

ica and ensconced himself at a big desk under a portrait of Lincoln. Why is a portrait of Lincoln always hung over Big Desks? The Pulitzer prizes went to Robinson, Tarkington, O'Neill, Frank O'Brien, Rollin Kirby, Hamlin Garland. And we now had suddenly with us—"Ulysses" by James Joyce.

(To be concluded in a fortnight)

The Complete Medievalist

THE RETURN OF DON QUIXOTE. By G. K. CHESTERTON. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1927. \$2.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

MR. CHESTERTON'S are always propaganda novels. Even at his most fantastic he is developing a thesis. He develops it with a profuse decoration of romantic absurdity, but, for all that, it is never to be forgotten that he is dealing underneath with the most fundamental of matters, an ethical view of life. Mr. Chesterton is now a Roman Catholic and believes firmly that a return to the actual bases of medievalism would regenerate the world. He was always tending strongly in that direction. Now he is firmly entrenched. Into the mouths of several of the characters of the present story he puts the most pungent things he has to say against the modern state of society. His political views are nearer to those of the syndicalist than to those of the capitalist. They always have been. You have only to go back and reread his song of the Wheels for an indication. And the last verse of his poem "Medievalism" might be a text for this book:

Have ye not known, ye fools, that have made the present
a prison,
That thirst can remember water and hunger remember
bread?
We went not gathering ghosts; but the shriek of your
shame is arisen
Out of your own black Babel too loud; and it woke the
dead.

His sympathies are with the common people under what he conceives to be the utterly joyless blight of the modern social and industrial organization. He has Herne, the fabulous librarian of this story say,

I mean that the old society was truthful and that you are in a tangle of lies, I don't mean that it was perfect or painless. I mean that it called pain and imperfection by their names. You talk about despots and vassals and all the rest; well, you also have coercion and inequality; but you dare not call anything by its own Christian name. You defend every single thing by saying it is something else. You have a King and then explain that he is not allowed to be a King. You have a House of Lords and say it is the same as a House of Commons. When you do want to flatter a workman or a peasant you say he is a true gentleman; which is like saying he is a veritable Viscount. When you want to flatter the gentleman you say he does not use his own title. You leave a millionaire his millions and then praise him because he is "simple," otherwise mean and not magnificent; as if there were any good in gold except to glitter! You excuse priests by saying they are not priestly and assure us eagerly that clergymen can play cricket. You have teachers who refuse doctrine, which only means teaching; and doctors of divinity disavowing anything divine. It is all false and cowardly and shamefully full of shame. Everything is prolonging its existence by denying that it exists.

A group of people at Seawood Abbey are giving an amateur play at the time of a great coal strike. John Braintree, the Syndicalist, has been asked to play a small part. He refuses because the Miners' Union has declared a strike and he is the secretary of the Miners' Union, and he thinks it would be "a little low" to spoil the play at Lord Seawood's by coming in, when, as he expresses it, he is trying to spoil his work by "staying out." Miss Olive Ashley, who has written the play, is immediately attracted by him though she strongly disagrees with his views. The librarian at Seawood, who specializes in the Palaeo-Hittites is persuaded to take his place in the play. And promptly the librarian, in our American phrase, "runs away with the show." That is, the strike comes to a head, the librarian refuses, after the play is over (it is called "Blondel the Troubadour" and is naturally all about King Richard the Lion-Hearted and his times) to change his costume or, indeed, his new rôle (he has, finally, been acting the King). He makes the speech I have quoted. He then is the cause of the organization among the young people of The League of the Lion, which starts as fun and which the Prime Minister of England, conferring with Lord Seawood, seizes upon as a political weapon against the strikers under Braintree. A revolution, in fact,

comes about among the Conservatives. They go in head-over-heels for Medievalism. "The new power was divided between three or four subordinate monarchs ruling over large provinces of England . . . and called according to the romance or affectation of the movement Kings-at-Arms." Herne, the librarian is made King-at-Arms of the province with which we have to do, and commands his Order of Chivalry. He falls in love with Lord Seawood's daughter and she is a flame of energy in the movement.

