

Books of Special Interest

Two Plays

LOUD SPEAKER. By JOHN HOWARD LAWSON. New York: The Macaulay Company. 1927. \$2.

EARTH. By EM JO BASSHE. The same. Reviewed by JANE DRANSFIELD

WHEN the New Playwrights' Theatre, of which Mr. Lawson is a Playwright-Director, put on "Loud Speaker" late last spring as their opening bill, it must have been with the same realization that the Guild had expressed about "Processional," that some would like it very much, and some would not like it at all. Unfortunately, being abroad, I missed its production on the stage, but I understand that it roused a controversy almost equally clamorous with that stirred up by the earlier play. Now reading "Loud Speaker" as just published, I find myself as in regard to his earlier play again on the "yes" side toward Mr. Lawson. I like "Loud Speaker" exceedingly, but for entirely different reasons from those which inclined me toward "Processional," which had appealed to me for its sweep of vision, its emotional intensity, and the poetic beauty of its writing. I like "Loud Speaker" because it is an unemotional fling of the intellect, the writing epigrammatic, staccato, nervous, a boisterous extravaganza, the meaninglessness of the whole comprising its meaning. It reveals Mr. Lawson in an entirely new light, that of a detached satirist, employing, as did Molière, the broadest stage buffoonery of burlesque and farce to convey his criticism. In action and plot it is a conglomeration of everything under the sun from our modern stage and from our tabloids, acting as itself a "loud-speaker" which amplifies the jazziness of the times to such enormous proportions that even the deaf must hear. In it Mr. Lawson turns the laugh, as it were, even upon himself, upon those very theatre "isms," constructivism, expressionism, and so forth, of which he has hitherto been considered the serious exponent, but which here he uses to the limit of absurdity. One believes in a writer who can thus occasionally laugh at himself.

In his introduction to the play Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch says of the characterization:

"Loud Speaker" is probably the first American play to take complete advantage of the fact that certain characters like the flapper and the politician have reached the point where they may be successfully used as puppets. Mr. Lawson's characters are not in the ordinary sense of the word characters at all. The politician, the reporter, the flapper and the vamp are divested of all possible significance, and reduced to the status of mere stock characters, appearing before us as simple zanies. Curiously enough the result is something which might not inappropriately be called an American example of the *Commedia dell'arte*.

Here Mr. Krutch adumbrates a quality that is constantly becoming more evident in Mr. Lawson's work, namely, its theatricality. This is not spoken in derogation, quite the contrary. Mr. Lawson is essentially a man of the theatre, and he is working to develop a form that while it shall embody revolutionary qualities, nevertheless shall be as effective on the stage as the old and tested forms. As this play, and also his last play, "Internationale," testify, he is feeling his way to this fixity of form through stylization. Theme, plot, characters are for the time being made subservient to the development of his technique along this line, and probably will be until Mr. Lawson has worked out his own artistic salvation to his satisfaction. When this happens, when he has found the form which satisfies him as the mold into which to pour his dramatic conceptions, his power of saying effectively upon the stage what he wishes to say will be unassailable. Meanwhile with keen interest we watch, and we enjoy his experiments.

"Earth," by Em Jo Basshe, also a member of the New Playwrights' group, is in complete contrast to Mr. Lawson's burlesque, with which it alternated in production last spring. An insurgent in the theatre as is Mr. Lawson, the author of "Adam Solitaire" which mystified even the audiences of the Provincetown, and of the recently produced "Centuries," Mr. Basshe is also feeling his way along revolutionary lines. In "Earth," however, he uses the expressionistic form with which, ever since Kaiser's "From Morn To Midnight," we have been familiar, employing seven scenes without division into acts. Poetic in mood, pictorial in scenic qualities, against a vivid background of the negro's superstition and illogic, of Voodoo-

ism and primitive savagery, the play tells a dramatic tale, often profoundly moving, of religious fanaticism in a community of Southern negroes in the period at about 1880. Its theme is the struggle between the "earth" instincts of the dark skinned race and superimposed Christianity.

It is not a *genre* study of the southern Negro of a defined *locale* such as Paul Green gives in his plays, although there is truth to negro psychology in the portrayal. Deborah, its central character, is not so much a black woman apostate from a superimposed white man's religion, as she is a tragic soul, regardless of color, seeking to penetrate the unsearchable ways of the being its elects to call God. The action takes place, not in a recognizable southern region, but in a poet's mind, building for the theatre. Many of the passages are of passionate beauty, and many of the scenes rise into vivid intensity. Mr. Basshe writes with telling power, his feeling for character giving him a bend toward realism. This realism, however, is in the service of an innate idealism, so that whatever particular symbols he uses, as here the negro character, take on an aspect of universality.

