

The Anniversary

By FRANK H. SIMONDS

ANOTHER August First inevitably stirs memories of the days, just fifteen years ago, when a shower of declarations of war precipitated the catastrophe which still fills all our horizon. And for those who had reached maturity at that moment, the anniversary will stimulate an effort to recapture the emotions and impressions of the first tremendous days, when the storm broke, the breathless fascination of the weeks when the German tidal wave engulfed Belgium and rushed resistlessly down upon Paris, the sense of incredible and unutterable relief, when, at last, the onrushing sea of field gray was halted at the Marne and ebbed backward to the fields of Flanders, Picardy, and Champagne, there to beat furiously but futilely upon the Allied dike stretched from Ypres to Verdun.

As is customary on all such anniversaries, we are sure to harvest a new crop of interpretations, explanations, and elaborations of the causes and consequences of the conflict. Yet, beyond much doubt, the newest crop will be far smaller than in the earlier post-war years. For nothing is more striking than the ever diminishing assurance with which men volunteer illumination alike on the reasons and the results of the World War. The more we know the less we understand, the fuller the record the more incomprehensible are the facts.

Viewed from the purely literary aspect, it has been said often enough and perhaps

accurately, that the war produced no great literature. In any event, it is much too soon to attempt any accurate appraisal of the vast accumulation of books which record the events. Nevertheless, great or inconsiderable as later generations may pronounce these volumes, it is becoming increasingly clear that they express one clear message, which breaks utterly with tradition.

Looking back a century, it is patent that Napoleon had hardly reached his island prison when there was launched that ever-expanding effort to celebrate and glorify the colossal cycle of wars, which stretch from Valmy to Waterloo. Napoleon, himself, became the first publicity agent of his own legend, and he was barely in his grave when Byron, seizing upon the Greek revolution, took up the cry, skilfully replacing glory by liberty, but repeating all the praise of war.

Thereafter for three generations, youth was thrilled and thrallied by the literary celebration of the Napoleonic saga. Even on our own side of the Atlantic, Pickett's Virginians advanced on the slopes of Cemetery Ridge in conscious emulation of the Old Guard at La Haye Sainte. Moreover, each of the innumerable national conflicts of the nineteenth century contributed something to the enhancement of the reputation of war itself. If the Napoleonic *épopée* crowned France with a glory which lasted from Austerlitz to Sedan, three victorious

Prussian wars established the conviction that war could be profitable as well as magnificent. The struggles of the Risorgimento added a fresh glamour, and Garibaldi and his "Red Shirts" for the moment obscured the memory of Napoleon and his Grenadiers. Even our own Civil War, by preserving the union made the reward, at least in the written records of the North, seem commensurate with the sacrifice.

Thus for a hundred years youth was fairly drenched in glory. The conviction that war was noble, that victory meant profit, that mankind found its highest expression in battle, found repetition in numberless volumes. In vain the pacifist proclaimed that war was wicked, and the economist warned that it was becoming costly beyond possibility of profit. And all unheeding, the world marched to the frontiers, just fifteen years ago, youth captivated by the vision of glorious adventure in patriotic cause, maturity reconciled by the prospect of national advantage.

"I have a rendezvous with death," Alan Seeger sung, and in tragic unison his contemporaries echoed the same note, the ultimate expression of that interpretation which the literature of a century had given to the fact of war. When, however, one turns to post-war literary expression, it is instantly apparent that something approximating a revolution has taken place. Without exception, the books, which present judgment has pronounced good, give the lie direct to the older version. From Barbusse to Remarque the tale runs straight. Nothing survives of the legend, of the faith in which the youth of 1914 went to battle.

