

All for Love of Abelard

Héloïse, by Elizabeth Hamilton (Doubleday, 234 pp. \$4.95), interprets and analyzes the ideas and behavior of the participants in a classic romance. Now retired, Orville Prescott was for many years book critic on the *New York Times*.

By ORVILLE PRESCOTT

HELOISE and Abelard's may be one of the most famous of all love stories and one of those most often told. Nevertheless, few cultivated readers know much about that brilliant and grievously unhappy couple. There are two reasons for this. The majority of the books about them, with the exception of Helen Waddell's excellent novel, *Peter Abelard*, are not only long since forgotten but they never were notably attractive. Moreover, in spite of Abelard's books, and the pair's eloquent letters written in Latin, reliable facts are scanty. So there should be a place for Elizabeth Hamilton's scholarly and well-written biography, *Héloïse*.

This is a good book, but an oddly personal one. Miss Hamilton has plunged deeply into the strange world of medieval scholastic philosophy and canon law and has visited every site associated with either Héloïse or Abelard. She writes with authority. But some of her accounts of her own journeys and of present conditions in various places in France seem almost irrelevant. Her long, involved speculations about her doomed lovers go beyond commenting on their ideas and behavior; they are theoretical elaborations, critical analyses, and guesses about implications.

Some of this interpretation is obviously necessary. Héloïse and Abelard lived according to concepts and customs unknown to most of us today. They were both brilliant students of the classic literature then available. They were philosophers and deeply devout. Consequently, when they use a particular Latin phrase it may have a meaning that needs pointing out. When they defend an idea there may be all sorts of possible reasons which are not immediately apparent. Miss Hamilton is quite eloquent in her commentary, but methinks she doth comment too much. Some of the facts require nothing more to be said. Parts of Héloïse's letters are so eloquent or so passionate they can stand alone.

Abelard, who was vain, proud, boast-

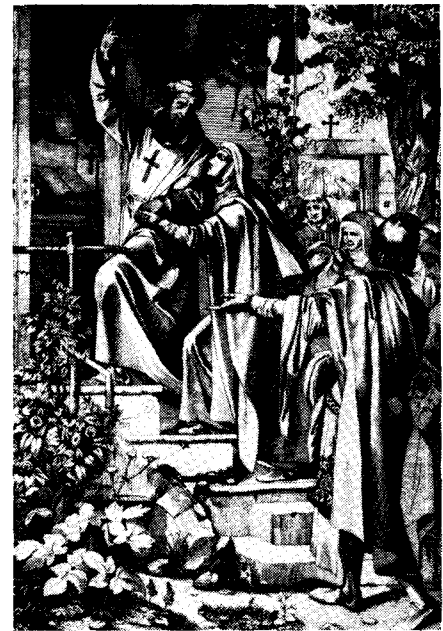
ful, and insufferably egoistic, did not really deserve to be loved by a woman as nobly generous and self-sacrificing in her devotion as Héloïse. Abelard was a great and original religious thinker. But he did not understand human nature or much care about anyone except himself. Héloïse cared only about Abelard. She wrote:

A woman should know that she is selling herself, who marries a rich man more readily than one who is poor; and who desires in her husband anything other than himself.

It was not a vocation to the religious life but your bidding alone which made me submit as a young girl to the austerities of the cloister. If from you I deserve nothing, then my labor is indeed vain. For I can expect in return no reward from God, since it is certain that to this day I have done nothing for love of him.

Héloïse as the abbess of a convent founded by Abelard could not and did not want to forget her love: "When I ought to be lamenting what I have done, I sigh for what I have lost. . . . I am young and passionate and I have known the most intense pleasures of love—and the attacks directed against me are the fiercer in that my nature is frail."

She was a good and much admired



—Bettmann Archive.

Héloïse and Abelard—"philosophers and deeply devout."

abbess. She played her role as a nun ably and conscientiously, but she did not change: "At every stage of my life (God knows this) up to the present time I have feared to offend you rather than God, sought to please you rather than Him." Since Héloïse believed profoundly in God and in rewards and punishments after death such a declaration is still enormously moving nearly 800 years later. No wonder that Héloïse's love for Abelard has never been forgotten. Miss Hamilton's book by its emphasis on the nature of the intellectual world in which Héloïse lived makes her love seem greater than ever.

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich and David M. Glixon

H A R K ! H A R K !

Peggy Kelbley of Zanesville, Ohio, reminds us that some of the greatest lyrics of the language are embedded in Shakespeare's plays. Here are the first lines of fifteen lyrics that she thinks will be a lark for you to assign to their respective plays. Check your inspirations on page 88.

