

Foreign Literature

Werfel Among the Saints

PAULUS UNTER DEN JUDEN VON FRANZ WERFEL. Vienna: Paul Szolnay. 1926.

Reviewed by PIERRE LOVING

IF Bernard Shaw ever writes the legend of Jesus in dramatic form, as he is rumored to be doing at present, he will, one hazards, make it viable to his own public, a public that is at once sophisticated and simple, by a leaven of humor, wit, reason, and satire. He will intermix timeliness and abolish the strangeness which invariably accompanies distance by holding in solution as it were history itself. The solution may in the end be so powerful that as we have seen in a number of Shaw's plays, it will destroy the core of the legend, giving us back chiefly a certain unfading truth about ourselves.

Now Franz Werfel in writing "Paul Among the Jews" has severely avoided almost all of these elements and for a good reason. He wished, evidently, to produce a sort of cultural drama which, when read or played, would be as beautifully simple as an unwritten chapter out of the Acts. He sought, in addition, to portray through Saul of Tarsus, Gamaliel, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Chanan, the rebellious son of the High Priest, Marullus, the Procurator, Frisius, Simon Peter, James, the Sanhedrin—all historical characters—a crucial moment in the history of Judaism and so in the course of the world. His concern mainly was to create drama and he knew that drama lay in making these persons simple and human.

But the drama was in effect already created, prepared for his hand. He has neither arbitrarily juggled fact nor tortured or invented situations. Neither have spurious glamour and a false romantic appeal, which distance lends, been used by the dramatist, and if the people live it is because, despite the remoteness of the dramatic incident, the speech they employ, the sadness of a passing culture and religion, are brought poignantly close to us. It is no mean achievement, for one thing, to have used history as a tool and to have purposed that tool—shaped, warped, and refined in the first place by the historian's mind—for the destruction of its own edge, historical bias itself. Werfel is interested in men as men, whatever the web of circumstance in which they happen to be caught. Shaw in *Saint Joan* makes us sense and touch at every moment of the play, the historical process, the give-and-take of all sorts of interpretations that centre in Joan, so that in the consciousness of the audience it is always the various interpretations that are warring against each other, really precipitating the dramatic conflict. This is not Werfel's way.

As the author says in his after-word, the emergence of the religious hero is always enshrouded in deep myth. The myth will be indifferent to historical fact or will use it to its own ends, coloring it, transmuting it, especially endowing it with the quality of mystery and paradox. There are far more precise facts available about Pontius Pilate than about Jesus. In the minds of men, singularly in the minds of the early Christians, the sharply-outlined facts grew dimmer and dimmer and strangely ambiguous. Not only do the versions of the Apostles differ one from the other but St. Paul's view of the message of Jesus becomes finally no longer a cult of Judaism, as it was until then in the minds of Peter and James, but a new concept—Christianity.

In "Paulus Unter den Juden" Werfel isolates arrestingly that point in time—a turning-point in civilization—when St. Paul, sensing the narrowness, literalness, and inadequacy of the law, especially in the light of the appearance of Jesus, envisages the future, his own future, and the long destined procession of the message and significance of Jesus Christ. The author manages to relieve high drama because his aim was primarily to create character at war with itself, at war with the minor cults and schools and parties, with the Roman Empire overshadowing all. And yet it must have been the very form of the Roman Empire that infected Paul with the notion of subduing the cities and peoples of the earth with a spiritual idea.

