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GOOD
BOOKS

Points of View

Romanticism

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

In his front-page article, "Perennial Romanticism," under date of June 25th, Mr. Ernest Sutherland Bates writes all around the idea of romanticism in literature without giving his readers—or at any rate, this reader—any clear-cut definition of the word "romanticism," or of its cognate, "romance." I hope it is not presumptuous to suggest that romance and realism are not conditioned upon verisimilitude of presentation: indeed, it seems to me obvious that they are not, and that the romanticists Hugo and Dickens—to go back to writers of large output—were as factual and detailed as the realist Zola.

The real difference, I think, is not one of method but of feeling. The romanticist sees and delineates pretty much the same things which the realist does, with this difference, that the romanticist has and expresses an emotion in relation to his subject: he kneads his own personal reactions into his work, so that it is never purely objective, as the realist's is. It is unfair to the romanticist to say that he merely prettifies, or dreams, or ignores the disagreeable. He may do so, of course, just as certain degraded realists find no material suitable for presentation except that which is malodorous and diseased. These are the extremists: in between are the careful artists of both schools—the romanticists whose work is colored by personality, and the realists who refuse to admit personal bias or emotion into what they intend to be pure objective portrayal. The difference in effect is that which we find between painting and monochrome drawing: one is warm and the other cold, but both may be correct representations within the limits of the medium chosen.

If this be true, then Mr. Sinclair Lewis is no novelist, but a man who paints in the vivid colors of his own convictions. Neither are the majority of our modern writers realists, for that matter. Mrs. Winslow—one of whose books is ably analyzed in the same number of the Review—is a realist, and the critic holds it as a fault that she has no inner vision of what the characters should be. But it is just that absence of the optative which makes a realist, and its presence the romanticist. I wonder if Mr. Bates would concede this. Brooklyn. J. M. HAMILTON.

The Class-War

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

Is it permissible that an author, returning home on a train, should indite a somewhat illegible letter in protest against a somewhat unsatisfactory review of his book?

That Professor R. G. Tugwell should consider my novel, "Oil!" very bad and its characters "automatic," is his right, and my hard luck; but that he should miss my motives and plainly stated point of view seems to me a matter for correction. The Professor says: "The feeling of a race winning its standards by sweat and in the dire dilemmas of thought is no part of Mr. Sinclair's Utopian conception." Well, it seems to Mr. Sinclair that he has no conception but this, and that it is so stated on every page of his novel.

There are two "heroes," as they are called, in "Oil!" One of them is a working-class boy who sets out to train himself as a scientist, and then, discovering the class-struggle, turns that same scientific sternness to the bigger task of discovering a method of working-class emancipation. That Professor Tugwell calls it "operating on the principle of soap-box oratory" is simply his own ignorance of the class-struggle, and his inability to understand the most exact and detailed picture of its realities ever given in American fiction.

The other "hero" is a rich man's son who devotes his spare time in college to trying to understand these same realities, which his subsidized instructors are trying to keep hidden from him—as they generally do in American colleges, and evidently did in the case of Professor Tugwell. This boy endows and helps to edit a little weekly paper—and what does Professor Tugwell think of the contents of that paper? Not very much, evidently; but to me, and my hero, and his working-class comrade and wife-to-be, the contents of that paper are exactly described by Professor Tugwell's phrases, "the feeling of a race winning its standards by sweat and in the dire dilemmas of

thought." Only one word would have to be changed in the above; "race" would have to be "class"—and there again we have the measure of your reviewer's mind. He is one of those who deny that there are any "classes" in America, and when you point out plain economic facts, he calls it "disturbing the roots of hate"! Let the roots alone, says the professor—so that they may produce a new crop of hate every season!

At the end of the story my hero, "Bunny," and his comrade, "Rachel," are founding a labor college, where the students are to work half-time with their hands, and produce what they consume. Does Professor Tugwell imagine that they will not "sweat" at this life? And does he think they will not face "the dire dilemmas of thought"? This fictional college is modeled upon a real one, Commonwealth, at Mena, Arkansas. Has the professor ever heard of it? Has he ever investigated its standards, to learn what discipline it is giving to its working class boys and girls? No, it wouldn't do any good, because to the professor it would all be "operating on the principle of soap-box oratory," and "disturbing the roots of hate."

