

Points of View

The Polish Problem

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

In his generous review of my recent book "Can Europe Keep the Peace?" for which I am properly grateful, Professor Borchard raises the question of the possible substitution of Lithuania for the present Polish Corridor as a solution for the problem of Polish access to the sea. May I venture to express an opinion based upon a visit to the Polo-Lithuanian frontier and discussion of the question alike with Poles and Lithuanians?

The objections seem to me twofold, political and economic. The racial bitterness between the Poles and Lithuanians constitutes one of the most acute of the ethnic disputes of Europe. It arises primarily from the question of the possession of Vilna but toward the Poles the Lithuanians feel much as the Czechs toward the Austrian Germans. Over centuries there was a far going polonization of the Lithuanians. While Lithuania was in fact liberated from Russia, the true fear of this people is born of Polish not Russian dangers.

To turn Lithuania over to Poland would mean creating a new minority of upwards of two millions, solidly united alike in their desire to be free and in their hatred of the Poles. Such a transfer could only be accomplished by force, could only be maintained by arms. Beyond any question the Poles would resume the process of polonization. It would be in fact both a grave wrong to the Lithuanians and a new source of European unrest.

Professor Borchard will recall, doubtless, the similar experiment when after the Russo-Turkish War and despite the service of the Rumanian Army before Plevna Rumanian Bessarabia was transferred to Russia and Rumania compensated by Bulgarian Dobrudja. The result was disastrous alike in its local and in its larger consequences.

On the economic side access to the sea through Lithuania would be eccentric to the main lines of Polish traffic. Relatively little commerce follows the line of the Niemen—none, of course now, since the frontiers are closed, while the Vistula route bears the same relation to almost all of Poland as the Mississippi to that part of the United States between the Alleghenies and the Rockies. It is true that the river is little used at present, but all the railway lines lead parallel to it either to Danzig or Gdynia. Possession of the Lithuanian seacoast would at most only meet the military and not the economic aspects of the question.

Apart from the ethnic and economic aspects of the question, however, as a practical matter the Poles would not accept it more willingly than the Lithuanians. For they hold that the Corridor is Polish soil historically and ethnically and therefore inalienable. A union between Poland and Lithuania is sometimes discussed by the Poles as a natural reversion to former conditions. But a new partition, as they consider the retrocession of West Prussia, never.

FRANK H. SIMONDS.

Washington, D. C.

Mr. Crotty

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

The Saturday Review numbers me among its charter subscribers. I prize the paper, eagerly await its arrival, and am so well rewarded by its contents. But tonight, I am thrilled—and by one word, CROTTY'S, in the Bowling Green (October 31). Nostalgia perhaps, for I, too, used to browse in Crotty's and praise be, will browse again, for Mr. Crotty still lives—an ancient keeper of a modern book shop. Last summer when I saw him, his four-score and one years sat no more heavily than his three-score and seven when I first discovered him; no matter how one meets Mr. Crotty, it is always with a sense of personal discovery and one retains his friendship as a personal triumph. He was an old man to an earlier generation; he is young to this; he is ageless and custom does not stale.

That choice book on the upper shelf now as always awaits a delighted recipient. The moderns on the lower shelf and the sophisticates on the tables, "sell,

of course, people want them, and they keep the business going, but these oldsters, ah-h, they wrote books. I am reminded—"and a quotation from Plutarch or Emerson, Aristotle or Thoreau, from the Irish poets ancient or modern, or from the latest letter from some person of prominence, delights you. Mr. Crotty seems to have read everything from Plutarch to Agnes Repplier, to have had correspondence with everyone from Emerson ("when a youth in Boston") to Padraic Colum, from Beecher to Al Smith. I wonder what he has done with all those charming letters. And to this day, does one merely remark a recent experience, an interesting encounter, a charming friend, and immediately "Ah, yes, that reminds me, I have just the book you will enjoy" and my library is always the richer for that reminder.

