

# by André Maurois



for a second intended us to believe that he was himself Gulliver. There is no conceivable reason why a man cannot write the romance of a woman in the first person; to do so, would be simply to adopt a convenient device for telling a story. On the other hand, the narrator of the tale may be the author and yet not the principal personage of the novel. In such a case the author wishes merely to play the part of spectator, and writing in the first person serves simply as a means of relating a story. This is true, for instance, of many of Conrad's romances, of Merimée's "Carmen," and even, to a great extent of "La Recherche du Temps Perdu."

Very often, in novels which appear to be objective, the author is almost as much present as in the autobiographical novels, but he conceals himself under the personality of a secondary character, just as in certain of Veronese's pictures the artist is seated at the foot of the table among the patrons whose portraits he has painted. Two recent examples will make clear what I mean; the novelist Philip Quarles, in "Point Counter Point," seems to be Huxley himself projected into his romance, and the novelist Edouard, in Gide's "Faux-Monnayeurs," is confessedly a portrait of the author.

One form of novel which is rare (surprisingly so, indeed, since it is a type which lends itself readily to presenting all phases of a subject) is that which Browning employed so successfully in "The Ring and the Book," the novel in the first person plural. A dramatic situation having been presented, each of the actors and witnesses involved in it offers his version of it, and from them all gradually emerges an impression of the general truth of the situation. The method seems to me good, because it is the one by which in actual life we discover the truth in regard to a set of circumstances. Clemence Dane tried it in "Legend." The novel in the form of letters, so high in favor for a hundred and fifty years after the appearance of "Clarissa Harlowe," also made possible the appearance of a number of characters in the first person, but this type of fiction has come to seem almost unnatural in this day of brief letters and conveyance of passion by means of the telephone.

Nothing gives rise to a more profound modesty than the study of literary history and a review of the severe, sharp, and evanescent judgments which various schools have passed the one upon the other. At one moment the critic tells us that the only authentic artist is he who, to the best of his abilities, copies direct from nature; at the next, he asserts that only that man is an artist who erects a purely intellectual structure, remote from actuality; again, he states that it is disgraceful to be subjective, that the artist should cut the umbilical cord between his characters and himself, and presently, on the contrary, an entire epoch is interested only in the most personal confessions. There have been long periods when classicism has been dominant and the great writer has been considered the one who portrays humanity in its most universal terms. Eras of romanticism have succeeded them when the individual alone seemed worthy of observation. For ten years the thesis novel holds sway; for another ten any author is taken to task who expounds an idea in his tale. And then eventually the reader wearies of an art that is purely objective and demands again that the novelist have a philosophy of life.

In the days of Zola and his followers, fashion demanded the portrayal of the lower classes. After twenty years of such depiction the reading world wearied of a succession of workmen, laundresses, mechanics, and clerks and insisted on high society. There followed a France, a Bourget, a Hervieu, finally a Proust, all of whom painted the society world, and before long the young critic began to clamor again for the masses. The truth is that there is no recipe for writing a good novel, and that it is next to impossible to define what a novel is or should be.

It is the habit of critics, when a novel makes its appearance which stirs the public, and which falls into no established categories, to say: "It is not bad, but it is not a novel." Now, "novel" is a term which applies to widely divergent works. The novel, indeed, has traveled far since the time of the "Princesse de Clèves" and the "Nouvelle Héloïse." More and more it has become the fashion to make it the

carry-all for observations upon anything at all; it is a study of manners in Balzac, a doctrine of action with Kipling, almost a philosophical treatise for Proust. What difference does it make, if the work is interesting? It is perfectly possible to write execrable romances in the third person and excellent ones in the first. One can be an admirable objective novelist, and quite as possibly a distinguished subjective novelist. Let us beware of rigid canons on an art so essentially supple as that of fiction. I once had a professor of philosophy who said: "All generalizations are false." That itself is a generalization, but I believe it to be true, and to be more generally true in esthetics than in any other science.