The climax comes when the strikers and their leader Braintree are haled perforce before Herne as President of the Court of Arbitration. Herne has been going profoundly and thoroughly into the matter of medieval institutions and everything pertaining thereto, having now completely forgotten his Hittites. But the judgment he passes in court assembled strikes his own side of the industrial battle aghast. For he explains to them the true nature of the old medieval guild organization of labor, and states that if the Leader of the Labor organization believes that the Craft should be controlled by those who completely and competently practise it he is entirely correct. The Craft should be governed solely by Master Craftsmen. He goes on to show undeniably and lucidly that the present three Masters of the Trade, Sir Howard Pryce, Baron Seawood, and the Earl of Eden, are anything but Master Craftsmen; and that, when they appeal to their Nobility, they have no claim to be either nobles or peers. They cannot even claim their family names, owing to the fashion in which they have assumed their estates, for he has found in England "very few people possessing any pedigree that would be recognized in the heraldic or feudal sense of medieval aristocracy." He also finds that a certain inventor of artists' colors, whom they have "squeezed out" and left in beggary while cornering the market with their Coal-Tar Color and Dye Company, is the true Master Craftsman. He disallows all three pleas that the present owners are either masters, proprietors, or nobles. And he then goes forth into the wide world as a sort of new Don Quixote, having wrought disaster among the conservatives. His judgment upon her father naturally severs him from Rosamund Severne, Lord Seawood's daughter, who now, it seems, can rightly only call herself Smith! "Monkey" Murrell, the chivalrous practical-joker of the group, who has meanwhile rescued the inventor spoken of from being incarcerated for lunacy, goes forth with Herne as his Sancho Panza, —though Murrell, as Herne later admits, is really the true Quixote of the story. Braintree and Olive Ashley are reunited after having broken, as they think forever, with each other over the strike. But later Chesterton brings the other lovers together again. Herne finds that on her father's death Rosamund has made Seawood Abbey actually an abbey once more and has become a Catholic. Murrell marries the daughter of the persecuted inventor.

It should be unnecessary to say that the punning dialogue at which Chesterton excels enlivens this fantastic tale throughout. There are many gorgeous moments. But the important thing about the story, for agreement or disagreement, is Chesterton's ethical view, which includes the political. He is very sympathetic with the Syndicalist, but his own belief is quite evidently that the old guild organization is the only true salvation for Labor. With the titled capitalists he has but little sympathy, owing to his view of medievalism as a fairer and better state of society. And the medieval condition, he implies, was permeated, of course, by a faith, in the loss of which the modern world has lost incalculably. That is what he has to say. But those who wish to read the book simply as a fantastic and romantic yarn will encounter much entertainment by the way in its acrobatics and its glowing colors.

Lovers of coincidence will be interested in the fact that unknown to each other, three young English novelists, Miss Rosamund Lehman, Mrs. See, and Paul Bloomfield, recently hit upon as the title for their new novels, "Dusty Answer." Miss Lehmann, who was first in the field, retains the title for her book which Henry Holt is to bring out in September, while the others have had to find substitutes from it. It is derived from Meredith's lines:

Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When hot for certainties in this our life!

Australian Scenes

WORKING BULLOCKS. By KATHARINE SUSANNAH PRICHARD. New York: The Viking Press. 1927. \$2.

HERE is a novel that demands respectful attention. It does for the remote timberlands of Western Australia what "Maria Chapdelaine" did for the lonely homesteads of Canada. Grimly in contact with reality, "Working Bullocks," is a novel that no imaginative American can forget, once he has turned the first page. There are two definite appeals, either one of which is of sufficient vigor to make the book important: first, the general excellence of the narrative; and second, the fascination of the setting that is so unfamiliar to most of us. In judicious adjustment, these two interests combine to make "Working Bullocks" a rare pleasure.

We get the sense of taking part in a new life—the life of the lumberman. The timber is the karri, a huge beast of a tree, ten feet across its base and two hundred feet high. Around the falling of the karri and its transportation to Karri Creek, where the Company mill necessitates a dismal little township, the characters of the novel find their lives inseparably woven. We see the struggles of the young men to own a bullock team so that they can work for themselves; we feel the very haste of the meal hour at Pennyfather's boarding house at the Creek, where "all the lives were regulated by the blowing of the mill whistle." The sports are strange; the chief contest is a chop—that is, a race to chop in two a standard-size log. A steeplechase is not ordinary, but becomes a test of strength between a semi-aristocratic horse, just imported from Perth, and the new brumby (a kind of wild horse) belonging to Red Burke. We know that these unfamiliar customs are introduced not for their strangeness but for their usualness. In fact, if memory is accurate, the word "Australia" is not once used in the whole novel. The result is that we approach a new mode of living; we share horizons with the characters, and without fail we are exhilarated by our growth in experience. Seldom does a novel make so deep an impression.

