

the time dismissed these great works with ignominy and indifference, sinking comfortably into the mediocrity of the works of such poets as Moore, Campbell, Kirke White, Bloomfield, Hogg, and Southey; as Mr. Monro put it, "the genius of the time unconsciously eluded these critics, or was consciously dismissed." No great poet has ever been properly recognized in his own time, or at any rate, not since the rise of the purely commercial press. By the many, including the press, every great poet has always been abused, insulted, worried and, if possible, driven into the grave—if not, at least into exile or to the Pines, Putney. Here are a few criticisms, proving that love of new beauty of which the English papers boast so proudly.

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," said *The Monthly Review*, "seems a rhapsody of unintelligible wildness and incoherence, of which we do not perceive the drift, unless the joke lies in depriving the wedding guest of his share of the feast." "At first," said the *Quarterly*, "it appeared to us that Mr. Keats had been amusing himself and wearying his readers with an immeasurable game of *bouts rimés*; but, if we recollect rightly, it is an indispensable condition of this play that the rhymes when filled up shall have a meaning, and our author, as we have already hinted, has no meaning." Now take Jeffrey of *The Edinburgh Review*. "The volume before us ('The Excursion') if we were to describe it very shortly, we should characterize as a tissue of moral and devotional ravings, in which innumerable changes are rung upon a few very simple and familiar ideas; but with such an accompaniment of long words, long sentences, and unwieldy phrases—such a hubbub of strained raptures and fantastical sublimities that it is often extremely difficult for the most skilful and attentive student to obtain a glimpse of the author's meaning—and altogether impossible for an ordinary reader to conjecture what he is about." *Blackwood* says of Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound": "To our apprehension it is little else but absolute raving; and were we not assured to the contrary, we should take it for granted that the author was a lunatic, as his principles are ludicrously wicked, and his poetry a mélange of nonsense, cockneyism, poverty, and pedantry." And the *Monthly Magazine* says of Keats's poems: "The faults characteristic of his school are still held up with as much affectation by Mr. Keats as if he were fearful of not coming in for his due share of singularity, obscurity, and conceit."

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There is no difference between these criticisms and what the poets are having to put up with to-day. Here are two criticisms from *The Sunday Times* of May 17th, 1925. One criticism shows that critics' manners have not improved or in any way altered; the other shows the same love of flatness that has always distinguished critics as a race.

A: Miss Sitwell's poetical reputation can hardly survive her latest volume. There is scarcely an ounce of coherent thought or accountable emotion to be extracted from its hundred pages. Anything approximating to sense is sought in vain. Miss Sitwell's rococo figures and their inconsequent soliloquies are such as haunt the uneasy slumbers of disease. If she has any devotees it can only be because "her nonsense suits their nonsense," for to readers of ordinary sanity her flow of words conveys no meaning.

B: The poet's work has lost none of its sweetness and artistry; it is, as always, quietly ascetic and lucid. Mr. Shanks *never startles*; (the italics are mine) he plays a game that children play, tracing a shadow on the wall:

*Until at last the lamp is brought
The game is done, and now I see
The tangled scribble I have wrought
Grimacing at me mockingly.*

such as to disturb the most mobile placidity. A peculiar quality of certain types of the English countryside is made manifest in Mr. Shanks's descriptive verse:

*But never a footstep comes to trouble
The rocks among the new-sown corn
Or pigeons rising from the stubble
And flashing brighter as they roam.*

These criticisms might have been written a hundred years ago. It is interesting to notice that in the first review they are wise enough (so as to gain their point) to refrain from quotation; in the second, unwise enough to quote.

