

crushed the real man. Still, in his greatest misery, he never bleats of capitalism, or wage-slaves, or revolution. The actuality is too intense to permit theories. For that very reason, this novel that is his history becomes powerful in its indictment of the system that necessitates the sacrifice of such a man.

We resent a tendency to baldness in Mr. Walker's style, and we wish that he had chosen to give his novel more movement. Undeniably the unfolding tragedy is a little slow and monotonous. But there is much to praise in "Bread and Fire," as well as much to make us vastly uncomfortable. The book's chief asset, its surface dispassionateness, allows it to be as palatable to the readers of *The Nation* as to the readers of the Boston *Evening Transcript*. Neither group will be offended. Mr. Walker may well feel that he has rendered his cause a service, and that at the same time he has written a novel of distinct merit.

O'Neil's Achievement

THE WHITE ROOSTER AND OTHER POEMS. By GEORGE O'NEIL. New York: Boni & Liveright. 1927.

ANY casual mention of an O'Neil is taken as a reference to Eugene O'Neill, America's most brilliant and most uneven playwright. There is, however, another O'Neil (minus one "l") in the field of letters, a younger man who suddenly, in one stride as it were, has stepped into the front rank of the younger poets. This review of "The White Rooster" comes regrettably late, but since its publication the book has been read and reread with increasing pleasure by this commentator. The felicity of George O'Neil's phrase is most unusual, his technique is now entirely mature, the poems here assembled are the true gold. He has learned well that

Beauty's a charger vaulting up a void
With veins all checked in rigid spasm.
He hears no timid foal, with entrails cloyed,
Neigh in the flowery chasm.

In other words, his muse has knit up its sinews; and if sometimes O'Neil's floriate decoration has a touch too much of the metallic or seems too brittle, we may at least marvel at the infinitely dexterous interplay of words. But there is really far more than this; there is a fierce zest for life almost cruel. The first verse of the poem called "Snake," for instance, rivets one's attention with the art of its language, but the last verse ripples the spine. In "Fable," the unicorn's hoof, haunch, and head that

swung down into a glassy heap
And smashed it with a sideward sweep

brings the frost fume of actual winter into one's throat, and, magical as are, in "Inlander," the lines of description,

Her hair hung down all willow-wise
And shook a golden sleet

it is in the intense expression of foreboding in the last verse that the salient power of the poem resides.

"Garden Incident" we have heard read with keen delight by no less a poet than Edna St. Vincent Millay, and particularly remember how her voice lingered on the lines

The hound that runs alone
Has turned himself to stone.
The urns upon the wall
That let the water fall
Have whispered, dripped, desisted.
The basin that was wide
Has narrowed on a side,
The marble edge has twisted.

When O'Neil observes natural things his precision of description is sometimes amazing. Who can forget his "railing" locust, or the crow that "cried apprehension down his wing"? His "Ode to a Frog" in which he ejaculates, "Green little ogre in the poisoned stream," and speaks of "this little sluggard's bellows" also strikes out "the quivering distraction of a star." He sees a tortoise move "up copper sands . . . an onyx cluster." He knows

The way a fragile birch went up and broke
Into a snare of iridescent smoke,

sees "free brown rabbits sitting cautiously," dreams in a bus of a fisherman by "the bright Ligurian sea" till

down the fellow's thighs, all wet,
The morning glued a golden vine.

These expressions rise from him continually and spontaneously. He conjures with phrase. He vividly evokes actuality. The musical movement of his verse, in its delicate arrangement of syllables, shows

him a fine lyricist. The improvement over former work of his own is almost startling. In fact, "The White Rooster" is brilliant performance, where there was always promise.

Here's to Crime

(Continued from page 606)

to entire populations, seem natural enough little varmint. Super-detectives—well, the same. But every addict develops certain prejudices. The delicate art of forgery still leaves me cold. "A gang of international crooks" arouses faint nausea. How I abhor hidden wills! Barratry or arson I should not seek of my own accord. No, not even—take it away, my dear,—burglary. I WANT MURDER! It is Mr. Wright's conclusion also. For he thinks it not only the most serious crime but the most absorbing public topic, "something commensurate with the amount of mental energy which a good detective novel compels (one) to expend." Wright is right, and that's all there is to it!

We return to where we were before we were so rudely interrupted. I shall refer to all my favorites. First, next to those I have mentioned, Austin J. Small. What does it signify, the impossible feat of Kellard Maine's escape from the villain Vorst's under-river cellar in "The Death Maker"? Both this story and "The Man They Couldn't Arrest" attain such a pace and such a pitch of excitement that one hurdles lightly over such matters. It is the same with the preposterous "crashing" of the airplane into "The Pretty Ann" at the end of Edgar Wallace's "The Traitors' Gate," flinging out both fliers unhurt and full of beans into the aftermath of the bloody fracas abroad ship. These are flaws, bad flaws. But, at his best, in each work, the writer has commandeered three virtues: speed, atmosphere, clarity.

