

uary, 1875, till April, 1879; from this Sir Arthur quotes the tag of a speech in which a son who persisted in marrying to suit himself was threatened with disinheritance by an angry father: "And that's my ultipomatum!" Puns of this calibre were still tolerated by the public fifty years ago. Yet there were capable actors. Lady Bancroft, Mrs. Kendal, Forbes-Robertson, Charles Wyndham, Henry Irving, and Ellen Terry came to the front during the decade. Tennyson, Swinburne, and Meredith were trying to write for the stage; but their well-meant efforts seemed fruitless! Sir Arthur Pinero is, of course, too modest to mention his own "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," which was acted in 1893, when Bernard Shaw, though known as a novelist, pamphleteer, and journalist, had only just established that connection with the stage which enabled him, long years after, to proceed from dramatic criticism to dramatic authorship.

It was upon the novel that the reading public of the 'seventies depended for sustenance. Dickens and Thackeray were dead, but George Eliot reached in 1870-71 what Mr. Hugh Walpole regards as the height of her achievement in "Middlemarch." Trollope was producing some of his best work, and there were some remarkable beginners. Samuel Butler with his characteristic satire in "Erewhon" (1872) heralded the break-up of the Victorian tradition, though the importance of his message was hardly realized at the time. An even greater portent was Thomas Hardy.

It was early in 1869 that Thomas Hardy received a request from the publishers to whom he had sent the MS. of his first novel, "The Poor Man and the Lady," to come to see their reader about it in London. So Hardy posted up to town from Dorset (where he was helping to "restore" Gothic churches) and found in the backroom of Chapman and Hall's office in Piccadilly a handsome man wearing a frockcoat, buttoned at the waist and loose above, who gave him a spirited lecture on the modern novel and how it should be written: "The Poor Man and the Lady" was promising, but it wouldn't do; it was too radical in tone and would permanently antagonize the reviewers; and it ought to have a plot—if possible, a sensational plot. So Hardy went off, lost "The Poor Man and the Lady," and forgot about it. And George Meredith went on disregarding as a writer the advice he had given as a reader—producing novels that were too radical for his public and had no plot to speak of—much less a sensational one.

Neither Meredith nor Hardy wanted to write novels. They were poets, but poets of such tortuous and broken utterance that even the young intellectuals of this more advanced age find them hard going. Yet it seems likely that upon their achievements in fiction the literary reputation of the latter half of the Victorian era will mainly rest. Meredith's reputation as a novel writer is just now under a cloud, but Hardy's novels have held their own and even increased their hold upon the affections of the public. Meredith's heroines, downtrodden by convention, no longer interest women who are no longer downtrodden: Hardy's men and women, hard beset by fate, still interest a generation which finds the dice of destiny still loaded against some of its members. Hardy, though perhaps more of a philosopher, is less of a moralist than Meredith, and his rather grim pessimism is more acceptable to the post-war public than Meredith's exuberant optimism. Even more important is the fact that Hardy was always gently humble, willing to please his public, his publisher, his editor, and making his best efforts to do so! Meredith, offended at the lack of appreciation of his earlier work, held haughtily aloof and "wrote only to please himself."

Mr. R. E. Sencourt, Meredith's latest biographer, making discreet use of the recent contributions of Professor René Galland and Mr. R. M. Ellis, shows that many of Meredith's novels were intimately related to the events of his private life. "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel" was a reaction from his unhappy experience as the husband of Peacock's brilliant daughter, whom he refused to forgive after she had deserted him; he declined to see her even in her last illness, and she died dictating as her epitaph the lines of Tennyson:—

Come not, when I am dead,
To drop thy foolish tears upon my grave,
To trample round my fallen head,
And vex the unhappy dust thou would'st not save.
There let the wind sweep, and the plover cry;
But thou, go by.

