

the same time a companion study in education to "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel." "Beauchamp's Career," suggested by the personality and experience of Meredith's friend Maxse, whom he had helped in an unsuccessful parliamentary candidature for Southampton in 1867, is not merely a picture of the crass conservatism of the British public at that time, but also a struggle between the forces of egoism and sacrifice in the hero's own breast; even the protests of Meredith's adored Marie Vulliamy, whom he had married not long before, could not dissuade him from the sacrifice of his hero's life, which gives the story such a grim ending; Dr. Shrapnel, the older friend who stands in the same relation to Beauchamp as Meredith did to Maxse, is, as Dr. Galland points out, essentially a moralist, insisting that love involves self-sacrifice.

It seems unnecessary to continue Dr. Galland's thesis by a further examination of the novels; the moral significance of "The Egoist" is as obvious as the skill of its psychological analysis. It was because of its moral side that it was appreciated by Robert Louis Stevenson, and it was on the same score that Henry James classed Meredith as fundamentally English, Victorian, and "bourgeois." As early as 1877 Swinburne in his "Note on Charlotte Brontë" described Meredith and George Eliot as artists of the first order of intelligence, but of the second order of genius, whose work is "of high enough quality to engage our judgment in its service, and to make direct demand on our grave for deliberate assent or dissent," but does not command our instinctive response to genius of the first rank. Dr. Galland exclaims at Swinburne's collocation of Meredith with George Eliot, but the conjunction seems to be broadly consistent with his own point of view.

Meredith himself, in his examination of the English novel in the first chapter of "Diana of the Crossways," said it needed to be "fortified by philosophy," and by philosophy he meant ethics, for he had no taste for metaphysics. With reference to his "Grand Ode," "France 1870," he wrote to John Morley, then editor of the *Fortnightly Review*:

From my point of view of sympathy and philosophy. . . . Latterly I have felt poetically weakened by the pressure of philosophical reflection, but this is going, and a fuller strength comes of it, for I believe I am within the shadow of the Truth, and as it's in my nature to sing, I may now do well.

As the general opinion of Meredith's admirers agrees with that of the poet as to the effective combination of feeling and philosophy in the Ode, which marks the height of his poetic achievement, it seems worth while to inquire wherein that philosophy consists. He ascribes the humiliation of France, not on the one hand to a Special Providence on the side of Germany (after the fashion of the new made Emperor) nor on the other merely to superior German skill and organization, still less (as the French were inclined to do themselves) to treachery on the part of their leaders; the French were betrayed by what was false within their own hearts, their worship of the military glory of the First Napoleon and their acceptance of the hollow imitation of it by Napoleon III. They appealed to force, and force failed them.

Lo, Strength is of the plain root—Virtues born:
Strength shall ye gain by service, prove in scorn,
Train by endurance, by devotion shape.
Strength is not won by miracle or rape.
It is the offspring of the modest years,
The gift of sire to son, thro' those firm laws
Which we name God's; which are the righteous cause,
The cause of man, and manhood's ministers.

He exhorts France to return to her better self:

Die to thy Vanity and strain thy Pride,
Strip off thy Luxury: that thou mayst live.

The same moral intent is to be noted in the series of short poems by which Meredith is most likely to be remembered, "Modern Love":

Thus piteously Love closed what he begat:
The union of this ever-diverse pair!
These two were rapid falcons in a snare,
Condemned to do the flitting of the bat.
Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,
They wandered once; clear as the dew on flowers:
But they fed not on the advancing hours.

Curiously enough, we find the same moral conviction controlling Meredith's policy as "reader" for Chapman & Hall, a post which for many years supplied the main part of his income. We have a signal example of this in his treatment of one of the most popular novels of the day, "East Lynn." He gave a curtly hostile opinion when the manuscript was submitted to him, and in spite of the protests of the novelist's friends and his own publishers, he refused to reconsider that opinion, even when the novel had

been issued with general acclaim by another house. Dr. Galland says, no doubt rightly, that Meredith was anxious to contribute to the moral and literary education of the public; he believed in the good or bad influence of a book on ideas and morals. The works of Mrs. Wood, Lynn Linton, and Ouida, more or less hostile to the emancipation of women and little conducive to their moral development, provoked his vigorous hate and indignation, and he did all that was in his power to prevent their publication.

