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CIVILIZATION is so marvellous a mechanism that it can accustom itself under necessity to anything. It can inure itself to war and, hardly less difficult, again accommodate itself to peace. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say inure itself to peace, since the readjustment that comes after struggle is a hardening rather than an easing process. It is a process which means the resolute acceptance of a changed order of existence, the determination to live down as well as live after dissension, the will to triumph over chaos. It implies a recovery of balance, measure, and perspective, and in that recovery of proportion a reassessing of human values. It is no mere accident, indeed, that a sudden tide of philosophic discussion has swept literature, but rather the signal and result of the recapture of a point of view which the war temporarily shattered. For when you no longer believe that man-made civilization has hopelessly foundered, and when you see in the kaleidoscopic progression of life pattern as well as lack of conformity, you are apt to reestablish man as the measure of all things. Once more he dominates his experiences and when that happens his philosophy and his literature alike tend away from naturalism.

That literature at least (for we shall leave philosophy to the philosophers for the present) has here in America been leading away of late from the naturalism of the immediately post-war years there can be no doubt. Daily it grows more evident that between the writing of even three years ago and today there is a sharp division. Our fiction—and fiction, of course, is more completely reflective of the standards of conduct and modes of thought of a people than any other single department of letters—shows an increasing withdrawal from the defeatism of recent years, a reawakening interest in the historical and romantic, and a growing attraction to the robust and hearty. Partly, of course, this is so because a new generation has come to maturity, a generation born too late to have shared in the devastating mental experiences of war, let alone to have borne arms, and bound, like all youth, to be served. It demands of right the enjoyment of a belief that life is something more than mere incoherence, and looks upon the world with a spirit quickened by this faith to a tussle with existence, confident that the struggle is worth the waging. It takes as of course certain of the sanctions—or lack of sanctions—which its immediate predecessors won for themselves with clamor and bitterness. It resents, to be sure, having the disillusion of its elders fastened upon its shoulders, yet it bears those elders gratitude for having removed the blinders from society. It is a generation open-eyed, unsentimental, outspoken, but a generation unembittered.

And what of its elders? They, indeed, are no more what once they were, for they have lived long enough since the war for knowledge to have relaxed their callow despair. Their disgust with life has abated, their despondency has sprung occasional sentimental or romantic tendrils. They remain a disillusioned generation but no longer a completely hopeless one. Henceforth, in fact, they should be a leaven rather than an irritant to literature and as such quite as useful as ever they were in the crusading days of their youth.

Prognostications are rarely more than hopes finding words, and dangerous at best. To venture a forecast of what the next twenty years in American literature may bring is to fly in the face of wisdom. Yet it may at least be said that whether or not the next two decades will produce great books they hold

New Song

By SHAEMAS O'SHEEL

WHEN I walked out the stars put by
Their frosty high serenity
And gravely glad came thronging down
To be once more my casual crown.

They know!—and calm Selene knows
The secret of the secret rose,
Of their hushed passion it is born,
They are its loveliness and thorn.

That night I spoke the expectant stars,
Brothers, gird me for your wars.
They armored me with nakedness,
And forged the swift sword of excess.

They brought me Pegasus for seat.
With argent clangors rang his feet.
From pasture in the Galaxy
Neighing he came and nuzzled me.

I grasped his comet-spangled mane,
Between his perilous wings again
I leaped, and rode as in old days
The pithless paths and cosmic ways.

And from my heart and lips long dumb
Song silvered forth when we had come
Close to the Pleiades—I knew
They are the seven selves of you.

I heard the stars with happy laughter
Whisper before and murmur after,
He sings again, he saw us there,
In her eyes and in her hair.

Mr. Belloc's Apples*

By DESMOND MACCARTHY

HE is, what in youth he never dreamt of becoming, one of the most popular men in England—I am speaking of Bernard Shaw. This is not a suspicious symptom; it is merely the result of having been before the public a long time. The English have a habit of proclaiming some one as the Grand Old Man of Letters and of then hailing all he does afterwards as more wonderful than anything he wrote before. They get fond of anyone whose name they have heard for fifty years, and fondness takes the form of unbounded admiration.

