

The BOWLING GREEN by Christopher Morley

“ * * Unique ”

BOOKS of genuine rarity and condition still remain among the most solid investments. The Caliph A. Edward Newton remarked the other day “I paid \$60,000 for an immaculate First Folio, selling a block of ——— in order that I might pay for it promptly. The present value of the ——— I sold is now less than \$5000. Query: what does my First Folio stand me?”

And in spite of international broils it's going to be an exciting winter in the Going-Going-Gone business. Last week I happened to be upstairs in a big auction gallery while a sale was going on elsewhere in the building. I didn't even know about the sale: I was looking at some unusual finds that had lately arrived and were being catalogued for a future occasion. The working quarters of an auction house are as alert and responsive as backstage in a theatre; and suddenly among all those bins of ticketed “lots” the word ran round “Fifteen Seventy Five for The Whale.” Which meant that Melville's book—an earlier version of *Moby Dick*—had just brought the remarkable price of \$1575. Cataloguers laid down their scholarly collations and lit a cigarette to consider this. It sounded like the old era of Jerome Kern.

I may as well explain that my purpose in being there was to have a glimpse of a very odd item—“attractive” would perhaps be the austere cataloguer's technical word for it—connected with our old friend Sir Kenelm Digby. I haven't bothered you about Sir Kenelm for a long time, but you needn't suppose I've forgotten him. Here, beautifully written out by some professional scribe but with numerous corrections in Sir Kenelm's own hand, is a vellum folio containing the letters he wrote to his children, his relatives and intimates, after the death of his wife, the Lady Venetia. And the notably interesting fact is that the amanuensis was evidently the same copyist who engrossed the famous *Private Memoirs* (not published until 1827). I remember once expressing some puzzlement as to whether Sir Kenelm really did write those memoirs himself. Perhaps I shall have to reconsider that: Mr. E. W. Bligh in his delightful book *Sir Kenelm Digby and His Venetia* (London, 1932; I think it has not appeared over here) seems to have no doubt of the authenticity of the memoirs. And odd as they are, K. D. was fantastic enough to make anything possible.

The big vellum letter-book now locked up on 57th Street waiting to take its turn in some forthcoming sale should particu-

larly interest the library at Harvard. For it is the best rebuttal yet to hand of the unpleasant rumor that Sir Kenelm's “Viper Wine for the Complexion” caused Venetia's death. Here, in his own innermost vein, are moving and lengthy essays on his lady's virtues. The first letter, “To my three sonnes Kenelme, John & George,” an attempt to fix upon the “tender and slippery memories of childhood the character of their mother,” is no less than 68 folio pages. The whole series, written in K.D.'s period of grieving retirement at Gresham College immediately after Venetia's death (1633), has a convincing eloquence of sincerity. A bit longwinded I admit, but Sir Kenelm could be longwinded about anything. The “solemn



SIR KENELM DIGBY, by Van Dyck

assembly” at Montpellier which listened to his Discourse of the Sympathetic Powder may well have been solemn before he had finished. Yet those who slept missed some excellent anecdotes.

But why, I hear someone asking, should Harvard be interested? Because Sir Kenelm was one of the earliest benefactors of the Harvard Library. The ancient theological books which he sent them were destroyed in a fire (1764 or 1765?); and oddly enough the same happened to books he gave to Oxford—an example, Mr. Bligh suggests, of his doctrine of Sympathy. He also gave 50 oak trees to the Bodleian Library, and it would be pleasant to think that they still form part of those ancient shelves and alcoves. Do any records still exist at Harvard of Sir Kenelm's gift—which we know of only by a hearsay allusion in the works of pious Richard Baxter. At any rate the legend is a pleasant one, and some friend of the great Widener Library should see to it that this unedited curiosity from the seventeenth century

reaches its most appropriate destination. It well deserves the annotation that sympathetic cataloguers sometimes employ: “ * * UNIQUE.”

As for Mr. Bligh, a Digbyolater like ourself, he will certainly wish to visit this country to see the manuscript. His book is written in the gayest and most fetching humor; he quite sees the comic side of laborious pursuit of so quicksilver a creature, and yet—as happens to all devotees of Sir Kenelm—he ends by loving him. He quotes letters that were never in print before; K.D.'s anecdote about the naiveté of St. Francis deserves reprint but I don't quite dare. . . . Best of all I like Bligh's admission that he and three friends met at an inn (the famous Spread Eagle at Thame) to drink to the memory of Venetia. There's plenty of testimony that (in the modern jargon) she had what it takes. As Master Shallow used to say (in the most humane piece of writing in our language, *King Henry the Fourth*) “She was then a bona-roba. Doth she hold her own well?”

