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of LITERATURE

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Where Is Greatness?

THERE is perhaps no word more abused by the general reviewer and more cautiously employed by the critic of learning and penetration than greatness. Experience, if nothing else, has taught the latter that the marvels of today are not infrequently the curiosities of tomorrow, and that time, while it makes ever more apparent the actuality of real greatness, often leaves slightly ridiculous as well as patently second-rate many a work that has precipitately been announced to possess it. It is doubtful, indeed, whether any age can properly judge of the achievements of its period. Too much that is extraneous to the actual merits of a production—passions, prejudices, beliefs, hopes, theories, ignorance—enter into its appraisal to permit of a just perspective upon its qualities. We men and women are reasoning beings, to be sure, but despite training and exhortation, we remain in the aggregate, and probably will for all time remain, primarily feeling beings. It is our hearts, not our heads, that dictate most of our preferences, and it is in the light of emotion not of logic that we yield our allegiances and proclaim our enthusiasms.

It may be objected, notwithstanding, that the critic is by the very definition of his profession he who has been able to overcome the inhibitions and set aside the preconceptions that warp the judgments of most of us. And so he is, if he is that rarest of human beings, the man who is able under all circumstances to hold in stable equilibrium his opinions and his sentiments, using the one to justify the other, and keeping the balance true between them. Precisely when he has achieved this poise, he becomes the critic fitted to render absolute judgments, but when he has become so he is little likely to do it, for his critical judgment tells him that the only thing that is absolute is that human judgment is fallible. As for the rest of us, how few of us can even attain that detachment which is the first prerequisite of definitive judgments! How few of us there are who do not consider popular acclaim a title to greatness! We allow ourselves to be stampeded into believing something great by a predilection, or an ardor, or a general enthusiasm. Your true critic, on the contrary, is frequently out of step with the prevailing opinions of his day, lagging behind when general praise rushes a writer to the pinnacle of greatness, or striding ahead of the encomiums that will eventually be bestowed by the many upon as yet unrecognized genius.

Perhaps because distance to a certain extent provides the same alembic as time contemporary critics have in the long run gone less astray in their pronouncement of greatness on the works of foreigners than when conferring the accolade upon writers of their own nation. Separated from them by habits of thought, by modes of life, and by political differences, as well as by an ocean or a continent, it has been easier for them to assess at their true value the writings of alien peoples than it has been to estimate the worth of the work of their own countrymen. Unfettered by those considerations which in approaching the current literature of their own people have a well-nigh inescapable influence upon their judgment, they are able to look upon conditions and tenets which may run counter to all their beliefs as mere background to the portrayal of the human comedy, and to disengage what is intrinsic to greatness in literature from that nimbus of the personally pertinent and the timely which may lend importance and interest to writing without conferring lasting distinction upon it.

Those qualities that make for greatness, the ability to see beyond the immediate to the general, the reali-

Trust Left A Dead Woman

By VIRGINIA MOORE

THE dead must take their long hands off the living,
They must let go:
A man breathing above-ground can have no traffic
With a woman below,

Though it were sweet, with the fascination of the unholy,
And valued more highly than breath,
A woman must deny herself if she loves him
And keep her distance, in death,

And pretend she is not as passionate as ever
And wrap herself in dust.
Through the long interval of their separation, it will
not be easy,
This trust.

Meyersonism

By ABEL CHEVALLEY

HOW many connoisseurs of French culture, dazzled by intellectual baubles and little "boulevard" quarrels, are aware that, since Bergson, one of the strongest and deepest currents of contemporary thought is issuing from Emile Meyerson's books "L'Explication dans les Sciences" (1921), "Identité et Réalité" (1912), and "La Déduction Relativiste" (1925)? His ideas have, since the war, been more or less anonymously renovating the general conception of human understanding. I meet them reflected, sometimes deflected, rarely circulating under their father's name, in English and American criticism of science and philosophy. They cannot help influencing our ideas on the relation between art and science and bid fair to react effectually on literary criticism. Does not a new trend in literature always accompany a new system of explanation, a new philosophy of science? Newton and Descartes, Darwin and Bergson, have they not influenced the intellectual production of the world, be it lyricism, fiction, or drama, more effectually than all the critics of their time, and ours?