"How can I hope to put in a column and a half," wrote Mr. St. John Ervine of "The Apple Cart," "a fair measure of the brains that are in it? To produce such a piece of high farce, fantastic wisdom, high discourse, at the age of seventy-three, is a feat of which men half the age of Mr. Shaw might be envious." (Yes, of course they ought to be.) "Let me say," wrote another critic, "this is one of the most brilliant plays Bernard Shaw has written." . . . "To-day," exclaimed Mr. Hannen Swaffer, after the first performance, "was a great event in the history of the English theatre." Such praise might pass as only verbally unprecise if critics remembered that Mr. Shaw has written many other plays not only as brilliant but more profound; plays which they received in a very different manner. What was it, I asked myself, at the end of the performance of "The Apple Cart," beside the dramatist's venerable years, which made the people who were wont to dismiss his "discussion plays" as all talk and no drama, accept this prolonged political conversation with such grateful enthusiasm? Not even in "Getting Married" or in "Misalliance" is the proportion of talk to action greater than it is in "The Apple Cart."

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Well, in the first place there is a theatrical reason: with the exception of the interlude the talk centres round a situation in which one man is pitted against many, and this is always a "sympathetic" situation. How is King Magnus going to escape signing the ultimatum by which his Cabinet intends to reduce him to a royal cipher? We are aware that he is cleverer and more disinterested than his ministers, but we are kept wondering how he will manage to get the better of them. He triumphs in the end by threatening to abdicate and lead in the House of Commons a rival political party. Why that threat should have compelled the Prime Minister to tear up the ultimatum was not quite clear to me. Such a decision on his part would depend, of course, upon his estimate of the feeling in the country at the moment, and in the play indications of that feeling were insufficient to make one certain that the Prime Minister's decision was inevitable. One thing, however, was certain, that the King as a party leader would have aimed at destroying the power of the great "Breakages Trust," allied as it was with a more or less corrupt Press, while his own views suggested that to do this he would have willingly become a Mussolini under the nominal monarchy of his son. At the same time his last words to Lysistrata (Power Mistress General) hint that he felt himself too old and tired to see that job through. She, who alone in the Cabinet represents devotion to efficiency, was sincerely sorry that he did not

* The Theatre Guild will produce "The Apple Cart" toward the end of February.

This Week

"Good-Bye to All That."

Reviewed by ARNOLD WHITRIDGE.

"A Gallery of Women."

Reviewed by ROLLO WALTER BROWN.

"Iron Man."

Reviewed by THEODORE PURDY, JR.

"Enough of Dreams."

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT.

Next Week, or Later

The Present Position of History.

By GEORGE MACAULAY TREVELYAN.

the hope of a literature more balanced and rounded, more nicely compounded of emotion and thought, than the literature that has gone before. For within the space of a single generation extraordinary experience has produced what is virtually two generations, both mature and both yet young, the one purged of all glamorous belief by the disaster of war and viewing the world somberly now rather than bitterly, and the other with the natural ardor of its youth tempered by the knowledge of the catastrophe in which it so narrowly escaped participation. Here surely should be the high seriousness which Matthew Arnold proclaimed the mark of great literature. Here should be both vision and understanding.

abdicate. The implication, then, is that the Labor Cabinet and its Prime Minister are content, now the whole population is enjoying a more or less American level of prosperity, to let the "Breakages Trust" and corruption alone, provided they remain in office themselves. This is the only assumption on which the effect of the King's threat becomes plausible.

It is not very long since Mr. Shaw startled liberals and reformers by speaking up for Mussolini; and so inveterate is the popular notion that his *obiter dicta* was dictated by desire to surprise that his defence of Facism was interpreted as a piece of characteristic showy wilfulness. "The Apple Cart" proves that it was nothing of the kind. And here we touch upon a second reason why the play has been received with such effusive benevolence. The central idea that emerges from the criss-cross of discussion, from the satire, the fun, and the clash of character, is that Democracy as a form of Government is a hopeless fraud. This is a wide-spread and spreading persuasion. The play reflects what many intelligent people are thinking.

The strength of King Magnus's position is that he knows this. Being a King he can afford to admit it, while his Ministers and opponents know it is true but have to pretend that it is not. This gives him a great pull in argument; the discussion was consequently a one-man walk-over affair between a clever, calm, disinterested man and a set of excitable political boobies, each with one eye askew on the main chance. As a dramatic critic I missed in it therefore what has hitherto been the great merit of Mr. Shaw's discussion plays, an even distribution of brains among the debaters.

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I have watched for years the evolution of Mr. Shaw's thought and genius. We all remember the moment when as a reformer he seemed to despair (if one so instinctively gay in temper can ever be said to do so) and clung to the idea of selective breeding ("Man and Superman") as to a last hen-coop in the wreck of his hopes for the future.

