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Books of Special Interest

Morris and His Press

THE KELMSCOTT PRESS AND WILLIAM MORRIS, MASTER-CRAFTSMAN. By H. HALLIDAY SPARLING. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1924. \$6.50.

Reviewed by ELMER ADLER
Pynson Printers

FROM the title of this book, you might expect to find a rather human story, especially if you happen to know that the author married Morris's daughter. But Sparling looked upon Morris so much as a superman that he seems almost fearful of approaching his subject, and when the writer observes from a distance, the reader will have little likelihood of gaining an intimate view. Of course, there is no suggestion in the book of Sparling's personal relation with the Morris family and indeed it is much to be doubted, from his tone, whether he ever called his father-in-law anything other than "Mr. Morris."

Although the reader misses throughout this human touch, the lack of it may not be entirely the fault of Sparling. He may never have seen his "master" in an unguarded moment. Regarding the author's position towards his subject the first sentence leaves no doubt: "Born into a world that in most respects has been transformed, very largely through the work and influence of William Morris, the reader or student of today does not always find it easy to realize the full greatness of the man, or to measure the effect he produced upon the world, as he found it." And in a later sentence, "He will be recognized for what he was, one of the great men, and not far from the greatest, of his time; some of us think of all time. He has not only bequeathed us an enormous heritage of material and spiritual beauty, but has conditioned our thinking in matters of art to a degree that is comparable only to the conditioning of our thought in matters of science by Darwin."

Almost one is tempted to say, "Be reasonable, Harry" then slap the author on the back, and attempt to get rid of a little of the stiffness. We are left to doubt whether anyone's back was ever slapped within the confines of the Kelmescott Press. It would appear that Morris's appearance in the press was something of an event. Perhaps it resembled the engravings showing Caxton on the throne chair in the Westminster, permitting himself to look upon a proof from his press. For certainly when Morris started the Press, he was already a figure of world size with an international reputation in several fields. So in the introductory sentence, Sparling does not refer to the influence of Morris in the field of typography alone. It is difficult at any time to measure the influence of any one man or group. That Morris's influence extends to a smaller group than does the influence of the scientists is perhaps unfortunate from the artistic standpoint, but is none the less evident. Thus when it comes to estimating the quality of the lives and the amount of influence, there appears to be a subtle task which neither this volume nor any other would undertake.

Sparling, with the point of view of an editor, is most interested in Morris as a poet and writer and his judgment of the man's contribution, of course, takes all his activities into consideration. But the reader of this book would like to have a measure of Morris as a printer. The outstanding features of the Kelmescott Press are scholarship and craftsmanship. The work done at that press was not influenced by that of any of its contemporaries; its standards and styles were the result of study and investigation. Its craftsmanship was another expression of William Morris and his greatest contribution in this field. His books as models of design will never be popular, but the idea of making books even better than the public demanded and making them just for the joy, was almost unknown to publishers. The financial success of the Kelmescott Press was almost unfortunate. It led to imitations of the idea without the spirit and in consequence the work of Morris is often confused with work like that of our American book fakir at East Aurora. Hubbard borrowed a few of the outstanding features of Morris's work and applied patent medicine selling methods, to his own great monetary return but with much harm to Morris.

Those readers of Sparling's book who may be especially interested in advancements in the art of typography are again disappointed in not finding an intimate picture of the Press. Really we are hardly permitted a view through a window. On

the other hand, many pages are devoted to Morris's position in the world of literature. There is nothing in the text that so well tells the story of the Press and its ideals as does Morris's own note which he wrote about its founding, and which Sparling wisely reprints in the appendix to the present volume.

Typographically also, Sparling's book is disappointing; it has some of the unpleasant features of a Kelmescott Press book and other things that Morris would never have tolerated. It is printed without leading, for instance, and the illustrations are on coated stock, against all the Morris traditions of book making. Perhaps Sparling would have objected had he lived to see his volume through the press.

The book will find a place in all important libraries; it is a record which cannot be neglected. Perhaps it will prove that there is enough interest in the subject to demand a more intimate picture before it will be too late to gather the material from the memories of living men.

Laughter Again

THE COMIC SPIRIT IN RESTORATION DRAMA. By HENRY TEN EYCK PERRY. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1925. \$2.