Austin J. Small and Edgar Wallace are both possessed of hectic, small-boyish invention. Small is the more ingenious, Wallace the more atmospheric. They are super-dime novelists and extremely good of their kind.

I like desperate figures flitting the desolate downs through resonant thunderstorms. I like pea-soup fogs on London, and, as Chesterton puts it "the finding of a foe." I like the extraordinary amount of whisky and soda that English writers make their male characters consume in the course of a breathless chase. In fact, it sometimes seems to me a mortal wonder that anyone keeps on searching at all with that fascinating "tantalus" forever at their elbow! I like Scotland Yard. Let me burst into song and declaim that—the C. I. D. means more to me than the whole old Homicide Bureau. But then, that's prejudice. The prejudice of the addict. I inherited it from another addict who can never possibly bear any detective story without an English locale.

This darned article is just all messed up with digressions. Where was I? Not back in the days of the old *Strand Magazine*? No, no; I was coming down to R. Austin Freeman. And what a man! You can have your J. S. Fletcher with his four books, at a minimum, per year. To me he is writing himself out. You can even have Sherlock Holmes with his Case Book, by this time; "We are not once the strength that in old days—" Yes, you may even have "Father Brown," in whom I have often taken vast delight. But give me, oh give me, and how I wish you would, the forthcoming "A Certain Dr. Thorndyke." And read Freeman's latest before that; "The Cat's Eye," and his collected short stories. Yet better still go back and read "The Singing Bone." Thorndyke is, again according to Wright (who is always popping up), "the purely scientific detective"—and just contrast him with Arthur B. Reeve's "Craig Kennedy," pseudo-scientist! Convincing detail versus flagrant concoction.

I have no space here to mention my vastly-admired Mrs. Belloc Lowndes. So I shall. One of the primer lessons in detective and mystery story reading would be the prescription of "The Chink in the Armour" and "The Lodger," for all earnest neophytes. And by the end of next month you will be able to read her "The Story of Ivy." Then there is H. C. Bailey's Reggie Fortune ("Mr. Fortune, Please!"), also ranking "A" and (pardon me, Mr. Wright, but I have been giving you a lot of publicity!) so far superior to the affected "Philo Vance." And then there is—well, the late Isabel

Ostrander, so good in her time, and (to my mind) so far excelling the classic Anna Katharine Green. But, though Isabel wrote under several names, and in reams, I haven't read anything posthumous of hers in the past year. Who else? A good many newcomers. Henry Wade is not a newcomer. Wright knows about him, and "The Verdict of You All" has been out in England for some time, though now first published here. It is a tale with a sardonic sting. "Interference," by Roland Pertwee, is from a play that made a great hit in London and still runs at the Lyceum in New York. Pertwee has made a rattling good novel of it. There is "The Vanishing Men," by G. McLeod Winsor, and "The Last Trap," by Sinclair Gluck, and "The Professor's Poison," by Neil Gordon. The first exploits a new scientific discovery called "levium," a form of matter with which all of us were hitherto unfamiliar—which rather begs the question. Yet the story has thrills. The second has such a "button, button, who's got the button" ending that it makes you wish to cry "Fraud!", especially as the final culprit proves to be a poor unsuspecting China-boy who hasn't really figured in the story at all. And yet the author displays unusual invention and agility. The third is chiefly remarkable for a peculiar character with a decidedly humorous aspect, and for a strikingly original conception that, after much breath-taking, resolves itself into a rather long-drawn-out stern chase and climax at Geneva in close conjunction with the League of Nations. Yet Stein's last card is not badly played.

