

Books of Special Interest

"Official Sinning"

FALSEHOOD IN WAR-TIME. By ARTHUR PONSONBY. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1928.

Reviewed by HENRY KITTREDGE NORTON

Falsehood is a recognized and extremely useful weapon in warfare, and every country uses it quite deliberately to deceive its own people, to attract neutrals, and to mislead the enemy.

UPON this theme Mr. Ponsonby builds up in his reader's mind an expectation of learning all about a really first-class lot of government war lies. If the book were the kind of propaganda it denounces, the expectation might be realized. But Mr. Ponsonby is too honest for that. He tries to tell the whole truth and in doing so greatly weakens his indictment of the war governments.

The falsehoods that he gives us, picturesque as they are, lose their power to horrify when we know they are falsehoods. It is very doubtful whether they secured any general belief even while hostilities were in progress. To the extent that they did, they are quite deserving of Mr. Ponsonby's condemnation.

But a point which stands out in the book is that most of the lies which were circu-

lated—and no country was exempt—were neither started nor encouraged by the governments. On the contrary, Mr. Ponsonby repeatedly cites instances where the various governments on both sides took occasion to deny the authenticity of reports of enemy brutality. There were cases where the government did not do this and let a falsehood serve its purpose even when the government had knowledge that it was a falsehood. There were cases, fortunately still fewer in number, where the government or its agents deliberately manufactured and circulated lies of its own. Perhaps the outstanding case was that describing the German corpse factories, in which it was claimed that the Germans were boiling the bodies of the dead to obtain certain fats and oils.

Too strong condemnation can hardly be given to such proceedings, but it appears from Mr. Ponsonby's book that only the French government lent itself in any wholehearted way to this practice. Even in this case the charge rests upon the testimony of one witness whose motives we have no means of judging.

While falsehood in war-time is as despicable as at any other time, it is open to question whether it has even as serious effects as Mr. Ponsonby ascribes to it. While one people is using every means to slaughter

another, it probably makes little difference to the victims whether a few lies are thrown along with the hand grenades. Nor is it probable that the grenadiers would stop throwing grenades if they did not believe the lies.

The lies that really make for war are not those told in war-time, but those which are told before the war commences. Of these, Mr. Ponsonby mentions but two, that of the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary in denying that there was any British commitment to France, and that of Pashitch in denying any knowledge of the plot to kill Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo. Both of these may be said to have had a direct influence in leading peoples into war. On this account they are much more deserving of condemnation than the absurdities of individuals whose minds were unhinged by the horrors of the struggle.

But an appraisal of such official statements belongs rather to a study of secret diplomacy than of war-time lies.

Rossetti the Poet

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI: Painter Poet of Heaven in Earth. By R. L. MEGROZ. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1929. \$4.50.

Reviewed by SAMUEL C. CHEW
Bryn Mawr College

IF the fashion of observing centenaries is to continue, why cannot we agree to observe the centennial of a great man's death and ignore the hundredth anniversary of his birth? It is a sweet and decorous thing to do honor to those whose larger life "on lips of other men" has endured for a hundred years, and we gladly heed the injunction, "Let us now praise famous men." But the hundredth birthday is apt to follow hard upon the disappearance from among us of the person whom we honor, more than apt to come when his reputation is in the trough of the wave of posthumous renown. Markedly spontaneous were the tributes to Byron in 1924 and to Blake in 1928. But it was obvious that no one was particularly anxious to do homage to Rossetti and Meredith in 1928. The centennial tributes appeared, but they were perfunctory. Mr. Megroz's belated book is a much better piece of work than is Evelyn Waugh's study, which appeared promptly on schedule time last May; but it is labored and slow-moving, the product of industry rather than of enthusiasm. This is not to say that it is to be judged merely as a *pièce d'occasion*, called forth by the centenary; for, as its somewhat clumsy title indicates, it is a complementary study to the same critic's book on Francis Thompson. But while "Francis Thompson: The Poet of Earth in Heaven" was written obviously because Mr. Megroz was impelled to write it by his devotion to Thompson, this companion volume on Rossetti has been written because the author thought he ought to do so. It is but fair to add at once that despite its conscientious heaviness it is the best book we know on Rossetti.

Nevertheless it is incomplete and it needs Mr. Waugh's far less satisfactory work to supplement it. Mr. Waugh centered his attention upon Rossetti's paintings and treated his poetry hastily and gingerly. He exhibited a somewhat priggish distaste for the picturesque squalor of the poet-painter's environment. The pathological details of Rossetti's last years appeared to fascinate him, and he dwelt too long upon them. Mr. Megroz, on the contrary, is far more concerned with Rossetti's poetry than with his paintings. He considers the paintings, indeed, almost exclusively for their bearing upon the problems of the poetry, a point of view defensible in a critic who is dealing with a painter so "literary" as was Rossetti. He has little to say in general of Rossetti's environment, preferring to concentrate attention upon a few phases and a few personalities. And far from recounting at too great length the story of the tragic latter years, he breaks off his narrative abruptly after 1872, as though he were weary of his task. After the death of the poet's wife the critic's interest seems to cease; and one of the most noteworthy parts of his book is his examination of Elizabeth Siddal's forelorn little poems in which there is revealed an unsuspected depth of autobiographical significance.

