

# John Ruskin's Tragedy

JOHN RUSKIN has qualified for the status of "Eminent Victorian" in an exceedingly thorough manner. He lived in a prodigious fame. Not many miles of bookshelves and of picture galleries, but the configuration of whole towns stand to his glory and shame. Three generations have hailed him alternatively as the absolute arbiter of taste and best enlightener of the human spirit, or as the most distressing bore and prig who ever existed.

More than Tennyson's, Carlyle's, Browning's, Herbert Spencer's, or Morris's, Ruskin's view of the good and the beautiful dominated the cultured life of his country for a generation. Of painting he was king. For instance, in one of his notes in the *Times* he remarked that apple-blossom was a subject worthy of a painter's brush: next year the walls of the Academy blushed pink.

The visible events of his career are plain. His works, collected and collated, and each of them prefaced by a biographical study, stand in thirty-six immense volumes in Messrs. Cook & Wedderburn's incomparable Library Edition. Besides this monument, this tomb of the Pharaohs, there exist two full-dress two-volume biographies. Every diarist of his time has something to say of Ruskin: contemporary newspapers were full of him. He himself was "the author of eighty distinct works." Comments, impressions, books of elegant extracts and appreciations stand in support: they are from hands as eminent and as diverse as those of Marcel Proust, Bernard Shaw, Alice Meynell, A. C. Benson, and Hall Caine. And yet (the conclusion is hard to avoid), all these accounts of Ruskin do not make sense.

Now portentous and monumental effigies (whether they be statues or reputations) that do not make sense, constitute a challenge; and that is perhaps why so many eminent persons have nibbled at Ruskin. Alice Meynell said he was unhappy because he could not fully renounce the world; Shaw says he out-Bolshevized Lenin and Karl Marx; Proust says he was the most exquisite observer and recorder of natural beauty who ever lived.

What comes out very clearly, from whatever source we get our information, is that there was something about the living man himself that was at once challenging and appealing. I have talked with a number of people who knew Ruskin, especially at the time when, as an oldish man and when as an old man, he was Slade Professor at Oxford. My father, St. Loe, was one of these Strachey eye-witnesses: Mr. Graham Wallace, Sir Michael Sadler, Mrs. Holman Hunt, Miss Violet Hunt, and a painter uncle of mine were others.

They all tell the same tale. Ruskin had a voice more beautiful than any voice they ever heard, except perhaps Ellen Terry's: he had the oddest and most vivid blue eyes: he was quick in movement like a starling, or sometimes he looked uncommonly wild, sometimes unhappy. All agree with Shaw and Proust that he was a great man. Even, said his contemporaries, with Gladstone or Darwin in the room—let alone the Brownings or Matthew Arnold or Jowett or William Morris—you felt Ruskin as the great man. When he lectured, and launched at last into one of his famous perorations, a room full of Oxford undergraduates would be held quite still for a full minute after he had ended.

But more than half the questions that the modern reader wants to ask remain unanswered. Why did he lose his first love? Why did his wife run away from him? Why was he so unhappy? Why was he so worshipped and flattered and admired? Why did he run so uneasily up and down Europe, on a sort of train line between Herne Hill and Venice? Why could he never work with anybody? Why did he turn Socialist? Why did he love, and having loved why did he lose, that beautiful child, Rose La Touche? Why did she die of grief? Why, in an age of Grand Old Men and of Prime Ministers of eighty (like "Dizzy" and Gladstone), did Ruskin begin to lose ground in his prime—(soon after he was fifty), and die at last, having been mad for twenty years?

The old, voluminous, direct accounts of Ruskin

do not make all this hang together. As a recent critic in the *Times* has said: "As long as our eyes are fixed on the best parlor, there is no sense to be made of Ruskin." Indeed, after a protracted study of the thirty-six volumes, and of a great deal else beside, it becomes clear that we must follow Ruskin into his nursery if anything coherent is to be made of that strange drama, his life—a piece that was played out before a row of gas-lamps and in much pomp of outward decorum and publicity. "It is," he said of it himself, "an exquisite piece of tragedy altogether, rather like Lear in a ludicrous commercial sort of way."