Meredith sublimated his bitter regret in the noble stanzas of "Modern Love." His adoration of Janet Duff-Gordon perhaps found expression there too—more certainly in "Evan Harrington," in which is shadowed also his separation from her, not only by his age, but by his lack of social position and a secure income. "Harry Richmond" is also, to some extent, romantic autobiography. "Beauchamp's Career" is an idealization of Meredith's friend Maxse, who was the radical candidate for Southampton in 1868. "Diana of the Crossways," it has been long known, was founded on the career of a brilliant Irish beauty of the time, Mrs. Caroline Norton, accused (unjustly, it would appear) of an intrigue with Lord Melbourne and of selling to the *Times* the secret of Peel's intention to repeal the Corn Laws. In the last instance, at any rate, Meredith was hampered in adjusting his conception of the heroine's character to the supposed facts—which later turned out not to be facts at all.

Both Meredith and Hardy fell foul of the Victorian convention as to reticence in treating matters of sex—Meredith in "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel," in "Modern Love," and in nearly all of his later novels. Hardy's first real success, "Far from the Madding Crowd," which began to appear in the *Cornhill* in January, 1874, was threatened at the very outset by "a Grundian cloud"—as Leslie Stephen, the editor, called it: three separate old ladies had written to complain of an objectionable paragraph—apparently that in Chapter VIII, which set forth that Levi Everdene, the father of Bathsheba, the beautiful heroine, was so temperamental that he could not keep his affections fixed on his lawful wife when he felt that he was tied to her by bond. "But he cured it," says Coggan, "by making her take off her wedding-ring and calling her by her maiden name as they sat together after the shop was shut, and so 'a would get to fancy she was only his sweetheart, and not married to him at all. And as soon as he could thoroughly fancy he was doing wrong and committing the seventh, 'a got to like her as well as ever, and they lived on a perfect picture of mutel love.'" This offended the old ladies and Hardy was admonished to go gingerly with the seduction of Fanny Robin. At this stage of his fortunes Hardy was amenable to editorial admonition, and soft pedalled the seduction scenes accordingly. In 1879, when "The Return of the Native" was appearing in *Belgravia*, he submitted to the editorial request to give the story a happy ending. When "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" appeared in the *Graphic* in 1891 Hardy not only agreed to the omission of the chapter describing the baptism of Tess's illegitimate baby, but had Angel Clare carry the dairy-maids over the flooded lane in a wheelbarrow instead of in his arms, which the editor considered improper. These and other changes Hardy blue-pencilled in his own copy, restoring the original text when the novel was published in volume form. He suffered further editorial mutilation when "Jude the Obscure" ran serially in *Harpers* in 1894, and when the omitted passages were published in the book the reviewers made such an outcry that Hardy gave up writing novels altogether.

Mr. Hugh Walpole, in his article on the novels of the 'seventies, suggests that the New Morality was introduced by the New Woman; but it is a nice question whether the new Novel owed more to the New Woman than the new Woman owed to the new Novel. Meredith's Diana and Hardy's Tess (along with Ibsen's Nora) flew the banner of revolt as conspicuously and effectively as any organization for the emancipation of womankind, and now that the battle is won it would be ungrateful to forget their services.

That excellent critic, C. E. Montague, in one of his last articles, pointed out that the Victorians, impressed by the leading position of England at the time, felt the duty to give a lead to the modern democratic nations; the poets, and even the novelists, thought of themselves as seers as well as artists. Meredith, though saved by the Comic Spirit from taking himself too seriously, felt the novel needed to be "fortified by philosophy," and used it to sound a trumpet call for courage, intelligence, and good humor in face of difficult circumstances. Hardy, more modest, disowned the philosopher's robe, but uttered with combined art and passion a plea for pity and sympathy for those whom circumstances overwhelmed. Both spoke with the earnest tone of personal conviction in a time of achievement. The

writers of the present generation, which is one of disenchantment, speak with a tone of sceptical disillusion. They say very cleverly—and even brilliantly—how much they disbelieve. It is not an attitude habitual to the Anglo-Saxon mind, or even to the human race; and it may well be that the more confident tone and responsible attitude of the Victorian writers will come back into favor. At any rate it is too soon to decide that authors of the intelligence, sympathy, and artistic power of Meredith and Hardy have nothing to say to any generation except their own.

A Navajo Tale

LAUGHING BOY. By OLIVER LA FARGE. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1929.

