

in a new town; the story which the man with the tattooed breast and blue flannel shirt tells of murdering a comrade for pity; the dialogue of the history of the last day of the circus—in all this the talk has an impressive tang and bite. It is not a book for people with squeamish tastes, but those who value a courageous picture of life in the raw will wish that it were twice as long.

A Fighting Optimist

MEANWHILE. By H. G. WELLS. New York: George H. Doran Co. 1927.

Reviewed by LEE WILSON DODD

IT is difficult to review the thoroughly mature work of an established author of high gifts if not of genius. The major difficulty lies in bringing to any new example of his craftsmanship a mind not closed to the possibilities of a fresh and sharp impression. I should like to have been able to read this new novel by Wells as if it were by an unknown hand; and so far as that sort of critical make-believe will carry, I have attempted to do so.

I have discovered, then, in the author of "Meanwhile," a writer whose mind is a congeries rather than a compound of extraordinarily diverse elements; yet surely the first thing to be said of him is that he is wholly and dynamically *alive*. His sentences vibrate with an unrelenting vitality. They communicate their tension, their excitement, with the swift directness of electricity. A paragraph or two is enough to establish the fact that who touches this book touches a *man*.

But what kind of man? Is he an artist, a philosophic artist, or is he merely a social propagandist, using the novel as a pulpit from which to proclaim his particular brand of radical reform? Questions not easily answered. It will be safer perhaps to admit that he is not exclusively one kind of man, that he manages somehow, without much seeming difficulty, to be several kinds at once.

An artist, assuredly, he is. Mr. Wells not only cares for beauty, he creates it. Formally speaking, "Meanwhile" is a balanced, thoughtfully proportioned whole. It has little incident, but the incident is tactfully selected and has a progressive rhythm of its own. The novel, purely as a novel, is well planned. The writing, moreover, purely as writing, has its special cadence and distinction. For a sensitive ear this will at once be established by almost any passage taken at random; a passage of commonplace will serve:

It was hopeless even to try to make Philip understand what she was laughing at. So she just laughed and laughed, and then Philip lifted her up in his arms and kissed her and soothed her, and she cried a tear or so for no particular reason, Philip being such a dear, and then she was put into bed somehow and went to sleep.

That, certainly, is not an impressive fragment, but it is far from journalism; it is English prose.

Mr. Wells, too, has other gifts that go to the making of a major novelist. His characters—even his minor characters, even his fantastic characters with improbable names—come alive from the page. It is far from likely that even an expatriated American sybarite should be named Mr. Plantagenet-Buchan, yet Mr. Plantagenet-Buchan, though a slightly sketched caricature, undoubtedly exists. He is difficult to forget. As for Cynthia Rylands, the heroine and unifying consciousness of the present novel, she is completely and graciously herself from the first page to the last. The reader meets her as flesh and blood and learns to care for her as he cares for a valued friend. Insight, humor, a quick eye for those glinting, evanescent traits that make all the difference—all these things must be freely granted to the novelist (the poet, or maker) in H. G. Wells. His equipment for the fine art of prose fiction would seem to be undeniable and complete.

Yet it soon becomes evident, in the novel under consideration, that the artist in H. G. Wells, though authentic, is rigorously kept in a subordinate position. The veritable captain of his soul is another sort of being entirely, a militant, reforming spirit self-driven to change and benefit this stupid, intolerable world. In spite of its occasionally odd translations, the ruling passion of Mr. Wells is moral passion, an almost Hebraic concern for righteousness as the one possible source for our common well-being. Like Bernard Shaw in this, if not otherwise, he has prophetic fire in his belly, and it

gives him no earthly peace. There is in him a grave, persistent fanaticism. He is essentially religious, a *seer*—one who scouts forward and points out the steep and narrow path. And like all moralists and idealists, he is a radical critic, an unsparing satirist of his times.

True, it would seem from the present novel, he is in no sense an orthodox religionist. It would be hardly possible to fit him into any established evangelical sect. Rather, indeed, one would have to range him with the advanced mystical wing of modern science—the new science which is at once scrupulous in its pursuit of fact, yet enlightenedly aware that all facts are relative with respect to each other and with respect to human perception. It is "the total expression of human experience" upon which Mr. Wells asks us to ponder, so that we may in the light of that total, that evolutionary, expression "think things through." For dark as the existing social chaos is, he does not permit it to daunt him. He is at farthest remove from the fashionable nihilism of our day. He is a fighting optimist. And as I am myself in full sympathy with many (though as strongly opposed to some) of his leading ideas, I not unnaturally cry "God bless him!"

