

Books of Special Interest

A Neglected Poet

COLLINS. By H. W. GARROD. New York: Oxford University Press. 1928. \$2.
Reviewed by JAMES MCLEAN
Harvard University

AFTER Professor Garrod's admirable work on Wordsworth, at once acute and sympathetic, one lays aside this little book on Collins with a feeling of frustration and dissatisfaction. The book is, in Professor Garrod's words, "something between an essay and a commentary," so that it is satisfactory neither as the one nor the other. Collins and his poetry remain, at the end, unaffected, unexplained, uncategorized, unilluminated. Professor Garrod is present throughout, important, dignified, and reassuring. But in the long run, one feels that his little study adds nothing to our profit or our pleasure. Intellectually, he treads water. Critically, he begs question after question. At the end we remain disappointed. The book reveals none of what one may call the excellent, intellectual "window-washing" qualities which so distinguish the work of Professor Grierson, Mr. T. S. Eliot, and Mr. F. L. Lucas. There is the very definite feeling that in this little book we have not any of Professor Garrod's best. It is his third best or fourth best—and Collins, even if he does not merit the best treatment, is as a poet worthy at least of Professor Garrod's second best. Dr. Johnson for all his occasional obtuseness and prejudice shoots far nearer the mark than this.

On page 34, for example, one pauses be-

fore Professor Garrod's remarks about Gray. On page 44, again, one is made uncomfortable by Professor Garrod's conventional manner of treating what he calls "verbal music." Here, if ever, we are on debatable ground and definition, it seems to me, is demanded. Vague and inclusive phraseology crops up again on page 71, where Professor Garrod is criticizing Swinburne's criticism of Wordsworth and where he says, "The truth is that the 'Ode to Duty' is a poem very much inferior to the Immortality Ode—at once less greatly perfect and less perfectly great." Such criticism is slipshod and Professor Garrod errs in his own way as obviously and as extensively as did Swinburne in his.

On the score of personal taste, furthermore, there is ample margin in which to disagree—and completely, at that—with Professor Garrod. His peremptory condemnation in his comments on the "Ode on the Poetical Character" of Collins's phrase (with reference to Milton) "his Ev'ning Ear" is a fair example. To some judges there is an aptness and a beauty in the expression "Ev'ning Ear" which make it perhaps one of Collins's peculiar felicities. In another instance Professor Garrod objects to Collins's phrase "the Mellow Horn"—the mellow horn through which melancholy pours "her pensive soul." Why, I for one, fail to see. Collins, of course, never heard the lovely opening phrases for the horns in Brahms's Second Symphony, but he could not more happily have hit them off.

Most lamentable, however, of Professor Garrod's remarks—and by all odds the most

important of his looser statements—is his remark that Collins's "temperament, if it had less of power than Dryden's, had more of true poetical quality." What in the name of all the Muses does Professor Garrod mean by "true poetical quality"? It is from misstatements such as this, neither artistic nor academic, that Professor Garrod's book suffers.

The book, however, is not wholly bad. There are entertaining pages and some diverting but judicious quibbling. And in the end it sends one back to read again, and with a healthy prejudice in his favor, one of the better if neglected poets of the eighteenth century.

MR. GAY. Being a Picture of the Life and Times of the Author of the Beggar's Opera. By OSCAR SHERWIN. Day. 1929. \$2.50.

There may be many persons who will enjoy this account of the life of a most likable poet. In order to enjoy it they must believe that a constant use of the present tense in recounting past events gives life and vivacity to narrative. They must also be sufficiently naïve to suppose that a satisfactory picture of any age may be given by merely assembling details concerning manners and customs which seem strange or quaint. And, finally, they must be able to accept as a satisfactory biography of a poet a book in which no significant word concerning his poetry is set down. To persons who cannot meet these requirements Mr. Sherwin's book will seem dull, inadequate, and incompetent. It is obviously an attempt to profit by the amazing willingness of present-day Americans to purchase anything classified as biography.

Journalistic Essays

LABELS AND LIBELS. By the VERY REV. DR. W. R. INGE. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1929. \$2.

Reviewed by BERNARD IDINGS BELL

IN London last summer three Americans were lunching at the Savage Club with one of the more widely known English essayists. One of them uttered words of regret that a series of sermons by the Dean of St. Paul's had been completed before they arrived from the States. The others added their expressions of sorrow. "Do you really wish to hear Inge preach?" queried their host. "How delightfully American!"

In this country the estimate in which Dr. Inge is held seems a little different from that common in his own. Over here it is commonly supposed that he is a leader of the intellectual life of his people. Over there they regard him as a clever popular journalist. Over here he is looked upon as a philosopher of parts. At home he seems to most of his own people more of a "columnist." Here he is supposed to be a preacher of distinction; but in London he is regarded as rather a dull talker. There is a certain epigrammatic utterance of the commonplace about most of his work which the British deem a bit unseemly in decanal speech, although quite all right in a penny paper. The British suspect dealers in verbal pyrotechnic. They have never quite taken seriously even Mr. G. K. Chesterton, despite his more than occasional profundity. A man of wisdom in British estimate ought not to sparkle. In the case of the Dean of St. Paul's, there is more than a suspicion in Albion that he has the sparkle without, as a rule, any real depth at all. We Americans take the Dean very seriously. When he last visited New York, hundreds of the city's leaders turned out to a great banquet in his honor, and listened with much respect to a speech which for thoughtfulness and penetrating comprehension would have disgraced a schoolboy. We Americans love titles, ecclesiastical and otherwise. A Dean of St. Paul's must be a mighty man! Dr. Inge is not so great a figure at home. He writes pseudo-science and demi-philosophy and jingo patriotism for the papers; and that is most of it.