On War

PEACE OR WAR? By J. M. KENWORTHY. New York: Boni & Liveright. 1927. \$2.50.

PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUE IN THE WORLD WAR. By HAROLD D. LASSWELL. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1927. \$5.

Reviewed by JOHN BAKELESS

Author of "The Origin of the Next War"

THE literature of war suffers from several shortcomings which, though they are not peculiarly its own, seem always in it to appear at their very worst. As in all subjects that attract many who are not professional writers, the quality of the writing is likely to be rough and uneven. As in much literature dealing with a subject that deeply stirs the author's emotions, the tone is likely to be a little shrill. And as is always the case when there is anything to attract the lunatic fringe, the intensity of the author's feeling is likely to exceed his knowledge.

The first of these criticisms applies about equally to Lieut.-Commander Kenworthy's "Peace or War?" and to Professor Lasswell's book on "Propaganda Technique." But the two other faults that one naturally expects in such books as theirs are agreeably lacking in both. This is the more surprising since both write from an obviously pacifist standpoint—and there is no one, for belligerent shrillness and ignorance of the facts in the case to match your thorough-going pacifist.

Naval officer and war veteran though he is, Commander Kenworthy views the institution of war as an unmitigated evil and wholly avoids the apologetic attitude that one might expect. The palliatives ordinarily proposed—limitation of armaments, regional understandings, arbitration treaties, and intervention by the League—he holds quite useless. Nothing seems to him an adequate safeguard against that new war toward which he believes civilization is drifting, save complete disavowal of the pretense that war ever can be legitimate and its abandonment as a recognized means of policy by all civilized nations. He is, however, apparently willing to admit the need of small forces for purely police purposes.

This is, of course, precisely the position of that little band of serious thinkers who in America have bestowed on themselves the unlovely title of "outlawrists." Commander Kenworthy writes with a far more intimate and extensive knowledge of international realities than do most of them; but it is painfully apparent that, like his fellows, he has no definite and workable plan for bringing his Utopian ideals to fruition.

"Peace or War?" is remarkable for the range and general accuracy of its information and for the author's success in making his somewhat grim subject good reading all the way. The most startling chapters are those in which he roughly tears apart the clouds of pleasant words that ordinarily cloak the realities of Anglo-American relations. Fully recognizing that the future of world peace is in the hands of the two great English-speaking nations, he indulges in none of the ordinary banalities. Instead, he says plainly that "in the present state of world opinion about war as a legal measure, it would be foolish to rely on sentiment alone to keep the peace for ever between the British Empire and the United States of

America," and he spends an entire chapter showing "Why an Anglo-American War is Possible." Nay more, he even maps out the general course of such a struggle and suggests that public opinion is quite probably, though not intentionally, being prepared for it.

As for the strategy of this disastrous but perfectly possible conflict, he believes neither power could at first invade the other. Canada might have to abandon the Empire to avoid conquest. On the other hand, American trade would be swept from the seas, the Philippines would probably be taken, New York would be shelled and possibly gassed by submarine raiders. If Canada joined the fighting, the invasion of the United States might be feasible. Curiously enough, Commander Kenworthy does not dwell on the immense advantages, to any enemy of this country, of establishing a Mexican alliance.

In his "Propaganda Technique in the World War," Professor Lasswell provides an admirable example of the coldly lucid, critically clear scholar; and though coldness is not invariably a scholarly virtue, it becomes one in treating a subject which so frequently tempts to injudicial heat. Propaganda, as he describes it, is the civilized equivalent of the war dance, "one of the most powerful instrumentalities in the modern world. It has arisen to its present eminence in response to a complex of changed circumstances which have altered the nature of society." And he adds sadly, "Propaganda is a concession to the wilfulness of the age." He surveys impartially the methods employed both by the Allies and by their enemies, the abused Creel press bureau emerging fairly creditably from the discussion, though Professor Lasswell does not fail to draw on the most ill-natured German studies of American propaganda.

Woodrow Wilson he presents as the supreme propagandist, though he admits that "just how much of Wilsonism was rhetorical exhibitionism and how much was the sound fruit of sober reflection will be in debate until the World War is a feeble memory. From a propaganda point of view it was a matchless performance, for Wilson brewed the subtle poison, which industrious men injected into the veins of a staggering people, until the smashing powers of the Allied armies knocked them into submission. While he fomented discord abroad, Wilson fostered unity at home."