But I ought not, I am aware, as a cautiously esthetic reviewer, to do so. I ought, indeed, to regret bitterly that the prophet and propagandist in Mr. Wells is spoiling an artistic novelist. However, why may I not for once be inconsistent and—genuine? Why may I not admit that few recent novels have given me more stimulating pleasure than his last—? It is a dangerous game that Mr. Wells is playing; for it is unquestionably true that a heavily moralized art, propagandist-art, smells of mortality. But possibly Mr. Wells is convinced that he who loses his life, in this sense, too, shall find it. If so, it is a deliberate and gracious sacrifice, and there is little further to be said, *meanwhile* . . .

Out of Her Need

THE LOVE-CHILD. By EDITH OLIVIER. New York: The Viking Press. 1927.

Reviewed by AMY LOVEMAN

HERE is a book that many will like and more will not. But those who like it will be loud in its praise, will vaunt its limpid simplicity of style, its steady march of incidents each slight in itself, the delicate precision with which it holds its balance true, the restraint of its leashed emotion. A delicate, shimmering thing, it has the immateriality yet the radiance of a bubble, and like a bubble when it bursts all its elements are dissolved into air. Miss Olivier is a newcomer in the field of fiction, but she should go far. If she has passion as well as fancy, and a grip on realities as well as imagination, hers is a talent to watch.

Yet many will not like her book. For to like it one must be prepared to accept the impossible, to set reason aside for a time, and to live in a realm that may be either the unreal world of fantasy or the more terrible realm of the unbalanced mind. The "love-child" of Miss Olivier's tale is conceived of the starved emotions of a woman bereft of the only person who meant anything in her life and the revived memories of an imaginary playmate of her childhood whom the very passion of her craving for companionship brings to actual being. Agatha, deprived of human associates, recalls to her thought the "Clarissa" of her youth whom "when she was fourteen years old the caustic drops of Miss Marks's common sense" had "felled like a weed." With an adroitness that is true art Miss Olivier has woven the child at first into the dreams of the woman, then into her waking dreams, letting the obsession which she herself recognizes as madness grow until the real and the unreal are inextricably intertwined, and Clarissa usurps the story apparently a flesh and blood girl of ethereal charm. For nine-tenths of its length she is evolving into a creature of normal impulses and action, wrapt always however in a glamour that is of another world, and then at the touch of an earthly love she vanishes once more into the void from which she has sprung. "She had ceased upon the midnight."

Had Miss Olivier been content to end her book upon these words it would have had no roots in earth and would have been the fantasy tenuous and immaterial that conceivably it may still be regarded. But we suspect that Miss Olivier is realist as well as fantasist, and that her brief last chapter is a grim

obedience to truth. "When she looked at Agatha's mindless face, she saw that it was quite happy." Bright, pure Clarissa with her grace, and her light-someness, and her occasional wistfulness, was she nothing but the creation of a diseased mind, evolving out of its own frustration the image of a lost illusion? Fantasy or tragedy, this is a delicately wrought book, piercing in its sadness, arresting in its unsubstantiality.

Feminine Knights-Errant

UNKIND STAR. By NANCY HOYT. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GLADYS GRAHAM

LONDON, Paris, Brussels, Rome, Vienna, and London, resting-places for Cintra and Liliias on their passionate pilgrimage across this unkind star,—Liliias and Cintra, born one summer night when "the stars, too warm to shine, winked dreamily," into a strangely uncharted world where old guide-posts had been torn down and no new ones erected, not even temporary detour indications. In days of old when knights were bold, dragons had a pleasantly unambiguous way of belching forth fire and smoke as indications of their true low nature, and as a rule they domiciled themselves, year by year, in one and the same spot that they might the more easily be avoided. Furthermore, no well-dressed knight ever thought of faring abroad without a complete suit of practically impervious armor. The two knights errant, ladies all, of Miss Hoyt's novel, appareled gossamer-wise, skirt continents, leap seas in an itinerary which would have given pause to the most travelled of their jousting predecessors.

Cintra Amory is the forthright and straight-thinking heroine. "Nothing for granted" might be her motto. Born in 1900, she approaches maturity at a time when ready-made ideals are in the discard: she takes her education in living, straight. What has-been-done and what is-being-done are not good enough for her. With courage, with sympathy, and with wit she faces the adventure of life: and she needs all three. In the end she is left with a baby and a husband, but it has been a long way round.

