

Mr. Moon's Notebook

May 10th: *Anne's Book of Hours*

SINCE the days of the split reed and the papyrus roll, from the epoch of the monkish parchment traced religiously in the wing-glimmering scriptorium, no type of book is, to my mind, more intimately interesting than the old-time devotional "Book of Hours." And I am now thinking of a particular, beautifully-illuminated "Book of Hours." It is famous. It belonged to Anne.

Anne's "Book of Hours" was, simply, a Prayer-book, except that it consisted of 240 white vellum pages, exquisitely adorned by Jean Poyet and others—with evangelists and saints, wonderful flowers, and fruits, and birds, and insects. It is actually one of the world's most superb illuminated manuscripts.

What Anne was she, who appears to us out of the past from a great age of courtiers? Diaphanously veiled hennins of gold and silver brocade bow before her like a forest of fairy steeples. The audience hall is a wave of obeisance. She has brought Brittany to France by her marriage to the young son of the eleventh Louis who, by the thrust of his march to Naples, is to prevent unification of Italy for four hundred years. The crested viper of Milan lures the Angevin line southward with pennoned armies. The timbals thunder. Charles the Eighth is even to break through the hosts of the League, at Fornova, still conquering. But read of him in Commines.

Anne's Charles is a young king of spirit but of dubious wits. He is not handsome. The regency of Anne of Beaujeu managed things for him upon his boyhood succession. And this sister Anne of his had seen to it that Maximilian of Austria failed to secure Anne of Brittany, and, with her, her father's fief. So, while Charles is south among the vineyards busy with his battles, Anne, his wife, rules France well. Her long, and often intensely sad and weary, royal life is decorously begun. This is that Anne who after Charles's death married Louis Douze, his successor, and swayed him with her intelligence, uncommon in her time. It is said that when young, she was beautiful. And when, at length, the pale warrior, Death, stood by her bedside in turn, and raised his vizor, the twelfth Louis, left to his empty throne, bit quivering lips upon his loss. For he saw rising the star of Angoulême and the swollen ambitions of Louise, the Savoyarde. Anne's daughter, Claude, had in that moment much need of her mother; for, as we know, after death had removed her mother's opposition to the match, Claude wed Francis the First.

Claude was also at her father's second wedding. A stranger than Louis the Twelfth's new marriage is rare in history. For the peace of France and England and the foiling of Ferdinand, the hand of Mary Tudor, young auburn sister to Henry the Eighth of England, was laid in that of the old and ailing French monarch. It was sanguine youth to the sacrifice, and all young romance—Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, being Mary's true love. Hectic gaiety indeed, that late dance of death of so senile a groom as Louis! And soon enough, indeed, the death-ringers through the streets of Paris tolled the end. It was Mary's release from the loathed marriage,—we may, in passing, be a little glad for her and for her future with Suffolk. It was the Savoyarde's fierce delight for her son Francis, her "Caesar." A brilliant modern poet and novelist has written an exquisite story, "King's Pity," with reference to Mary's side of the matter. But from the viewpoint of the aged Louis, this state alliance may, on his part, have been something less than "roses, roses all the way." Though for a brief space unloving and unwilling youth was in his arms, the festivities that assured his death must have seemed something in the nature of a nightmare.

But this was not Anne's life. This lay in the future. Anne instituted her own separate Court. She was a golden exemplar to its young ladies. Her Bretons felt that she had their affairs deeply at heart. She read devotional things. She conned her "Book of Hours." In that book were not written battle and rampant victory, the guile of the court or the duplicity of state affairs. I have thought upon that book, and I have set in rhyme a picture of it as I conceive her to have seen it, when her eyes looked through the beautifully bedizened and gilded page, and her head lifted as she stared at

the wall, and her gentle hand lay lightly upon illuminated patterns as she mused. This, I believe, is the meaning of her Book and of La Bretonne:

Brilliant birds and flowers;
Anne's Book of Hours
Open on her knees;
Blue and green and gold,
Margins interscrolled
With vines and trees;

How the intricate page
Renders back the Age;
Sheaves and bowers,
Plenty neighbouring dearth—
Dark industrious earth,
Its Book of Hours!