But if certain externals make Western Australia different from New England or North Dakota, the fundamentals of human living are not changed. Miss Prichard shows us the common ambitions, and loves, and stupidities living on in their eternal persistence. These poor swamper and bullockies are not far removed from the beasts they drive; just a little conventional relaxation, an unbelievable amount of work, and so each day. Working bullocks, unable to throw off the burden of their lives. Against a background of such a type the author tells her story of two girls and a man, of a mother and her "sixteen living and two dead," of primitive contacts with nature—tells it simply, honestly, and with power.

Poetry and Miss Monroe

POETS AND THEIR ART. By HARRIET MONROE. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1926. \$2.50.

Reviewed by EDWARD DAVISON

MISS HARRIET MONROE'S name cannot fail to survive in the literary annals of this American decade. Since the foundation of her magazine in 1912 her constant, loyal and devoted efforts in the cause of poetry have brought their own rewards, not least her right to boast (as she does more than is perhaps necessary in this new book) that some of the best known living poets first took to print, as it were, under her sheltering wing. She will be remembered as a pioneer, one who anticipated and even helped to create the recent boom in poetry. She helped to crumble the mountain of public apathy and confounded (for a while, at least) those sceptics who held that a magazine devoted exclusively to poetry could never hope to bankrupt bankruptcy. There cannot be very many poets in modern America who do not owe her at least some little debt of gratitude.

But only a humbugging gratitude would pretend that Miss Monroe is a great editor or an exceptional critic. This new book, consisting almost entirely of articles reprinted from *Poetry*, carries a certain gloss of affectionate enthusiasm which fades into dulness under even a mild critical light. Her utterances about poetry are essentially of the emotive

kind, verbal bubbles of appreciation, bright little toy balloons of anecdote, such things as mirror convexly the eruption of Miss Amy Lowell into a Chicago dinner party, or the debut of Mr. Vachel Lindsay to the Nunc Dimittis of Mr. W. B. Yeats, or, again, the early vagaries of Mr. Ezra Pound.

In the foyers of modern poetry, or in the poets' dressing rooms, Miss Monroe is at her best. But when she appears in the critic's robes on the open stage it is generally to fall badly between the two stools, analysis and synthesis. Mushroom enthusiasms stud every other page of her book with the word "masterpiece." She cries "Wolf" so insistently that when the wolf, (in the guise of Mr. Robert Frost or Mr. E. A. Robinson), actually does appear it is all too easy to attribute her recognition to accident. She cannot see round a good poet or through a bad one. This inability is, perhaps, best illustrated (to take an example from the section significantly described as "Certain Poets of Yesterday") in her essay on Chaucer and Langland, where it is possible to detect the wish in its act of fathering the thought.

Those old poets (Langland and his old English predecessors) will be studied, not from the point of view of academic scholarship, but from that of immediate beauty and fecundity. We shall have a new realization of their power of imagination and of the splendor and variety of their rhythms.

This is the very ecstasy of love. We shall sooner find passion and tears in Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" than "immediate beauty, fecundity, splendor, and variety of rhythm" in the works of Lydgate, Occleve, Gower, and their kin. Much may be said in their praise, but never such things as these. Thus, on one hand, Miss Monroe prophesies the discovery of bright needles in the rusty haystacks of the pre-Chaucerian poets of England, while, on the other, she weighs Matthew Arnold in her peculiar scales and finds—

Little details of old-fashioned manner or attire stand out with a new consciousness—I see *thou* and *doth*, 'mid *ere*, *sate* and *snake* and *palfrey* on every page, and find it difficult to forget them as a mere inevitable convention of the hoop and skirt period.

