

tremely welcome, for a book on modern architecture by Frank Lloyd Wright is an event of major importance in the history of American art. In the first two lectures he considers the effect of the machine on the artist and on style, emphasizing the fact that machines are merely tools of an unprecedented efficiency—never masters, if art is to live. Beauty, he knows, is only to be obtained through the organic, living, or “natural” development of form from the conditions of material, and technic, into that spirit of essential joy which he terms “Romance.” The third lecture—“The Passing of the Cornice”—is at once the most controversial and the least convincing part of the book. Here it seems that somehow Mr. Wright’s passion for valid beauty—the secret of his greatness—has failed him, for, classic as he himself is in his essential feeling for proportion and repose, he nevertheless reveals himself as blind to all the “classic” architecture of the past. One resents his gratuitous disparagement of the American Institute of Architects, which is in no sense the “Arbitrary Institute of Appearances” that he calls it; he should know that it has no creed of taste. To all the classic architectures of the past, and especially to the ideas of the Renaissance, he opposes the passion of the mid-nineteenth century Romanticist, almost in the very spirit of Ruskin, and his words are, one feels, all too often barbed by an understandable, but quite irrelevant, pain.

But the last three lectures are on a different and higher plane, far above any little personal pains or blindnesses; they are the words of the keen-eyed creator, of the worshipper of a free beauty, of one who would shatter the artist’s chains rather than forge new ones. Nowhere in the criticism of modern architecture has there been such delving, deep down into the bed rock of building, into the sources of form in human life and dreams. Thus Mr. Wright sees there is no salvation for modern architecture in any stylism, however “modern,” no future in that simplicity that is itself a mere pose, and so mere pictorial decoration. The only future for a living American architecture he can see is in the vital and independent organization of form, an organization that has a heart, that makes lovable things, and that uses the machine only as a tool for a richer and freer life. So, strangely enough, in the last two chapters Mr. Wright is forced behind architecture to the relation of man and the machine. Are we to have a machine-directed life, to be slaves, or mere cogs, housed in sterile and sanitary cubbyholes? Or can American democ-

racy preserve its rich individualism by mastering the machine, making it the tool to obtain liberation and leisure? The city of today, he points out, with its “space manufacturing for profit” leads only to slavery and sterility. This ideal must be broken if our civilization is to grow. “Eventually,” he says, “we must live for the Beautiful whether we want to or not”—a realization of that is the only basis for a great architecture in the future. Altogether this book is disturbing, stimulating, sometimes over-rhetorical, yet somehow magnificent, the voice of one of America’s greatest creators, who knows all too well the little-nesses of fashion, the fickleness of taste.

TALBOT FAULKNER HAMLIN.

The Week’s Reading

FATAL INTERVIEW,” by Edna St. Vincent Millay (Harper & Brothers, \$2). In fifty-two precise and exquisite Shakespearean sonnets, a loose sequence describing the experience from first discovery to final dissolving, the foremost woman poet of our time has here set down the truth about a woman in love. Many men and a few women have tried to do something of the sort before, and perhaps in classic times some one may have done it; but nobody today has come anywhere near to Miss Millay’s achievement. About the only poetry of recent date that can be compared to it is George Meredith’s sequence called *Modern Love*; but love was thought to be different in those days, and that bitter and sardonic piece of work, for all its beauty and its fame, is too full of mannerism, oratory and falseness of emotion to hold a very firm place today beside this new clear and equally beautiful document, with its portrayal of real emotion. Meredith himself would probably be the first to shrink with horror were he to discover women as Edna Millay knows them to be; he would be shocked at so candid a revealing of the flesh and blood under his tiresome idol’s plaster surface. Indeed *Fatal Interview* and the modern woman it reveals are not to be recommended to romanticists of any time or place. The author has no patience with romanticists and what they believe, and no willingness to record the pretenses they decree.

