

## The Strength of the Weak

THE BELATED RECKONING. By PHILLIS BOTTOME. New York: George H. Doran. 1926. \$2.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

IT is the strength of the weak that supplies the motive force for the larger part of Miss Bottome's neatly done story. Do you remember Maude Adams in "What Every Woman Knows"? That dauntless frailty . . . ? How the house, in particular the matinée audiences, used to rise at the spectacle of a more or less downtrodden little woman's common sense, instinctive rightness, and unassuming courage, steering, and indeed saving, her blustering and blundering husband?

One is reminded of that. Ellen McDermott, the timorous English spinster about whom the story turns, had lived forty-two years—mostly at Bournemouth, with its clergymen and invalids—"without ever having tasted what the world was like." Just as the supports of even the drab existence to which she had become accustomed suddenly gave way, what does her brother, who had gone to America, made money, and married a strong-minded American woman, do, but invite her to go to Sicily with him and his wife!

In the hotel there was an American girl married to a brute of a Sicilian sculptor, and one day Miss McDermott heard her sobbing on the other side of the partition, "O Mother! Mother! Mother!" Miss McDermott had never heard that appeal made in just that way before. She sprang to her feet as if the cry had been for her. In a way it was for her, and all at once she became a mother, not merely of the unhappy little American in the next room, but of the latter's unborn child.

The drama that follows brings out not only the strength of the weak, but a special and characteristic English sort of strength—that trait according to which timidity of mind can be combined with great strength of character, and a rather drab, even dowdy, English spinster can be, fundamentally, such good sort," and so confidently looked to, in remote and outlandish crisis, to do the right

In celebrating this trait, Miss Bottome writes, undoubtedly, with a certain partisanship, both for her race and her sex. She is not merely setting down objective facts, she is proud and fond of her heroine. But she is also an artist, and the partisanship is implied rather than expressed.

The deftness, indeed, with which these two elements are sometimes combined, is both moving and charming. Charming for its own sake, technically, and stirring for what comes out of it. Take, for instance, the scene between her and the leader of the local Fascisti, to whom Miss McDermott and her brother finally appeal for help in rescuing the American girl from her blackguard husband. The gray-eyed young Fascist boss is made, for purposes of the story, a sort of mediæval knight, a steely incorruptible, who would cut a throat as lightly as he would crack an egg-shell, though all, of course, "for Italy and the right." His attitude toward women is very different from that of the Englishmen Miss McDermott has been used to—she feels it at once, though he says nothing and only looks, and she both vaguely fears and as vaguely likes it. Well, anyhow, here are two individuals, the hard-boiled Sicilian and the English spinster, as different as two people well could be, and yet he understands at once and respects her, his own chivalry "clicks" with that very different sort of chivalry hidden beneath the gray exterior of this middle-aged lady from Bournemouth, and she, incidentally, is exalted by the promptitude with which he becomes her perfect knight.

You will like the way in which, so to speak, drums roll and bugles call, every now and then, beneath the light and ladylike surfaces of the story. You will like the author's occasional dry smiles—as when, for instance, Miss McDermott's brother, Herbert, both of them a bit disturbed in the garden of their Italian hotel, "reads her nice, soothing things out of an English newspaper, about England going to the dogs, and all working men being Bolsheviks, and the awful troubles of millionaires owing to the super-tax." And you will doubtless be pleased that Miss McDermott's reckoning, though belated, came at last. A "little" story, perhaps, but "vurra, vurra" nice.

## The BOWLING GREEN

### A Casual Anthology

THAT is what is meant by publicity—a voice loud enough to drown any remarks made by the public. —G. K. Chesterton, *An Outline of Sanity*.

Your spending £1,000 in paying debts seems to me awful. I cannot understand such extravagance. Where will you end if you go on like this? Bankruptcy is always ahead for those who pay their debts.

—Oscar Wilde, letter to Leonard Smithers. (*American Art Association Catalogue*.)

The American book-buying public appears to be more easily led than ours, and to exercise less independent judgment. The herd instinct carries all before it, and books that run counter to that instinct stand a much poorer chance of being read in America than in Great Britain.

—Stanley Unwin, *The Truth About Publishing*.

It may be that in a world where gentlemen prefer blondes, neither blondes nor gentlemen will pause to listen to an age-old melody. And if there are any readers left who are neither blondes nor gentlemen, it may be they will shrink from the story of a love that was as utterly candid as it was utterly innocent.

