

stage, see the light, give up their hatreds and ambitions, and become as little children.

There are moments in the narrative—as when, for example, the White officer, Koronin, tells his Monarchist sweetheart, Xenia, that he is working in a counter-revolutionary conspiracy, and lifts his eyes to meet the sardonic gaze of the girl's Communist brother, who has overheard everything—when the threads unite into first-class “good theatre,” and one gets a whiff of the nightmare air in which people lived in Moscow during the period of “militant communism.” But as already intimated, these moments are not as frequent as the reader might wish them to be. Too much of the time he is plowing through reveries and mental questionings, which, “Russian” though they may be, don't take the place of a go-ahead story.

Their Untouchable Selves

THE HOTEL. By ELIZABETH BOWEN. New York: The Dial Press. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

He felt that most profound concern possible for another human being, when it becomes a question no longer of the extent of one's own possession of them, but, transcending this, of what in their untouchable selves they are.

THIS, one of the very many wise and sensitive observations in Elizabeth Bowen's novel “The Hotel,” I feel inclined to apply to the book itself and my relation to it as reviewer. Because, by one of those simperings of occasion (as Sir Kenelm called them) that do sometimes happen, here is a creation of most delicate and difficult texture which is going to come into the hands of a great many more readers than would usually encounter a book of that sort. It has been chosen by the Book-of-the-Month Club, and it will be extraordinarily interesting to observe how it fares with so large a subscription list. I believe (since reviewers have to use their trade argot now and then) that its triumphant naturalism will carry it through.

Rose Macaulay is quoted as having said of this book that “it is hard to describe its quality without seeming overenthusiastic.” True indeed. The material of the story is casual enough: merely a few weeks' episodes in the lives of a few people in a hotel on the Italian Riviera. Of course as soon as one says Riviera, you imagine a certain crystallized type of novel; but how different this is. Elizabeth Bowen's triumph is that never in her exquisite comedy of the mirths and acids of social observation does she rely for an instant on cheapened effects, easy tricks, or meretricious glamors. The word “sophisticated,” which has undergone queer diversions in recent years (it has become customary to use it when what is really meant is “sophomoric”) may here be genuinely applied. Here is the subtle pourri of real sophistication, a wit that is not harsh or bawdy or mean.

Elizabeth Bowen—or Mrs. Cameron, if you insist—is a young writer; as is so characteristic of an Irish woman she is still under thirty—in fact, under twenty-nine. But this is not a young book, it is frugal and keen, rich with the rather desperate wisdom of maturity. It is social comedy of the most intricate merit, malicious and tender, the neat elixir of observation. Its people are dreadfully alive, so much so that you carry them on in your mind after finishing the story, wondering what will become of them. The hotel itself, the lounge with its grove of chairs, the drawing room where an unbroken front of matronhood warmed its knees at the fire, the lift, even the Honorable Mrs. Pinkerton's private bathroom (with the “Shetlands” on the radiator) all these are a décor that every traveled reader knows by heart. Americans, great connoisseurs of lavatory detail, will have their small private merriments over the so characteristically British toilet appointments of the visitors—the sponge-bags and loofahs and wash-stands and slop-pails; and the solid dressing-table ware of the Honorable Mrs. Pinkerton.

This is a book that two readers particularly would have been excited by—Jane Austen, Henry James. And I think I should add a third, our well-loved “Elizabeth.” For it is much more than what the term “social comedy” suggests: it conveys genuine tragedy and pity, and even a sense of the sinister in the enigmatic (yet how recognizable) person of Mrs. Kerr. If you insist on character study of the Younger Generation, I believe both Sydney and Veronica are considerably more authentic than a good many more melodramatically romanticized young questioners.

Elizabeth Bowen has the rare and the difficult

gift: she can impart character in a flash. Her crisp dialogue makes one hanker for a stage to hear it on. It is a brilliant and triumphant book, and I pay it the greatest compliment I know, by believing that there will be some (oh lucky, lucky people!) who will imagine it a little dull.

Good Wine, Burning Bush

MR. WESTON'S GOOD WINE. By T. F. POWYS. New York: The Viking Press. 1928.

Reviewed by HAMISH MILES

IN this story of three startled hours of a November night, a night of sudden apocalypse in the village of Folly Down, Mr. T. F. Powys has produced what is so far the most memorable of his tales. It is also that in which the element which may roughly be termed allegory is most openly avowed. And that fact may give us a clue to the real value of this very remarkable writer and his work.