Nothing teaches these people—neither the death of Keats, nor the death of Chatterton, nor the exile of Shelley, nor the persecution and final triumph of Wordsworth and Coleridge. They go on in the same way, always. Poets expect to be arraigned in front of a jury of their peers; what happens is that they have to appear in front of a jury which consists half of flappers, writers of vulgar plays, and

other ignoramuses, half of tired men of letters who are afraid of anything new. These people complain that they cannot understand a book. Who on earth expects them to? They are capable of understanding neither our predecessors' language, our language, or even their own. All they want is "Good rest, good sleep" like the old men in "Thus Spake Zarathustra." Some time ago in an English journal, I gave a description of the kind of poem that these people like—a poem about an earnest Nonconformist missionary in Aberdeen, travelling backwards and forwards from Aberdeen to the Cannibal Islands. The poem, I declared, would give a full account of Nonconformist life in Aberdeen; nothing was left out—neither the price of the d'oyleys, nor the full description of the ferns in art pots. You would get the family reading aloud from the *London Mercury* and Mrs. Humphry Ward (the author of the poem would, for the purpose, translate the whole of "Robert Elsmere" into blank verse); you would get the family discussing the housing question, vegetarianism, and the reasons for dissenting, as well as praising Mr. Jaeger and calling down blessings on his head as a benefactor of the human race. You would be shown the family playing The Lost Chord on the harmonium in the sitting-room and practicing brass instruments in their bedrooms. And, when the children are safely in bed, you would hear the broad-minded pastor and his wife discussing such burning problems as "Was George Eliot a good woman?" That is the kind of thing that the critics like in England and that is the sort of thing that they get.

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Together with this craze for dulness, we find, in an opposite set of people, a passion for obscenity. Lately there has arisen among us a young gentleman whose name I will not mention, since his real name in itself is so truthful as to constitute a libel. But this young gentleman, in addition to writing dirty plays (you will soon have him in America, I am told) is given to publishing and causing to be acted, insulting and obscene libels on poets. The hurricane of applause that has greeted him is the greatest ever known, and he has completely filled the empty place which Mr. Horatio Bottomley left in the hearts of the British people when he was so unkindly taken away from them. We find this young gentleman (one of whose lyrics contains the lines:

Poor little rich girl,
You are bewitched, girl

being compared by certain critics to Shakespeare, to Dryden, to Congreve. But, as *The Nation* kindly remarked, "It must be as trying to Mr. — to be asked to write like some great dead writer as it would be for an artist to be asked to write like Mr. —." I do not know that the lines quoted above do much to prove that this gentleman is qualified to act as a critic of poetry, but in England, anybody is allowed to criticize poetry as long as he or she knows nothing whatsoever about it; and so, as I have said already, this person is never tired of insulting poets.

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Another little trouble we have with the critics is that they say we do not give the people a great moral message. We give them new sense-values and a new apprehension of life, but they do not know this is a moral message. And when we do give them the kind of moral message they can understand, they become positively hysterical with rage. I should have thought that at this time, the greatest and most urgent message of all is that dealing with the senseless wickedness and horror of war. Yet when men like Siegfried Sassoon, Osbert Sitwell, and Richard Aldington, men who had experienced that horror and are therefore fitted to speak of it, gave the people this great moral message, they were execrated and persecuted. Unfortunately, many of the critics hold the same view as that expressed in this apocryphal poem of the late Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox:

It is not the song of the singer,
Though nought could be possibly sweeter,
Which touches the spot with a flame that is not,
But the Heart that is back of a metre.
And though all my life I have loved
True Art for its own true sake,
It is not Art, oh no, it is *Heart*
Which finally takes the cake.

And whilst this point of view exists, poets will always find themselves unpopular, if they write poetry!

Origins of Languages

LANGUAGE: A Linguistic Introduction to History. By J. VENDRYES. Translated by Paul Radin. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1925. \$6.

Reviewed by GEORGE PHILIP KRAPP
Columbia University

NOW and then it is a refreshing and stimulating experience for the worker to ascend some eminence from which he can survey broadly the field of his labors. Such a place of view is provided for the domain of philology in this excellent and readable study by M. K. Vendryes. No one would deny that language has occupied an important place in the general development of human history, or that it continues to occupy a similar position in the present activities of mankind, but the linguistic student is ordinarily so busily engaged over immediate tasks that his gaze seldom wanders towards the wide confines of his subject. He must permit himself a few philosophic moments, as M. Vendryes does in this book, if he will see his material in its extended relationships and significances.