Then, he found it necessary to add another postulate to the basis of rational optimism: the idea ("Back to Methuselah") that the world could not really improve until men had learnt how to live to be thousands of years old. Both plays were full of insight into the radical conditions of humanity. "The Apple Cart" is nothing of that kind. It is almost as topical as "John Bull's Other Island," though the scene is projected into the future. That is another reason why it has interested people. It is about things they talk and laugh about. Let us not, then, call "The Apple Cart" "profound"; brilliantly topical is the right description of it. Its circumstances only differ from those of to-day in two respects: the national income is at the date of the play so distributed that there is no effective discontent left in England, and English life is still more Americanized. But the main features of the political situation remain those of today. There is a King who, though glamour has deserted him, still possesses dormant legal powers, by using which an exceptional man might any day make the Throne of first importance in the state. (Magnus is such a king.) Intelligent citizens have lost all interest in politics; the predatory have found short private cuts to power and riches outside politics, and exert pressure, when necessary, on frightened politicians through the Press which is in their pockets; the masses give without thinking their votes to any type of man or woman who amuses them; they are better off than they have ever been before, and they don't and can't bother their heads about the really precarious nature of that prosperity (suppose revolutions broke out in the countries where English capital is chiefly invested! Magnus is aware of that possibility, though his ministers only complacently observe that all is quiet at home); the people are rather amused by the plutocracy; they don't know, and they don't care how the rich batten on the waste generated by the social machine; politics only attract second-raters who cannot carve out for themselves a career in other fields; the devices by which politicians become popular and "rise" (but no longer to honor), are so futile as to fill any self-respecting man with nausea; the party machine makes the Cabinet independent of the House of Commons and Cabinets are full of duds or representatives of dubious "interests"; the prime Minister has to use his wits in trimming between those interests and cajoling those duds instead of applying them to real problems. But one barrier against corrupt or stupid legislation still remains in the Constitution—the Royal

Veto; that is to say the disinterested decisions of a man independent of the frivolous idiots who are pulled and pushed this way and that by a few energetic greedy persons, good fellows no doubt in a private life, but without the tradition of public service or understanding of statemanship. Such is the theme of "The Apple Cart."

Allowing for exaggerations all this will pass as a description of English politics today. But who was it who drew our attention to these features of our political scene? It was not Mr. Shaw; I looked at my programme to make quite sure that "The Apple Cart" had not been written in collaboration with Mr. Belloc. Its points were precisely those at which Mr. Belloc has been hammering for twenty years: the humbug of a modern representative government; the unreality of party conflicts; the poor quality of the men attracted to public life; the helplessness of politicians in the hands of financiers and newspaper proprietors (Mr. Belloc wrote with Cecil Chesterton before the war a book on the danger of Press-Combines); the resulting indifference of the public to politics; the dwindling prestige of the House of Commons; the permeation of public life by indirect corruption; the fact that he who controls the party funds decides the party policy and that those funds are accumulated by means which won't always bear looking into; the Americanization and plutocratizing of old England. A few years ago Mr. Belloc also wrote a book suggesting the same remedy as "The Apple Cart"; strengthen the Crown.

When critics of "Major Barbara" were chattering about Mr. Shaw's debt to Nietzsche, he pointed at once to Samuel Butler, who also was a literary Ishmael; I really think he ought to dedicate this play to Mr. Belloc. Of course, no reproach is intended in pointing out this rather odd accord between two men who have hitherto always met to dispute; but I do object to others, who have for years ignored Mr. Belloc's criticism of political life as the notions of a somewhat bitter and irresponsible crank, hailing them in Mr. Shaw as proofs of startling and novel insight. For my part, though agreeing with reservations to the general diagnosis of both writers, I seem to hear a still, small voice which whispers "Fiddlesticks," when they recommend the Royal Veto as the remedy.

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The skill is great with which the discussions are supported throughout the play by interest in the King as a man. The types are amusing, and though caricatures they are recognizably true. King Magnus, unpretentious, subtle, and selfless, is not only a real human being, but a creation of Mr. Shaw's moral insight which is a much more remarkable gift than his faculty for hitting off types, and is, indeed, the gift which makes him the superb dramatist he is. Greatness of mind is not necessarily imposing or magnetic; it is something which may only gradually dawn upon you. Such are the virtues of King Magnus. A disinterested man of strong intellect and with no *amour propre* will often make others seem children beside him. This is the effect of Magnus on his ministers, who at rare moments, when they too catch the infection of his candor, know themselves dimly to be, comparatively speaking, babies. Of all the characters in the play Proteus, the Prime Minister, is the only one, male or female, who is even remotely capable of taking the measure of the King's diameter. He is a clever study (I thought I recognized in him a hint or two taken from real life.) Proteus is highly intelligent. But, alas, the political game has caught him and forced him to devote his faculties to steering adroitly from moment to moment rather than to seeking a goal. Just as Napoleon learnt to use his naturally bad temper as a diplomatic asset, so does Proteus employ his endowment in the direction of touchy vanity and emotional hysteria to gain time or darken counsel. He is blunt of speech and devious in thought. Magnus is subtle and frank; Proteus crude but not candid.