But beware! To follow Ruskin into the nursery, to see him absurd in his cradle, to watch him trot up the long garden at Herne Hill, to see him fall in love as a gawky boy of sixteen, to see him blush and tremble at a first view of the Alps, to see fame and disappointment settle one on each shoulder, to watch both fame and disappointment grow and grow till they half crush him, to see a sort of horror seize him, to watch the brilliant mind whose hopes we have known, struggle awhile with its enemies and then give way, and finally, to see the repose of extreme old age, is to grow to love Ruskin. We shall feel for him, begin to see in his life a sort of epitome, some general truth about those frail sons of men who are idealists. Or perhaps it is a truth about all men—one of those truths that is housed in almost any long story told in the country over the fire, or else succinctly in a proverb. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Perhaps it is only in defeat that the soul finds herself: perhaps the bright hopes with which the child sets out are always more mortal than its life. Perhaps the shipwreck that Ruskin suffered is our shipwreck.

Anyhow, be the truth what it may, do not follow his story if you still want to dismiss Ruskin as a futile fellow or a pompous old bore.

I have myself, in a forthcoming book, tried to trace the tale at length. Now, having shut the books, it is as if I were moving about among all these events and persons, and wondering which to choose of them all—the rich accumulation of a long life—in order that Ruskin shall stand visible on the page, small and yet distinct.

Certainly there is no getting Ruskin clear unless we first get his parents, James and Margaret Ruskin in focus, and it is a sore temptation to go back yet another generation. James and Margaret Ruskin were cousins: she was the daughter of a sea captain, and her widowed mother kept the King's Head Inn at Croydon. James's father was a wine merchant in Edinburgh, an old man who lived high and embroiled his business. The two could not marry till they were almost middle-aged, because James's sense of duty compelled him to pay his father's debts. James was very cultivated, and would have liked to follow the arts, but had had to see to this wretched business instead.

He and Margaret were pious people, and they had been obliged to lead a hard life. So in 1819 when their only child was born, they determined that he should lead a soft one. They had gone hungry for beauty and culture; they determined that John should have his fill. But it was to be their sort of beauty, and their sort of culture.

Every day he and his mother read the Bible together, verse and verse about; she small and erect in a white cap and wide maroon dress, John very dutiful on a stool at her feet. At first he is a child hardly able to pronounce the words, then he is a tall, wispy boy of twelve, then an awkward lad of sixteen suffering acutely in his first love affair. But his mother never changes, but sits there composed and upright. When Revelation is ended, they go back to Genesis.

They saw very few people, and all Ruskin's accomplishments were long-range affairs. By the time he fell in love with a Parisian girl who came to stay in the house, he was writing for "Friendship's Offering" and the like. But at close range, he was awkward, sensitive, and haughty without meaning to be. He complains bitterly that he was taught no manners: he was only taught not to be tiresome in company, which proved a very different thing. Years after he had become something of a public character

as a writer (he made his name when he was an undergraduate) he remained hopelessly shy and awkward in company.

The almost incredible conduct of his parents is a feature of the next stage in his career. They thought it necessary that he should go up to Oxford, though he had never been away to school, but they went with him! Mrs. Ruskin was established in lodgings in the High, and there every week-end, leaving the sherry business in Billiter Street, James Ruskin joined them. *Solitude à trois*, Mr. Benson (in his study of Ruskin) calls it.

Ruskin tried again and again all his life to pour out his soul at the feet of some girl. There is an endless history of Adeles, Charlottes, and Miss Wardells, Kates and Ursulas; while the two chief tragedies of his life, his marriage to Euphemia Gray, whom he rather disliked, and his refusal when he was over fifty by Rose La Touche, were all incidents in the drama of his attempted escape from a situation which first hardened into grotesqueness at Oxford.

For this family life, this *solitude à trois*, was a glass prison. Its form bent all Ruskin's motions as surely as the swimming of a goldfish is shaped by the bowl in which it lives. Ruskin was so early famous that he had little more privacy than the fish, and like the fish he moved in a different element from the creatures that surrounded him. Almost every aspect of his life shows the combined vehemence and superficiality that mark the outsider who is yet a lynx-eyed observer.