I think she does.

News from Ecuador

A delightful letter from Guayaquil, Ecuador, tells us that Chimborazo the great mountain is more often visible from that city than we had supposed. B. C. writes:—

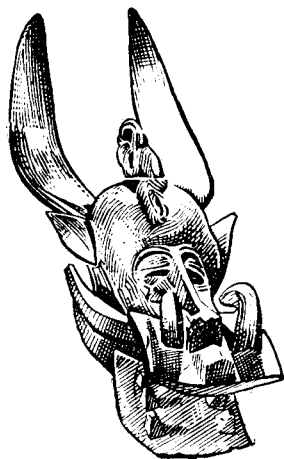
“From one room in my home, on the Boulevard, which faces on the Plaza Centenario, and a most satisfying view, I look out toward the hill of Santa Ana and Chimborazo every day at teatime, and have discovered that Chim. is visible far more frequently than people imagine. In June and July, she may appear in all her glory, all day, about eight or nine times, but during the remainder of the year, the curtain of mist is often lifted for a few brief moments in the sunset hour. Perhaps one only sees a luminous gold tipped peak for a second or two but often the fates are kind and she unveils completely, for a few moments, and what a marvellous sight! A moment of blazing flame and gold which quickly fades to rose and silver—then all too soon the clouds descend, the vision disappears and one wonders if it wasn't a beautiful dream.

“Did you see Guayaquil in her most prideful hour—the sunset, when its shabbiness is mantled under a glow of gold, a fresh breeze called “Chanduey bueno” springs up, the gente come out to take the air and it is good to be alive?

“You may read something of Ecuadorian news in your daily paper. If so you will see the reign of Velasco Ibarra was of short duration like that of his predecessors. As I write, the streets are full of

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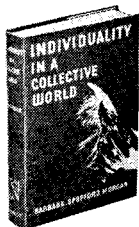
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part of the soul (for in most men it is but like a dead point) we must as much as we can decline enjoying any corporeal object in our senses, or reflecting upon them in our discourses. We must (as Plato saith) separate our felices from all matter or corporeal substances, or the knowledges that result out of them. And then the soul will live by contemplation, and it is dead to sense, and elevated above ratiocination, discomfited. For in the order of the world, superior things have so direct and continual and full influence into inferior, that if there be not a defect in the recipient, the greater saileth of performing his part. We see in corporeal substances, the alive, quiescent his feed & spirit of vegetation to all earth, that by some extrinsecal accident is not made incapable to receive it; the light in corporeity is felt in the whole world, of air where some opacous and dark bodies doth not keep it out. Cut up the shrubs and shrubbes, or decay away the superfluous moisture, and the soil will be fertile. Draw the curtains and open the windows, and the chamber will be light. In like manner, drive away all corporeal species from

PAGE FROM K.D.'S LETTER BOOK
Courtesy American Art Association.

parading enthusiasts who loudly "Viva" the favourite of the moment—communications with the capital is cut off and railway service discontinued—and, even as I write these words, the soldiers have fired on the crowd and people are running and screaming in all directions. We are so used to these disturbances. They do not arouse any fear."

Hail Minnesota

As we enter the winter season we always ask the Business Department whether anything exciting has happened in the ranking of our First Ten States. (In the matter of *Saturday Review* subscriptions, obviously.) The first nine of them stand in the same order as they did a year ago: Connecticut, energized by her tercentennial, still holds the lead she regained over Michigan, but keeps it by a very small margin. Only 36 new Wolverine subscriptions would overhaul the Nutmeg. How about it, Detroit?

The news item however is that Minnesota has pushed out Wisconsin for 10th place. The standing now is:—New York, California, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Illinois, Ohio, New Jersey, Connecticut, Michigan, Minnesota.—The runners-up are Wisconsin and Indiana.

Notice to Mariners

SIR: For downright exciting and imaginative literature may I recommend the "Notice to Mariners," published weekly by the Hydrographic office. It is the only direct benefit I receive from the taxes I pay my government.