So I exhaust my first choices, and now I can merely append a summary. Here is my winnowing. It is governed by my own prejudices, naturally. I have read, among some good ones, some extremely poor stories. Of these I must, in all honesty, list "The Return of Blackshirt," by Bruce Graeme (Dodd, Mead), "Findings Is Keepings," by John Boyd Clarke (Clode) and "By Night," by Robert Clay (Lippincott). They are pretty terrible. "Find the Clock," by Harry Stephen Keeler (Dutton), is not quite so bad, and the author knows newspaper offices; but it is bad enough at that. If we come down to publishers, the present firm of Doubleday, Doran seems to deserve precedence. Dodd, Mead would rank next. Alfred A. Knopf has the most Fletcher titles. Dutton, besides H. C. Bailey, promises new work by Walter S. Masterman, in "2 L O," Ben Ames Williams in "The Dreadful Night," Keeler again, and Clement Wood in "The Shadow from the Bogue." Macmillan has Eden Phillpotts, Harrington Hext, (is he Phillpotts also?) and Joseph Gollomb. Stokes promises a new murder mystery by a writer called "Molly Thynne." Harpers is playing a "stunt" with their new "The Old Dark House," by the highly intelligent J. B. Priestley. Dodd, Mead, again, is about to exploit John Rhode's "Dr. Priestly," (not at all the same man!). Lincoln MacVeagh, of the Dial Press, has had an Edgar Wallace, a Bertram Atkey, and an Anthony Gilbert, among others. And so, dear readers, on another page of this issue, in more succinct form, you will find all that I otherwise have to say.

RECOMMENDED WITH FEW RESERVATIONS

- *THE GREAT DETECTIVE STORIES (For the Introduction). Willard Huntington Wright. Scribners.
- *THE GREENE MURDER CASE (as it promises). S. S. Van Dine. Scribners.
- *GREEN SANDALS. Cecil Champaign Lewis. Doubleday, Doran.
- *THE BELLAMY TRIAL. Frances Noyes Hart. Doubleday, Doran.
- *NO OTHER TIGER. A. E. W. Mason. Doubleday, Doran.
- *THE MAN THEY COULDN'T ARREST. Austin J. Small. Doubleday, Doran.
- *A CERTAIN DR. THORNDYKE (sight unseen). R. Austin Freeman. Dodd, Mead.
- *THE CAT'S EYE. R. Austin Freeman. Dodd, Mead.
- *MR. FORTUNE, PLEASE! H. C. Bailey. Dutton.
- *THE VERDICT OF YOU ALL. Henry Wade. Payson & Clark.
- *INTERFERENCE. Roland Pertwee. Houghton Mifflin.
- *THE VANISHING MEN. G. McLeod Winsor. William Morrow, Inc.
- *THE LAST TRAP. Sinclair Gluck. Dodd, Mead.
- *THE PROFESSOR'S POISON. Neil Gordon. Harcourt, Brace.
- *THE HOUSE OF DR. EDWARDES. (More strictly a mystery and horror story. But you should not miss it.) Francis Beeding. Little, Brown.

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The Play of the Week

By OLIVER M. SAYLER

THE BRIDAL VEIL, a Pantomime-Ballet in Three Acts. By ARTHUR SCHNITZLER, with Music by ERNST VON DOHNANYI. Produced by ELIZABETH ANDERSON-IVANTSOFF for the American Laboratory Theatre, 222 East Fifty-Fourth Street, New York, January 26, 1928.

Reviewed from Performance and Manuscript

LAST fall when I began this series of criticisms of contemporary plays in the light of their literary values as qualified by purely theatrical expedients and transmuted thereby into an independent art which is not merely literature, but inevitably related to it, I filed a claim for ballet as innate if remote participant in this esthetic process. The word, it seemed to me, has a vital, essential, and more or less significant function to perform in ballet, the word as concrete conceptual idiom as contrasted with form, color, sound, or movement in the abstract. The word is necessary, in the first place, purely as a mechanical medium of exchange to convey the thought and purpose of the author to the performer. Only an author who could turn ballet regisseur and illustrate in person the workings of his creative imagination could dispense with it. The word, in the second place, is eminently desirable, if not strictly necessary, to insure comprehension of the author's idea on the part of the audience. In this sense, the word becomes interpretation, "program," in contrast to the word as mechanism, and hence partakes more obviously of, and lends itself more freely to, literature.

To illustrate and point these general reflections concerning the word-bridge between ballet, pantomime, or other forms of wordless drama and the literary art, the American Laboratory Theatre has conveniently produced in its new home in East Fifty-Fourth Street, as the third item in its third season, Arthur Schnitzler's pantomime-ballet, "The Bridal Veil" ("The Veil of Pierrette") with the original score by Ernst von Dohnanyi, for many years a favorite in European repertoires and the first notable production of the now-celebrated Kamerny Theatre in Moscow.



I hope that no one who values a brave and intelligent experimental spirit or who prizes an unusual and sensuously exhilarating evening in the theatre regardless of experiment, will be swerved from attendance by what I have to say in regard to the literary shortcomings and neglected opportunities of "The Bridal Veil." That aspect of ballet, after all, though it is an integral part of the subject and the one chiefly pertinent to this series of criticisms, is subsidiary in general importance to the direct appeal to the senses and emotions through the other abstract and non-literary media of the art.

