

stormed a city, or broke a maiden's heart. He has always borne the name of the little Flemish market-town of Ruysbroeck, where he was born on the banks of the Senne, near the forest of Soignes, in 1393.

Jan, as the child was called—the Flemish for John—had his roots deep in the sub-soil piety of a genuinely religious family and was spiritually nurtured for a life of devotion. He himself speaks of "the May month of his spiritual life" as the early preparation for a rich, ripe age of spiritual fecundity. The story of his conversion is vividly told and then follows the interesting account of his "spiritual refuge" in the forest of Groenendael—Green Woods—where with a little band of pious friends he devoted himself to *living, thinking, meditating, and writing*. "You can be as holy as you wish to be," he told two students from Paris, and as his supreme wish was to be holy his life attained a rare and wonderful beauty and fragrance.

The second part of the volume deals with the philosophical sources of Ruysbroeck's doctrine and with its interpretation. It is a first-class piece of work. In fact the book is indispensable to anyone who is desirous of understanding the significance of fourteenth century mysticism. One of the most important chapters is one which deals with Neoplatonism—chapter xii. It compares favorably with the best recent studies on the subject. I personally disagree with the writer in his view that Plotinus reveals in his philosophy a strong oriental influence, but that is a minor point. The main lines of the article are admirable and adequate. The book finishes with an important section on Ruysbroeck's originality and influence. We come away from the study of this lonely hermit in his green forest six hundred years ago deeply moved by his radiant personality, his depth of soul, his conviction that he had found God, and his beautiful literary style, and we wish that our age with its speed and skill and successes could produce such lives.



In his small, compact book on "Heretics, Saints, and Martyrs," Frederic Palmer of Harvard Divinity School has done an excellent piece of research and of interpretation. The book opens with a fresh study of the Anabaptists. The reader will find here an interesting account of one of the great movements of modern history told, in the main, impartially and with clear insight. Angelus Silesius, an important seventeenth century mystic and poet, is presented with unusual skill and ability. I know of nothing dealing with this interesting character which compares with it in value. Joachim of Floris, the prophet of the Eternal Gospel, is another of his figures. So, too, is Isaac Watts, whose hymns everybody sings, though almost nobody knows much about the saint's early life. Then there are two of the noblest saints in the calendar, Perpetua and Felicitas, Montanist martyrs in North Africa. And, finally, a strange heretic, Mani, the founder of Manichæism which played a long rôle in Christian history, has his story told. It is a good book for present reading and for a place on the library shelf.



"The Great Partnership," by Dr. MacCallum, is a book, not out of the fourteenth century, and not about remote saints and heretics, but out of the living stuff of our present age and about the life and religion of the times in which our problems lie. It is a good, live, vigorous, robust, pactical, and convincing message for today. It is spiritual and ethical rather than primarily mystical, though again and again the author emphasizes the importance of first-hand experience. The book contains many passages of beauty, it has many fine illustrations, it shows a wide range of reading with happy quotations, but still more important is it to note that the *thinking* revealed in all the chapters is sound and deep and honest. It is not a piece of loose-jointed homiletics; it has strong fibre and is well woven into a continuous presentation of its central theme, that we are linked with God in a great co-partnership. God has faith in us; He needs us; we need Him; He is Father, Worker, Friend, Comforter; He is Grace, Peace, Joy; He is Life, Power, Light, Truth, Law, and Purpose. All these aspects are unfolded with freshness and power, and we are carried forward from the beginning to the end with interest and with a sense of reality of what we are reading. I am glad to recommend such a gospel of health and vigor, and I am glad that those who are not fortunate enough to hear it preached every Sunday can nevertheless *read* it every day in the week.

What is Good Writing?

BETTER WRITING. By HENRY S. CANBY.
New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company. 1926.

Reviewed by GRANT C. KNIGHT
University of Kentucky

I BELIEVE that I speak for a phalanx of teachers of advanced composition in colleges when I say that most texts constructed for use in our courses leave us unmoved. We have become so familiar with the table of contents which advertises such matters as Unity, Emphasis, Coherence, Sentence and Paragraph Structure, Diction and Style, Choice of Subject, and all the other items of the stereotyped inventory that in despair at conducting students to a *doloroso passo* as sorrowful to us as to them we have often given up altogether instruction from books and have relied upon informal classroom discussions. A book which performs this function for us, however, and performs it wisely, pointedly, and inspiringly, is now before me; it is Henry S. Canby's "Better Writing."

