

architect today faces is the fact that he does not have time to think. The really successful man as a rule accepts more work than he can comfortably do himself and runs a sort of factory, giving a little of his thought and time to each of many jobs instead of much to one; and even were the best architect in America to have but one job in his office, it is probable, nay, almost certain, that he would not have time to think it out as it should be thought out, because of the requirement for speed made by the owner of every tall building, the economic loss in delay of construction of the project costing from \$5,000,000 to \$20,000,000, is so great that no American owner has yet given an architect time to do the problem well, and the best efforts which have yet been made have resulted from cumulative experience added to natural ability in design.

This necessity for haste—and it is a necessity—is incompatible with a very high degree of quality in any work. It is the greatest handicap under which our architecture suffers, and one which is neither realized by the public nor mentioned in Mr. Tallmadge's book.

Isadora Duncan

MY LIFE. By ISADORA DUNCAN. New York: Boni & Liveright. 1928. \$5.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

CERTAINLY Isadora Duncan had the quality of greatness. There was nobility in her dream of dancing the spirit of America, something more than mere artistic sectarianism in her lonely, but successful revolt against the classical ballet and the spiritual and social servitudes which it implied. She not only gave the world beauty, but she was creator, discoverer, and pioneer.

There was a certain objective "greatness" in the mere breadth and variety of her career—the way in which she swept across Europe, the numbers of distinguished persons on whom she impressed her will and her charm; the waves of dancers, more or less Greek, whom she started leaping and waving their arms all over the world. And along with these great qualities there was also smallness. She could sneer at her rival artists with the energy of the most commonplace representatives of that conventional theatre which she despised. Humility and reverence—unless, perhaps, for her own artistic dreams—knew her not. The world not only owed her a living, as the saying goes, but adulation, and if this was not promptly forthcoming—at least in the later phases of her career—everyone responsible, from individuals, through the theatre-going public, to the nation itself, in which at the moment she happened to be, were showered with her scorn.

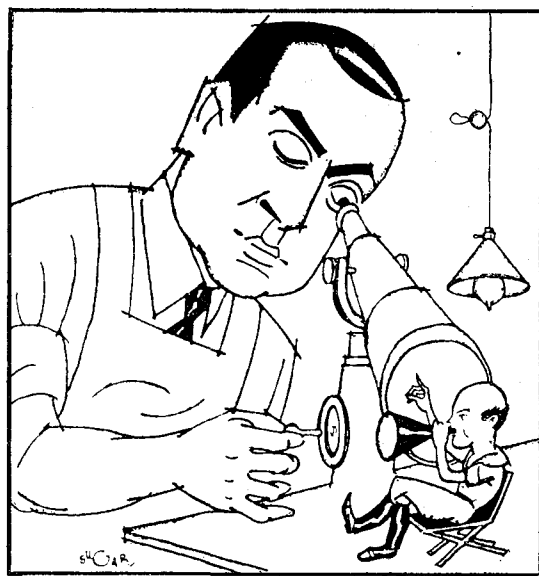
The Duncan Clan, as Isadora sometimes speaks of them, had admirable and unusual qualities, but a sense of humor (*i. e.*, proportion) toward themselves, and ordinary common sense, were not among them. If the Great Isadora, at her best, represented one swing of the Duncan pendulum, then Raymond in his Greek robe, with his bare legs and bare arms, dragging his hapless children similarly swathed in costumes intended for the isles of the Ægean, through the wind-swept and raucous canyons of a below-zero Manhattan, was at the other. And if Isadora, when at her best, swung far above the banal attitudinizing of the lesser members of her family, she was nevertheless, in her weaker moments, not incapable of sharing it.

Devotees speak rapturously of Isadora's freedom. Free of what? . . . of shoes and stockings, yes; of various routine conventionalities; but who is free who is so constantly the slave of his own uncritical romanticism, and at any instant, at the first touch from some stray member of the opposite sex, is likely to explode like a bit of fireworks, convinced that *this* is the ideal soul, this the perfect love, this the new, complete, and consummate chapter of experience, and thus to go swishing up—up—like a skyrocket, only after an instant and a shower of sparks, to come tumbling back to earth again and the darkness of disillusion! It is possible, perhaps, to regard her innumerable loves as proof of splendor of spirit; of an idealism which nothing could vanquish and nothing satisfy, because nothing was perfect enough. But it would be easier to do so had the temporary objects on which she pinned her dreams oftener been chosen in her personality as the Great Isadora, so to say, and not so often been the flimsy esthetes who might naturally have drifted into her orbit as a lesser member of her Clan.