Here, despite the Court,
See, in other sort
Glimmer clear
Those who swarm the soil,
Those who trudge and toil
Through the hardy year;

All a kingdom's folk,
Slow beneath their yoke,
Heavy, many, and slow;
Till their toil is done,
On,—through sleet or sun,
Through rain or snow!

Somewhat, perhaps, in this way she pondered; for, at her death, if the poor people had been articulate to express what they felt, it seems implicit in the pages of history that they might have enunciated something like the following,—again I shall lapse into verse:

Many years, many fears we have known; many
shifts have seen;
We have endured the sword, plague, famine, siege.
From Blois they bore her bier. We loved this
Queen;
We loved her lord, our Liege.

In the new year they bore her through the cold,
Through the Porte Saint Jacques the cavalcade
moved on.
We were silent then; the world, it seemed, was old;
Dead, with our dear Bretonne.

Miserere! Through the evening, in the black,
The torches moved with the ladies and the lords,
Where gems would gleam and casements glimmer
back
On brooches, rings, and swords.

By day, the six black horses, darkly led,—
Her stately head beneath the double crown. . . .
So real she seemed, being breathless, being dead,
Our hearts bowed down.

High in the gate the herald king-at-arms
Cried of this death, and cried it through the nave.
No thing availed, availed no sacred charms,
No hushed conclave;

Availed not even our hearts, our hearts being hers;
Nor even our Liege's love, his love being ours;
Her ladies' court nor all her ministers,
Her great estates or towers.

It is always possible, of course, to sentimentalize and romanticize history. Probably I have done so in this instance. The Queen was always the Bretonne; considered her own native country first. But that was highly natural. Hers were forced marriages, first by siege, second by article of contract. And yet what one reads concerning Anne of Brittany seems to sequester still a peculiar fragrance. I see her as a lady of great poise in the midst of a court life seething with intrigue and waving with martial banners. She is not a highly romantic queen. But it is true, I think, that she thought deeply concerning her own people, and that she was the friend of art.

The day of Francis was yet to dawn, in her day. And that was a day full of majesty, the day of a Renaissance monarch of high port and dazzling stature. I admit that I have never felt drawn toward Francis, though in his waste and folly and amours

he was as full-blooded a king as he was in his physical courage, his soaring plans, and his patronage of the artists of the time. If he looked lasciviously upon the white swanlike shoulder of a Françoise, if he was deeply enamoured of damask and tapestry, panoply and trumpeting, he had a war-horse to bestride, a mailed horse with a flourishing plume of pride and a hoof of ringing iron; and when he rode over the Alps and down into the Lombard plain, he was, indeed, no long-legged boy, merely, destined (as Louis Douze had said of him and had thought of him in nightmare) to mount a frippery-flounced hobby-horse to the ruin of all. He was a poet, as well, who had heard the horn of Roland in a vision, and tossed the world like a glittering bauble in his hand. But I never liked his shrewd eyes and his big nose.

For Anne I admit great affection; which is hardly strange, since what I am writing is all about her and her Book. In that book there were many black hours. And she was no golden Marguerite of Navarre, herself to create imperishable literature. She was but a sober scholar of the book of life, but she possessed her own steadfastness and sympathy. So I have to come to the end of my small sixteenth century digression. We will leave Anne sitting by her casement, quietly reading in her book. Francis had his large library bound for him by Jean Grolier de Servier, his treasurer. On the center panels of the books' sides, it is said, the motto "*Portio mea domine in terra viventium*" alternated with "*Io. Grolierii et amicorum*" (the property, it signifies, of John Grolier and his friends). Here were sumptuous volumes, indeed, laced and scrolled with gold. Anne, herself, had her own large and valuable library. But to all of this, in retrospect, I prefer that single volume, the floriate "Livre d'Heures" of the Queen. It was a day when books of religious observance did not condemn gold leaf of perpetual burnish, bright singing colors, thick-crowding pictorial embellishment. So this book, I will believe, became her bower. Out on the smoky plain the destriers neighed and the kings fell in harness; behind black velvet arras the counsellors whispered and realms were betrayed. Anne sat in the bower of her book and essayed a higher satisfaction. In her Breton silk cap, girdled with the aureate cord of her duchy, she pored upon bright presentments of old Touraine. At her back stood Saint Anne, Saint Margaret, and Saint Ursula holding Attila's arrow and the Breton banner.