In this post-war harvest Mars, like Humpty Dumpty, has fallen, cannot be got back on his wall, not by all the king's horses, not, indeed, by all the king's scribes. Nothing, not a single shred, is left of all the splendid literary garments in which he was formerly arrayed. The last war was not magnificent, romantic, thrilling. It was dull, monotonous murder. Gone were the cavalry charges of Murat, the advance of the Old Guard with Ney leading, instead was the irruption of sewer rats out of stinking drains to meet automatic and impersonal extinction by poison gas, mathematical obliteration by machine guns, nameless mutilation by high explosive.

The bearskin shako made way for the gas mask, combat became as undistinguished and as indescribable as the grappling of negroes in an unlighted tunnel. War was reduced to the endless repetition of the routine of the stockyard. "Le Feu," "The Spanish Farm," "Disenchantment," "Three Soldiers," "No More Parades," "What Price Glory," "Sergeant Grischka," "All Quiet on the Western Front" repeat the same story. Frenchman, Englishman, German, and American, all arrive at the same conclusion.

"That is what the damned thing is like, take it or leave it"—there is the burden of the message. These witnesses do not take the field as crusaders. There is not even an evident and conscious purpose to "muck-rake" war. All speak in the same matter-of-fact tone, the impression is conveyed not by the enlargement of a few splendid incidents, but by the endless repetition of commonplace detail. But, in sum, it is a literature of vermin and smells and of infinite and indescribable boredom.

Nor can one dismiss these post-war books as the evanescent consequence of temporary shell shock. On the contrary, the present day witnesses belong to the millions, who are only now becoming articulate and audible. When they first came home, all the soldiers of the World War lapsed into silence. It was impossible to persuade them to disclose the slightest detail of what it had been like "out there."

Even during the war a gulf had progressively opened between the man in the trenches and the civilian. One was already conscious of the incomprehensible mood of the fighting man. After a fashion the non-combatant world had continued to live in the old faith and to be sustained by the time-honored legend. The journalist described war in the only fashion the non-fighting world could understand. But, in the same time the soldier passed from initial irritation to consuming anger and at last to sullen hopelessness. He abandoned the last faint hope that the rest of the world could understand the truth about his war and succumbed to a weariness beyond all expression.

As a consequence of this break between the front and the rear, between the civilian and the soldier, the tradition of war after a fashion survived the end of the conflict itself. And, when the world was treated to Armistice Day Celebrations and Victory Parades, done in the best Napoleonic style, it seemed possible that the traditional view

might be preserved, the legend resuscitated, the old bait saved for a new generation.

In these circumstances all depended upon the man, who had been in the trenches. He alone knew. But for the first post-war years he hung silent and scornful. Already Versailles had ripened into the Ruhr and the world was beginning to repeat the old patter about the next war, when at last, very slowly and deliberately, the man, who had fought the last, began to put into words the meaning he had discovered in his war. And so gradual and unhurried was his course, that even today, it is with surprise that one discovers upon reflection, how complete has been his triumph.

For, ephemeral or enduring, the phenomenon is unmistakable. Not only has the contemporary novelist stripped modern war of the trappings of the Napoleonic legend, but the historian of the moment has with equal ruthlessness robbed statesmanship of the pre-war years of the Bismarckian glamour. And, last of all, the economist, dealing not in abstract theories, but in the commonplace details of the lives of all European peoples, has demonstrated that measured by the parochial circumstances of the millions there is little to distinguish the lot of the victors from the fate of the vanquished.

Nor can one mistake the fact that this movement, this substitution of the realities of modern war for the romance of nineteenth century conflict continues to gain momentum. For the present, at least, literature has broken with war, it not only refuses to make new use of the old material in the conventional manner but with a savage and sustained effort it is demolishing the tradition. Whatever else one may say, at least it is true that the next generation of youth will receive from the hands of the present nothing that will suggest that war is the supreme adventure and conflict the most inspiring of human endeavors. And this, after all, is something new and hopeful alike in the world and in literature, for, if youth may still devise its own glamour with which to clothe war, of all events the long line of tradition has been broken.