*André Maurois is too well known to readers of the SATURDAY REVIEW to need more than a mere mention of the fact that in addition to being the biographer of Shelley, Byron, and Disraeli, he is the author of several novels among which "The Silence of Colonel Bramble" and "Weigher of Souls" have appeared in English translation.*



## Auto-da-Fé

(A Fire Legend)

THE room These entered was a perfect room  
Soft to the touch, pulpy and palpable.  
Rugs kneeled on by Saladin gold-shook  
Beneath two pairs of feet, the same sheathed  
In high-heeled shoes; poised upon the shoes  
A young girl and her mother made weird sounds.

"Richard, how well your apartment looks today."  
Her lilac eyes were closed. A blaze of light  
Rose reflected from the surface of  
The malachite piano set where lights  
Could gather best upon it; on the wall,  
Weirdly framed, the original document of  
The American Constitution sealed by seals  
Awesomely arresting, gave the ethical  
Tone and slant to Richard Cunningham's room.  
In a niche, framed by draperies made from  
The garments Roman soldiers had cast lots for  
After removing them from Our Lord, the glow  
Of the lighted Holy Grail revealed the True Cross.

A straw bathrobe of the Ming Dynasty  
(Value now ten millions) which moreover  
Once belonged to Buddha, crackled as  
He laid aside the Stradivarius bull-fiddle  
On which he had been playing an imponderable  
Melody, and touched the fingers of  
The faintly puffy mother of his betrothed.

"Glad you like my weird place. Why shouldn't it  
"Look well when you, Delicia, honor it,  
"Et vous, Mrs. Delicia Ciel?"

They sat upon a bridge throne fashioned  
Of martyrs and apostles cracked skulls.  
"I am all out of score-pads," Richard said,  
"But this will do," taking an autographed  
Folio of Romeo and Juliet.  
Discovering that M. Shakespeare had written  
Some weird poem on the back, Richard used  
The original manuscript of K. Lear,  
Hugely blotting and scratching the pages  
For the ink of his fountain pen was old.

Mrs. Ciel, playing with the weird man  
Who lived with Richard, raised her deer eyes,  
Fit to annihilate empires, and purred, "Seven diamonds."

Beetle browsed, vast as the empyrean  
Unseen, in his rugged stern appearance  
Richard said, "Seven Clubs."

The signal flashed  
As lightning across chaos downward to  
His partner. But the weird man who resided  
With him, quaffing hope and fulgent life  
Eternal from his partner consubstantial  
With him, cloud aspiring, intoned, "Seven Spades."

Delicia leaned her head upon her hand  
Bent upon a wrist moulded to inspire  
Passion in a king, unknown, or roué,  
Gasping, "Seven hearts (It is cold)."

Richard unfurled an unused deck  
Of the satin playing cards and put them in  
The fire which acknowledged with a flicker.  
This gesture in deference to courtesy  
Completed, he upheld Delicia's bid  
Of hearts, and laying down his dummy's hand,  
Hurled his eyes where sleeping lightnings lay  
Entranced, around. Then languidly he rose  
And slipping from his being the straw robe,  
Ming Dynasty, which moreover once belonged  
To Buddha, enfolded its yellow length  
With iron hands, and smoothed it in the fireplace.

A voice laden with abstract fugues floated  
To his ears:

"Honied Richard, we were set."  
"Gods Neds, Delicia! As it is not my turn  
"For dealing, and the fire needs attention,  
"You will pardon me?"

He took from the wall  
The American Constitution which he attacked,  
Tore up, and placed beneath the robe of straw,  
And then applied the Holy Grail to all.  
"Richard you're a dear," cried Delicia.  
Mrs. Ciel dealt the satin cards and bid,  
"Seven diamonds."

Richard Cunningham sat down  
"I have to pass; too bad I can't bid eight."  
"It is very weird that straw is so combustible  
"And burns so fast."  
"True, Mrs. Ciel. If Delicia  
"Would only take the bid away from me  
"I could light a really gorgeous friendly fire."  
"Mr. Cunningham means a friendly gorgeous fire."  
"True, Mrs. Ciel. Mr. Cunningham does."  
"Yes indeed," said Richard Cunningham, "I do."

