

Vulgarity in Literature

WAS Edgar Allan Poe a major poet? It would surely never occur to any English-speaking critic to say so. And yet, in France from 1850 till the present time, the best poets of each generation—yes, and the best critics, too—for, like most excellent poets, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Paul Valéry are also admirable critics—have gone out of their way to praise him. Only a year or two ago M. Valéry repeated the now traditional French encomium of Poe and added at the same time a protest against the faintness of our English praise. We who are speakers of English and not English scholars, who were born into the language and from childhood have been pickled in its literature—we can only say, with all due respect, that Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Valéry are wrong and that Poe is not one of our major poets. A taint of vulgarity spoils, for the English reader, all but two or three of his poems—the marvellous “City in the Sea” and “To Helen,” for example, whose beauty and crystal perfection make us realize, as we read them, what a very great artist perished on most of the occasions when Poe wrote verse. It is to this perished artist that the French poets pay their tribute. Not being English they are incapable of appreciating those finer shades of vulgarity that ruin Poe for us, just as we, not being French, are incapable of appreciating those finer shades of lyrical beauty which are, for them, the making of La Fontaine.

The substance of Poe is refined; it is his form that is vulgar. He is, as it were, one of Nature's gentlemen, unhappily cursed with incorrigible bad taste. To the most sensitive and high-souled man in the world we should find it hard to forgive, shall we say, the wearing of a diamond ring on every finger. Poe does the equivalent of this in his poetry; we notice the solecism and shudder. Foreign observers do not notice it; they detect only the native gentlemanliness in the poetical intention, not the vulgarity in the details of execution. To them, we seem perversely and quite incomprehensibly unjust.

It is when Poe tries to make it too poetical that his poetry takes on its peculiar tinge of badness. Protesting too much that he is a gentleman, and opulent into the bargain, he falls into vulgarity. Diamond rings on every finger proclaim the parvenu.

Consider, for example, the first stanza of “Ulalume.”

The skies they were ashen and sober;
The leaves they were crisped and sere—
The leaves they were withering and sere;
It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year;
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
In the misty mid region of Weir—
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber
In the ghoul-haunted woodlands of Weir.

These lines protest too much (and with what a variety of voices!) that they are poetical, and, protesting, are therefore vulgar. To start with, the walloping dactylic metre is all too musical. Poetry ought to be musical, but musical with tact, subtly and variously. Metres whose rhythms, as in this case, are strong, insistent, and practically invariable offer the poet a kind of short cut to musicality. They provide him (my subject calls for a mixture of metaphors) with a ready-made, reach-me-down music. He does not have to create a music appropriately modulated to his meaning; all he has to do is to shovel the meaning into the moving stream of the metre and allow the current to carry it along on waves, that, like those of the best hairdressers, are guaranteed permanent. Many nineteenth century poets used those metrical short cuts to music, with artistically fatal results.

Then when nature around me is smiling
The last smile which answers to mine,
I do not believe it beguiling
Because it reminds me of thine.

How can one take even Byron seriously, when he protests his musicalness in such loud and vulgar accents? It is only by luck or an almost superhuman poetical skill that these all too musical metres can be made to sound, through their insistent barrel-organ rhythms, the intricate, personal music of the poet's own meaning. Byron occasionally, for a line or two,

takes the hard kink out of those dactylic permanent waves and appears, so to speak, in his own musical hair; and Hood, by an unparalleled prodigy of technique, turns even the reach-me-down music of “The Bridge of Sighs” into a personal music, made to the measure of the subject and his own emotion. Moore, on the contrary, is always perfectly content with the permanent wave; and Swinburne, that super-Moore of a later generation, was also content to be a permanent waver—the most accomplished, perhaps, in all the history of literature. The complexity of his ready-made musics and his technical skill in varying the number, shape, and contour of his permanent waves are simply astonishing. But, like Poe and the others, he protested too much, he tried to be too poetical. However elaborately devious his short cuts to music may be, they are still short cuts—and short cuts (this is the irony) to poetical vulgarity.

A quotation and a parody will illustrate the difference between ready-made music and music made to measure. I remember (I trust correctly) a simile of Milton's:—

Like that fair field
Of Enna, where Proserpine gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the world.