And yet it would be quite untrue to describe K. Vendryes as a philosopher. He is above all a linguist, one who has at his command a wide range of precise scholarship in a variety of languages. His illustrative examples are taken most abundantly from French, Latin and Greek, but M. Vendryes also cites freely from English, German, and various other languages. He expressly disclaims any intention of going beyond the field of actual linguistic experience. From the observation of facts, as he observes them in actual languages, M. Vendryes deduces certain general principles applicable to language as a human activity. His method therefore is primarily linguistic, not psychological or philosophical. It is this purpose and method which lead him to make the statement that "the problem of the origin of language is not of a linguistic order," and to limit narrowly his discussion of this problem. Undoubtedly the origin of language as an element in human existence is a process not susceptible of actual historical examination. Even the oldest known languages, as M. Vendryes says, have nothing of the primitive about them. Nor can much be learned concerning the ultimate origin of language from the speech of savages, or from the way in which children acquire organized languages from their elders. The conclusion to which M. Vendryes therefore comes is that the question of the origin of language concerns not the philologist but the psychologist.

It is true of course that if one attempts to discuss ultimate origins in language, one passes quickly beyond historical record. But on his own principles, perhaps M. Vendryes has excluded more than was necessary. It is his purpose, he declares, to discuss language as a process of life. Now life is still going on, and language is still going on, and when these two are combined, the processes of origins must also be going on. Ultimate, remote and prehistoric origins, are not the only ones that may be brought under examination. This latter method of approaching the question of origins has recently been applied in a number of suggestive ways by Professor Jespersen in his "Language," a book M. Vendryes had access to only after his own volume was printed.

To indicate even in barest outline the many important topics treated in this book is manifestly impossible, but one brief passage, from the discussion of the question of progress in language, may be quoted in illustration of the admirable balance of the book:

Progress in the absolute sense is impossible, just as it is in morality or politics. It is simply that different states exist, succeeding each other, each dominated by certain general laws imposed by the equilibrium of the forces with which they are corporated. . . . In the history of languages a certain relative progress can be observed. Languages may be adapted in a greater or lesser degree to certain states of civilization. Progress consists in the best possible adaptation of a language to the needs of the people using it. But however real this progress may be, it is never definitive.

This volume is the fourth in the first section, Introduction and Pre-History, of the comprehensive "History of Civilization," edited by C. K. Ogden. It contains a Foreword by M. Henri Berr, director of the French collection, "L'Evolution de l'Humanité," in which the work first appeared as number three of the first section.

Romain Rolland

THE SOUL ENCHANTED: Volume II: SUMMER. By ROMAIN ROLLAND. Translated by Eleanor Stimson and Van Wyck Brooks. New York: Henry Holt. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ERNEST BOYD

READERS of "The Soul Enchanted" in English have had the advantage of getting both volumes within the same year. For "Annette and Sylvie," the first part of this work, was published last season. In France an interval of a couple of years separated them, and since 1923 nothing more has been heard of a work which promised to be the successor of "Jean Christophe." It is usual to declare that novels issued in several volumes may be read as if each volume were a book complete in itself, but this is obviously a polite fiction encouraged for the convenience of author and publisher. The work either is or is not a homogeneous entity, and if it be the former, criticism of any incomplete part or parts must be as hazardous as it would be to pass judgment upon a serial after reading an isolated instalment. To this day there are people—Bernard Shaw, for instance—who do not hesitate to pronounce upon James Joyce's "Ulysses," although they have seen only the fearfully mangled fragments which appeared in *The Little Review*.

"The Soul Enchanted" assuredly does not promise to be anything comparable to "Jean Christophe." That is not, I am afraid, the reason why it has been so indifferently received by the French press, which is still nursing the wounds inflicted upon national vanity by Romain Rolland during the war. But, in the circumstances, the policy of boycott and depreciation which "The Soul Enchanted" has had to endure from the more influential critics in France has not worked so much harm as it might otherwise have done. It has failed, for one thing, to damage the author's reputation abroad, much to the chagrin of his innumerable adversaries. In fact, amongst other grievances which are nursed by the present mood of "integral nationalism" in France is the conviction that "un-French" French writers are those most esteemed outside their own country. The idol Barrès had no following save amongst his own countrymen, but wicked fellows like Anatole France and Romain Rolland, dissimilar in everything but their lack of self-satisfied chauvinism, belong to world literature.



