

Lord John Russell

THE LATER CORRESPONDENCE OF LORD JOHN RUSSELL. 1840-1878. Edited by G. P. GOOCH. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1925.

Reviewed by WILBUR CORTEZ ABBOTT
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IT has now been nearly forty years since Sir Spencer Walpole wrote his life of Lord John Russell and more than a decade since the early correspondence of Lord John was published. In that time the knowledge of the history and of the personalities of the nineteenth century has been increased by a volume of publications probably unparalleled in any country in any period save, perhaps, by the masses of material relating to the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era. In consequence this new contribution to biography has the advantage over its predecessors in the opportunity afforded its editor to enlarge and illuminate the correspondence with an amount and quality of information impossible of acquisition by even so eminent and accomplished a biographer as Walpole. Nor does the present editor yield even to Walpole in fitness for such a task as this. The Russell family, fortunate in many things, has been peculiarly fortunate in securing two such men to embalm the life of its great nineteenth century representative in such work as this.

In spite of his great services to his country, in spite of his talents and his personality, in spite even of Queen Victoria's attachment to him, or of the popular causes which he championed and which should have brought him even greater measure of popularity than they did, Lord John Russell never seems to have touched the general imagination in the same fashion as—we will not say Disraeli—even Gladstone managed to achieve. If we view the century just past as the era of nationalism and democracy, Lord John should certainly be accorded a high place in the affections of the champions of those causes. If we regard high office as the test of greatness, he must be regarded as one of the greater figures of the period, for he was twice prime minister. He was an early champion of parliamentary reform, he introduced the great Reform Bill of 1832, and carried it through the Commons with enormous credit to himself in the face of the bitterest opposition. Its passage made him the most popular man in England for the time being. But it was his great moment; he never reached those heights again. Despite the fact that he was a member of all or nearly all the Liberal ministries until his death, and was the head of two, despite the fact that he guided the destinies of England through some critical years with skill and success, in all his seventy-four years he never touched the height of 1832 again.

For this there were perhaps two reasons. A sickly child he never quite outgrew the nervous condition induced by his early struggle for existence, and was the greater part of his life what is called "difficult." His personal appearance was against him; and, though a ready and occasionally a great speaker, especially in his quickness of retort, he had a weak voice and a poor public manner. He had none of the tact and personal charm of Melbourne, none of the grand manner of Gladstone, less than nothing of the cheerful audacity of Palmerston, and no greater contrast could be imagined than that between Russell and Disraeli. Much may be pardoned to a man with chronic indigestion, and much must be granted to the strength of spirit which resided in that feeble frame. Russell was in many ways a great man, but he had the misfortune to have those precise physical disabilities which go so far to nullify greatness in the minds of a public which judges so largely by sight and sound. Especially in his later years when physical disabilities began to overpower even his great spirit, he lost his hold upon not only the public but on affairs. Yet in the judgment of one who knew him well he was a great man, and there are few more touching tributes to any man in public life than the letter of the Queen to him on his retirement.

In one sense, then, this is a judgment of the value of the present volumes. They cover, indeed, the two prime ministries. They are made enormously more valuable by the introduction and the comments of the accomplished editor. Yet one who goes to them for the vigorous entertainment which some of his contemporaries afford, or even for a

great addition to his knowledge will not, perhaps, be fully satisfied. It goes without saying that they are indispensable for a more complete knowledge of the period; for the history of that period without Lord John Russell would never be complete. They touch on many things which we are glad to know and to have available. They will take their place on the shelves of history as finally completing the record of the man and his share in the period in which he played his part.

A Gifted Amateur

RELATIONS. By SIR HARRY JOHNSTON. New York: Harper & Bros. 1926. \$2 net.

Reviewed by STANLEY WENT

ONE has come to speak these days of a "Johnston novel," and the appearance of a new one is a mild literary event. Thus we have traveled some distance since the author of "The Gay Dombey" was regarded as a remarkable example of that rare phenomenon, a man who not only had up his sleeve the one novel that every man is supposed to keep there, but who actually produced it. Yet despite the growing list of fiction credited to Sir Harry he remains still the gifted amateur—the distinguished explorer, naturalist, servant of empire, who has turned, in later life, to novel-writing as a hobby.

