

The Position of History, by George Macaulay Trevelyan, on page 777 SEP 22 1930

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## of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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### An Exacting Art

FOR the hundredth time we are moved to wonder what it is that inclines so many persons to reviewing. Is it mere desire for self-expression? Is it the ability to turn a facile phrase or force a glittering paradox? Is it hot convictions or passionately held prejudices? Is it an egotistical urge to speak out in meeting? Or is it a belief that criticism is easy, requires no special equipment, and is, if not lucrative, at least respectable and, today, respected? All editorial offices know how frequent is the literary aspirant whose whole preparation for the work of passing judgment on the writings of others is a course or two in English at college, a general interest in books, and a large faith in his ability to "handle anything." He is the reviewer who will write around the Einstein theory with the same complacency that he will avoid giving away the point in a detective story and tackle a history of the crusades with as much self-confidence as the chronicle of a motor trip across the Sahara. And he is, curiously enough, the man who is sometimes of considerable value to journalism if not to criticism. For he serves for the paper that is professedly writing for the masses much as do the lay critics whom we understand the Hollywood authorities call in to sit in judgment on the scenarios of highly paid writers,—he is the index to public taste and the exponent of it. But surely he is not the critic.

For criticism is an art of exacting sort. It demands first and foremost an intellectual honesty that never allows feeling to warp reason and that recognizes knowledge as the touchstone of judgment. It implies that queer paradox of the mind that to be open must be shut—shut to prejudice, shut to the clamor of propagandists and slanderers, shut to the insistence of faddists and denouncers. It requires taste, and sympathy, and understanding, and an immense and constant interest in the present as well as a wide acquaintance with the past. It demands the ability not only to analyze but to interpret, not only to expound but to exhilarate. It presupposes a decent respect to the established sanctions and an attitude of watchful waiting towards the experimental. It is zealous, and jealous, and catholic all at the same time.

Criticism that is worth its salt results not from reading but from thinking. And by thinking we would not be understood to mean merely a deliberate effort at rationcination directed toward the interpretation of the volume in hand, but a long habit of reflection that weaves life and literature into relation and that affords a basis for understanding and judgment. The best criticism should have the masculine quality of virility, the feminine trait of intuition. For it must be robust if it is not to be betrayed by externals of sentiment and style, and it must have insight if it is to find more than surface values. What happens when really constructive criticism is written is that a book has acted as an explosive to a long-laid train of thought. All that the critic has felt and divined about life and living, all the standards he has established through loving study of "the best that has been thought and said in the world," becomes the background against which he projects and the means through which he evaluates the volume he is criticizing. The richer the personality of the critic, and the greater his stores of knowledge, the more revealing will be his comment, the more understanding his appraisal of the author's intention and achievement.

The primary object of all writing about books,

### Only, It Happens

By LEE WILSON DODD

COME, come, my pen, what shall we satirize?  
Whom shall we try to hate, or whom despise?  
Distilling secret venom from the spleen,  
Let us spray poison on the tender, green  
Young shoots now pushing up from this old clod  
Called Earth, and wither the wild flowers of God.  
Let no new thing escape us, let us be  
The sworn foes of contemporaneity:  
Such is our function, so our critics say—  
And who are we, my pen, to say them nay!  
Dip, then, and poise for action, sneer and scratch,  
And emulate the frumious Bandersnatch. . . .

Only, it happens that to-day  
I walked along a lonely beach  
Beneath a sky, nor blue, nor gray,  
And heard the sea-gulls grind and screech  
Like ungreased wheels, and watched two crabs  
Fight over carrion, with thin claws  
High-lifted, threatening cruel dabs.  
Dismembering nips . . . and just because  
I found the sea-gulls beautiful  
When they were silent and at rest,  
And the small crabs, when came a lull  
In conflict, thought the loveliest  
Corroded coinage of the sea,—  
Somehow, my pen, I'd rather we  
Refrained, and let the age drift by,  
Too faint a cloud to stain the sky.