Richard's "Seven clubs" enabled Delicia  
To declare a slam. Richard then arose  
A second time, and lifting the bull-fiddle  
Fashioned by the Italian cunning of Stradivarius  
Cracked it upon an apostle's cracked skull.  
"Mrs. Ciel, this will make it last much longer."  
He flipped the fiddle kindling on the straw.  
Glowing at the malachite piano  
Imprimis, he took the stool. The piano stood  
Afraid. With a bull's force he tore  
Away a leg to swell the roaring fires.  
As falls the brooding aura-ringed hemlock,  
Fell the malachite piano, three legged,  
Majestic in decay.

"These legs won't burn."  
Said Richard. "True, Mrs. Ciel? We made game?"  
Bending unmoved to highest bridge laws  
He seized the shuffled satin cards and dealt.

During the momentary lulling pause,  
The dummy, the weird man living there  
Stared muttering in corners, and muttered,  
"Behold! Mrs. Ciel, some score pads!"

"Seven diamonds," said Mrs. Ciel triumphantly.  
"Seven spades," said the weird man majestically.  
"Seven hearts," said Delicia passionately.  
"Seven clubs," said Mr. Richard Cunningham.

"I shall light a gorgeous friendly fire, Mrs. Ciel."  
"Mr. Cunningham means a friendly gorgeous fire."  
"True, Mrs. Ciel. Mr. Cunningham does."  
"Yes indeed," said Richard Cunningham, "I do."

He took the folio of Romeo.  
The original manuscript of K. Lear,  
And crushing each sheet in iron hands  
Placed them at intervals in the fireplace.  
Observing that even these did not suffice  
He chopped off an arm from the True Cross  
With an axe, and laid it on the fire;  
The same ensued with the other arm, and likewise  
The middle part.

PAUL EATON REEVE



## Books of Special Interest

### Man and His Ancestors

UP FROM THE APE. By E. A. HOOTON.  
New York: The Macmillan Company.  
1931. \$5.

Reviewed by MAURICE PARMELEE  
Author of "The Science of Human Behavior"

THE rapid progress of science renders the communication of its results to the general public increasingly difficult. The mass of data has become so great and the problems involved so complex that only the specialists can deal with them with safety. Nevertheless the amateur often rushes in where the scientist hesitates to tread. Thus Will Durant palms off gossip about philosophers as if it were a scientific study of philosophy; A. E. Wiggam describes dubious methods of improving the human breed under the guise of biology, and Lothrop Stoddard purveys racial prejudices as anthropology.

The author of the book under review is Professor of Anthropology at Harvard University and Curator of Somatology at the Peabody Museum. In his preface he tells us that weary of writing technical papers he decided one summer vacation that "it might be more amusing to try to write something which could be read." Here, then, we seem to have a specialist who is willing and able to popularize. At first sight, however, the result is rather discouraging. The table of contents is bespattered with such expressions as the following—"Sinanthropus pekinensis: the first lady of China," "Dame Eoanthropus: the first female intellectual," "Aurignacian Man: the first esthete," "The Grimaldi Widow and Her Son," "The Lively Mediterranean," "The Stodgy Alpine Race," "The Enterprising Armenoids," "The Inscrutable Mongoloids."

These flippant and often tendentious characterizations of extinct types and extant races do not presage scientific caution in their treatment. This unfavorable first impression is in part confirmed by a frequent and not always appropriate use of slang expressions, such as "buck teeth" and "cold deck." Some of the references, such as "the Walrus and the Oysters" and "poker-backed Weissmannism," are obscure to the

reviewer—even though he has read Lewis Carroll and played cards—and may be equally obscure to many of the readers of this book.

But Professor Hooton's tendency to be facetious is likely to conceal the genuine excellences of his book which are revealed to a careful reader. His intention apparently is to prove that man is an animal and has evolved like other animals and thus to cut the ground from under the feet of the fundamentalists. After indicating briefly why man is a mammal and a primate, he describes in considerable detail the primate life cycle with special attention to the traits of peculiarly human significance, such as becoming erect, coming down to earth (out of the trees), standing up and walking, making things and using tools, thinking, talking, and shedding hair. He then describes more briefly the individual life cycle, including being born, growing, adolescence, reproducing, growing old, and dying.

