

Round about Parnassus

By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THE *Selected Poems* of Alice Meynell, with an introductory note by W. M., who is, of course, Wilfrid Meynell, are now given us by Scribners, following seven years after *The Poems* of Alice Meynell, Complete Edition, from the presses of the same firm. The one thing always apparent in the poetry of the late Mrs. Meynell was her distinguished diction. Her collected poems contained one hundred and twenty. This later selection holds about a third of that number. It is a most treasurable book, and we are glad that the first poem in it is the "Letter from a Girl to Her Old Age," one of the most utterly original and beautiful poems Mrs. Meynell ever wrote.

*Suffer, O silent one, that I remind thee
Of the great hills that stormed the sky behind thee,
Of the wild winds of power that have resigned thee.*

The book ends with that perfect lyric to her husband, "At Night," and we are glad to have affixed to the small rare volume some contemporary appreciations from great writers, headed by the late John Ruskin and including Coventry Patmore, William Sharp ("Fiona McLeod"), George Meredith, Francis Thompson, Sir Henry Newbolt, and Gilbert K. Chesterton. Dante Gabriel Rossetti called Alice Meynell's sonnet "Renouncement" "one of the three finest sonnets ever written by women." The poem "In Early Spring," which opened the *Collected Poems*, is also here again and deserves immortality, were it only for that marvelous line concerning "The cuckoo's fitful bell." Alice Meynell's was a "slender landscape and austere," but her religious poetry is fit to stand with Christina Rossetti's, and that is high praise. One pure lyric we are sorry to miss from this strict winnowing. It has always appealed to us as one of those seemingly effortless felicities that are pure song. We will quote it in full:

CHIMES

*Brief, on a flying night,
From the shaken tower,
A flock of bells take flight
And go with the hour.*

*Like birds from the cote to the gales,
Abrupt—O hard:
A fleet of bells set sails,
And go to the dark.*

*Sudden the cold airs swing.
Alone, aloud,
A verse of bells takes wing
And flies with the cloud.*

Sir Henry Newbolt has this to say concerning certain of her other work:

Mrs. Meynell's genius is sundered by leagues of tenderness and self-restraint from that of the fierce and gloomy Dean (Donne), but she seems to me to resemble him in her originality of metaphysical drama. Certainly there is no modern poem more original than the "Letter from a Girl to Her Own Old Age," none since Donne, which looks more profoundly or more sadly into the abyssal depths of personality.

And when we find a poem beginning, as in "A Song of Derivations,"

*I come from nothing; but from where
Come the undying thoughts I bear?*

we know we are in the presence of great verse; as also in "I Am the Way," which contains this perfect stanza:

*I cannot see
I, child of process—if there lies
An end for me,
Full of repose, full of replies.*

In her essays Mrs. Meynell had a touch that was often most near to poetry. One book of her essays that we possess, "The Children," is often of amazing insight concerning quite young people. The essay entitled "Under the Early Stars" holds in its first paragraph so delightful an observation concerning "a tide in the affairs of children" that we cannot resist quoting it here, to illustrate another than the devotional side of Mrs. Meynell which has been so stressed by the usual reviewer:

Summer dusk, especially, is the frolic moment for children, baffle them how you may. They may have been in a pottering mood all day, intent upon all kinds of close industries, breathing hard over choppings and poundings. But when

late twilight comes, there comes also the punctual wildness. The children will run and pursue, and laugh for the mere movement—it does so jog their spirits.

The particular use of words in those sentences is like a conjuring. The young people are breathingly, and breathlessly, before one. And the observation is so wonderfully exact!

One gift of Mrs. Meynell's was a most exact observation of nature. If the general method of her verse was highly and finely traditional her descriptive terms were far more than "literary," they were those inevitably brought to her by a close contemplation with her eye on the object. She retained certain indirectnesses and inversions from an older day, a fine formality of statement which is alien to much modern verse, but so limpid is her expression, so pure her emotion, that these matters do not appear as blemishes upon her work, only like the accent of a distinctly individual voice, the voice of a singer born and an eclectic of the English tongue.