Fortunately for people like Miss Millay, this is a day of realities. If any reader still believes that love made plain is love with the glamour gone, this book will disprove him. It will show him that with reality the glamour of that emotion is not tarnished but heightened, the intensity not slackened but increased by being allowed to go free of pretenses. Miss Millay abandons all the conven-

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tions, the set phrases used so long to describe a woman in love, and instead of them she makes plain the whole variety of a woman's moods, the range of her feeling, where a whole universe with its own special space and time is created out of the small range and the sadly short moments of her individual experience of loving. The tears and sighs and moonlight are gone; instead she swears:

Now by this moon, before this moon shall wane
I shall be dead or I shall be with you!

She hates the dishonesty of loving women of the past, hiding their real intention behind tricks and wanton manners and lovers'-knots, and all the ways devised to attract and hold a man's love. She says:

But being like my mother the brown earth
Fervent and full of gifts and free from guile,
Liefer would I you loved me for my worth,
Though you should love me but a little while.

She traces all the varied feelings, the sense of imprisonment, the strong wish never to be free again, the exaltation, the pride, the fear of love's passing, and the curious seasonal sense which makes each woman believe, at least for a time, that nothing ever can last. All these things are so directly and beautifully told that you almost forget to notice the words at all. The rare vitality of the work brings it into your mind with a living sharpness. It seems not to have been written according to any Wordsworthian formula of "emotion recollected in tranquillity," but rather by "emotion rehearsed," not in tranquillity at all. The whole book is too immediate, too warm, to partake of any of the qualities of tranquil recollection.

Miss Millay has made use of archaic phrase and classic allusion throughout her volume, and in doing so has lifted it beyond her own personality, so that it seems not only one woman's experience, but the general experience of all. Since the classic manner is a direct one, it combines well with the modern idiom which at its best is equally direct; and in her blending of the two styles, Miss Millay has saved her work from being individual and narrow in substance, and has made it seem universal and without date.

As a psychologist she deserves great praise. She has been able to analyze and separate the varying shades of her experience, and never once grow confused. As a poet she deserves even greater praise. This new book is by far the best of all her distinguished work, and it is in the great tradition, a part of literature that cannot be lost. B. K.

"NEW YORK: An Intimate Guide" by Walter R. Brooks (Knopf, \$2). Even if you were born and bred in New York, Mr. Brooks' engagingly written little manual will be able to tell you things about the city which will make you a happier and more contented citizen. Certainly if you have only a few days to spend in New York this guide book is invaluable. Mr. Brooks does not tell you how much the Statue of Liberty weighs or how many square feet of asphalt there are in the city—he tells you, in fact, that the Statue is a bore and not worth a visit. Also he explains why your New York cousins, living in two small rooms, would rather have you stop at a hotel than live with them. He has three excellent chapters on restaurants and a chart with street numbers enabling you to find just how near you are to these restaurants. Other chapters are entitled "If You Must Bring the Children," and "Seeing the Wheels Go Round," which tells you how to get into factories, newspaper plants, phone exchanges, etc. Mr. Brooks tells you everything, in fact, except how to discover your dream girl and how to find a drink. But this last is unimportant; any New York cop will be charmed to direct you to the nearest speakeasy.

C. P.

"MEN AND WIVES," by I. Compton-Burnett (Harcourt, Brace & Co., \$2.50). The story of *Men and Wives* is not original. It is a tale of Jane Austenish people in a "Cranford-like" village, told entirely through conversation which might have come from the lips of Rosa Dartle. But this reference to older novelists does not indicate a resemblance. If any one is Miss Compton-Burnett's literary ancestress it is Jane Austen. For characters, the novel has the family of the new baronet and that of the old, the doctor, the rector, the solicitor, the butler, the three elderly sisters, the light lady and her platitudinous mother. For plot it has a cruel story of maternal domination and filial revenge, a melodrama all the more dreadful for being played at a tea table by well-spoken folks who know how to handle their knives and forks. For manner it has something highly original. With scarcely a paragraph of description, all told, the story is set out through the conversation of nineteen different people, who disclose themselves almost shamelessly through their talk, and who are so real that they could be recognized if met. There is something bewildering and a little fatiguing about the intensity with which the book is written; in reading, one longs occasionally for a page in a lower key: but the general effect is