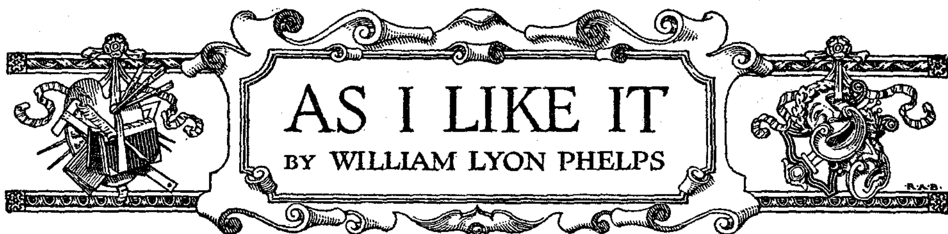

IS any work of art flawless? The choral portions of the Ninth Symphony are an anticlimax, the female saint in the Sistine Madonna has a simper, and if "The Rugged Pyrrhus" was intended to be perfect, it should have been so; if meant for a burlesque, Hamlet ought not to have admired it. Andrea del Sarto was called errorless, but was he? "Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement."

To please the Pope, Giotto drew a perfect circle, but when finished it was zero. There is a certain imperfection about perfection—there is something unsatisfying, something missing. In ecclesiastical architecture, the Gothic is more appealing than the Classic, partly because of its apparent irregularity. "There is no excellent beauty," said Bacon, "that hath not some strangeness in the proportion."

Nature is more sublime than art, because the works of Nature are in accordance with law but not with rules. To the discerning eye and ear, an inner harmony has more beauty than superficial regularity. The greatest works of art are perhaps the most natural. All creative artists hate the Beckmessers, and the Beckmessers hate them, but for opposite reasons. The Beckmessers hate the original artists because they do not understand them, and the artists hate the Beckmessers because they understand them only too well.

To say that perfection is unsatisfying does not mean that we love blemishes, uncouthness, or crudities; the majority of contemporary novels are disappointing not because they are perfect, but because they are immature. They lack dignity. They lack sincerity. They are not written with soberness of mind. Among living novelists, Thomas Hardy is in a class by himself, because of his austerity. Apart from the dominating interest of his narrative and characters, the outline of his (say) "The Return of the Native" is almost as beautiful to contemplate as sculpture. His training and experience as an architect served him well.

Among the novels of the past, I can at this moment recall only four that in construction approach perfection; that can almost be called flawless. There are greater novels than any of these, but few so nearly ideal in form. The four I have in mind are "The Scarlet Letter," "Madame Bovary," "Fathers and Children," and "The American." To all aspiring novelists I recommend them as models. Perhaps my readers will suggest other works of fiction fit to stand with these.

An American book that has justly awakened the enthusiasm of so fastidious a critic as Mr. Santayana is "The Golden Day," by Lewis Mumford. It is an essay in criticism, a criticism of American art, letters, and life. Every man and woman who wants to live on a higher intellectual plane should read this book. It is a book with a core, and the core is a "divine discontent." For complacency is the brake on development.

In a time when many American books are slovenly and vulgarly written, the style of "The Golden Day" is singularly refreshing. Mr. Mumford has at his command the resources of the English language, and knows how to make the most of them. Every reader should feel complimented, not because the author has endeavored to please him, for he has tried to please no one but himself; but because he has assumed that those who read this book deserve the best.

Every chapter is filled with penetrating ideas, luminously expressed; one really ought to read such a book repeatedly, for one cannot begin to exhaust its richness in one perusal. Furthermore, I believe that in this instance the whole is considerably less than the sum of its parts.

If I understand the thesis, I do not find it convincing. It is perhaps well enough to call the Middle Ages the Age

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of Faith, because orthodoxy was generally accepted. But I do not believe that in the thirteenth century the majority of men and women really regarded this earthly existence as a narrow vestibule to heaven and hell, or that their actual lives were governed by the things that are unseen and eternal. They gave a formal acceptance to faith, but the majority did not mould their conduct by it. Their hearts were set on practical and material things. I believe the standards among business men, for example, in 1927 are higher than they were in 1327. I would rather trust the word of the manager of the Hotel St. Francis in San Francisco to-day than that of an average innkeeper in the Middle Ages. I have more confidence in a retail boot-seller to-day than I would have had in a mediæval shopkeeper if I had dropped back into that time.