"Vale and Other Poems" comes from Macmillan and is a new volume from George Russell, the Irish poet "Æ." Some of these poems have appeared in another book of his we reviewed fairly recently. Some are new to us. Æ's poetry is full of the elemental things, earth and air and water and fire. Mixed with these is a strange brightness. In some respects he seems a latter-day Blake. His verse is supple and shining with a wild innocence. In such a poem as "Germinal" he seems almost to touch the mysterious secret of life and destiny:

*To that first tapping at the invisible door
Fate answereth.
What shining image or voice, what sigh
Or honied breath,
Comes forth, shall be the master of life
Even to death.
And the poem ends:*

Let thy young wanderer dream on:

*Call him not home.
A door opens, a breath, a voice
From the ancient room,
Speaks to him now. Be it dark or bright
He is knit with his doom.*

Most profound of all, however, seems to us the poem entitled "Retribution":

*The soul into itself withdraws, thinking on all
The gay, heroic ardors it foresook; the years
That were made over sweet with passion;
the tears
Love swept, dying of its own fullness; and
the fall
Into the pit where seven unholy spirits conspire
Against the Holy Ones, turning the sky-born fire
Unto infernal uses, feeding beauty to the beast.
Remembering the dark joys that were born
of the feast,
It dreads the everlasting fire, the torment of sense.
Oh, unhappy, the judge is not without thee
but within,
Who shall condemn thee, as retribution for
thy sin,
To the consuming fire of thine own penitence.*

We have enjoyed running through a recent book from the Cambridge University Press entitled "Eight Victorian Poets," by F. L. Lucas. These talks, now gathered together in book-form, are chiefly delightful for the copious use of anecdote, some of it old and worn, some of it—to us at least—new. To quote a few situations which may be twice-told-tales to the reader or not, as luck will have it, Mr. Lucas refers to such incidents as Hardy on his death-bed being read "The Listeners," by Walter de la Mare; Swinburne at Eton crowning with a jam-pot the maid who was reading to him aloud, the nervous laughter of Jane Faulkner when he proposed marriage to her, which inspired the cascading stanzas of "The Triumph of Time," and his addressing Emerson in a letter as "a hoary-headed and toothless baboon."

There is much tart discrimination in Mr. Lucas's comment, yet he is ready to praise and praises generously when he feels the writing to be worthy of it. His summaries of the poets he has chosen, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Clough, Rossetti, Morris, Swinburne, and Hardy are just estimates, if far from being hero-worshipping ones. The endeavor is to see these geniuses steadily and see them whole, with all their shortcomings as well as their triumphs. They emerge as entirely human beings, which does not a whit affect the greatness of their great work. It is interesting, too, to see them in the not too generous asides of their contemporaries, who, it seems, could manage to say some pretty cutting things about even the greatest of them.

THE HANDWRITING OF THE RENAISSANCE

Being the Development
and Characteristics of the
Script of Shakspeare's Time

By

Samuel A. Tannenbaum

*A Textbook for Readers
of Renaissance Manuscripts*

Price \$4.00

COLUMBIA
University Press

LISA



By Edith Young

J. MIDDLETON MURRY writes:

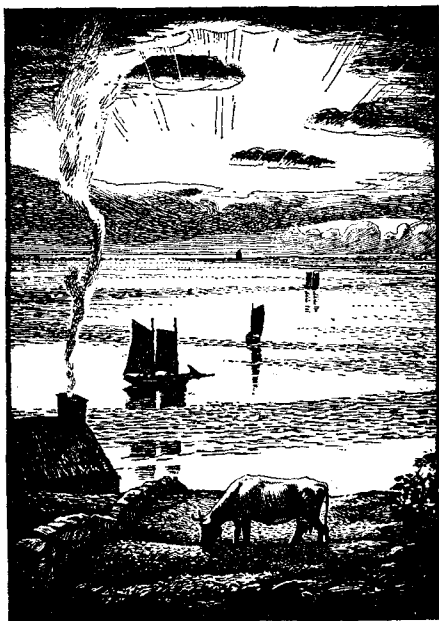
"A well high perfect story of a young girl, a delicate, remote creature, who spent most of her life in search of love. A strange story of a very remarkable personality, written with such haunting beauty that the memory of Lisa will stay with us for a long time."