It consists of collected official bulletins from all over the world, noting the changes in buoyage, lights, channels, the discovery of uncharted reefs, etc. What is more stimulating to read, for example, than this: "First officer — of the Japanese S. S. — reports that the island shown

on the chart as — island in lat — long — does not exist. It will be expunged." Or that the lighthouse at — will be discontinued. Why? That is never told, so a whole evening of speculation is ahead of you. Perhaps the Japanese don't want visitors at that particular island any more, so what more charming way to avoid an "incident" and yet maintain their purpose. Who wants to go to an island that is about to be expunged?

RICHARD K. HAWES.

Westport Harbor, Mass.

Eminent Misjudgements

Looking up some allusions to Coleridge I turned to a favorite old book *The MacLise Portrait Gallery*. The 1891 edition, annotated by William Bates, contains a footnote which I had forgotten, and which I prize in my cedar-chest of eminent misjudgements. (Professor Pattee's comment, in 1915, on Emily Dickinson, is another.)

Mr. Bates, discoursing on Goethe, found opportunity to make some comments on what he considered fake poetry—his own phrase is "superfoetations of conceit upon inanity"—which "have brought burning disgrace upon the sacred name of poetry."

"Take, for instance," he wrote, "the notable 'Walt Whitman' hoax. An eminent literator, Mr. W. M. Rossetti, laid a cunning plot to test the gullibility of the public in matters of taste and criticism. He dug up an American 'poet' who had never written a word of poetry in his life; and who, in all he had written, was bombastic, coarse, conceited, and irreverent, or generally meaningless. He reprinted him in England and engaged some really clever fellows to aid the scheme by unstinted laudation. The bait took. Men who had never read Washington Irving or Whittier echoed the cuckoo-cry, and 'Walt Whitman' was the noblest Transatlantic 'tone' yet heard! Professor Bayne, in an able article in the *Contemporary Review* (December 1875) pretty well shook the bran out of the puppet 'poet'; but the impetus he got at starting still carries him on, and like a spent ball, he may yet roll on languidly for a time."

J. M. A. (Tokyo, Japan) submits a puzzle which he says has given some amusement to the American colony in that city. As follows:—

Persons	Positions
Mr. Brown	President
Mr. Fienberg	Vice-President
Mr. O'Shaughnessy	Cashier
Mrs. Johnson	Teller
Miss Gordon	Bookkeeper
Miss Leonard	Stenographer

The Vice President is the President's grandson. The Cashier is the Stenographer's son-in-law. The teller is Miss Gordon's stepsister. Mr. Brown is a bachelor. Mr. Fienberg is 25 years old. Mr. O'Shaughnessy is the President's neighbor.

The problem is to determine which person has which position.

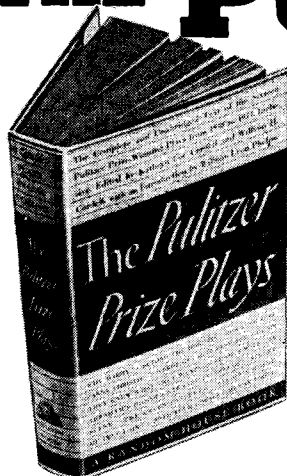


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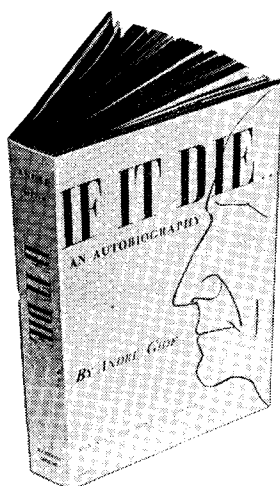
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By Arthur Cushman McGiffert. Volume I: *Early and Eastern*. Volume II: *The West from Tertullian to Erasmus*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. \$3 each.

Reviewed by WILLARD L. SPERRY

SOME one has said that on the evening of a day of battle naked facts may be picked up anywhere, lying about on the field, but that by the next morning they have begun to get back into their uniforms. The historian is forever seeking the naked fact, and his main difficulty is to get the uniform off. This difficulty is enhanced for the simple reason that the uniform worn by the fact, as it first presents itself to his observing mind, is one which the historian's own temperament, prejudices, and native preferences have imputed to the fact.