In the Rabbi Gamaliel, Paul's master, Werfel has portrayed one of his finest figures. It is with him, his beloved master, that Paul wrestles in an alcove of the temple for the sake of Jesus of Nazareth. He almost convinces the noble Gamaliel, Patriarch of Jerusalem, for the brand of Judaism practised by this nephew of Hillel

—supposed to have been the teacher of Jesus—is close to later Christianity, tinged with Hellenism. The climactic scene takes place on the Day of Atonement. Marullus, the Procurator, having put down a Jewish insurrection, enters the temple. He reads a message from Caesar to the effect that the ensigns of the Roman Empire shall be hung in the temple and the bust of Caesar shall be placed near the altar, for Caligula is also a god. This portends the ruin of Israel. Paul, who is held for the exorcision of his devils, is set free and Rabbi Gamaliel, unable to bear the violation of the temple, kills himself, thus, ironically enough, desecrating the House of God which he tried to shield. Judaism is sick and the breath of decay is upon its limbs.

"Paulus Unter den Juden" is at bottom a play about Jews written by a Jew. Every aspect of Judaism, ancient and modern, is touched on in the course of the play, now in a neat epigram, now in a moving scene. Above all, the self-betrayal of Israel is painted, the hatred that reigns between Jew and Jew, the narrowness, the beauty, and grandeur of the stark, unbending reverence for the Mosaic Law. Marullus is endowed with an insight into the character of the Jews he has to deal with, that is both rare and unerring. He says in one place that if any one can destroy the temple and the Law, the Jews will vanish from the face of the earth. In another place he says: "How they hate us! And they hate each other just as much—and no Jew believes in another Jew." Now Marullus, being a politician who mixed with place-men rather than large forces, was incapable of seeing that any root emotion such as love or hate, if strong enough, can breed its own posterity. The temple has been razed and the Law is of small effect and yet the Jews survive. They are still "the people of the book." Marullus did not count, moreover, upon Paul. Paul, as much as any other single item in history, is responsible for that survival. "There is only one sect," Werfel makes Marullus say, "which believes in a crucified Jew. But because they believe in another Jew, they are Jews no longer and cast out."

The weakness of the play lies perhaps in its epigrams for such, conceived by a man living in 1926 and presumably spoken by a man in 40 A.D., are of the nature of easy devices, what the French call *raccourci*, and when they deal with prophecy rather lacking in imagination. But Werfel has lavished his richest gifts on the portrayal of character, even the least of them. We never challenge their reality, so charged are they with dimension, with a body of true responses and feeling. In the end, however, we come to realize that the dramatic incident is foreign to us, and its value chiefly historical.

Franz Werfel has recreated both the situation and the characters, and the characters alone remain alive and moving. Both elements are given about the same amount of emphasis. You might duplicate the leading characters in the Prague ghetto, say, but you could not duplicate the crucial situation. The drama of losing Judaism and triumphant Christianity, at the one instant in its career when it really triumphed, has lost a good deal of point for us because, rather trivially, we are debating Fundamentalism, Evolution, and Glands. We are not concerned with the birth of a great mystic hero.

The letters of Emperor Francis Joseph I, selected from the secret archives at Vienna and edited by Dr. Otto Ernst, are soon to be published in English translation. They illuminate the political activities of his reign as well as the personality of the ruler.

M. J. Kessel, whose last novel "L'Equipage," was a notable success, has published a new book, "Les Captifs" (Nouvelle Revue Française). The captives are the consumptive patients in a great international sanatorium in Switzerland, where all the unfortunate inmates are rich and mostly doomed. The hero is a Parisian man of affairs, of the type that frequents the "American Bars," and has an "amie." He spends his health recklessly and is suddenly informed by his doctor that he must go away for a cure, or perish. The tale deals with his intrigue with another patient, like himself not very ill, an attractive woman who succumbs to his attentions and tries suicide when he abandons her, and with his final devotion to a poor little girl patient who is nobody and comes from nowhere, but who exercises a spiritual influence upon him before she dies. Readable, sometimes touching, the book certainly is.

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The AMEN CORNER

PAMELA has gone in for Internationalism. Always a champion of neglected causes, she has cast her *cerise* *béret* into the ring, and her hundred and twelve pounds into the scales, for the brotherhood of nations. Forsaking last year's crusade against prudery in parents as a tourney grown too popular, she has turned with dangerously sparkling eyes and a resolutely dimpled chin to the study of world politics. Borah and Chamberlain beware!