"Better Writing" is preëminently a friendly text. Friendly inasmuch as it is willing to take pains to interest us, friendly in its occasional sharpness of reproof, in its point-blank declaration of our un-



BUNNY GANDLE

Winning drawing by Alexander King which was awarded the prize offered by its publishers for the best pictorial interpretation of the hero of "Gandle Follows His Nose," by Heywood Broun (Boni & Liveright)

fitness if we are unfit, in its readiness to encourage. It is, indeed, an excellent model of what Dr. Canby calls good manners in writing. From the moment when we note that instead of handling the small stones of fossilized instruction it is going to tap skilfully such unusual specimens as Crooked Guideposts, Beauty Rash, Faulty Brakes, and Rickets, to the final summarizing chapter we remain good-humoredly attentive. It does not flaunt novelty for novelty's sake, but it does recognize the pedagogic value of emptying new wine into old bottles. And—to suit our new figure—Dr. Canby's wine has a taking sparkle; his words are selected carefully, often inevitably, but with no taste of pedantry. Every page gives pleasure by its alert phrasing, its thrust of antiseptic epigram, its scrupulous avoidance of the *cliché*, its competent organization, and this, as all teachers and students know, is a rare experience to derive from a textbook. It is as though the author were conscious that in selecting a title so ambitious as "Better Writing" he was assuming the responsibility of illustrating his theories and practicing his advice, a responsibility which he carries easily.

"Better Writing" is, nevertheless, not too comfortable in its dilation upon the penman's craft. Its variety has a spice to burn sensitive tongues. There are warnings against sentimentality that will leave not a few of even the most modern collegians something to think about; there are diagnoses of "disabilities and diseases" which will set every aspiring writer to studying his symptoms; and there is above all an insistence upon the combination of mental strength and mental quickness which may cause all of us to pause in self-examination. This last point,

it seems to me as I look back upon the work of my students, is especially to be pondered by the ambitious in fiction or verse. "The clearest mind, the best interpreted experience, the most sensitive perception," says Dr. Canby in explaining the control which comes from mental hardness, "will never make a good writer if either the intellect or the emotions betray him when he begins to write." Perhaps there is nothing that the present-day novice in writing needs more badly to learn.

Chapter X, entitled Who Should and Who Should Not Write: Simple Tests in the Choice of a Vocation, is directed toward the student outside as well as the student inside college and is so decisive that I wish the author had been bold enough to make it Chapter I. These are the tests he proposes to would-be men of letters: Have you the desire, not merely the vague wish, to write? Will your determination carry you through the subsequent drudgery? Are you fond of words for their own sakes? Can you invent? Were you born with an ear for rhythms? Ultimately, have you succeeded or failed in your attempts? Although we may quarrel with this order of climax it would be difficult successfully to impeach the validity of the implied standards and judgments and a better series of tests would be far to seek.

Pedagogically, "Better Writing" is sound. It maintains what too few authors and teachers have said, that composition is not the tracing of symbols upon paper but an energetic process that goes on in the mind; it repeats strongly that correct thinking is the base of all good writing. It passes lightly over such so-called mechanics as spelling, punctuation, and paragraphing—things which, of course, should be taught in secondary schools but which must also be reviewed by most freshmen in colleges—and concentrates upon the importance of equipment other than technical: experience, imaginative interpretation, vital expression. Lastly, if I may be so revolutionary as to use an old-fashioned term in closing, it exemplifies in thought, style, and tone the precepts it has laid down, and these virtues, to which must be added the lively spirit which pervades the pages, make it the best current text on composition for college sophomores and juniors.