Rearranged according to their musical phrasing, these lines would have to be written thus:—

Like that fair field of Enna,
where Proserpine gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower,
by gloomy Dis was gathered,
Which cost Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the world.

The contrast between the lyrical swiftness of the first four phrases with that row of limping spondees which tells of Ceres's pain, is thrillingly appropriate. Bespoke, the music fits the sense like a glove.

How would Poe have written on the same theme? I have ventured to invent his opening stanza.

It was noon in the fair field of Enna,
When Proserpina gathering flowers—
Herself the most fragrant of flowers,
Was gathered away to Gehenna
By the Prince of Plutonian powers;
Was born down the windings of Brenner
To the gloom of his amorous bowers—
Down the tortuous highway of Brenner
To the god's agapemonous bowers.

Of the versification of “The Raven” Poe says, in his “Philosophy of Composition”: “My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which this has been neglected in versification, is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere rhythm, it is still clear that the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite—and yet, for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done or ever seemed to think of doing an original thing.” This fact, which Poe hardly exaggerates, speaks volumes for the good sense of the poets. Feeling that almost all strikingly original metres and stanzas were only illegitimate short cuts to a musicalness which, when reached, turned out to be but a poor and vulgar substitute for individual music, they wisely stuck to the less blatantly musical metres of tradition. The ordinary iambic decasyllable, for example, is intrinsically musical enough to be just able, when required, to stand up by itself. But its musical stiffness can easily be taken out of it. It can be now a chasuble, a golden carapace of sound, now, if the poet so desires, a pliant, soft and, musically speaking, almost neutral material, out of which he can fashion a special music of his own to fit his thoughts and feelings in all their incessant transformations. Good landscape painters seldom choose a “picturesque” subject; they want to paint their own picture, not have it imposed on them by nature. In the thoroughly paintable little places of this world you will generally find only bad painters. (It's so easy to paint the thoroughly paintable.) The good ones prefer the unspectacular neutralities of the Home Counties to those Cornish coves and Ligurian fishing villages, whose picturesqueness is the delight of all those who have no pictures of their own to project

on to the canvas. It is the same with poetry: good poets avoid what I may call, by analogy, “music-*esque*” metres, preferring to create their own music out of raw materials as nearly as possible neutral. Only bad poets, or good poets against their better judgment, and by mistake, go to the Musiquesque for their material. “For centuries no man, in verse, has ever done or ever seemed to think of doing an original thing.” It remained for Poe and the other nineteenth century metrists to do it; Procrustes-like they tortured and amputated significance into fitting the ready-made music of their highly original metres and stanzas. The result was, in most cases, as vulgar as a Royal Academy Sunrise on Ben Nevis (with Highland Cattle) or a genuine hand-painted sketch of Porto-fino.

How could a judge so fastidious as Baudelaire listen to Poe's music and remain unaware of its vulgarity? A happy ignorance of English versification preserved him, I fancy, from this realization. His own imitations of medieval hymns prove how far he was from understanding the first principles of versification in a language where the stresses are not, as in French, equal, but essentially and insistently uneven. In his Latin poems Baudelaire makes the ghost of Bernard of Cluny write as though he had learned his art from Racine. The principles of English versification are much the same as those of medieval Latin. If Baudelaire could discover lines composed of equally stressed syllables in Bernard, he must also have discovered them in Poe. Interpreted according to Racinian principles, such verses as

It was down by the dank tarn of Auber
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir

must have taken on, for Baudelaire, heaven knows what exotic subtlety of rhythm. We can never hope to guess what those ghoul-haunted woodlands mean to a Frenchman possessing only a distant and theoretical knowledge of our language.

Returning now to “Ulalume,” we find that its too poetical metre has the effect of vulgarizing by contagion what would be otherwise perfectly harmless and refined technical devices. Thus, even the very mild alliterations in “the ghoul-haunted woodlands of Weir” seem to protest too much. And yet an iambic verse beginning “Woodland of Weir, ghoul-haunted,” would not sound in the least over-poetical. It is only in the dactylic environment that those two w's strike one as protesting too much.

