

# The Saturday Review

## of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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### Shifting the Apology

IN a not so remote past the detective or mystery story was an humble member of the family of books, a sort of stepchild of literature, that wore its thrills with an apologetic air and was hardly to be mentioned in the society of intellectuals. All that is gone, and the detective story has been "taken up" in the politest circles. Curious to what diversity of persons it makes appeal—to the scholar, to the practical man of affairs, to the woman to whom bloodshed is anathema and crime outside the expectations of her experience, to the gentlest and the most genial as well as to the adventurous and crabbed. And yet its translation from its modest position to its present high estate of favor has not come about through any ripening of its art. Quite to the contrary; its highest models are still the tales of Poe and Conan Doyle in English and Gaboriau in French. To what then is ascribable its popularity?

Quite clearly it is a literature of escape, and one that common experience has not yet rendered savorless, a literature bearing enough relation to the happenings of life to bring it into consonance with living, and yet sufficiently removed from the routine of existence to give it the glamour of the unknown. In a sense, it is almost the only type of fiction left to us in which the reader can project himself from the world of actuality into a realm of the imaginary where abnormal incident is plausible, and which yet lies sufficiently outside of usual experience to leave that incident piquant. War, and science, and travel have given it an advantage over the old-fashioned tale of excitement.

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For the recent spectacle of war by paling the blood and thunder of novels into insipidity by comparison with its own vast gruesomeness has, temporarily at least, rendered flat, when not painful, the story of action and daring. Brought into juxtaposition with the war—and who today has yet sufficiently emerged from its thralldom to cease to use it as a standard of measures?—any sword and cloak romance dwindles into dullness. And romance of this sort had been one of the popular forms which the literature of escape had taken.

But before the war, science had already struck a blow that favored the rise of the detective story. Science had in large measure nullified the fascination of pseudo-science. With submarines following upon the heels of the telephone, and aeroplanes being jostled out of novelty by wireless, where was the wonder of a Verne's fancied journeyings under the ocean or a Wells's battle of the air? Here was a field of fancy in which the routine constricted reader had delighted to revel, and suddenly from an exhilarating playground of the imagination it had become a commonplace reality. When the actual world had suddenly taken wings to itself, and silence had unexpectedly become vocal, there was more to capture interest in a tale of mystery and its unraveling than in ingenuities of the novelists outmoded by fact from romancers to realists.

And exploration and travel, too, have played their part in raising the detective story to popularity. For exploration by penetrating to all parts of the world, and travel by making all but the most inaccessible regions matters of common acquaintance, by greatly lessening its ability to convince, have drawn something of the zest from the story of imaginary and adventurous travel.

It would be ridiculous, of course, to ascribe the respectability which has settled upon the detective story to these causes alone or even predominantly. We do not advance them as primary reasons for its popularity but rather as explanations of the rapid ex-

### To Those That Come After

By LORD DUNSANY

WE were not wholly here, because to you  
Often from our old homes our dreams  
drew near:

They did not know our hearts as you shall do.  
We were not wholly here.

By lonely voices calling through Time's mists,  
By loves and hatreds following like bees,  
By jealousies and angry journalists:  
Follow our way by these.

We shall be with you in your distant time,  
Shall lean towards you across many a year,  
Shall bring you courage with a way-worn rhyme:  
We were not wholly here.

### This Week



"History of Medieval Philosophy." Reviewed by *Fulton J. Sheen*.

"This Believing World." Reviewed by *Lewis Browne*.

"Labels." Reviewed by *Allan Nevins*.

"Almost Pagan." Reviewed by *Robert B. MacDougall*.

The Valley of the Kings." Reviewed by *Anne C. E. Allinson*.

Pursuing the Whale." Reviewed by *Frank V. Morley*.

### Next Week, or Later

Thoughts on the Literary Movement. By *Chauncey B. Tinker*.

The Passing of the Great Race. By *Elmer Davis*.

"American Finances of the War Period." Reviewed by *Thomas W. Lamont*.

"United States Oil Policy." Reviewed by *H. L. Doherty*.

"The Martyrdom of Man." Reviewed by *Hendrik Van Loon*.

pansion of interest in this type of literature within the last ten or fifteen years. Man cannot live by fact alone; he must have relief from the actual. And if war, and science, and travel have turned what he was wont to deem romance into everyday happening, he will take his relief where he can get it—in the story of mystery and its resolution. And he does it today in the full odor of sanctity. If you don't believe it, ask the next friend you meet whether he reads detective stories. Either he will unblushingly admit that he does or else he will apologize for not doing so.

