

they would exclaim, 'le chapeau de Lord Curzon.' " How paraphrase the encounter with a young Polish pianist: "He laughed a little uncertainly at this, and crossed his legs. I could see that he was the languid type of invert, whereas the sort I like best are of the brisk variety. So I read my book."

The portrait of Lord Curzon, which is made up of brief glimpses of him as he appears in some of the sketches, for no real person is allotted a sketch to himself, convinces one that Harold Nicolson is the man to do the "Life" of Britain's most belligerent peace commissioner. Mr. Nicolson shows a side (many sides would be more exact) of this will-driven, pain-ridden diplomat which has never crept into the reports upon him in the public press. His works on Verlaine, Tennyson, Byron, and Swinburne have already placed Mr. Nicolson's name near the top of the list of English biographers. "Some People" shows that he is particularly qualified to write of those whom he has known personally, and it has further released something in the author's temperament making for a lightness and intimacy of style which is likely to add warmth to his future work.

## Japanese Literature

MASTERPIECES OF CHIKAMATSU, THE JAPANESE SHAKESPEARE. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1927. \$8.

A WREATH OF CLOUD, BEING THE THIRD PART OF "THE TALE OF GENJI." By LADY MURASAKI. Translated from the Japanese by Arthur Waley. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1927.

Reviewed by LEE WILSON DODD

FOR a western critic, who has never visited Japan, who is ignorant of the Japanese language, to attempt any estimate of the classical literary art of Japan as compared with that of our western nations would be a supreme impertinence. I shall attempt nothing so gratuitous here. On the other hand, the above translations are presumably intended for the casual, not too imperfectly educated English or American reader, and the impressions and reflections they have brought to the mind of one such reader may have a certain restricted value.

I have already, in reviewing an earlier volume of "The Tale of Genji," expressed my unforced admiration. The genius of Lady Murasaki is surely not betrayed in the limpid, rhythmical English of Arthur Waley; it easily, if belatedly, passes the boundaries of her country and will be welcomed everywhere by sensitive, intelligent minds. But before indulging myself in the pleasure of speaking once more of "Genji," I must turn to a more difficult essay.

What am I, a racial and cultural outsider, to make of the classical *Kabuki* plays and *Joruri* plays (plays of the popular theatre, and puppet plays) of Chikamatsu Monzaemon, called "the Japanese Shakespeare"?

He was born in 1652 A. D. and lived for seventy-two years, producing during fifty or more of those years well over a hundred dramatic compositions. And in one non-dramatic respect, at least, he resembles Shakespeare: very little is known of him. "This is, after all (says his translator), but natural, as Japanese historians have interested themselves almost exclusively in the lives of people of the upper class." And he adds that Chikamatsu's life could no more have interested Japanese biographers than "the life of a cat or a dog."

Evidently, then, the social position of the people of the theatre in Japan during the life of Chikamatsu was not dissimilar to that of the Elizabethan actors and playwrights; they were held to be little better than vagabonds. Yet the theatre was enormously popular in Japan of the earlier Yedo period, as it was in Elizabethan England. Throughout history, drama has been the most honored of the arts, while its creators have been considered the least respectable of men.

But, frankly, what I know of the Japanese theatre has been chiefly gathered from the excellent introductory essay by Asataro Miyamori, Chikamatsu's translator, who is Professor of English Literature in the Oriental University, Tokyo. His translations have been revised by Robert Nichols, the English poet, who taught for a time in the Imperial University, Tokyo. The volume itself is a sumptuous one, thoughtfully illustrated by many photographs and reproductions of Japanese prints

which, for the uninstructed foreigner, are invaluable as aids to understanding and appreciation. Clearly, a great and loving effort has now been made to popularize in the West something of the intricate and alien beauty of the dramatic literature of Japan. But those who acquire this admirable book should also obtain, if possible, the exquisite translations of the more ancient and aristocratic *Nô* Plays of Japan, made by the English scholar-poet, Arthur Waley, and published by Alfred A. Knopf, in 1922. The owner of these two volumes and of the successively appearing volumes of "The Tale of Genji" should be able to gain a very fair impression of the older Japanese culture and its sublimation in Japanese art; and such an impression, however superficial, is well worth the trouble it may take to acquire it. The cultured West has perhaps lived too exclusively within its own rigid "cake of custom." We all tend to harden into formulas and lose sensitiveness and flexibility of mind. Contact with the East, so different in its simplicities and in its immense sophistication, can hardly fail to quicken and renew us. For one thing, merely, it hurts no one to realize that there are a number of entirely satisfying ways of cooking an egg.