Barren are the benches of the County Fair since Pamela has neglected them for the pages of *Foreign Affairs*. Silent are the midnight shadows of Minetta Lane since Pamela's rippling laugh has given way to silent evening devotions over the *Survey of International Affairs*.⁽¹⁾ Desolate wanders the Publisher's Young Man, whose studied cynical indifference betrays an incipient passion, now that Pamela confines her starry eyes to *The New Germany*.⁽²⁾ Only Young Harvard, who took politics under Haskins, is allowed to read to her from *The United States and France*.⁽³⁾ And even he, poor Abelard, finds all too soon that *International Sanctions*⁽⁴⁾ do not bring the special privileges for which he yearns!

But the Oxonian has scored heavily. The timely gift of *China and Her Political Entity*⁽⁵⁾ evoked from Pamela's studiously pale lips the first smile since A. E. Zimmern autographed her copy of *The Third British Empire*.⁽⁶⁾ And, if Pamela's political passion persists, the Oxonian will win more than a smile when *The Oxford History of the United States* appears next autumn. But before then come summer nights, and who knows but that Young Harvard, passing skillfully from international amity to a more personal plea, may secure the adoption of a Most Favored Nation Policy?

MEANWHILE, the Publisher's Young Man seeks consolation in literature. Attracted to mediaeval culture by the lively style and happy illustrations of *English Life in the Middle Ages*,⁽⁷⁾ he went deeper into *The Legacy of the Middle Ages*⁽⁸⁾ and *Life in Mediaeval France*.⁽⁹⁾ At this juncture the timely arrival at 35 West 32nd Street of *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*⁽¹⁰⁾ led him onward into the Renaissance, which he found to be more modern than Chicago or Sinclair Lewis. Cellini's memoirs, complete in the Roscoe translation in one readable volume of the World's Classics Series, have delighted the Publisher's Young Man, for they have nourished his fashionable cynicism, stirred his unfashionable imagination, and provided sprightly anecdotes with which to regale his admiring fellows over the noon-hour ravioli and Camembert of their 29th Street Cheshire Cheese. Cellini,—artist, courtier, and rascal extraordinary,—has made more endurable to the Publisher's Young Man the temporary indifference of the inconstant Pamela. To quote a *Medici* for her *Grotius*, a *Machiavelli* for her *Kant*, is the secret ambition of this flouted genius.

BUT the Publisher's Young Man has moments when he yearns for the time when he can indulge his love of Trollope. For Trollope is like the *Lacrimae Christi* of the slopes of Vesuvius; deliberation and a philosophic ease are essential to the full appreciation of the full-bodied richness of both. Both are delicacies for the man of cultivated palate, though full of nourishment for the less sophisticated sampler.

For nearly half a century a little group has cherished the Barchester novels and the Autobiography. Their devoted faith, their untiring praises, now win their own reward. New editions are appearing; first editions are being sought. Soon there will be biographical studies, and a bibliography of criticism for those who fear to walk alone. Then Trollope will take his place with Thackeray and Dickens, and the King of the Immortals will have had his laugh out!

The Oxford University Press, with commendable literary perception, long since foresaw and fostered this revival of Trollope. Eight Trollope novels and the Autobiography⁽¹¹⁾ (the latter one of the best-formed documents in our language) have long been available in the World's Classics. To these has just been added *Framley Parsonage*,⁽¹²⁾ an amiable narrative in which Trollope reverts to his old characters, Mrs. Proud and the Archdeacon. Here indeed is old England at its best and truest.

"We that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long."

—THE OXONIAN.

(1) Two vols.: 1920-1923, \$9.00; 1924, \$8.50.
(2) About \$2.00. (3) \$2.75. (4) 85c. (5) \$2.00.
(6) \$2.00. (7) \$3.50. (8) \$3.50. (9) \$5.25. (10) 80c. (11) and (12) World's Classics Series, each 80c.