It is needed. I know little of what reception Mr. Powys's six previous volumes have had in America, but I do know that in England their proper appreciation has always been fogged by a misapprehension of the vision behind them. Generally they have there been greeted by many angry voices up and down the country, protesting that the village life of England is something far kinder, far smoother than he paints it. English villages, these critics reiterate, may have their faults—but no, not this horrid catalogue of rape and madness, meanness and filth, visions and portents and sudden conflagrations—no. But of Mr. Powys's intention and achievement this explains—precisely nothing. After all, his pictures of these villages and the creatures who dwell in them, are extraordinarily alive. The play of character in them is absorbing and intricate. The slow necessity of tragedy broods over their stories. Surely truth cannot be so very far away?

And indeed it is not, if only we put altogether out of our heads the idea that Mr. Powys has just been trying to make a kodak record of Dorset life, or, what would be worse, that he has been simply butchering the rustic virtues to make a townsman's holiday. He has attempted neither. He has simply been telling stories which are rooted in the deepest truths, portraying men and women, even ladies and gentlemen, in those simple lines and clear unshaded colors that are instantly visible to an eye accustomed to watch, first and always, for the great determining elements of good and evil. For in their essence Mr. Powys's books are only fortuitously pictures of English village life. He is a man who has stories which, for truth's sake, he is bound anyway to tell; it happens that for this purpose English villages have lain ready to his hand. And he is driven to tell them by a profound religious sense. To him the supernatural is no matter of strangeness: it exists—not a sentimental, sticky, psychic emanation, but a plain, honest fact; and when we look beneath the puppet-surface of all these queer pig-breeders and carriers and zanies and wantons, we may discern, as clearly as our own sense of these matters will allow us, that the principal characters of Mr. Powys's tales are always really two—God, and the Devil.

In “Mr. Weston's Good Wine” this pattern of good and evil is more vividly exposed than in any of his earlier books. And let it be said that in none has he shown better his direct, unadorned, keen-edged style. With this he compels as the bright-eyed Mariner compelled: in the wake of the mysterious Mr. Weston's Ford truck, we cannot choose but follow him into the chosen village of Folly Down, where during the evening of his visit, time itself will for a while stop short and the courses of common nature be bent to his will. And once drawn into this village that for the moment is being visibly ruled by supernatural laws, we cannot turn back; we watch, with no thought for their superficial plausibility or otherwise, the wonders wrought by Mr. Weston as he goes from house to house offering to sell his unaccustomed wine. The symbolism of that determined old salesman, with his companion Michael (not to mention the Beast which lies hidden and chained inside the Ford!) is gradually exposed as the intricate and tightly-knit story is unfolded; and it would be wrong to attempt in a short space too close an application, or too bald a summary, of their significance, earthly or divine. But from the first glimpses we have of these visitors, we are made instantly aware of deep forces working far below

the surface of simplicity or depravity or bodily beauty which the storyteller is handling:

“And surely,” observed Michael, “it is nearly time for us to go down into the village, for we have a good many visits to pay, and you wish also to see the church.”

“I have never been inside one before,” said Mr. Weston. Michael looked a little surprised.

“I only like to go,” remarked Mr. Weston, “where my good wine is drunk. In a condemned cell, in a brothel, in the kennels of a vast city, our wine is drunk to the dregs, but in a church they merely sip.”

“And yet we have had orders,” said Michael.

“And if we fulfil them,” replied Mr. Weston, “have the buyers ever been known to pay?”

“Why, no,” said Michael, “they expect all goods to be given to them.”

“They won't get much from us, then,” said Mr. Weston grimly.

Nor did they. . . . The wine of love and the darker wine of death were not lightly handled by Mr. Weston and his companion. Yet even those who drank of neither were not left unaffected by the coming of their vendors on that night in Folly Down when the clocks stood still at seven; signs were in the heavens and portents walked the lanes. But the restraint of the writing, in contrast with the violence of the spiritual imagery which it contains, is something truly memorable. Let anyone look at such a scene as that where the three girls sit talking in the ill-famed cottage of that peeping old pander, Mrs. Vosper; at the gentle love-madness of Luke Bird; at the formidable scene of the opening of Ada Kiddle's grave; or at the blasting of the great oak tree that had sheltered so many lustings—it should be plain that writing and visualization like this come, not from any effort to startle, but from the natural, the logical, compulsion of a coherent spiritual revelation. It is this which makes Mr. Powys a memorable allegorist, and keeps his still restricted body of readers always expectant.