Loeb Classics

LOEB CLASSICAL LIBRARY: DIOGENES LAERTIUS, LIVES OF EMINENT PHILOSOPHERS, 2 vols., R. D. HICKS; PLATO, vol. v., W. R. M. LAMB; vol. vi., H. N. FOWLER; DIO'S ROMAN HISTORY, vol. viii., E. CARY; SENECA, EPISTULAE MORALES, vol. iii., R. M. GUMMERE; AESCHYLUS, vol. ii., H. WEIR SMYTH; TACITUS, HISTORIES, I-III, CLIFFORD H. MOORE.

Reviewed by J. M. CORNFORD
Cambridge University

WHEN Solon was told that it was of no use to weep for the son he had lost, he replied: "That is just why I am weeping—because it is of no use."

The "Lives of Eminent Philosophers" contains a fair number of repartees as poignant as this, and a much larger number which, though less poignant, have the lucid finality of French *esprit*. Indeed French is the only language into which they could be worthily rendered. It is significant that the Greek word for a wise man (*sophos*) meant a man of *esprit*, as well as a man of skill in art or craftsmanship. The innumerable anecdotes in these biographies consist chiefly of epigrammatic sayings. Unfortunately they are not, in general, characteristic of their supposed authors; in fact, many are ascribed to more than one philosopher. When Anaxagoras was told that he was condemned for impiety and that his sons were dead, "his comment on the sentence was, 'Long ago nature condemned both my judges and myself to death; and on his sons, 'I knew that my children were born to die.' Some, however, tell this story of Solon, and others of Xenophon."

The compiler of the "Lives" makes no attempt to fasten the anecdote upon one of the claimants rather than another. His chief merit is that he was uncritical by modern standards. He copied out what he found in older handbooks of the same sort, without disguising the fact, as we do when we write articles for encyclopædias. Hence, happily for us, we can often trace the source he drew upon at fourth or fifth hand. The reader who is in search of historical facts may put his trust in the judicious

survey of sources which introduces Mr. Hicks's careful and learned translation. Others will value the anecdotes for their own sake, as illustrating the quality of the Greek mind. It will not matter to them that we know nothing of Diogenes: his very name is uncertain—a curious fate for the author of a famous book.

But the philosophers were not only coiners of epigrams. Diogenes distinguishes between the wise man, or sage, who should have "achieved mental perfection," and the "lover of wisdom," the philosopher, who is conscious of not having achieved it. The Greeks had seven canonical sages, though as to who they were, opinions differed. They were men of acute and inquiring intellect, whose wisdom lay in a practical knowledge of life and was formulated in proverbial advice: "Nothing too much," and so forth—platitudes which seem trivial or profound, according to the amount of experience you bring to the interpretation. This conception of the sage is remote from the oriental. The first wise man whom an Indian would recognize as a sage was Pythagoras, and it was precisely he who was the first to call himself a mere "lover of wisdom," "for," said he, "no man is wise, but God alone." Thenceforward it became difficult to claim wisdom, and the word "sophist," professor of wisdom, ended as a term of abuse.

Most of the other volumes in this batch are continuations; they maintain the standard reached by their predecessors. Professor Clifford Moore's "Tacitus" deserves more than the "kindly charity" he asks for "one who has dared to face the tempting but impossible task" of rendering the "Histories" into a language which resists extreme compression.

Mr. Lewis on Everything

THE ART OF BEING RULED. By WYNDHAM LEWIS. London: Chatto & Windus. 1926.