It seems to me that the revolutionary thesis of my novel has roused in your reviewer such bitter prejudice that he has been incapable of understanding my plainest words; and in so behaving, he has proved my class-war thesis one more time.

UPTON SINCLAIR.

Gissing Again

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

How Mr. Morley warmed my heart by his "Notes on George Gissing," in a recent *Saturday Review of Literature*! No, I never knew Gissing in the flesh, but I know him in the shadowy realm of thought.

"The Odd Women" is a favorite volume, I happened to find it in the cheap Nelson Edition when abroad in 1912. If I admit the absurdity of the first thirty pages, will Mr. Morley admit their truth? Even now men neglect to insure their lives until it is too late. Even in the present day a happy group may gather about the light to hear a poem read aloud, and one of them go out and never return alive. If you have ever observed large families you must notice that the survival of the fittest is very keen. Still I do think Isabel might have been allowed to drag out her existence in the Board Schools a little longer. There are certain ones, however, in any large family who are foredoomed.

But after the setting is given nothing could be finer than the clear, merciless description of the efforts of the three remaining sisters—the world is full of such figures. I seldom ride on a street car without seeing an Alice out to do the family marketing or shopping—Virginia was ambitious—she had a scholarly turn of mind. We can see her toiling over the ecclesiastical histories when she should have been sleeping. Perhaps she hoped to write a short and comprehensive history of the use of women teachers of Church history. Her descent from the narrow way is drawn in a masterly manner. To me her sweet and refined nature shows in spite of everything. What is more pathetic and amusing than the reasons they give for dining off rice or potatoes? No wonder Virginia craved a little brandy—you noticed that the slice of beef at Rhoda's had much the same effect? For my part I believe Virginia was ultimately cured and joined Rhoda and Mary, with happy visits to see little Monica and her dear Clevedon!

Monica's fate is severe indeed, and the master has drawn the heart and conduct of a philandering lover with more truth and exactness than a hundred French novels. I do not believe Alice was spared only to look after the baby. Little Monica might have been sent to an institution or handed over to Mrs. Luke—No, the kindness in Gissing's heart realized a clearer truth, that sometimes the awkward, overworked, forlorn female does slip into a place of responsibility and trust, and the end of her days better deserve the name of "living." With all Mr. Morley's praise of Rhoda I agree. The whole book is a world of women, of the sort one sees in reality and seldom in fiction. Monica lives and has a being. Even less than the others such as Winifred and her aunt, the mother of the lovesick wine merchant.

I am glad that Mary and Rhoda

devote themselves to the misfortunes of gentlefolks—there are few indeed who do that. When I go into an office hoping to meet the unpersonal, stolid gaze of a man, and instead find a nervous (or bold) silly, uneducated girl, I am annoyed—girls are unsuitable in most offices. But going home I read a few chapters of "The Odd Women" and resign myself to what is only an annoying phase of a general advance. I thank you for the pleasure Mr. Morley's paper has given me, it was like a talk with a friend.

E. A.

Philadelphia, Pa.

Exception Taken

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

Permit me to take exception to certain statements in an otherwise admirable review of my work written by Mr. Herbert S. Gorman and printed in your issue of June eighteenth.

Mr. Gorman speaks of my "brightly malicious" nature and my "emphatic disgust for the commonplaces and courtesies of polite living." I would be the last to claim an attitude of angelic composure, but during the ten years in which I have peered at the American literary scene, with all of its politics, open grudges, clique-warfare, and confoundings of personal reaction with impersonal judgment, I have come to the quaint opinion that whatever malice I may possess is, if anything, considerably less than that which I have observed around me. Also, Mr. Gorman is in error regarding the disgust which he singles out. It is directed against the hypocrisies and boredom often prevailing in existences whose politeness may not be as consistent as Mr. Gorman imagines. Again, concerning the foot-note to which Mr. Gorman objects, if any writer considers it an honor to be rejected by a particular magazine, I cannot see why he lacks the right to make public his opinion. If this opinion occurs outside of an essay, or critique, he may be violating the somewhat stodgy image of seriousness held by many people because he does not believe that every separate matter needs to be one-colored within itself.