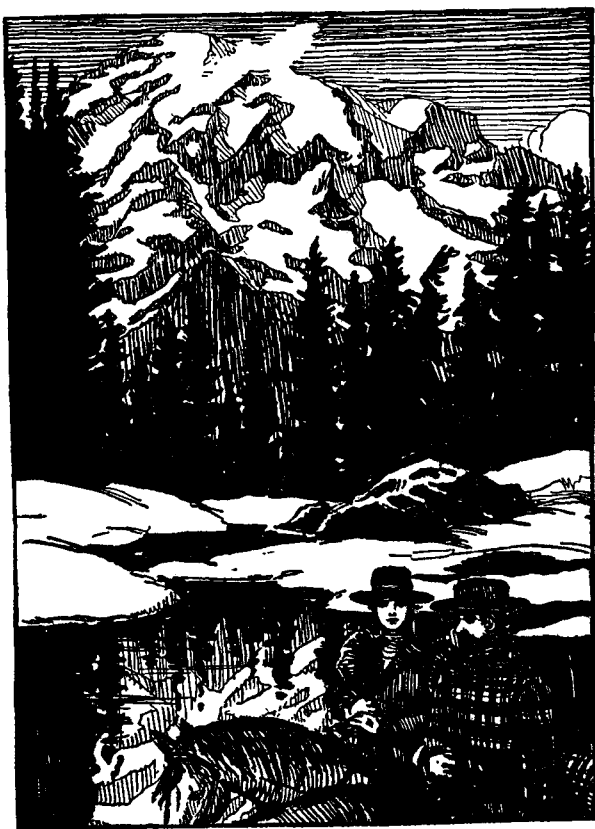
If anything can disillusion his American worshippers it will be this "Labels and Libels," just out. Here are a number of his journalistic pot-boilers, dignified by a cloth cover. It is hard to imagine anything less worth reading, for instance, than the "prognostications" which make up the middle seventy-five pages. The one about Catholicism ignores Catholicism as a religion and plays on a "Guy Fawkes Day" sort of fear of papal political ambition. Protestantism is pretty poor stuff, but destined, he thinks, to survive, because it is Nordic. As for education in the year 2000, it is going to be "democratic," which this supposed anti-democrat most surprisingly thinks is a great virtue. The political world in A.D. 2000 will be dominated by America, and a United States of Europe would therefore be a good thing; only of course it is impossible. The dole is going to impoverish and degrade all social life; but nothing, to be sure, can be done about it. Marriage is in a bad way, and growing worse; but the Dean is of four or five contradictory minds about what should be offered by way of diagnosis or remedy. Democracy is a bad form of government; but all that can be done is to shake one's head. Eugenics will work wonders. The Dean ignores the fact that there is nothing at which humanity more instinctively rebels than external regulation of sex-relationships on scientific principles. And, finally, the globe is shrinking because of the radio and television. That is a most original observation!

The essays on religion are a little better. The Dean is in them mostly a courteous and reticent gentleman. But they, too, stay usually very near the surface. The best thing in the volume is the initial essay, a plea for large-minded desire to appreciate the positive and commonly-held elements in religion and not to focus attention upon elements that are decisive; "to personalize sympathies and depersonalize antipathies." That paper is in the vein of the better of the "Outspoken Essays." Significantly, it was written ten years ago—before the daily papers began to get in their deadly work.

Clara Viebig, despite her advancing years, continues to write. Her latest novel, "Die mit den Tausend Kindern" (Deutsche Verlagsanstalt), is a tale of social conditions in Berlin. Its characters are drawn from the working classes which the author knows intimately.

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ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT By ERICH MARIA REMARQUE



Here at last is the great War novel for which the world has been waiting. Its author, a young German of French extraction, enlisted in the infantry as a boy of eighteen and served on the Western Front throughout the War. In this book we see the life of the common soldier in all its phases—in the trenches, behind the lines, in hospital, at home on leave among civilians. It is a book of terrible experiences, at times crude because of the necessity of telling the absolute truth, at times rising to an almost incredible degree of tragedy, and at times relieved by humorous incidents and examples of rough good-comradeship. It will shock the super-sensitive by its outspokenness; it will leave no reader unmoved.



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The London Sunday Chronicle says: "The most wonderful and terrible book that has come out of the War. At last the epic of the lowly soldier in the line, the true story of the world's greatest nightmare."

The London Times says: "It has certain of the marks of genius which transcend nationality. There are moments when the narrative rises to heights which place it in the company of the great, nor are these always scenes of battle or horror. Herr Remarque is undoubtedly a great writer."

Walter Von Molo, President of the German Academy of Letters, says: "Let this book go into every home that has suffered no loss in the War, and to every home that had to sacrifice any of its kindred, for these are the words of the dead, the testament of all the fallen, addressed to the living of all nations."

Bruno Frank in Das Tage Buch says: "It is unanswerable, it cannot be evaded. It does not declaim, it never accuses, it only represents, and every word flowers in truth. Out of his common grave speaks the Unknown Warrior. . . . Let it make its way over the whole world."

Erich Koch-Weser, Minister of Justice, says: "Of all descriptions of the War that I know, this is the most powerful. I repeatedly put it away from me, because it moved me beyond measure, but always took it up again, because it held me irresistibly under its spell."

Redakteur Stohr says: This novel is the greatest war-book that has yet been written. . . . The man in the trenches, the 'tommy', the under-dog, at last speaks out. Word for word it is his speech and his thought."

Translated by A. W. Wheen. \$2.50 at all Booksellers

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