I dare not believe it, simply because I dare not believe that there is no longer a place in the world for the candor and innocence of love that is true and loyal and passionate. Arden and Arcadia demand to exist, if not in the territories, in the souls of men. Here is a story of as it was, not of as it might have been. Those who have it in them to condemn the truth of truth's simplicity that they will find in it, should pause, lest, in condemning it, they are themselves condemned.

—Middleton Murry, preface to *As It Was*.

Ten years ago, as you will remember, I went about the country shouting to you and all my more tolerant friends that one James Branch Cabell was a man to mark well and admire. Since then I have been, for me, comparatively silent. But now I emerge. I ask that a tucket sound. I enter. I announce in all gravity that I have found a new novelist, to wit, Eleanor Carroll Chilton, whose novel, "Shadows Waiting," I send you separately. If you love me, begin it; I know that your continued attention will need no urging from me. And if you find it, as I do, a book animated by a sombre but irresistible loveliness, I pray you let me know.

—Guy Holt, in a letter to the Green.

Sitting one morning behind my counter of second-hand books I was buried deeply in one of Scott's romances. A gentleman brought me back to earth by inquiring what book it was which so engrossed me. With a boy's enthusiasm I exclaimed: "The greatest novelist that ever lived—Sir Walter Scott." The gentleman laughed. I had never seen him before—I have never seen him since. But his reply made an indelible impression upon me, gave me an incentive which was to impel me through the rest of my life. He said:

"Honoré de Balzac is the greatest novelist that ever lived. You are not qualified to judge until you have read his books. Then you will agree with me. But begin with 'Le Père Goriot.'"

—William H. Royce, in *Balzac, Immortal*. (privately printed)

Let us not mourn for George. He had a happy life and the end of it was a swift and happy death. He was almost ideally the free artist of Beethoven's famous saying. He practised an art that he loved; he lived out his days among pleasant friends; he was not harassed by sordid cares; he had enough of fame for any rational man. What endless joy he got out of his work! Every new poem was to him an exhilarating emotional experience. He was a sound workman and he knew it. What more could any man ask of the implacable fates?

Much that he wrote, I believe, will live. . . . He wrote, not to meet a passing fashion, but to measure up to an immemorial ideal. The winds of doctrine roared about him without shaking him. What was transiently cried up did not escape him: he was, in fact, intensely interested in everything new and strange. But his own course was along older paths, and he kept to it resolutely to the end.

It has been my destiny to know many artists, great and small. Of them all, George was easily the most charming. There was a divine rakishness about him that never staled. Dying at fifty-seven, he was still a boy.

—H. L. Mencken, tribute to George Sterling.

In another hour that dreary business "In speaking of the English humorous writers of the last, &c." will begin—and the wonder to me is that the speaker once in the desk gets interested in the work, makes the points, thrills with emotion and indignation at the right place, & has a little sensation whilst the work is going on—but I can't go on much longer—my conscience revolts at the quackery. . . . Now I have seen three great cities, Boston, New York, Philadelphia. They seem to me not so civilized as our London; but more so than Manchester or Liverpool.

—Thackeray, letter written just before lecturing in Baltimore, February, 1853. (*Anderson Gallery Catalogue*.)

A good indication of the changing values and emphasis in the vampire picture is brought home to us if we compare Miss Greta Garbo with the most famous screen vamp of yesteryear, Theda Bara. Miss Bara, with her robust voluptuousness, her relentless eyes and encircling arms, was the accepted prototype of the lady who has made men uneasy, from St. Anthony to Rudyard Kipling. Her appeal was nothing if not frank, and wise and sober men could be on their guard against her. Miss Garbo shows a frail physique and a fragile ethereal air. She is infinitely more civilized and all the more subtle.

—Alfred Kuttner, *National Board of Review Magazine*.

I wager that William Lyon Phelps (who is not a notable critic but who retains the secret of cheerfulness) sells more books annually than any two other critics now living in the United States.

—George N. Schuster, in *The Commonwealth*.

LOGRIS: You Americans are a strange people.  
HARDING: Yes? So I have read in the English reviews.  
LOGRIS: We get to thinking of you as altogether prosaic, commercial, hard-headed. And then suddenly you send us a hobo poet or a queer idealist. I shouldn't be surprised to see you go out there and try to walk on the water, just to prove that Americans are more spiritual than Europeans.

—Don Marquis, in his play *Out of the Sea*.

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A Personal Representative who does the things—

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  2. You haven't time to do
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I thought very pretty a notation I found in a list of Endowment Funds at Haverford College. In 1917 Charles S. Hinchman bequeathed \$10,000 in securities, the income from which was to be used "to increase the salary of the astronomical professorship so as to provide a suitable instructor in the ennobling study of the heavens."