Were Isadora as great a writer as she was a

dancer, the irony and pathos of these recurring raptures and disillusion might, of course, be made more clear. The psychological background of each adventure, that which made it, in its particular moment, persuasive and real, might be more warmly filled in, the transitions less abrupt and meaningless. As it is, one can not follow this aimless Peerygnting about Europe without feeling, along with the tragedy both of her personal life and of her career as an artist, a frequent sense of absurdity.

Some such generalizations as these seem called for by the very spaciousness and importance of Isadora Duncan's career, however churlish they may appear as relating to this book itself. The latter, taken just as it comes, is always interesting, unaffected, frank, and touched every now and then with an unexpected humor. It starts at the very beginning, in California, with little Isadora dancing in a baby-jumper on the center-table, and follows down through that extraordinary dancing Odyssey to the moment of her departure for Soviet Russia in the belief that again she was saying goodbye to all that was worn-out and false and entering a new and more perfect world. It is just as well that this final chapter is left out, for in the adventures of this once blithe spirit, which set out to dance through life, and saw it in terms of beauty, there was already tragedy enough.



PHILIP GUEDALLA, English writer and lecturer, trying to solve one of the great American mysteries—i. e. why movie directors insist on dressing like horseback riders.

"A Chiel amang You"

CONQUISTADOR. By PHILIP GUEDALLA. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1928. \$3.

Reviewed by BERNARD DE VOTO

LISTING Mr. Guedalla's book on a private bibliography which will probably never lead to the monograph I once intended to publish, I discover that it is well past the hundred and fiftieth item. More than one hundred and fifty discussions of America by visiting Englishmen—after that number the thrill of recognition is what Mr. Watson describes as a conditioned response. I reflect on the endless shelves in Widener where I must yet search out other hundreds, and on the non-existence of books about England by American men of letters, and on the pleasure I derive from British spelling whenever I see mention of *The Covered Wagon*.

Long before the bibliography had reached one hundred and fifty, it was apparent that the genus comprised two species and that the type-specimens had been composed by Charles Dickens and Hepworth Dixon. "Conquistador" belongs to the second species—to the expertly journalistic books which announce the necessary imperfection of a three months' study of a continent and then, maintaining good nature, discover from page to page that much may be accomplished in three months. Such books exhibit more amenity than those of the Dickens tradition, but anger from Gad's Hill is rather more entertaining.

Mr. Guedalla, a historian, believes that the Indians who greeted Columbus were Sioux. He suffered a really dreadful reception at the hands of the Indiana Legislature, which required both him and Mrs. Guedalla to address it. Somewhere near Los Angeles a patriot pointed out to him the vices of the British Empire, at dinner, but, thank God, across the border from Laredo there were tanned

men of the bulldog breed bearing their burden. As a lecturer he feels sympathetically superior to the Swedish prince and is distressed by the Queen of Rumania's endorsements of cosmetics. He refuses to describe Niagara: so did Hepworth Dixon, in forty pages, and some ninety others. Is there, after all, something about Niagara?

Nearly anything, the tradition holds, will suffice for a book about America. Mr. Guedalla is not the first, by a hundred years, to offer his notebook instead of a decently constructed effort. Well, that is good journalism, and the fragmentary, unrelated impressions that attend the method may well be the most truthful way of reporting a three months' observation. A few pages of "Conquistador" are worth the reading—those that deal justly with a young American genius who has publicly explained why he must live and write in France, those that gently explain the difference between sending the Guards to Shanghai and sending the Marines to Nicaragua, those that comment on the Southern gentleman, and those that touch upon the Broadway Temple. Mr. Guedalla gets nearer New York than Mr. Ford did, by discovering that it is the only metropolis in the world with a peasant population. Of course, there is the rhetoric that we associate with him ". . . Metz in the still autumn days that watched Bazaine between the dripping trees, as the leaves fell and the last eagles of the Empire drooped miserably towards surrender." And it is informing to learn not only that America is, fundamentally, a fad of the British, but also that England's true cosmic function has been the destruction of world empires—ominously, since we prepare to understudy that Cæsar whom she sent to Doorn.