* * *

Meyerson's philosophy is founded on general history and a personal experience of scientific research. Born in Poland about seventy years ago, he worked in Germany under Bunsen as a professional chemist, and in Paris under Schutzenberger, met in France the continuators (Poincaré, Bergson) of a unique tradition of modern scientific philosophy (Carnot, Ampère, Comte, Cournot, Renouvier), joined their ranks, and became a French citizen. He found in the mental history of the great chemists and alchemists, tendencies which he identified with the secret springs of his own mind in research work, and he gradually associated them with the processess of universal reason, in quest of what we call truth. Bergson, presenting Meyerson's first discoveries on "Identity and Reality" to the French Institute, emphasized "their importance as regards the philosophy of science, and also general philosophy." In his book: "Philosophie Contemporaine en France," M. Parodi, an authority on the subject, says that Meyerson's influence is one of the most telling on cultured youth, and marks one of the main currents in contemporary thought.

Meyerson's system of thought (for it is a coherent system) is not easy to summarize. Some idea of it is, however obtainable from André Metz's manual: "Une Nouvelle Philosophie des Sciences" (Alcan: 1928). But the aspect of Meyersonism that chiefly concerns a literary paper is, of course, its possible influence on criticism, and this aspect of it has never been, so far as I know, disengaged from the others. I shall attempt to bring it to light.

* * *

Let me first draw your attention to at least two points in Einstein's articles (London Times, February 4 and 5) which contain his new conclusions concerning the full meaning of relativity. Einstein emphasizes its *theoretical* boldness, its slender empirical basis, its aloofness from pragmatic influences, its "fundamental reliance on the *uniformity* of the secrets of nature and their *accessibility* to the *speculative* intellect." (The italics are mine). In the same breath he mentions Meyerson (and no other philosopher) as having rightly estimated the native and full import of relativity. "In his illuminating studies on the theory of knowledge" says Einstein, Meyerson has, "with good reason, compared the intellectual attitude of the relativity theoretician with that of Descartes, or even of Hegel, without thereby imply-

This Week

"Motion Picture Problems."
Reviewed by FRANK TUTTLE.

"The Adventures of an Outlaw."
Reviewed by MARK BARR.

"The Poetry Quartos."
Reviewed by LOUIS UNTERMEYER.

"The Elizabethan Jig."
Reviewed by EDWARD BLISS REED.

"The Pedro Gorino."
Reviewed by CAPTAIN DAVID W. BONE.

Granules from an Hour Glass.
By CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

"Wells Without End."
By E. PRESTON DARGAN.

Next Week, or Later

Detective Fiction—Its Future.
By DOROTHY L. SAYERS.

zation both of the little for which the individual counts in the general maelstrom of existence and of the majesty and pathos of his combat with the universe, the understanding, the compassion, and the faith—a faith which may mean no more than a disbelief in chaos—that inform great literature,—these qualities are more readily recognizable at a distance of time or space than at close hand. But who of us can say with certainty what constitutes greatness since its very essence is the divergence from the normal? Who of us can infallibly recognize it when we see it, or be sure that what we consider greatness is not coincidence of tastes or beliefs with our own? Surely too few of us for the word to be bandied about lightly, too few, to come down to our own special field, for critics and journals to make flat-footed statements, that in this work of today or that of tomorrow is greatness. If all the superlatives of recent years could rise up to plague their sponsors, what a blushing and a hemming and a hawing there would be in this land of the brave and the free. "Preserving the sweetness of proportion" is indeed a virtue devoutly to be cultivated.

ing the censure which a physicist would naturally read into this."

Here, in Einstein's words, is one of the distinctive traits of Meyerson's doctrine. Here is the key to its probable effect on the future of criticism. The days of a "fundamental reliance" on the real unity of the visible and the invisible universe both in art and science, are getting nearer. Meyerson is powerfully contributing to that ultimate synthesis. Already his views are as indispensable to the formation of any future system of metaphysics, epistemology, and even psychology as were, in their time, Descartes's "Method" and Kant's "Critique." But it is not his business to foreshadow their effect. Nor could it be mine without his permission.