The Japanese theatre, says Arthur Waley, developed from rustic exhibitions of acrobatics and jugglery, various sorts of recitation, ballad-singing, etc., the Chinese dances practised at the Japanese court (as so beautifully described in "The Tale of Genji"), and from *Sarugaku*, a masquerade which relieved the solemnity of Shinto ceremonies. From these diverse elements the *Nô* plays were created, in the fourteenth century, by the personal genius of two men, Kwanami, and his son, Seami, who won the fostering protection of the Shogun Yoshimitsu, then ruler of Japan.

Thus, *Nô* was from the first an aristocratic art, refined for the pleasure of a court which has seldom elsewhere been equalled in esthetic sophistication. The soul of the *Nô* plays is to be found in "the difficult term *yûgen*. . . . It means 'what lies beneath the surface,' the subtle as opposed to the obvious; the hint, as opposed to the statement. . . . The symbol of *yûgen* is 'a white bird with a flower in its beak.'" Says Seami of his courtly auditors: "Their honorable eyes have become so keen that they notice the least defect." Says Professor Miyamori:

Of the four types of Japanese drama the *nô* plays were the first to attract foreign notice . . . presumably because they appeal to a taste which recognizes in them certain curious resemblances to Greek tragedy. These resemblances . . . consist in the fact that the plays are entirely chanted, that they are pervaded by religious ideas, that the principal characters wear masks, that the chorus sings certain metrical portions and that the manner of the acting is dignified and reserved. None the less . . . the puppet plays and the dramas of the regular stage, both of which reflect in a decidedly greater degree actual Japanese character, beliefs, and moral ideas, are considerably more enjoyed by our countrymen. And from a literary point of view the puppet plays are more highly esteemed by Japanese scholars than the *nô* plays.

By the "dramas of the regular stage" Professor Miyamori refers to the so-called *kabuki* plays, which in their material and its often extravagant development somewhat distantly resemble the romantic art of the Elizabethan theatre. I say somewhat distantly, for these classic plays of the popular theatre of Japan are more strictly conventionalized ("stylized," in the modern cant) than their analogues of the West. They are

accompanied by song and music . . . dialogue is spoken, or rather chanted, in highly artificial voices; the miming is much exaggerated, often approaching dancing, and the make-up is strongly accentuated. Just as brevity and quietness are the characteristics of the *nô*, so exaggeration and expressiveness are the distinguishing features of the *kabuki* . . .

It was as a *kabuki* playwright at Kyoto that Chikamatsu began his career, emerging into sudden fame at the age of twenty-five. Yet his more lasting fame is founded, apparently, upon his *joruri*, or puppet plays. These puppet plays are an especially characteristic development of the Japanese popular theatre. In form, they are highly romantic tales, partly in descriptive and lyric verse, partly in prose dialogue, and were developed from the performances of professional reciters or chanters of stories, histories, and Buddhist legends. The individual reciter was in time replaced by a chorus (of from six to ten men, to judge from the photographs) "seated on a platform . . . overlooking the stage." By this chorus the narrative and lyric passages are

sung or chanted "to the agreeable music of the samisen," and by it the speeches of the puppet-characters are declaimed. The puppets are large and elaborately costumed, and are moved about the stage by mute showmen, usually in black robes and hoods, but in full view of the audience. However, since the days of Chikamatsu, there has been a further development. The regular theatre, with its living actors, has appropriated these puppet plays. A chorus still chants the narrative and lyric verse, but the dialogue is now declaimed by actors—who, in movement and gesture, deliberately ape the restricted mobility of marionettes. Briefly, the puppet plays of Chikamatsu and others of his time are not only popular today, but modern Japanese scholars agree "in considering them not only the best of the various types of dramas, but the supreme achievements of Japanese literature."

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And, assuredly, there is much to be said for the form of these puppet plays. The Elizabethan drama, played on a bare platform, had to create its own atmosphere by descriptive and lyric passages forced in boldly, but often very awkwardly, amid the cut and thrust of the dialogue. Such interpolations are given to the chorus by the *joruri* playwright and the bouts of dialogue are thus stripped for the action in hand. Consider, for example, that famous purple patch in "Antony and Cleopatra," which flows so absurdly from the rough tongue of the Roman soldier, Enobarbus:

The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,  
Burn'd on the water: the poop was beaten gold;  
Purple the sails, and so perfum'd that  
The winds were love-sick with them . . .

and so on for a dozen lines or more!