The Brontës

THE BRONTË SISTERS. By ERNEST DIMNET. Translated from the French by Louise Morgan Sill. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by CHAUNCEY B. TINKER
Yale University

MONSIEUR DIMNET'S charming book, "Les Sœurs Brontë" has been familiar to serious students of English fiction for nearly two decades. It is now translated—and well translated—for the benefit of those who cannot or will not read it in the original tongue. There have been many books about the three passionate sisters of the Yorkshire Moors, among which M. Dimnet's has held no mean rank. Its chief importance consists not in the new facts added to the biography of the family, but in the critical view of a Frenchman who knows the subtle combination of the sane and the sympathetic which characterizes the critical writing of his nation. British criticism is always likely to be personal, centrifugal, abhorrent of principles, measure and restraint. M. Dimnet has these qualities; and any reader who fails to acquaint himself with their application to the story of the Brontës is depriving himself of a pleasure and of something more than a pleasure.

The appendix to the book appears here for the first time. It contains Charlotte Brontë's four letters to M. Héger written in 1844-45, which were discovered in the year 1913, and first printed in the London *Times*. Many will recall the discussion which arose and continued—stormily—until the war put an end to all literary criticism. The question at issue was whether Charlotte Brontë had been at one time in love with her "Professor," M. Héger. It is interesting to have M. Dimnet's final word on this subject: "Everything is said when it is recalled that, as everybody agrees, Charlotte Brontë was as pure as she was impassioned." To this the present writer will merely add his conviction that, whenever one of the Brontës was about, passion of some sort and in some quarter was certain to be engendered.

These Rustic Figures Caught ENGLAND RECLAIMED: A Book of Eclogues. By OSBERT SITWELL. New York: Doubleday, Doran. 1928. \$2.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

OF the three Sitwells Osbert's best work heretofore seems to me to have been embodied in the prose of "Triple Fugue." As a poet his sister Edith (to whom the present volume is beautifully dedicated) has excelled her two brothers, various and original as their poetry has been. But with "England Reclaimed" Osbert Sitwell suddenly comes to the fore in the friendly family tourney and has, indeed, produced a happily-linked series of poems unusual among most of the verse of our time,—unusual in richness of fabric, sensitiveness of deep feeling mellowed by humor, and in precision of recollection fused with imagination.

At his best heretofore in more satirical verse, he has here greatly increased his range. This is a book of rustic and pastoral poems, the first of an intended trilogy of which the second is to deal with the 'country town, the third with "the cosmopolitan life of the cities." The writer "aims at recording a broad panorama, essentially English . . . which seems now, by force of circumstance, to be slipping away from us into the past." It is upon the past, upon memories from childhood, that he draws for the homely and yet fascinating characters portrayed in "England Reclaimed." We have Mr. and Mrs. Hague, Mary-Anne, Mr. and Mrs. Nutch, Moping Fred, Mr. and Mrs. Goodbeare, Mr. and Mrs. Southern, Phoebe Southern, and the Kembleys. In the Grand Finale the theme appropriate to each recurs woven into a symphony. Throughout, the English landscape persists, freshly and exquisitely described. Against the landscape, in the estate of their lifelong occupations, in and out of their various dwellings, move gardener, carpenter, market gardener, the presiding genius of the orchards and the gamekeeper,—together with their wives and several children of pathos, "Moping Fred," in whose poem "The Survival of the Fittest" lurks such masterly irony, and Phoebe Southern, romantic dreamer "of trumpets under trees, in an unimaginable blaze of glory" sustaining an unhappy human passion. I confess complete enthusiasm for a number of passages in this book. I shall never, so long as I live, forget the indelible Mr. Goodbeare.

*Oh, do you remember, do you remember,
As I remember and deplore,
That day in drear and far-away December
When dear, godfearing, bearded Mr. Goodbeare
Could remember
No more?*

It is meet and right that this, somehow the most sympathetic of all the poems, should also be one of the most humorous. Surveying the hidden dramas and dreams of apparently ordinary lives Mr. Sitwell distills their fantastic essence, that blend of comedy and tragedy the full recognition of which bespeaks ripe wisdom. In his "Portrait of Mr. Southern through the ages" and his discussion of memorable physiognomies he is richly meditative. Mrs. Kembley, waiting at evening on the hill, he makes, with unobtrusive art, the most significant part of a landscape. In fact he does such various things in this volume, with a pliant and unusually melodic line and a wide range of sensitive feeling, that the book absorbed me. It creates its own atmosphere. The illusion is upon you that your own mind holds also these memories. That is an unusual achievement.

