

The BOWLING GREEN

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ONE of the most interesting and luxurious volumes I have ever seen is the special Enthronement Edition of the *Japan Advertiser*, published in Tokyo by Benjamin W. Fleisher. This large folio, beautifully bound in purple balloon cloth with the imperial phoenix stamped upon it in the five traditional colors, contains a number of essays on the meaning and ritual of the Japanese enthronement ceremonies (which last over a period of two years.) I note that among those ceremonies there is a night of final purification when the new Emperor sits alone and in silence, communing with the spirits of his predecessors, from midnight until dawn. It would be well indeed if the inauguration of an American President might be preceded by a brief period of silence. It would be intensely un-American, but worth considering, if for one day no newspapers were published and no one did anything but meditate, wherever and however seemed to him best, what might be done to improve the spiritual and physical behavior of the nation.

To my colleague of the Phoenix Nest I submit the following information from the *Japan Advertiser* about the fabled bird as emblem of the inscrutable:—

The phoenix is as inseparable from royalty in the Far East as is the Scepter in Europe. It crowns the throne of the Emperor in his palace in Kyoto. From its beak depends the sedge umbrella which is held above the Emperor as he makes his stately progress to hold communion with the gods.

One of the chief halls of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo is known as the Phoenix Hall. With the phoenix often appears the paulownia, for, say the ancient records, it was only upon the paulownia tree that the phoenix would alight.

All that is graceful and elegant is combined in the form and movements of the phoenix.

In appearance the phoenix is described by one Chinese book as resembling a wild swan before and a unicorn behind. It has the stripes of a dragon and the vaulted back of a tortoise. The feathers have five colors, which are named after the five cardinal virtues, and it is five cubits in height; the tail is graduated like Pandean pipes, and its song has five modulations. It feeds on nothing but the fruit of the bamboo, and drinks only "spirited water," that is, natural water which has been changed into sake. The phoenix appears only during the reign of a virtuous monarch.

The Manchester *Guardian*, always one of the world's most interesting newspapers, has been looking up the history of cocktails, apropos the republication of Jerry Thomas's "Bon Vivant's Companion." The *Guardian*, with its well-known conscientiousness, assigned one of its editors to go into the matter with care; he reports that the earliest mention of cocktails in English literature is in "The New-comer," and next (this is a surprise) comes a cocktail in "Tom Brown's School Days." And yet it was the post-war younger generation that was accused of having been the first to dabble in sin. The earliest American allusion to cocktails, according to the *Guardian's* expert, is in Irving's "Knickerbocker Papers."

The *Guardian* goes on to tell us of developments in the smart world of London. Sandwiches and cocktails are superseding dinner, it appears, but perhaps the sandwiches are larger for we read "Special whale or bêche-de-mer sandwiches and cocktails are provided." A whale sandwich might be quite a meal. "Cocktails are now served at most of the mannequin parades in the best Mayfair shops."

The *Guardian* concludes its little essay with a passage worthy of preservation by the anthropologist:—

The case against the cocktail, that "ill-bred drink," has been put finally by the greatest wine merchant in London in these terrible words. He was speaking of the end of wine-drinking in America. "The Americans are a curious people," he said, "very strange people. To let you understand, they took gin and brandy and vermouth and whiskey and lemon and oranges and cherries and olives and sardines and anchovies and goodness knows what, and they mixed them up with ice—with ice—and put them into their stomach. They were not worthy of God's great gift of wine. And God punished them, and condemned them for the rest of their lives to drink nothing but—*raw spirits*."

Certainly I had not supposed that a casual allusion to "the wittiest line of indecorum in Shakespeare" (which we identified only as being in the 5th scene of the First Act of "Antony and Cleopatra") would have brought in so much correspondence. But for the benefit of numerous clients who have written their suggestions, including a President of a Y. M. C. A., I will state that they are all wrong.

Without exception they quoted a line which is gross, clumsy, and pedantic; the line I had in mind, which is genuinely amusing and witty, not one spotted.

The present generation likes to imagine itself a connoisseur of indecorum but it has much to learn.

I haven't had opportunity to investigate for myself, but I have been told that what was once the romantic Sybil's Cave in Hoboken is now a hot-dog stand for longshoremen. Keyserling or Spengler would say that was a comment on modern civilization; but lots of things just happen, without rising to the status of being comments on anything. There are too many comments and not enough civilization.