A Letter from Boston

By DALE WARREN

WINTER still broods over Boston, yet there is no end of talk about "Spring books." Little, Brown, Small, Maynard, Houghton Mifflin, Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, Marshall Jones, and the other publishers are all working over their Spring lists, and the Old Corner Store, Lauriat, and DeWolfe & Fiske are already planning their window displays for April and May. Mr. Gregory of Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, publishers of children's books, and Charles E. Lauriat are recently back from Europe. Herbert F. Jenkins of Little, Brown is expected on Beacon Hill again late in February, with the latest news of Hutchinson, Jeffrey Farnol, and Sylvia Thompson. Ferris Greenslet of Houghton Mifflin, who has lately prepared an American edition of Stanley Unwin's "The Truth About Publishing," sails on February 25 and plans to visit Anne Douglas Sedgwick in her remodeled home in Oxfordshire after her return from the Riviera. Mr. Greenslet's advent in London is invariably noted by the *Fishing Gazette* before the literary journals are aware of his arrival. This year he will join John Drinkwater on a fishing trip and they plan to stay in Ireland until the last trout is lifted from the Blackwater, Blarney, and Ballyhooley Rivers.

Stewart Beach of *The Independent* told me in the fall to watch for a new magazine, *The Sportsman*, which would be issued from 10 Arlington Street after the first of the year. I did so, and the first number surpasses expectations. It is a journal dedicated to amateur sport and appears to be the only one which covers the entire field from the point of view of the gentleman sportsman. W. A. Diggins, who designed *The Saturday Review of Literature*, *Harper's Magazine*, and *The Independent*, is responsible for its typographical dress, and Guy Arnou, the French artist has contributed a striking color illustration for the cover of the January issue. Richard E. Danielson and Christian A. Herter, editors of *The Independent*, are president and vice-president of the Sportsman Publishing Company, and Frank A. Eaton, formerly picture editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*, is managing editor of the new publication. On its advisory board are such recognized sportsmen as Louis E. Stoddard, Bayard Warren, Commander R. E. Byrd and R. Norris Williams.

February 15 marks the close of the competition for novels announced by the Atlantic Monthly Company. The award to the winning novel will be ten thousand dollars for its serialization in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and in addition, the author will receive the royalties of book publication when the novel is published by Little, Brown & Company. The *Atlantic* competition is the first of the many 1927 prize competitions to reach its goal and the editors anticipate a fight to the finish among the contenders. The canon for judging the merits of the manuscripts is to be solely that of inherent interest, combined with excellence of treatment. I am told by Edward A. Weeks of the *Atlantic* staff that about five hundred manuscripts have so far been received, and that all quarters of the globe, from South Africa to China and Australia, have put their money on favorite sons.

Those who have followed the growth and development of the *House Beautiful* since its editorship was assumed by Ethel Power will be glad to know that her volume "The Smaller American House" will be published by Little, Brown on March 15, as an Atlantic Monthly Press publication. To this work, as to her editorial duties, Miss Power brings the technical knowledge of an architect as well as the discriminating taste which yearly attracts new readers to the magazine. To William D. Kennedy, editor of *The Writer*, is due great credit for assembling the material so admirably arranged in "The Freelance Writers' Handbook." Harford Powel of the *Youth's Companion* has recently written a life of Walter Camp.

Another Boston editor who is to have a book out in the spring is Charles R. Walker. "Bread and Fire" is described as a novel of industry, yet it is not by reason of its subject matter alone that it is worthy of serious consideration. The book has no sermon to preach, and no point to gain. It is a stirring adventure in reality, a romance of the machine and machine-made society. The narrative possesses vividness and strength, and the book reveals a rare degree of intellectual honesty. Mr. Walker was for two years on the editorial staff of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and is now literary editor

of *The Independent*. "Bread and Fire" is autobiographical to the extent that Mr. Walker has drawn richly upon his experiences as a worker in brass and steel mills during the interval between his graduation from Yale and his assumption of editorial work. His first book, "Steel: The Diary of a Furnace Worker," appeared in 1922.