Not soon will the enchantment of Mary-Anne's "patchwork pavilion" leave me; not soon shall I forget Mr. Nutch chasing the boys in the orchard, Mr. Goodbeare's parlor, Mrs. Southern warring against the triumphant dust or her ideas upon "Workmanship"—"Just like the dimples in a baby's knuckle,"—nor indeed the delicious Sisyphian labors of Mr. Southern's pronunciation. Fade not too soon, oh lovely foredoomed phantom of Phoebe Southern, "Her voice carrying always, even in its laughter, the upward-speeding, arrow-angle of a question!" Luke Kembley, remain my Autumn! This is beautiful work brilliant in phrase, work of which to be fitly proud, in these portraits of

*the English Dead,
Not slain in battle, in no sense sublime
These rustic figures caught at last by Time.*

I leave to the reader the enjoyment of the book as a whole. The mind that cannot enjoy it must be dull indeed.

Books of Special Interest

**The Uses of Thought
THOUGHT AND THE BRAIN.** By
HENRI PIÉRON. Translated by C. K.
OGDEN. New York: Harcourt, Brace &
Co. 1927. \$4.

Reviewed by ROBERT M. YERKES
Yale University

WHO of us, layman or neurologist, is not eager for knowledge of the nature and uses of thought and its relations to the nervous system, and who would not welcome an authoritative, intelligible, and readable book on the subject? Professor Piéron's exposition will richly repay critical reading and rereading by specialists in psychology, neurology, physiology, and brain surgery; but the lay searcher for general information and understanding concerning thought, the brain, and their relations, is doomed to disappointment unless he is prepared for an intricate subject and a somewhat difficult style.

Lacking the courage to write of this technical work at once for layman and specialist we have chosen to ignore the latter. For him the original text should be more valuable than Ogden's translation or this review. To the layman who presses the question, Should I read it? we must reply, "If you can do so with pleasure and profit, yes, and also congratulations: it is not a popular discussion." Reasonably reliable and authoritative the volume appears to be, but in the French, and also in the English, needlessly difficult to read unless one happens to be steeped in functional neurology and psychology.

The immediate excuse for this gathering together of neurological information is the unique observational material contributed by surgery during the World War. As the author says, "No mean body of knowledge is now at our disposal as to the functioning of the human nervous system." But "very erroneous ideas are certainly still prevalent in these branches of science, especially as regards psycho-physiology among those who study the brain, and as regards 'cerebrology' among those who are concerned with psychological analysis. And to these false ideas are due the disagreement and contradiction on questions relating to cerebral

function which seem so flagrant at the present time."

Following a brief general account of neuro-mental functioning of the nervous system and two summary chapters, the one on nervous functioning and the brain and the other on mental functioning and the brain, Piéron plunges into the assemblage of difficult problems of localization and specialization. In turn, various types of brain center and of mental process connected with the functioning thereof are considered. Naturally several chapters are devoted to the receptive and incito-motor functions, or, in the older terminology, to sensory experiences and their various functional expressions. Visual reception is considered at length because of its peculiar importance and the relative abundance of observations, but perceptual processes and associated reflexes also claim attention, and the author gives a problem-suggesting if not an informationally-satisfying exposition. To the general reader who can master this volume doubtless the most interesting if not also the most valuable parts will be those on the "verbal function and thought" and on "the affective regulation of mental life."

As one studies Piéron's systematized and simplified observational data on cerebral and mental processes, one is increasingly impressed by the complexity and variability of the phenomena and their relations. Evidently no simple scheme can adequately represent the facts. Brain functions are analyzable and within limits specialization undoubtedly exists, but it is clear that different parts of the brain, and indeed of the whole nervous system, are significantly adaptable and sometimes capable of vicarious functioning. Perhaps even normally they as it were lend a hand, and regularly, when necessity arises, tend to assume the rôle of, or at least function of, any missing or incapacitated part. There are even, it would seem, primary and secondary rôles or functions. This greatly complicates the task of the investigator, as do also many other peculiarities of the physiology of the nervous system.

Direct experiments on the functions of

the human brain are rarely possible, although accidents, especially in war, and brain operations frequently afford observational opportunity and occasionally also chances for experimental inquiry. It is, we suspect, inevitable that progress in knowledge of brain functions and their relations to experience should go forward primarily through the study of other animals.

Of the image versus the sensation in brain functioning, Piéron writes:

The specific neurones necessary for sensation are also necessary for the associative reawakening of that sensation, which is called the image—a dynamic process and not a photographic negative resting miraculously in the nervous substance, where some subtle spirit might go to consult it.