And then there are the proper names. Well used, proper names can be relied on to produce the most thrilling musical-magical effects. But use them without discretion, and the magic evaporates into abracadabral absurdity, or becomes its own mocking parody; the over-emphatic music shrills first into vulgarity and finally into ridiculousness. Poe tends to place his proper names in the most conspicuous position in the line (he uses them constantly as rhyme words), showing them off—these magical-musical jewels—as the *rastacouaire* might display the twin cabochon emeralds at his shirt cuffs and the platinum wrist watch, with his monogram in diamonds. These proper-name rhyme-jewels are particularly flashy in Poe's case because they are mostly dissyllabic. Now, the dissyllabic rhyme in English is poetically so precious and so conspicuous by its richness that, if it is not perfect in itself and perfectly used, it emphatically ruins what is meant emphatically to adorn. Thus, sound and association make of “Thule” a musical-magical proper name of exceptional power. But when Poe writes,

I have reached these lands but newly
From an ultimate dim Thule,

he spoils the effect which the word ought to produce by insisting too much, and incompetently, on its musicality. He shows off his jewel as conspicuously as he can, but only reveals thereby the badness of its setting and his own Levantine love of display. For “newly” does not rhyme with “Thule”—or only rhymes on condition that you pronounce the adverb as though you were a Bengali, or the name as though you came from Whitechapel. The paramour of Goethe's king rhymed perfectly with

by Aldous Huxley

the name of his kingdom; and when Laforgue wrote of that "*roi de Thulé, Immaculé*" his *rime riche* was entirely above suspicion. Poe's rich rhymes, on the contrary, are seldom above suspicion. That dank tarn of Auber is only very dubiously a fit poetical companion for the tenth month; and though Mount Yaanek is, *ex hypothesi*, a volcano, the rhyme with volcanic is, frankly, impossible. On other occasions Poe's proper names rhyme not only well enough, but actually, in the particular context, much too well. Dead D'Elormie, in "The Bridal Ballad," is prosodically in order, because Poe had brought his ancestors over with the Conqueror (as he also imported the ancestors of that Guy de Vere who wept his tear over Lenore) for the express purpose of providing a richly musical-magical rhyme to "bore me" and "before me." Dead D'Elormie is first cousin to Edward Lear's aged Uncle Arley sitting on a heap of Barley—ludicrous; but also (unlike dear Uncle Arley) horribly vulgar, because of the too musical lusciousness of his invented name and his display, in all tragical seriousness, of an obviously faked Norman pedigree. Dead D'Elormie is a poetical disaster.

It is vulgar, in literature, to make a display of emotions which you do not naturally have, but think you ought to have, because all the best people do have them. It is also vulgar (and this is the more common case) to have emotions, but to express them so badly, with so much too many protestings, that you seem to have no natural feelings, but to be merely fabricating emotions by a process of literary forgery. Sincerity in art, as I have pointed out elsewhere, is mainly a matter of talent. Keats's love letters ring true, because he had great literary gifts. Most men and women are capable of feeling passion, but not of expressing it; their love letters (as we learn from the specimens read aloud at inquests and murder trials, in the divorce court, during breach of promise cases) are either tritely flat or tritely bombastic. In either case manifestly insincere, and in the second case also vulgar—for to protest too much is always vulgar, when the protestations are so incompetent as not to carry conviction. And perhaps such excessive protestations can never be convincing, however accomplished the protester. D'Annunzio, for example—nobody could do a job of writing better than d'Annunzio. But when, as is too often the case, he makes much ado about nothing, we find it hard to be convinced either of the importance of the nothing, or of the sincerity of the author's emotion about it—and this in spite of the incomparable splendor of d'Annunzio's much ado. True, excessive protestings may convince a certain public at a certain time. But when the circumstances, which rendered the public sensitive to the force and blind to the vulgarity of the too much protesting, have changed, the protests cease to convince. Mackenzie's "Man of Feeling," for example, protests its author's sensibility with an extravagance that seems now, not merely vulgar, but positively ludicrous. At the time of its publication sentimentality was, for various reasons, extremely fashionable. Circumstances changed and "The Man of Feeling" revealed itself as vulgar to the point of ridiculousness; and vulgar and ridiculous it has remained ever since and doubtless will remain.