It is still Mr. Crotty's custom to read until midnight and arise before dawn, his breakfast is the earliest served in Lansing, he walks until sunrise and then to his store to read some overlooked treasure until "the boy" comes to open up, or to write one of those letters (pounded out on an original Corona) it is such a delight to receive, particularly if one is Celtic and enjoys a bit of Gaelic. A gracious woman, beginning as a clerk, has gradually changed his store to a shop that pays and all the charities benefit, but Mr. Crotty, his residence, his habits, his scorn for commercialism in books remains unchanged. Helen Hull wrote of him but no one likes the description, the bitterness of that book flows to all her characters and touches the genial gentleman and makes him seem a sly admirer of an author he detests. A few people call him John, but his old friends are passing and he lives with their memories and his beloved books—not as a recluse but as a man whose life and thought have been touched by the great and near great and for whom life still holds many such contacts. Some years ago old Mrs. Applegate died—an ancient grand dame who had retired in her Victorian raiment to charity and good work and a scorn of fashions and manners of the frivolous 1900's. Mr. Crotty remarked sadly, "Now all the old characters of the town are gone." We smiled. Mr. Crotty is not a character, he is an institution. Long may he flourish! Crotty's Book Store—to my vision books, such books, and a genial gentleman emerging from the back of the store, fingers holding the place in the book under his arm and a booming, "Well, well, well, bless my soul if it isn't—I want to go back to Lansing and browse in Crotty's Bookstore."

And thank Mr. Leavitt for putting Crotty's in the *Review*.

HELEN M. MARTIN.

Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Madame Blavatsky

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

You print a long letter in your issue of November 21 from a couple of Theosophists, attacking my recent biography of their prophetess, Madame Blavatsky, "The Mysterious Madame." In so far as they assure your readers that I am ignorant of my subject and her published books, I need not waste your space with a reply; that sort of accusation betrays the weakness of the case of those who make it. Nor need I make any comment on your correspondents' defense of Madame Blavatsky's notorious plagiarism, except to remind your readers that she strenuously and indignantly denied them, especially when she was writing in the guise of a Mahatma in a Tibetan retreat.

The only point in the letter which really calls for reply is the writers' absolutely untrue statement that I do not refer to the New York *Sun's* apology to Madame Blavatsky after her death for various statements it had printed about her. I describe the incident on pages 284 and 294 of my book. I point out the absurdity of some of the *Sun's* charges, though any reader of my book, the first unbiased account of this remarkable woman, will recognize that other charges for which the newspaper apologized were true.

The writers of the letter evidently accept the conventional Theosophical notion that Mme. Blavatsky was a creature of a higher order of humanity than themselves, and you, and I, and the rest of us. On this hypothesis her wildest statements

might be accepted as truth, even when they contradict ascertained facts—as they usually did. But people who do not share the view that she was divinely appointed found a curiously quarrelsome and inter-necine sect of pseudo-Oriental sentimentals, will prefer the proven facts about her life and career to her own fantastic claims.

C. E. BECHHOFFER ROBERTS.

Leylands Farm, England.

Bubble and Squeak

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

In "Maid in Waiting" Mr. Galsworthy repeatedly mentions "bubble and squeak" as a constant and peculiar attribute of his heroine.

I had always supposed "bubble and squeak" to be a nautical term for corned beef and cabbage. The Oxford Concise says "cold meat fried with chopped vegetables." While this is a fair description of the book, perhaps, just how did the author mean it as applied to Duing?

E. NEARING.

Flushing, N. Y.

Pound and the "Cantos"

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

A romantic misconception of the nature of poetry, implicit in the question "What does this mean?" vitiates the popular approach to any poem not so immediately comprehensible as, say, "Thanatopsis." It implies that since poetry is itself a paraphrase, it must in turn be paraphrasable (that is to say, it must at any time be adequately convertible into prose); in other words, it must "mean" something that can be isolated, reduced to another form, and thrown back at the examiner. Also, poetry must be unilinear: that is, it must tell a recognizable story, or expound and develop a recognizable idea, progressively and on a single plane. Accordingly, poetry may legitimately be "difficult" or "obscure" only if the difficulty or the obscurity conceals a definite recoverable meaning (read "message"? "sentiment"?): in which case we may dig, if we want to, with the assurance of eventual "understanding."

This familiar criticism, which has been used against almost every first-rate poet of our time, is generally supposed to be the defense of the classic "old" in the face of revolutionary "modernism." Actually, however, it is itself the modernism. The idea that a poem must "mean" something is a comparatively recent idea, and can be used just as effectively, or ineffectively, against "The Parlement of Fowles" and "King Lear" as against "The Waste Land" and Ezra Pound's "A Draft of XXX Cantos" (Paris: The Howes Press). But the classic conception was always that a work of art should say and be, not that it should state and mean; and it is this classic conception of a pure, non-predicatory art that is being restated today by a few men like Ezra Pound (in the "Cantos," though not in most of the minor poems, and certainly not in his criticism), T. S. Eliot (in "The Waste Land," "Ash-Wednesday," "Marina," but not in such pieces as "The Hippopotamus"), Igor Stravinsky (in the "Edipus," the "Symphonie des Psaumes," though not in the "Sacré du Printemps"), Cocteau, Chirico, and Cro-pius. No amount of digging will unearth a "meaning" in the work of these artists. You will discover precious things—beauties of technique, richnesses of emotional association, and so forth—but you will come no nearer to a solution of the riddle "What does it mean?" For the riddle is imaginary; there is not, and never has been, such a riddle; and to complain of the difficulty you have in "understanding" such a poem as "XXX Cantos," is ridiculously to lament your inability to see the stars if you are burrowing head-first into the ground.