### Defoe and the Blessed Mary\*

By ARTHUR COLTON

DEFOE lived some seventy years, from the debatable date of 1660 to 1731, but his six novels and the notable fiction called "The Journal of the Plague" were the fruit of five elderly years: "Robinson Crusoe" in 1719, "Memoirs of a Cavalier" and "Captain Singleton" in 1720, "Moll Flanders," "The Journal of the Plague," and "Colonel Jack" in 1722, "Roxana" in 1724. His bibliography is formidable, thirty-five pages of small print in M. Dottin's "Life." The bulk of the titles refer to pamphlets, such as to-day would be articles in newspapers, magazines, and reviews, but the output is still extraordinary, and authorship was only part of his incredible activity. Mr. Dottin remarks that up to Anne's accession in 1702, he was a business man with political interests, through her reign to 1715 a politician with business interests, and under the first George principally a novelist. It is only a rough classification. At all or various times he was a merchant, importer, manufacturer, and speculator; a political pamphleteer and a government agent; something of a Puritan, something of a sport, and always a propagandist; a journalist and editor, a compiler and historian; finally a biographer and a novelist. Rash, pugnacious, and then scared not without reason, he was twice in prison, once on the pillory, once bankrupt, and frequently hiding from arrest. He liked the excitement of politics too well to attend properly to the routine of business. He made a good deal of money, was usually in difficulties, and his family was sometimes in want.

It was a perilous time for a fighting journalist, with a dynasty in doubt, and treason possible in either direction. But he was hardly an innocent victim. He gave his enemies sufficient provocation, and even the unprejudiced some reasons for suspecting his good faith. "The Shortest Way with Dissenters," which sent him to the pillory, was a brochure whose irony was so subdued that most people thought it meant what it seemed to say. It got him violently be cursed by both parties. A passionate Whig threatened him with the gallows and a furious Tory with assassination. The intention was like Swift's proposals to whitewash Westminster Abbey and to use Irish babies for food, but Defoe's mask of gravity was too thick. A popular pamphleteer to a literal-minded public must not be too subterraneanly sarcastic. The London crowd thought the punishment tyrannical, and surrounded his penal platform with cheers and bouquets. He was never more popular than on the pillory.

But the popularity faded. He became, and remained for some years, a secret agent and quasi-spy in the pay of Robert Harley, the Earl of Oxford. A non-conformist Whig pamphleteer, in the pay of a moderate Tory ministry, under a Parliament that was mainly Anglican High Church, was in an equivocal position. It was not an unnatural inference that his pen was more venal than principled. Unfavorable opinion was not confined to his personal enemies or political opponents.

"I have suffered deeply for cleaving to my principles," he wrote. "The immediate causes of my sufferings have been the being betrayed by those I trusted and scorning to betray those who trusted me."

\* LIFE AND STRANGE AND SURPRISING ADVENTURES OF DANIEL DEFOE. By PAUL DOTTIN. Translated by LOUISE RAGAN. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1929.

### This Week

"The Woman of Andros."

Reviewed by HENRY SEIDEL CANBY.

"An Autobiography of America."

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS.

"Australia Felix."

Reviewed by ROBERT B. MACDOUGALL.

"Ella."

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT.

Hermione on Humanism.

By DON MARQUIS.

"Produce of Scotland."

By CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

"Art in America."

Reviewed by FRANK JEWETT MATHER.

### Next Week, or Later

Can the League Enforce Its Will?

By JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES.

we take it, is to give them currency. For the best book in the world is worth nothing at all if it never finds a reader. Merely to analyze a book is for the critic to fulfil but a portion of his task. Properly to present it he must distil its spirit as well as display its parts. A difficult undertaking, indeed, and one that demands high abilities, not a mere smattering of knowledge and an ardor to write.



And now I live under universal contempt, which contempt I have learned to contemn, and have an uninterrupted joy in my soul—I have always kept cheerful, easy, and quiet; enjoying perfect calm of mind." The evidence makes all these assertions rather more than doubtful. "If any man ask me," he continued, "how I have arrived at this peace of mind, I answer him, in short, by a constant serious application to the great, solemn, and weighty work of resignation to the will of heaven." Two days after expressing this sentiment of Christian resignation he sent to Harley a collection of clippings from articles by Richard Steele, who had never said a word against him, urging that Steele be prosecuted for high treason; and pushed the matter until he succeeded in having Steele expelled from the House of Commons. One can understand why many suspected him of underhand dealings and showed a kind of blind fury when his name was mentioned. Steele was the most amiable of men, but Defoe was more ingenious than ingenuous. If he had not been secretly protected by the ministers who employed him, he would have had still more occasion for resignation to the will of heaven.