If Cintra is the more credible of the two, Liliias is the more fascinating. One of those lovely ladies, frail and fair by profession, who have moved so exquisitely through history and art, usually excused as having loved not wisely but too well, Liliias, finding that loving well is a lonely task, breaks with tradition and thenceforth loves very wisely indeed. She ends without a husband and without a baby, and that has been a long way round, too.

Miss Hoyt has the gift of the swift, sure phrase: the picturing phrase that carries with it through connotation all the reader's experiences with the object described, and the picturesque phrase that will attach itself through its bizarre aptness to the reader's future experiences with the object. The style of "Unkind Star" is brilliant and flexible, like the bracelets unforgettably designated as "service stripes" in "Roundabout." It is surprising, when Miss Hoyt has words so completely at her command to find that much of the conversation is unconvincing, little wooden blocks of speeches tossed between the realities of her characters.

The backgrounds, highly plural, of "Unkind Star" are arresting. The technique varies with the scenes. For some, flashes shown momentarily, Miss Hoyt has adapted the pointillist method to words, mere spots of color and light that yet produce both scene and situation. For others, a few significant phrases are used to give a period and an atmosphere: "The four starched shirt-fronts in the English Club creaked uneasily round the card-table; four brutally high white collars wilted on weary necks. The artfully broad shoulders of 1900 weighed oppressively on their wearers." Locations that carry on over longer stretches are built up, bit by bit, of minutiae, down to the very name and make of powder spilled upon a dressing-table.

Miss Hoyt gives the impression of having almost too much material at her command. Her experience and imagination crowd events and people into her work that seem to be there rather because of their own individual interest than from any inner necessity of story. The worlds of "Roundabout" and "Unkind Star" are too full of a number of things to make any of them inevitable.

The Life of an Idealist

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF KINGSLEY FAIRBRIDGE. New York: Oxford University Press. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by FRANK PARKER DAY

NOTHING is more inspiring than the autobiography of an idealist, who, undeterred by the dull resistance of nature, and the hampering impediments of actuality, presses on and follows his star to the end. The Autobiography of Kingsley Fairbridge makes the reader feel like gathering together the broken fragments of his own life, and again striving for what he dreamed of at twenty.

Kingsley Fairbridge's father, who was a surveyor for the Cape Government, took his family, when Kingsley was a little boy, to live in the rough village of Southern Rhodesia. He had no fear of living, nor did he deny to his son the right to live. Kingsley as a boy of twelve was sent on long journeys through the bush with a couple of native boys, to build huts on his father's claims, to explore the Zambesi, and to erect survey beacons on nameless kopjes. At this early age, he learned to command natives, to endure thirst, hunger, and the weariness of long treks in the blazing African sun, to sleep in the brown grass of the high veld, and stare up at the stars. His episodes of the relief of James Morrell's party, his exploration of the upper Zambesi, the stories of trapping Ingwi the leopard, and the death of the sable bull on the Sabi, will delight any boy who loves real adventure, and is jaded with the cardboard heroics of the wild west.

As Fairbridge wandered over the vast expanse of high veld, the seed of his great idea was sown in his mind. "Why are there no immigrants here?" I thought. I found myself picking out little plateaux on the grassy slopes . . . here was a home for white men—wood and grass and plough land."

When he visited England the fulness of his vision burst upon him.

That day I saw a street in the east end of London. It was a street crowded with children—dirty children, yet lovable, exhausted with the heat. No decent air, not enough food. The waste of it all! Children's lives wasting while the Empire cried aloud for men. There were workhouses full, orphanages full—and no farmers. . . . And then I saw it quite clearly. *Train the children to be farmers!* Not in England. Teach them farming in the land where they will farm. Give them gentle men and women for their mentors and guides, and give them farms of their own, where they may grow up among the gentle farm animals, proud of the former, understanding the latter. Shift the orphanages of Britain north, south, east, and west to the shores of greater Britain.

To this great idea he dedicated his life.

He got to Oxford by means of a Rhodes Scholarship, passed the entrance examinations with great labor, for he had had no schooling since he was ten, and in Oxford founded the Child Emigration Society with fifty Colonial Rhodes men, who on the first night of meeting contributed five shillings each as the initial endowment of the Society. Fairbridge never faltered; he procured land from the Australian government since none in Rhodesia was available, and despite ignorance, inertia, lack of funds, war, and malaria that wracked him, he carried out his work with the help of a wife who loved him and believed in him. For the hundreds of children he took overseas to new lands, he became, as necessity demanded, a blacksmith, a carpenter, a farmer, a teacher, a father. His life was nobly planned and nobly lived.