One can almost watch Miss Monroe reexamining her poets periodically, on each occasion striking out passages that have just proved out of date. Eighteenth century criticism, at its worst, was never quite so stingy as this. The prejudice—for it deserves a word no kinder—inherent in this passage is not uncommon in choirs and places where the lesser critics sing today. To accept such objections as valid is to strike out, with one fell sweep of the pen, ninety per cent of the greatest poetry written in the English language—the best of Shakespeare, Milton, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley. What have *thou* and *doth* to do with the "hoop and skirt period"? Have we grown out of great poetry for no better reason than that it contains a few *doths* and *'mids* or even a whole stableful of *palfreys*? Miss Monroe does poetry and herself a gross injustice. If this ridiculous prejudice were not so generally current in recent journeyman criticism it would not need to detain us here.

This is typical of the kind of superficial thinking, or feeling, that undermines the value of Miss Monroe's criticism and belies her avowed aim—"that ruthless detachment required by the high standards of impartial criticism." She is not ruthlessly detached. So far removed is she from any such critical approach that it is not perhaps unfair to say that her approach to poetry is partly geographical. Thus, while reading this book, one recognizes (not for the first time) a pleasant and not unnatural prejudice in favor of poets whose native heath is to be found in Illinois. One suspects that her sympathies diminish a little, proportionately, as the habitat of a poet recedes to New England or beyond the Atlantic. It is possible to applaud Miss Monroe for her loyalty while reproaching her for this, and even more definite parochial qualities of her criticism.

In conclusion, it should be repeated that Miss Monroe's services in the cause of poetry are not to be judged merely by her writings in behalf of that cause. She commands and deserves the affection and respect of everybody who shares her enthusiasm for poetry, whether or not they agree with her opinions; and the poet who passes through Chicago without saluting the lady who wrote the "Columbian Ode" thirty-two years ago surely offends the very Muse whose name Miss Monroe so painstakingly derides.

The BOWLING GREEN

The Rabbits with Wet Eyes

ONE evening while Mr. Mistletoe was pulling up plantain weeds . . .

But before we go on I had better tell you a few details about Mr. Mistletoe's adventures as a grass-grower.

He was always happy when he was mowing the lawn—though (as I said before) *lawn* is certainly too smooth a word for such a bumpy arrangement of ground. There is something very soothing in the whirr of the twirling blades, if it is not broken too often by the hard shock of a stick or a pebble or one of Donny's old bones. Keeping the lawnmower straight, and enjoying the smell of cut grass, and feeling your own strong earth solid under your feet, is a healthy pleasure.

But though Mr. Mistletoe was very happy mowing the grass, he looked serious. Perhaps he was thinking? Certainly there was plenty to think about. I wonder what there was about his ground that made it so attractive to moles. Every time he thought he had got the front grass-plot in pretty good order, there appeared a new lot of their wrinkly little subways. Then these soft tunnels had to be all carefully trodden down or else flattened out with the heavy roller. Worst of all was when Donny and Fritz, the dogs, would decide to give some help in the mole problem. Then, when Mr. Mistletoe came back in the evening, he would find a ragged zigzag furrow, ten or fifteen feet long, dug up one of the terraces; or a hole big enough to bury a neighbor's child in. These excavations were worse to repair than all the tunnels a whole family of moles could make in a month.

Another thing Mr. Mistletoe used to think about, as he went solemnly to and fro with the lawnmower (stopping now and then to light his pipe and wipe his forehead) was the idea of starting a Nassau County Weed Show. In a Flower Show he would have no chance at all; but in a well-conducted Weed Show he ought to get a prize. His plantain-weeds were remarkable, both in number and size. And in a good Weed Show there should also be prizes for the greatest number of croquet hoops lost in one season, or balls disappeared among rhododendron bushes, or velocipedes left out over night. In such competitions, he believed, the family would rank high.

But the plantain-weeds were his special concern. On warm evenings he often spent an hour or so grubbing them up. Sometimes it seemed as though the lawn was really more plantain than grass. But it is quite good fun pulling them up, because you are never sure whether the roots will come or not. If you are careful to get hold of all the leaves, and give a little twist, the chances are that the roots will come too. The game is to keep score, and count how many roots come and how many don't.

What bothered Mr. Mistletoe, in these adventures, was that anything so plentiful as those weeds should be so useless. For he liked to imagine that almost everything is useful in one way or another if you understand about it. It always gave him great pain to throw anything away: he carefully preserved bits of string, heads of broken dolls, small pencils, buttons, corks, rusty nails. He rarely put these odds and ends to any purpose, but it made him happy to have saved them.