It's a long time since I've had a real adventure with a Pullman car. The last one, I think, was seeing the car *Jane Austen* on the Reading-New Jersey Central route to Philadelphia. But the other day, in the big Pullman car dormitory at Long Island City, I saw the car *Joel Chandler Harris*. That will keep me happy for quite a while.

I stopped in to see Jo Davidson at work on his



GABRIEL WELLS

From a bust by Jo Davidson.

bust of Gabriel Wells the eminent bookseller. Mr. Wells sat on a high stool, rather ill at ease, like a small boy being punished; the bearded Jo, picking deftly at the clay with a small scalpel, was quite undisturbed by several casual visitors and emitted songs, anecdotes and bursts of Latin Quarter hilarity as he worked. I begged a photograph of the bust to reprint here. I confess that I was amazed when Jo told me that the job was done in four sittings—of which, he said, "The first sitting wasn't any use at all because Gabriel didn't believe I could do it, and I had to get him feeling confident before I could do anything myself. It takes two to make a bust."

I enjoyed old Ed Howe's autobiography "Plain People," a book written with all Ed's admirable shrewdness and simplicity. I was interested to hear a distinguished man of letters speak of the book as being "so badly written," because to my taste Ed Howe's concise potato-skin sententiousness is perfect for the matter he wishes to convey. Mr. Howe has specialized for many years in what is known as "common sense." It is a limitation; he grumbles about literature because he does not realize that the greatest things in literature are infected with lunacy; with absurdities of compassion and intuition where common sense plays no part. But I would not have him other than he is; nor, indeed, has he any intention of being so. It was excellent to discover also that his *Monthly*, ("devoted to Indignation and Information") which I used to read regularly some twelve years ago, still goes on. Its price apparently has risen to "twenty-five cents a year, or five years for one dollar," but it still contains my favorite advertisement of T. H. Jackson's Common Sense Liniment. The little cut of the mule tied to a post still catches the eye, and reminds me that I always intended to write to Mr. Jackson (Quincy, Illinois) to pass him a howdy and evoke some of his ideas about the problems of life.

Mr. Howe's somewhat acid reasonableness, his tough adherence to things that are so, is amusing and even stimulating; but we also need a William Blake now and then. We encounter so many things that are unquestionably so; I am all for a carouse now and then among the impossibles.

There is nothing on earth to be said against Ed Howe as a writer except the gravest accusation of all: that he never says anything that everyone cannot understand. But he gives you many a smile, and even more—for instance in describing a train ride in his youth:—

Opposite me sat a young and pretty girl, and I do not believe I stared at her more than men usually do: but while I was looking at her, she winked at me. I would not have been more astonished had a rabbit shot at me while out hunting, for I had always believed men made the advances.

Mr. Howe understands the skilful use of colons and semi-colons, which is rare.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Travels in Distant Lands

SLAVES OF THE SUN. By FERDINAND OSSENDOWSKI. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1928. \$3.75.

THE LAST OF FREE AFRICA. By GORDON MACCREAGH. New York: The Century Co. 1928. \$4.

Reviewed by EUNICE TIETJENS

IN a corner of the railway coaches of French Tunisia hangs a metal ring with this ingratiating sign—in French of course—"It is forbidden to pull this signal of alarm without a plausible motive." With admirable insight the rulers of trains have perceived that the justice or injustice of the motive which might lead to the stopping of the express is no concern of theirs. They, being human, are concerned only with its plausibility.

Some such warning should be hung about every book of travel. Whatever its merits or demerits, its truth or its fiction, one virtue it cannot dispense with, plausibility. But plausibility itself is a variable. What might be perfectly plausible to a smouldering Slavic temperament leaves an American unconvinced, and it is quite possible that our own most convincing accounts might not touch the Slavs.

These reflections invariably arise in me when I read Ossendowski. It is, I know, quite fashionable to regard him as a literary charlatan, a sort of modern Baron Munchausen. Possibly this is true. Yet Ossendowski, in those books in which I have been able by personal knowledge to check him, is certainly no more "interpretative" than any of the modern painters, Gauguin for instance, whose works pass unchallenged. Probably he is less so. The main outlines of his books are undoubtedly true, as are hundreds of details. It is chiefly in the interpolated tales, picked up by the way and elaborately embroidered, that the sense of unreality lies.