Reviewed by MARY AUSTIN

WHERE it nothing other, this is a book for middle age to read with surreptitious curling of the corners of the lips and wiping of the dew of youth from the eyes. It is the impossible thing so easily done that the reader does not know that one of the most obstinate literary traditions, the most cherished of obfuscating errors of anthropo-socio-psychological currency, is reduced by it to the condition of a shopworn counterfeit. For "Laughing Boy" is a true story of primitive love. Not the moving-picture-Tin-pan-Alley-all-day-sucker-sexy-saxophone obviousness which goes by that name, but an authentic story of man and woman under conditions in which white thinking is a merely incidental intrusion.

To be exact, "Laughing Boy" is the story of a Navajo lad "lean, tall, handsome . . . with a new cheap headband and a borrowed silver belt" . . . riding to a dance, "treasuring his hunger because of the feasting to come"; and Slim-Girl, "dark and slight like a wisp of grass,"—dancing with "the happiness of a natural people to whom but few things happen."

The background of the story is of Navajo life in a semi-pastoral condition. The whole is admirably rendered, with that complete mastery over the material which conceals from the reader the profoundly studious extent of the writer's knowledge. We have had novels of primitive life before this, written by archaeologists or anthropologists, who failed to conceal for a single page that such was their derivation. We have had novels written by professional novelists—Jack London's "Before Adam," for example—in which an emotional release of imperfectly civilized emotion has been posed against an imagined primitive environment, abrogating most of the things that anthropologists know about it.

There are also stories in which primitive life has been so carefully observed and so skilfully objectivized that its truth appears to be rendered with full effect. In all such tales—Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" occurs to me as a notable instance—the focus of emotional interest is in the white man or woman around whom the story is plotted. But I do not recall a single other long story of primitive love in which the story complex is so completely kept within its native color and tone. There is in Mr. La Farge's story an extraordinarily deft use of the intrusive white element, in developing the character of Slim-Girl; so deft that one suspects that many readers will miss altogether the measure it affords of the tragic failure of our Indian Bureau system of "educating" the Indian. To the emotional content of the story it adds that subtly acrid tang of tragedy which is an indispensable concomitant of beauty in art. And yet with the skill which argues well for Mr. La Farge's future as a literary artist, it is not permitted to become more than an accent to the essential Navajo veracity of his story.

Oliver La Farge has lived with the Navajoes so intimately as to be mistaken for one of them by their hereditary protagonists, the Hopi, but his use of the minutæ of Navajo life, social custom, and ceremonial obligation, is nowhere pushed to the point of inquiry on the part of the reader as to how he came to know so much, and whether it is known truly.

The question, if any question does arise about a work which is sufficiently well handled to be read for interest and charm alone, will not be a question of authenticity of the material. It will be a question raised by the violence "Laughing Boy" does

to a long entertained prepossession as to the way primitive lovers meet and mate and maintain their married relations. For this is no tale of a Cave Man knocking down a reluctant she and dragging her to his den by the hair—a notion that ought long ago to have been relegated to the category of the belly-ripping exploit of the ogre in Jack-the-Giant-Killer. Neither does Mr. La Farge's story bear any resemblance to the Freudian appetites and repressions, the alternate hysteria and machoism, which furnishes forth the *materia novellæ* of the pseudo-intellectual. How can any picture of primitive love be true even to the specialized type of the Navajo, which bears so little resemblance to the literary stereotype? The only answer to that is the one your reviewer has been making for a long time to ears indisposed to listen, that our whole concept of beginning love-life is in serious need of revision. In so far as I know anything about Indian marriage, it is as Mr. La Farge draws it. These are the emotions, the tendernesses, the decencies, and loyalties of love in social adolescence. This is the way in which the primitive husband waits upon the decisions of his woman in respect to her children; this is the way in which a careful wife considers her husband's standing with the tribesmen. And in this manner they work together for their common foothold in the wilderness. Incidentally, although it will probably escape the average reader, this is the freedom of individual action which the Amerind primitive countenances within the married relation. And Mr. La Farge might, if his story plot had admitted such a conclusion, have shown the Navajo couple continuing in the same tender freshness of sentiment for the whole of their natural lives. Not all primitive couples, for there are individual differences among primitives. But just as the tribal consciousness can respond unintermittently and rise to ecstasy on a drum rhythm, or in interminably repeated phrase of recitative that would drive the White man crazy, so it can continue to reenact the few freshly youthful progressions of love life.