THE case of Dickens is a strange one. The really monstrous emotional vulgarity, of which he is guilty now and then in all his books and almost continuously in "The Old Curiosity Shop," is not the emotional vulgarity of one who simulates feelings which he does not have. It is evident, on the contrary, that Dickens felt most poignantly for and with his Little Nell; that he wept over her sufferings, piously revered her goodness, and exulted in her joys. He had an overflowing heart; but the trouble was that it overflowed with such curious, and even rather repellent, secretions. The creator of the later Pickwick and the Cheeryble Brothers, of Tim Linkwater and the Bachelor and Mr. Garland and so many other gruesome old Peter Pans was obviously a little abnormal in his emotional reactions. There was something rather wrong with a man who could take this lachrymose and tremulous pleasure in adult infantility. He

would doubtless have justified his rather frightful emotional taste by a reference to the New Testament. But the child-like qualities of character commended by Jesus are certainly not the same as those which distinguish the old infants in Dickens's novels. There is all the difference in the world between infants and children. Infants are stupid and unaware and subhuman. Children are remarkable for their intelligence and ardor, for their curiosity, their intolerance of shams, the clarity and ruthlessness of their vision. From all accounts Jesus must have been childlike, not at all infantile. A childlike man is not a man whose development has been arrested; on the contrary, he is a man who has given himself a chance of continuing to develop long after most adults have muffled themselves in the cocoon of middle-aged habit and convention. An infantile man is one who has not developed at all, or who has regressed towards the womb, into a comfortable unawareness. So far from being attractive and commendable, an infantile man is really a most repulsive, because a truly monstrous and misshapen being. A writer who can tearfully adore those stout or cadaverous old babies, snugly ensconced in their mental and economic womb-substitutes and sucking, between false teeth, their thumbs, must have something seriously amiss with his emotional constitution.

One of Dickens's most striking peculiarities is that, whenever in his writing he becomes emotional, he ceases instantly to use his intelligence. The overflowing of his heart drowns his head and even dims his eyes; for, whenever he is in the melting mood, Dickens ceases to be able, and probably ceases even to wish, to see reality. His one and only desire on these occasions is just to overflow, nothing else. Which he does, with a vengeance and in an atrocious blank verse that is meant to be poetical prose and succeeds only in being the worst kind of fustian. "When Death strikes down the innocent and young, from every fragile form from which he lets the panting spirit free, a hundred virtues rise, in shapes of mercy, charity, and love, to walk the world and bless it. Of every tear that sorrowing mortals shed on such green graves, some good is born, some gentler nature comes. In the Destroyer's steps there spring up bright creations that defy his power, and his dark path becomes a way of light to Heaven." And so on, a stanchless flux.

Mentally drowned and blinded by the sticky overflowings of his heart, Dickens was incapable, when moved, of recreating, in terms of art, the reality which had moved him, was even, it would seem, unable to perceive that reality. Little Nell's sufferings and death distressed him as, in real life, they would distress any normally constituted man; for the suffering and death of children raise the problem of evil in its most unanswerable form. It was Dickens's business as a writer to recreate in terms of his art this distressing reality. He failed. The history of Little Nell is distressing indeed, but not as Dickens presumably meant it to be distressing; it is distressing in its ineptitude and vulgar sentimentality.

A child, Ilusha, suffers and dies in Dostoevsky's, "Brothers Karamazov." Why is this history so agonizingly moving, when the tale of Little Nell leaves us not merely cold, but derisive? Comparing the two stories, we are instantly struck by the incomparably greater richness in factual detail of Dostoevsky's creation. Feeling did not prevent him from seeing and recording, or rather recreating. All that happened round Ilusha's death bed he saw, unerringly. The emotion-blinded Dickens noticed practically nothing of what went on in Little Nell's neighborhood during the child's last days. We are almost forced, indeed, to believe that he didn't want to see anything. He wanted to be unaware himself, and he wanted his readers to be unaware, of everything except Little Nell's sufferings on the one hand and her goodness and innocence on the other. But goodness and innocence and the undeservedness of suffering and even, to some extent, suffering itself are only significant in relation to the actual realities of human life. Isolated, they cease to mean anything, perhaps to exist. Even the classical writers surrounded their abstract and algebraical personages with at least the abstract and algebraical implication of the human realities, in relation to which virtues and vices are significant. Thanks to Dickens's path-

ologically deliberate unawareness, Nell's virtues are marooned, as it were, in the midst of a boundless waste of unreality; isolated, they fade and die. Even her sufferings and death lack significance because of this isolation. Dickens's unawareness was the death of death itself. Unawareness, according to the ethics of Buddhism, is one of the deadly sins. The stupid are wicked. (Incidentally, the cleverest men can sometimes and in certain circumstances reveal themselves as profoundly—criminally—stupid. You can be an acute logician and at the same time an emotional cretin.) Damned in the realm of conduct, the unaware are also damned esthetically. Their art is bad; instead of creating, they murder.