Romain Rolland shares, therefore, with France and André Gide the attacks of the literary Grand Inquisitors, Henri Massis, at their head, calling down the wrath of heaven upon all French writers who show any signs of being aware that culture is not a monopoly of the French mind, that Thomism is not a substitute for intelligence, and that the muttering of incantations about monarchy, aristocracy, Catholicism, and the classical tradition will not produce great literature, or help to situate France in a world from which her cultural hegemony has definitely disappeared. But Rolland's own writings can hardly be cited to prove that a mere reversal of the traditionalist position can produce a work of literary art. André Gide has said that "Jean Christophe" in French "never reads so well as in a translation," and this is true of "The Soul Enchanted," as the excellent version of Mr. and Mrs. Van Wyck Brooks shows.

Gide went so far as to declare that Romain Rolland "would lose nothing by the disappearance of the French language, of French art, of French taste, and of those gifts which he denies and which are denied to him. The final disaster of France would definitely establish the supreme importance of his 'Jean Christophe.'" I quote Gide because he is the antithesis of Henri Bassis, and his criticism of Rolland is wholly free from the reactionary bias of the Right Wing. It is a striking judgment upon the inherent weakness of Rolland's style, whose defects Remy de Gourmont was one of the first to point out, and those defects have become more noticeable as the author has had less and less to say. His ear is soothed by the hollow sonority of his libertarian ideas, but to the harmonies of words he is so indifferent that one is shocked by the jolting cadence of a prose interwoven with blank verse.

As for the ideas, in the present work his aim apparently is to celebrate the freedom of the senses, to develop the thesis of the Free Woman, Annette Rivière, as he has already developed that of the Free Genius, Jean Christophe, of the Free Thinker, Clerambault, of the Man of Feeling, Colas Breug-

non. In the first volume we left the frivolous Sylvie safe and happy, but the grave Annette was the unmarried mother of a child. Now the narrative unwinds at great length and shows how fate continues to bludgeon Annette while sparing Sylvie; how she loses the love of her own child, the affection of her friends, and the friendship of Sylvie. Annette's second encounter with sex is as disastrous as the first, and when the book closes with the outbreak of the war she is alone, resigned to this as to all other struggles, for war is just another name for life itself. Annette is the idealist of sex, and, like all Rolland's idealists, she not only gets the worst of it, but is regarded by her creator as all the better on that account. His sympathy for minorities and lost causes has come to seem little better than a glorification of defeated revolt, for defeat's sake.

The slavery of revolt, of liberty conceived not as a right but as a duty—it is this which renders lifeless and depressing Romain Rolland's studies of free souls. The pardonable excesses of sentimental youth are transformed into the futile wriggings and squirmings of obstinate doctrinaires. A method and a point of view which luckily fitted the purpose of "Jean Christophe" are inadequate to the themes of "Clerambault," "Colas Breugnon" and "The Soul Enchanted." The ascetic, Protestant mind of this protester cannot evoke for us figures of a full-blooded humanity which would explain their struggles and triumphs and weaknesses, when caught in



Ermyntude, First (and Last) Countess Boole: Lord Chancellor of England.

From a drawing by G. K. Chesterton for "Mr. Petre," by Hilaire Belloc (McBride)

the toils of fleshy passion. He preaches the religion of the senses and urges the claims of the body in the tone of a Huguenot sermon or a pamphlet on behalf of universal disarmament. The French spirit of pleasant *libertinage*, or the clean logic of that spirit, might have made "Annette and Sylvie" charming or moving, but, actually, a mealy-mouthed furtiveness makes the relations of the two girls ridiculous and morbid. In "Summer" the requirements of fiction are deemed to be satisfied by all the recognized melodramatic devices for producing tears for the poor girl-mother.

As I have said, here is no promise of another "Jean Christophe," but rather confirmation of the feeling that Romain Rolland had only that one great novel in him. For the rest, one should think of him as a musical critic of distinction, and pray that he restrict the play of his libertarian enthusiasm to the propaganda of specific ideas in a more appropriate vehicle than that of the novel.

The Crystal Cup

THE CRYSTAL CUP. By GERTRUDE ATHERTON. New York: Boni & Liveright. 1925. \$2.