This view of Meredith as a moralist, which Dr. Galland works out in detail, puts Meredith into line with his great predecessor, Carlyle, his great contemporary, George Eliot, and his successors in English fiction. The "philosophy" with which he fortified the novel was continued on its political and educational sides by H. G. Wells, and on its social and personal side by Galsworthy. But his own novels have fallen into neglect. His preoccupation with the moral significance of his work led him perhaps to give insufficient attention to its form; either he had little narrative skill or he underestimated this important element of the novelist's art. The novel was not his first choice of a medium for conveying his ideas to the public; he thought of himself first of all as a poet, and he was driven to novel writing, as to journalism and the office of Chapman & Hall, by sheer economic necessity. With dogged persistence he continued, in these various activities, to force upon the public the ideas in which he had faith. These ideas were unpopular because they were in advance of the time; the public had to grow up to them, and it proceeded, in large part, to outgrow them, chiefly by a process of absorption. So that, while Meredith's place in the history of English literature is secure, there seems little prospect of such a return to popular favor as has been reported recently in England for Anthony Trollope and George Eliot. The section of contemporary life he describes is more limited, and he puts greater difficulties in the way of the reader, not only by his idiosyncrasies of style but by the demands he makes on the reader's knowledge and intelligence. Hardy's great novels have continued to hold their own as masterpieces of the novelist's art, in spite of the grim philosophy which lies behind them. But Hardy, George Eliot, and Anthony Trollope are all willing to go at least half way to meet the reader and to engage his interest. Meredith makes no concessions; he said in so many words that in the face of public neglect, he wrote "only to please himself." He has wit, but in its most brilliant coruscations it is more likely to dazzle the ordinary reader than to enlighten or amuse him. Meredith will always win the admiration of a select few, and some of his poems hold a permanent place in the rich treasury of English verse; but his novels seem likely to retain their Victorian reputation of being "caviare to the general," though not altogether for the reasons which earned that reputation half a century ago.

The style and method of presentation still offer obstacles to the average reader; the "philosophy," which once offended by its radicalism, now seems hedged in by Victorian reserves which give it a flavor of antiquity. No doubt there are many young conservatives who have not yet caught up to the essential liberalism of Meredith's point of view, and would be greatly benefited by a perusal of his novels, but they are frightened away by their reputation for difficulty; and the young radicals find his moral teaching behind the times. He would not have been content, like Joseph Conrad, to uphold such primitive virtues as loyalty and solidarity by romantic stories directed first of all to make the reader see and feel; he strove to teach more precise, moral virtues, to advocate a sound intellectual discipline, and to declare himself on definite social and political issues, which seemed to him important in his own time. On these issues, partly owing to Meredith's advocacy, the battle has been won; but, much as one may admire his independence of character and the extraordinary vigor of his mind, one is bound to acknowledge that his novels have less chance of enduring interest than the work of men who gave their chief attention to the art of the novel in itself. If the English-speaking nations, or any one of them, can develop a race of intellectual giants who can easily leap the crags and ravines of Meredith's poetry and can take a simple pleasure in the keen dialectic of the novels, there will be a good chance of a revival of his fame; but that eventuality seems at present rather remote.

Shakespearean Criticism

THE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE. Edited from The Quarto of 1609, with Introduction and Commentary. By T. G. TUCKER. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1924.

THE SHAKESPEAREAN ENIGMA AND AN ELIZABETHAN MANIA. By JOHN F. FORBIS. New York: American Library Service. 1924.

Reviewed by W. A. NEILSON
Smith College

THESE two volumes are admirable examples of two contrasted types of Shakespearean interpretation. Professor Tucker's volume is obviously the result of many years of study and thought by a man of wide culture and scholarly habit. Equipped with a knowledge of the technique of textual criticism, he has become saturated with the scholarship of the Elizabethan period and especially of the Sonnets, and so furnished has produced what one is tempted to regard as a final edition. The Introduction deals critically with all those theories of the origin and significance of the Sonnets as a group which may be regarded as still in the field. His judgment is both sane and subtle, and his own conclusions are urged with modesty and restraint. The Commentary is very full and extraordinarily candid. One seldom finds so valiant a determination to shirk no obscurity, whether one has a solution or not. Many readers will find many notes unnecessary; but for a definitive edition, Dr. Tucker has erred, if at all, on the safer side.