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

(To be continued)

Clinical Tales

CHILDREN AND FOOLS. By THOMAS MANN.

Translated from the German by HERMAN GEORGE SCHEFFAUER. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by LOUIS SHERWIN

MOST latter-day German fiction—unless for accuracy's sake you include the works of the so-well-with-himself-satisfied Emil Ludwig—produces in me the same stimulating effect as is derived from putting the tongue against the window pane. Its magnificos inspire nothing so much as a longing to turn the clock back some twenty years. They recall the ghastly interregnum in Teutonic letters that followed the death of Heine and preceded the advent of Sudermann, Wolzogen, Schnitzler, and Bahr. What a degradingolade from the period of that brilliant coterie known as the Ueberbrett'l crowd, when Bierbaum, Hartleben, Liliencron, Dehmé, and Wedekind flashed trium-

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phantly on the reading world, heralding a golden age for tedescan literature. But alas! the promised golden age turns out instead to be that of Thomas Mann and Jacob Wassermann.

The foregoing jeremiad is part of the digestive process after the consumption of Thomas Mann's "Children and Fools," his latest opus to be published in America, in a rather wooden translation by Herman George Scheffauer. It is well for Mann that his status in the literate universe does not rest upon this collection of short stories. For not one of them has that arresting quality, whether of power, compassion, mirth, or irony which in a new author causes you to prick up your ears, wag your tail, and exclaim: "Here, by Goethe, is one of the real lads!" On the contrary, anybody who picked up the book merely on the strength of its creator's prestige and without having read his novels would rather groan: "Good Lord! If *this* is one of the premier literati of Germany—!"

We have here the Thomas Mann of "Der Zauberberg" rather than him who wrote "Koenigliche Hoheit" and "Buddenbrooks." A morbid fellow, trying to be clinical and not knowing quite how to accomplish it. At this sort of thing, to be sure, Schnitzler can write his head off, which is not surprising when you recall the medical background of the luminous Viennese. Mann has not the equipment for this job and, despite his long residence in the South, he has never been sufficiently able to shake off the North German protestant bourgeois.

Some of the tales are not bad. In fact, not one of them is downright villainous enough for real abuse. He is, after all, too sound a craftsman for that. The trouble with them is that, with three exceptions, they are unsatisfying, flat, desiccated. And even those three exceptions, in view of their clinical element, leave you with the feeling that they might have been better done.

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The first, which bears the prosaic title of "Disorder and Early Sorrow," has considerable charm of sympathy. Moreover, its photography is excellent. I say photography deliberately in preference to portraiture. It gives the picture of a German professor and his family in the melancholy, straitened times just after the war. The pathology of the children born in the days of upheaval and neurotic disturbance is outlined with veracity and mature understanding. The robust, irreverent, and restless vitality of the elder offspring makes an interesting contrast. Humor is conspicuously absent from Mann's treatment. Perhaps you will object that it has no place in such a sonata. This I beg leave to question.

"Little Louise" is a grim study in pathetic cuckoldry with a gruesome note. After such a tale as this I cannot help thinking how much more illuminating and facile would be Schnitzler's wielding of this theme. Yet there is tragic feeling here.