Sometimes, securely immured in the fortress, I gaze with disbelieving amazement upon things I see in actual print. Apparently they are real, they have been intentionally set down in black ink; and yet a sense of sorcery almost persuades me to believe it is a hallucination.

For instance, my eye came by chance lately upon a narrow strip of print in the *New York Sun*. It was called *The Book Column* and it began:

A talk with almost any recent graduate of Oxford University will bring out the opinion that with one exception the dons were dubs.

The article went on to say that the one exception to this general dubbishness was Professor Sir Walter Raleigh. That gallant spirit would have been the first to reject an exception made by so obviously hasty a commentator.

But I wonder, still in amazement, what sort of "recent graduates" can the *Sun's* bookman have been talking to?

Master Walter Kingsley, legitimately incensed, calls upon us for apology. To wit:—

As public relations commissioner for Master Francis Beaumont I call upon you to credit my client and not Parson Herrick with the lines which you printed praising the Mermaid Tavern as the wittiest and most worth while night club for the Algonquinite intelligentsia of Elizabethan London. Herrick sends smiling regards from Dean Prior but Ben Jonson and Beaumont double dare you to come near them in Westminster Abbey. Hereafter you are Mr. Morley to them and not brave translunary Kit of Bowling Green whose sack goes on their score.

Hoping that this finds you with ample store of good sea-coal, cheese, pippins, prawns and ale a-plenty, I am your worshipful servant and thine own faithful reader.

We have also undergone merited reproach from C. O. S. for having allowed our Chinese Translator to misspell that douce Italian liqueur, *strega*. The way he spelled it, we gather, made it plural—*strege*. His only excuse is that the first time he met it, it was plural; he had two glasses.

Apologies now off the slate, we are permitted a word of gratulation. A client informs us that the poem about Mr. Toulemonde (last week) is the perfect sort of thing to be chanted in the bathtub. There is no higher praise. The Green plans to proceed with its old scheme of Soliloquies and Duets for a Hot Bath.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.



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# Books of Special Interest

## Europe Since 1815

EUROPE SINCE WATERLOO. By WILLIAM STEARNS DAVIS. New York: The Century Company. 1926. \$6.

Reviewed by WALTER S. HAYWARD  
Harvard University

WILLIAM STEARNS DAVIS is a professor of history in the University of Minnesota. He is also one of the few examples of men who combine successfully the writing of history and of fiction. His first novel, "A Friend of Caesar," was published in 1900, in which year occurred also his twenty-third birthday, and his graduation from Harvard University. Since that time he has published six other novels and in addition has produced a number of historical works of value ranging in subject matter from "The Influence of Wealth in Imperial Rome" to a "History of France" and a "Short History of the Near East."

His latest work, "Europe Since Waterloo," is in a way the culmination of previous work on the subject. This volume of 950 pages is roughly divided into three parts. The first covers the period of 1815 to 1870, which he calls the Triumph of Nationalism; the second deals with the Armed Peace which extended from 1871 to 1913, while the last part is entitled Armageddon.

The author has set about his task from three angles. In the first place, he believes in a just form of nationalism "and that a devoted loyalty to native land is entirely reconcilable with an ardent love for wide humanity." In the second place, he has what he describes as an intense belief in democracy, not to be confused with parliamentarism, and holds up the United States as an example of what a democracy without parliamentarism can accomplish. His final thesis is the spirit of Christianity working in the hearts of men.

"Europe Since Waterloo" is mainly a political history. It has to do with persons, rather than movements. It is synthetic rather than specialized; popular rather than academic. Professor Davis applies the same qualities of literary technique to historical writing that Sir Philip Gibbs did to his war correspondence. He visualizes, he dramatizes, he makes his characters move.

The author knows also the newspaper art of writing subcaptions which convey the gist of a page or two in a few words. "Blood and Iron Create Germany" is his method of heading the section on the founding of the German Empire. "The Sick Man of Europe and His Surgeons," "The Second Marne; the Sword of Foch and Pershing"—these titles are symptomatic of his treatment. He has the modern style of writing typified by a constant striving after effect, the use of the picturesque adjective, and the stressing of the high lights.

The best method of illustrating his style is to quote his description of that morning of November 11th, 1918, when the guns ceased firing.