Less invalid than the "unintelligibility" criticism, though by no means sound, is the objection that an extraordinary apparatus of historical and literary erudition is necessary for the enjoyment of the "Cantos." It is obvious that a tremendous amount of factual knowledge has gone into the making of the poem. Historical documentation, ranging over time and space, involving literatures and mythologies familiar and unfamiliar, recording events of universal significance with an emphasis neither lesser nor greater than that accorded the narration of imaginary or purely personal events—this is one of the devices of the poem: a major device, to be sure, but no more than a device. Now it is true that enjoyment of any work of art is intensified by a comprehen-

sion of the devices of its composition; but it by no means follows that ignorance of the ways of these devices precludes enjoyment. This would be true only if the work were created for the devices, in which case it would be a virtuosity, not a poem or a picture or a quartet. It should never be forgotten that the devices exist for the composition, not the composition for the devices. When "XXX Cantos" fails, as it frequently does, it is usually because the poet has lost sight of the whole in his preoccupation with some device or other—usually the scholarship device. Much of the Malatesta business, for example, is documentation simply for the sake of documentation; and even if one were familiar with the background of this particular episode in Renaissance history (and I'm not), Cantos VIII and IX, for all their vigor of execution, would still seem lifeless, clogged by the dead mass of allusion and arcane detail. But this does not raise the question of "intelligible" or "unintelligible," or that of the necessity of possessing an erudition adequate to Mr. Pound's.

It is easy, as I have said, to overestimate this necessity. Let me take an example, from the twenty-third Canto:

And that was when Troy was down, all
right,
superbo Ilion. . . .
And they were sailing along
Sitting in the stern-sheets,
Under the lee of an island
And the wind drifting off from the island.
"Tet, tet. . .
what is it?" said Anchises.
"Tethnéké," said the helmsman, "I think
they
Are howling because Adonis died virgin."
"Huh! tet. . . ." said Anchises,
"well, they've made a bloody mess
of that city."

Here, if you will, a certain amount of added enjoyment is to be obtained if you know about Anchises and Troy, if you are familiar with the Rossetti ballad travestied in the first line, if you have enough Greek (rather more, it would seem, than Anchises had) to be able to recognize *tethnéké*, and can connect that with the Adonic liturgies. But these facts are not essential. What is essential is sympathy—an ear keen enough to analyze the brilliant clash of tones, and a sensibility acute enough to harmonize this clash as the poet has harmonized it. In this particular example the working of Mr. Pound's favorite device is obvious: it is a writing on two planes at once, the annihilation of unilinear composition. It is more than the fusion of two vocabularies, or tones; more than the imposition of a colloquial contemporary tone upon a traditional epic tone: it is the simultaneous creation not only of past and present, but of two emotional attitudes; it is the arrest of time and individuality in a vertical synthesis of time and individuality. Ezra Pound is always, in his own early words,

Suddenly discovering in the eyes of the
very beautiful
Normande cocotte
The eyes of the very learned British
Museum assistant.

His method is identification of period with period, of personality with personality, in a continual present. He is not an archaeologist or an historian, though archaeology and historiography serve his devices. His periods and his personages are exactly what he has called them—*personae*, "masks," of his own time and his own personality.

The "Cantos" are to be read, then, not as a kind of historical jig-saw puzzle, not as a scholarly *ντοματα*, a crazy-quilt of names, places, and events. They are poetry, with no other purposes and responsibilities than those which naturally devolve upon poetry. They should be read, and criticized, not as predicatory documents, but as poems. In this brief letter I have been unable to comment upon their technical excellencies and failures, their flights and lapses of conception and execution. Rather, I have tried to forestall a more fundamental criticism, a criticism which would be impossible if our esthetic were pure. For it is only with a pure mind, a mind stripped of schoolroom cant and romantic irrelevancies, that we can approach pure poetry, which makes no concessions. "Anyone," says Kung, in "Canto XIII," "can run to excess. It is easy to shoot past the mark. It is hard to stand firm in the middle."