Could Chikamatsu have written such lines (which seems improbable, though I am unable to say that he could not), he would have given them frankly to the chorus—where they belong. Thus, in a *joruri* play, narrative, lyric, descriptive, and dramatic values are combined, but in so reasonable a way that there is nothing incongruous; they reinforce, they do not confuse and destroy, one another. A single illustration may suffice.

Toward the close of Chikamatsu's puppet-romance, "The Almanac of Love," two ill-starred lovers, O-San and Mohei, have been tracked to their hiding-place, captured, and are being returned to Kyoto for execution. The scene of the capture has been tense with action and passion; but it is ended—and at once the chorus takes up the tale:

O-San and Mohei, tightly bound, were seated upon separate horses and the procession started for the execution ground in the suburbs of Kyoto. The horses that bore the prisoners were, no less than all other living creatures, doomed sooner or later to the land of shadow, but to that pair of prisoners, whose last moments were so rapidly approaching, it seemed that they alone were vanishing from the world.

And so this quiet narrative passage (in verse which I must accept on faith as of great beauty) leads on to the dramatic climax of the play. It takes the place of that dead pause, that break in illusion, the lowered curtain. The story is continued, the mood maintained, and the transition from scene to scene is smoothly effected. Moreover, the playwright has been able, appropriately, through the chorus, to make a profound reflection on human life. Thrust into the dramatic dialogue such reflections are intolerable; but here the poet's footnote to mortality is perfectly placed and therefore graciously welcome.

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But six of the many plays by Chikamatsu have been translated by Professor Miyamori. Let us suppose that some Tibetan critic, who knew nothing of our western drama, and very little of our ideas and customs, were handed clear but quite uninspired prose translations of, say, "Romeo and Juliet," "King Henry V," and "A Winter's Tale." What would be the chances of his being able to obtain from them a just conception of the genius of Shakespeare? Suppose, again, that a certain prose passage in "Hamlet," when set over into modern Tibetan, sounded to our critic something like this: "I have lately—I really don't know why—felt very unhappy and given up exercising much; and the fact is I feel so blue that this construction, the earth, strikes me as a barren rock; and as for the air-tent under which we live, which is decorated with stars, I can only point out to you that I see it as a dirty and disgusting fog-bank. . . ." Then suppose,

finally, the Tibetan translator assured our Tibetan critic that Shakespeare is especially famous for "the perfection of his language." Professor Miyamori informs the western reader that Chikamatsu's language "matures to its finest point every element of melody and variety inherent in the Japanese tongue." Whereupon the western reader turns eagerly to the opening of "The Almanac of Love" and is soon confronted by—"Such, however, was not the case. . . ."

Not that the western critic blames Chikamatsu for this, but he at once recognizes that he will never be able to appreciate the stylistic felicities of Chikamatsu; he must take them purely for granted.

Now when you subtract from a great dramatic poet all the glamor and distinction of his personal style, what is left? Who would remember Marlowe if "Tamburlaine" had been written by someone else, line for line, in a rather labored pedestrian prose?

Yet something after all is left to Chikamatsu: the stories themselves, the dramatic framework and balance given them, and the general characterization of the persons involved in them; also, the underlying social, moral, and philosophic ideas of the poet, his necessarily implied criticism of life.

Judged from such fragments of himself, Chikamatsu is somewhat dimly seen to be an expert theatrical technician with a love for highly colored romantic and emotional situations; a tender-minded idealist whose heart bleeds easily and always for the under dog; a humorist who can paint admirable little *genre* pictures of the common life, yet whose touches of naturalism affect only the details of his work. The extravagant unreality of his "historical" plays, which the dramatist himself preferred, will hardly commend them to the western reader who, foiled by translation, will fail to appreciate "his magical color, the fluency of his language." It is through his domestic plays that Chikamatsu must make his difficult way to us. In such of these plays as Professor Miyamori has enabled me to read certain of the characters come to life and speak to me in a language I can understand, because it is the universal language of human nature. Yet even in these plays, says my mentor, "ugly events are beautified and contemptible characters idealized." Even when the heroes and heroines of his love tragedies commit double suicide Chikamatsu extends to them "the hope of a rebirth in the Pure Land or in the Lotus-Flower." Says another Japanese commentator: "The poet's strong and all-embracing compassion wraps them round." Yet were he a western dramatist I fear he would be accused of a too facile sentimentality and an illicit care for the happy ending.