Presently, against the skyline, lifting themselves above the trenches, first cautiously, then bolder, were seen figures,—staring, gesturing. They were Germans gazing curiously. Americans, Frenchmen, Britons, grew visible likewise. Machine gunners unbuckled their belts, gave stiff salutes towards the opposing barbed wire, and then walked deliberately toward the rear. And then a sound "like the noise of a light wind" could be heard, whether the troops stood at Verdun or in Belgium. Across four hundred miles, millions of men were cheering from the Vosges to the Sea.

The chief criticism of Mr. Davis is that he is too much of a democrat, not in the party sense, but in his evident belief that monarchy as a form of government is noxious. While writing mainly of kings and emperors and the pageantry of courts, the thought is never far distant from his mind that he, a commoner and citizen of the Great Democratic Republic, is the chronicler of the decline and fall of monarchy in Europe. There is a sense of finality in his method of treating crowned heads. As he himself expresses it, "the king-business in any autocratic form seemed eternally ended."

In late years determining the causes of the World War has become one of the favorite subjects of historical discussion. Professor Davis has wisely chosen the historical rather than the polemical method of expressing his conclusions. Although inclined at the outset of the War to favor a German victory (he was at the time in the Rhineland and received his first impressions of the conflict from German papers) a careful study of the available evidence convinced him that Germany provided "a very large, though not the only part" of the

enormous magazine of combustibles which represented Europe, and "into this vast inflammable mass" the ruler of Germany "insanely permitted Austria to drop a match." He points out graphically the slow psychological preparation of the German people for war; how Moltke believed war was necessary and inevitable; how the Emperor and all Germany became used to the idea of war and the justice of the German cause; and how when the final crisis came, the will to keep peace was not in the hearts of the German people.

The volume has footnotes, a bibliography, and an index. There is no reason why it should not serve as a text book as well as for the general reader. Some hypercritical individuals may object that this is a book by a novelist writing history, yet the public will read it and like it.

## Nations in Flux

THE CHANGING EAST. By J. A. SPENDER. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company. 1926. \$3.

Reviewed by HOWARD SWIGGETT

MR. SPENDER in this book goes to Turkey, Egypt, and India and publishes 252 pages on the issues of those unhappy countries in a judiciously balanced statement. From Kemal to Gandhi everyone is profoundly sincere. After all is it not unwise to leave the virile attitudes of prejudice, bigotry, and conviction to members of the government of this world? Must all educated men be fair and see all sides?

Intelligent Englishmen so generally recognize that the Hindu "has ideas about eternity and existence which make Western theology seem crude and fumbling," that India is "the centre of a subtle and original civilization which will be of value to the whole world,"—that the contradiction of Amritsar and English criticism of the Swarajists' everlasting nay is a special mystery. Men, like Mr. Spender, see this subtle civilization woven into eternity and existence, but government and industry, possibly even necessity, see it as something to be done away with "if we are to get anywhere."

However, this book is not all of India. There is a vivid paragraph about the Turk trek to Angora, if little sympathy with it, and the customary English wail about lack of sanitation, as though the sanitary arrangements of offices in the City of London were not usually an affront to decency.

Egypt's problems are somewhat curiously reviewed, with a plea to her to "make terms with facts," that is, with British control. She is roundly lectured about her duty to her antiquities, an issue which the author appears to feel quite as vital as the control of the Nile waters. This reviewer found it badly out of focus.

The Indian portion is better and if the author is still almost too judicious, he is profoundly engrossed in and sensitive to all the meaning of Indian life. There is the customary discussion of dyarchy, Swaraj, the "reserved questions," religion and agriculture, and the gentle but determined censure of India's lack of political sense. Surely political governments are not such things of beauty, even in England, that we can say that opposition to them in India is folly, if not criminal. The difficulties of ruling India are of course tremendous. India has, of course, received benefits from the Empire, peace over wide areas if nothing else, but the apparent belief of most British writers, of whom Mr. Spender is one, that if she will cooperate with the Raj, she can then go ahead to her destiny, oversimplifies the problem and accounts far too easily for her condition and her revolt.

The usual British tribute is paid to Gandhi, with whom the author's "fairness" made little headway. The most stimulating chapter is that telling of Tagore's beautiful school at Santiniketan, the Abode of Peace. There is nothing condescending, nothing "fair," nor judicious in the account. Apparently the author was himself thrilled by the sweetness and light of that great idea. It is very interesting to note that in India, as everywhere, the best ideas on education are at war with all that English public schools, and our own imitations of them, have stood for.

This is a clear and informative text book written by a distinguished member of a group usually at its best while being scrupulously fair to the lesser breeds.



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