On these general scores, there can be little but gratitude and praise for the Laboratory's achievement. Elizabeth Anderson-Ivantsoff, bringing to her task the skill of one of Moscow's most highly regarded prima ballerinas and a pliant and evocative pedagogic talent, has fired a group of young American dancers with individual insight into and mastery of their rôles and with an ease of ensemble playing that insures a continuity of action steadily alive and plastic. There is vigor here where vigor is demanded, tragedy that cuts clean and avoids melodrama, and a lyric atmosphere over all which is never permitted to become mawkish or prettily sentimental. Schnitzler's simple retelling of the legend of Pierrot, Pierrette, and the Bridegroom, and von Dohnanyi's score are fused by the choreography. This wedding of two arts to make a third is blessed and perfected by James Reynolds's boldly original and exotic but strangely blending costumes which flash against his happily conceived settings. On the score of performance, I could wish only that a string quartet had replaced a single piano to give rhythmic and tonal variety and the strangely vibrant and dramatic quality of that musical medium.

Literary negligence in the American version of "The Bridal Veil" is excusable and harmless on the first count of the word in ballet. Schnitzler, it is true, provided in the original German text a running commentary on the action in succinct, workmanlike form which, nevertheless, has literary dignity and variety if not reading value. He even indicates snatches of speech corresponding to the action, a phrase or a remark which he expects to be translated from dialogue into plastic expression, gesture

or movement. The prompt book or scenario, as it were, of the American version, which, by the way, has been freely adapted by Mme. Anderson, came into existence after the fact and then only in the baldest and most technical of stage directions. But the case differs. Mme. Anderson embodied her conceptions in person without the need of a word link, whereas Schnitzler had to work through a second party as regisseur.

It is on the second count of the word in ballet—its function as interpretation, as "program"—that I feel the Laboratory Theatre has been remiss. How much more effective, how much more emotionally satisfying, the production would be with such an inspired and inspiring poetic résumé of the action, we can only surmise. The old classic ballet, of course, could afford to ignore this literary legend. Absolute dancing—the pas seul, the pas de deux, the entire corps—has no story. It is esthetically pleasing only in the most abstract sense. It can mean to the spectator anything which he brings to it at the moment. Even a title is gratuitous. But when the pantomime-ballet, the dance-drama, the ballet with a story, emerged, it brought with it the opportunity if not the necessity for the word, for a literary résumé. In this sense, the pantomime-ballet corresponds to program music. The practitioners of the latter frequently find inspiration in an already created work of literature—a poem or a passage of descriptive or narrative prose. If the process is reversed, they are usually careful to provide the interpretive "program" in a form worthy of their own musical contribution. Such a "program" is lacking in "The Bridal Veil." A single inept and banal paragraph attempts lamely to do duty for it. It is not too late to fill this gap in an otherwise exquisite contribution to the season's theatrical record. But it must be filled by a poet or a master of lyric prose worthy of the collaborating author, composer, regisseur, and designer.

I have said that the pantomime-ballet brought with it the opportunity or the necessity for the word. I have purposely phrased the case thus alternatively. For I recognize the legitimacy of the contention of the newer school of dance-dramatists that the pantomime-ballet can and should be so self-evident in its meaning as to need no interpretation—a kind of motion picture without sub-titles. I venture to doubt, however, whether any but connoisseurs of the art can ever successfully waive this literary key. And even were it possible to do so, an appropriate "program" should be a pleasant and unobtrusive grace note or l'envoi.



PLAYS OF THE SEASON

Still Running in New York

BURLESQUE. By Arthur Hopkins and George Manker Walters. Plymouth Theatre. The personal equation beneath pink tights and putty nose.

THE GOOD HOPE. By Herman Heijermans. Civic Repertory Theatre. A European repertory veteran ably revived on our only repertory stage.

PORGY. By Dorothy and DuBose Heywood. Republic Theatre. The rhythms of negro life interpreted in pulsing drama.

ESCAPE. By John Galsworthy. Booth Theatre. Leslie Howard et al. in the dramatist's latest—and last—play.

THE IVORY DOOR. By A. A. Milne. Charles Hopkins Theatre. An ironic and whimsical fairy tale for grown-ups.

AND SO TO BED. By J. B. Fagan. Bijou Theatre. A satiric and pungent comedy based on a presumable day in the amorous life of Samuel Pepys, Esq.

THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA. By Bernard Shaw. Guild Theatre. A debated and debating play set squarely on its feet at last by sound acting and discerning direction.

THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS. By Sean O'Casey. Hudson Theatre. The Irish Players lift the curtain on a Dublin tenement under the rebellion.