This latest book, "Slaves of the Sun," dealing with a voyage down the west coast of Africa and an excursion through several French territories in the interior, is like all the rest. Those who enjoy his heightening of reality, his keen dramatic sense, his feeling that every country possesses a spirit in itself, quite apart from what happens in it, will enjoy this also. Those who look for a convincingly realistic account of facts will not. Plausibility at the last comes down to the temperament of the reader.

Gordon MacCreagh is a horse of another color. Here is no smouldering Slavic mystery, but a gay, at times even impudent, account of everyday occurrences in Abyssinia, the ancient Kingdom of Ethiopia. Humorously yet swiftly he sets forth his travels, his misadventures in hunting, his blunders, the daily life of the white people in the capital city of Addis Ababa, his acquaintance with King Tafari Makonnen—for whom he has a wholesome respect—and the reactions of the "intrepid exploress," his wife. He adds also something of the history of the country and its place in the world today. Something, too, of the mentality of the inhabitants. And he is thoroughly convincing. I, like most of his readers, have never been in Abyssinia, and I believe the tale.

"The Last of Free Africa" is a good book, an interesting book, a book to be recommended. Yet I cannot help wishing for a little more sensitiveness, a little more imaginative understanding. All that is recorded carries conviction, yet I can but believe that much is not recorded. To me it seems that the overtones of Ethiopia have escaped the author. But that again is a question of temperament.

Mr. Ossendowski's book, whose plausibility would greatly profit by photographs, has none. And Mr. MacCreagh's, which one would believe anyway, has many and excellent ones. Yet I recommend that before the next trip the "intrepid exploress" should learn the art of interpretation with the brush.

The Feminine 'Seventies

AS any particular period of time steadily recedes into the past, its content in human memory suffers a series of rapid and inevitable transmutations. It fades in patches, it continues but changes color, lightens in one place, darkens in another. It becomes contorted, distorted, and shrunken; here, flattered in retrospect; there, belittled or defamed. Though the whole of that content, we vaguely suppose, is still "there," as precisely fitting its original receptacle as a nut its shell, even of the personally experienced only fragments are recoverable, and they not as they actually were, but as they now look to be. For the rest we must depend upon memorials in print or writing, in stone or wood or canvas, and attempt to translate them into something resembling the original. But even these memorials have been the outcome of a close or heedless sifting and selection and condensation, and they cannot but be modified or falsified in some degree by the perspective of the present, in quality, meaning, and impressiveness.

So with that brief section of time known as the 'seventies. From our crow's nest of the passing hour we gaze out in its direction over the sundering flood in search of landfall and sea-mark. It is a period for many of us (a many rapidly dwindling to a few) just remote and just retrievable enough to be singularly beguiling. What was its general appearance? Who and what was "going on"?

In the 'seventies women were compelled to fight for the privilege of becoming novelists.

In the year 1875, when "Coming Thro' the Rye" appeared and Thomas Hardy had recently published "A Pair of Blue Eyes" and "Far from the Madding Crowd," when Meredith was forty-seven and Henry James thirty-two, when Mr. Wells, Mr. Galsworthy, and Mr. Bennett were not yet in their 'teens, the following novelists were more or less engrossed in the production of fiction: George Eliot, Mrs. Henry Wood, Mrs. Alexander, Mrs. Oliphant, Rhoda Broughton, Charlotte Yonge, Jean Ingelow, Mrs. Betham-Edwards, Mrs. Craik, "Ouida," Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Rosa Carey, Charlotte Dempster, Rosa Kettle, Mrs. Linnaeus Banks, Florence Montgomery, Anne Thackeray, Jessie Fothergill, and "Rita." Of the less known novelists of the period nine were alone responsible for about five hundred and fifty-four publications in all, chiefly in three volumes. An average of sixty-one each, that is, with a remainder that would suffice in mere paper for the complete works of Flaubert.