The book challenges comparison with the admirable variorum edition of the late Professor R. M. Alden. The latter, by its method, was bound to record much that was of merely curious or historical interest, much that was absurd; and like all variorum editions, had its bulk swollen and its convenience reduced by masses of dead matter. Dr. Tucker was free to ignore all that was not relevant to the question of actual meaning, and so has produced a more serviceable volume. Editions more brilliant, like that of Wyndham, have been produced, none more workmanlike, and none so satisfactorily supplying the needs of the student who wants to know what the Sonnets are and what they mean.

The equipment of the author of "The Shakespearean Enigma" is indicated by the complete inaccuracy of his opening sentence: "The authentic facts relating to the life, habits, and writings of Shakespeare are curiously vague and meager, if not altogether wanting." In order to compensate for this alleged vagueness and meagerness, Mr. Forbis turns to a scrutiny of Shakespeare's poems, and finds there what he regards as indubitable information not merely as to the meaning of these documents, but as to the life of the poet. With a single key he unlocks all the mysteries of Mr. W. H., "the onlie begetter," the dark lady, the rival poet, and the rest. This key is ALCOHOL. Shakespeare, he tells us, in his youth "contracted the habit of using intoxicants, and at the same time was developing his poetic art . . . It was a question with him, whether he was at his best, when free from stimulants or when writing under the inspiration which he imagined he gained through them." "The Sonnets," "The Lover's Complaint," "The Phoenix and the Turtle," all record the struggles of the poet with this question and with the temptation to alcoholic excess; and the present volume reprints all these poems with a prose paraphrase of each, and an application of the key. Here is an example of the method from Sonnet No. 130.

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

Interpretation.

My mistress' (Wine's) eyes are nothing like the sun; coral is redder than her lips; if snow be white her breasts are dun; if hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head. (There is a possibility that the color "dun" and "black wires" may give a clue to what particular liquors Shakespeare indulged in. The dun of course refers to color, and it is suspected the black wires refer to the retainer in which the liquor was sold or delivered. If so, the reference is probably to the manner in which the top or cork was secured.)

So much for the Shakespearean Enigma. The Elizabethan Mania is of the same nature. Not Shakespeare alone, but Petrarch, Sidney, Daniel, Lodge, Willobie, Drayton, and Spenser—all were dipsomaniacs, and wrote their sonnets in celebration not of any real or ideal Lauras or Stellas, but of Wine.

Comment is tempting, but we forbear.

A Novel of the Soil

PRAIRIE FIRES. By LORNA DOONE BEERS. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1925. \$2.

Reviewed by LOUIS KRONENBERGER

"PRAIRIE FIRES" is a spacious novel. Upon its broad canvas are projected the life of the Dakota farmer, his struggle against the grain monopolies and the faithless Legislature, and the difficulty of a romantic young girl in accommodating herself to the reality of life. Without going a step afield to fetch significances, it is a history, a tract, a satire, a love story, and a modern epic of the soil. And so interdependently do these aspects combine that the book advances like a coach drawn by five great horses abreast.

Set in the Dakota of a decade ago, prior to the formation of the Nonpartisan League, the story has to do chiefly with the fortunes of Hans Erickson and his family. Erickson, like most of his neighbors, is an extensive wheat-grower. The farmers are at the mercy of more than the elements and the vicissitudes of crops: they face the grain monopolies and the double-dealers they send to the Legislature. They face the small-town bloodsuckers, lawyers, and bankers who foreclose the mortgage on a farm after a single bad season. Attempting to save themselves, Erickson and a few other intelligent farmers build their own grain elevator, only to have their scheming opponents defeat them by buying wheat at a higher price from dull-witted harvesters who do not look beyond the present. But the destroyers go finally too far: they insult a group of farmers in the gallery of the Legislature, bidding them go home and "slop their hogs," and arousing the slow-to-anger Scandinavians so deeply that they form their own party and set about once again to build an elevator.