One can only wish there were more such gifted amateurs. His methods would flabbergast the principal of a school of fiction-writing; but, after all, method is largely a matter of fashion. It is doubtful whether the modern stage convention of the telephone to reveal a situation is really a great deal better than the old-fashioned soliloquy. It is all a question of what one's ear is attuned to. At any rate, to enjoy a Johnston novel one must enter into the spirit of it and accept the Johnston conventions. When, for example, Sir Harry is anxious to give the reader a description of his hero's brother-in-law, the hero is likely to address the wife of his bosom in some such naïve terms as these: "As you no doubt know, my dear, your eldest brother is not particularly goodlooking. He has a turned-up nose and a squint. But, as no doubt you also know, he is really a very good-hearted fellow."

The fact is, Sir Harry is so intent on carrying forward the story and telling the reader what he thinks about an amazing variety of questions that he doesn't give a hang about the means employed. However achieved, the result is one of the main essentials of a good novel—a definite sense of progression. This one gets to quite an astonishing degree in Sir Harry's latest book, "Relations." Here the author sets himself to tell the story of the first quarter of the present century. There is no plot, but only people and events and ideas. And before any of us who were bright young fellows at the beginning of the century and still think of ourselves as such—before we crack a smile at the expense of the Johnston manner, we should stop to ask ourselves why we haven't done the very thing that Sir Harry makes appear so simple, and if we had tried it, whether, with all our superior technique, we could have achieved that amazing sense of progression that with Sir Harry never fails. There is a touch of genius in the way this amateur novelist produces his effects. It is like looking at the work of a born artist. The line may be faulty, the perspective absurd, but somehow in the picture is a quality that defies analysis—the quality that one misses, for instance, in the impeccable correctness of a Lord Leighton and even in the perfection of the "faultless" Andrea del Sarto.

The story is told in brief in the title. Sir Harry takes as his central character a young Anglo-Australian (aetat thirty in the year 1900) and tells about the doings of his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, his in-laws and their aunts and cousins to all sorts of degrees of affinity, from the year 1900 to 1925. All of the everyday goings-on out of which Sir Harry makes his story he regards as a legitimate excuse (as indeed they are) for the freest possible expression of his own ideas, prejudices, hobbies, and predilections. He has an amazing number of ideas upon an amazing number of topics—woman suffrage, politics, the evils of free-masonry, the desirability of mothers nursing their children, the growing of tulips, the rearing of pigeons, the responsibility for the war, which latter, by the way, he divides between the Kaiser and the Czar. And with it all, Sir Harry is a real realist, much more real than most of the advanced young men who make a profession of realism.



Newcomers. II.

EMANUEL CARNEVALI

I KNOW several people carrying "A Hurried Man"* round with them, passionately nosing in its glossy pages, devotees absorbed by the leaves of a little holy-book. I know people who would prefer parting, for the hour, with almost any volume in their libraries rather than with this of Emanuel Carnevali's. They are not perfectionists, the folk getting a marvelous corroboration of timely feeling through the small collection. Perfectionists can find relatively little in this piously edited miscellany of stories and book reviews, poems and addresses, upon which an unnaturally exquisite sense of form is safely to be pastured. Carnevali was only twenty-four when they shipped him from Chicago back to Bologna broken with encephalitis. It was in an adopted language that he had made his things. He was already sixteen when he ran from home to America in 1914. During his few years of creativeness he handled prose, narrative and critical, always more successfully than forms of verse; and half of his relic is "poetry."

Rest assured the Artist is strong in men finding a friend in the splendid tatters of his poor career. It is to the artist in the human frame that Carnevali speaks; in fervent, moving tones. With the grand number of the winter's publications, his paper-bound booklet has no connection. Those others are books merely, novels, assembled poems and studies, biographies, histories . . . "A Hurried Man" holds the truth of an hour, fixing a reigning mood, defining a general state. It is the book of homeless men. Content, pathos, form where it is active in the quasi-confessional narratives, were found by Carnevali through the types of the unrooted soul floating in every American city. Four or five significant variants spoke richly and accurately to him; and the homeless man, in one incarnation or another, is ourselves.