Nor do I agree with the apparent assumption in this book that religious faith has been mortally wounded by science or sectarian controversy or by anything else. If one spends one's time only with persons of similar mental attitudes—a common thing with Bohemians, agnostics, and Fundamentalists—one is apt to assume that the rustic cackle of the bourg is the murmur of the world. No error is more common than the error of assuming that one's world of thought is the thought of the world.

Finally, I do not agree with the author that American life and thought reached a climax in the years from 1840 to 1860. It is true that to-day we have no man of genius equal to Emerson, no thinker so original as Thoreau, no poet so elemental as Whitman. But because that golden period was fortunate in possessing those individuals in the flesh, who indeed tower up on the sky-line of history like lofty peaks, it does not follow that our general level of life to-day is lower. If every book of Emerson's were destroyed, his influence would continue. We have taken in Emerson with our mothers' milk. One might as well say that the second and third decades of the first century were on a higher and nobler plane than the twentieth, because then Jesus was actually on the earth.

There has never been a time in the history of the world when the spiritual climate was healthy; the majority of men and women have always preferred things of the body to things of the spirit. A certain form of religious faith may receive general tacit acceptance as in Russian villages and in parts of South America; but are the inhabitants there all spiritually minded and morally trustworthy?

Indeed, a harsh climate seems to be as necessary for spiritual development as it is for robust mental and physical activity. And in every age, no matter how corrupt, there have never been lacking some witnesses to the divine element in human nature. The court of King Ahab was as rotten as one could easily imagine; yet the truth became articulate in Elijah, and there were seven thousand who said their prayers every day.

But although I do not accept Mr. Mumford's thesis, I am profoundly grateful for such a book, a book inspired by a deeply serious purpose, its glowing thought expressed with beauty and grace.

Among important biographical works I call attention to "Napoléon," by Emil Ludwig, translated by Eden and Cedar Paul, of which I shall have much to say in a subsequent issue; "Anthony Trollope," by Michael Sadleir; "Early Life and Letters of John Morley," by Hirst; "A Doctor's Memories," by Victor Vaughan.

"Anthony Trollope, A Commentary," by Michael Sadleir, with a pleasant introduction by the American bibliophile, Mr. A. Edward Newton, is an extremely good book. Mr. Sadleir is himself an accomplished novelist, scholar, and diplomat. He is a Balliol man who took honors in history; he was one of the British delegates to the peace conference, is on the Secretariat of the League of Nations, and his novel "Privilege" is original in conception and characterization. Inasmuch as many works of biography to-day are deliberately intended to lessen the reputation of their hero, it becomes necessary to state that Mr. Sadleir is an ardent admirer of Trollope. This is a book of over 400 pages and is built to last. It may well be regarded as a definitive work in fact, and highly important in criticism. Furthermore, it resembles

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Trollope's best novels in being continuously interesting.

The only book by Trollope that can be called improbable is his autobiography, wherein he professed to set forth his methods of work. Mr. Sadleir believes that his reputation as a creative writer suffered by this disarming frankness and modesty, as a magician suffers when he explains his tricks. If Trollope were right about his methods of production, any facile writer with unending industry and regular habits of work could equal him, and none has or can. He has been surpassed in English fiction only by writers of genius like Dickens and Jane Austen; and there is a vitality in his best novels that defies corroding time. He said he would not be read in the twentieth century, but he certainly is; there are thousands of readers who are almost fanatically enthusiastic. ("The American Senator" which he began in Australia, and finished at sea, is one of his less-known novels that I find particularly interesting.) Mr. Sadleir's favorite is "Doctor Thorne," a good choice. But if one wishes to know why even this splendid story is inferior to the great novels of the Russians, one has only to quote from its second chapter.

> A few words must still be said about Miss Mary before we rush into our story; the crust will then have been broken, and the pie will be open to the guests.

I am glad that Mr. Sadleir quotes the remark of Nathaniel Hawthorne, not only because it is always interesting to see what one master says of another, but because Hawthorne came very near to Trollope's secret. It is a famous and well-known remark, but I shall quote it again.

> Have you ever read the novels of Anthony Trollope? They precisely suit my taste; solid, substantial, written on strength of beef and through the inspiration of ale, and just as real as if some giant had hewn a great lump out of the earth and put it under a glass case, with all its inhabitants going about their daily business, and not suspecting that they were made a show of.

If we get a few more books like this biography of Trollope, some persons may begin to suspect that the mid-Victorian period was not altogether contemptible.