PARIS BOUND. By Philip Barry. Music Box. A young American playwright comes into his own with a triumph of the casual.

THE ROYAL FAMILY. By George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber. Selwyn Theatre. A wise, witty, and tender comedy of the actor at home—back of "back stage."

MARCO MILLIONS. By Eugene O'Neill. Guild Theatre, alternate weeks with "The Doctor's Dilemma." Venice's star travelling salesman is counting his profits when Romance knocks at the door.

STRANGE INTERLUDE. By Eugene O'Neill. John Golden Theatre. The Theatre Guild as experimental laboratory for O'Neill's newest, longest, most original, and most provocative play.

Three years of effort by the directors of the Newberry Library to acquire for Chicago the famous Biblioteca Canale of Crespano—more than twenty thousand volumes on the Italian art, literature, music and history of the Renaissance—came to an unsuccessful conclusion recently when the Mussolini Government denied authorization for it.

Hugo the Romantic

VICTOR HUGO, THE MAN AND THE POET. By WILLIAM F. GIESE. New York: The Dial Press, 1926. \$4.

Reviewed by CHRISTIAN GANSS

THERE are few recent volumes on French literature which I have read with more interest than this study of Victor Hugo by Professor William F. Giese. It has many admirable qualities. It is brilliantly written by one who wears his erudition lightly. It deals, as professorial work in this field does only too rarely, with the larger aspects of the problem. Yet it does not altogether please me. Perhaps I am finicky but my objection to it rests upon a feeling that the spirit which underlies it is such as to make it not so much a critical study of Victor Hugo as a satire upon him.

There is no denying that in certain respects it is an advantage to be hearty in one's hatreds. They make interesting reading even though they tend to vitiate criticism. From the first page to the last I have the suspicion that Professor Giese's attitude toward Hugo is the attitude of the elder Dumas toward beans. The author of "The Three Guardsmen" is reported to have repeated with gusto his enthusiastic disapproval of this vegetable. "I do not like beans and I am glad that I do not like them for if I did like them I'd eat them—and I detest them."

Professor Giese is proud of his distaste for most of Hugo's verses. He has a right to be if he so desires. Academic freedom permits it, but it is well to keep in mind that *superbia* is a sin not only in the church but in criticism, and I am afraid Professor Giese is prouder of his dislike than he can afford to be in case he wishes to be regarded as a judicial critic of Hugo and the French Romantics.

Professor Giese calls his volume, "Victor Hugo, the Man and the Poet." He devotes his first chapter to proving that Hugo was not much of a man and the remaining chapters to proving he was not much of a poet. He would have been more candid and his book would have been more nearly satisfactory had he taken as his title, "Victor Hugo at His Worst." This subject he treats with such mastery that he occasionally succeeds in making him out worse even than he actually was.

The place of Victor Hugo in literature, as Professor Giese sees it, is a much less important one than has generally been accorded to the author of "La Légende des Siècles." Had Professor Giese set himself this problem and had he dispassionately made his study and reached this conclusion, few readers would object. I have the feeling, however, that he began with his conclusion, that he deliberately set himself the task of belittling Hugo in the interest of a thesis. To shoot at this target he has been willing, as the Frenchmen say, to make his arrows of any wood. In the process, Professor Giese has shown himself to be one of the ablest men of letters in the American academic world. He is skilled in the art of fence. He thrusts the moment the lumbering Victor's guard is down. He deftly cuts out a purple patch, spits it on the point of his foil, and with a flourish shows you that it is only a gaudy little rag after all. He reminds one of a deft toreador, with no effort outwitting a blindly infuriated bull. At times he seems almost heartless, but it is entertaining no end and will meet with approval particularly by those who are tired of old admirations, who delight in having their Lives of Washington brought up to date, who are self-consciously modern, who are self-consciously superior. This a bit strange since Professor Giese is in no sense a modernist. He believes in the rule of reason and in the classical decalogue generally. He seems to be one of those Puritans of letters whose principles make it impossible for them to enjoy very much in the way of modern literature, and who compensate themselves by becoming almost romantically enthusiastic over the damnations which they mete out to the innumerable failures in the literary life. To read Professor Giese, one would imagine that verses like Hugo's grew on every bush. The result is paradoxical. Professor Giese treats Hugo as Mencken treats President Harding. If he lacks the Baltimorean's open-hearted beef-eating gusto, he far outdoes him in finesse. He does not belabor his victim with insults. He resorts to raillery, but the raillery is rarely good natured. Professor Giese is disposed to say it with sneers.

This is the more unfortunate as Professor Giese