Reviewed by RICHARD ALDINGTON

ADMIRERS of Mr. Wyndham Lewis whose "Tarr" is about to be published in America, may feel some misgiving when they contemplate his recent plunge into philosophico-politico-sociological theory, invective, and phophecy; and this misgiving is rather increased than diminished by reading the 434 closely-printed pages of "The Art of Being Ruled." There is nothing remarkable in the artist turned *philosophe*, for this phenomenon has occurred before in Europe, but the amazing farrago now produced by Mr. Lewis—who is a great artist—is indeed remarkable. It is almost as compendious as "Ulysses"—a mighty maze of walks without a plan—and almost as trying to the reader. But this profuse, witty, and inelegant author seems to be in some danger of becoming a distinguished publicist. The ninety-four chapters which make up this "essay" might have been contributed as articles in a more diluted form to some sublimated *John Bull* or *Sunday Pictorial*. (For all I know, they have been.) In his denunciations of contemporary civilization Mr. Lewis has donned that prophet's cloak worn of old by a long series of puritan divines and, more recently, by the inspired eunuchs, Ruskin and Carlyle. But, as everyone knows, the English public dearly loves to be preached at and kicked, to be convicted of all sorts of wickedness. This Mr. Lewis performs with great energy and ruthlessness. His mind is a prodigious rabbit-warren of ideas; whichever way we look we see the bobbing tails of innumerable ideological rabbits disappearing into a net-work of underground burrows. This truly admirable fertility of ideas, these assertions of inevitable revolution, this denunciation of democracy, these dark hints of some awful and impassable chasm separating Mr. Lewis and other born rulers from the common herd of us, all these impressive quotations, this intellectual beating about the bush, this frenzied stampeding hither and yon to no particular end, this passion for actualities, this orgy of ferocious theorizing, this vaticination, this sustained crepitation of witty phrases—all these can hardly fail to intimidate a cowering and contemptible public and to produce a sensational success.

"The Art of Being Ruled" is one of those magnificent amateur constructions of thought for which the English are so justly famous. It seems to possess many of the materials of a great book, but materials arranged and displayed in a curious and baffling way, as if the author had something mysterious to conceal. Some lucid-minded French-

man, one feels, is needed to sort out and to rearrange all this heterogeneous and discursive matter and to tell the author what his views really are. The book is a whole "To-Day and To-Morrow" series crushed into one volume. It is hard to extract a sustained line of argument from this profusion, harder still to arrange coherently, without immense labor of note-taking, all Mr. Lewis's hints and dabs at the coming Utopia. All one firmly possesses here is the certainty, that Mr. Lewis, like others before him, is more successful in his "Inferno" than in his "Paradiso," in denouncing things as they are than in reconstructing them as he thinks they ought to be. He scores heavily off enfeebled democracy, like a prizefighter with a novice; and this display earns rounds of applause. But the changes, the improvements, the new severe organizations advocated or hinted at by Mr. Lewis are received in silence. They are as repulsive, and probably as unlikely to be adopted, as all the other Utopias from Plato's to William Morris's. I see no real advantage to be derived from these violent changes; nor will a mere disciple of the sages of "Ecclesiastes" and Ferney be expected to welcome them with enthusiasm. Undoubtedly, under modern democracy, the intellectual standards of the Western nations are grievously, perhaps irreparably menaced. The grave voices of Renan and Arnold sound in our ears the warning which events have but too well justified:

The countries which, like the United States, have created a considerable popular instruction without any serious higher instruction, will long have to expiate this fault by their intellectual mediocrity, their vulgarity of manners, their superficial spirit, their lack of general intelligence.

The disease was there diagnosed by a master physician, and the subsequent diagnosis of—I will not say, quacks but—amateurs, like Mr. Mencken and Mr. Lewis add nothing to our perception of the disaster. The nations of Europe, under the pressure of circumstances, are plunging with vertiginous swiftness into an abyss of barbarity; and the enormous structure of Western democracy may collapse with a crash more dreadful than the heart-shaking dissolution of the Roman Empire. I say "may" because I still hope; but the harsh and merely negative contempt of Mr. Mencken, the *régime* of castration and black or red shirts proposed by Mr. Lewis, seem to me equally futile and abortive. Even now, though all is imperfect, all is at least tolerable; and one may still take the advice of Candide and cultivate one's garden. But for how long? Meanwhile, in a free and democratic country Mr. Lewis can still shatter the world to bits and then remould it nearer to his heart's desire—on paper. In practice, I believe there would be some effective opposition.

A New "Don Juan"

DON JUAN: A Play in Three Acts. By JAMES ELROY FLECKER. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1925. \$3.

Reviewed by EDWARD DAVISON

CONCERNING this play, "Don Juan," Bernard Shaw, who never flattered any man, wrote to the author in 1911—

There is no doubt in my mind that you have high qualifications for dramatic work—some of the highest in fact. I see nothing to complain of but a few careless verses. . . . The last act contains one of the best scenes I have ever read—that with Tisbea. It is a stroke of genius.