*O spurn the shout for consistency
Floating from every concealed
Dungeon known to men. . .*

A very occasional prank in the midst of seriousness may be cinnamon in the bowl.

I have no quarrel with Mr. Gorman's assertion that my last two novels exhibit a half-reluctant desire to meet the popular impulse around me. They are much more simply written than my verse because they hold a broader and less ironical content-matter, but they were certainly not written with any conscious longing to compromise with surrounding tastes, though Mr. Gorman has a right to his contradictory opinion. The claim that I was not designed, by nature or my own inclinations, to be a popular writer, is a compliment to me, though it may exclude me from preference by Literary Guilds and Book-of-the-Month Clubs, membership in literary societies, and material comforts. Also, I did not claim that American critics have ever ignored my work. I have always had certain emphatic admirers among American critics, and even my critical enemies have never resorted to anything as crude and open as complete snubbing—their methods have been invective and distortion, or, in the case of weeklies and newspaper literary-pages, the practice of reviewing my books from nine months to one year after their publication. Everyone knows, of course, that a very belated review is of little service to a book, as far as the attraction of readers is concerned, and that materially successful books are always those promptly noticed and ballyhooed by sources with large circulations. In conclusion, I cannot understand why Mr. Gorman believes that I may have been pained to discover his fondness for my work, since I listed him, in the preface to "Returning to Emotion," as one of the critics who would recommend that volume of verse! Unlike many American critics, editors, and authors, I never confuse personal and impersonal reactions.

MAXWELL BODENHEIM.

Woodstock, N. Y.

Italy, like America, has its child prodigies, and strangely enough the most recent one in the literary world is an American by birth. Annemar Togett, which is a *nom-de-plume*, has published in her "I Misteri del Mondo Fatato" (Florence: Bemporad), a collection of original fairy tales which have the charm and the drollery that only a child's mind could convey. The stories are remarkably well written and well constructed.

The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received. Many of them will be reviewed later.

Belles Lettres

THE JEW IN DRAMA. By M. J. LANDA. Morrow. 1927. \$3.50.

Mr. M. J. Landa has accomplished his task gracefully. With a scholarly ease and penetrating erudition, freed of all provocative racial idiosyncrasies, he has sketched in detail the metamorphoses of the character of the Jew as he appeared from the age of the medieval morality and mystery plays until our own day of Maugham's "Lady Frederick," Arnold Bennett's "London Life," and "Potash and Perlmutter."

Especially interesting is Mr. Landa's treatment of Elizabethan drama. It is during this period that the character of the Jew was painted in blackest colors—inspired, no doubt, by the caricatures drawn by Gosson, Marlowe, and Shakespeare. And this period is discussed with such a scholarly diligence that in three terse chapters Mr. Landa has done greater justice to his material than did even Mr. Cardozo in a huger work, "The Jew in Elizabethan Drama." Mr. Landa was better equipped than Mr. Cardozo to discuss this era's treatment of the Jew. Versed, as Mr. Landa is, in Talmudic wisdom, Rabbinic law, and Hebrew statutes he has the power to prove with facility that the accusations heaped on the Jew by Marlowe and Shakespeare simply could not be true—since they were contradictory to Jewish laws.

Mr. Landa concludes this work optimistically. With a few scattered and insignificant exceptions, the Jew is no longer a target for venomous slander in our modern drama. The Marlowes and Shakespeares of our day—if there are any—would never stoop to such degrading calumny. The Jew, for the most part, has been made human, stripped of those barbaric mannerisms and despicable traits that have so caused mirth through the centuries. In drama, at least—if not in life—we have attained a much-coveted goal. Religion and its believers are treated with a human tolerance and broad-mindedness.

VASSAR JOURNAL OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES. Vol. 2, May, 1927. Poughkeepsie: Vassar College.

This seems to be a new idea, an undergraduate counterpart of the "Columbia Studies," or the "Johns Hopkins Studies." The contributions are undergraduate, the editorship presumably by the faculty. As a matter of educational stimulus it ought to be more effective than most academic honors. At any rate, whether or not the Vassar undergraduate would rather have an article in the Journal than an A in any examination, it seems quite certain that she learns a better result by working up an article than working for an examination. All one's experience points to that. Not only your facts stay by you, but you learn method.