Hindu mystics attain an understanding of God's will by endlessly repeating a dull, monotonous act. After reading more than one hundred and fifty books about America by Englishmen, while the list moves on toward its first thousand, may I not be competent to reveal one divine intention? Certainly God commands some American novelist or critic to write a book about England. I can't make out just whom the nomination falls on. My preference would be either George Jean Nathan or Thomas Beer. But perhaps Omniscience has selected Sinclair Lewis.

Oriental Poets

LOTUS AND CHRYSANTHEMUM: An Anthology of Chinese and Japanese Poetry. Selected and edited by JOSEPH LEWIS FRENCH. New York: Boni & Liveright. 1927. \$7.50.

Reviewed by ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE

AN experienced reader probably grants, to start with, that all translations of poetry are necessarily vain and futile things—and then he proceeds to examine with intense curiosity every translation that gives him even the faintest hope of glimpses into an unknown language and an unfamiliar world.

That the poetry of Japan and China can ever be fully conveyed to western readers is doubtless impossible. The reason for this is not far to seek; it is accurately expressed in the words of Miss Judith Gautier, which Mr. French wisely quotes in the notes to this volume:

A charming and original effect, a quality possessed only by Chinese poetry, results from the ideographic nature of the characters; one gets a definite impression from the appearance of the writing, and an unexpected vision of the whole poem. The flowers, the forests, the streams, and the moonlight, all these present themselves before one has commenced to read. For example, in the poem of Li-Tai-Pe, "Good Fortune on the High-road," the effect at first glance is of prancing horses, and before knowing what he will say, one seems to see the poet riding among flowers.

In other words, the pictorial quality of the ideographs is an essential part of the written poem; and there must therefore be, for the instructed, a quality in Chinese poetry not so very different from the combination of word and picture that is to be found in the self-illustrated poems of William Blake. Against such a problem as this, the translator stubs his toe in vain.

There is another difficulty, growing out of the nature of Chinese poetic thought. Mr. Witter Bynner, who has worked much in this field along with his collaborator Mr. Kiang Kang-hu, confessed to me recently that all his translations of classical Chinese poetry made him unhappy.

I know (he said) that there is in the finest poetry of Asia a beauty far surpassing the poetry of Europe; I feel it just as distinctly as you feel the matchless beauty of the great Chinese paintings; but, try though I may, I ap-

parently cannot put into English words the thing I feel—the thing that is unmistakably to be found in the work of the greater Chinese poets. English and American poetry seems to me child's-play compared with the severe beauty of the Chinese—the abstention from superfluous comment, the hard selectiveness—and, mind you, all this done in perfectly colloquial language, which somehow achieves the beauty of frozen jade. How can we put that into the soft English tongue? It seems impossible.

The extreme condensation of Chinese and Japanese poetry, its hard factual quality, is completely alien to the greater richness of emotional comment which is part of the European poetic tradition. This can be illustrated by the following short poem, which has been put into English by Mr. Arthur Waley, the most learned and the most poetical of all the translators.

The Little Lady of Ch'ing-Hsi
Her door opened on the white water
Close by the side of the timber bridge:
That's where the little lady lived
All alone without a lover.

One is obliged to speculate in vain as to what connotations that poem may have in the original. Certainly in English it is a barren fig-tree.

The volume which Mr. French has compiled is, however, by no means a vain essay. It gives to us ignorant westerners a glimpse of something that we are very eager to have. If one cannot go to the circus oneself, one is extremely glad to hear big brother's account of the marvels within the big tent. Mr. Arthur Waley is so obviously the one and only big brother, in this case, that several other of the included translators seem to shrink to insignificance. The learned Dr. Giles, important though his services were in the cause of philology, is very small potatoes when it comes to the problem of translating poetry; and the Ayscough-Lowell combination, and Mr. Cranmer-Blyng, and Mr. Ezra Pound are little better. It is a perilous game, my masters, this game of recreating Chinese and Japanese poetry. It requires a Fitzgerald; and another Fitzgerald has not yet been born.

How one would like to be free to enter this world! Mr. Waley gives one a glimpse of it sometimes.

SAILING HOMEWARD

By Chan Fang-Sheng (Fourth Century A. D.)