An Argentine Novelist

BLACK VALLEY. By HUGO WAST. Translated by HERMAN and MIRIAM HESPELT. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

IT is pleasant to find the best Latin-American novels still being rendered into English for American readers. Just after the war a considerable number were translated, the best-advertised, like Graça Aranha's “Canaan,” were not always very good, but they introduced us to the mind and manners of South America. Hugo Wast, whose real name is Gustavo Martinez Zuviria, is the most successful of Argentine writers; his books have been rendered into German, Italian, and Polish, his novel “Stone Desert” won an Argentine prize of \$30,000, and this present story has been crowned by the Spanish Academy.

To anyone who finds Blasco Ibáñez interesting and profitable “Black Valley” may be cordially commended. If it is below the Spaniard at his best, it is more than equal to his average level; and in theme and method it recalls him. There is the same violent action, marked by jealousy, lust, and murder; there is the same full and careful depiction of an unusual geographic and social setting. The sun-scorched, frost-bitten region where the pampas yield to the Andean foothills, the great ranchers, the peons and herders, the reign of lawless individualism, the conflict of man and beast, the duels of rivals in love and in land-acquisition—these are the elements of the novel. It is a tragic story. Two rich estate owners are parted by a bitter feud; the chieftain of the one has carried on a secret love affair with a daughter of the other, and from this there springs a series of agonizing complications. In the end murder and sudden death have their way with several of the principal characters, and the curtain falls in gloom. Even a boy and a girl, who had theretofore seemed fortunate, and whose attachment seemed destined to a happy ending, are ruthlessly torn apart. Yet violent and blood-drenched though the story is, it is saved from being melodrama by the skill and adequacy of the motivation.

What the reader will longest remember, however, is not the plot or the characters. It is the background of Hugo Wast's story; his picture of the wild foothills of the Andes, and his study of the primitive society of mountaineers and peons and imperious overlords of the land. It is a book which all those interested in South America will find well worth reading.

The BOWLING GREEN

The Folder

FELIX RIESENBERG in his lively little book of sea sketches called "Shipmates" reminds us that the magnetic character of a metal hull is strongly affected by the direction in which it was laid down in the shipyard. If a ship's keel is laid down due North and South her compass will need quite different adjustment from that of a ship laid down East and West.

One has sometimes wondered whether anything of the same sort may be true of human beings.

It once struck me that an amusing story could be written of a man whose mother worked in a compass laboratory before he was born. He was so strongly polarized that it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could move in an East or West direction, and always in moments of stress proceeded due North. He became a realtor in New York and amassed a huge fortune.

I am inclined to agree with Vincent Starrett who says (in his introduction to "Fourteen Great Detective Stories," in the Modern Library) that he believes Mr. Austin Freeman's Dr. Thorndyke "the best detective since Sherlock Holmes." But I repeat that Mr. Footner's Madame Storey is far too little known. Chesterton's Father Brown is a bit too extravagant for my taste, though the conception is admittedly a fine one. But even the greatest detective writers usually forget something: Poe, for instance, in The Purloined Letter, forgot that men do not smoke pipes in the dark.

Ejected from a sleeping cart at Back Bay Station at half past six in the morning, it is too late to return to bed and too early to do anything in particular. So, after coffee and doughnuts at a sandwich shop near Copley Square, I fulfilled a long-unsatisfied impulse to find out what are all those names carved on the front of the Boston Public Library. I was pleased to find there my old friend GAIUS, whose Institutes I once had to brood over in a course on Roman Law and whose grievous axiom *Res perit domino* seems thoroughly confirmed by life. MARCUS AURELIUS I observed was one of the very few whose names are given two lines of space: it is usually the platitude merchant who gets the best of it in the end. SANSOVINO was a very pretty name of which I know nothing, but it reminded me that a Correspondence College in Rochester, N. Y., sent me lately the following offer:

BE A PROHIBITION AGENT. \$1,800 TO \$3,000 FIRST YEAR. Men 25 to 65. We offer this course to you at only \$27.50 cash. This examination will be held throughout the country within a very short time.

I was wondering just what sort of accomplishments would be tested in the examination, when over my shoulder I heard an appealing voice: "How about helping a fellow to a plate of beans?" and I knew I was really in Boston.