The contributions in this number are varied: "Statistics of the Earnings of Undergraduates at Vassar," "The Legal Obligations between China and Great Britain," "Conditions Underlying the Spread of Religion" (anthropological); followed by five literary and three scientific articles. They are all somewhat in the manner of the simple minded thesis, but comparing the Journal with most undergraduate publications, there appears an unexpected solidity. The curriculum may perhaps be made a better background than "student life" for undergraduate writings. The Vassar lead ought to be followed.

Fiction

LEN CULLITON. By NELIA GARDNER WHITE. Appleton. 1927. \$2.

This novel presents the noble,—and sentimentalized,—figure of a farm woman who is compelled to do a quantity of disagreeable things all her life, until at an age deriving of a peaceful retirement, she is forced to do a great many more to save her children from domestic entanglements. In addition she mothers the entire community, looks in admirable farm dialect, and achieves poignant death-scene. All the ingredients of a good cry are provided in this book.

HULE AGRA. By KATHLEEN COYLE. Dutton. 1927. \$2.

Miss Coyle has attempted to combine the romance of Ireland with its abundant sentiment, and the modern novel of introspection. The result is somewhat odd, but not always interesting. The heroine acts in the

manner of Charles Lever after speculation in that of Dorothy Richardson,—both, of course, somewhat modified for popular consumption. There is considerable very bad writing, and at times a really striking phrase or thought, which seems to prove that Miss Coyle's true talent lies less in attempting improbable literary alliances than in writing her own books, which would surely be far more charming and far better written than this artificial product.

TOMEK THE SCULPTOR. By ADELAIDE EDEN PHILLPOTTS. Little, Brown. 1927. \$2.50.

Miss Phillpotts's new novel begins on a farm in Bohemia, where her hero, Josef Tomek, destined to be a famous sculptor, is born. A series of neat contrasts in the setting of his story carries him to Vienna and eventually to London. These backgrounds are brightly indicated, and the incidental characters are perhaps more successful than the leading one. The excessive concentration of the entire book about a single figure is not entirely fortunate, for Miss Phillpotts's talent is undoubtedly better suited to the descriptive and the narrative rather than the analytical vein. She has put a great deal of sincere feeling into her full-length portrait of an artist, as well as much convincing detail, but the medium does not suit her as well as that of "Lodgers in London." Tomek's mother is the most skilful secondary character; in her the peasant qualities which seem exaggerated in her son, because of his greater experience, become natural attributes. The ability of the author is nowhere so apparent as in those parts of the story dealing with the old woman. For the rest, the book scarcely rises above the mediocre. The urge to self-expression, slightly tinged with sentiment, is not the most satisfactory material for a novel.

THE WOMAN WHO STOLE EVERYTHING: And Other Stories. By ARNOLD BENNETT. New York: George H. Doran Co. 1927. \$2.50.

Here are thirteen short stories by Arnold Bennett. Except for the title-story, which runs for seventy pages, all are of normal length. In merit they vary tremendously, as is inevitable in a collection of pieces culled from four years' work for magazines. Infrequently there is a flash of the real Bennett, the incomparable Bennett, but for the most part we find merely good writing, swift, penetrating, varied. Occasionally triviality and dullness reign.

Three of the stories have considerable interest as sketches of character developing and revealing itself under stress. Included in this group is "The Woman Who Stole Everything," with its Cora Usher, a splendid, unscrupulous example of the marauding female. Then there is "Middle-Aged," excellent in its setting forth of the advantages of a certain jealousy between husband

and wife in the middle forties. "A Place in Venice" is more conventional than the other two, but it is far superior to the average anthologized short story.

"What I Have Said I Have Said" might be included in one of Chesterton's volumes without awakening any suspicions. The conception of an eminent gentleman's standing on a London curb for hours on end, waiting as a matter of principle for a bus that he knows will not come, is mildly insane and wholly delightful. Mr. Bennett builds up the mad notion without a slip. But the triumph of this volume is "Death, Fire, and Life." It is powerful in its subtlety, in its wracking descriptions of poverty, in its tribute to the eternal galantry that is such an inexplicable part of human nature. No one with a feeling for mankind will read it without being moved toward tears.

SUN AND MOON. By VINCENT H. GOWEN. Little, Brown. (Atlantic Monthly Press). 1927. \$2.50.