Holman Hunt and Ruskin's biographer, Sir E. T. Cook, both agree that his ill-fated marriage to his kinswoman, Euphemia Gray, was chiefly of his mother's making, and that Margaret's motive was to ensure his choice falling on someone really suitable. He had twice been so ill-advised as to want to marry Papists, the French girl and Scott's grand-daughter, Charlotte Lockhart. By firmly telling him that his feeling for Euphemia "was of a tender nature" and that he had better marry her directly, "Margaret Ruskin hoped to gain a daughter rather than lose a son."

John protested that he had never loved her, but at last, ever obedient, he went through a form of marriage with cousin Effie. Nature, however, was not to be forced beyond the form. The marriage, which lasted for six years, was never consummated; and in the end Euphemia fell in love with John Millais, had her marriage annulled, and married him. Ruskin in 1854 at thirty-five, was back with the old *solitude à trois*.



Now to the neurologist or the psycho-analyst, this may perhaps seem no uncommon tale. There is the dominating mother and there are the irrepressed parents who seek to identify themselves with the child who fails to emancipate himself. But actually this story has one unusual feature. Ruskin was a man of genius. He came to realize what had happened to him: he came to the conclusion that the failures and unhappiness that dogged him, were ultimately traceable to James and Margaret and their determination to live in their son.

When he was away from them, he was expected to write or telegraph to his parents every day. If we pick up one of these daily letters, written when he was forty-four and famous, we may find its contents startling.

Men ought to be severely disciplined and exercised in the sternest way in daily life (he wrote to his father)—they should learn to lie on stone beds and eat black soup, but they should never have their hearts broken. . . . The two terrific mistakes which Mama and you involuntarily fell into, were the exact reverse of this *in both ways*—you fed me effeminately and luxuriously to that extent that I actually now could not travel in rough countries without taking a cook with me!—But you thwarted me in all the earnest fire of passion and life.

Ruskin would have been no true Victorian if a great deal of his unhappiness had not taken on the guise of religious doubt. He had been taught a narrow evangelicalism by his mother, who was, as has been suggested, a proud, stupid, and tenacious woman. When at last, in spite of her and in spite of his father, he did grow up intellectually if not emotionally, this religion failed him. Yet it was, in his efforts to make what he had been taught about



# by Amabel Williams-Ellis

Christianity operative, that he turned to socialism, and to some extent pacifism.

His father's body is lying dead upstairs, and a fall of snow has muffled the sound of wheels outside the house in Dulwich; and the sherry merchant's old friends write to his son and say that they would like to show their respect by coming to the funeral. The convention irks Ruskin.

People think it respectful to see their friends buried. To me, it is, as it always has been of late years, one universal puzzle. To see you Christians as gay as larks while nothing touches you in your own affairs or friends—watching thousands of people massacred and tortured—helping to do it—selling them guns to shoot each other with, and talking civilities and protocols to men who are walking up to their loins in human blood. Presently God knocks you on the head with a coffin's end, and you suddenly perceive that something has gone wrong—scratch your heads—say—“Dear me—here's one of *my* friends dead—really the world is a very sad world. How very extraordinary! let me improve the occasion!” You are funny people—*vous autres*. I wish you were not coming or would not come tomorrow, for you are real friends.

Ruskin composed his father's epitaph. It is a moving study in omissions.

Here rests from day's well-sustained burden,  
JOHN JAMES RUSKIN  
born in Edinburgh, May 18th, 1785.  
He died in his home in London, March 3rd, 1864.  
He was an entirely honest merchant,  
and his memory is, to all who keep it, dear and helpful.  
His son, whom he loved to the uttermost  
and taught to speak truth, says this of him.

The omissions in this lapidary essay are not, we can be sure, accidental. If Ruskin does not say that he loved his father, it was because he did not mean to say it. He was a master of style and his words always clothed his meaning exactly.

It has been suggested that contact with real life always eluded Ruskin. He married a beautiful girl, but never consummated the marriage. He visited Paris in 1848, and was merely shocked by the barricades. He became a Communist and lived in the same city as Marx and Engels, and never got to know them. He was the patron and champion of the pre-Raphaelite movement, but never really entered their cheerful, Bohemian society.