Once, in the heat of the struggle, Woodrow Wilson described it as the war to end war and the phrase, having served the purpose of the propagandist, fell at last into the hands of the cynic, when the anarchy of peace replaced the misery of conflict. And in the sense in which Wilson used it, it is clear that it was only a phrase. Nevertheless, in the light of the post-war literature it may yet acquire both a new meaning and a fresh vitality.

Obviously the war brought no clear and clean decision cutting through all pre-war problems and bringing the world to a peace based upon justice and thus certain to endure. On the contrary each day's newspaper brings us new menaces, Polish Corridors, Magyar Minorities, Mussolini's imitations of the best Bernhardt bombast. If the war resolved a few old problems it preserved more and produced a whole new crop. Outwardly little has changed and if nations talk more of disarmament they spend no less in arming. Yet, underneath the surface through all the literature of Great Britain, France, Germany, even to a degree, if less decisively in America, runs the same note. In the old days it was so easy to trick youth into uniform, when generation after generation was nourished upon the ancient legend, inspired by the deeds of heroes portrayed by artistry of literary genius.

But will it be as easy to conscript the intelligence of the generation reared in the knowledge of Barbusse and Montague, of Remarque and Dos Passos? One may doubt it and in the doubt take courage on this anniversary.

Maurice Reclus in his "Monsieur Thiers" (Paris: Plon), a monograph that at times may be too detailed to hold the interest of the average reader, has nevertheless in part at least written a biography that is full of color and incident. He has stressed the dramatic elements in the career of the man who became the first President of the Third Republic, and examined into the reasons for his having succeeded in winning the importance in the eyes of his countrymen that he held.

The second volume of the diary of Tolstoy's wife has just been published in Moscow. The book covers the period from 1891 to 1897, and is overshadowed by domestic tragedy. Tolstoy and his wife seem drifting deeper and deeper into that maladjustment which led to his flight from home shortly before his death, and which caused both of them bitterness of soul. There are even hints of suicide on the part of the wife entered on her pages.

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JOHN MACY in the *Herald Tribune*

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The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received. Many of them will be reviewed later.

Art

CHINESE PAINTINGS IN AMERICAN COLLECTIONS. By OSVALD SIREN. Paris. Von Oest. 1929.

With the completion of the fifth (and presumably the last) volume of this great album, American scholars of Eastern art have received their final reprimand. If they criticize it adversely, the obvious reply would be, "Why, then, did you leave the task to a Swedish investigator and a comparatively late comer?" Indeed, it would be difficult to criticize it adversely without admitting much more to its credit than blame. The size of the illustrations make them really fit for study; the text is modestly and safely confined to attributions by the curators in charge of the treasures. Omissions are few and, except for Chinese wall painting in America, not important. In other words, Dr. Siren has done precisely what we should have long ago begun and should each year have been increasing. Let us hope that he will bring out next year another volume which will include the additions to American collections that have been made in the interval. Until the present no such *corpus* has been available. The Musée Guimet is also to be congratulated on its courage in publishing so handsomely a book which manifestly must have a restricted sale. However, the public for such a book will grow more rapidly than it has even in the past decade. For it is now obvious that the interest in the best paintings of China will no longer be confined to specialists, and that every cultivated person will realize that we cannot afford to remain ignorant of this amazing rich mine of beauty. Dr. Siren's record should be supplemented at frequent intervals when our additions demand a fresh volume, and it should be available in every college library where the fine arts are studied.

THE WOODCUT, NUMBER III. Edited by Herbert Furst. London: The Fleuron. New York: Random House. \$5.

STAFFORDSHIRE POTTERY FIGURES. By Herbert Read. Houghton Mifflin. \$15.

Belles Lettres

ADAM, THE BABY AND THE MAN FROM MARS. By IRWIN EDMAN. Houghton Mifflin. 1929. \$2.50.