The interlude is a deft piece of construction. Apparently it has nothing to do with the theme, yet it supplies what is wanted—a background for the action firstly, in the shape of the King's private life—in which he is exactly the same man as in politics, and secondly, in that it typifies that *beau monde* which has turned its back on social questions as drab and petty. Magnus, for a little rest, often visits this world, embodied in his putative mistress, Orinthia, wondering at, and just a little fascinated by, the blooming, gaseous, extravagance of its romantic egotisms. Orinthia is a more corporeal em-

bodiment of the spirit which in "Back to Methuselah" animated the figures of Azymandias and Cleopatra-Semiramis, who die in that play of "discouragement," when brought into the presence of moral beauty and endeavor. Orinthia is not subject to such a test. She is utterly unaware of Magnus, except that since he is a king, he ought to cut a figure on the throne with her beside him. I think perhaps Mr. Shaw went a little too far in showing up Orinthia, for she was so presented that it became difficult to believe that Magnus could like her. The feminine foil to her is his Queen Jemima, a domestic lady, perfectly dignified in what Orinthia would consider a very dull way. Was it quite right, *dramatically*, that Queen Jemima should have been so much more attractive? No.

The richest moment of comedy in the play is when the American ambassador, setting a seal upon what is really a *fait accompli*, suggests, radiant with romantic generosity, that America should return again to the British Empire, a proposal which is equivalent to the python saying to the swallowed rabbit "at last we are one."

Of course "The Apple Cart" has rare merits; that anyone should think less of it, or admire it less than they do, is not my object in writing this article. But I protest against its being put in the forefront of Mr. Shaw's achievements.

A Farewell to Youth

GOOD-BYE TO ALL THAT. By ROBERT GRAVES. New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith. 1930.

Reviewed by ARNOLD WHITRIDGE

ONE of the delightful things about autobiography is that the author is invariably in love with his subject. Provided he is honest it is inconceivable that he should be dull, for the dullest fellow cannot look into his heart and write without finding something that is worth recording. "Good-bye to All That" may not quite achieve the uncanny honesty of Mr. Pepys, the most self-revealing of all autobiographers, but it suffers little from that instinctive good taste which is to the twentieth century the unpardonable literary sin. After all, intellectual honesty is about the only virtue that has not been swept off its pedestal, and only in the very greatest literature of the world are good taste and intellectual honesty to be found yoked together.

"Good-bye to All That" is Robert Graves's official farewell to his youth. He has decided to unload the accumulated impressions and experiences of thirty-three years and to start life afresh. Graves is one of the many young men whom the war caught on the brink of manhood and forced into poetry. The heroism and the sordidness, the noble self-sacrifice and the utter futility, had to be somehow fused. For the average man humor was the great preservative of sanity, but for the more delicately adjusted natures humor like patriotism was not enough. Since 1918 the heroism and the self-sacrifice have receded into the distance, while the sordidness and the futility have become steadily more obvious. What was to have been a great adventure developed into a nightmare, and naturally enough youth, which was beginning to chafe at the stolid drabness of peace, chafed still more at the drabness, danger, dirt, and discomfort.

The amazing feature of Mr. Graves's war poetry is its utter freedom from either bitterness or exaltation. He is certainly under no illusion about war, but he is, or at least he was when the poems were written, equally free from the savage indignation that has so tortured Siegfried Sassoon. There is no suggestion of that berseker love of fighting that inspired Julian Grenfell's "Into Battle," or of the rather too conscious dedication of himself to sacrifice, that underlies Rupert Brooke's famous sonnet. In the past the horrors of war were mitigated by an unswerving belief in immortality, but in our sceptical age that anodyne has lost its efficacy. Wordsworth's happy warrior, who "makes his moral being his prime care" is strangely out of date. How little would he have understood Graves's poignant little elegy, Goliath and David:

Loud laughs Goliath, and that laugh
Can scatter chariots like blown chaff
To rout; but David, calm and brave,
Holds his ground, for God will save.
Steel crosses wood, a flash, and oh!
Shame for beauty's overthrow!
(God's eyes are dim. His ears are shut),