It was only in the worlds of visible form and of words that Ruskin moved free and unfettered, loosed from his cheated body and heart. It is impossible to read the pieces of natural description in “Modern Painters,” or “Stones of Venice,” without agreeing with Marcel Proust that here was one of the greatest masters of observation and expression that ever lived. Proust lauds him to the skies: praises his matchless discrimination, his delicate touch, his vivid sense of color; his ability to bring the whole perfume of meadow-grass or of a climatic zone before the reader.

Turner had set himself to paint “the deep open sea” with his brush. Ruskin will do no less with his pen. May I recall a familiar passage to the reader?

It is a sunset on the Atlantic, after prolonged storm; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain-clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of sea is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high, not local, but a low, broad, heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath, after the torture of the storm.

His familiar, his tender, or comically irascible styles are just as effective. He likes to write grotesque and grumbling letters to Charles Eliot Norton in Massachusetts. Norton always understands.

This letter expresses a mood felt just before he came out with his political reflections. He had become a political thinker who realized, as clearly as the Marxians or the world of modern high finance, that it is the economic structure of a country rather than its form of government that affects the life of the people. The “one more howl” took shape as “Unto This Last,” perhaps the most limpid political tract ever written.

I live the life of an old lady in a houseful of wicked children. But people were meant to be able to give quiet pieces of advice to each other and show, without any advice, how things should be done properly (such as they had gift and liking for). But people were never meant to be

always howling and bawling the right road to a generation of drunken cabmen, their heads up through the trapdoor of the hansom, faces all over mud—no right road to be got upon after all—nothing but a drunken effort at turning, ending in ditch. I hope to get just one more howl executed, from which I hope great effects—upon the Moon—and then, see if I don't take to Kennel and Straw, comfortably. . . .

You are almost the only friend I have left (1859). I mean the only friend who understands or feels with me. I've a good many Radical half-friends, but I'm not a Radical and they quarrel with me. Then all my Tory friends think me worse than Robespierre. Rossetti and the P. R. B. are all gone crazy about the “Morte d'Arthur.” I don't believe in Evangelicalism—and my Evangelical (once) friends now look upon me with as much horror as on one of the possessed Gennesaret pigs. Nor do I believe in the Pope—and some Roman Catholic friends, who had great hopes of me, think I ought to be burned. . . . I haven't made up my mind what to fight for—whether, for instance, people ought to live in Swiss cottages and sit on three-legged and one-legged stools; whether people ought to dress well or ill; whether ladies ought to tie their hair in beautiful knots; whether Commerce or Business of any kind be an invention of the Devil or not; whether Art is a Crime or only an Absurdity; whether Clergymen ought to be multiplied or exterminated by arsenic, like rats.

Ruskin had, too, like so many Victorians, a very pretty turn for political invective. Later (in that fascinating fragment of autobiography, “Praeterita”) he dropped all the stiffening out of his prose, and we have pages that might have been written by Sterne or James Joyce or Virginia Woolf. Grammar is overleaped, and, up at some perilous height of experiment, we see Ruskin juggling. He has three or four meanings in the air at once, all flashing and illusive. Then—outside reason and grammar—they are triumphantly caught and flung onto the page.

By the winter of 1866 his father was dead, Euphemia held John Millais's children at her breast, but Margaret Ruskin still ruled Ruskin's house. Ruskin was nearly fifty, but he had fallen in love again—this time with Rose La Touche, a girl who was still almost a child, and over whom he had watched ever since she was nine.

Her mother and father had confided her education in the arts to Ruskin, he had been free of her nursery. Now, when she was eighteen, he offered himself as a suitor, and they forbade him the house.

The tragedy is as smothered as if it had been composed by Corneille or Racine, and even today it is obscure. Her parents are said to have told Rose that Ruskin was an immoral man and that therefore she should not see him. (He was going through a phase of religious doubt.) Another explanation is that the parents assured themselves that Ruskin's physical condition made marriage impossible, and that it was thus kindest to break off as soon as possible.