DUDLEY FITTS.

The Choate School.

The Reader's Guide

Conducted by MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Inquiries in regard to the choice of books should be addressed to MRS. BECKER, c/o *The Saturday Review*. As for reasons of space ninety percent of the inquiries received cannot be answered in print, a stamped and addressed envelope should be enclosed for reply.

V. C. F., Pittsburgh, Kansas, asks about the editors and notable contributors of the *Cornhill Magazine*, in whose history he is interested.

THE *Cornhill* rose from a bright idea of Mr. George Smith. In 1860 there had been monthly reviews for more than a century and the publication of novels in parts was at its height. Why not, said this publisher, combine the two, so as to give the public, for what was then the cheapest magazine price, the contents of a general review and a monthly instalment of the best fiction? *Macmillan's Magazine*, some two months before, had inaugurated the shilling price; the *Cornhill* met this figure. For the first number Father Prout wrote

With Fudge or Blarney, or the Thames on fire

Treat not thy buyer;
But proffer good material—
A genuine Cereal,
Value for twelve pence, and not dear at twenty,
Such wit replenishes thy Horn of Plenty.

Thackeray was editor till April, 1862, and most Americans first heard of the magazine through his famous essay, "Thorns in the Cushion," the undying plaint of a tender-hearted editor who must be cruel only to be kind. After him came Leslie Stephen—Virginia Woolf's father—and James Payn, but the magazine never lost the "Thackeray touch" in its essays. Sir Edward Cook, from whose "Literary Recreations" (*Macmillan*, London, 1919) I lifted most of this, says "The note of the *Cornhill* is the literary note, in the widest sense of the term; its soul is the spirit of that humane culture, as Matthew Arnold describes it in the pages, reprinted from the *Cornhill*, of "Culture and Anarchy." Meredith said of Leslie Stephen's style that its only sting was "an inoffensive, humorous irony that now and then stole out for a roll over, like a furry cub, or the occasional ripple on a lake in gray weather."

Thackeray set the pace in fiction; Trollope, Lever, George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë, Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, Meredith, William Black, James Payn, Henry Seton Merriman, Thomas Hardy, kept it up. Ruskin roused excitement; Matthew Arnold disseminated sweetness and light. John Addington Symonds, R. L. Stevenson, wrote essays for it; Tennyson, Swinburne, and both the Brownings wrote its poetry. In January, 1910, it published a Jubilee Number, in which Sir Edward Cook's paper first appeared. "What a collection of first editions," he muses as he looks over the volumes, "he might make by cutting its threads!"

T. J. B., Osakis, Miss., asks for a few good books on philately; he has P. H. Thorpe's "Stamp Collecting, How and Why" (*Scott*). He adds, "There are millions of literary stamp collectors; why not a review once in a while of such books? For instance, Thorpe's book is a gem; even those who don't collect would not be able to lay it down once they started reading it. I quite understand this curious charm; I never collected stamps—they collect themselves around this department whose clients are far-flung—but a really good book about stamps I will read to absorption. For instance, E. M. Allen's "America's History as Told in Postage Stamps" (*Whittlesey*), and a new book just from Whittlesey House in time for the holidays, "Geography and Stamps: Stamps in the World's History," by Kent B. Stiles. Then there is that tremendous big book, "The Pageant of Civilization," by F. B. Warren (Century), a wide review of the subject; there is Jenkins's standard "The Stamp Collector" (Jenkins), an English work in its second edition, the little "Peeps at Postage Stamps," by S. C. Johnson, published here by *Macmillan*, and the old favorite, "Wonderland of Stamps," by W. D. Burroughs (Stokes), the last two for younger readers—though age does not count for much in this matter. There are the publications of the Scott Stamp and Coin Co. of this city and of Stanley Gibbons of London and this city, and if one wishes to branch out into the records of

the postal service, there is a fine book, "Old Post Bags," by A. F. Harlow (Appleton).