Without anywhere stating it as a thesis, Mr. La Farge has remained faithful to this primitive capacity for renewal. Never at any point does he resort to the devices of sophistication by "building up" the passions which bring about the final crash of the story. Slim-Girl is killed because killing comes easier in her world, as loving does, requires no sedulous cherishing to make it serve; and grief, in its naturalness, is beautiful and grave. "Laughing Boy" is a good story, but it is still better as an exposition of the essential worthiness of the animal called man.

An Exile from Destiny

THE GOLDEN WIND. By TAKASHI OHTA and MARGARET SPERRY. New York: Charles Boni. Paper Books. 1929. 75 cents.

Reviewed by JONATHAN DANIELS

COLORED with all the dark fatalism of the Old China and the restlessness of the New, "The Golden Wind" by Takashi Ohta and Margaret Sperry is a beautifully written narrative of the wanderings of a young Japanese, exiled in body from his homeland and in spirit from his destiny.

Coming into China upon an exile, assumed to save his father, he serves with the armies of a Manchurian war lord, becomes one of the bandit brotherhood of the Kin of the Everlasting Pine, and, to serve a beautiful woman, crosses the interminable stretches of the war-wracked nation. He is fastidiously chaste, but three women, Lee, Nadja, Kay, themselves all exiles, touch and color his life. He learns wisdom in the Temple of Mysterious Heaven where young priests, contemptuous of the rituals they chant, plot secretly for the coming of New China. At last in Bombay he pours out his story and his heart into the ears of a beautiful prostitute only to find her deaf. The odyssey goes on without any end and the book comes to a close as he sails for Cape Town and the coasts of Brazil.

The struggles of his spiritual exile are expressed in dialogue typically Eastern in its philosophy. At the outset a sage who points him on his way tells him, "Forever you will be exiled from the beauty that you love; if you will beware of lovely women and games of chance, you can go toward the west and there your life may bring you wisdom." But at the end of that long journeying through war and

banditry and love, he comes to no greater wisdom about his own future than this, given him by another wise old man in the Temple of Mysterious Heaven, "The wind upon which you ride will never rest; forever you are doomed to be carried by the secret mysteries of chance. Through this you may achieve nobility."

"The Golden Wind" is the product of an interesting collaboration. Mr. Ohta, out of his own past, has furnished a story full of dramatic incident and color. Miss Sperry has given shape and pattern to his story and clothed it all in a fine, vivid prose which has about it a quality as Eastern as the story. She has taken advantage of the gorgeous imagery of the Chinese scene. Some of her exquisite sentences are worth quoting. Close upon the end of the narrative she writes:

Over Takawo a cold wind blows. Stillness descends; he feels himself lost; shipwrecked as on the shore of some forgotten star.

And there is beauty, too, when she describes the little deaf prostitute and the three women of her hero's life:

Hers a face less beautiful than Lee's, and more the child's;



Jacket design for "Laughing Boy."

her body less rich than Nadja's, for it seems purified with pain; no calm assurance as in Kay, for this girl bears in her eyes, upon her lips, within her hands, the pathos of the prisoned spirit.

In the matter of characterization the conflict of tradition between the collaborators—the conflict of Eastern fatalism and Western romance—seems to have prevented a true understanding of the hero. He is sometimes a modern prototype of the perpetually doomed Wandering Jew. At other times he seems more like the sweet Galahad questing the Holy Grail. This lack of a clear understanding of the young hero, Takawo Muto, keeps his story from possessing the quality of conviction. Since we are never quite gripped by the reality of the character of Muto, we are never moved by the poignancy of his exile. In the whole matter of characterization the work of the collaborators seems far below their achievement in the field of external description. Few of the figures in the book possess the qualities of life. The three women Muto loves are sentimental pictures of feminine perfection and the men—war lords, bandits, priests—are the conventional characters of the conventional Chinese story. The only character in the whole book who seems original and truthful is the little deaf prostitute of the House of the Plum. She is a minor character but more convincing than any of those who play more important roles.