Miss Beers links this struggle between the farmer and his enemy with the consonant story of Erickson's daughter, Christine. She is a romantic girl in flighty rebellion against her farm life, dreaming of wealth and station in the world outside. She falls in love with a young chemist, Benjamin Paul, who is equally romantic in his ambitious dreams of fame and fortune. To consummate, as he thinks, these dreams, he gives up Christine although he is in love with her, and she marries Christian Lovstad, a vulgar and despicable small-town banker. He is by nature her father's economic foe, and she comes to loathe him personally. She and Benjamin plan to run away, but seeing how such an elopement would ruin his career, he once again throws her aside. Christine returns to Lovstad, tolerates him on the ground that all men are alike, and becomes highly satisfied with the life of gossip and material comfort which is symbolized by the Ladies' Aid Society.

Against her omnipresent background of the soil, so that in its modern way it becomes almost epic, Miss Beers draws the life of a whole agrarian people and of the Erickson family in particular. To the romantic struggle of the farmer to win his crops against the elements, she adds his further struggle to sell them in the face of modern economic warfare. Her rage against the wrongdoing of the lawyers and bankers and legislators is a noble rage; but she is too fair to let it go at that. She has a sense of the farmer's own impotence, of his stupidity and muddleheadedness. Hans, whom she makes intelligent and far-seeing, is able to see the situation in its true perspective:

There is one inequality you can't blot out or ignore either—the inequality of brains. All the legislation could not help farmers as incapable as Axel or Shepley. I think that is the hardest thing to confess, that we are limited by the poorness of our minds.

Just, wise in experience, Hans is a human figure, one of those simple men who draw us to them with admiration and affection. Christine is human also; and she and Benjamin, as is rarely the case with the romantic type, are treated as people quite worthy of serious satire. Their romanticizing is ruthlessly slashed. The irony of Christine's final capitulation to small-town life is more than cynical disposal of her; in it lies Miss Beers's comprehension of the girl, and with it tie up the essential stupidity and materialism which run like an undercurrent through the book. For only a man like Hans, in his superior wisdom, can hope for the future, and in the superiority of his ideals—so different from the material and romantic ideals of the others—can remain true to them.

It would be unjust to Miss Beers to say nothing about the quality of her writing. "Prairie Fires"

has more than the strong fibres of its substance; it has vitality, variety, a power of making its narrative march without slackening or interruption to the last page. Her descriptions are indigenous and fresh; she recaptures the sounds and sights and odors of a farm; she gives us, marvelously, the taste and pleasure of food. She has written a first novel whose promise cannot be judged more remarkable than its performance.

Negro Folk-Song

THE NEGRO AND HIS SONGS. By HOWARD W. ODUM and GUY B. JOHNSON. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 1925.

Reviewed by ERIC WALROND

NO amount of urbanization, of flight into environments "hostile" to the true essence of the Negro spirit, can deprive the Negro of his enormous capacity as a creator of music and folk song. Georgia, Alabama, Africa, or the West Indies, is conducive to expressions of intense tropic warmth and beauty, but in Philadelphia, Chicago or New York this spirit-thing which differentiates the Negro from the Eskimo, for example, again struggles to the surface, albeit colored, not unexpectedly, by the consequences of life in an impressionably mechanical civilization. Which is to say that no matter where he finds himself, there is color, warmth, fervor in the black man's soul, so that, if he is not swerved by temptations of a nebulous racial present, whatever he does has the distinct mark of raciality upon it.

So far the best index to the character of the Negro is his music and folk songs. And particularly the



Arms of the imaginary "Royal House of Scarpa," from "The Carillon of Scarpa," by Flora Klickman (Putnam's)

songs, for while the music is symbolical of determinant currents in his life, the songs acutely and oft-times crudely dramatize them. To an onlooker emphasis is placed upon moods or heart-desires that are relatively trivial. Or, what a white arranger may take to be an "immoral" expression may simply be a restatement through song of a differing moral point of view. Slaving on wharf or cotton field, driven to an emotional wall by the strenuousness of toil or the anger of an irate white "boss," the Negro realizes solace in song. In church or at camp meeting the divine flame of Jesus or the blistering prospect of a descent into Hell, give rise to spasms of fervent lyrical outbursts. Gathered together these songs or bits of folk-utterance make marvellous material for the study of both the folk lorist and sociologist.