Is not Chikamatsu, perhaps, a Japanese Fletcher or Heywood rather than the Japanese Shakespeare?

It is to an earlier Japanese writer—a woman, and a novelist—that one must turn for a deeper reading of life. The Lady Murasaki has no need of any explanatory tag; she is not the Japanese—this or that. She is quietly, exquisitely, and finally—herself. In "A Wreath of Cloud," the third volume of "The Tale of Genji" to be published in English, she continues on her serene and masterly way. But, for an English-reading critic, no final consideration of "The Tale of Genji" will be possible until Mr. Waley's beautiful translation is complete. For the time being it is enough to say of her in Mr. Waley's own words: "Here is no 'Oriental vagueness. . . .'"

A. Edward Newton of Philadelphia, the noted book collector, arrived recently from Europe with a collection of rare books which he acquired abroad. He has brought to this country the Lord Carysfort first Shakespearian folio, which is said to be the last set not in a museum and for which he paid \$62,000.

While in England Mr. Newton also bought Izaak Walton's "Compleat Angler," a copy of the first edition of Sir Thomas More's "Utopia," published in 1555; one of the twelve copies of the first edition of Thomas Hardy's "The Dynasts," published in 1903; and a copy of Hardy's "Desperate Remedies."

The resignation of Arthur Swann as a Vice-President of the American Art Association, and Director of its Department of Books, Prints and Autographs, was recently announced. Mr. Swann has been a noted rare book expert for a quarter of a century and built up the business of his department from \$36,000 in 1914 to nearly \$1,000,000 last season.

## "Prince Serebryany"

A PRINCE OF OUTLAWS. By COUNT ALEXIS TOLSTOY. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1927. \$3.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

THE novel of Count Alexis Tolstoy's, now offered in English translation as "A Prince of Outlaws," is, of course, the "Prince Serebryany" that was as familiar to well-brought-up Russian children of pre-Bolshevik days as "Ivanhoe" is—or was—to ours. The fact that it was written more than half a century ago and in quite another vein from that usually thought of in this country as "Russian" need not, however, make it any the less worth reading.

Count Alexis Tolstoy, who was a distant cousin of the greater Tolstoy, was a great friend of the Czar Alexander II, and served as Imperial Huntsman. This gave him a chance for the out-of-door life he liked, and the opportunity to be near the Czar without compromising himself in politics. A more or less westernized Liberal in his attitude toward government, he was an enthusiast in Russian folk-lore, and he wrote about boyars and oprichniki and the good old days of blood and Tartar-fighting with the verve and sincerity of a Russian who was both patriot and poet.

In "Prince Serebryany," he brought back the nightmare reign of half-mad Ivan the Terrible and the poisonous crew that surrounded him. The oprichniki were a characteristic Russian phenomenon—a sort of super-police, of which the Okhrana of pre-Bolshevik times and the Cheka of recent days were psychological, if not lineal, descendants; a band of cut-throats, whose theoretical function was to protect the holy person of the Czar from the various sorts of "treason" which threatened him on every side. Actually, they preyed on peasantry and nobility alike, and meanwhile spied on, lied about, and double-crossed each other.

Count Tolstoy, in the preface written to the first edition in 1863, says that he "more than once threw his pen down in anger, not from the thought that Ivan IV could exist, but from the thought that a society could look at him without dissatisfaction." The reader of this story feels in the same way, and there are instants when the impulse to break through the malignant spell in which Ivan's Court was held, vicariously to seize one of the boyars' battle-axes and bash the tyrant's head in, becomes almost irresistible. For reasons such as these one hesitates to recommend the book to American young people. Their whole historical background is so different that they might not "get" the old-chronicle charm and the really informing mass of accurate archeological detail, and feel that they had been turned loose in a gang of psychopathic murderers.

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Prince Serebryany is the knight, without fear or reproach, amongst all these paranoiacs and obscurantist self-seekers. He belonged to the boyar, or old landed nobility class, who found themselves tricked, laughed at, robbed, and sent to the torture-chamber and execution block by the Czar's new super-legal and super-traditional oprichniks. He is almost the only one—except, perhaps, the old boyar, Morosov, who goes to his death, after giving the Czar a piece of his mind, with crest unbowed—to whom "honor" has the meanings and responsibilities usually attached to it in the West. True to romantic tradition, he loses his lady love, who, despairing of his coming to rescue her, takes her vows as a nun just on the eve of Serebryany's arrival, and the Prince goes off to fight the Tartars and die on the frontiers for a Russia that had gone rotten at the core.