But these are probably not sufficient; an impulse of peripheral origin, operating certain notes of the keyboard formed by the specific neurones, could not by this act alone produce a sensation, which is a psychical phenomenon; this results from an excitation of the associative area by the specific connecting neurones, reception begins at the level of the calcarine area with its rich and varied group of cells, but is completed in wide and numerous circuits.

Piéron thus prepares the way for his examination of the data of linguistic or verbal disturbances and their neurological relations. Are there verbal blindnesses, verbal deafnesses, aphemias, and agraphias? What is the effect of these disorders on thought? How are they inter-related? Can they exist in a pure state, either at the outset or as the result of a general disturbance? These are questions which must be considered without prejudice and without theoretical controversy, before we discuss the problem of mechanisms or the points in which current notions require correction. We will therefore examine the facts first from the point of view of the four forms of aphasia distinguished in Charcot's theory, and then from that of complex aphasia, in their relation to thought.

Language, man's most intricate system of responses for the expression of feeling and thought, offers many and extraordinarily puzzling types of disturbance in association with brain destruction or disease. For example, "When several languages are spoken, they correspond to distinct keyboards, and—in exceptional cases—may be selectively injured. Generally it is the least automatic which, in ordinary lesions, are the first to be impaired in their functioning."

And in description and explanation of aphasia—inability to comprehend language:

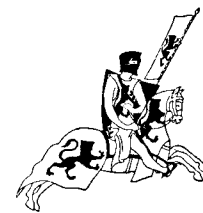
If the lesion specially affects the area of the ascending convolutions we get verbal aphasia: the patient has difficulty in finding the verbal forms necessary for the expression of his thought. If the temporal lobe is particularly affected, the result is jargonaphasia and syntactic aphasia. Finally, a lesion situated between the post-central fissure and the occipital lobe disturbs the appreciation of signification: when it is only a matter of verbal signification (nominal aphasia) it is the use of words that is impaired; when the general signification is more disturbed (semantic aphasia) the comprehension of logical conceptions is lacking. . . .

What, in any case, particularly emerges from this whole group of studies is the relation of an injury to a limited temporo-parieto-occipital area, in the left brain, with disturbances of nominal or semantic comprehension, that is to say with the most characteristic disturbance of symbolic thought, which in man, the speaker, is essentially verbal thought.

Experiments on aphasics open the way to a finer analysis—psychological and cerebrological—of symbolic thought, thanks to the initiative of Head, the value of which cannot be too strongly emphasized.

Discouraged by the intricacies and ambiguities of the English text we occasionally turned to the original for comfort. Usually in such cases we discovered that the responsibility for our difficulties rested with Piéron. Nevertheless, we cannot wholly forgive the translator for preserving so perfectly the infelicities of the original. Even more difficult is it to forgive the careless proofreading, or was it manuscript preparation, of "Thought and the Brain." Yet despite the imperfections of the English version we are extremely grateful to the translator for the undertaking and execution of a difficult task, and we earnestly hope that thousands of English-speaking readers can and will read the volume with profit. In our opinion its value would have been considerably enhanced by a glossary.

The third volume of the exhaustive study of the career of Dupleix which Alfred Martineau has been writing over a period of years has just made its appearance. "Dupleix et l'Inde Française" (Société des Editions Géographiques Maritimes et Coloniales) covers the years 1749-1754. Its scope is limited to the Carnatic, a concluding volume being designed to deal with the exploits of Bussy in the Deccan and with Dupleix's life after his return to France.



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"A somber wrath over the witless agony of war
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Art Studies, Volume 5

Edited by Members of the
Departments of the Fine Arts at
Harvard and Princeton Universities

The current issue of Art Studies, an annual publication addressed to both the general reader and the specialist, contains eleven fully illustrated articles; among them are "Monuments Byzantins Inédits du Onzième Siècle," by Charles Diehl, "The Table of the Last Supper in Religious and Secular Iconography," by Laura H. Loomis, "The Portraits of the Evangelists in Greek and Latin MSS," by A. M. Friend, jr., and "Liturgical Influences on Pre-Romanesque Apse in Spain," by Walter M. Whitehill, jr. \$7.50 a copy.

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■ JULIAN S. MASON,
Editor of the *New York Evening Post* says of DR.
JOSEPH COLLINS' *THE DOCTOR LOOKS AT LOVE AND LIFE*:

"I've never read a book on that difficult thing called sex which had more sheer intelligence and commonsense."

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Doubleday, Doran \$3