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Points of View

Ivan Bunin

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

I am writing to ask you to make an appeal in your columns in aid of one of the most brilliant Russian writers of the present day—Ivan Bunin.

I recently had a letter from my father, telling me of Bunin's dire position and asking me to try to do something for him. He and his wife have undergone four operations within a year or so. Mrs. Bunin has not yet recovered from the last one and one of her arms is temporarily paralyzed. Bunin himself is suffering from acute neuralgia in the head and is unable to write at present, needing the quiet and rest he is unable to have, owing to their lack of means. The Bunins are great friends of ours and my father, who is the former Russian Ambassador in Spain, thinks very highly of them.

It is terrible to think of a man of his great talent—a member of the Academy—being in such a situation.

He is not unknown to the American public, his works are, I believe, widely read and appreciated, that is why I am appealing to you, in the hope that you may be able to do something for him.

Perhaps the donations could be sent to you and you could forward them to Bunin? His address is: 1 Rue Jacques Offenbach, Paris XVI.

I would be deeply grateful for any help you could give them and hope you will excuse my troubling you with this.

ELIZABETH NEKLUDOFF.

222 East 71st St., N. Y.

A Protest

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

In your issue of February 27 I find a communication signed by Mr. Hervey Allen, in which it is stated: "Mr. Whitty is the editor of Miss Phillips' 'Edgar Allan Poe, The Man.' . . . It is quite patent that Mr. Whitty is interested in another life of Poe." This statement not only lacks authenticity but is as gratuitous as it is erroneous. From the very start of my work on Poe Mr. Whitty has proved himself a mentor, allowing me free use of excerpts from his copyrighted Poe texts, honestly used by me in "Poe—The Man," with Mr. Whitty's permission. He has not only had no editorial connection with my biography but is in no manner financially interested in my Poe work. Towards its close, an automobile accident left me weak in eyesight, and other physical disabilities. Since that time Mr. Whitty has assisted me only in the strong publication issue of my Poe work. On all scores above mentioned Mr. Whitty's services have been selfless, peerless, and priceless, indeed, so divine-like in character as to be utterly inconceivable to the mind of Mr. Hervey Allen.

Your sense of justice, I am sure, will prompt you to give this note as speedy print as possible, as a protest from

MARY E. PHILLIPS

Boston, Mass.

Hint to Authors

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

There's a man out here in the small towns of Iowa that would grace any book in which the author is on friendly terms with his characters. So far, we have failed to find any book in which even an attempt is made to portray him.

The author who uses him will put into his book one of the backbones of the development of the Middle West.

He divides himself into two classes—this man—according to his weathering of the economic storm which recently visited the corn belt. One of him came through, carrying his town and community into the peaceful waters of reasonable prosperity. The other, after years of captaining the community ship, foundered it on the rocks of the land boom, carrying many of his people down with him.

Nearly always he is a banker, and usually head of the local implement company, general store and grain, coal, lumber and elevator organization at the same time. He keeps in touch with business affairs of the country. His advice on business conditions is almost final. He advises on the purchasing and selling of farms; he arranges the loans; he advises for or against holding corn; he knows whether it will be best to feed cattle during the summer; suggests

new ideas, such as feeding sheep; and is the man to whom agents go to head the list of guarantors for the chautauqua. No business deal of any size is made without his being consulted, and no "civic" project is furthered without his support. Most likely he is superintendent of one of the Sunday schools, often for fifteen or more successive years.

His wife is prominent in the local club affiliated with the state organization, and his sons and daughters are the leaders of the upper of the two classes, socially, in the village. He is called the most influential man in the community. His views are quoted. Mothers point to him as a model for their children. He is the wealthiest man, but his wealth causes little envy.

In 1896 and 1907 he carried his community through the hard times. If he didn't, he wouldn't be a community leader when the World War broke out. In the economic and financial affairs of his village and townships, incident to the war, he takes the lead, of course. Liberty loan drives, Red Cross campaigns, war savings stamps, etc. Invariably he advises "giving until it hurts."

Then after the war, comes the real test, and his division into two classes. One class of him makes a character for a tragedy, the other for the happy ending, after difficulties. One class of him analyzes economic affairs aright, although it calls for consideration of world influences, advises against buying high-priced land, undergoes a lot of criticism, and sees business go from his bank, store, shop, and elevator to the town of the other class of him, the man who says a new era of prosperity has appeared, arranges loans with second-mortgage security, expands his own business, takes commissions for aiding in selling rubber company and packing concern stock to the farmers, and generally whoops it up.

Then 1921 comes, and with it the economic revulsion in the corn belt. The first class of him is justified to the happy ending. The other class reaches the apex of his tragedy in the small hours of some morning when the directors of his bank—former figureheads—sitting with the bank examiners, close the doors of the pride of his life. Law suits, foreclosures, lost homes, shattered prestige, suicides, and in some cases, penitentiary sentences, follow.