Reviewed by HAZELTON SPENCER
State College of Washington

HE who deals in Restoration comedy ought to write with wit if he has it, and with brilliance if he can summon it; but if these will not come profusely at his call, with either flippancy or intense moral indignation. The latest analyst of Congreve and his colleagues uses neither: he's as sober as a judge. Not that he affects the black cap; rather he vehemently eschews the ethical controversy. There I think he is mistaken; for that ancient hare, once coursed by C. Lamb, Esq., and Lord Macaulay, and recently started again by Professor Stoll in his "Literature no Document," takes a deal of running and covers an enormous extent of the hinterland of literary theory before its pursuers give up. Professor Perry is nothing if not Meredith-

ian, and refuses to pass in review the moral aspects of this school of drama. Which seems a pity; and so I offer the following suggestion for a doctoral dissertation to settle the whole matter. Let the Candidate steep himself in the memoirs, diaries, and anecdotes of the Restoration, and then read its dramatic literature; matching every immorality, and simple naughtiness of Cloud-cuckooland with its exact parallel from real life.

That Professor Perry has read intelligently (if not perhaps widely among the minor dramatists) his book affords ample evidence. The very idiom of the Restoration has become so familiar to him that occasionally he lapses into it: as when, summarizing "The Comical Revenge," he describes Sir Frederick's assault "on a whore's lodgings;" or, indicating the darkness of Alderman Gripe's future, he pertinently inquires, "What more can a victim of whores and bawds expect?"; or again, tells how Mockmode "is made to think that a common whore is his divine Lucinda." An effort to reintroduce this plain word into critical English is complicated by the fact that as used by the Restoration it is scarcely more opprobrious than "trull" or even "jade." But most of our generation met its first in its less polite Elizabethan milieu—perhaps in the agonized revulsion of Hamlet's "rogue and peasant slave" soliloquy—where it is not trivial. The recent producers of "The Beggar's Opera" decided, I think wisely, to read "Trull" and rogue they call husband and wife," in the bilious Mr. Peachum's opening ditty.

The usefulness of Professor Perry's slender volume lies more in his admirable analyses of the structure of the plays than in his interpretation of their comic spirit. Plotting is on the whole the weak point of the Restoration dramatists—it is notoriously Congreve's weak point: one diagrams "The Way of the World" for one's undergraduates. Professor Perry's explanations and correlations are often helpful. Unlike Mr. Allardyce Nicoll he confines himself to the five major dramatists; even Shadwell and Dryden are passed over. Within these limits his comments are acute; but his "Conclusion," which embodies a glance at the influence of Molière and of Johnson, suffers from his failure to take into account a vigorous survival of the comedy of humors.

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Mexico and Folk-Lore

By CARY F. JACOB

IN a country of which one of its conspicuous poets, Amado Nervo, has said that "almost nobody reads books," it is not to be expected that there should be a very generous literary output. Of the population of Mexico perhaps 80 per cent consists of Indians and of half-breeds. The remaining 20 per cent is of Spanish origin. From the latter comes the group of authors who have made Mexico conspicuous among the Spanish-American states. European in their culture and their thought, they have created a product remote indeed from what Americans think of as typically Mexican. However, it is as typical of the Mexican upper class as the other is of the lower. It finds its market on the continent rather than in New York, and, consequently, is as well known abroad as is the work of less conspicuous European authors. In Mexico itself, with the growth of education, this continental influence, predominantly French, is spreading so rapidly that there is likely to be repeated a literary evolution altogether similar to that which has been experienced in both England and the United States. However, there is one marked difference between what has gone on in these two countries and what is now in progress in Mexico,—namely, Mexicans of culture are aware of the situation and are doing their best to capture the passing spirit before it has become a part of a civilization so remote as to be beyond recall.

To say that the masses of Mexico are wholly illiterate is not to say that they are lacking in the artistic impulse or that they do not possess a wealth of song and story as abundant as the precious stones and minerals in their undeveloped mines. Each element of the population has its own traditions, and each has preserved in its own way its tales of the supernatural, of love, and of war. Folk-tales, folk-songs, and folk-dances are so numerous as to excite no comment and as to be of especial interest to only that part of the cultured population which is able to estimate the value of folk-ways in the development of a national literature, and to labor to preserve them in their beauty before they have become obliterated from the daily life of the people and before the tongues of the latter have begun to stammer with self-consciousness in telling them.

Mexico so teems with folk-lore that one man alone, Sr. Higinio Vazquez Santa Ana, has been able to secure both words and music to over 7,000 songs. In the United States to unearth even one ballad and the tune to which it is sung is to make a find of which to be proud. In Mexico the folk-song is still sung by the very men and women with whom it has originated. Music and words are usually equally lovely; and the voices of the singers are as fresh, as sweet, and as sonorous as are those of our lesser operatic stars. In fact, in their interpretations, Mexican singers are so unrestrained emotionally that they give to their renderings quality the more wonderfully delightful when contrasted with its entire absence from the decidedly poor performance of the ballad-singers of the north. Mexicans are born with the gift of song, and their environment furnishes no restraint upon its development. Open throats, good lungs, emotional abandon, and an abundance of erotic experience—all this combines to produce an excellent medium for the expression of whatever plastic material may come their way.