Another explanation, and one which is supported by certain still unpublished evidence, is that Mrs. La Touche, the girl's mother, was herself in love with Ruskin, and had always hoped and pretended that Ruskin's affection for the child was a subterfuge, or as we might say today, a sublimation. She hoped it was her that he loved. When his formal declaration of his love for Rose came, she was deeply chagrined, and her jealousy and disappointment turned her against Ruskin altogether. This is the explanation which I believe to be the true one.

What at any rate is clear, is that between her elders—between this formidable lover and her beautiful mother (who was always in the right—Rose's life was pulled to pieces. She could not make up her mind either to marry Ruskin against her parents' wills, nor yet to refuse the lonely, unhappy man outright. The situation was intolerable to her, and as a beautiful girl in her twenties she died, worn out by the conflict.

“I had just got some pressing work done,” Ruskin writes to Carlyle, “with other worldliness, and was away into the meadows, to see clover and bean blossom, when the news came that the little story of my Wild Rose was ended, and the hawthorn blossoms would fall this year—over her.”

With Rose's death in 1875 Ruskin lost his last hope of personal happiness. He was as famous as ever, his word was once more law in the arts, and the eclipse that he had suffered on first declaring himself a socialist, was over. He was rich, he held an Oxford professorship, his books lay in every drawing-room and every studio in England, his pen shook the walls of the Academy, buildings in the

styles of architecture he had advocated rose all about him, princes and princesses were his pupils, and his name was a household word. But now he had no more hope of happiness.

When he is fifty-nine, Ruskin has a long period of being downright admittedly mad. At last, in the 'eighties, the attacks of mania crowd quickly one upon another: Ruskin is defeated, spent, exhausted, and only half alive. Finally there comes the last period—the sad eleven years of waiting for death.

But Ruskin's was a strong spirit. Again and again in the last years, that spirit flashes out into uncommon brightness. If he could not save himself, if experience is a light that only shines on the tossing wake of the ship, Ruskin can shout to us through the storm in a mighty voice. He is Captain Ahab, pursuing he knows not what spirit of evil—what white whale—a being, like Ahab himself, possessed by he knows not what strange genius.

It is an old tragedy: the human spirit is at war, tossed hither and thither, suffering, defying, and in the end, perishing. This time the tale is told not by Herman Melville, but by a Racine. Everything is suppressed. There is no fine expressive backcloth of towering seas and tattered cloud. Everything is trivial: the light is not that of a storm gleam, but of a row of gas lamps. The elements are stilled: they tell us nothing about the passions and conflicts that are raging.

Yet here, in a suburban drawing-room, by Rose's deathbed, or on the moors at Brantwood, these passions and uncertainties are able to tear as cruelly as the fury of a whale, and to overwhelm as surely as that terrible sea into which Melville has externalized them.

When the story is set in utrecht velvet, when the tragedy is enacted “between a Turkey carpet and a Titian” (to borrow Ruskin's words) there creeps in an element of satire, delicately barbing the arrows of fate. The cultured Victorians tried to fence themselves from the tragic and the terrible. By never mentioning this, by hushing up that, and sliding over the other, the well-bred, quiet-voiced, rich *intelligentsia* of England and America, tried to make ladies of the Fates. They made their little genteel jokes, and were so cultivated. Surely destiny would not have the heart to “hit them over the head with a coffin end”? At least they could see to it that their tragedies should be all muted by the upholsterers. In the 'eighties it is bad form for the victim on the rack of doubt, failure, and despair, to cry out: if he does, his voice is drowned, not in kettle-drums, but in plush.

But for all that, before he died, exhausted, a pale simulacrum in a bath-chair, Ruskin did cry out. He could and he did speak and call. There is a note of genuine passion: we hear the authentic voice. Every month in *Fors Clavigera*—a sort of strange, mad, eloquent miscellany—Ruskin poured out his heart, his sense of the futility of genteel society (the “great picnic party,” as he called it), his sense of the sufferings of man.

But as far as they could his friends hushed everything up. Perhaps they were right. The public was rich and pitiless, hedged about with crinolines and the five per cents. So the “pious hands” held the veil extended. They pretended that poor, mad Ruskin's old age was one of gentlemanly and honored leisure. So we have the conventional Ruskin legend. Perhaps they were right.