The author who puts this character, either in one or both classes, in his book will find thousands of his Iowa readers declaring the story was written about their home town.

JOHN M. HENRY

Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Triangles

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

I thought I was a fairly constant reader of the "Bowling Green," but I see in the last number a hint of something I must have missed in its reference to non-Euclidian morals. This has long been a favorite subject of study with me and I have been wondering whether Mr. Morley's conclusions agree with mine. Triangles have been a favorite theme since the novelist began. Usually one of the angles was a right angle (generally the wife), or an obtuse angle (generally the husband), but the three angles could be depended upon to add up finally to two right angles—"the villain got his flogging at the gang-way and we cheered"—the third angle becoming infinitesimal and receding to an infinite distance. But today what a mess! With these non-Euclidian triangles we may have any sum whatsoever: sometimes pessimism leaves us no right angles at all and sometimes an excess of moral tolerance provides three. This of course is only a sample from my projected treatise. The subject is really too important to be handled briefly.

C. W. SPARROW

Virginia Quarterly Review.

Bryant

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

I am writing an account of the life of William Cullen Bryant from 1794 to 1829. As I am in search of letters and other manuscripts which concern the poet, I shall be grateful if readers of *The Saturday Review* who possess such documents or who know where they may be located will communicate with me.

TREMAINE MCDOWELL

Yale University.

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

FROM PASCAL TO PROUST. By G. TURQUET-MILNES. Boni & Liveright. 1926. \$2.

Seven Frenchmen,—Pascal, Molière, Maine de Biran, Balzac, Bergson, Proust, Albert Thibaudet,—and George Meredith are the subjects of Mr. Turquet-Milnes's study. But his book is actually about Bergson and his philosophy, considered in relation to the other figures. The author's claim of a common "intuitive philosophy" for all of them amounts to little more than the admitted vicious-circle truth that each man wrote and thought under given conditions which, obviously, caused him to write and think as he did. Like all books seeking to interpret the work of one man in terms of another man's influence upon that work, Mr. Turquet-Milnes's is in the end given to consider the destructive element of personality before any working explanation of the writer's significance can be attained. It is often a fruitless process, but in this case the comparative novelty to English readers of much of the subject matter, together with the thoroughness, clarity, and precision of the author's analysis, yields unmistakable results. With a few important exceptions,—Mr. Saintsbury, in England and at times Mr. Boyd in America,—no one has bothered with the ideological background of modern French literature. Mr. Turquet-Milnes having had the wit to perceive Bergson and his philosophy as a kind of transformer into which the current of literature flowed and from which it issued to produce the work of Proust and the criticism of Thibaudet, the rest of his splendid little book followed almost automatically, as the result of correlation and analysis. His viewpoint must occasionally be classed as a trifle conscientiously that of the philosopher rather than the literary critic. The chapters on Meredith and Proust, in particular, seem to leave out a great deal for the sake of making clear a single influential trace. As he is finally impelled to exclaim: Never does one realize so well as with Proust the futility and the impotence of so called physiological criticism.

In fact, a Frenchman might object to his exclusively Anglo-Saxon perspective. While Mr. Turquet-Milnes's knowledge of the Gallic literature is manifestly that of an expert and a scholar, there seems always to lurk in his mind a consciousness of some parallel in England, and of what happened there at the same period or under the same conditions. This is not a bad way of fixing Pascal and Molière for us, but it throws Proust and Thibaudet into a curious and not wholly truthful perspective. After all, a French writer's relationship to English literature should not always be the most important factor even in the book of an English critic, which discusses his work.

There is little lacking, however, in Mr. Turquet-Milnes's consideration of what he does elect to treat. How seldom is such thoroughly reasoned criticism produced or read in America! It escapes the academic and yet fails to bow to the popular cry for "outlines." It is on such work that opinions may be formed: its effect, through the writing of others, is often great. A study of Paul Valéry, announced as in preparation by the same author, should also fill an important space in the slow-growing English commentary on French letters.

Drama

TWELVE ONE-ACT PLAYS. Longmans, Green. 1926. \$2.50.