The rootlessness of poor immigrants struggling for adjustment to a bewildering, steely America, gave him a dramatic point of contact. An even larger, richer one was granted by the painfully unstable feelings of the adolescent outgrown the mothering home but still unripened for the world, helpless and hemmed in by the brutal contradictions of life as it is dreamed and life as experience will have it. The nonconformists for whom the "home" is an inadequate reality, or none at all, and overfilled with old bones, spoke equally deeply, intimately to him: the rebels suspended in the gaunt way in which neurosis stalks between a family mind and another, future, shapeless one; the gods or inferiors eager for Mondays and holiday endings because on Sundays and fête days the fat spectre of the home parades and lies that "the world is a garden of happy children and they are bugbears." He felt almost grandly the pain of the pitiful, sinister types unable to sustain any relationship almost grandly; and through the entire material quivers something of the restlessness present in America and over the globe wherever the ancient tribal ways and sanctions are defunct and men wander in emotional confusion.

The reality fitfully touched through these synthesized broad points of contact, stands more universal than any single one of them, or even all of them taken as one. His subject was always something of a symbol for Carnevali. Homelessness to him was always more a spiritual than a quasi-material state. Yelling, weeping, and cursing in adolescent intolerance, Carnevali was yet an artist, releasing feelings about life as a whole through manipulation of his medium. A sense of sorrow, not soft nor weak, but dignified and penetrating in all boyishness, was roused in him by the subject; perhaps had lain waiting for it all his life; and brought the deep in him in contact with impersonal forces. Italian blood and the Italian past indubitably made the adjustment and consequent release relatively less difficult for him the man of letters. Certainly, all artists, American or Italian, are able to touch eternal regions through even the most painful, squalid circumstances, and over their own slain bodies to feel the whole of life. Still, Carnevali's subject, the rootless and divided

*A HURRIED MAN. By EMANUEL CARNEVALI. Paris: Contact Editions. Three Mountain Press. 1925.

state, spiritual pain and endless insecurity, required of its manipulator a personal humility, a fund of selfless sorrow, a sense of the helplessness at the heart of life which shoots only of the old cultures possess. Most Americans are as yet too impatient and resentful of the helpless aspects of the universe to confess failure and weakness with as much humility, candor, and simplicity as Carnevali found. We show resentment of our disabilities in the disguise of social propaganda; and dote on pictures of "beautiful souls" against whom the universe leagues, and saviors strung to the crosses of Main Street. Deep civilization alone permits a Jules Leforgue to cry "Donc je suis un malheureux, et ce n'est ni ma faute ni celle de la vie!"

Or an Emanuel Carnevali to paraphrase the cry vociferously, racy, passionately in lyrical, nervously conducted prose! That medium, in stories and critical pieces, carefully informal, touches one how directly with the quick of the torn present; moves one how deeply despite thickly sown testimonials that the author was a neophyte among masters! Carnevali always had a material feeling for words, an attraction for the language which models and builds. He fingered ardently, patiently, for the pithy plastic term and phrase; sought them boldly amid slang and colloquialisms and the "splendid commonplaces;" admired Carl Sandburg for his whimsical use of the "wayward gab" of workers and criminals. And both his prose and the auriferous gravel of his verse are keenly amusing with finely used common language, and fresh ways of speech. Only form in the large sense pretty regularly eluded Carnevali. His poetry suffers most from the absence of rhythmic balance and general outline. As a poet, despite his genuine disdain of preciousness and all penny wisdom and Pound folly, he remained too neurotically aware of his own fancied insufficiency and the exclusivity of the standard set by the Exquisite movement, at its crest in 1920, to entrust his best to verse.