His prose halts in places, as if he had written when tired, but for the most part flows on with the splendid rhythm of his poems. Like poets before him he feels the magic of strange names; the music of Umbali, Umbassa, the Sabi, the Zambesi are sweet to his ear. The description of parting with his father is like the biblical narrative in its simplicity.

The next day I set out in the direction of Old Umtali to find my father and bid him good-bye. I found him on the road beyond Christmas Pass. I said, "Good-bye, Dad, I am going to England" . . . We did not say much more, but my father told me again to come back soon. We looked at each other for a little while; and then my father took my hand and kissed me, and turned away.

When I had gone some distance I stopped, and looked back. It was blazing hot, the dry road quivered under the sun, and the dry red dust lay deep. My father was standing in the middle of the road, looking after me. His grey flannel trousers to the knee were red with dust, for he had come some miles to meet me. . . . We waved our hands, and I went on; and that was the last time I saw him.

The BOWLING GREEN

Travail Forcé

OF course when I spoke of William Blake as of "our race" I meant, in a loose general way, the family of English-speakers. Such terms as Nordic, Anglo-Saxon, Aryan, etc., mean, I fear, little enough to me. But my friend Shaemas O'Sheel makes an interesting comment:

Your words evoke, for anyone who has ever looked upon his picture, that "brow and arch of pate." And surely it is pleasant to think that he was of "our race." He was of our human race, and of our white race; and every man can follow his choice among the ethnological schools and say that Blake was of whatever race, Aryan or Nordic (though Heaven forbid!), or whatever classification will take in Teuton and Celt, Briton and Gael. But when you couple him with Shakespeare there is danger that the reader unacquainted with the facts will suppose you mean to place William Blake in the English race, or the British race. Won't you point out that, wholly and nobly as Blake identified himself with Britain, he was by *race*—by blood—something more Irish than Dublin or Killarney or Mary McCann's donkey? His paternal grandfather was one John O'Neill, Irish-born and bred, who took the name Blake when he married one Ellen Blake, Irish-born and bred. William Blake's father was the son of John O'Neill but not of Ellen Blake; his mother seems unidentified, but, ninety-nine chances out of one hundred, was Irish, since he (Blake's father) was conceived and born in Ireland. In short, his blood was of the Irish O'Neills and his name was of the Irish Blakes. No Irishman, I am sure, would object to sharing his genius with England; but surely the Irish should object to quite relinquishing him.

Fred Melcher, the highly esteemed editor of the *Publishers' Weekly*, has an excellent idea that he propounds from time to time, and it is greatly to our taste. He writes:

By the way, did you ever note my editorial on establishing bookstalls in New York? There is one perfect place for them, and that is along the iron fence on Fortieth Street next to Bryant Park. That sidewalk isn't crowded, the stalls could be hung on the iron fence, and what a wonderful place it would be to walk to at noon time. The city could rent them out at so much per ten foot. Can't you imagine how popular the post-cards would be showing the bookstalls and the library in the background? I've never yet had a friend go to Paris who didn't pick out the bookstalls and Notre Dame post-card to send back to me. If you could only put the benefit of your blessing on such a project, I am sure it would go through.

Alas, the Bowling Green's blessing is not necessarily advantageous to any project. In the wicked old down-town days every restaurant or doughnut-foundry we praised was sure to go bust. But the idea of bouquinistes on Fortieth Street is too good to lose: I immediately appoint Mr. James F. Drake, whose sanctum of rare editions overlooks those same railings, as unselfish chairman of a committee. How much money we could save by browsing in the boxes instead of going upstairs to Mr. Drake!

Once again, it strikes me this evening, Olivier-Merson becomes my favorite artist. He is the one who did the drawing that is reproduced on the hundred-franc notes. I wish I could print a picture of it here, but the warning is explicit. "Le contre-facteur sera puni des travaux forcés à perpétuité." But if you have ever turned over a little bundle of those pretty blue-and-yellow flimsies (pinned together in tens, as they always fix them in the French banks) and thought of all the possibilities they suggest, then you will not have forgotten M. Olivier-Merson's picture of the two deep-bosomed ladies.

They stand under two trees, one under apple boughs (symbolic of Normandy, I suppose) and the other beneath the tassels of a pine (the Midi?). And as you consider the pale familiar tints, and cast your mind forward to the blue crockery of the Wagon-Lits and the green hedgerows of the Etablissements Duval and the tartines beurrées of the Café-Bar de la Sorbonne, you begin to wonder whether it might not almost be worth while reprinting M. Olivier-Merson for the benefit of subscribers. After all, what travail could be more forced than sitting down, the last night before a sudden vacation, to extenuate one's thoughts?