With the possible exception of "The Valiant" by Holworthy Hall and Robert Middlemass, wherein an appealing story is presented with telling dramatic effect, none of the plays in this collection rises above mediocrity. Nothing is found here of distinction in the manner of writing, or of significance in theme. Yet the volume serves a worthy purpose in that it offers to little theatres and amateur producing groups tested, actable plays which while not outstanding in value are not mere "clap-trap." An ideal bill of one-act plays for an evening's entertainment usually consists of a fantasy, a tragedy, or serious play for backbone, and a light comedy, or farce. Several such evenings might be put together from the plays in this collection. One such bill, perhaps the best one, would include "The Willow Pattern," by Ethel Beekman Van Der Veer, a "comic-tragedy" done after the Chinese style of staging as in "The Yellow Jacket," followed by "The

Valiant," and concluding with "The Master Salesman," a truly humorous bit of satire on the trained glibness of the Rotarian seller of goods. Another would consist of "The Most Foolish Virgin," by Helen Gaskill, "Copy," by Kendall Banning, which has been successfully produced in vaudeville, and "Thank You, Doctor," by Gilbert Emery, a detective skit using the familiar pearl necklace strung on a new string. In characterization "God Winks," by Katherine Burgess, is effective, while if costumes and a touch of romance are desired Ruth Giorloff's "Jazz and Minuet" will please. Of the other plays little can be said except that they will act.

AN OUTLINE OF CONTEMPORARY DRAMA. By Thomas H. Dickinson. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.

THE FLYING PRINCE. By Peggy Wood and Eugene Wood. Appleton.

Education

THE FOLK HIGH-SCHOOL OF DENMARK AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FARMING COMMUNITY. By Holger Begtrup, Hans Lund, and Peter Manniche. Oxford University Press. \$2.

THE POET'S COMMONWEALTH. Edited by Walter Murdoch. Oxford University Press. 85 cents.

Fiction

THIS DAY'S MADNESS. By the author of "Miss Tiverton Goes Out." Bobbs-Merrill. 1926. \$2.50.

The stolid, complacent English upper-class family that has gone so far on the road to mental degeneration that it finds its own company the only one really tolerable has served as a *pièce de résistance* for a galaxy of English novelists. Thackeray, Meredith, Wells, Sheila Kaye-Smith, and Galsworthy by no means exhaust the list. But one suspects that the subject is running dry. After all, Galsworthy's Forsytes contain most of the qualities of the whole class, and he has put them together in almost every conceivable combination.

Consequently it is with a slight sense of boredom—or worse—of revisiting with an inferior guide scenes that once fascinated us, that we follow the anonymous author of "Miss Tiverton Goes Out" on the trail of an honest, vital, restless young girl who rebels against the stupid self-sufficiency of the moribund Moncktons. The author writes with a certain hard brilliance, an occasional dash of penetrating satire, and with flashes of real creative insight; the story is "well constructed" and competently handled throughout. But there is about it the feeling of an old tune rearranged and scored with new harmonies. In the process the quality that gave it vigor and significance has been lost.

Letty tried hard to be a Monckton, but she could never put herself into it. Something within her rebelled. She even became engaged to her cousin, Bernard; everyone agreed that it was an eminently suitable marriage, as it would keep the entailed estate within the family; but it was foreordained that she would jilt him. She had to break away or die, stifled. "The Moncktons . . . were solid and upright and united and encircling, like the stakes of an inclosure." Even when she had defied them all and leapt into matrimony with a comparative stranger, "The Moncktons wouldn't cease to exist. There would always be the sense of them, silent, shocked, deeply outraged. They would stand aloof from her, but their eyes would always be upon her. Laughter was the only power that had any effect upon the Moncktons; they dispersed under it somehow, like fog under sunshine."

WHISPERING CREEK. By ALMA E. HENDERSON. Burton. 1927. \$2.

We have found nothing above average mediocrity in this pseudo-mystery tale of the western mountain wilds. Its plot sets forth the adventures met with by a young man and his friends in seeking to solve the enigma of his father's unaccountable disappearance from the vicinity of Whispering Creek, three years before the story's opening. The ferreting out of the missing man's fate is accomplished without skill or ingenuity, at excessive length, and with a superfluity of uncouth dialect.

CONGAL. By Harry Hervey. Cosmopolitan. \$2.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. By Irvin S. Cobb. Cosmopolitan. \$2.

THE MAGIC GARDEN. By Gene Stratton-Porter. Doubleday, Page. \$2 net.

(Continued on next page)

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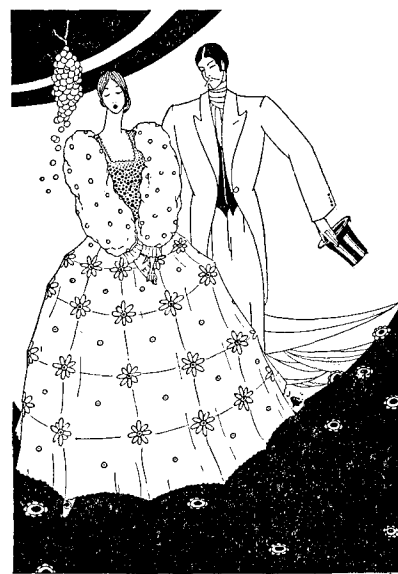
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