Curiously enough, in Mr. Hirst's Life of Morley there is a quotation from a letter of Frederic Harrison referring to a number of *The Fortnightly Review* in January, 1870. "How Helen Taylor crunches up Trollope. I hear his bones crack like the eating of larks. What a Gorgon." Well, he seems to have survived it.

Mr. F. W. Hirst's "Early Life and Letters of John Morley" takes us in two volumes to the year 1885; I hope he will write at least two successive volumes, as it would be interesting to follow Honest John through the Boer War and through the year 1914. Here an excellent account is given of Morley's boyhood and college days, of his editorial, critical, and political activities, and of his friendships. The friendship between Gladstone and Morley is one of the most notable in British politics; and the mutual affection, intellectual respect, and admiration between this ardent Christian and thoroughgoing agnostic make food for contemplation.

Morley, who knew Gladstone as well as any one, must have turned over in his grave at the recent accusations of Captain Wright. It is to be hoped that the complete vindication of Gladstone's character in court will have a wholesome influence on scandal-mongering. It is curious that many of our purveyors of gossip delight in showing up what they call the vulgarity of public men without seeing that their own delight in writing about such things is the essence of vulgarity.

A charming autobiography is "A Doctor's Memories," by Victor C. Vaughan, who for many years was dean of the Medical School of the University of Michigan. In this book he reviews his whole life from earliest childhood to the year 1926. He was born in Missouri in 1851, gave instruction in the University of Michigan from 1875 to 1921, and is now enjoying well-earned leisure. His life has been filled with happiness because it has been continually productive. His services to science and to administration are notable, and those who have been officially connected with university life

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will enjoy his revelations of Faculty politics.

In reading a book like Wassermann's "Wedlock" or in reading many of the attacks on domestic life so commonly made to-day, a visitor from another planet might easily imagine that there was no happiness to be found on earth, and that the institution of marriage was a complete failure. The testimony of this clear-minded physician is therefore valuable, and I believe that it describes an experience by no means uncommon.

I can truly say that with old age, so far as I have experienced it, I am content. The pleasure in living has grown, . . . My ancestors did not transmit to me any gross defect. My parents nurtured me in wisdom and love. I have not been pinched by poverty, nor exalted by riches. Above all I have been blessed by a wife whose unfailing love has cheered me in both fair and foul weather and whose wise counsel has been my staff and support along the way. She has borne to me and reared to maturity five sons no one of whom has ever caused our cheeks to blush with shame.

In addition to the biographies of distinguished men who have been fortunate enough to enjoy a long career, I take pleasure in calling attention to the biography of William Whiting Borden, who died at the age of twenty-five, in Egypt, on his way to his chosen labors in the East as a foreign missionary. This book is by Mrs. Howard Taylor, and is called "Borden of Yale '09." I knew Borden well, but if I had never seen him, I should still find this book interesting and inspiring. He was a young man of fine intelligence and great wealth who devoted his brains and resources to the cause in which he believed.

West Virginians will welcome a new book, "Representative Authors of West Virginia," by Warren Wood, with a foreword by Professor Tucker Brooke. It is fully illustrated, and makes a brave showing for the State.

A book that will, I believe, sell by the hundred thousand is "Ask Me Another," by Spafford and Esty, with an introduction by the genial Robert Benchley. The two young authors had an inspiration. Although the book is only just out, the publishers cannot print copies of it fast enough to supply the shrill demand. Booksellers are wringing their hands in despair at their inability to fill orders. Apparently everybody in the country wants a copy and wants it immediately. It is a rage, like ping-pong, and the cross-word puzzle. People on railway-trains and steamer-decks are absorbed in it, and it is the favorite game of evening parties. If school and college examinations were as popular as these information tests, the entire country would rise to a higher plane of knowledge. Many have taken up this book in idle curiosity, only to spend a whole night over it.

The first gleam I had of the approaching furor was in a call some months ago from one of the young authors, who wished to give me an information test. I submitted with some trepidation, and was rather pleased to find that out of the fifty general questions submitted, I failed on only four. I did not know how macaroni was made—I guessed it was enamelled rubber, which was wrong. I did not know the meaning of the letters B. P. O. E. I did not know the day when Columbus discovered America—I guessed October 15. I did not know why the American Embassy at England was called "to the court of St. James's." *Now how much do you know?* Get this book, if you can, and find out.

Louis E. Asher writes me from "Somewhere in New Mexico" about the epigram I ascribed to Knute Rockne in the February SCRIBNER'S. "Mr. Rockne has created some great football plays, but he did not make the epigram. I think it originated in 'The Mind in the Making,' by James Harvey Robinson."