Art, as I have said, is also philosophy, is also science. Other things being equal, the work of art which, in its own way, "says" more about the universe will be better than the work of art which says less. (The "other things" which have to be equal are the forms of beauty, in terms of which the artist must express his philosophic and scientific truths.) Why is "The Rosary" a less admirable novel than "The Brothers Karamazov"? Because the amount of experience of all kinds understood, "felt into," as the Germans would say, and artistically recreated by Mrs. Barclay is small in comparison with that which Dostoevsky feelingly comprehended and knew so consummately well how to recreate in terms of the novelist's art. Dostoevsky covers all Mrs. Barclay's ground and a vast area beside. The pathetic parts of "The Old Curiosity Shop" are as poor in understood and artistically recreated experience as "The Rosary"—indeed, I think they are even poorer. At the same time they are vulgar (which "The Rosary," that genuine masterpiece of the servants' hall, is not.) They are vulgar, because their poverty is a pretentious poverty, because their disease (for the quality of Dickens's sentimentality is truly pathological) professes to be the most radiant health; because they protest their intelligence, their lack of understanding with a vehemence of florid utterance that is not only shocking, but ludicrous.

Good Cheer for Readers

(Continued from page 153)

bers of the book business, which must always be added, to or subtracted from, price.

What makes talk about books? Reviewing and advertising indirectly, but directly the intelligent interest of those good readers who in every community start the talk about good books. And yet to get the talkers started, to bring books to their attention by the right advertising or a criticism flush with enthusiasm, there must be good books to go on. Not even Charles Lamb could have been made to talk excitedly about the book season of 1929-1930.

This year, thank heavens, apparently we are going to have the books! Already stir of excitement precede the publication of a dozen early books:—a really excellent novel by Booth Tarkington; an extraordinary story of Manchuria, humorous and beautiful, by Stella Benson; the best novel of her series, by Martha Ostenso; a fresh and vivid book, compounded of adventure and mysticism, called "Lives of a Bengal Lancer"; the impressive autobiography of the Archduchess Marie; the first really good novel of the Russian Revolution, called "A Quiet Street"; fine novels by A. P. Herbert and Francis Brett Young; a book on the Victorians by Esmé Wingfield-Stratford that puts new meanings in Victorianism; another important contribution to the literature of our South in a novel by Isa Glenn; a new and admirable novel by Priestley, as rich in content as "The Good Companions" and better fiction; more Siegfried Sassoon; the intimate letters of Archie Butt; a brilliant life of Daniel Webster. . . . But this is only a sampling, enough, however, to excite a reader. And enough, too, to make it safe to assert that this year we shall have a chance to test the theory expressed in these paragraphs. For, with (we hope and expect) not too many of the other kind, we are going to have plenty of real books, after a dead interval. It is our belief that the public, hard times or no hard times, will want them.

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Skunk

What does your dictionary say that it is?

SUPPOSE that you want a clear, concise definition of the simple word "skunk," and let us assume that you own a dictionary which defines the word as follows:

SKUNK—An American mephitine, musteloid, carnivore of stout form, with a bushy tail, and very large anal glands that secrete a liquid of very offensive odor which can be ejected at will.

Before you can fully understand this definition, you must have patience to look up the meanings of *mephitine* and *musteloid*, and possibly *carnivore* and *anal*. Four obstacles to easy comprehension!

Let us try defining *skunk* again. Turning to another dictionary, assume that you read:

SKUNK—A fetid animal of the American genus *Mephitis*, *M. mephitis*. By extension—2. Any species of one of the American genera *Mephitis*, *Spilogale*, and *Conepatus*, and some others of the family *Mustelidae*, as the African *zorille*, *Asiatic zebu*, or *stinkard*, etc. See these words.