"Little Herr Friedemann" gives the portrait of a man deformed as the result of an accident in his infancy. He conceives a passion for the town beauty, an aphrodisiac dame of quality. She encourages his grotesque infatuation in a purely sadistic spirit. In respect of workmanship this is the best story in the book.

The others will hardly bear description. They all deal with morbid specimens and conditions, except the one describing a fight between a couple of schoolboys. And they are, to me at least, disappointing.

"Mektub"

NAKED TRUTH. By CLARE SHERIDAN. New York: Harper & Bros. 1928. \$5.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

THE nakedness of Mrs. Sheridan's truth, like the scarlet and magenta flames and the "most daring woman in Europe" which decorate the jacket of her book, may be dismissed, of course, as a salesman's gesture—"custom of the country," as the Spanish say. The important thing is the picture of Clare Sheridan; the endeavor of a vivid and curiously undisciplined woman ("*enfant terrible* of Europe!") as a Frenchman once told her gallantly, "You put on an innocent face and play with bombs like a child who does not know that they can explode") to tell the story of her life.

This story falls, almost inevitably, into two parts of quite different tone and texture. The little Clare, who, with her faithful brother, Peter, lived such a strange, lonely, loveless childhood, beaten and

terrified by an ogre of an Alsatian governess; even the young lady, who danced with midshipmen at Malta, painted in the lovely islands of Stockholm harbor with her friend, the Princess Margaret, and was dragged to London balls in the hope—to her distressing—that she might pick up a rich husband, has already dropped behind into that more or less enchanted mist in which youth is walled away. The globe-trotting sculptor-journalist, pausing, as the story closes, on the edge of the Algerian desert, can look back to that other Clare, see her "all round," and write of her, finely and feelingly, as if she were another person.

Along about the time she returned from that great adventure into Soviet Russia, in 1920, when she did busts of Lenine and Trotsky, suddenly found herself notorious, pursued by reporters and photographers, snubbed as a "Bolshevik" by old friends and at odds with her own people ("my father had expressed the pious hope that my throat might be cut in Moscow, as the only possible vindication of the family's honor"), there was a turning point. She had not learned, as her American publisher presently explained to her, the great contemporary art of "selling" one's self. But she was still young and



Thornton Wilder, whose "Bridge of San Luis Rey," (A. & C. Boni) won a Pulitzer Prize.
From a bust by Alexandre Archipenko

"free," for Wilfred Sheridan was killed at the front in 1915; well-born, beautiful, and clever; at once sensitive and insolent, a "personality," in short, and others were not lacking to do the selling for her. She was brought to America to lecture—unsuccessfully—to see something of our "best people," do a bust here and there, make money for herself and her two little children, and to spend so much more than she made—as was the custom of the family—that New York became quite "unlivable."

A newspaper offered her a roving commission to write about post-War Europe. She jumped at the chance, "prepared to sacrifice any old friendship that could be turned into my newspaper mill," and there began that strange, wild, and rather shoddy flight from celebrity to celebrity—Mustapha Kemal, Mussolini, Queen Marie, Charlie Chaplin, Berlin, Smyrna, Mexico, goodness knows who not and what—that mad dance, giving nothing and getting nothing real, and always away from what in quieter moments she felt to be her real self, which gives the latter half of her narrative its turgid, muddy texture and its tone of almost tragic futility.

When she was still a young girl, petted by Henry James and George Moore, friend of the poetess, Ethel Clifford, who was "Barrie, Maeterlinck, James Stephens, Yeats, Rossetti, stewed in a pot, seasoned with herbs and scented with jonquils," Clare Frewen, as she was then, wrote an article on country-house visiting for the *National Review*, in which she tried to "describe as insolently as possible all the kinds of houses I had stayed in, each with its type of hosts and guests."

That which she did then, anonymously and in a spirit of daredeviltry, she did for an American magazine, after she had visited the United States, quite knowingly and for cash. Whence these incredible manners—this notion, which seems persistent and instinctive, that she is somehow outside the usual amenities, and permitted, if people cross her or bore her, to spit in anybody's eye?