### A Social Philosopher\*

By HENRY NOBLE MACCRACKEN  
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MR. BERTRAND RUSSELL, who must be one of the best talkers living, was speaking of L. P. Jacks of the *Hibbert Journal*, for which Russell had written some essays: "Jacks is an unhappy optimist; I, on the other hand, am a happy pessimist." It is this quality of good cheer in all his controversial writings, this mixture of radicalism and good taste, his imperturbable good temper amid situations and issues that would embitter anyone else, that give Russell his hold upon the young people, with whom he is a favorite of the age. Curiously limited in experience to a small circle of radicals and aristocrats, yet theorizing from them to the whole world, Russell is the trueborn Englishman, at home in every clime. Writing with the clarity of a good talker, and often, alas, repeating himself as talkers do, he makes the viewpoint of the agnostic endurable. At its worst, knowing no more and believing no more than scientific method will grant, there seems to him plenty to be accomplished by brave spirits. And when the worst comes, and the winter of our discontent is upon us, there is always philosophy and the divine mathematics for the mind to play with.

A more cautious Archimedes, Mr. Bertrand Russell has more than once abandoned the pleasure of mathematical speculations at his hearthstone, to rush to the defense of beleaguered justice. The lectures, essays, letters, and other miscellany recording those adventures betray the occasional nature of such sallies forth, their romanticism, their gallant tiltings at the solid windmills of commerce, and also the profound melancholy and distrust with which the knight-errant of modern philosophy has buckled on his well-battered armor.

Mrs. Stan Harding, in whose behalf Mr. Russell honorably laid lance in rest, once remarked that "there is no thirst like the thirst for justice." This is true, especially when it is justice to one's self for which one thirsts. But the Grail does not reveal itself to such impetuous seekers. Mr. Russell's crusades began with a personal experience, no doubt (as he himself has told us in his lecture on free thinking in 1925), and continued with occasional impulses to action such as his dismissal from his Cambridge lectureship in 1916. But his fights are not tinged with any selfishness or personal rancor. His humor comes to his aid and gives him time to reflect that in every contest of wit he has come out victor, leaving his more powerful adversaries helpless before his shafts of ridicule.

It was, one may guess, the Great War that first drew Bertrand Russell out from his preoccupation with mathematical abstractions. Confronted successively with dangerous reversions to more primitive social codes, such as abridgment of free speech, intrigues of the underworld of state, problems of dealing with new Russia, China, Persia, Morocco, and other outbreaks of the later nationalism, the philosopher has been compelled again and again to review his own philosophical creed in the light of a changing world. And like so many other idealists who have thought humanity might learn from the war to do anything rather than incur it again, and who failed to take into account the stolid resistance of common inertia in the mass, he has been driven to education as the means of the world's salvation.

To these general desires is now added a personal

\*Education and the Good Life. By Bertrand Russell. New York: Boni & Liveright. 1926. On Education, Especially in Early Childhood. London: 1926.



one. Confronted with children of his own, Mr. Russell has become alarmed about modern education. It is as parent rather than as educator that his new book declares his desires, for, as he says, "the opinions of parents are immensely important." No teacher doubts this for a moment.

It must be confessed, however, that Mr. Russell's adventures in parenthood, to which reference is made at length in this volume, do not add very much that is new to modern educational theory. It is delightful to read perhaps, that his little son was wild with joy on his father's return from barbarous America; but we fail to perceive, crude provincials that we are, what great educational principle is illustrated by the fact that of that experience Mr. Russell "had no wish to tell, and he (the son) had none to hear." The situation is, of course, unique among English tourists in these parts, but the educational values deducible therefrom are not vouchsafed us.

We are edified by the proud parent's Spartan procedure in overcoming his little boy's fear of the sea. "Every day for about a fortnight, we plunged him up to his neck in the sea, in spite of his struggles and cries. Every day they grew less; before they ceased, he began to ask to be put in." From which we learn that familiarity kills fear. This is enlightening, as to the Russell régime, but it does not add greatly to our technical equipment for the modern school.