Z. B. S., Erie, Pa., asks if any other modern writers besides O'Neill and Robinson Jeffers have written plays with the Greek tragedies as their theme, as a drama reading circle would like to read them. Hugo von Hoffmannsthal's "Elektra" has been translated; it was a storm center in a decade more susceptible to bad weather on the stage, when Richard Strauss set it to music. Perez Galdos wrote an "Elektra" which was translated in *Drama* in 1911. Von Hoffmannsthal adopted "Oedipus the King" from Sophocles for a libretto for Richard Strauss, and wrote a "Helen"; these have not been translated; his "Elektra" was put into English by Arthur Symonds. Barrett Clark in "A Study of Modern Drama" (Appleton) analyzes this play, pointing out its differences in spirit and form from the Greek, and quoting from Hoffmannsthal's article on Eugene O'Neill. Emile Verhaeren wrote a "Helen in Sparta" (translated) with a curious modern twist to the fate-driven theme, and Stephen Phillips a poetic play, "Ulysses." Mr. Clark's book just quoted would be useful to this group; he often brings out differences in Greek and modern concepts of tragedy. I see that the Oxford University Press as the result of the O'Neill success has had such a run on Gilbert Murray's translation of "Elektra" that the house is beginning politely to wonder if something should not be done about retroactive royalties.

M. V. N. S., Philadelphia, Pa., asks for books to keep an unemployed youth of twenty-three cheered up; he is of Syrian parentage, has run elevators, sold bananas, driven an undertaker's wagon, and likes Will Durant's book, some of John Dewey's, and books on cipher codes and football. This assortment reminds me of a letter I lately received, straight from the heart of an eleven-year-old girl: "I love all A. A. Milne writes and have read 'Winnie-the-Pooh' and 'The House at Pooh Corner' again and again. Of more serious books I prefer 'The Education of a Princess.' I like anything about Russian history and the Little Colonel stories," and if that letter surprises you, you don't know much about the selective tastes of this time of life.

Why not direct this youth—as he is to find his books at the admirable Philadelphia Public Library—to the new "Only Yesterday," by Frederick L. Allen (Harper)? Thus he would have entertainment—who would not be captivated by this record of his own past? We are all in this book, somewhere amid the shouts and murmurs—and solid, stimulating instruction; he might know more about what may be on the way if he thus found out what had lately passed. Then let him wind back through Mark Sullivan's "Our Times" and see if that does not take his mind off the disconcerting present.

Then lead him joyfully back to today by means of Christopher Morley's "Swiss Family Manhattan" (Doubleday, Doran). I hope it is out by the time this gets into print, lest I spill untimely the news that this modern Swiss Family is airship-wrecked on the mooring-mast of the Empire Building, descending therefrom for study of our wild and strange civilization. I do not know what fiction cheers up other people—I have known readers to come up like wilted geraniums under a shower of novels that daunted me, and vice versa—but I know that "Albert Grope," by F. O. Mann (Harcourt, Brace) stays on the most reachable place near my easiest chair, and that I pull its pages up over me like a down quilt. This is a sketchy sort of answer; the American Library Association, 520 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, has taken up the matter in a serious way and issued a leaflet "The Public Library and the Depression," reprinted from the *Wilson Bulletin*, with lists of books by which to improve enforced leisure, saying "the latest and soundest information on timely subjects must be at once assembled in order to give readers an intelligent understanding of the present economic situation."

A Letter from Dublin

By PADRAIC COLUM

SINCE the suspension of *The Irish Statesman* there are only two organs in the whole of Ireland that a writer of any standing would care to appear in: they are the *Dublin Magazine*, edited by Seumas O'Sullivan, and *Studies*, the organ of University College, conducted by the Jesuit Fathers; neither is very much in evidence, being quarrelsome. I need not say that *Studies* is not for the encouragement of the revolutionary and the experimental; in matters of scholarship it keeps a high level. The *Dublin Magazine* is always distinctive and interesting. But these two provide very narrow channels for the intellect of Ireland to manifest itself in. Needless to say, the intellect of Ireland is showing itself in other fields. While there isn't a single publisher in Dublin who has more than two good names on his list, London publishers' lists are more filled than ever with books by new Irish writers.

And this brings me to a rather odd fact. One organization in Ireland is turning out books by the thousands, having in the last three years put fifty thousand volumes into circulation. This is a Gaelic publication office financed by the Free State Government. When we remember that Ireland, in the main, is a non-reading country, this output is surprising. The bulk of it is translation—translation into Gaelic of all kinds of books, mainly, as far as I can make out, of mystery stories and sentimental romances from English. Who reads them? Well, since Gaelic is compulsory in the schools and since there is hardly anything in modern Gaelic that anyone but a philologist would have much interest in reading, a great supply of books is needed by students and teachers, and the reading public that is being turned out by the schools. Need these books be on such a mediocre level, I often ask? I suppose they needn't be, but the Minister of Finance who has charge of this department, has given the order that quantity is an important element—reading matter for Gaelic Ireland has, for a time, to be in quantity-production. The result is that writers who have any readiness in Gaelic are making incomes in Ireland; they are taking the line of least resistance, and are offering their public books for the original of which they don't have to seek far. But how odd that when one masters a Celtic speech "like the rattling of war-chariots," the books one finds to read range from "Robinson Crusoe" to the novels that go into Hollywood films.