A collection of essays on American life, philosophy, religion, education, and other matters. Professor Edman is quiet, reasonable, moderate. He takes the path of unadventurous good sense on most subjects. There is a clarifying essay on John Dewey. "Adam, the Baby and the Man from Mars" are three types that have been used to represent unprejudiced observers, receivers of unclouded and unwarped impressions of the human scene. But on examination it is found that these hypothetical observers are by no means so innocent, plastic, and detached. The Man from Mars is only a degree less provincial than the human beings he studies. Adam ceases to be innocent as soon as he leaves his innocuous Eden. The Baby is plastic, but as soon as he learns anything his intellectual chastity is gone. The moral is that no human philosopher is impartial. All philosophies and theologies are prejudiced. There is no Absolute Thinker, and he has no absolute thoughts.

POETRY AND MATHEMATICS. By Scott Buchanan. Day. \$2.50 net.

MY SKIRMISH WITH JOLLY ROGER. By D. H. Lawrence. Random House. \$3.50.

AUSTIN DOBSON. By Alban Dobson. Oxford University Press. \$5.

Biography

LETTERS OF WOMEN IN LOVE. Selected and arranged by R. L. Megroz. Houghton Mifflin. \$4.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN NEW HAMPSHIRE. By Edwin L. Page. Houghton Mifflin. \$6.50.

NAPOLEON SELF DESTROYED. By Pierce Clark. Cape-Smith. \$3.

LETTERS OF RICHARD FOX. Edited by P. S. and H. W. Allen. Oxford University Press. \$5.

SEVEN MONTHS WITH MAHATMA GANDHI. By Krishnadas. Bombay: Taraporevala. 2 vols.

Fiction

SVEN DISCOVERS PARADISE. By FRITZ RECK-MALLECEWEN. Translated from the German by JENNY COVAN. Liveright. 1929. \$2.50.

Boy Sven's nationality is never definitely disclosed to us, the author merely suggesting that his hero is a Nordic who in origin may be either a German, a Swede, or a Dane. At any rate, Sven did his war service in Flanders and Bulgaria though not

until three years after, when he is twenty-six, do we first encounter him, setting forth for Egypt, an assistant irrigation engineer, employed by the British in an important canal-building project near Alexandria. On the voyage from Marseilles, Sven falls in love with the spoiled daughter of his immediate superior, and she with him, but after they land in Egypt it is not long before she dismisses the trusting boy. Meanwhile, through various misadventures, foremost of which is his love for a Bedouin girl rescued by him in a shipwreck, Sven loses his job, suffers ostracism from his fellow Europeans, and takes the first steps toward becoming an outcast. But we realize that he is too inherently fine and strong a nature for moral self-destruction, and so does Bully, that admirable old Britisher, who in the nick of time saves the disillusioned boy. Though the book may not be numbered in that group of remarkable novels which this year have come to us from Germany, it is still a forceful, brilliantly written story, and of an artistry fully equal to that of the author's widely acclaimed "Woman in Flight."

WINTER. By FRIEDRICH GRIESE. Translated by D. S. ADLER HOBMAN. Longmans, Green. 1929.

Griese reminds us of Jensen of "Jörn Uhl," who in turn reminded us of Björnsen and the Icelandic sagas. But the old sagas were not sophisticated by allegory. The curt simplicity of the big-boned North Sea race had no shadow of romance and subintention about it; and Herr Griese tells his story something in the old, plain North Sea manner; he gives his characters something of that boney structure and unexpected action. But he surrounds it all with symbolism. There is a Götterdämmerung in miniature. Fate closes in relentlessly on the failing village of Long Row, and the story ends with the two who had the most vitality going away on their skis, leaving the old village buried in the snow.

THE DAIN CURSE. By Dashiell Hammett. Knopf. \$2.

THREE LOVES. By Max Brod. Knopf. \$2.50.

THE REBELS. By Alfred Neumann. Knopf. \$2.50.

BEAUTY: I WONDER. By Dorothy Courson. Elliot Holt. \$2.50.