Cliffs that rise a thousand feet
Without a break,
Lake that stretches a hundred miles
Without a wave,
Sands that are white through all the year,
Without a stain,
Pine-tree woods, winter and summer
Ever-green,
Streams that forever flow and flow
Without a pause,
Trees that for twenty thousand years
Your vows have kept,
You have suddenly healed the pain of a traveller's heart,

And moved his brush to write a new song.
And in the work of Mr. Bynner and Mr. Kiang one finds such passages as this:

MY RETREAT AT CHUNG-MAN

By Wang Wei

My heart in middle age has found the way,
And I have come to dwell at the foot of this mountain.
When the spirit moves, I wander alone
Where beauty is known only to me.
I will walk till the water checks my path,
Then sit and watch the rising clouds,
And some day meet an old woodcutter,
And talk and laugh, and never return.

In such poems as these the attentive reader may find the mark of that grandiose simplicity which is apparently one of the characteristics of classical Chinese poetry. Perhaps Wordsworth is the only European poet who has achieved, in a few passages, an effect something like these deceptively naive lines, where Nature is used as a vehicle to convey haunting intimations of man's spirit in life and in death. The western poet usually expressly defines emotion; but the Chinese or Japanese poet suggests, sharply and coldly, the edge from which emotion takes its dizzy leap. That which is left unsaid is the most important part of the poem. Mr. Bynner thus translates a short poem:

Twilight is passing the lady's silken window.
She weeps alone in her golden chamber.
Spring is leaving her garden desolate.
A drift of petals closes her door.

Is this too condensed, too severely bare a style for our western taste? It is just possible that, as the number of good translations from Chinese and Japanese poetry increases, we shall be obliged to extend our sympathies to this alien region, and to count it as much a part of our spiritual heritage as we now do the poetry of Greece.

The BOWLING GREEN

ONCE or twice a winter it happens to me to pass through New Haven on a train, and I am always impressed by the number of fine bulky coonskin coats that enter the smoking car at that station. Inside these furry cocoons are young men whose general air of having solved life's problems may only be a genial masquerade, yet is assured enough to cause a faint twinge in a senior spectator. Just how to analyze the components of that twinge is a nice question. Is it envy, is it amusement, is it indignation? And in this complex of thought there is also always an arrear of wonder whether or how the fathers of these cheerful larvae can afford to pay for so much raccoon peltry.

But anyhow, dismounting onto the New Haven platform for a breath of air, I observed particularly three of the cocoons, more particularly because (it was soon before Christmas) one of them carried a copy of the December *BOOKMAN*; and this surprised me because in my experience coonskin coats are more likely to be reading the *Cosmo*. I pondered on this a while, offering myself various rationalizations of the paradox. It must be remembered (I said to myself) that Billy Phelps is said to have made literature popular at Yale; perhaps this is an evidence of it. Or it may be (I argued) that the *BOOKMAN*'s new editor has in some way retintured the magazine, injecting into it some ruddy hormone secretions that appeal to the realistic boulimia of undergraduates. So naively does a wondering student endeavor to account to himself for the phenomena he encounters. But all this which I now laboriously set down occupied only a twinkling of the mind; I abandoned the speculation and returned to Dr. Holmes's *AUTOCRAT* which I had found for a quarter on Mr. Liggett's jetsam counters in the Grand Central Drug Store. And yet, in the tender inward of my mind, there was something that bothered me, some delicate incongruity unresolved. I felt that there was some lack of propriety about that conjunction of the *BOOKMAN* and the coonskins.

I supposed that the episode was finished; but arrived at Springfield, where I had to change, there was time to have one's shoes shined. It was my adventure that day to visit Miss Dodd's pleasing bookshop at Northampton: I was hoping that Miss Dodd and I would have our annual stroll together around the Smith College campus; and certainly on such an expedition it was my ambition to arrive with well-burnished gear. But when I approached the shoeshining alcove in that palatial new Springfield station, there occupying all the available thrones were the same three coonskins, and the copy of the *BOOKMAN*.

I waited until they were through, though perhaps a trifle anxiously—there was really plenty of time, but I am always one of those who like to be aboard in good season. When they abdicated and I succeeded I noticed for the first time that they also seemed to have spotted something about me that struck them as odd. I wonder if I had looked too persistently at their *BOOKMAN*, or what? As I sat being shined I saw them glancing covertly in my direction. But again the moment passed.