A few grains of real literary nourishment appear amongst all this chaff. Through this enterprise a new edition of Douglas Hyde's "The Love Songs of Connacht" has appeared; if there was nothing else in modern Gaelic except this collection of folksongs, it would be worth while learning the language to know them. Then there has recently been published an autobiography of a native of the Blaskets—those islands off the coast of Kerry that form the only fragment of medieval Europe; this book, "The Islander," is as original as might be expected from a life where the language, customs, means of living are surprisingly remote. Then Neil Munro, that Scottish writer who never had proper recognition, has had one of his heroes translated into the Gaelic that his heroes speak in: those who are instructed in these matters assure me that the translation of "John Splendid" ("Iain Aluinn") make an addition to our youthful Gaelic literature. One authority says:

It all goes into Irish like a hand into its proper glove. Once again we are made to feel what a magnificent language Irish is (or was) and how feelingly it conveys its own magic, that of fields, hills, woods, the sea, and all the fresh instincts of the heart. We are fortunate in having a few lucky survivors from that old world who can put down for us in readable prose the rich language they heard in the cradle or by the turf fire.

This traditional richness is going fast in Ireland. And yet, even now, one is amazed at the richness it can still show. From Galway down up into Connemara, for a distance of about a hundred miles, there is a belt in which the Gaelic life has hardly changed—the people are farmers and fishermen on the smallest possible scale, still weaving and spinning and carrying on their few traditional household arts. Here one can find story tellers by the score—I mean story tellers with a great traditional repertoire and a highly de-

veloped art. They are not all old men, either; some are in their thirties, some are even in their twenties. And at last, the collecting of Irish folk-lore is being systematized by a learned and devoted young professor of the National University, Dr. De Lary. Oddly enough, the most modern of institutions has given indispensable aid to the Irish Folk-lore Institute's efforts—this is being done by the Rockefeller Foundation. A small grant from them has enabled Professor De Lary to get local assistants, who are now gathering in material from every corner of Ireland, not in thousands of words but in hundreds of thousands of words—the old



PADRAIC COLUM

shanachies are talking into Ediphones, and not only the stories but their manner of delivery is being recorded. The Rockefeller Foundation gives aid to cultural monuments that are in danger of perishing, and I cannot imagine assistance given anywhere that is more timely than that sent into this field. Not only is an enormous material being saved for those are interested in cultural origins and every backgrounds, but forms of speech, words, are being recovered that are the greatest enhancement to the reviving Gaelic language.

Whether or not the revival of Gaelic language and literature will come to be an accomplished fact, there is no doubt but the revival movement in the past thirty years has given freshness and distinction to Irish literature in English. Take the latest book published by one of the younger poets, Austin Clarke's "Pilgrimage" (New York: Farrar & Rinehart). In this collection the poet has brought his art to a curious kind of perfection. I do not say that he has written better poetry than in previous volumes, but I think that what is most characteristic in his vision has been given clearest expression in this latest book of his. His muted verses belong to the world of half-lights, remembered visions, and lost forms of a lapsed civilization. Austin Clarke's is the Ireland where Queen Gormlai writes her "learned and pitiful ditties," where the Woman of Beare pleases the Captains of the armies and the lawyers who break lands, where the monks on an island in the western main throw themselves on beds of nettles to rid themselves of a tempting vision, and where poets on a desolate mountainside meet her who is the spirit of the land. Through some strange process he has been able to identify himself with the Gaelic poets of seventeenth century Ireland—he writes in the temper of these dispossessed men, as if he had actually trudged the roads they trudged, crossed the waters they crossed, and like them, separating himself from the people he sings to by dealing only with the most tragic figures in their tradition. The landscape is blurred with rain; the light is the light before or after a storm.

Gray holdings of rain
Had grown less with the fields,
As we came to that blessed place
Where hail and honey meet.
O Clonmacnoise was crossed
With light: those cloistered scholars
Whose knowledge of the gospel
Is cast as metal in pure voices,
Were all rejoicing daily,
And cunning hands with gold and
jewels
Wrought chalices to flame.
(Continued on next page)