Reviewed by H. W. BOYNTON

AGAIN Mrs. Atherton has made an elaborate gesture and produced a stuffed rabbit out of the hat. Its skin is real but its eyes are glass, and its little insides are cotton and excelsior. The effect is distressingly lifelike. The more you tint a Tussaud image, or curry a corpse, the more shocking its resemblance to the living creature. Mrs. Atherton's realistic verisimilitude of detail merely stresses the artificiality of her people and their doings. There is no life in either: they are simply tricks of an experienced performer. Always, to begin with, we have the stunt theme: in "Black Oxen," rejuvenation; in "The Crystal Cup," love the primeval urge vs. love as "an over-secretion of hormones in inter-

stitial cells adjacent to the Graafian follicles." Wedded to, or rather built about this theme is an action singularly obvious and commonplace. Gita of "The Crystal Cup" has been early affronted by sex, wishes she were a boy, tries to be like a boy. A novelist, mature and male, becomes her chief friend. In order to be sure of his companionship, she becomes his wife—in name only. Later she falls in love with another man; and matters are duly arranged. The hat is real, but only the performer's compelling eye and experienced gesture put the wriggle in the rabbit.

The Perfectly Proper

FURTHER REMINISCENCES. 1864-1894. By S. BARING-GOULD. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1925. \$6.

Reviewed by SIR A. MAURICE LOW.

IN the days of Good Queen Victoria, when in every properly conducted English household on Sundays such impious things as novels were removed from the parlor tables to prevent the corruption of youth and *The Quiver* and other pious literature substituted, the books of the Reverend S. Baring-Gould might almost have escaped the ban. For Mr. Gould was a very proper person and much beloved of middle-aged ladies of the Victorian era who wore mittens and dresses tightly buttoned up to their necks, and over their tea and crochet deplored the bad manners of the rising generation and wondered what the world was coming to. There was everything in Mr. Baring-Gould's favor. He was a clergyman of the Church of England, he had aristocratic connections, he inherited ancestral property. He wrote novels that never brought the blush of shame to the cheek of maidenly modesty. He wrote articles for the religious press. His hymns made a wide appeal. He was a model of propriety; old ladies might with perfect taste adore him and young people detest him because he was so very, very good. How with all these advantages he managed to escape being translated from a rectory to a bishopric will always remain a mystery. However, he had his consolation. Lord Palmerston's object in the selection of bishops, he tells us, "was to select characterless men, but plausible."



Mr. Baring-Gould's "Further Reminiscences" (as the title suggests, this is a sequel to more of the same sort) are not thrilling and his publishers need fear no danger of any of the persons whose names are used bringing suit for libel. In fact, to speak with truth, they are deadly dull; the kind of thing that a country clergyman making his parish rounds might bring into the lives of middle-aged ladies wearing dresses buttoned up to their chins, crocheting with hands encased in mittens, sitting on stiff and uncomfortable chairs decorated with antimacassars and eagerly drinking in the wit, brilliance, and knowledge of the world of their beloved pastor.

There was a spice of malice in the good man, which he is not ashamed to reveal. He once attended a Ruridecanal meeting at which the Rural Dean recommended his clergy to be studious.

Then up stood an unctuous Evangelical and said: "We have one Book, one Book that contains all we need. If we go outside the covers of our Bible, we err and go wrong, etc., etc."

Another suggested the advisability of commentaries.

"I allow a Scott's Commentary," said the first.

"And a Cornelius à Lapide," I suggested. No one at the meeting had heard of him or of it.

The reverend gentleman's wit is delicate and chaste, as these two anecdotes, italics and all, certify.

Archbishop Tait was dining one evening at the house of the Duke of Westminster. During the meal his face became ghastly. Laying down his knife and fork by the plate, he said to himself in a suppressed voice: "It has come to pass at last as I feared. I have been dreading, expecting, a stroke."

"Console yourself, your Grace," said the Duchess of Sutherland, who sat beside him. "It is not *your* leg but *mine* that you have been pinching."

The Dean of Norwich gave a garden party to celebrate his golden wedding, and a visiting Frenchman was one of the guests. He asked to have explained to him the meaning of a golden wedding.

The Dean put his hand on his wife's shoulder, patted it, and said: "This good lady and I have lived together for fifty years."

"Ah! now I do understand," exclaimed the Frenchman as his face lightened with intelligence, "so now you are at last about to marry her."