

## Literary Independence

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unless our youngest generation decides not to go excavating for Troys in our still rather shallow past. Perhaps our younger generation has found that an age which must be rescued from columns of vulgar writing and pages of vulgar photographs resists them almost as tenaciously as trousers resist sculpture, and perhaps, instead of following Henry James across the sea, they are cherishing the idea that all the ages which have been laid away have been laid away in lavender, or in myrrh and frankincense. "Linda Condon" is almost the only novel which could possibly be called a successful effort to make a work of art with our modern American life as its model, and Linda Condon herself is hardly more than a beautifully finished paper doll with three frocks and one perfect hat, who must be surveyed only from the front. And when our youngest generation realizes that the characters in our novels who have three dimensions have usually been drawn from a mirrored reflection, and that those reflections are usually surrounded by paper dolls who have not always three frocks, they must surely discover the impossibility of reproducing the minds of two or three centuries ago, even if they cannot look into "Romola" and see that Benvenuto Cellini made the labors of George Eliot unnecessary and the labors of her readers ridiculous. And then they will have only to discover that there are charming people and charming places in America, and that there are even charming relations between people, and that there are spinsters quite as depraved as Cousine Bette and students not much less wretched than Raskolnikov, and that there are whole countrysides of Emma Bovarys and towns full of Sir Willoughby Patterners. There are even Elizabeth Bennets and there are hundreds of Candides—but there are not any Jane Austens and there is not quite one Voltaire, though perhaps we need only three things to produce them, and to prove the advantages of a land where no one is sufficiently convinced of his low estate to feel it a justification of bad manners and bad clothes and bad grammar, and where very few people are sufficiently convinced of their high estate to feel it a justification of exactly the same attributes.

Perhaps, with just time enough for two more younger generations, we may celebrate the second centennial of our separate and equal station with a whole library of the literary form which must always be the fine flower of a civilization—perhaps we may prove again that a self-made nation can survive long enough to triumph over the disabilities a self-made man has never yet lived down. We need only schoolmasters and schoolmistresses who will know genius in its infancy, and who will forbid it to read the homespun prose of Cooper and Mark Twain, the cotton prose of Dickens and Scott and George Eliot, and the mercerized prose of Sinclair Lewis—schoolmasters and schoolmistresses who will realize that the brains of Americans are in much greater danger than their morals. And librarians who will also realize that self-evident truth, and who will hide away "Ivanhoe" and "Our Mutual Friend" and "The Rise of Silas Lapham," and bring them out only for those persons whom a careful intelligence test proves incapable of understanding "Tristram Shandy" or the introduction to "The Egoist." And more critics whose limitations will not be the limitations of their subjects, who will know first drafts when they see them, who will recognize imitations and even influences, and who will demand at least a respectable mediocrity before they compare novelists with Tolstoy and Anatole France and playwrights with Sophocles and Ibsen.

## The Return of Harlequin

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ious scavenging of realism, these developments meet us at every turn. Artifice and artificiality have danced in upon the heels of waddling Naturalism, that sweating and heaving behemoth. We can welcome Harlequin once more,—aye, even when he thumbs a knife for our vitals behind his brightly-lozenged back. We can better bear today the cut and thrust of flashing, malicious satire than any more bludgeonings at present from the profoundly "significant writers." For fantasy too, is significant, in a more real sense. A pin can puncture a balloon, and against our gaseous modern buncombe it is not entirely necessary to muster cannon and battering-rams.

## The BOWLING GREEN

### Bertha and Her Pottage

OF course there must have been others also for whom the word *Brooklyn* has always been a gramaryl and a spell. Probably it was Walt Whitman who long ago cast a magic over that name, so that not Stratford, Stoke Poges, Weimar, Valley Forge, Walden,—not even Cockeysville, Md., where the Sherwood rye used to be distilled—none of the traditional shrines had a livelier music in my skull. Since then some of the most unawaited excitements have transpired for me in that borough which Mr. Lawton Mackall ungallantly called the butt end of Long Island. And my actual entry into Brooklyn is demurely associated with what I thought was the discovery of the amazing literary merit of Bertha M. Clay. (I wonder what the M. stood for?)