Prose found him less self-conscious, and lured from him tenderness and human feeling rich beyond his age. Through it, freely, with a simplicity almost childlike, he uttered his warmth and pain; in critical pieces crying his robust contempt for the literary orientation that shows no love nor ecstasy nor drunkenness; ruddy hate of the indecisive and pettily calculated and cold in the poetry and criticism of the new men. The three tales which begin "A Hurried Man" are actually written; they are literature. Here Carnevali is at the center of his pathetic subject-matter, casting forth words and cries, rhythms and phrases, pregnant as those of folk caught in sudden crises. The old human pain which he felt in women, weighing upon him and the world through them, comes like a sad and solemn laying-on of hands through the alternating prose and poetry of the first story. In a second, the tale of the lame grey dove, he gives very subtly, in half-pointed, unsentimental phrases, the feeling of the lover who knows his own love inadequate. The third, "Home, Sweet Home," is Carnevali's most elaborately developed, daring, and rewarding piece.

There has been no clearer expression of sorrow in American prose. Compared with this passionate kind of writing, the sorrow which permeates so much in classical American literature is seen to be no sorrow at all, and kin to another state: an absence of emotion, a sort of down-feeling; in Hawthorne "fatalism, hopelessness, moral indolence;" in Poe weariness from not having lived and morbid voluptuousness. Poor Carnevali's feeling was born of openness, positiveness, warmth, and acts as a resolution and gives a broken day proportion. Perhaps it is an insolence to compare, in any respect, something as groping and incomplete as "A Hurried Man" with a prose as delicate and finished and bodied as Hawthorne's, or with verse as absolute and Chopinesque as that of Poe. If it is, then all comparison of the American moderns with the American classics is an insolence, so essentially does Carnevali's literary value correspond with the value of the best work of to-day. For the reality of that, our faiths are vouchers. Small in asthetic perfection and intellectual structure as that of the forerunners was large, the work of the moderns nevertheless has warmth, abundance, direct contact at the heart of it. The archway to growth lies opened in it. Perhaps Carnevali's contributions are only rude mixtures of friable mortar and small building-stones. Yet through them feeling, the current of life, proceeds.

PAUL ROSENFELD.

The BOWLING GREEN

I Say to Myself

I KNOW a man who wants to own an island. Sometimes, when we lunch together, he blurts out rather incoherently some of his notions about it; he even dreams of an archipelago, a cluster of islets to be settled by a few congenial families, one islander to be a doctor; and I can see the vision clearly, with our topsail schooner anchored in a handy cove.

Then, falling back into the various timidities of my kind, I say to myself in the subway, Aren't we all islands already?

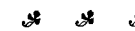


It is a familiar theory in the world of books that a publisher should issue a few little volumes of good verse now and then, even expecting to lose money on them, because it is healthy for the tone of his business, because it wins him the gratitude of authors and often leads to more profitable dealings.

And in the same way, I say to myself, a man of imagination must entertain in his skull many random ideas and wild notions that probably cannot be transacted; dreams that are violent and strange and not for wide circulation; all these are essential for the medicine of his mind.



And still letters come, sometimes of distress and reproach, and many very friendly and charming that happily reward the heart, saying "What do you mean?" This appears to me an oddity. I cannot quite grasp the notion of writing to an author to ask him what he "meant" by his book or any special passage thereof. It would appear to me that an author, having certainly considered his work more carefully than anyone else, might be supposed to have set down in it as much of his intentions as he intended to be stated and was averse from further argument. Moreover, for myself I should take with great caution any author's explanation of his design, for it might be quite different from what I had decided the thing meant to me; which is the only meaning I need.



It has struck me as interesting that in casual conversations lately I have noticed the name of Fielding coming up surprisingly often. Perhaps this is due to the instinct of the reading public; a kind of subtle realization that a modern Fielding is one of the things we greatly need. We need someone to play Fielding to the innumerable inversions of Richardson that are current. And that book, when it comes, will be written, in its own mode, of course, but comparable to the manly simplicity of "Tom Jones" where every gaiety and subtlety of observation is carried on a strong pour of narrative; where the reader, unmercifully chaffed, imagines the ironic fun directed at everyone but himself and so has ease to perceive the great heart behind. Such work will come; it will come because it must, because a million readers hanker for it without knowing what they need. It will be written as plainly as if it were a translation from some other tongue; none of its merits will be dependent on mere verbal skill or prettiness. It will come when there is a writer who can see the egregious humors of our American life not angrily, nor brutally, nor sentimentally, nor as a stunt or skit; a writer who, as Fielding once said, is "admitted behind the scenes of this great theatre of Nature." And no other author, he added, ought to write anything besides dictionaries and spelling-books.