One point must be at once noted. Meyerson has no metaphysical axe to grind though he sees metaphysics behind every bush. His business is to watch the human intellect in its tensest effort towards certitude, and to ascertain the laws and ways and means of that supreme quest. But he does not—at least not yet—deduce a system of metaphysics from his system of observations. His knowledge of Knowledge is unique, but as I said, mainly derived from his professional experience, from the history of science, and from close watching of common sense at work. Meyerson lives "on the trail . . ." He follows the track of reason in search of that modern grail, scientific truth, and charts it up to the summit, down to the plains, through the forest of all ages, and all systems. He is the greatest road-mapper of the avenues of science that I know. But he does not attempt to connect his conclusions with any of the usual philosophies. For instance, he is neither an idealist nor a materialist, even in the limited and confusing acceptance of these antiquated terms. The most that can be said is that his views do not lead toward a purely subjective world. His originality is to look at science in all its stages, not as *made*, but *in the making*. It has been truly said that he deals not so much with science, i.e., sets of doctrines, as with scientists, i.e., real living men.

At the beginning and end of all analysis, at the basis of all hypotheses, mechanistic or non-mechanistic, even in the texture of common sense, Meyerson discovers and demonstrates the constant and unavoidable presence of metaphysical notions, which he calls "Irrationals." Coming from a declared non-metaphysician, this is especially significant. His "Irrationals" are not absurd,—not closed and forbidden ground as in the Positivist code which he repudiates—but merely inexplicable (in the original sense of explanation), incapable of logical development, irreducible to reason. Such is the basic concept of thing or of object as independent of mind. Both science and common sense, pure and applied reason, postulate being outside thinking. They could not work otherwise.

As thinking individuals we start from a metaphysical, not a physical necessity. Here lies our essence: in an impulsion not towards action, but from speculation. Pragmatism is a by-product. Intelligence has a life of its own: it is not primarily employed in tool making, and the source of its life is an act of faith. Whether primitive or highly trained, scientific or popular, it *believes* in (that is, in the true original sense, it relies upon) an objective reality which *may* be this or that, but *must* be.

This is not the deadly dualism imputable to post-Cartesianism. It does not imply a world where mind and matter, soul and body, subject and object, can never meet, and remain sterile. In Meyerson's system we start from an object uncreated but not unfelt and unapprehended by our whole living self. Reason is for ever in contact with both elements of each of the couples divorced by Cartesianism; she is constantly moving between herself and reality, unable to give up measurements, and unable to reduce the real to her measures. That conception is fundamental in Meyersonism. Like many others where concrete life is involved, it appears self-contradictory and is none the less essentially true. Cartesianism is not merely Meyersonism without the Meyersonian paradox, but it is partly that.

If objective existence is the support of science, explanation is its specific process, its all-sufficient method. To explain, or explicate, is merely to develop, to demonstrate that the solution was in the data. An unexplained residue necessarily remains at the bottom of all explanations, and demands further data, further hypotheses.

To explain is to prove that all is accounted for,

nothing lost, nothing created. Hence, an invincible tendency to consider things as identical with themselves, independent not only of mind, but of time. Science is for ever in search of explanation, and explanation of identification.

But no identification can be complete. When I say $A = A$ it is either a tautology, and means nothing, or it implies a preliminary negation (A cannot *be* A , a thing cannot *be* another thing). That negation is, however, intermingled with an affirmation that, notwithstanding, we can logically reduce the difference to a degree of identity acceptable by reason. This is done by skilful management through the consideration of progressive and partial identities, leading to others, which land us in a purely intellectual assimilation between A and A . An equation can only be quantitative, not qualitative. In his book, "L'Explication dans les Sciences," Meyerson is inexhaustible on this subject. Even the elements of mathematics and geometry yield him examples. How lucidly he exposes the conjuring trick, the kind of logical legerdemain which is at the bottom of the *pons asinorum*. All scientific systems are explanations founded on identifications. We cheat ourselves into practical, useful, limited conclusions, leaving "irrationalities" at the beginning and the end of our highest disquisitions. We cannot logically apprehend the difference between what is and what has been which, alone, would be sufficient to prevent a perfect identification. The irreversibility of all phenomena, that constant presence of irrationalities impossible to unify and conciliate, make it, if not impossible to adopt a monist conception of thought and life, science, and art, at least very difficult.