Chinese customs and civilization do not get fair treatment in this novel, which was written by a missionary. We see only the shadows in the picture, for by implication every Chinese influence is bad, leading the characters away from desirable Occidental manners and points of view. The story deals with an English widower who goes native, invests heavily in mistresses, wives, and concubines (how Mr. Gowen delights in the wicked ways of these women!), and tries to bring up his two children by the English marriage as Orientals. The wedding of an English girl to a Chinese youth is the climax of the narrative; Mr. Gowen goes into the details of the ceremonies and spares us nothing. The novel is not skilful, nor is it forceful enough to hold our attention for long. Louise Jordan Miln has done the same sort of thing much better, and with a surprisingly greater sympathy.

CRAZY PAVEMENTS. By BEVERLEY NICHOLS. Doran. 1927.

High society and low morals are pleasantly entwined in Mr. Nichols's latest novel, "Crazy Pavements." This young man, who last year gave us a book of entertaining memoirs shortly after his twenty-fifth birthday, has apparently seen a good deal of nastiness; but he must have had an immense amount of fun. It is doubtful whether a report of vice and corruption could be less seductive than Mr. Nichols's, for decadence in his novel is at best pitiable and unlovely. In the course of these pages we find ourselves in company with (among other types) nymphomaniacs, homosexualists, sadists, and drug-addicts. But having been introduced to them by Mr. Nichols, we do not despise them; we do not clothe ourselves in protective indignation, nor do we lust after their pleasures and privileges. In short, here is a novel that casts clear illumination into filthy corners, but the author is so decent about it all that we have no quarrel with him or with his material.

The narrative takes a poor journalist into an orchidaceous stratum of London's West End. Ingenuous, attractive, quick to

learn, he becomes the latest fad; he is taken to week-ends and parties until the emotional strain becomes unbearable, the artificial bonds collapse, and he finds himself back where he started from. Mr. Nichols is an instinctive artist; nowhere in this pilgrimage is there false sentiment or weakly constructed plot. Throughout, there are qualities so maturely blended that we remember only with difficulty the novelist's youth. "Crazy Pavements" combines technical dexterity and substantial matter with smart gaiety; it is an extremely encouraging book. Mr. Nichols has come far from his Oxonian puerilities. Given the added weight of a few more years and a continuously widening horizon, his writing will demand serious consideration. At present it is very good indeed.

ONE OF THESE DAYS. By MICHAEL TRAPPES-LOMAX. Doran. 1927. \$2.50.

When we come across such a good first novel as "One of These Days" we immediately abandon our proper business of book reviewing and speculate upon the future of the newly discovered author. In the present case the mood of conjecture is decidedly optimistic; Mr. Trappes-Lomax has literary brains, instinctive good taste, and an original, light touch. Certain undeniable faults seem due to inexperience rather than to lack of ability; they are inconspicuous, however, beside his excellences.

The novel is the chronicle of a single day in the life of a house party on the Riviera. Assorted characters provide humor, and a pleasant friction comes from the clash of unlike temperaments. Incidents often farcical keep the narrative at a constantly high pitch of interest. Behind the flow of the story is a convincing background of Monte Carlo, Mentone, and the Mediterranean. The one day is given some continuity by a protracted proposal of marriage; everything is very unimportant but surprisingly amusing. Mr. Trappes-Lomax has surely impressed his personality upon the novel, with a most fortunate result for all concerned.

THE LONGEST SHADOW. By JEFFERY E. JEFFERY. Little, Brown. 1927. \$2.

Philip Queste was a "romantic-minded fool." In that statement we can see the course of the novel. Mr. Jeffery puts this romantic youth in post-war England and watches him squirm as blast after blast of cold reality sweeps down upon his tender-mindedness. The fool falls in love as we expect him to, he assumes quixotic obligations that bring about his ruin, and he limps away at the end of the novel to begin his poor life again. We know, as Mr. Jeffery knows, that the effort is vain; outside of the kingdom of sugary fiction there is for such a soul no home. Certainly the novel is honest and painstaking, and, if it were read, might conceivably do substantial good by its statement of tragedy. It loses force, however, by being a little dull and plodding; we long for the sure lightness of touch that we found in "An Octave," one

(Continued on next page)

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