It was a day, then, much like this; a drowsy forenoon of early spring; and calm Brooklyn byways whose names I have forgotten, perhaps they had none, lay mild and yellow. I had been sent by a publishing house to collect information, for publicity purposes, about one of its authors who had died. The author (I can see very plainly the picture of him we used, again and again, it was the only one we had, in our broadsheets sent out to the press; his moustache was finely waxed) was an Englishman, but he had a kinsman who lived in Brooklyn. From this kinsman, a veterinary surgeon, I was to glean some biographical details. It is a bit vague in my mind, but I remember that near the house was a stable or some sort of quadruped dispensary and the doctor and I sat in a pleasant whiff of strong nostra and horse. There was a glass of beer somewhere in the picture, very cool and pleasant beer, blonde like so much of Brooklyn's charm, and in the conversation I learned that the vanished author had been one of those who wrote the novels signed with the great name of Bertha M. Clay.

This may or may not have been exact; but young men in the publicity professions are not gruesomely concerned with doctrines on the fallibility of human transmission. In any case it was a good "item" and I knew that my boss would be pleased. And I resolved to make the acquaintance of Miss Clay's works.

This was not immediately easy, but one day I found myself in the neighborhood of Ninth Avenue and 28th Street (Manhattan). This time I believe I was on some errand for the editor of the *Garden Magazine*, something to do with a flower show, and the wholesale florists were along West 28th. You have no idea, incidentally, how many quaint errands are devised to keep active and alert the young apprentices of the publishing business. In a stationery shop on Ninth Avenue I found a fine display of Bertha Clays. I bought one, perhaps, "The Shadow of a Sin" or "Thrown on the World," though I admit that Charles Garvice and Charlotte Braeme had more skill in titles. Why didn't I buy "Neither Maid, Wife, nor Widow?" The title has haunted me ever since. For the conclusion was irresistible, she must have been a Cartesian, as Mr. Clem Hawley would say. In that region there is a park, whose name escapes me; and there I sat on a bench reading my first Bertha Clay. I rapidly came to the conclusion that it was dull twaddle, and left it on the seat.

We now skip several years. One evening, in a ten-cent store in Hempstead, L. I., I found a lot more Bertha Clays and determined to have another try. The volume I chose, at random, was "A Dead Heart;" The Arthur Westbrook Company, Cleveland, U. S. A., publishers; postage stamps taken the same as money. "A Dead Heart" was there, sure enough, but it was followed by another tale printed in much larger type, and I tackled the second one first. By the time I had read three or four paragraphs I got up from the couch in excitement. I've done Bertha an injustice, I said. There's something to her after all. Why, she's kidding them!

The story was about a young Scot, a graduate in theology and logic (only a Scot could graduate in both these simultaneously) who went to London to look for a job. He wanted to be private secre-

tary to a member of the Cabinet and "if time permitted he proposed writing for the press." He says goodbye to his Scotch sweetheart. "Andrew did not open the door for her, for he was a Scotch graduate. Besides, she might one day be his wife." The girl is briefly described. "Clarrie was beautiful and all that." Their parting:—

"Andrew stooped and kissed her upturned face.

"If a herring and a half," he said anxiously, 'cost three half-pence, how many will you get for eleven pence?'

"Clarrie was mute."

With growing enthusiasm I continued. Andrew, the hero, goes to London. "It was the first time he had set foot in England, and he naturally thought of Bannockburn." Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain were too busy to see him, and he became embittered. He tried journalism:—

He sent one of the finest things that was ever written on the Ontology of Being to paper after paper, and it was never used. He threatened the *Times* with legal proceedings if it did not return the manuscript.

The *Standard* sent him somebody else's manuscript, and seemed to think it would do as well.

A certain amazement was taking hold of me as I scoured through these witty pages. Good heavens, here was Bertha Clay, whom I had regarded as a mere caterer of plum duff, turning off this graceful and highbrow burlesque. I felt I owed Bertha an apology.