When daisies pied and violets blue ()
The ousel-cock, so black of hue ()
Tell me where is fancy bred? ()
Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more ()
O mistress mine! Where are you roaming? ()
Take, oh, take those lips away ()
When daffodils begin to peer ()
Where the bee sucks, there suck I ()
Fear no more the heat o' the sun ()
Blow, blow, thou winter wind ()
Fie on sinful fantasy! ()
Love, love, nothing but love, still more! ()
In youth, when I did love, did love ()
Who is Silvia? what is she? ()
The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree ()

1. *As You Like It*
2. *Cymbeline*
3. *Hamlet*
4. *Love's Labour's Lost*
5. *Measure for Measure*
6. *The Merchant of Venice*
7. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*
8. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
9. *Much Ado About Nothing*
10. *Othello*
11. *The Tempest*
12. *Troilus and Cressida*
13. *Twelfth Night*
14. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*
15. *The Winter's Tale*

From Capitol Hill to Capital Gains

The Journals of David E. Lilienthal. Vol. III. Venturesome Years 1950-1955 (Harper & Row. 647 pp. \$11.95), carries the former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission's memoirs through his initiation and success in the world of big business. Richard D. Heffner, a historian and communications consultant, is professor of Communications and Public Policy at Rutgers University.

By RICHARD D. HEFFNER

AFTER a long and brilliantly successful career in public service—capped by a historic tenure as chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority and then of the Atomic Energy Commission—David E. Lilienthal at midcentury and midlife decided to resign from the government and to make a new career for himself in the world of business. This gentle, persuasive man's account of rebirth and self-discovery is quite as readable, as pungent, and as quotable as his earlier record of the TVA and AEC. To the professional historian it is perhaps not so important, for this extraordinary man's odyssey into the Land of Capital Gains can't quite be made to rank with his former battles for the Public Weal.

And yet, even when they do not immediately touch upon public events, the inner thoughts, musings, feelings of guilt

and aspirations, the personal conflicts and confusions, the flights of fancy and rationalizations of great men do ultimately comprise the very stuff of history, as does this Journal.

Although the particular events of these years were unique to me [Mr. Lilienthal writes], the emotional crisis I underwent is not unique; indeed it is a human experience shared by many men: the need to make a new beginning in their lives.

When I left the AEC in 1950, I faced the necessity of reconstituting my life. Most men encounter this problem sooner or later. Their lives are radically altered, by their choice or by chance. They are plunged into new circumstances. For a young man, adjustment is natural and sometimes easy, and of course many young men actively seek such changes. For older men, the experience is often a disaster. They do not "adjust." Their creativity is ended. They cease to function.

In 1950 Lilienthal was neither young nor old; and, far from being predetermined, his path was more to be broken than revealed. Nor was his success or his choice of business—indeed, Wall Street business—accomplished without frequent pangs, whether of conscience or of intellect, although his rise from bureaucratic "rags" to capital gains riches was incredibly rapid.

In December 1950 he wrote: "Am I unhappy and restless about not being 'in

the government' when so much is going on and so few people have my experience, etc.? At moments, yes. Sometimes I read about the names in the news and I have an unworthy flutter. But most of the time I'm relieved, relieved that I don't have to go through that agony and yet am out of it honorably, with service stripes that justify my being on the sidelines." More importantly, there was the painful self-questioning about serving Mammon. "Great doubts came over me. 'What am I doing here?' Thoughts of alternatives. Mental pictures of . . . telling them all what they could do with this clay."

But the answer is here, too, though accepting it is admittedly a matter of faith:

My purpose in this . . . venture is, of course, to make a good deal of money. But there is another purpose, and one that really induced me to try the role of businessman before I really believed any such opportunity as this one was more than a come-on.

The real reason, or a chief reason, is a feeling that my life wouldn't be complete, living in a *business* period—that is, a time dominated by the business of business—unless I had been active in that area . . .

Perhaps part of the answer is in the picture I have of myself as wanting to interpret my times. That is the kind of "memoir" I'd like to write. And to do this, about a time when business is so important, and an understanding of men of business so essential, the thought seems to be that you must associate with them, get to know all kinds of the species, and yourself share the life, or what you say won't be authentic.

Coolidge had said that "the business of America is business," and Lilienthal set out to participate in it and to learn it. But there is more to this perceptive diarist's notes by far, much to cull from them about the events and people of recent times. One recalls here—almost with a physical sense of surprise and disbelief—the enormous psychological impact and burden of the Korean War, and the intense fear of Armageddon it engendered in many of us, so clearly did it appear to be the harbinger of World War III. Nor are Lilienthal's own reactions to the war without relevance today. His entry for 28 November 1950 reads: "For weeks I've been fuming about these bitterly partisan bastards in the Republican camp who have been pushing our sons into a ten-year war with China . . . the news now begins to look as if they have ruined our last chance of avoiding a war with China. It makes me sick clear down to my lowest gut. It is a sad wretched ugly picture. . . ." Shortly before that he had written: "Can't help thinking of David [his son]—and a lot of

(Continued on page 94)



"While stalking wild animals be as silent and cautious as you'd be before announcing a two-for-one common stock split."