But it is as easy to admire Defoe as to dislike him. The eager spirit that drew him away from the routine of business into the whirl of politics, the energy and tenacity that enabled him to come up fighting after every defeat, the insatiable hunger for knowledge, the incessant industry, are not only likable but inspiring. Broken and disgraced, he managed to pull himself back to recognition. Finally in his old age he won his place among the immortals. His last three years were somewhat mysterious. His property was considerable, but some creditor seems to have threatened, and his fears were excessive. He left his house and family at Stoke Newington, hid himself somewhere in the neighborhood of Newgate, and died in St. Giles Cripplegate, where he was born.

It is hardly accurate of Mr. Dottin to speak of him as "rising from the lowest ranks." His father was a London shopkeeper, a tallow chandler, more or less prosperous, and his mother the daughter of a

ples of the public schools, were secondary at Stoke Newington to modern languages, history, and the natural sciences. "The practice of short hand, experiments in physics and astronomy, and the study of geographical maps took up a great part of the time." Morton stirred his pupils to debate, and Defoe learned there to speak on his feet extempore. Almost his last writings were three treatises on education: "A New Family Instructor," "Of Royal Education," and "The Complete English Gentleman."

Defoe's writings are all in the same manner of the matter-of-fact Englishman; he walked into fiction without altering his gait, much as Richardson did when he moved on from writing letters for actual servant girls to writing them for invented persons. Roxana the demi-mondaine, Moll Flanders the shop-lifter and prostitute, Singleton the pirate, Crusoe on his lonely island—they all have minds that run on business lines. They even have the shopkeeper's habit of inventory, they like to take stock of possessions. In whatever various ways they may go astray, they have a middle class, nonconformist conscience in the background. The apparition of Mrs. Veal is as mundane as a pamphleteer. The events may be dramatic and powerfully described, but the characters are not dramatic. The situations may be extraordinary, but the reactions are invariably normal. The humanity is all essentially Defoe. "Suppose I were a prostitute or a castaway, a pirate or a ghost, how did I probably become so? What would be likely or plausible to happen to me, and how would a reasonable person like me think, feel, and act in the circumstances?"

Defoe's novels are indistinguishable, moreover, in their form from his biographies, except that the conditions of fiction allowed him to substitute the first person for the third. That gives "Colonel Jack" a certain advantage over "Jack Shepherd" and "Jonathan Wild." If Defoe was the father of the realistic novel, the realistic novel sprang from biography or autobiography. He assumed that the imaginative belief in fiction is the same, that it demands the same background and method, as the narrative of veritable facts. He was singular in the depth to which he sunk himself in whatever hypothesis, fiction, or

mask he assumed. The trait which in "The Shortest Way with Dissenters" (1702) confused both friends and enemies, was the trait that gave "Robinson Crusoe" its peculiar "kick," and made "The Apparition of Mrs. Veal" (1706) the model of a sober, accurate, and well-documented Report.

Defoe's fictional method was not, however, a theory. It was rooted in his habit of mind and customary procedure. He did not set out to invent the realistic novel. He wrote fictional autobiographies, and made the mask as thick as he could. His genius, if that is a separable function, is not in question here—the inventiveness and the imagination that enabled him to see invented things in a flood of attendant detail. The point is the way that genius went to work, and the assumption that belief in imagined facts requires the same outfit and guidance as belief in actual facts, ascertained and stated.