PLUS MINUS. By Franz Harper. Covici-Friede. \$2.50.

Juvenile

(The Children's Bookshop will appear next week)

A WONDERFUL ADVENTURE. A Primer on the Workings of the Body and the Mind. By HAROLD DEARDEN. Illustrated by WILLIAM C. BLOOD. Cosmopolitan. 1928. \$1.25.

Before the modern child has completed the fourteen short chapters of this primer, intended to induct him softly and safely into the great adventure of living, he would throw the book down because of its obvious moral intent. The author does not give a clear, straightforward, direct description of the workings of the body and the mind, but disguises a robust reality with didactic sentimentality. His interpretation of instinct in general gives a false impression, while the discussion of the sexual instinct in particular begs the question and creates an incomplete if not distorted pattern.

The growth of the mind and the functioning of the body are too complex to be treated with such amiable discursiveness.

BOBS, KING OF THE FORTUNATE ISLE. By A. W. FRANCHOT. Dutton. 1928. \$2.

This is not a well-written book, because the conversation is jarringly artificial. However, the story evokes a warm response because it is a real romance—a story of shipwreck on an uninhabited island. The progress of events is reminiscent of the charming ridiculousness of Cooper's "Crater Island," in which the heroes find first here and then there an unexpected supply of just what was needed to avert disaster. The theme of escape from civilization will always have power as long as the world is peopled by the young of all ages.

The ingenuity displayed in this story by the three shipwrecked boys and their mother who must make their own home and discover their necessary supplies, is bound to be interesting to young minds. The book moreover, contains a good deal of arresting information. It commits, however, the serious fault of drawing attention to childish inefficiencies which are amusing to grown-ups, but quite wasted upon young readers, and the equally regrettable error of trying to interest children at the price of creating an artificial child who is presented to them as a perfectly normal child.

PEEP-IN-THE-WORLD. By Frances Elisabeth Crichton. Longmans, Green. \$1.75.

A DAUGHTER OF THE SEINE. By Jeanette Eaton. Harpers. \$2.50.

LEGENDS OF THE SEVEN SEAS. By Margaret Evans Price. Harpers. \$2.50.
THE STORY OF THE THEATER. By Louise Busleigh. Harpers. \$1.25.

Poetry

SCRAPPED SILVER. With a Foreword by ISABEL FISKE CONANT. Portland, Maine: The Mosher Press. 1929.

This little book deserves its charming format. It is a collection of the class-work of eight girls, sixteen and seventeen years old, at the Scoville School in New York. The verses, Mrs. Conant tells us, are the by-product of a term in a class for the appreciation, not the writing, of poetry. "There are many by-products in industry, such as Tyrian dyes and diamond-dust, which might have lent a title to this collection, but it has derived instead from one of the poems which the poet herself modestly offered as 'junk.'"

It is evident, at the most rapid leafing through, that this is not the result of "required" writing. Nor is it the usual undergraduate compilation so prevalent in these so articulate States. Sharing the gift of creation—and adaptation—with all children not yet ruined by pattern-imposing teachers, these eight have resisted the clichés of education with unusual success. Most of them, like most of their kind, are indefinitely "poetic," but two or three of them are poets in their own small but absolute right. Evelyn Ahrend, who writes like a juvenile Sara Teasdale, is one of these; Elizabeth Morris, whose hand seems surer, is another; Edna Michaelle Snyder, if one can judge thus prematurely, has the greatest range. She can write a genuine evocation of the spirit of poetry (at the age of ten), an Ave Maria a few years later, a prismatic tribute to the quality of words, a whimsy concise as this:

RAGAZZA

When you are hungry
You must feed
On meat and apples
For your need.

I was hungry
Once, and took
For my need
A slice of book.

Altogether, a delightful booklet the inimitable fragrance of youth proud parents will not be the only ones to regret that there are only thirty-six pages and two hundred and sixty copies.

(Continued on next page)

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