Metaphysics, before and inside physics, the necessary presence of irrationalities in the exercise of reason, such in the main is, according to Meyerson, the essence of thinking. We move between elastic walls. Reason cannot apprehend life since it is made and meant to discover not what is but what fits. It can neither solve the problem of what is, nor leave it alone. It remains ever in search of a satisfactory solution, which can only be unsatisfactory. It cannot do more, or less, or otherwise. This is what Meyerson calls the paradox of epistemology. "I use the word *paradox*, said Seeley, in its original sense of a proposition that is really true though it sounds false."

The dignity of science is not impaired by that paradox. It is true that reason, ever in quest of a fresh explanation of the world, ever meets irrationalities. But it lives on good terms with these, even in its own house. Irrationality begins at home. They are not threatening, those irreversible and irreducible companions, not even mysterious, except for the reasoning part of us, when it sets about analyzing. We feel them around us like dear, mute relations and, if they encroach, we may set them back in their proper place, but can neither make them speak, nor murder them. Reason, and science, its daughter, may narrow the field of irrationality, though they cannot hope to remove entirely its frontier. That would be like trying to start from nowhere or land in the air. The fact remains that science only, nothing but science, can control the results of the scientific spirit. Reason interprets experience. Experience corrects reason. But experience has always the last word. A fresh experiment, if it smashes an old theory, necessitates a fresh one. But a theory it must be. Hypotheses succeed each other. The necessity of hypothesis remains. The man of science often fancies that he has at last found an all-explaining truth. This is an invigorating illusion, but an illusion none the less.

But without the lure of total explanation there would be no science, no human knowledge, even of humanity. What Meyerson cannot swallow in positivism (and sociology) is its veto against metaphysics, its pretence of finding laws while ignoring causes. We are born metaphysicians, we cannot help it. Action, instinctive action, may seem more spontaneous and deeper-seated than thought. The first use of thinking may be to make tools, shape instruments. Its nature is different. Meyerson thinks of intellect as apprehending its nature, and finds it speculative in essence, and disinterested.

In this respect, Meyerson is a rescuer, a liberator. He never preaches, avoids proselytism, repudiates secession, and none the less, acts as an emancipating power. He has contributed more perhaps than any thinker alive to a restoration of the highest "values" in our intellectual nature (much denounced in the last generation) and reduced to its real import their

verbal and scholastic opposition. For instance, he reinstates speculative reason as ruler of the world, though prisoner of herself. He disentangles the human intellect at work from the shacklings of collective compulsion, redeems it from the straight waistcoat of sociological necessity. It is true that he leaves us, as thinking units, under contradictions inherent to the exercise of intelligence. But this is a living paradox, it is part of us; inner, individual, not paralyzing. It hinders no fulfilment. Yes, there is an element of redemption in Meyersonism. He makes a point of remaining objective; his language is severely restrained in tone; he never indulges in a flight of rhetoric; he is at immense pains to express the various shades of his meaning and his thoroughness may seem at times tedious and slow. The movement of his mind is none the less epic and lyric in turns. Any great philosopher is also a poet.

Let us come to the impact of Meyerson's system of thought upon literature and art, and turn from his criticism of philosophy to a philosophy of criticism. Here I am going to anticipate. Meyerson has not yet produced its full effect. My anticipation may fall beside the mark. No mere man is a prophet in his own country. Still less in others. But precedents authorize prophecies. And, as surely as the last generation has been informed with Bergsonian principles, so surely Meyerson and his ideas will influence the next.