“We cry and cry,” his friend Manning wrote to him, “but the nineteenth century looks upon us as deaf and impassive as the young Memnon.” But perhaps our more pitiful age may be allowed to look behind the convention, and see Ruskin not as an Eminent Victorian but as a man like ourselves, but raised both in sorrow and beauty a little above mortal stature.

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Amabel Williams-Ellis, author of the foregoing study of Ruskin, is the daughter of the late St. Loe Strachey, and is herself a writer whose work has attracted attention. In 1927 her novel, “Wall of Glass,” was issued by George H. Doran, and there has this week come from the press of Doubleday, Doran a biography of Ruskin entitled “The Exquisite Tragedy” of which the article printed above is an after-product.



## Books of Special Interest

### A Travel Diary

THE PILGRIMAGE OF BUDDHISM. By JAMES B. PRATT. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1928. \$3.

Reviewed by KENNETH SAUNDERS

HERE is another "Travel Diary of a Philosophy"—less egoistic if less profound. The author of this large and interesting book has made pilgrimages to the Far East and to India which have already yielded good fruit. He is known as a trained observer, as a teacher of philosophy, and as a sympathetic student of the religions of Asia. During several sabbatical years he has seized the opportunity to visit the temples, and to meet the leaders of Buddhism. This is an interesting and often a fascinating thing to do. There is the strangeness of intellectual and physical landscape; there are the mighty works of civilization throughout the ancient East; there is the growing conviction that Buddhism has been not only the vehicle by which the heritage of India has been carried from her shores to the other countries of Asia, but a most potent factor in their civilization. To the religious observer there is the growing sense of spiritual kinship between the followers of this great faith and Christianity, and a desire to enter more fully into the experiences of the saints of Buddhism. All this Dr. Pratt has seen and felt and he writes well—as a rule. There are many passages which make this an attractive travel-book for all who desire a general introduction to a vast and intricate subject; and it would certainly help to make a tour in the Orient really fascinating and worthwhile; for its main purpose is to reveal Buddhism as a living religion.

The student of Buddhism will find much to interest him in the early chapters which deal with the Founder, his teachings, and the development of Buddhist philosophy. While they contain nothing very new and some things which could be debated at length—for example the statement "that Buddha was primarily a moral teacher"—they are a useful survey of western scholarship, which gains in color and in insight from the author's personal contact with

Buddhists. Too many books are written which lack reality because the writer knows the books and not the people. Dr. Pratt knows the books, at any rate in translation, and the people at any rate through interpreters, and for all this and for three dollars worth of voluminous and often picturesque information, the general public must be grateful to him and to the publisher. The reviewer, however, has been over most of the same ground, and feels that the book would be stronger for being condensed; much repetition might then be avoided. He cannot help noticing also many unfortunate misprints, and some which are grotesque. What will the general reader make of this sentence:

"But one should remember also Hideyoshi's ear mourned in Kyoto, and the iron heel shown in Korea in our own times?"

The traveler will remember, after a minute's thought, that there is a mound of Korean ears cut off by Hideyoshi and will see the point of this reference. Then there is the habitual use of the strange name *Dammo*, which sounds like an eighteenth century oath, but is intended for Daruma, the grotesque and bizarre Bodhidharma who is so popular a figure in Japanese art. It would be easy to multiply such examples, and towards the latter part of the book they become thicker as the pilgrim tires of his pilgrimage of proof reading.

There is also some bad stuff which from a professor of psychology is less excusable. What is one to make of this?

There is, however, one use to which prayer may be put of which all earnest souls may avail themselves, and that is the active debasing (*sic*) of oneself before the Divine, the August, the Overpowering, the immediate sensing of the contrast between one's own finiteness and the infinitude of the Eternal, the pouring forth of one's soul in deep humility and reverence before the unspeakable Whole of things which is never far away.