Schweitzer has made this clear, as it concerns the figure of Jesus, in his "Quest of the Historical Jesus." That book leaves little to be said hereafter as to the historical method addressed to the study of the central figure in the Gospels. Meanwhile the immediate centre of theological interest has shifted to the years following the death of Jesus, and we are now engaged in a Quest of Primitive Christianity. For all of these earlier centuries, Harnack's "History of Dogma" has

been the pattern and manual of the modern study of Christian thought. But Harnack's attempt to recover the naked ancient fact is vitiated at certain points, as in his treatment of Marcion, by a native predilection for Paulinism.

The first and most important thing to be said of Professor McGiffert's two recent volumes is the distinct gain which they make over Harnack in a thoroughgoing dispassionateness. The rigors of the historian's self-discipline have been brought nearer to perfection here than in any familiar available work of its kind. This is their signal excellence.

Let it be said at once that Professor McGiffert's opening chapter on the life and teaching of Jesus cannot be wholly adequate. Dispassionateness, as Schweitzer has shown, is unable to recover the figure because the sources are too meagre and obscure. Moreover, the origins of genius, let alone the operations of the supernatural, lie outside the proper sphere of the historian's inquiry. Nevertheless one feels that Professor McGiffert has done something to sharpen the focus.

The next act discovers an ethical mystery religion, a distinct "Christianity," at Antioch. This Christian mystery differed from the pagan mysteries in an ethical emphasis which was its direct heritage from Judaism, and which remained its

historical bond with Judaism. This mystery was offered to a world which was already being propagandized by pagan mysteries and which felt an increasing hunger for immortality. Here, if anywhere, Professor McGiffert, like all scholars working on this period, must rely in part upon hypothesis to supply the "missing link" between the primitive gospel and nascent Catholicism. The real question is, where did Paul get his Christ-mysticism? And Antioch seems the only answer. As for the account of a pagan world overrun with mystery missionaries and hungering for immortality, it must be said that not all classical historians consent to this convention, which has been very familiar in recent histories of dogma.

For the rest, Professor McGiffert's first volume is significant in that material for the next three centuries is organized around a critical axiom which brings order out of what is too often chaos. The author realizes that the "ethico-legal and the mystical are the two permanent elements in historic Christianity." The theologians and controversialists of the early centuries are interpreted as they incline to the one or the other of these positions, and the otherwise all but unintelligible Christological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries reveal their basic rationale. Much has been done here, by invoking this premise, to clarify what is too often a hopelessly confused record.

In his second volume Professor McGiffert turns from the Christianity of the East to that of the West. The former had issued in the orthodox faith, that of the Nicene Creed and the Definition of Chalcedon. The latter, drawing upon the genius of Rome for institutions and for the governing of men, was to elaborate the doctrine of the Church.

This story is told in a succession of brief biographies; Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Scotus Eriugena, Anselm, Abelard, Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Eckhart, Erasmus. The medium is a happy one, and in place of the abstract doctrines of the East we have this roster of vivid individuals in the West. The felt difference between the two halves of the history is something more than a matter of the later date of these men who made the Roman Church. It is a difference of culture. Dr. McGiffert concludes:

Had it not been for Luther and the Protestant Revolt such a simple, ethical Christianity as that of Erasmus might well have prevailed within the Catholic Church alongside of such a mystical Christianity as that of Eckhart. In that event while Catholic dogma might have remained untouched and sacrosanct it would have ceased to dominate the religious situation and to restrain the free working of the human mind. But the Protestant revolt made all this impossible. It brought dogma to the front again. . . .

Himself an enemy of dogmatism, our author seems to cherish a wistful desire that Christianity might have persisted as the ethics of Erasmus and the mysticism of Eckhart. He voices no outspoken preference, but leaves us to infer that he shares with Melancthon a distaste for that "madness of the theologians" which raged in the sixteenth century and which is not yet abated.

Abbé Ernest Dimnet,

author of *The Art of Thinking*, says of *For Life*: "All the novels written by Mrs. Colby show a curious characteristic: they are real, sometimes realistic, and—when the author chooses—no one's acid bites so deeply into the human reality, but everything in these books is bathed in a strange light . . . the scenes going on in them seem to be made magical by an enchanted moonlight. . . . You doubt nothing, question nothing . . . the result of extremely artistic selection is that every now and then a perfectly simple notation gives us the shiver of admiration." \$2.50

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