Technically, the novel is somewhat uneven and composed of diverse elements. Alexis Tolstoy was steeped in the old chronicles, he wrote verse in the manner of Russian folk-lore as nobody else, perhaps, could, and there are moments when his poetic and archeological impulses override his interest in a straightaway story. Indeed, in several spots, he interrupts his own narrative frankly to insert passages from the old ballads and let them tell what happened in their own words. A good deal is lost in translation, too, for Tolstoy was a poet, and in the matter of romantic beauty, the English version leaves something to be desired.

Everybody interested in Russia, whether from the point of view of politics or from that of its literary history, and in particular those who know only recent novels and contemporary history, should find

"A Prince of Outlaws" decidedly worth while. Alexis Tolstoy's novel was written during the period in which the serfs were freed and a wave of liberalism was sweeping over educated Russians. He was the first, it is said, whom the censor permitted to write with comparative frankness of the personality and times of Ivan IV.

The cautious little sermon with which the novel closes contains the following significant sentence: "Nothing in the world is lost, and every deed and every word and every thought grows like a tree, and much of good and ill that exists now like some inexplicable apparition in the life of Russia, has its roots in the dark recesses of the past." And these words are just as applicable to the Russia of 1927 as to that of 1863.

## A Wife—Modern Style

STRANGE WOMAN. By ELMER DAVIS. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co. 1927. \$2.

Reviewed by GRACE FRANK

LET no one be misled by the jacket and the advance notices into thinking that "Strange Woman" is a problem novel. The perplexities of the "woman of forty whose job is done, children raised," and all the rest of it have very little to do with the case. Lucy Merriam is merely the modern Helen of Troy in reverse. Mr. Erskine showed us that a beautiful hussy might take a highly conventional stand on social questions; it remained for Mr. Davis to introduce us to a respectable wife and mother whose principles were completely amoral.

When the man who has been loving Lucy unsuccessfully—in the pragmatic sense—for ten long years suggests to her that she can hardly understand the point of view of her husband's mistress since she is herself "a good woman," Lucy answers suavely: "Don't be abusive. It isn't your fault if I am. Life made me so. It's a form of white slavery that many an innocent young girl is forced into against her will." As for her husband's lapse, "Forgive him for what?" she asks. "For being able to get some excitement after eighteen years—to get Dagmar Dahl? Why, I'd like to give him a medal!" There's a wife for you—1927 model.

And this, if you please, is the wife of the president of a middle western university. Once more Mr. Davis has amusingly exploited his formula of placing the least likely people in the most unlikely situations and giving the Comic Spirit a long leash. Lucy's lover is none other than a professor of philology in a fresh-water college who refuses calls to Harvard and the Sorbonne. (Incidentally, we should like to meet that unicorn.) And Lucy's presidential husband, a man who needs his weekly Purpose to keep fit, who "could sell rosaries to the Klan," and who does indeed sell Idealism to his trustees, becomes the lover—the nineteenth, to be exact—of a prima donna who never meets wives and who refuses categorically to live out another woman's unfulfilled longings.

Who cares if the cherry is artificially colored? The champagne bubbles unintermittently for three hundred pages. There is also a heartening dash of *amaro* in the light satire of those glorified business colleges that pose as universities and provide suitable establishments for boys and girls in search of football, fraternities, and each other. Such universities, says the unicorn, do a noble service to higher education by keeping these adolescents out of the way of real students. The introduction of a few well-chosen minor characters calculated to stress the essential parallels between colleges of this sort and opera companies—especially between their respective impresarios—also helps prevent the comedy from descending into farce.

And then of course there is that part about the potential divorcee of forty "whose job is done, children raised," etc., and who ruefully contemplates the experiences that life may have left for her. Now, our critical creed includes no article evolved out of the old unities, and yet we must confess that in this case the ascent from Avernus was a bit too steep for us. When Lucy grows serious and contemplates her Problems and when Lucy persistently clings to her romantic conception of her husband's very realistic adventure, she has to pay the penalty of having been so delightfully pagan throughout the rest of the book: we cannot quite take her seriously. Yet, paradoxically enough, it is on this higher ground that we should like to see Mr. Davis pitch his tent next time. Evidently he knows more than enough for another novel about