After being annoyed by a mere parade of Latin names, we are told to look farther!

And now let us look up SKUNK in

The WINSTON Simplified DICTIONARY (Encyclopedic Edition)

At once you find the straightforward definition you want, in plain English, complete in one reference:

SKUNK—A small American mammal (genus *Mephitis*) usually black with white markings, able at will to eject a liquid of very offensive odor. In the United States also called *polecats*.

Is it any wonder that the WINSTON is highly praised by busy people like Booth Tarkington, Mary Roberts Rinehart and Zona Gale? Used because of its scholarly accuracy by such colleges and universities as Harvard, Princeton, Chicago and Columbia. Edited by Henry Seidel Canby, Ph.D., William Dodge Lewis, A.M., Ph.D., Litt.D., and Thomas Kite Brown, Jr., Ph.D.

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Books of Special Interest

Strictly Homebrew

FORGERY IN CHRISTIANITY: A Documented Record of Jewish-Christian Forgeries, Frauds, and Fakeries. By JOSEPH WHELESS. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1930. \$4.

Reviewed by BENJAMIN W. BACON
Yale University

THIS is one of the massive crudities of America unveiled before the astonished eyes of Europe since the conflict inaugurated by the Scopes trial between Fundamentalism and Atheism. A few foreign visitors have been already induced to follow from New York to Los Angeles the national highway known as Main Street. Possibly more may be induced to make the trip under the guidance of one who confesses himself "a trained lawyer with wide reading and profound learning." The legal training (private) seems to have been pursued under the maxim, where the evidence is weak, abuse the opponent's lawyer.

Mr. Wheless has framed an indictment which Burke might well envy, not "against a whole nation" merely, but against all the nations of Christendom in all their history. This is his modest undertaking:

I charge and purpose to prove, from unimpeachable texts and historical records, and by authoritative clerical confessions, beyond the possibility of denial, evasion, or refutation:

1. That the Bible, in its every Book, and in the strictest legal and moral sense, is a huge forgery.

Six further items in the Indictment follow whose general substance may be gathered from No. 5 without burdening the reader with more raving.

5. That the Church was founded upon, and through the Dark Ages of Faith has battered on—(yet languishes decadently upon)—monumental and petty forgeries and pious frauds, possible only because of its own shameless mendacity and through the crass ignorance and superstition of the sodden masses of its deluded votaries purposely kept in that base condition for purposes of ecclesiastical graft and aggrandizement through conscious and most unconscionable imposture.

This haughty challenge Mr. Wheless "flings in the face of the Church." To impress it more thoroughly on any reader who may be disposed to question his immense erudition he even translates it into what he obviously supposes to be Latin, "in facia (sic) ecclesiae."

It is a pity that the extreme youth of Mr. Wheless prevented committal to his hands of the defendants case in the *cause célèbre* already mentioned, instead of the clumsy hands of Clarence Darrow. However, Mr. Wheless has prepared himself to fight the battle over again by diligent reading of Maynard Shipley's "arsenal of defense against canting religious Pharisaism" entitled "The War on Modern Science; a Short History of the Fundamentalist Attacks on Evolution and Modernism," 1929. A judicial frame of mind being thus induced he exhibits his "wide reading" through copious clippings from the newspapers, and his "profound learning" by alternate extracts from the "Catholic Encyclopedia" (a "clerical confession" which unaccountably escaped suppression by the Roman Curia) and the "Encyclopedia Biblica," a standard critical authority of liberal Protestant scholars. Seated at his ease between these two, generously supplied by the staff of any good theological library, he doubtless also has such assistance as enables him to translate from the original Greek such a passage as that quoted from Paul on p. 1 (capitals from Wheless) "Being crafty I caught you with guile. . . . For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my LIE unto his glory; why yet am I also adjudged a sinner." Thus comfortably ensconced he can nibble like Alice in Wonderland, from the one authority when he wishes to be one of the "sodden mass of deluded votaries," or from the other when he wishes to rise to the level of the historico-critical scholar. A theory of intentional fraud discarded since the days of the eighteenth century deists makes him more than a match for the *omnis genus* of priestcraft.