For the true thoughts of one about to vacate, like any other true thought, are perilous to publish. Surely none but a very Lunatic at Large anticipates sea voyage just as merriment. To be swung so irretrievably between blue and blue; to be actually aware that one lives on the asymptote of a curve

(truth mercifully disguised on land); to face the meaningless unanswerable sea; to hear, damnably insisting, the dull clamor of crank and blade that churn you further and further from what you love and understand—aye, he is burnished in the treble bronze who esteems all that mere sport. To pass down the North River at a full-moon midnight, fugitive from such small sleepers, is something more than a joke. It is to live in the last line of a sonnet. Then you are something more than an essayist, emetic epithet.

These things, like most that are more than a joke, you keep to yourself.

Besides, there's a kind of indelicacy in mentioning Vacation in the presence of Subscribers. Subscribers should not be allowed to be aware that there are such phenomena. Suppose Subscribers should decide to take a vacation from subscribing?

Hastily I avert from such topic. Now is my chance to make real attack upon my long-postponed *Apprenons la Grammaire! Seul et Sans Peine* (Paris: Librairie Delagrave).—It belongs to a series called Bibliothèque des Chercheurs et des Curieux. Well, that's me. And with what jocund humor it begins by discussing Interjections:

D'entre les mots qui ne changent pas, débarrassons-nous d'abord des interjections. Lorsque, enfonçant à coups de marteau un clou dans le mur, nous nous écrasons par mégarde un doigt, la douleur nous fait pousser un cri: *Aïe!* Ce cri, cette exclamation est, grammaticalement, une *interjection*. C'est moins qu'un mot, puisque c'est le cri d'un petit enfant qui ne sait pas encore parler, le cri par lequel l'homme primitif exprimait sa douleur, le cri que pousserait dans la même circonstance un Allemand, un Chinois, un Papou. C'est ce qui donne tant de sel à cette phrase, écrite fort sérieusement par le trop fécond romancier, Alexandre Dumas: "Ah! s'écria-t-il en portugais. . . ."

One other thing is on my mind. I promised to write a note about William Gillette's "The Astounding Crime on Torrington Road," and I haven't done so. I said I would do it aboard *Caronia*, but I know I shan't. So let me say here, with affectionate respect, that Mr. Gillette has been worthy of his high detecting associations. It is a notably ingenious tale, the best possible anodyne.

And now you see me, clean and shriven for the moment. Free, for a few days anyhow, to live merely in the heavenly rhetoric of the eye and no responsibilities toward paper. As innocent, in my secret valves, as those two little boys I saw from the train as they were bathing alone on the wide shore of Perth Amboy one hot afternoon. Arcades Amboy, I said to myself.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

"That clever people, and especially clever people who are much given to the pen, do as a rule write a poor hand has often puzzled the curious-minded," says the *Manchester Guardian*, "and an American professor has just put forward the theory that this bad writing is due to the brain working much quicker than the muscles, which seems not unlikely. Yet some of our most prolific authors write not only a legible but quite a dainty hand—Arnold Bennett, for example, and, in a slightly less degree, Thomas Hardy, and even H. G. Wells. Oddly enough, those eminent lawyers, such as Lord Oxford and Lord Birkenhead, who have lately turned authors, nearly all write a hand that any child could read.

"Arnold Bennett was a solicitor, Thomas Hardy an architect, and H. G. Wells a draper, which explains much. On the other hand, the authors of whom this American professor was thinking were never much of anything in the business line except authors—President Roosevelt, for example, whose journalistic manuscripts never failed to produce a cold sweat on some poor sub-editor's brow, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, many of whose manuscripts remain unpublished because nobody can make head or tail of them. On this side of the Atlantic we have had many like them. Andrew Lang's hastily scribbled sheets for the leader column of the *Daily News* were dreaded almost as much as Roosevelt's political and tropical effusions. R. L. Stevenson had to write his stories laboriously from his original manuscript so that editors could read them. Thackeray, of course, made a specialty of clear handwriting, but it cost him a deal of effort. Carlyle's writing was described as 'awful,' and Sydney Smith had himself to admit that his handwriting looked for all the world as though a swarm of ants had escaped from an ink-well and crawled all over the paper. These men were bad writers simply because they cared not to be otherwise, and had never had any reason to care."