The "debasing of oneself . . . before the unspeakable Whole of things"; surely this is a strange substitute for prayer, as the masters of the spiritual life understand it. Even to debase oneself before God is not

enough. When Dr. Pratt speaks of Jesus as the "eager adolescent reformer of the Synoptic Gospel," he lets fall a phrase which suggests that he might do well to look again at the Author of the Lord's Prayer. This rather patronizing tone of some recent books toward the most august figure in history is becoming intolerable. We have Mr. Wells's "lean and strenuous Jesus," and Rabbi Brown's "dear young Galilean." Dr. Pratt knows better. The synoptic Jesus is thirty years old when he begins his preaching, and it might be better if all teachers waited in silence as long, or longer. When he first appears, he is not so much "eager" as calm and authoritative.

From other faults of scholarship this book is not free. The Tibetan Tantric formula, om mani padme hum, almost certainly erotic in its significance, is attributed to the Hinayana. This is enough to make the great Buddhaghosa, whom the author barely mentions—though news of central importance—turn in his grave. Fortunately the monks of Ceylon and Burma are a long-suffering and kindly people and have forgiven all of us, not least the reviewer, many blunders and indiscretions. It would be easy to go on pointing out rather obvious mistakes, but it is a thankless task at best, and it is not the impression which one would wish to leave upon the reader of this review. The book is a good weighty one in every sense of the word, very tiring to hold up and frankly rather tiring in its too conversational tone. Nevertheless, it fills a need, and it may encourage others to journey on this Pilgrimage, to tread in the footprints of far more distinguished pilgrims from Fahan in the fourth century to Sylvain Levi in our own.

### What Science Is

THE SCIENTIFIC WORLD VIEW. By WILLIAM KAY WALLACE. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1928.

Reviewed by FILMER B. C. NORTHROP

AWARENESS of a significant change in man's attitude toward himself and nature, due to the influence of science, is widespread. There is need for an exact statement of what science stands for and what its consequences are. This book attempts to meet this need.

The fundamental procedure which the author follows is historical. The "scientific world view" is regarded by Mr. Wallace as the product of a historical development in which an entirely different philosophy termed the "religious world view" has been replaced. This leads naturally to a consideration of the causes of the change, and forces the author to state a certain philosophy of history. For the most part he holds that world views are determined by economic conditions, although at times the opposite position is suggested.

This general historical view of the problem expresses itself in a three-fold division of the book. The first part involves an examination of religion to determine the essential character of the religious world view; the second part does the same for science and its world view; and the third attempts to indicate the change in moral principles which a transition from the religious to the scientific outlook entails. It is evident that the book is well conceived.

Although the section on religion is inadequate in its scope, considering the task which the author proposes to accomplish, it is, nevertheless, a great relief from the usual announcements of the existence of blissful peace and agreement between science and religion. The author asserts that science is removing the need for the religious attitude, along with the rejection of the old religious cosmology.

When one turns to the section on science the result is disappointing. Certainly, the chapter on the foundations of science should provide the basis for the positive thesis of such a book. Nevertheless only a few words on Descartes appear. At this point, nothing is said of Galileo and Newton. This means that the book must fail to accomplish its purpose, for without a primary emphasis upon the ideas of classical physics, as they were stated by Galileo and Newton, there can be no understanding, either of traditional modern science, or of the modifications which the discoveries of our own day are producing.

For this fatal omission the author pays dearly to the end of his book. The cost is vagueness and an appeal to statements about "the new economy" and "the new morality." Thus, that which started as an important and clearly conceived undertaking, ended in a suggestive and somewhat plausible propaganda for a new faith. As such it is interesting, but it is hardly science.

### A Noble Rake

By ROBERT S. FORSYTHE

"This claims to be a study of the historical background of Thackeray's 'Henry Esmond.' . . . It began in a footnote to Macaulay's description of the actor Mountford's death over the actress Mrs. Bracegirdle. It has grown to nearly 300 pages around the career of Lord Mohun. . . . The result is a running commentary on Lord Mohun's life and Thackeray's novel which will prove equally fascinating to the reader of fiction and to the historian. . . . To read Dr. Forsythe's minute and enthralling book is to re-read 'Esmond,' and we advise no one to re-read 'Esmond' without reading Dr. Forsythe."—*London Times*. \$3.50

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### Books for Little Theatres

#### THEATRON

(An illustrated Record)  
by Clarence Stratton

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