"If (your child) does something slightly unkind to a younger child, do the same to him at once. . . . In this way the fact that others have feelings like his own is brought vividly to his attention." This counsel, repeated somewhat carelessly at various places in the book, savors of the Old Testament Puritan and comes strangely from the apostle of tolerance. It is the iron rule of "with what measure ye mete." The fact is that there is a little of abstraction and aloofness in this philosopher gifted with children, which reminds me strongly of Puritan school masters. There is a distaste for rough and ready—sport and competitive games, a tendency to make the child's world a man's world in miniature; above all, a total absence of reference to the sense of beauty and the part it can play in the child's world. This omission is deliberate, possibly reserved for a later volume, but it is hard to excuse. Mr. Russell would apparently confront the child with all the physiological aspects of sex; but the aesthetic may not supplement the physical in any way. As for the morality inculcated, "I shall not teach (children of the grades) that faithfulness to one partner through life is any way desirable, or that a permanent marriage should be regarded as excluding temporary episodes. . . . Relations involving children should be permanent if possible, but should not necessarily on that account be exclusive." A child should simply not know that people have feelings about modesty. (Of course, later on he will have to know.) We fear so. But as Mr. Russell observes, rather sapiently, "as soon as the subject has been explored to this extent, it becomes uninteresting, like a cupboard that is often open." To some teachers the comparison of a long, dark corridor, thus lighted dimly at one end, may occur as more appropriate.

Such are the original comments of this philosophic parent, a good, hearty, English "original," of the kind Henry Adams found to be common in London. Nothing better illustrates the stability of English society, than its power to digest its eccentrics. But as a textbook for the American Teachers Institute, our book needs footnotes.

Similar doubts will arise as to the accuracy of Mr. Russell's other sociological observations—shyness, we are told for example, is common in England and China, and parts of America, but rare elsewhere. One is more disposed to believe that shyness, by which is here meant not bashfulness, which is universal, but the acute misery of a proud soul suffering from a sense of inferiority, will occur where superiority of origin is preached and believed. The failure to measure up to what one is taught to believe of one's self will cause shyness. The phenomenon is not rare anywhere, within the present writer's experience.

The American edition bears the more accurate title. Nine-tenths of the volume concerns the Good Life, and is, indeed, little more than an expansion of the author's earlier "Essence of Religion" and

"What I Believe." It is education as religion that's expounded. This religion, originally compounded of love, knowledge, and service, is now restricted to the two formal ideals. The reader will not be deceived by the arbitrary division of the volume into education of character and intellectual education. The subject is the same throughout, how to produce a generation among which the present state of things will be impossible. Mr. Russell has no panacea, he knows only that things are wrong, and that the trouble is that we have the wrong kind of people. Leaning to behaviorism, his recipe would be so to recondition the world as to rid the child of the sources of fear, hate, ignorance, and inertia.

The philosopher, talking now abstractly from the depths of his armchair beside his hearth, is of the opinion that religion, and especially Christianity, has, in the balance, done more harm than good. Asked for a substitute by young people, he reconstructs for them a religion of humanity, the principles of which sound like strange echoes from the recorded sayings of Jesus. "Love is a gift from Heaven, the best that Heaven has to bestow" (Heaven here must be the Confucian one, apparently). "Fearlessness is the essence of wisdom." And of course, perfect love casts fear out. Knowledge, guided by love, or rather love moving along the path illumined by knowledge, will save the world yet. Love is of nature double, contemplative and active; the beauty of holiness, and the good will (always called here benevolence) towards men. Knowledge is science, controlled by scientific method, destructive if misused, but a friend if approached in love. Scriptural precedents spring to the lips, needless to quote.

But the notion that without any stronger impulse than desire mankind will adopt this reasonable way, sounds rather Chinese than Judean. China is indeed, for Mr. Russell, returned a confirmed and romantic admirer, the last refuge of freedom upon earth. In his Utopian Middle Kingdom pure reason rules, scientific spirit is revered.

Four cardinal virtues are to be inculcated in children; courage, vitality, sensitiveness (the responses of pleasure and sympathy) and intelligence (not the innate quality, but the well-stored, well-trained mind). If these ideal habits are well formed, the parents' and teachers' tasks are done. Push these four buttons, and the child will do the rest.

In the first two qualities, Mr. Russell gives little encouragement to the psychiatrist and the physical educationist. His methods are still those of hit-or-miss, kill-or-cure commonsense. Some teachers will side with him, at the risk of seeming old-fashioned, rather than with the extreme claims of modern psychiatrists. It has been publicly asserted this summer, by a well known psychiatrist, that the four full-time experts to be let loose upon the defenceless freshman class at Yale this next fall will, by the coming spring, have effectively disposed of every personal problem presenting difficulty to any undergraduate. As to such a triumph of mental hygiene the imagination stays humbly but defiantly in doubt.