According to Meyerson, the human mind can neither dispense with the notion of an external world nor abstain from an attempt at a total explanation, essentially deductive and speculative, necessarily partial, abortive, temporary, but nevertheless necessary. Its workings begin and end in a paradox. But life and nature do not resent paradoxes. There is no satisfaction for our thinking nature outside the Meyersonian alternative.

Art being also an exercise and a satisfaction of human nature is submitted in its expression to the same necessity as science. You cannot divide mental activities, into compartments, erect a wall across the spirit. What is "necessary" is necessary. Literature and art can neither do without the postulate of an objective reality, nor avoid a demonstration, an explanation. They, also, must uncover something. In fact, the oldest fictions (and the newest) contain a detective story element. There must be a *deus* or a *homo ex machina*, the gods or the hero. An epiphany is wanted. A minimum of organization, instruction, movement, machinery—yes, machinery, however much abused,—is not only legitimate, but necessary, never absent. Whether it be religion, fatality, retribution, character, situation, antecedents, heredity, evolution, sex, humors, or tendencies, there is in literature and art something which, being contained in the known elements of the case, explains the unknown, extracts a solution from the data, brings out their identity. This identification, though forever incomplete, is what satisfies the mind as soon as established or suggested. It is not a weakness but a necessity.

Art (originally skill, technique) is first, if not foremost, the ability to bring out identity. In its principle it is, like science, a research of what fits. It means today much more, but it has always meant that. There was and is an art of mathematics: "A mathematician can infallibly know by the Rules of Art," says old R. Barclay, "that the three angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles." It is only in later times that "art" has become limited in one sense to imitation, design, representation, and extended in another sense to the very spirit of things. It is only under the sway of a rationalism deprived of its paradox, that "quality" (or value) has become a mere opinion (cf. Descartes, Democritus), and art an airy something divorced from knowledge and tending through impressionism to eliminate organization.

One of the effects of Meyersonism is in consequence to exonerate science in the making (not ready-made science) from the opprobrium it now suffers when detected in the expression of art. It tends to rehabilitate the intellectual management in artistic activity. Ten years ago, at the end of a small book on the "English Novel of our Time" I wrote:

Let us suppose that a day comes when the new psychology has emphasized the dependence of the conscious upon the unconscious, dethroned premeditation, abolished the logic of mind and action, . . . related all emotions, almost all life, to the vital and sexual instincts; in short, substituted

(Continued on page 1175)

The Cinema and Peace

MOTION PICTURE PROBLEMS. The Cinema and the League of Nations. By WILLIAM MARSTON SEABURY. New York: Avondale Press. 1929.

THE KING WHO WAS A KING. An Unconventional Novel. By H. G. WELLS. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1929. \$2.50.

Reviewed by FRANK TUTTLE

Propaganda pictures, with a predominating theme glorifying war and which incidentally hold up to ridicule and disparagement race, religion, and nationalistic attributes, are produced and exhibited in increasing numbers.

Their inevitable effect is to stimulate racial and national dislikes which readily ripen into hatreds and ultimately lead to and encourage war. . . .

The first step in the organization of an effective world peace in support of the anti-war Treaties of August 27, 1928, will necessarily be the formulation of appropriate ways and means to induce all of the instrumentalities of public communication and influence to "scrap" the war mind and to think in terms of world peace, and the first of the instrumentalities of public communication and influence to be appropriately controlled and made amenable to a reasonable and universally beneficial use of its immense power to influence the masses of the world, is the motion picture.

THIS statement—which develops into a proposal that an International Cinema Alliance should be formed which would in turn request inspection, instead of censorship, applied at the source of production by League of Nations Inspectors empowered to mark all films containing pro-war propaganda—is the high point of "Motion Picture Problems." Mr. Seabury further expands this idea to take care of other motion picture problems—"those which primarily affect the public welfare from an educational, moral, artistic, and cultural point of view, and those which primarily affect the trade which involve economic, industrial, and commercial consideration."