Every work of the so-called "imitative" arts, nevertheless, starts with a set of conventions. A painting is a perfectly flat surface, but perspective assumes it is not. There are only three walls to a stage drawing room, but the play assumes there are four; the audience exists in a sort of fourth dimension, a mystically real presence, in some way both there and not there. So long as the convention is accepted it is lightly carried. The conventions at the entrance of any printed book stand in serried rows, but the imagination does not balk at their extent or number. Under the spell of fiction its faith, hope, and charity are amazing. It will fling itself on the air with the wind under its wings. Props and crutches may hamper rather than encourage it. At any rate the art of narrative does not as a rule attempt to prove what an assumption will successfully carry. You begin: "Mrs. Brown came down the steps of 123 East Street in a flutter of anxiety"—"Once upon a time there was a beautiful princess named Rosamund"—"Denis de Beaulieu was not yet two-and-twenty"—and are accepted at face value. The advantage of telling a story in the first person is fixity of standpoint, a certain automatic unity, not that it induces any more implicit belief.

values in mind and leading their readers to feel novelistically about them. M. Maurois has stated his method and theory to that, at least inferential, effect. Another reversal is in respect to a trait already described. Defoe puts all his romance into his environment. The characters are, on the surface at least, ordinary, average, and familiar to his readers, very much like himself and themselves. The situation of being a prostitute, a castaway, an expatriate in Madagascar, a ghost, a wanderer in plague-stricken London, that city of death—was not to them ordinary, average, or familiar. But the realists of the last century were apt to reverse the combination. The environment was usually familiar or domestic, the characters personally distinct if not odd. The field which twentieth century romance, of the more substantial kind, has been exploiting, is the psychological. Its adventures are into the subconscious. It seems to be the only field left. "Je conanois tout, fors que moy mesmes." Since the boreal pole and the Antarctic at the other end have both lost their mystery, since America spells commerce, and Africa is no longer dark, nor Asia any longer an opiate dream of Kubla Khan, where can wonder find its nourishing thrills, its unknown seas and moonlit perils, except in that

Dark tarn of Auber,  
The mystic mid region of Weir?

The only haunted spot now is the cellarage of the soul, which is being ruthlessly threatened with electric lighting.

Your complete romanticist will have both character and situation "of a concatenation according," and runs the risk of but a vaporish consistency. Your complete realist will have plain people walking their usual days of small incident, and he undeniably tends to be dull. There is virtue in combination. My own preference in that way would lean toward Defoe's; toward some romance in the situation, something not too close to the daily round and procession of inconsequential hours; toward realism, some objective realism at that, in the characters. Situation seems to absorb romance better than does character. In respect to a preference for a modicum of visible objectivity, I seem to find the dim wilder-

ness of the subliminal self, as a field of romance, lacking the gusto of the greenwood, the ancient city, and the plumed wars. The stream of consciousness has not the azure and assuring sparkle of the Gulf Stream. The details of Crusoe's struggle seem to me to have more intriguing romance and more substantial reality in them than the details of a conflict between several subconscious instincts; which is too much like a trench battle between front lines of abstractions with an artillery of theory behind each laying down a barrage. The spell of fiction begins with visibility first, and then motion.

Finally, I prefer the biographical novel, on the whole, to the novelistic biography. Fiction of the Defoe model may clutter the stage with unnecessary furniture, but biography of the Maurois model is a primrose path to the everlasting bonfire. Both of them make the assumption that fictional and biographical belief are the same species of faith, which I take to be a fallacy. Some modern writers, with material in their hands for a quite worth while biography, decide to make a novel of it, either preferring the novelistic kind of belief, or supposing the two kinds are the same, or calculating that it will sell better. The preference is a matter of taste, the supposition mistaken, the calculation possibly correct. The probable and usual outcome is that the novel has spoiled the biography (hung it in the air instead of planting it on the ground), and the biographical material has clogged the novel, weighted it in the wrong places, and led it down alleys that do not serve its progression and goal.