A hardly less arid and harrowing means of hinting at the situation is to mention a few titles—a title being at least as indicative of the character of a novel as of a man. A large number of the novels of the nineteenth century written by women were called after their heroines—or their heroes. It matters little which, since both usually imply a pursuer and the pursued—only a slight jar of the kaleidoscope, whatever the consequent form and "pattern." For the rest, "Miriam's Marriage," "No Saint," "Only a Woman," "Two Little Wooden Shoes," "A Rise in the World," "Goodbye, Sweetheart!" "Can This be Love?," "The Doctor's Dilemma," "Half a Million of Money," "Wee Wife," "Above Suspicion," may surrender a glimpse of their general trend.

Seriousness, whether it be a condition of the spirit or an attitude of the mind, is closely akin to sincerity, and in some kind or degree, though it may parch like the sirocco bad fiction, it is essential to fine fiction, though a novelist may smile and smile, and yet not be frivolous in virtue or in villainy. George Eliot was so serious as to be by conscious intention didactic, and to declare that her mission in life was that of "an esthetic teacher and an interpreter of philosophical ideas." Yet her fiction survived the strain. Seriousness, indeed, (however airily variegated), prevailed in the minor novels of the 'seventies. It may be in part explained by the fact, already mentioned, that women had been compelled to fight for the liberty of becoming novelists.

"Novel writing," said Mrs. Parr, writing in 1897, and she can scarcely have realized that a quarter of a century afterwards well over three hundred women would be following her own dreadful trade, "Novel writing has now become an employment, a

profession, distraction, I might almost say a curse." "The mania to see their names in print," had seized upon her sex. But when in 1833, Anne Manning burst into her father's study with the announcement that she had finished a tale entitled, "Village Belles," "Papa," said she, "I don't know what you will say, but I have written a story?" "Ho, ho, ho!" was what Mr. Manning said. He nevertheless read the tale, and afterwards remarked, "My dear, I like your story very much." But as he never afterwards referred to it again, the problem of what actually passed in Mr. Manning's mind is left unsolved.

It was still something of an event in literary annals so late as 1846, when at the age of twenty, Mrs. Craik fled to London from Stoke, "conscious of a literary vocation." "Women in her day," says Mrs. Parr, "were in intellectual imprisonment." Even in the latter 'fifties, and in spite of the enthusiastic encouragement of John Keble, when Charlotte Yonge announced to her parents that she was about to publish a novel, a family council immediately followed, and its sanction to so daring a "departure from the ladylike" was granted only on condition that Charlotte should not herself profit by any financial reward that might come of it. She agreed; and a large part of her ill-gotten gains enriched missionary work in Melanesia.

Long before December, 1869, however, the tint of the bluestocking, it might be supposed, had to be very dark to justify the ascription of the term. None the less in 1877 a novel of this title could be published by Mrs. Annie Edwardes. The New Woman, too, though as yet unlabeled, was not unknown. She, too, in the guise of a "writing woman" named Mattie Rivers, appears as "the customary accessory" on a smart yachting cruise in the same novel. She is described as "an emancipated sister of twenty-nine, with a cavalier hat worn distinctly . . . over one ear, a rakish-looking double eye-glass, a cane . . . a palpable odor of Havana smoke clinging to her gentlemanly yachting-jacket, and short clipped, gentlemanly hair."

It was not, however, until the end of the century that the "sex-problem"—dismalest, surely of all phrases—had become, according to Mrs. Oliphant, "the chief occupation of fiction," and that Mrs. Linton could refer to "unveiled presentations of the sexual instincts which seem to make the world one large lupanar,"—a term which I was relieved to find no trace of in "The (Concise) Oxford Dictionary." However that may be, the novels written by women in the 'seventies were still for the most part either love stories, not very subtle, perhaps, but simple, and not usually sensuous, or passionate; or they were tales like "Bridget," by Mrs. Betham-Edwards, or "Debenham's Vow," or "The Mistress of Langdale Hall," by Rosa Kettle, dealing with the domestic affections, and welcomed by the family circle, phrases nowadays perhaps needlessly tepid in effect. If "I don't *think* Papa would mind your being poor" is one extreme of the situation; "I am quite sure that Mamma wouldn't mind your being a marquis," might well have been the other.