A parent of statistical mind (it was Old John Mistletoe in fact) once tried to figure out what was Par in a normal family with, say, four children, two dogs, an elderly automobile, and the other adminicles of life. His calculations, carefully set down over a period of ten years, averaged out as follows:—

- Every 18.15 minutes a toy is lost—
- Every 21.03 minutes a question is asked—
- Every 24 minutes a telephone rings—
- Every 33 minutes a parent is waked up—
- Every 46 minutes a tool is mislaid—
- Every 48 minutes a dog has a fit of barks—
- Every 62 minutes a picture has to be hung—
- Every 78 minutes something goes wrong with the plumbing—
- Every 86 minutes someone comes to the door to try to sell something—
- Every 91 minutes a button comes off—
- Every 110 minutes someone has to finish the spinach—
- Every 130 minutes someone has to catch a train—
- Every 150 minutes there is a bill to be paid—
- Every 7 days a Funny Paper has to be arbitrated.

I don't remember the exact publication date of Dickens's Christmas Carol, but one of the very first presentation copies must have been the one now in the Andrew D. White Library at Cornell University. It was dated 17 December, 1843, and the author's inscription says "Given to W. M. Thackeray by Charles Dickens whom he made very happy once a long way from home." Probably some of our Dickens experts, such as Mr. John Eckel, could tell us to what particular episode that refers?

Tyngsboro, Mass., writes asking for help in naming a restaurant. "This summer we (husband and self) are to have a restaurant at Dennis, on Cape Cod, for the workers at the Cape Playhouse. The place must have a distinctly theatrical flavor, most important of all the name must be theatre-y. In case, while at the icebox, your imagination plays around the idea of naming such a place, I should be grateful if you would forward the inspiration."

Brooklyn Heights writes:—

You might be interested to know that the old building at the corner of Cranberry and Fulton Streets, Brooklyn, where Walt Whitman (according to an item I once read in the old Bowling Green) printed his Leaves of Grass, has just been demolished. Only the doors to the old bar-room are still standing, and they will go soon. Doubtless to make way for a slick yellow apartment house. The only wonder is that Brooklyn has kept her immunity so long, and hence kept her shabby old homely atmosphere so well. Did you know the old Fulton Ferry building beneath the bridge? The quintessence of the jig-saw gas-mantle stove-pipe era, when men were not afraid to wear stove-pipe hats and think (or write, in Walt's case) in terms of moral grandeur! But alas, it burned a year or two ago.

By the way, I once told the late Joseph Pennell about the Cranberry-Fulton building as the site of Walt's printing, and as he claimed to have illustrated a book on Walt's Brooklyn days and had never heard of this printing shop he strenuously denied its authenticity. But then, he was rather given to strenuous denials of other people's ideas, whether he knew anything about them or not. And so I have always chosen to believe that there and nowhere else the immortal Leaves were first printed. Artistic truth is so vastly superior to literal truth, anyway; and that little red brick warehouse with the saloon on the ground floor and the L rattling by the second story and all the pathetic bums and hobos from the Fulton Street lodging houses drifting about the hideous and fantastic plaza outside, has artistic truth to back its claims, whatever the cold facts.

As your guest at the rechristening of the *Tusitala* some years before, I suppose I should have thanked you before this for a delightful and unique afternoon. Will you ever forget that thunder squall, so neatly synchronized with the bursting of the champagne? I suppose the pleasure cruises were too good ever to come true in this world. But in the current Report of the Governor General of the Panama Canal (a booklet well worth study if you can read between the sober statistical lines), I noticed an item "Tugboat and dry-dock assistance to the sailing ship *Tusitala*, \$1,000," or some such sum: I forget the actual words and figures, but it gave me a queer little thrill, remembering so vividly that hot afternoon and the hilarious party aboard her, to stumble across her name in such an unexpected place.

R. D. TURNBULL.

It is some years since I have visited Fulton and Cranberry Streets, but my recollection is that the old print-shop of the Rome Brothers (number 98 Cranberry) was across the street from the building which our correspondent describes as now demolished. The old printing-shop building used to have a fruit-stand and barber shop on the ground floor. The building opposite was the saloon: I well remember a sign over the door that said BEN'S PURE LAGER.

I hope, incidentally, that we may soon hear that Jo Davidson's fine statue of Walt has been assigned the kind of site that it deserves. I have seen in Mr. Davidson's studio some fine composite photos which show the effect the monument would have if set up on a rocky knoll in Central Park, where it would afford a thrilling profile against blue void.

In regard to the *Tusitala*, she is said to be in excellent health and spirits, and under the generous ownership of Mr. James A. Farrell she makes regular voyages as a cargo carrier between here and Pacific ports.