Mrs. Virginia Woolf pronounces Roxana and Moll Flanders "among the few English novels which we can call indisputably great." George Borrow's old applewoman of London Bridge drew from the life of "the blessed Mary Flanders" the consolations of a nun from her Book of Hours. How "blessed," and why "indisputably great?" The applewoman said she only read "the funny parts; all about taking things and the manner it was done," and that hardly explains "blessed." Lavengro told her it was a good book with a deep moral, not written to prove there is thieving, but rather to show the consequences of crime. Her only son was thief, like the "blessed Mary," who led to a safe and happy end. That comes nearer to her probable psychology. The present generation finds charms where the Victorian era was repelled, but the charms of disordered morality are not acceptable bases for the applewoman's peculiar piety or Mrs. Woolf's literary opinion. Mrs. Woolf points to Defoe's realism, to his knowledge and veracity. She seems to mean that greatness lies in a candid gaze on reality. "He belongs to the school of the great plain writers, the school of Crabbe and Gissing"; he is "its founder and master—There is dignity in everything that is looked at openly." Defoe knew the facts of trade and travel, of the half-world and the underworld, and set them down without exaggeration or much mitigation. He knew the seamy side of things as well as their embroidery. He had been poor, and proud, and shamed. He lived a year and a half with the derelicts of Newgate prison.

Roxana and Moll Flanders are, in fact, not types of the demi-mondaine, or criminal, or semi-criminal. They are ordinary women, whose instincts are no better or worse than others. The dominant instinct, if any, is a liking for comfort and some money in the bank. But whether or not the criminal is a type is a dispute of criminologists, and whether or not Defoe had observed that the people inside Newgate were just like the people outside, does not so greatly matter. He put nearly the same psychology into all his characters.

I suspect that the final fascination of Crusoe and Moll Flanders—their greatness if it is there, their consolation and their ultimate thrill—lies beyond the romance and the realism, beyond their values in singular adventure and the familiar plainness of their humanity. It lies in their granitic endurance. It is far from being the whole thing, but it is the ultimate thing. Crusoe is elemental, like Odysseus. They are both men of endless expedients, much enduring, weather beaten, monolithic. They are not complex. They are simple and solid. When I read Gorki's reminiscences it struck me that his old grandmother had something monolithic about her, the indestructible rock bottom of human worth. Moll Flanders is not as visible as Crusoe in his shaggy hat, but she has the same tenacity. The waves of life had gone over the applewoman, but they go over "the



blessed Mary" in yet deeper torrents, and she comes up through the surges unshaken. Whatever happens, one can live through it, and go on. Defoe put himself into his characters, and this thing was also in him. He could live through and go on.

I suspect the applewoman called "Moll Flanders" "blessed book" because it lifted and consoled her, and that this is the ultimate source of Mrs. Woolf's sense of greatness there. Here is the plainest kind of ordinary, sinful, mistaken humanity, and it is unbeatable. I suspect that is what Defoe means by his title: "The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, who was born in Newgate, and during a Life of continued Variety, for Threescore Years, beside her Childhood, was Twelve Years a Whore, Five Times a Wife (whereof once to her own Brother), Twelve Years a Thief, Eight Years a Transported Felon in Virginia, at last grew rich, liv'd Honest, and died a penitent." The "deep moral" is hardly as Lavengro thought, the terrible consequences of crime; any more than the moral of Crusoe is, as Crusoe thought, the error of leaving one's parents and running away to sea. If you draw back from interest in the details of adventure, and look at Crusoe and Moll Flanders for some totality and essential, it is this indomitable something, this solid consistency, that stands out. Crusoe is utterly stripped and alone. He has nothing but himself. He takes control of that self, and comes through. Moll Flanders outlives everything. Blunders, crimes, disasters, she outlives them all, and lives them down. Whatever else she may be, she is never cowed and spiritless. She remains to the end, herself. If not a "dep moral," it is at least a thrill. I suspect that the point here is an old story; that it is what Aristotle meant when he was talking of tragedy. If a French critic of the seventeenth century were asked what it is that gives the sense of greatness, he answered, "the heroic." We do not get it now from the thews of Goliath, but we may get it from the steady eye of young David. If we do not get it from rhythmical, high-souled queens, stately and foredoomed, we may get it from Moll Flanders. Whenever it catches us, we get the lift and the thrill. The sense of greatness is the sense of the possibility of greatness in our small human selves. That is where the lift comes in. But in order to be greatly enduring there must be great things to endure. That is where the romance, or at least the unusual, comes in, or is apt to come in. And in order to lift it must come near enough to us to catch hold. That is where the realism comes in. The "deep moral," if it is a moral, is that no one loses his soul who is still captain of it; to lose hope without losing grip, is to win out; it is a victory for your kind. Or if Defoe did not mean this, any more than Borrow, it is what he accomplished. He took the buskins off heroism, and stood it on its bare feet.