Andrew was reduced to rereading his testimonials for consolation. He had a sheaf of them, from the Rev. Peter Mackay of Dundee and many other Scottish logicians and divines. "Had you met him in the Strand conning them over, you might have taken him for an actor. He had a yearning to stop strangers in the streets and try a testimonial's effect on them." "He had two pounds with him when he came to London, and in a month they had almost gone." He took to writing obits:—

When the newspaper placards announced the serious illness of a distinguished man, he made up characteristic anecdotes about his childhood, his reputation at school, his first love, and sent them, as the reminiscences of a friend, to the great London dailies. These were the only things of his they used. As often as not, the invalid got better, and then Andrew went without a dinner.

In his despair our Andrew joins the S. D. W. S. P.—the Society for Doing Without Some People—and earns a modest living by helping to assassinate public figures who have proved wearisome, to the members of this excellent club. The only personages exempt from possible removal are those who have been elected honorary members. The first man of any note that Andrew dispatched with his own hands was "Punch's" favorite artist on Scotch matters." He was on the track of the man who signs himself *Paterfamilias* in letters to the *Times*. To his great pleasure he learned that "none of these American preachers who come over to this country are honorary members."

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Well, as you see, by this time I felt it was too good to be true. I was carrying Bertha Clay round with me and expounding her as an unappreciated satirist. I went in to see a connoisseur of such matters. "Have you ever read Bertha Clay?" I asked. "She's immense." I read him some of it.

"What's it called?" he asked.

"It's called 'Better Dead,' it's the second story in this book 'A Dead Heart.' The great thing about Bertha seems to be her versatility. It's totally different from the first story."

"Bertha Clay!" he shouted. "Better Dead"! Why, you fathead, do you know what that is? It's Barrie's first book, published in '88. This is probably the first American edition, pirated. Darned valuable as a curiosity. Can you get me a copy?"

I went back to the ten-cent store. The counter where Bertha had reigned was devoted to Easter eggs.

"I'm sorry," said the young woman, "they were taken off sale last week. There's not much call for literature here."

But I often wonder what the readers of "A Dead Heart" can possibly make of that little skit of Barrie's when they find it masquerading under the name of Bertha M. Clay. And in the same volume, at the very end (just before the advertisement of "Napoleon's Oraculum") you'll find a yarn called "My Own True Ghost Story," written by a young man in Allahabad. But that also goes in as one of Bertha's. I begin to understand why so many people, including the Arthur Westbrook Company, regard Bertha as a great writer.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY



Harcourt, Brace &  
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New York

"Pages from Life"  
*Manchester Guardian*

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## Books of Special Interest

### Chekhov Letters

LETTERS ON THE SHORT STORY, THE DRAMA, AND OTHER LITERARY TOPICS. By ANTON CHEKHOV. Selected and edited by LOUIS S. FRIEDLAND. New York: Minton, Balch & Co. 1924. \$4.

Reviewed by LEO WIENER  
Harvard University

LETTERS of a great writer have not only a fascination as giving an insight into his inner life, which is generally disguised in his literary works, but they also throw a flood of light upon many activities connected with his authorship, which otherwise would remain hidden from the reader's view and would distort the actual facts into wrong perspectives. In the first case a well-chosen selection, especially in a translation from a foreign tongue, easily accomplishes its purpose. Thus, Mrs. Garnett's admirable selection from the six volumes of Chekhov's letters, which appeared in 1920, fully satisfies the reader's curiosity. Apparently Mr. Friedland wanted to do justice to the scholar's desire for documentary proof in issuing the present volume, in which a larger amount of material is brought together. It remains for the critic to ascertain how he has acquitted himself of his task.