Ever since my childhood (she writes) my spirit had been in revolt. The first seed was implanted the day my gov-

erness beat me before the housemaid. It was fostered by the invasion of my father's house by bailiffs. It was aggravated by the death of Wilfred in the War, and cemented by the attitude of my family and friends on my return from Moscow.

Fed, too, she might have added, by the constant fighting between her will to be an artist and the hostility, not only of her own people, but of her own habits and of other sides of her temperament. "Mud-puddling," was her father's description of her sculpture, while her efforts to earn her own living after her husband's death he dismissed as "cadging for fivers." But she, herself, although always dreaming in one corner of her consciousness of peace on the edge of a desert, on the other jumps instinctively to the society and style of living common to those preoccupied with wealth rather than with the laborious pursuit of beauty.

Her father made and lost several fortunes and was always on the edge of bankruptcy. Once when, as a girl, she and her mother visited Cannes ("if London could be flung into a basin, and the lighter elements that floated were skimmed, that would be Cannes"), a friend of the family, learning that the two were quite broke, slipped a fifty-pound note into her slipper. Mrs. Frewen sobbed when she heard of it, "My poor child! My poor, poor child!" and then "pulling herself together with an effort, suggested that we go to Monte Carlo, 'just for a day, darling, and have a little fling.'" They went, Clare won some twenty-five pounds, and "my mother suggested that as the Fleet was due in two days at Genoa we should go and meet it. And we did."

In spite of her art, which one of her sculptor friends called "journalism" but which she certainly has worked at with savage seriousness, she seems unable, for long, to keep away from the society of those her artist's soul despises, or the financial habits of her family. And this must make things very difficult.

The above is a somewhat long-winded attempt partially to account for some of the contradictions of this brilliant and impatient temperament, her unhappy knack of exasperating almost as much as she charms. All the first part of her story, the "finished" part: London, Ireland, Henry James, George Moore, the ogre governess, Kipling ("a jolly little man with a schoolboy humor, who would not have seemed anything much if his eyebrows had been shaved and one had not known his name"), the Auteuil convent, Stockholm, Italy, and the rest, is delightful.

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No less delightful, though in a different way, is that delicious condensed novel which tells of her adventure with Kamenev; the philandering in England; the trip together to a mysterious and melodramatic Russia; Mrs. Kamenev ("this thin-lipped, hard-eyed bitchovitch") meeting them on the Moscow railroad platform; the relapse of the middle-aged Bolshevik Romeo ("*à Clare Sheridan qui a sait me dominer*," the absurd little spectacled Commissar had written on his photograph!), into a more or less terrified husband, and poor innocent Clare left flapping and wondering why. Mme. Sheridan bivouacing, in a "flame-color and emerald dressing-gown, of vivid futurist design" in a passage-way outside the Kamenev's chamber in the Kremlin; Mme. Kamenev's wistful "You have *des jolies choses!*" as she passed sourly by; the German maid's "*Der Mann ist ein goldener Mensch, aber die Frau, sie jammert immer!*" all that inimitable episode tells things about the Moscow of 1920 which don't get into the usual histories.

There are similar jabs at Queen Marie and Mussolini—who seems to have behaved rather badly—but all this latter part has, somehow, a different air. As they left Stamboul, Mrs. Sheridan's little girl, Margaret, sobbed, "I can't bear it! Every time I grow to love a place and it becomes home, we uproot and go away." The mother promised that this should be the last time, but she wonders if really it is, and as she looks out over the Algerian desert she quotes the word "MEKTUB," which means, it seems, that whatever is to be, is written, anyway.

As a part of the celebration of the centenary of the birth of Tolstoy which takes place August 28, 1928, the state publishing office of the soviet government will undertake the publication of virtually everything in existence that he ever wrote. The work probably will consist of ninety-three to ninety-five volumes and is expected to be issued in about four years.