Says the *Manchester Guardian*:

"Is Mr. Sexton, who is reported to have addressed the House of Commons in definitely doggerel verse the other night, the first 'poet' to give the House a taste of his own wares? The last House of Commons poet, a better versifier than Mr. Sexton, was Sir Wilfrid Lawson, but although his rhymes were freely quoted in the Lobby, one does not remember that he introduced them into his speeches; nor did Macaulay interlard any of his operations with those pretty effusions of the 'Judicious Poet' with which he amused his family.

"Of more serious poets, Andrew Marvell seldom addressed the House of which he was a member. Prior wrote a good deal of verse after entering Parliament, but did not quote it any more than did his more politically distinguished collaborator in 'The City Mouse and the Country Mouse,' Charles Montagu, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Waller was a distinguished poet and a distinguished member of Parliament, but he, too, seems to have kept the functions separate. Indeed, one of the greatest of members of Parliament, Charles Fox, laid down a condition as to quotation which would have been fatal to Mr. Sexton's little excursion:—'No Greek; as much Latin as you like; and never French under any circumstances. No English poet unless he had completed his century.'"

Historic old Newstead Abbey, famous as the ancestral home of Lord Byron, has been purchased by Sir Julian Cahn for presentation to the British Nation unconditionally. Newstead Abbey is older even than the Byron family. It was a priory when the founder of the line, Sir John Byron entered into possession in 1540. The poet was not born there, but was taken to Newstead by his mother at the age of ten.

## "Praise All Living"

THE WOMAN OF ANDROS. By THORNTON WILDER. New York: A. & C. Boni. 1930. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

MR. WILDER has somewhere said that all his books have been studies of how men and women meet their fates. And indeed his new novel, "The Woman of Andros," has for theme the first dawn of Christian pity "for the unfit and broken," born while the Holy Land was still "preparing its precious burden," yet already a philosophy which could teach the Greek intellect of Chrysis the beautiful hetaira, to "praise all living, the bright and the dark," and lift Pamphilus who betrayed and then lost her sister, from his uncertainties, and make that sister, Glycerium, in her suffering and death to be a prototype of the meek and lowly lambs of God who were to become for ages the subjects of Christian thought and charity.

There is more significance in this theme than is usually the case in a novel, which, after all, is neither sermon nor philosophy but a creation of human life in action. It is not, however, the theme which calls for praise, however much it may fix attention; nor the characters of this simple, poignant narrative of love irradiating, burning through, transcending the petty life of an island where only the tradition of the home is lovely. The characters of this Greek story,



THORNTON WILDER

From a cartoon by Eva Hermann in "On Parade" (Coward-McCann).

like the characters of "The Bridge of San Luis Rey" are literary, and generalized like figures of Greek sculpture. They are true and significant, but no more realistic than Socrates in the "Dialogues" and more reminiscent of familiar types.

It is the ideas and the situations that burn in "The Woman of Andros." No sooner is Mr. Wilder's plot, taken from Terence, under way: the two fathers disputing over the ways of Pamphilus who is drawn toward the banquet of the hetaira where young men's minds are inflamed by beauty and noble thoughts, when he should be safely married with a dowry—than the interest shifts from the familiar story of wayward youth to the mind of Chrysis who had made herself dead within so that her philosophy might suit her too intimate profession, and now feels shoots of tenderness uncontrollable for Pamphilus who unhappily longs for a new kind of love that the Greek conventions of commonsense do not make possible. And no sooner is his idyll with the young sister of Chrysis, Glycerium, complete in the fruits of a stolen love than the interest shifts to the young man's struggle between this new pity for an out-caste, love against reason, and the stiff family code which is his morality. Chrysis and Pamphilus endure the great typical misfortunes of humans capable of tragedy—thwarted love, loss, betrayal, frustration, and conflict between duty and desire when doubt clothes both—and it is what they say and feel that makes the story.