Some of the most interesting ballads arise in a given community and disappear before they are ever written down. Others spread throughout the Republic and become a part of the national life. All are doomed to ultimate obliteration, however, unless those who are at work hunting them are able to go on with their research, unless they are able to catch the popular mode of thought and of expression before the masses begin to feel that their civilization is a thing apart and before they begin to develop a reticence in the presence of what is likely to appear to them as an unwarranted prying into their communal life. At present, however, the lower class Mexican seems to get along without shame and without privacy. His door (and his window, too, if he has one) stands always wide open. He has no closets in his home and apparently no skeleton to hide in them. He changes his clothes in his doorway or in the public square, and no one appears in the least concerned. If the day be warm, he lies down in the shade of a wall to sleep; or, if he feels the need of the sun, he sprawls full

length on the open mesa or in a ditch at the side of the road. He carries his wardrobe on his back, and he finds his food in the unprotected orchards or on the waiters of edibles everywhere offered for sale. His hat and his serape are at once his glory of ornamentation and his protection against the often recurring rains. The Scotchman with his plaid and the Mexican with his serape are much akin. Yet the Scotchman never saw the day when he sang with the passionate freedom or the half-melancholy, half-joyous abandon of these shadowy-eyed children of the sun.

June of this year saw the publication of the first issue of *Mexican Folkways*, a bi-monthly magazine printed in English and in Spanish. Its editors are students of Mexican folk-lore, some trained in the United States, some without touch of foreign influence, but all filled with an intense admiration for the wonderful product of their native soil and all bent upon preserving its original flavor. The distinguished anthropologist and educator, Dr. Manuel Garmio, one of the collaborators with Frances Toor, the editor, says that this is the first publication to present the masses of the Mexicans to the American people. *Mexican Folkways* should be of much use to high-school and university students of Spanish, not only as material for the study of social background which gives insight into literature and language but also because of the wealth of Indian folk-lore which it brings to light. Those associated in the publication of this magazine deserve as great acclamation as that which came to Bishop Percy and Sir Walter Scott because of their attempt to capture for their own generation the best traditions of an age already past. *Mexican Folkways* has the very decided advantage of beginning its generous task before the setting sun of popular culture has begun to do more than decline toward the west. Those who admire the freshness of thought and of expression to be found among people of childlike minds as yet uncontaminated by the necessity for appearing sophisticated will receive much delight from the pages which these editors have in store for the public.

Foreign Notes

A VOLUME of quite unusual interest to students of the war has recently made its appearance under the title "La Bataille des Flandres d'après le Journal de Marche et les Archives de la IV^e Armée Allemande" (Paris: Charles-Lavauzelle). In it Col. René Tournès and Captain Henry Berthemet have presented in French translation a quantity of captured German military documents,—the war diary, archives, and records of telephone conversations of the Fourth Army in the Lys offensive of April 9-30, 1918. The great interest of the material consists in the fact that it proves conclusively what has been charged by Germans themselves that the German General Staff ruled the army, the orders of its commanders being susceptible of change at any moment through its interference. Hindenburg's name appears nowhere in the documents, but Ludendorff is shown as constantly directing. He appears, however, as anything but a daring commander, constantly counseling prudence, and most reluctant to draw on his reserves for reinforcements.

In his voluminous biography of two volumes covering the first thirty years of the life of Merimée, Pierre Trabard has presented an illuminating study of that contemporary of the great romantic writers. His "La Jeunesse de Prosper Merimée" (Paris: Champion) is in large part a study of the romantic influences that played upon the mind of the young writer and of the processes of reasoning by which he attempted to harmonize such varying points of view as those of Rousseau, Chateaubriand, and Voltaire. Particularly was the influence of Byron strong upon him; from that of Victor Hugo he drew away.

In his "La Vie d'un Dilettante: Horace Walpole" (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France) Paul Yvon has produced an exhaustive study of the author of "The Castle of Otranto." The labor he put into his work must have been prodigious, for it runs to about 900 pages and is elaborately annotated. It is a work of importance from the point of view of history rather than of literature.

Here is the Roll of Drums

By James
Boyd



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