It will be observed that Mr. Russell's four cardinal virtues—named with a scholastic certitude—represents merely the healthy, normal, human product of a sane and happy life. They are the irreducible minimum which this most individualistic of Britons would concede as commonly essential to the genus homo; and they are also the powerful will-training habits, which, if left to grow in free and stimulating soil, will demand freedom, justice, and yes, reform—for this philosopher of cold logic and cheerless mathematics, this agnostic and literal advocate of pure scientific method, believes nevertheless with all his heart in a new world to come, or rather, his hopes in education conquer his fears for prostituted science, eloquently described in "Icarus." And as he says, "Our life is governed not only by facts, but by hopes."

One misses, in this sketch of English individualism, just that overemphasis upon group activity which seems at times to some American observers to be actually unfitting our students for solid and constructive individual thinking. The group, indeed, is scarcely mentioned throughout the book. Even in the chapter devoted to the nursery school and derived from Miss McMillan, there is no description of the group as the educative factor; one returns, instead, to a dithyrambic praise of science and

of love issuing out of the security of the comfortable armchair by the fire.

The fact is, that any sort of external control, such as the group imposes, is theoretically abhorrent to the English philosopher's mind. Of the group will as superior in authority to the individual will, he will have nothing. The child must be for the teacher an end in himself. The teacher is to be the intellectual valet; he may pack his master's bag, but not inquire the destination. Mr. Russell has a mortal antipathy to any end beyond this mere grooming of the individual character. The pupils must be to the teacher, "ends in themselves."

Yet the inconsistency of severe and forcible disciplining against fear is apparent, in any such theory. The training, for instance, not to jump from high places involves fear of consequence, and it is idle to distinguish between rational and irrational fears. The teacher will inevitably choose just which things to avoid, which not. The timid, hesitant teacher will advise against a trip to the Rockies; the adventure-loving teacher will approve it. Inevitably some standards of experience and authority, even of tradition, will be set up. And to discard the whole race experience in behalf of each new pupil is too expensive a method even for the modern school. The fallacy of the pupil as end in himself, if advocated as the basis of all teaching, is apparent. There must be reference and comparison in past, present, and future with ends external to the individual. There is scholarship, and scientific method. Nationalism, too, may be an ignoble and unworthy aim, but at least it has given an opportunity to reverence the efforts of men in coöperation to get as far as they have along the way, and opens paths for the future, of greater promise in wider coöperation. Even with our philosophers, children are the means toward a better world.

Mr. Russell reserves for the American public school an unsparing criticism for its use of falsehood and hypocrisy. His observations in this matter are interesting—showing how impossible it is for even the most intelligent of persons to understand the people of another nation, no matter how close they may be in blood, or how well supported by reading and study the observations are.

The American school, we learn, successfully transforms a heterogeneous selection of mankind into a homogeneous nation. We are surprised, but pleased. We had been "told different." But we then learn that the attitude of the unschooled parent immigrant toward America is attributable only to the general merits of the country, to its democracy and its advanced industrial technique; while the attitude of the child comes from the false theory taught at school. The exact opposite, of course, is true. The child learns the technique of democracy, and of industrial organization, in school practise and in school life; it then returns to the immigrant family, living in the European manner still, on European food and ways, and instructs the parents. The invariable rule in American social work has been to reach the parent through school and child.

Again, Mr. Russell says that children of immigrants lose all loyalty to the land of their extraction, while parents remain passionately partisans of their homeland. This is only a half truth. Hundreds of Poles in Haller's army were children of American birth. Thousands of other nationals wish never to hear again of the land of their birth. Circumstances determine everything. It would be truer to say that with each generation the interest in the land of origin becomes more generalized. The Quebec French were not much concerned about France of late, we recall, but they are not the less French for that.

But when Mr. Russell charges the American public school with deliberately teaching untruths as to the superiorities in art of Eastern Europe and the superiorities in intelligence of western Europe, he is committing the very offense he censures. Two instances in recent years—the visits of the singing chorus of children from Prague and the Cizek art school from Vienna, may be cited in refutation. American public schools spent large sums of money to obtain thus the opportunity to pay their homage to the art of Eastern Europe. From one end of the land to the other, there was not one word of claim that our schools did better work in these creative forms. On the contrary there was a universal