Any brief review of Mr. Seabury's book, which is a serious, thoughtful, and heavily documented work, must obviously fail to do it full justice, since it reaches its conclusions through a necessarily intricate argument backed up by quotations from dignitaries ranging from Mussolini to Professor Hugo Munsterberg. Perhaps it will be wise, therefore, to reverse the arrangement of the book, and review only briefly its chapters on economic problems, devoting a larger space to its discussion of the movies and an international entente. At any rate this method has a distinct advantage for the reviewer since it leads him gracefully into his other assignment, a review of "The King who was a King," Mr. H. G. Wells's scenario for a moving picture designed to promote the peace of the world.

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Mr. Seabury calls for a voluntary reapportionment of trade in the picture industry, proposing to utilize in this connection, as in the case of his other reforms, a cinema committee of the League of Nations. The reasons for and against the desirability (even for America) of limiting the monopoly of the United States in the cinema industry are obviously too involved for discussion here, but when Mr. Seabury treats of a similar control at its source of the cultural and idea content of pictures his purpose will be clear to anyone at all familiar with censorship as it functions today, through state laws in this country, and through governmental agencies in other nations. Here Mr. Seabury's idea is to substitute for censorship (which he implies is dangerous in giving individuals the right "to judge concerning the political, philosophical, or religious tendencies of the films presented") or sincere internal reform on the part of the industry (which he considers unlikely) the idea of League of Nations Inspectors who would examine films at their source and affix to them a specific description of their violation of previously established canons of a moral, cultural, and political nature, or give them a clean bill of health if they were guiltless of any transgression in these respects. Thus the Inspector would have no authority to prohibit or change a picture, but would so classify it that it could be refused by any nation which it offended, or prosecuted where it violated any already existing law.

To anyone in the industry who has been startled by the sometimes amazing and always incalculable "cuts" ordered by various censorship boards in this country, Mr. Seabury's proposal must seem the most sane solution which has yet been offered.

As to his skepticism concerning any sincere desire in the industry itself for cleaner, more intel-

ligent, and less internationally offensive pictures when these attributes conflict with greater box-office returns, his cynicism might be more pointed if it were not so applicable to all forms of Big Business, which has, after all, never been particularly altruistic in any struggle between the law and the profits. In other words, this criticism of the selfish motives of American picture producers is really a criticism of the entire capitalistic system—and that, as the presidential vote will tell him, is another and longer story. As a matter of fact efforts are being made in the industry (whatever the motives may be) to improve the quality of its output. In the studio where this reviewer directs pictures whose purpose is avowedly along the lines of popular entertainment there is, for example, a foreign department which issues bulletins of national reactions to the product. This department also reads every scenario before it is produced and makes a violent protest if the story contains elements which it believes will be offensive to any nation (Mr. Seabury's idea of inspection at the source applied of its own accord in a commercial studio). In the reviewer's own experience a villainous character was voluntarily changed from a definite nationality to a vague "European," because the



Illustration by C. B. Falls for R. L. Stevenson's "A Lodging for the Night" (Limited Editions Club).

foreign department caught this possible affront to another nation in the script.

However, this instance is merely by way of slightly tempering one point of Mr. Seabury's criticisms and proposals. Certainly his schemes should be welcomed by those companies which realize the situation, the more so since by an international inspection their competitors would be forced to be equally conscientious or run the risk of foreign rejection or domestic prosecution.

Published almost simultaneously with this treatise on the problems of the movies, Mr. Wells's scenario comes as a sort of positive complement to Mr. Seabury's "don'ts." Feeling, apparently, that an ounce of production is worth a pound of cure, the hundred-fisted Mr. Wells turns a few of his hands to hammering out a gusty movie of a fictitious King who is faced with a triple problem. Mr. Wells's hero may allow the kingdom to which he has suddenly fallen heir to follow its conventional destiny and become a pawn in the war-game of bigger powers, he may take control himself and make a stand against war, or he may refuse to become involved at all and continue to live as a private citizen in America. Needless to say, he chooses the middle course and resisting all temptations to be used by other nations, he becomes a super-man. The whole story is told as Mr. Wells imagines it appearing on the screen. He uses only occasionally the technical references to fade-outs, dissolves, and closeups of the professional continuity writer—although he is obviously familiar with them—and substitutes a novelist's description of these phenomena as they would appear to any layman looking at the picture. Thus we have, preceding the Wellsian Vision of Modern War:

Paul (the King) sits thinking deeply—not sleeping at first—not at first dreaming.