Speaking of seafaring matters, in an introduction to the Modern Library edition of H. M. Tomlinson's "The Sea and the Jungle," I suggested that perhaps it was at Shireff's wine cellar, Ludgate Hill, that Mr. Tomlinson and the Skipper had that important drink that eventually led to a voyage up the Amazon. I learn that it was at the Black Dog pub in Shoe Lane. I mention this for the benefit of any romantic clients who may be in London this summer and might desire a sentimental drink. Another thing that has often occurred to me: I wish someone would go to Newcastle-on-Tyne and write the

Green a piece about the second-hand bookshops of that city. I have never been to Newcastle, but I get catalogues from several booksellers there, and they are extraordinarily interesting.

I am disappointed that no high-spirited client has volunteered to subscribe to the "Sincere Friendship Club" which I inadvertently discovered some time ago. My idea was that some cheerful investigator could really learn a great deal about Literary Tastes by getting into correspondence with some of these desiderating ladies and, in the guise of a Sincere Friend, ascertain what books they like. In their specifications they usually mention their private fortune, real estate holdings, shapeliness, ability to drive a car, lack of religious dogmatism, and pally disposition; but none ever speaks of a taste for reading. Yet, as Coventry Patmore remarked in a dissertation on this subject, to find out what books a woman enjoys is the most important preliminary.

Here are some of the ladies who subscribe to the Sincere Friendship Club:—

Neat, Pleasant Scotch-Irish widow by death, no family, age 57, 5 ft. 5, wt. 150, auburn hair, blue eyes, Presbyterian faith, good character and lead a clean life. Am very lonely and would appreciate and marry a good man. I have plenty of this world's goods, I seek company only. All a man needs to do is step into a comfortable home, sit down to a well-spread table, and not a dollar expense to him. I don't ask a man to support me.

Have a cozy, comfortable and inviting home. Would adore a real man, who is looking for a real loving lady, would give him the best of care and attention, if he would appreciate the comforts of a real home. I am very lonely as I sit home alone. American Catholic Lady, age 42, wt. 130, black hair, brown eyes, good education, nice looking, play piano. Worth over \$20,000, widow by death. Dear Friend—Please write for early marriage.

Am a good Friend and a wonderful Pal—True home-lover and a good housekeeper. Have a beautiful home, also summer home at the Sea Shore. Have the best of character and high standing. College education, very attractive, age 53, 5 ft. 7, wt. 130, brown hair, hazel eyes, Baptist. Worth over \$18,000. Would be happy to hear from a home-loving educated gentleman.

Have a most beautiful estate, large home, worth \$60,000, no encumbrances, no debts. Refined American Lady, perfect health, age 44, 5 ft. 2, wt. 145, brown hair, blue eyes, very nice looking, good figure, Protestant. I want a good kind husband, one that I can love with all my heart and one that will love and appreciate a good true wife.

Honestly and Sincerely—I seek a real home-loving husband. Have a nice 11-room modern home worth \$15,000, nicely located. Educated English-American Lady, age 36, 5 ft. 6, wt. 132, brown hair, blue eyes, above the average in appearance, social personality. I accumulated my property with no assistance except my own brains. Am not stingy or extravagant.

Slender, shapely, pretty, College educated, refined, American girl, age 22, 5 ft. 6, wt. 116, dark brown curly hair, deep blue eyes, musical education, Methodist faith, worth \$10,000, will inherit \$75,000. Am a worthy, self-respecting, honorable and trustworthy young woman.

Very neat and attractive, highly educated American girl, age 24, 5 ft. 3, wt. 125, brown hair and eyes, shapely figure, Methodist, have an ideal modern home of my own, am worth at least \$60,000, will inherit \$20,000 more. Will marry. Character, intelligence, honesty and ability mean more to me than means. Who will write?

I learn that it costs very little to enroll in the Sincere Friendship Club for three months, and the Bowling Green will gladly pay the enrollment fee for any client who will undertake a discreet investigation into the literary tastes of the lady members. The Green however assumes no further responsibility, in the event of any sentimental researcher becoming too deeply allured by large inheritances or shapeliness.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Ever since the publication in 1921, in five volumes, of Sir Aurel Stein's "Serindia," containing his account of his explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China on behalf of the Indian Government (now out of print) it has been known that he had in preparation another work. This will be published towards the end of the year—probably in October—under the title "Innermost Asia." It will fill four volumes, two of text, two of plates, plans and maps.

Eyre and Spottiswoode, who, as printers to the British crown, have hitherto been mainly concerned with official publications, are about to enter the field as general publishers.