In "The Wooing O't" Mrs. Alexander tells us that Maggie, her chief character, a young woman (the daughter of a chemist) whose "brave little heart" is not less endearing and delightful company than her sound little head, was guided in a certain crisis by "the fixed underlying feminine instinct which has probably kept more women straight than religion, morality, and calculation put together, the true instinct that woman 'should not unsought be won.'" A brilliant and charming man of the world having rescued his titled cousin from marrying her, has himself won her heart—and she, though she knows it not, his. "She cried shame upon herself for thus casting her full heart before a man who didn't want it. . . ." "That," Mrs. Oliphant agreed, "is somehow against the instinct of primitive humanity." So too would most of the heroines of our period. Nor did the women novelists who created them cast *all* that was in *their* full heart before the public. The public had to wait awhile.

That public—an otherwise extremely hospitable one—had lately been presented, though only tem-

porarily, with "Poems and Ballads," and Rhoda Broughton had not only skimmed its pages, but had observed its reflex in life itself. For Nell's sister, Dolly L'Estrange, in "Cometh up as a Flower," (Miss Broughton's first novel of '68), with her "passionate great velvet orbs," was, we are told, "the sort of woman upon whom Mr. Algernon Swinburne would write pages of magnificent uncleanness." She has a nefarious finger in the plot of the story,—she forges a love-letter; but otherwise occupies little space in it; and I cannot recover what Mr. Swinburne thought of her. Even Nell, her Tennysonian sister, was probably in the nature of a bomb-shell for mothers with daughters. It is her own story, and she tells it in the first person, not always as the purist (in grammar) would approve—"every English gentleman or lady likes to have a room to themselves." And its more dramatic episodes are narrated in the historic present, a device at times disconcerting.

Great tears are standing in his honest, tender, agonized eyes—tears that do not disgrace his manhood much, I think . . . and as he so kisses and clasps me, a great blackness comes over my eyes, and I swoon away in his arms.

If kisses be the food of love, then Eros is on famine commons in Jessie Fothergill's "Probation." It is a tale remarkably well told for a girl in her twenties, of life in Lancashire. As in many of the novels of that period, and in few of our own, wedding bells—a double peal ring out its last chapter. None the less, only two kisses, so far as I can recall, are recorded in the complete three volumes, and one of them is the forlorn farewell of a rejected but still gallant admirer. In "Cometh up as a Flower," which, like many other novels of its day has a sad ending steadily foreseen, they are as multitudinous as dewdrops at daybreak on a briar rose. But both novels are "love-stories," and both are representative.

All this is by no means to suggest that the fiction whose chief concern is with questions of sex, and whose first green leaf, it seems, was raised from a seed that may have escaped from Aphra Behn's pocket, but was assiduously watered by Charlotte Brontë, was not already in vogue. The intention was different. Love, as Miss Storm Jameson has recently declared, is an emotion that concerns not only the body, but the mind, spirit, and imagination of man or woman. This seems to have been the view shared by most women novelists in the 'seventies, and it gives their treatment of the theme, balance, proportion, and depth. Women of the world they may have been and women (as Rhoda Broughton puts it), "too thorough . . . not to enjoy household work," but in their explorations of the House of Life they did not lavish an unconscionably protracted scrutiny on the drains. Some of them were a little prudish; a few paddled in the shocking; but that as yet was not a difficult feat.

Such, so it seems, was the general reflex of life in the feminine fiction of the 'seventies. And this reflex concerns of course its kind, not its quality. When woman rules, her rod, there as everywhere, is adamant. When she shares the throne, or takes her Queen for her model, or meekly submits to an autocrat, a little feminine tact or manageableness, or the love that finds out a way, or downright guile, or Lilith-like seductions, come to her aid. A few tears are still a resource, and not to one sex only; a good cry is still an anodyne and a tonic, though the swoon and the vapors are going out. The women novelists themselves, if judged by their work, do not seem to have been made desperately unhappy because in Eden Adam needed a helpmeet for him. To read their fiction is to be refreshed by the courage, the fidelity, the wits, the loving insight, and above all the sovereign good sense of the woman depicted in it. Silliness, gush, sentimentality; the minx, the cat, the gosling; the icy glare of some Potiphar's wife may add their tang, but it takes all kinds to make the world as it is, and these particular kinds in some sort of essence to make even a faintly realistic fiction.

In 1904 Mr. W. L. Courtney published a volume entitled, "Feminine Note in Fiction," a critical sur-