The trend towards that desirable coming is visible, I think, in the revival of interest in picaresque fiction. One publisher has announced a whole library of reprints of classic rogueries. It is my misfortune, I suppose, that I have so often found the classics in that sort rather dull. Even in Rabelais, if I must confess it, it is painful to wade through so much merciless foulness to come upon the lovely little interlude of the Abbey of Theleme. How different our Fielding; "Tom Jones," a book so clean that the young should never read it.

Dr. Canby is quoted as having said, in a lecture, that male characters in fiction nowadays are less lifelike than the female. Certainly at present the female of the novel is more deadly than the male; but I don't quite understand Dr. Canby's saying (as quoted in the press) that "to get real men in books one must go back to Dickens." How about May Sinclair?

But if Dr. Canby is right—and it would be quite like him to be right—perhaps it is because at the moment women are more interesting than men. They are passing through a thrilling phase; the authors of the Today and Tomorrow Series and the Ellis Island authorities are kept busy trying to catch up with them. Between the masculine extremes of the two Ellises—Island and Havelock—there are many tinctures of doctrine; but take her by and large, woman is showing more fermentation. She has more to conceal than man, and, in the present fashion, less desire to conceal it. One who is in the attic of a burning building does not hide the fact that the house is on fire. Women, even more than men, live in the attic of a burning building. It is probably more expensive, psychologically, to be a woman than to be a man. The cost of doing business, psychic business, is greater, because women have more biological overhead to carry. They operate, perhaps, under a heavier handicap of self-consciousness. Man's complaint, since Eden, has always been that woman is hard to live with; but surely this is fair; she finds her own self hard to live with; harder, I guess, than we do. All this, and the fact that she is beautiful, amusing, and desperately eager to think, is why the novelist finds her stimulating. The old saying about the woman who is "a traitor to her sex" has a valuable suggestion. You never heard of a man who was called a traitor to his sex. In other words, women were supposed to be guarding some appalling secret of campaign. And now, if the secret isn't in circulation, it's not because they haven't been shouting it at us.

Perhaps one fundamental basis of much fiction is suggested by an advertisement I sometimes see. It says that you can buy a female canary for \$2.00, but a male costs \$4.49. It is the novelist's business to find out why that is so; and specially the female novelist's business to find out whether it will always be so. And most of all it is all novelists' business to practice, now and then, what happened to Montaigne's magpie—"a deep study and dumpish retracting into herself." For it is there, if you retract far enough, that you'll find almost everyone else—men and women both.



The lesson that very little really new or different happens in literature was reinforced by a letter of Dickens's that I saw lately. It was written in December shortly before the first publication of the "Christmas Carol," and expressed great outrage and despair because the book had not been adequately advertised by the publisher. It might have been such a success, he laments, and exclaims "Would you believe it, it was not advertised in any magazine but *Blackwood*!"

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Bores

(Continued from page 625)

civilization. We shall look back with pathetic longing to the good old days when golf, stocks, the weather, and politics, all expertly handled, were staples of talk.

Buy a book and become a bore. Condensed knowledge guaranteed to turn friends into enemies. A thousand useful facts carefully freed from wit and wisdom. Culture for the unculturable, or how five minutes a day will drive the wise man away. Be the heir to all the ages at \$3.00 net.

A new volume of the Bollandists' "Actor Sanctorum" (Records of the Saints), is about to appear, covering the dates November 9 and 10. This great work was begun three centuries ago, the idea of a compendium of the lives of the saints having originated with a Flemish Jesuit priest, Father Rosweid, in the early part of the seventeenth century. After the death of Father Rosweid, his papers were handed over to Father John Bolland, of Holland, who began collecting and editing material. The successor editors from his time to the present day have been called Bollandists.