MORROW, \$2.00

A NEW novel which comes
highly recommended.

IT is the January choice of
the Book Society of England.

PUBLISHED today in
America in distinguished format with jacket, endpapers
and decorations by Maitland
de Gogorza. \$2.50



MORNING TIDE

by NEIL M. GUNN

DOROTHY CANFIELD writes: "You are transported by the first lines of this beautifully written novel, far from your comfortable American home, up to the spare, harsh, stimulating life of Scotch fisher-folk. Every lover of distinguished literature will welcome this study of highland temperament and will, from now on, number its author among those whose books are not to be missed."

H. M. TOMLINSON writes: "Mr. Gunn does not get far before his importance begins to dawn on a reader. MORNING TIDE ought to lift him to a prominent place in contemporary literature."

HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY
383 Madison Avenue New York



Puritan's Progress

The trail of the Puritans from the
earliest days to the present followed
with results amazing and
amusing by a distinguished author

Arthur Train

476 pages, \$3 50 at your bookstore
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS



To Booksellers

We have constant inquiries from
people in all sections of the country,
asking the name of the nearest book-
shop where they can obtain copies of
The Saturday Review.

If you carry copies in stock, you
will be attracting new customers to
your shop and encouraging your own
people to keep in touch with current
books.

For information concerning bulk
rates and shipment, please write to:

Bookstore Department

THE SATURDAY REVIEW
OF LITERATURE
25 West 45th Street
New York City

Foreign Literature

Two German Plays

DAS REICH GOTTES IN BÖHMEN. By FRANZ WERFEL. Vienna: Paul Zsolnay. 1930.

ELISABETH VON ENGLAND. By FERDINAND BRUCKNER. Berlin. S. Fisher. 1930.

Reviewed by A. W. G. RANDALL

IT does not seem very long since the Prague writer Franz Werfel was one of the "young men" of the German stage. Yet here he is, with a mature piece of work, sure of himself, technically, philosophically. It is true that this latest historical play has some points of contact with his "Paulus unter den Juden," which was produced about four years ago. Both are tragedies of frustration; both are personal dramas against a broad historical background. But the latest play is perhaps more self-confident. At all events it seems to us to prove that Werfel, after four or five years during which he has given us nothing but fiction, has done well to return to the dramatic form in which his first post-war successes were won.

In "Paulus unter den Juden" the desertion of the Jewish religion by Saul was paralleled, in the entry of the Temple by the Roman soldiery, with the defeat of all Jewish aspirations. In "Das Reich Gottes in Böhmen," similarly, personal defeat goes hand in hand with national humiliation. The scene is laid in Bohemia and in Basle, in the time of the great Hussite general, called Prokop the Great. The Council of Basle has been summoned, and the Papal Legate, Cardinal Cesarini, is on his way to it when he is intercepted by Hussite soldiers. He obtains, however, a safe-conduct signed by Prokop, and, under the name of Angelo and the disguise of a simple priest, is able to continue his journey. Meanwhile there is dissension, political and personal, in the Hussite ranks. One of the extreme, or Taborite, party, a certain Prschibik von Klenau, is in love with Prokop's wife Elisabeth. The great general had given her some ground for unfaithfulness, since, wedded only to the Hussite cause, he had neglected her, and had paid small regard to his family duties generally. For this Nemesis was to overtake him. Elisabeth runs off with Klenau, and Prokop's mother and sister are left in extreme want, so much so that in the terrible plague that follows in the wake of war, the younger woman is forced to a shameful life on the streets, and among the camp followers. This, and the infidelity of his wife, increases the discontent that was already being shown against Prokop, and all the smouldering intrigues and jealousies in the Hussite ranks break into flame. Something of the Hussite dissensions had already been shown to us in the impressive stage pictures of the Council of Basle, where, by means of a front and back stage, the dramatist had presented the deliberations of the ecclesiastics and politicians together with the more homely sides of the question—a technical method employed effectively several times in the course of the drama.