The constant solecisms in Mr. Friedland's translations do not raise any hope that the renderings are exact or even correct. Moscowite for Muscovite, Sokolonits for Sokolnits, Russkoye Bogatsvo and Russkaya Bogatsyo for Russkoe Bogatstvo, Lvo and Lvov for Lev (Tolstoy's son), kalie bromatie for potassium bromide, etc., are irritating enough. His worst offence is quoting Mrs. Garnett's translation *in toto*, without even once giving her credit for the text. Such passages may be found, with an occasional change of a word, on pp. 10, 11, 16, 19, 20, 21, 24, 27, 29, 35, 40, and so forth. The following passage from p. 11 in Mr. Friedland's book as compared with Mrs. Garnett's translation, will illustrate his method:

Mrs. Garnett's Translation	Mr. Friedland's Translation
"I begin a story on September 10th with the thought that I must finish it by October 5th at the latest; if I don't I shall fail the editor and be left without money. I let myself go at the beginning and write with an easy mind; but by the time I get to the middle I begin to grow timid and to fear that my story will be too long: I have to remember that the <i>Syeverny Vvestnik</i> has not much money, and that I am one of their expensive contributors. This is why the beginning of my stories is always very promising and looks as though I were starting on a novel, the middle is huddled and timid, and the end is, as in a short sketch, like fireworks. And so in planning a story one is bound to think first about its frame-	"I begin a story on September 10th with the thought that I must finish it by October 5th at the latest; if I don't I shall fail the editor and be left without money. I let myself go at the beginning and write with an easy mind; but by the time I get to the middle I begin to grow timid and to fear that my story will be too long: I have to remember that the <i>Sieverny Vvestnik</i> has not much money, and that I am one of their expensive contributors. This is why the beginning of my stories is always very promising and looks as though I were starting on a novel, the middle is huddled and timid, and the end is, as in a short sketch, like fireworks. And so in planning a story one is bound to think first about its frame-

\*A letter by the author of this volume replying to the reviewer's criticism will be found on page 654.

work: from a crowd of leading or subordinate characters one selects one person only—wife or husband; one puts him on the canvas and paints him alone, making him prominent, while the others one scatters over the canvas like small coin, and the result is something like the vault of heaven: one big moon and a number of very small stars around it. But the moon is not a success, because it can only be understood if the stars too are intelligible, and the stars are not worked out. And so what I produce is not literature, but something like the patching of Trishka's coat. What am I to do? I don't know, I don't know. I must trust to time which heals all things."

One cannot condemn Mr. Friedland too much for the literary atrocities perpetrated by him.

### On India

ETHICS OF INDIA. By E. WASHBURN HOPKINS. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1924. \$3.

Reviewed by KENNETH SAUNDERS

IT is strange that the Western world has had to wait so long for books upon so great and important a topic. And now almost simultaneously have appeared two books, "Hindu Ethics," by Dr. McKenzie of Bombay, and "Ethics of India," by Professor Hopkins of Yale; the latter tells us that he had claimed to be the first in this field only to discover that Professor McKenzie's volume was already out. The books are written from a somewhat different point of view. "Hindu Ethics," a member of the well-known Quest of India Series, has a missionary purpose, and while it seeks to be fair is much more critical than "Ethics of India." This is in a sense a continuation of Dr. Hopkins's well-known "Religions of India," and follows the same historical method. It traces the development of Indian ethical ideals from the Rig Veda to modern days and shows how much more ethical content Indian religion has than is usually recognized. In a concluding chapter he attempts to evaluate some of these, and deals specially with India's challenge to the Western world in her great doctrine of Ahimsa, now voiced by Mr. Gandhi. He holds that Hindu ethics surpasses that of the West in its compassionate spirit towards bird and beast and even towards the plant world.

And we, who are only beginning to hear that trees and flowers have life and feeling comparable in weak degree to our own, and condone, if we do not inflict, so much of the misery suffered by dumb animals, may properly, as we learn to be less cruel, turn back with some humility to the time long before the Christian era, when so good and perfect a doctrine was not only preached as an ethical ideal but was accepted by millions of people as the normal rule of life for every good man, and confess that, however excellent our ethics may be, India has taught us something better than we know.

If this is true in the sphere of plants and animals how much more true is it in that of men. Today when it is regarded as a dangerous doctrine in the West the essentially Christian teaching of the power of love and of the duty of non-resistance is being embodied in a movement which is shaking all India and arresting attention everywhere.

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