Let not the reader suspect golden support from Moscow. Soviet atheism is doubtless glad enough of volunteer allies in its attempt to *écraser l'infame*, but its gold is quite too scarce to be wasted in payment for "confessions" accessible to every reader and discovery which only applies to religion the same reproach for derivation from a background of superstition and credulity as would apply to astronomy or chemistry. In addition the author will be greatly over-

paid by home patronage. Mr. Wheless's product is genuine bootlegger stuff, guaranteed to produce blind staggers in minimum quantity. Its base is the standard government article, diverted from medical and sacramental use. The flavoring is newspaper polemic. Only the labels are original—and the Latin. That is strictly homebrew.

Asia Minor and Syria

THE HITTITE EMPIRE. By JOHN GARSTANG. New York: Richard R. Smith. 1930. \$6.

Reviewed by E. H. STURTEVANT
Yale University

SINCE Professor Garstang's "Land of the Hittites" appeared in 1910 our knowledge of the ancient history of Asia Minor and Syria has been enormously increased not only by new excavations but even more by the interpretation of the texts in the Hittite language which Hugo Winckler discovered at Boghaz Keui in 1907. The discovery of these documents was recorded in the earlier volume, but their interpretation belongs to the period since the war. Under these circumstances the author has made so thorough a revision that he preferred to give the work a new title.

As a survey of geography and monuments the book is very satisfactory. The geographical descriptions, buttressed by excellent maps, are particularly useful. The "Land of the Hittites" was adorned by numerous landscapes and pictures of modern villages and their inhabitants, many of which have been omitted to make room for fuller illustration of the monuments. While this process might well have been carried further, it would, of course, be impossible to include in a single volume anything like a complete publication of even the more important monuments. What we have is a serviceable introduction with remarkably full descriptions and bibliography.

The historical interpretation is less successful. Now that we have contemporary documents of Hittite history a first-hand knowledge of them is what the historian chiefly needs, Professor Garstang realizes the importance of these documents, and he uses several that are to be had in translation; but how inadequate these few are becomes apparent if one compares the chapter entitled "Historical Outline" with Albrecht Götze's "Das Hittiter-Reich, Seine Stellung zwischen Ost und West," which appeared in Vol. 27, Part 2 of "Der Alte Orient" (Leipzig, 1928). Götze made full use of the Hittite texts, and the light they shed upon Hittite history completely eclipses Professor Garstang's treatment. In fact the chapter contains errors that could not be made by one familiar with the texts, such as the ascription of the law code to the second rather than the first Hittite empire, or the statement that Hittite documents relating to the period just before 1400 B. C. "are still largely unintelligible," whereas no such documents are known. More serious is the absence of any clear outline of the main course of events, such as Götze is able to supply for the earlier empire (c. 1900-1650 B.C.) as well as for the more powerful empire of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries.

It is Götze again whose familiarity with the texts has supplied the only reasonable interpretation of the archaeological monuments. Professor Garstang recognizes that the so-called "Hittite" art of Northern Syria cannot be derived from that of Hittite Asia Minor, and he observes that the relationship of the two with each other and with Mitanni existed even before the Hittite conquests in Syria. He is also inclined to credit the Hittites with an Indo-European origin, a conclusion that he could not doubt if he rightly understood the linguistic evidence. It has remained for Götze, however, in a review of David Hogarth's "Kings of the Hittites" (*Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, 1927), to draw the inevitable conclusion that this "Hittite" art is indigenous to Northern Mesopotamia or a neighboring region and is probably to be ascribed to the Hurli (not Harri, as our author still writes) and their kinsmen, the Mitanni. To them belong also the conical cap, the turned-up shoes, the storm god Teshup, and the "Hittite" hieroglyphic system of writing. All these were borrowed by the Indo-European Hittite invaders, just as the Hellenes adopted a large part of the indigenous Aegean civilization.

Professor Garstang has given us a welcome summary of the archaeological evidence for the earliest history of Asia Minor and North Syria, but the reader must look elsewhere for the interpretation.

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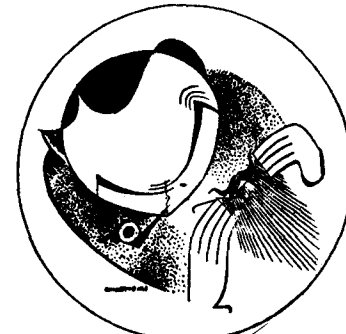
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