Perhaps I have made clear that unless by choice of theme there is nothing novel either in character, idea, or exposition in Mr. Wilder's story. Neither was there in "The Bridge," the happy idea of the bridge itself excepted. There was more novelty of character and background in "The Cabala" than in either. It is not novelty, I think, nor the rendering of personalities, that will ever distinguish Thornton Wilder's work. His task is more related to the quality of these classic authors with whose genius he is happily familiar, where complete and perfect expression was more to be praised than the savor of reality, or the echo of contemporary voices. It is the workmanship of "The Woman of Andros" which must arouse admiration, not as preciousness or display, for there is not one self-conscious word or superfluous phrase in the book, but because with a skill and a patience and an understanding of the lofty ideas in a beautiful setting with which he deals, Wilder has been willing to carry his writing over those leagues beyond impressionism which our journalist-novelists have never tried to follow, the pain of labor, or the haste of composition, being too great. And if "The Woman of Andros," reminds me of Plato and of Theocritus as I know them in English, it is because the book rests upon old wisdom and is finished with that sincerity of art which these great predecessors knew not how to escape. From the first sentences—

The earth sighed as it turned in its course; the shadow of night crept gradually along the Mediterranean, and Asia was left in darkness. The great cliff that was one day to be called Gibraltar held for a long time a gleam of red and orange, while across from it the mountains of Atlas showed deep blue pockets in their shining sides. The caves that surround the Neapolitan gulf fell into a profounder shade, each giving forth from the darkness its chiming or its booming sound. Triumph had passed from Greece and wisdom from Egypt, but with the coming on of night they seemed to regain their lost honors, and the land that was soon to be called Holy prepared in the dark its wonderful burden. The sea was large enough to hold a varied weather: a storm played about Sicily and its smoking mountains, but at the mouth of the Nile the water lay like a wet pavement. A fair tripping breeze ruffled the Aegean and all the islands of Greece felt a new freshness at the close of day.

to the last

On the sea the helmsman suffered the downpour, and on the high pastures the shepherd turned and drew his cloak closer about him. In the hills the long-dried stream-beds began to fill again and the noise of water falling from level to level, warring with the stones in the way, filled the gorges. But behind the thick beds of clouds the moon soared radiantly bright, shining upon Italy and its smoking mountains. And in the East the stars shone tranquilly down upon the land that was soon to be called Holy and that even then was preparing its precious burden.

the articulation of style to thought is as of the curves of a sculpture to its ultimate harmony. There are the fables of Chrysis, especially that very beautiful one of the hero sent home by Zeus for a day, who saw that the living, too, are dead except when they love. And there are phrases that one reads more than once for their wisdom as well as their beauty—

Now when her courage was being undermined by her pain she dared not ask herself if she had lived and if she were dying, unloved, in disorder, without meaning. From time to time she peered into her mind to ascertain what her beliefs were in regard to a life after death, its judgments or its felicities; but the most exhausting of all our adventures is that journey down the long corridors of the mind to the last halls where belief is enthroned.

It seemed to him that the whole world did not consist of rocks and trees and water nor were human beings garments and flesh, but all burned, like the hillside of olive trees, with the perpetual flames of love,—a sad love that was half hope, often rebuked and waiting to be reassured of its truth. But why then a love so defeated, as though it were waiting for a voice to come from the skies, declaring that therein lay the secret of the world. The moonlight is intermittent and veiled, and it was under such a light that they lived; but his heart suddenly declared to him that a sun would rise and before that sun the timidity and the hesitation would disappear.

Many wondered at the great popular success of "The Bridge of San Luis Rey" not realizing that the time was overripe for writing that availed itself of the adequacies of the great English tradition to shapes of beauty and ideas of pity and nobility. We had already learned all that naturalism could tell us in art; but a *jeu d'esprit* in pure literature, and yet fiction, yet "readable" was necessary to teach the populace what they craved. This new book also is—not reactionary, no vital book is ever reactionary—but recurrent to ideas and a mode of expression almost forgot in the rush of contemporary literature. Even its theme is in the strongest opposition to the "hard-