The shadows descend about him. He reappears—but now this is in his meditation—still sitting on his throne, but in great darkness. Then, like thistledown, the newspapers begin to fly about him. They drop and curl about. Some fly up towards the screen so as to be seen in detail. (I suggest producer shall study skate swimming about in an aquarium.)

One sees:

Sons of Clavery. War! War!

The Claverian Patriot. War! War!

The words War! War! detach themselves and fly across amidst the papers.

They become like a snowstorm and change in shape, changing into aeroplanes that pass even more swiftly. A sort of glare like the glare of fire appears behind the King.

Then follows the vision of modern war.

The scenario is full of good, effective picture stuff. It is inevitable that so didactic a scenario should be somewhat talky—"over titled," they would probably say at a studio—and the final episode is undeniably an anti-climax. Both these difficulties could and doubtless would be largely overcome in the final preparation and editing of the film. I almost said "will be overcome," but there is a somewhat wistful note at the end of the book which seems to indicate a doubt in the mind of Mr. Wells as to the actual production of his picture. I hope wholeheartedly that it is done—if it is well done—and there is no reason why it shouldn't be, despite the fact that it calls for considerable capital, a first-class release, a King Vidor to direct it, and a Richard Dix to play Paul. With the silent picture situation what it is, I believe that both a talking and a silent version should be made (in the United States the former form of entertainment has almost a monopoly on the big, first-run theatres).

Mr. Wells says, "At the least the writer hopes this will prove a provocative and interesting failure." Considering that this is the initial attempt by a first class writer to get a plea for world peace on the screen (there was a peace film called "Civilization" produced and released in the United States during the early years of the War) the above statement seems almost tragically modest to this reviewer, who happens also to be a moving picture director. If it is even faintly interesting to Mr. Wells, this director (and I'm sure there will be many others equally enthusiastic) would like nothing better than the chance to arrange with his boss (who is a far-seeing and modern-minded gentleman) a vacation without pay—this vacation to be devoted to the filming, still without pay of course, of "The King Who Was a King."

Out of Hades

THE ADVENTURES OF AN OUTLAW. By RALPH RASHLEIGH. Edited by the EARL OF BIRKENHEAD. New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith. 1929. \$3.50.

Reviewed by MARK BARR

WHEN Charles Reade wrote "The Cloister and the Hearth" he used material based upon fact. And when we scan that classic tale a second time, we see two factors of its value artfully combined but separately to be traced; first the factual adventures, and secondly the manner of presentation. But the incidents were manufactured out of facts by Reade's genius.

In the adventures of Ralph Rashleigh we are reminded of Reade though there is no parallel in the tale. But we almost feel that the splendor of this story depends upon a superior element, a masterly monochrome of incident as compared with Reade's rich variety; an adventure which creates the style of its presentation. Rashleigh has many experiences, but there is a single quality of event, one tone ever of the same depth, deep to black awe, one long stroke of hideous irony. No Greek tragedy exhibits a narrower march of doom, nor by its singularity a more certain inevitability in presentation.

Herbert Paul, I think, said the last word upon realism when he put fact, for literature, in a new category. Actuality may be stupidly unreal and unusable in a good book, but this does not mean that the author may lie out of hand nor dress up fact to hide its essence. And in "The Adventures of an Outlaw" we have even more than the essence of fact; there is in it inevitability of such a quality that no reader can question the basic truth. It is not fiction.

Ralph Rashleigh, an article clerk in London one hundred years ago, stumbled into petty crime and fell to serious thieving for which the punishment was imprisonment and death. But the immediate horror of his early career was the effect of jail life by which he was driven to a cynicism that made of him an incurable criminal for whom, in the view of time, hanging was considered only too good. Indeed—reprieve, or the alternative of transportation