Prokop is defeated and at last comes to his death bed. There he is brought face to face once more with the simple "priest Angelo," the Cardinal Cesarini, whose dignified, understanding, and noble character had been well brought out in the earlier scenes. The two men meet not as enemies, but on a basis of common human sympathy. The churchman is anxious to hear Prokop's last confession, but the soldier is already delirious and fails to make it, while his poor blind mother, whom he had so much neglected, fails to recognize the body of her dead son. Thus the play, in which sordid tragedy and bloodshed had been relieved with some touches of humor, and certain political allusions which might be interpreted as topical—for the extreme Hussites were akin in many respects to present-day Communists—ends on a note of great personal pathos and pitiful frustration. The threads keeping it together may not be strong enough to ensure its success on the stage, but it is at least an excellent play to read, and in it Werfel reveals himself once more as one of the most important serious dramatists now writing in German.

Ferdinand Bruckner, one feels, is far from being as mature or as sure of himself as Werfel. His earlier plays were rather in the manner of Wedekind; they were an attempt to *épater le bourgeois*—and in this at least they succeeded. Here, too, in this latest play on an historical theme one can trace a deliberate effort to shock. If the dramatist has not read Lytton Strachey's "Elizabeth and Essex"—and he has had the opportunity, for that work appeared in German with the same publishers about a year

ago—he has clearly gone to the same sources as the English writer, for in some of his physiological references to the "Virgin Queen"—one of his attempts to shock—as well as in his view of Bacon and the relations between the Queen and Essex he presents a close parallel with Strachey. One may, in fact, get a fair idea of the play by imagining a dramatization of some of Strachey's pages. The more original part of Bruckner's work consists in his parallel between Elizabeth and Philip of Spain. One or two scenes, by a stage arrangement the effectiveness of which it is difficult to realize, present the Queen with her council at one extreme of the stage, Philip with his advisers and his daughter at the other. The scene in which the King receives the news of the defeat of the Armada, and the thanksgiving service in St. Paul's, in London, are also presented simultaneously, and the singing of a Lutheran hymn and the monks' chanting—*die Stimmführung beider Chöre aufeinander kontrapunktiert*, as the writer's stage direction has it—are heard together. Altogether one would imagine these innovations rather difficult of accomplishment or, if accomplished, hardly worth the effort. Shakespeare could obtain the effect of simultaneity by means of a chorus, and by the power of language. But perhaps it would be fairer to withhold further questioning until the play has actually been seen. In the reading certainly the experiment looks interesting, and Bruckner is at least an enterprising young playwright with a promise. The chief distinction between him and Werfel—judged by their two historical plays—is that the older man has worked out a theme of personal and national tragedy, while the younger writer has constructed a series of pictures which do not give a regular view of the personal drama behind the defeat of the Essex rebellion, or the national drama behind the defeat of Philip of Spain. Bruckner, in other words, seems to us to have essayed a theme beyond his strength. His "Elisabeth von England" has more promise than performance.

Don Quixote with a Difference

LES FILLES DU DÉSIR. By FRANZ HELLENS. Editions de la Nouvelle Revue Française. Paris: 1930.

Reviewed by BENJAMIN M. WOODBRIDGE

IN "Le Naïf," Franz Hellens evoked with a vividness that is unforgettable scenes in the life of a singularly imaginative and sensitive child brought up among the conventions of an austere Catholic family. Quite unaware of subconscious forces, Frederic is led by semi-innocent curiosity into many equivocal situations of which he barely senses the dangers. The cunning of the author lies in the sympathy, tempered by almost ironical detachment, with which he follows the reactions of his hero. "Les Filles du Désir" is the continuation. Le Naïf, whom we left on the threshold of emancipation, has deliberately resolved to tear asunder the shrouding veils. But sophistication does not come at the first beckoning. Frederic is a Don Quixote vowed to the service of the laughter-loving goddess who is in no haste to end his novitiate and her sport. A barmaid, a painter's model, a bohemian artist, finally a friend's sweetheart incarnate for fleeting instants his Dulcinea. His senses are aflame, but his timidity is an admirable guardian angel. Clearly the author's purpose is to follow the struggle between the two; he notes minutely the gradual victory of the senses and watches the curve of the first amours, in which imagination was the protagonist, as they crystallize into reality. His subtle diagnosis is never at fault, and his art of awakening in the reader long forgotten memories shows itself at its best. He is a psychiatrist of the first water.