Significant moments in the race's history and progress occasion many of these songs. There are, for instance, endless songs picturing the epic flow of peasant blacks from the South to the North. Unsophisticated flat-dwellers in the crowded negro tenements in Detroit and Philadelphia sing of the cold, frosty nights and the general physical disabilities of their new, virgin environment. When Marcus Garvey's "Black Star Line" collapsed the urchin gods of the Harlem pavements came along and dramatized the calamity in lines of the utmost "point" and power. And if there is one version

of the "West Indian Blues," there are at least two hundred.

Of course it is not only in racial crises that the Negro bursts into song. It goes deeper than that; his is a musical nature. He may make a song out of a pal "going West," but the regular, uneventful flow of life also is dream-stuff for his lyre. Even "around the house,"—bare, drab, though it may be—there is provision for the realization of this song-quest. A whole family might have its roster of songs. I know for one that the songs which I heard in childhood are intelligible to few outside of my immediate relations. In fact, I have an idea that if each Negro would sit down and write from memory the songs concocted by his progenitors, or those to which he was exposed in adolescence, there would result the most amazing body of lore conceivable.

As the work of Southern white men, this book is a decided achievement. Although a large portion of the songs are culled from meritorious texts there is an amount of new material, gathered from negro sources in Northern Mississippi, Northern Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. In that portion of the book devoted to "social songs" the collection is of immense value. Here is rich, vital stuff—"Stagolee," "Honey, Take a One on Me," "Railroad Bill,"—exploits of a gay highwayman, a characteristic love melody, and the rovings of a race-track "rounder." In the work songs there is "The Grade Song."

Well, I tole my captain my feet wus cold,
"Po' water on fire, let wheelers roll!"

Told my captain my han's wus cold.
"God damn yo' hands, let the wheelers roll!"

The volume is marred slightly by an attitude, which I honestly believe is unconscious, to arrive at ethnic truths regarding the Negro which at times are pitifully absurd. The interpretations for the most part are academic and intrusive. Songs of subtlety and sophistication are held down to a precious minimum.

To me, however, the best thing about this book is that it richly illustrates the enormity of lore awaiting the energy and awakening of the negro scholar and folk lorist. For it is more or less common property in these United States today that if you really want to get to the heart and spirit of the black people you must do it through the medium of one of their own.

Rambles in London

RAMBLES IN OLD LONDON. By GEORGE BRYON GORDON. Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs. 1924.

A LOITERER IN LONDON. By HELEN W. HENDERSON. New York: George H. Doran. 1924. \$5.

Reviewed by FRANK V. MORLEY

LONDON! It is a fine town, as Mr. Massfield says in a song, and I know not how many million Cockneys, transatlantic and native, echo in their hearts. Everything else apart, as a city—as a stupendous outcome, at once a blot and glory of man's handiwork—it has the inestimable advantage of being old, while yet alive; of being very actively alive, while of amazing age. Rabbi Ben Ezra speaks from its temples, nursery rhymes clang out from its church-bells. It is the most familiar city of all; it has known everyone, and yet we call it by nicknames—some say, "the village"; others, "town"; others, "the city"; others, "my old lady London." London is an ale-wife, full-bosomed, red-faced, "forking to yer, strite"; else she is a dowager, bright-eyed, hook-nosed, loving a word of scandal; else—but there are far too many Londons to enumerate. The last word will never be said, even of London at one given moment.

Dr. Gordon's book is full of genial talk, but with a basis of sound scholarship that makes it doubly attractive; and his pictures are all that good photographs can be, when carefully selected and well annotated. Miss Henderson, too, relies on photographs; chooses them well, and talks about them very pleasantly. Her "Loiterer" series inevitably suggests comparison with Mr. E. V. Lucas's "Wanderer" books. For effortless ease of communication, for out of the way knowledge and understanding of human oddity and charm, it is difficult to measure up to that born *raconteur*. Yet Miss Henderson is sure and ready as a guide; she knows, if not the oldest places in present-day London, the places that the majority of people want to see. I would trust myself to her if I did not know the city, and desired to study it.