It is as an imaginative, but fundamentally truthful, picture of modern China that "The Golden Wind" excels. As such it is convincing and beautiful. The picture rather than the characters dominate the book, and this picture drawn by Miss Sperry and Mr. Ohta of that new China, which we know only through the staccato accounts of the daily press, is an altogether fine piece of work.

The book is the first issue of the "Paper Books" published by Charles Boni. In spite of its moderate price this first book is a beautiful production. It is well printed upon good paper and is firmly bound. The cover and end papers designed by Rockwell Kent add beauty to the practicability of the volume. For persons who can afford it the volume is well fitted for any type of more elaborate private binding.

A Glorious Spree

THE EMBEZZLERS. By VALENTINE KATAEV. Translated by L. ZARINE. New York: The Dial Press. 1929. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

MR. VALENTINE KATAEV, whoever he may be, is evidently an unusual man. He can live in and breathe the air of Bolshevik Russia, which is a good deal like living in the front-line trenches on an active front, or in an earthquake, or on the tenth floor of a hotel with smoke and fire billowing from the lower-story windows, and let it all run off him like water off a duck. He has one of the gifts of the genuine artist—the power to preoccupy himself with his own mood, regardless of what is being said, done, or thought about him.

In "The Embezzlers" he has written a delightfully amusing farce, which some have compared to Gogol's "Dead Souls," and which, for those unfamiliar with Gogol's classic, might almost as well be compared with some of the more riotous comedy of Dickens. In it, that is to say, we get away completely from life, not only as it "is," but as it may be "interpreted" by the professing journalist or those journalists once-removed, who produce most of our successful fiction.

We enter, that is to say, a world in which people, houses, horses, trees, although they may look the same, are not the same, any more than their words, motives, functions are the same, for the simple reason that they have been passed through, not merely an individual temperament, but a temperament usurped by a certain mood, so strong and lasting, that as long as they remain within view and hearing, they are bent and controlled by it, just as a landscape is transformed by moonlight or mist. A work of imagination, in short, or inspiration, if you prefer; of one of those winds which bloweth when it listeth, but everybody knows when it's there.

The mood which took hold of Mr. Kataev in this case happened to be whimsical. Suppose in this hard, new, tightly-regimented Russia, where all are voluntarily or forcibly poor, where even a modest accumulation is anathema, and everybody is supposed to be stripped and scowling, working for the common good, one were suddenly to jump over the traces, pocket a fortune which happened to be lying under one's nose, and start out, in a *milieu* where everybody was doing just the other thing, to make one's wildest dreams come true? Suppose that Philip Stephanovitch Prohoroff, middle-aged, slightly liverish chief accountant in one of the state "trusts" on Meat Market Street, on one of those dismal, drizzling, Moscow November days, when a cold rain pours down unceasingly and every turn reeks of gas escaping from broken pipes and green lamps burn all day long over the desks of the office-workers—suppose that Philip Stephanovitch, who underneath his drab exterior had a little buried streak of adventure and an imperceptible sense of superiority over those about him, "a patient and harmless haughtiness," should suddenly, but without hurry or excitement, pocket the funds for the monthly payroll, and walk out into the rain to realize all the dreams that had gathered about a phrase read years ago in a certain novel of high life and engraved on Philip Stephanovitch's heart:

"Count Guido jumped on his horse . . . !"

Well, Philip Stephanovitch does just that, and he is accompanied by one of the clerks in the same department, known as Young Ivan. On its surface, the whole story is the narrative of a prolonged drunk. Elevated enough to be safely above their usual fears and worries, but not too much to know what is going on about them, they drift in their pleasant semi-consciousness about Russia for a few weeks—to Leningrad and its meagre and macabre night-life, even down into the provinces and the sodden village from which Young Ivan came. And all the time they are just on the edge of being caught, and each time the suspicious individuals whom they take to be detectives turn out to be adventurers more or less in the same case as themselves!

Philip Stephanovitch's explanation of their mysterious mission is that they are "investigators from the centre," and once, on a train near Kharkov, the third occupant of their compartment, who is reading the Criminal Code and whom he feels sure, represents their Nemesis, turns out to be an investigator, too. "Yes," he admits, "I also investigate, or it is