One evening, then, as I started to say at the beginning, Mr. Mistletoe was cheerfully pulling up plantain weeds and putting them into a basket. When the basket was full he carried it into the woods and dumped it, and doing so he had to pass by the rabbit run. As he did so, he always said, "Well, bunny bunny bunny," which was not an important thing to say but showed a friendly spirit. He and the rabbits led very different lives, and perhaps they did not really have very much in common, but at any rate they were on good terms. So he was shocked, passing their wire netting, to see that their eyes were full of tears.

They were white rabbits, with beautiful red eyes. Even in their cheerfulness moods there seems something a little wistful about eyes of that color: they look as though they had been inflamed by long and inconsolable weeping. So when you take eyes that

are naturally red, and fill them with real tears, the effect is very sad. Mr. Mistletoe was painfully startled and stopped by the netting to wonder.

If he had not been rather a stupid man he would have guessed long before. The rabbits had been trying all summer to tell him, but he could not understand their language. It was gradually breaking their hearts to see him, day after day, pulling up and throwing away the beautiful delicious plantain-weeds they love so much. Among the many things that Mr. Mistletoe did not know was the interesting fact that juicy green plantain is one of a rabbit's most favorite foods. And to remain helpless in their enclosure and watch all that plantain being wasted was more than they could bear.

When he stood there, holding the basket of weeds and wondering, the rabbits became greatly excited. Their ruby eyes glistened with trouble, their tall pink ears quivered, they stood up poking through the wire with noses that twitched.

"Good gracious," said Mr. Mistletoe. "They seem terribly upset about something. Can it be that they want some of the plantain? It might be very bad for them."

It seems queer that a man could be so ignorant. Do dogs like bones? Do horses like apples? Do Chinamen like rice? Do girls like fudge? That is how rabbits feel about plantain.

The behavior of the rabbits was so emphatic, their eyes were so eloquently wet, that Mr. Mistletoe thought he might give them just one plantain and see what happened. When he began pushing it through the hole in the netting they almost tore it from his hands. They fell upon it like sailors on a glass of grog after a long long voyage. There was a violent nibbling and crunching and in half a minute that green weed had entirely disappeared, even the little cluster of roots.

Mr. Mistletoe watched anxiously. He had a sort of idea that perhaps Binny and Bunny would suddenly fall dead. But they looked stronger and bigger than ever, their noses trembled with healthy vibrations, the tears had vanished from their eyes. They looked at him in a way he could not possibly misunderstand.

Good heavens, he said to himself, and gave them the whole basket.

Late that night Mr. Mistletoe was waked by a queer soft cheerful sound coming from the back yard. The rabbits were singing.

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Slowly and quietly Mr. Mistletoe thought about this matter. He noticed, after that, that every time he began to pull up plantain weeds the rabbits were watching him closely. Then a great idea came to him. He hunted about in the attic until he found the old baby-pen that had been used by the children long ago. He carried it outdoors and put it over the richest and thickest patch of plantain on the lawn. Then he put Binny and Bunny in the pen. There was a merry sound of crisp eating, and that was the end of that patch. As they ate, the rabbits' active paws patted down the earth smoothly and neatly so that all was left tidy. After an hour's time he shifted the pen to another place and they began afresh.

So that is how the great institution of Plantain Hour was started. Every summer evening the rabbits have their outing in the pen, and move round from one part of the garden to another. That is why Mr. Mistletoe's lawn is now so beautiful, and why the rabbits are the most buxom in the Roslyn Estates. Just look at them!

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Paul Valéry, who recently became a member of the French Academy, was, according to a writer in a French newspaper, well known to the younger literary groups in France, but to more conservative circles was quite without interest. Indeed, the *Revue des Deux Mondes* had never printed his name before his election to the Academy. When he made his entrance into it even Joffre, who is almost unfailing in his attendance at meetings, failed to put in an appearance, being frightened by the prospect of a meeting so completely devoted to poetry. The attendance was of philosophers, historians, and of an unexpected number of *précieuses*. Mr. Valéry's address was on Anatole France, a thankless task in view of the enormous amount that has been written about him, but he managed to make it interesting.