Professor Bliss Perry of Harvard is being congratulated on the choice by the Book-of-the-Month Club of his "Heart of Emerson's Journals" as the book for January reading. This, as far as I know, is the second time the Selection Committee has chosen a work of non-fiction, and also the second time that their choice has rested upon a Boston author. Walter Noble Burns's "Saga of Billy the Kid" was the first non-fiction choice, and Esther Forbes first brought the award to Boston in June with that piquant novel of hers, "O Gentle Lady!" Two new books by Professor Perry will appear this spring. Little, Brown & Company announce his "Pools and Ripples," a group of essays for the angler, for April publication, and Small, Maynard will bring out "Eight Harvard Poets," a book of undergraduate verse, edited and selected by Professor Perry.

What are other New England authors doing, you ask? Their activities are so numerous and their comings and goings so rapid that I answer with a certain hesitancy. I saw Dorothy Speare a few months ago when she was at her home in Newton Centre recuperating from a tonsil operation. Her recovery was evidently complete as she hastened back to Italy, and cable dispatches reported an ovation after her operatic debut in the title rôle of "Lucia di Lammermoor" at Asti. Miss Speare is an alumna of Smith College, the wife of Franklin B. Christmas, a Princeton graduate, and the author of three successful novels of the so-called younger generation. Doran will publish her fourth book this month, "A Virgin of Yesterday," which was written while she temporarily forgot the ill-fated heroines of Verdi and Donizetti. John Erskine is not the only author who combines music with best-selling fiction!

Lilian Whiting has also returned to Italy, and Caresse Crosby, the author of "Graven Images," to Paris. I received just the other day a book of "Sonnets" from her Boston husband, Harry Crosby, issued in an attractive edition by the French publisher, Albert Messein. Ann Hamilton, another Boston poet, has left for a winter in Havana with a stout volume of William Blake under her arm. Florence Ayscough has taken her Chinese dog by the leash and set sail for Shanghai. Isabel Anderson, whose new book "From Corsair to Riffian" comes out next month, has gone to South America with her husband, Larz Anderson. Jeannette Phillips Gibbs and A. Hamilton Gibbs were, when last heard from, enjoying life and leisure at Nice.

From R. N. Linscott there comes news of an encouraging sort from Archibald MacLeish, Conrad Aiken, Elliot Paul and other erstwhile Bostonians whom he saw on a recent trip to London and Paris. Samuel Merwin, when not in Concord, is a familiar figure at the St. Botolph Club. His latest book is "The Entertaining Angel," illustrated with drawings by Lansing C. Holden. Henry Beston wanders in and out of Boston like one of his own "gallant vagabonds" and William Whitman, author of "Navaho Tales," is writing a new book for children on his farm in Needham. David McCord, in the midst of varied duties, has found time to bring a number of his sketches and essays together in a book, "Oddly Enough." Henry Chapin is back in America, living in Washington, Connecticut, and Odell Shepard, of Trinity College, hopes to see his "Harvest of a Quiet Eye" in book form before many weeks.

H. R. Burgess and Marjorie Knapp moved their bookshops to Rye and Swampscott for the summer season, but the sea change does not seem to have injured their winter trade. Norman Alexander Hall has opened a new bookstore at Newton Centre, and Mr. Andrew McCance, the genial Scot of Ashburton Place, has just celebrated another birthday. Business is humming at the Old Corner Bookstore; it may be because Richard Fuller has secured the services of Dorothea Lawrence Mann as editor of "The Old Corner Book News." Boston literary news is more widely disseminated than ever now that the *Post* has inaugurated a Sunday book review page under the editorship of Charles Wingate.

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