In spite of some minor strictures in the same letter this is enviable praise. But it is not too high for the author of "Hassen" who has yet to come into his own both as a poet and a dramatist. Flecker worked at "Don Juan" intermittently between 1911, when the first draft was completed, until 1914. Death came before he could revise the play to his own satisfaction. In all recent literary history there has been no more untimely end to the career of any man, not even of Rupert Brooke. Those who knew both men and believed in their work mourned the loss of Flecker no less than they did that of his younger compatriot, who, even in 1914, had not quite found foothold for his literary genius. Flecker, at least, left behind him a fairly solid body of work. His achievement in poetry cannot now be denied although it has yet to be fully recognized. And as for his shortcomings as a playwright (one who did not turn his back upon the Elizabethan legacy of poetry), they may be set down to the fact that he died before he had reasonable time to set

his artistic house in order. Nevertheless, even in the realm of drama, Flecker's achievement, as this new play confirms, was very considerable, and Shaw does not exaggerate unduly in the letter already quoted.

Flecker's Juan is something more than the villain and seducer of the old tradition although his new character admits most of the familiar attributes. He is also a philosopher and a poet, gay, cynical, disillusioned. He appears very effectively in the play as a reincarnation of his historic self. Flecker takes a leaf from Byron's book and sets his hero against a contemporary background. This heightens rather than lowers the universal significance of his character. When Owen Jones, his Welsh valet, asks "Who are you?" it is to be answered in one of the most portentous phrases in modern literature: "A spirit troubled about departure." From this the scene progresses until Juan speaks the rhymed passage already familiarized as a separate poem in Flecker's collected verse:

I am Don Juan, cursed from age to age,
By priestly tract and sentimental stage,
Branded a villain and believed a fool,
Battered by hatred, scared by ridicule.

✽ ✽ ✽

He represents himself as "the true, the grand idealist" whose purpose is to take everything that life can offer. He is not only the prince of lovers but also a man who refuses to turn his back upon any human experience. His sole unselfish action in the play is the cause of his catastrophe. Ironically enough, this action is to murder the father of his affianced wife, a British statesman, because he is about to create a European war. The murder is discovered and other murders are necessary to prevent the penalty. Flecker fills his stage with corpses with true Elizabethan gusto. But he escapes a too violent realism by a cunning introduction of the traditional statute episode. Similar transitions elsewhere in the play are equally effective as a means of avoiding more than one decline into mere absurdity. The scene to which Shaw refers in his letter concerns the remeeting of Juan and Tisbea, a young fisher-girl seduced by Juan after his shipwreck in the first act and afterwards abandoned. A single fragment of their dialogue will be sufficient to describe the nature of the scene which, in its entirety, is of exceptional power, much the best thing in the play.

Don Juan. You know me?

Tisbea. (*Dirty, ragged, unkempt, and worn*). You are Don Juan, my lord.

Don Juan. Could you forgive me for leaving you?

Tisbea. O sir, how was I to expect a fine gentleman like you would take up with the likes of me for long?

Don Juan. Are you the girl who left me with a bitter curse?

Tisbea. O sir, I am sorry it should ever have happened. I must have been mad, sir, indeed I must.

Don Juan. Girl, girl, what has happened to you? Why do you talk like a housemaid? Why do you not throttle me and spit in my face or else forgive me like the great woman you are, and love me all over again?

Tisbea (*tearfully*). O sir, I don't understand you, don't talk unkindly to me.

The change from Tisbea's character in the earlier scene where she could ask Juan "Did I sell myself for supper and a sovereign? How dare you stand there simpering goodbye to me, to me whom your passion has made Queen of all the World," is heart-rending and completely unexpected, therefore all the more powerful. This like the passage in which Lord Framlingham rises out of prose into the splendid lyric beginning "Day breaks on England down the Kentish hills" is the kind of thing which, in Flecker's two plays, cry out to the discriminating reader to applaud what the greatest living dramatist has said of the poet. Quite certainly Flecker had some of the highest qualifications for dramatic work. "Great men have been among us. . . ."

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