In Part IV he devotes one hundred pages to a description of our fossil ancestors or forerunners beginning with *Pithecanthropus erectus* and characterizing each of the principal discoveries. This part closes with a tentative primate family tree. Part V, two hundred pages in length, describes the contemporary races of man. It begins with a detailed discussion of the tests of race. Then follow brief descriptions of the principal races and sub-races, among them being the Mediterranean, Nordic, Alpine, Armenoid, Negroid, Mongoloid, Dravidian, and Indonesian-Malay races.

Professor Hooton's book is replete with a vast mass of scientific detail. His judgments on disputed questions are usually fully informed and well-balanced. His discussion of race is happily free from the prejudices which have marred many similar discussions. He is, therefore, able to refute without difficulty the absurd claims of the proponents of Nordic superiority and supremacy. His style is at times touched with felicitous humorous expressions which help to lighten the weight of detail. Thus in commenting on the extravagant promises of the Central Asiatic expeditions of the American Museum of Natural History to

discover the origin of man he says that "they have promised men and have delivered (dinosaur) eggs."

In view of the many scientific excellences of his book it is doubly regrettable that at its close Professor Hooton abandons in large part the scientific point of view. There are premonitions of a teleological complex where he speaks of "the works of the Creator," and where he says that "if a human being is not a manifestation of an intelligent design, there is no such thing as intelligence."

In the last section he expounds his theory of evolution which he characterizes as "the triumphant intelligence theory." He then makes the following extraordinarily anthropocentric allegation. "Man is a miracle, whether he be a miracle of chance, of nature, or of God." Why man is more miraculous than any other object in the universe, he does not explain. Of the evolutionary process he makes the following illogical and inconsistent muddle of chance and purpose. "That it is an accidental or chance occurrence I do not believe, although chance probably has often intervened and is an important contributing factor. But if evolution is not mainly a chance process it must be an intelligent or purposeful process." He then almost turns into a theologian by asserting that "the concept of organic evolution is one of the grandest and most sublime which can engage the attention of man. Whether man arose from the apes or was made from mud, he is in a sense a divine product. Organic evolution is an achievement not unworthy of any God and not incompatible with the loftiest conception of religion."

Professor Hooton has rendered valiant service against the fundamentalists. But in the last analysis he has delivered himself into the hands of the modernists in religion who turn the theory of evolution into a pseudo-scientific theological theory by imparting to it a teleological twist.

### Beerbohm and the Stage

AROUND THEATERS. By MAX BEERBOHM. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1930. 2 vols. \$7.50.

Reviewed by WALTON LOSEY

IT is amazing how serious Mr. Beerbohm becomes over that essentially flippant and scapegrace art, the theater. The theater is a heartless, incorrigible Lorelei casting the contempt of irrelevance upon its serious devotees (and such Max becomes).

To Bernard Shaw's famous valedictory upon relinquishing his throne with the *Saturday Review*, Max cuts a salutatory caper, called "Why I Ought Not to Have Become a Dramatic Critic." Therein he viciously declares that for him the drama holds "neither emotional nor intellectual pleasure." One suspects this is the last mental perversion of an accustomed wit. Max adds, with a bow, "I have never regarded any theater as much more than the conclusion to a dinner or the prelude to a supper." Coming from such an implicit epicure as Max, the disparagement is rather feeble. Intentionally so? Perhaps. This is 1898 and Max is still the humorist, not yet having been worn down by the appalling burden of writing serious and consistent criticism on so unmalleable a subject as the theater, a task to which he devoted himself for the following twelve years and then dropped abruptly.

In the present volumes are collected some two hundred short pieces written during his period as a dramatic critic. Each brief sketch, in fancy or idea, has its own integrity. The papers need not be read in their successive order, nor ought they to be read continuously; what they have in common is Max Beerbohm, rather than the theater (or is it more accurate to say that Max Beerbohm's unity as a personality is greater than the unity of the theater as a what-you-will?). . . . Max salutes Cyrano with appropriate gusto; causes shocking disturbances in the Duse aura (protesting boredom); is quite irreverent in the presence of Sarah's vanity and deeply appreciative of her genius. As Paris, Max bestows the apple upon Sada Yacco; in his own person he issues terribly right appraisals of Pinero and is brutal beyond excuse to Sir James. His essays on soliloquy and "sympathy" and literary men on the stage and play-reading and the Japanese theater's sojourn at Piccadilly Circus are trenchant and deft. With a delicate intimacy of touch he gives figures like Henry Irving and Ellen Terry and Coquelin (to name a few) their proper literary reality. His personal estimate of Ibsen is an excellent evaluation. His criticisms of plays like "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith" and "The Devil's Disciple" show freedom from the pressure of physical and temporal proximity. And on the many little companies and little plays and little peo-

