to think about. The presentation of "nothing" before the eyes of the public could scarcely be as detrimental as most of the pictures are, or as beneficial as are the few. Even though Mrs. Pennell may not recognize that there is thought in the poorer films (of a low order to be sure, but, still, thought), she must agree that where there is art there is truth.

There is still a large field of discussion open as regards the "laziness" of people consenting to give their attention to moving pictures. I may ask whether, in this world where there is so much to be studied, where there are so many spheres of knowledge unexplored, it is a part of "laziness" to seek that method by which the most can be accomplished in the shortest, most impressive and efficient way? Is this instinctive choice to be condemned or commended? To force any growth is to forfeit the gain one would reap, but, as nature is, after all, the final answer to our perplexities, it is well to notice that, though she works, she never "labors"; though she accomplishes what to us seems the impossible, she never chooses the longest route, but practices economy throughout.

All who think at all are certainly with Mrs. Pennell in an effort to improve the films, making them a channel for the expression of art; but constructive thinking is needed. It avails us little to condemn or tear down the structure that is, by reason of its forcefulness, a vital part of our people's life, if we do not build anything to take its place. Let us acknowledge its possibilities, and then, in such ways as are judged wise by our majority, direct the abilities of the generation toward raising these productions to a higher level until an increasing majority approaches the standard of "art".

MARGARET SCHUYLER STERNBIRGH.

Seattle, Washington.

NIRVANA VINDICATED

SIR:

Does the author of *The Movies as Dope* which appeared in the November REVIEW realize the slur twice cast on Nirvana, which it is suggested can be easily achieved by the movie addict whose thinking powers are being "doped"?

The religious devotee whether Hindu or Christian is *never* "seduced" into the state of Nirvana. He strives with all his spiritual might to return consciously back to the source from which he came forth—undifferentiated—a glorious goal, a tremendous expansion of consciousness, the exact opposite to annihilation.

While appreciating all that is said about the machine made art, the usurper, I deeply regret the fact that many readers may swallow this fallacious presentation of Nirvana.

MONA DE FILIPPI.

Berkeley, Cal.

UNAMERICAN "AMERICANISMS"

SIR:

In his review of my book on *American English*, in your November issue (which book, by the way, is merely a development of an article under the same title in THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW for January, 1883), Mr. Archibald Marshall remarks that my taking for granted that it is ungrammatical to say "I have been to London" seems to "need elucidation". Considering the uniform purity of diction in Mr. Marshall's writings, so far as I have read the books of that distinguished novelist, it is surprising that he can require "elucidation" of the simple fact that you cannot be "to" a place—in good English. If the phrase quoted were correct, it would be correct for the speaker to amplify it by adding: "I was to London last week, but now I am to home." Of course the proper preposition is "in" or "at".

GILBERT M. TUCKER.

Albany, N. Y.