Now you may know, if you have travelled on the Boston and Maine, at what a temperature they keep their smoking cars. Unless immediately palsied and stupefied by that hot swooning air, one discards one's wraps. So, as the train rolled along towards Holyoke, I saw without amazement a pleasant young man come down the aisle without coat and hat. I was surprised however when in the most agreeable way he said, "Excuse me, but would you mind settling a bet?" "Such as what?" replied the cautious voyager. "Well," he said, "I said that you were Mr. M—, but my friend said no; he said you don't look a bit like that picture in the Book of the Month Club advertisements." "It's an ideal bet," I said, "for you're both right."

We had a very pleasant chat, and he introduced me to two companions of his; like myself, they were bound for Northampton, which gave us a bond of union at once; though they admitted, if I remember rightly, that they go there every Friday, which seemed to me almost an excess of en-

thusiasm. And then, the talk having got onto literary matters, I told them of the three coonskins I had seen on the previous train; and of the copy of the *BOOKMAN* which had seemed somehow inappropriate to its luxuriously furry surroundings. They shouted with mirth, and then I realized that these were the same three—unpelted, unscarved, unhatted, I hadn't recognized them.

They were looking humorously at each other. "You were quite right," said one of them. "I was the fellow with the *Bookman*. And these aren't our coats at all; we just borrowed them to go up to Smith."

It's an evidence, I suppose, of the deep detective instinct that lurks in everyone's mind if he will only encourage it.

We enjoyed a little palaver together; I remember telling them that my favorite magazine is *Variety*; and we agreed to meet again on the late train that goes back to Springfield. But I feel badly about that, because when the time came that train was an hour or so late on account of floods; and I missed them, because I had an opportunity to get back another way.

It occurred to me, thinking about this afterward, that there is a pleasant illustration of the fact that I was born in a different century from theirs. This could only happen to one brought up not later than the golden nineties. I was driving the old coop the other day when a vagrant newspaper, blown by the wind, suddenly scudded across the road right under the front wheels. Instantly, instinctively, I tightened on the wheel, and heard myself saying inwardly, "Good Lord, now she's going to shy her head off." I don't believe anyone born in this century ever behaves like that.

I am told that the problem of finding a suitable site for Jo Davidson's statue of Walt Whitman is in the hands of a committee of the Authors' Club. I have also heard that the city having rejected the committee's proposal to place the statue in Battery Park, there has been some talk of putting it in Bryant Park, behind the Public Library. I think this would be a pity. The 42nd Street neighborhood has no Whitman associations, and it would be too comic to put just there the likeness of one who was fond of ejaculating, "Henceforth I am done with libraries, indoor complaints, querulous criticisms."

If, as we are often assured, the old Post Office just below the City Hall is presently to be demolished, and that space left open, surely there would be the perfect place for the memorial. Walt, striding along with hat in hand and his beard blowing in the breeze, would there be looking down the vista of the Broadway he loved. Mr. Davidson's statue (which exists so far only in a very spirited and masculine sketch in clay) will represent the Whitman of the open road, "afoot and light-hearted," and surely belongs as near as possible to the Broadway on whose "trottoirs" he found so much exhilaration.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

"Strange Interlude"

(Continued from page 641)

reads. Yet this loose girdled writing makes fiction the most wordy of all the literary arts.

Mr. O'Neill is as incapable of resisting temptation as the novelists he follows. His drama ends shortly after the dinner intermission which breaks his lengthy play. Then the heroine gathers all her men about her, each representing a function of her need, and all content. High tragedy has been resolved into high comedy and can go no further, an equilibrium has been reached. But the play goes on.

Mr. O'Neill has more story if no more drama; he has half a lifetime for his characters ahead, and, like the novelists, he can and will tell more; the unexpended years and his fire-new method of double speaking alike tempt him onward. His drama is ended—but he talks on. His play, like fiction, cannot stop short of marriage and the edge of the grave.

And yet few more interesting and genuinely dramatic plays than the first two-thirds of "Strange Interlude" have been presented in our time. If the drama has but just caught up with the novel, this heat, at least, it has won, and is likely to speed further in playing what before could only be read. Soon we may expect the autobiographical drama, to follow the autobiographical novel, staged as a moving-picture series of incidents and dramatized by the personality of a single articulate actor. After "Strange Interlude,"* much seems possible.

* "Strange Interlude" has just been published in book form by Boni & Liveright.