ple, he as as amusing to read in 1930 as in 1900.

Max says of William Archer, "In him I find my ideal of a critic, but—is it not a little disconcerting, even depressing, to find one's ideal? Besides I do not much care about good critics. I like better the opinions of strong, narrow, creative personalities." Max's opinions bear their own stamp; that is their authenticity.

### An Early "Modern" Woman

THE SIBYL OF THE NORTH: The Tale of Christina of Sweden. By FAITH COMPTON MACKENZIE. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1931. \$3.

Reviewed by OSCAR J. FALNES

CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN presents an amazing set of contradictions. Born to the purple, she pondered how to escape it, and royalty's exalted station which many scheme and struggle feverishly to attain, she regarded lightly and very shortly abdicated. The faith of her illustrious father, Gustavus Adolphus, Protestantism's foremost champion, she deserted to become her day's most conspicuous convert to Roman Catholicism. She bore her new faith with some jauntiness, but later, on occasions when a bit of resiliency could have brought her nearer the realization of larger aims, she clung to its form with the most stubborn tenacity. She acquired superior intellectual attainments and became a distinguished patron of the arts; but she had also a strain of callousness that could, for example, permit the murder of her Grand Equerry in a room next to her own. She was a daughter of the rigorous north who hated it, and felt herself drawn to the Latin temperament and environment. A woman, she despised the companionship of her own sex with one notable exception, and her salon came to be frequented almost exclusively by men.

Contradictions like these may well tempt biographers, and a number have been tempted. But there is place again for an up-to-date, understanding portrait in English of this most remarkable of Swedish queens.

Faith Compton Mackenzie's book, though it has merits of its own, will not fill that place. Its use of sources is somewhat circumscribed. It builds on records and accounts in English, Italian, and French, including some older Swedish material available in French, but it passes by the work of modern Swedish scholarship, thus traversing again the ground covered in English a generation ago in studies by Taylor and Gribble.

The book treats much of Christina *en famille*. Even more than Gribble it brings the Queen's entourage into the picture and has considerable to say of the scholars, courtiers, and attendants in her train—an approach that once in a while grows discursive when it tends to forget Christina.

But the method has its advantages, too, since it permits some of the scenes along the way to be given a better rounded treatment. The little rivalry between Santinelli and Monaldesco can be advanced stage by stage within the main story. The chapter on the long papal conclave of 1670 which finally chose Clement X is a fuller discussion than usual; it gives a number of interesting details about the appointments for such a gathering and traces clearly the intrigues that prevailed on this occasion so far as they involved Christina and the man she loved, Cardinal Azzolino.

The historian will probably question the propriety of referring to Charles Stuart in 1655 as "King Charles II of England," without further qualification; Charles was then a fugitive from England and had not yet ascended his throne. The remark ascribed to Christina at Innsbruck on the day she had professed her new faith should hardly be passed off as an established fact; the Queen may have called the ceremony of her profession a "farce," but enough doubt has been cast on the evidence to warrant a statement of the reasons which lead the author to accept it. A commendable feature of the study is its sane and even point of view; there is no undue eulogy for the Queen's accomplishments and no unwarranted censure of circumstances to explain away her failures.

But when the reader lays the book aside he will still feel a little less than satisfied. He may willingly concede that the outward circumstances of the Queen's career, and they were certainly amazing, have been competently retold and in their telling have lighted up again some of the sparkling facets in her character. But the contradictions in that character have not been wholly solved. Some of the other accounts we possess have done that better and left us a more unified, more incisive portrait of this seventeenth century feminist, this early "modern" woman.

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