"The French were, a generation ago, the most stay-at-home of all people," says a correspondent. "You find them nowadays on all the roads that lead back to Paris. *La Rive Gauche* has swarmed. Do not try to interest an up-to-date left-side young man if you have not been at least to Seattle or Baluchistan. Europe is too near, Europe has been annexed, as witness George Plazen's 'Europe Cynique, ou Les Aventures de Ferdinand.' Clever book, cleverly written, evidently by a young man in possession of old tricks. Voltaire's manner as a *conteur* is here resurrected. Do not, however, misunderstand the title. Do not translate by 'Cynical Europe.' Read rather: 'Europe, by a Cynic.'"

Not long ago Ernst Reinhold, a Vienna actor, recited the whole of "King Lear" by heart in front of the curtain of the Burgtheater stage, and, what is more, in the original English.

BORZOI BOOKS

"PUNGENT REALISM"

THE KAISER'S COOLIES

By Theodor Plivier

"What we are given is the experience of the 'coolies,' the common sailors, stokers and marines, throughout the entire length, and during all phases, of the World War . . . The description is throughout of the most pungent realism . . . 'All Quiet on the Western Front' may be superior to 'The Kaiser's Coolies' from a literary point of view, but the latter surpasses it in vigor, in its impressiveness as a document."—The New York Times. \$2.50

BEHIND THE GREEN LIGHTS

By Captain Cornelius W. Willemse

"An accurate, intimate and amazingly interesting account of the underworld and its chief figures, dead and alive . . . As an inside picture of the Police Department and its relation to the underworld, 'Behind the Green Lights' ranks pre-eminent."—The New York Times. With 16 Illustrations, \$3.00

A WOMAN ON HER WAY

By John van Druten

Of this novel by the author of "Young Woodley" The New York Times has said, "Of Mr. van Druten's talents there can be no question . . . Elinor Johnson, a successful novelist, (is) one of the most fully conceived characters of recent fiction." Over 400 pp. \$3.00

BLACK CHERRIES

By Grace Stone Coates

Mrs. Coates vividly recalls all the queries, tragedies, disillusionment, and supreme content which are the lot of a sensitive child whose life is one prolonged "why." It is a pleasure to offer a book as beautifully written, as fascinating as "Black Cherries." \$2.50

ON THE EDGE: Stories

By Walter de la Mare

"Quite the most perfectly grouped and varied series of dynamically moving short stories, balanced with true de la Mare precision . . ." says The Philadelphia Public Ledger. Over 300 pp. \$3.00

THE ETERNAL POLES

By Claude Bragdon

Love in all its forms and phases has been boldly treated by the author of "The New Image." With many designs by the author. \$2.00

NAKED HEEL

By Leonora Speyer

These poems are written in the same high spirit which won for Mrs. Speyer the Pulitzer Poetry Prize. \$2.50

THE MORBID PERSONALITY

By Sándor Lorand, M. D.

A brilliant study by the leading American exponent of Dr. Ferenczi of Budapest. With ten case histories. 5½" x 8¼", 208 pp. \$3.00

THE MEANING OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

By Martin W. Peck, M. D.

This guide book is the clearest, most concise and readable introduction for the layman that has yet appeared. 5½" x 7¾", 286 pp. \$2.50

CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT OF INDIA

By A. C. Underwood, M. A., D. D.

An excellent survey of politics and social and religious conditions by a well-known scholar. 5½" x 7¾", 232 pp. \$2.50

CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT OF GERMANY

By W. Tudor Jones, M. A., Ph. D.

A concise exposition of Germany's most important schools of philosophic thought. 5½" x 7¾", 276 pp. \$2.50

AT THE BETTER BOOKSHOPS

ALFRED A. KNOPF N.Y. 