Towards the end of his book Mr. Megroz remarks upon "the oppressive quantity of facts" that are available about Rossetti. Unfortunately, the innumerable diaries, letters, and memoirs of the Pre-Raphaelite circle are silent about many things of which we should like to know. So far as he can do so, Mr. Megroz pieces together what bits of testimony there are on matters upon

which Rossetti's friends were reticent. He deals frankly with the disastrous influence which Fanny Schott, the poet's mistress *en chef*, had upon him; and he seems ready to accept the report that Mrs. Rossetti did not die accidentally of an overdose of laudanum, but killed herself. He does not touch upon a problem to which Mr. Waugh devoted a good deal of attention: the large number of replicas (generally by Rossetti's assistant, Treffy Dunn) that came from the artist's studio, and the many obvious forgeries that were sold as authentic.

That Rossetti was a mystery was felt by his contemporaries, and he remains mysterious today. Mr. Megroz remarks that "the introversion of his mind" was balanced by a personal attractiveness and a sympathy with individuals that explain the remarkable influence which he exercised upon everyone who came in contact with him. He relates this mystery convincingly to the "romantic archaism" of much of his poetry and painting, emphasizing the fact that when moving in the world of old romantic themes, Rossetti was in his natural element, just as he was in his element when making beautiful verses or pictures from the stuff of dreams. With a good deal of ingenuity Mr. Megroz illustrates each point that he makes by reference to the appropriate poem or painting; and it is noteworthy that he recurs constantly to "The Portrait" among the poems and to "How They Met Themselves" among the designs. It is not for lack of careful and sympathetic study if Mr. Megroz fails to inspire in us a new enthusiasm for his subject.

The Pathology of Emotion

EMOTIONS OF NORMAL PEOPLE. By WILLIAM MOULTON MARSTON. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company. 1928. \$5.50.

Reviewed by JOSEPH JASTROW

PROFESSOR MARSTON offers a notable contribution to the psychology of emotion. His work is based on a large experimental program including several ingenious methods of recording the physiological accompaniments of emotion. These include both the introspective and the experimental records in the presence of so complicated situations as the dramatic moments of motion pictures, as well as records of students in actual situations from love-making to the exuberant customs of college life. Professor Marston has now undertaken to test the emotional responses at the Hollywood stage of production for the benefit of the "screen" industry. On the one side the volume records a technical psychological study, which leads to a theory of the underlying mechanisms in this most complex phase of our total behavior. His object is to gain a deeper insight into the emotional mechanisms. On the other side, he is dependent for his data upon following the clues of everyday normal emotions. To solve such a fundamental problem as what is the nature of appetite and desire, and where and how it passes over into a true emotional status, or again the specific function of the motor apparatus in emotional situations, requires equal ingenuity in both techniques: that of the records and introspections, and that of the favorable occasions for the typical emotions.

The keynote of Professor Marston's solution is to regard as the two great orders of emotion dominance and compliance. In the one case we command, in the other obey; in the one rule, and in the other are ruled; in the one insist, in the other yield; and it is this opposite pattern that he regards as implying equally an opposite physiological process. Here lies the essential component of character: how we dispose of our dominant and how of our compliant impulses. It is likewise in the alternating play of these that appetite must be both sought and satisfied. In the patterns thus resulting there enters submission and inducement. That these terms fit particularly well and, indeed, are derived from the love impulse is obvious. And by this route Professor Marston considers in intimate manner the formula of the love response not only in the master passion but in all its derivative forms.

The contrasted parts of the male and female in this relation afford the most distinctive picture; but it is no less apparent in the parent-child relation, as well as in ordinary social intercourse. Yet in a sense such patterns of dominance and compliance as operate in our social relations are but derivative forms of activity from the natural situations, those of sex centrally. The drama of love is physiologically as well as psychologically recorded in dominance and compliance. These furnish the typical normal emotions and by that route the clues to personal disposition and character.

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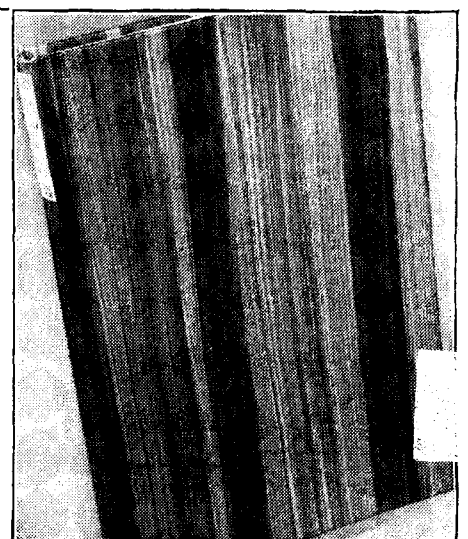
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