NOMINATIONS FOR THE IGNOBLE PRIZE

The story "Jimmie Goes to Sunday-School" in the February number of SCRIBNER'S. From E. P. Bledsoe of Experiment Station, Ga., who calls it "an absurd jumble of misstatements."

The head-line word "flay," as "Senator flays rival." From Doctor Effie A. Stevenson, of the State Hospital at Agnew, Calif.

The use of "financial" for "pecuniary," as in the sentence "Because of financial

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straits, I haven't been able to buy a suit of clothes." From a university professor of English.

"Colorful." From George Elias Wisewell, of Hamilton College, who also furnishes me with this cryptic head-line from the Utica *Press*.

HEADS AWNING AND TENT BODY

"Ladies" for "Women." From Wm. E. Simmons, of South Orange, N. J. "In a recent church calendar I noticed that 'the ladies of the church and congregation are invited to attend the meeting of the Women's Association of the church.' Why limit the attendance?"

"There was so much made over him." "There was a complimentary remark made about him." From F. A. Miller, editor of the South Bend *Tribune*, Ind.

"Milady." From Frank Place, of New York. "Wanted: A word to express the idea of 'hike' that is not so underdone. Walk, tramp, are not, yet, quite the same thing."

The Ignoble Prize is now attracting the attention of the inhabitants of Ceylon. I quote from the Ceylon *Observer*, Colombo, issue of December 26, 1926.

OFFICIAL AND "FICTIONAL" ENGLISH

A correspondent of the "Times" has been moved by a recent criticism of official English in that journal to protest that modern novelists are at least equally open to censure. Many people will agree with his protest, but his illustrations are not particularly convincing because they are drawn from a type of novel which is not specially representative of contemporary fiction.

Thus he takes exception to writers whose characters "spring" in and out of taxis, whose young girls "trip," whose locomotives "snort"; and especially falls foul of the phrases "double-locking doors," and "the selection of a cigarette from a pocket case." But these, at the worst are harmless "clichés" which could be paralleled by the practice of many Victorian novelists. They lack distinction, they are not always in strict correspondence with the facts of life, but they are not likely to be successful in the "Ignoble Prize" competition conducted every month in *Scribner's Magazine*.

They are not nearly bad enough to be placed on an index of forbidden and abhorrent words. In my opinion those novelists are far more vulnerable who cannot write a page without dragging in the jargon of modern psychology—"inhibitions," "urge," and above all "awareness."

Colonel Norris G. Osborn, the brilliant and accomplished editor of the New Haven *Journal Courier*, sends me the following letter which may arouse some of my readers:

Remember one time I suggested to you that you ask in your monthly article in SCRIBNER'S if anyone nowadays reads Charles Lever. As I told you at that time I quite inadvertently drew out one of his volumes from my shelves to be thoroughly delighted again in Charles O'Malley. Since then I have dipped into others to find an everlasting delight. I am curious to know whether he has been adopted by readers in general.

Miss Eliza B. Sears, of Buffalo, joins the Faery Queene Club. She spent all her money, including car-fare, to buy the five volumes at a bookstore, and carried them three miles to her home.

A tribute to Ibsen on the radio is paid by Katharine F. Dewey, of Yonkers, New York:

I have just been reading the February SCRIBNER'S. Your comments on Ibsen interested me especially in the light of a recent experience.

Three or four weeks ago I heard "Ghosts" over my radio. I don't think I ever had so vivid a sense of reality in seeing a play (not even "The Wild Duck"). It was as if I were overhearing real people in the poignant development of their fate. Imagination supplied the personality and setting without the inevitable artificiality of the stage.

It seems to me this is a rigorous test of the verity and power of the dramatist, and Ibsen comes out of it triumphant.

Professor Frederick A. Pottle, of Yale, gives me interesting information about Boswell's "Life of Johnson":

It may be of interest to your readers, especially those of Scandinavian extraction, to learn that there is now being published by Albert Bonnier, Stockholm, a

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monumental unabridged translation into Swedish of *Boswell's Life of Johnson.* The translator is Dr. Harold Heyman, a Swedish scholar now living in Paris. The first volume, which is all that is now ready, brings the *Life* down to 1753; it contains nearly two hundred pages of introduction, 360 of text, and more than 150 illustrations. The whole work is being done on the scale of Birkbeck Hill's great English edition of 1887, and will, when complete, extend to five volumes—possibly six, if Dr. Heyman includes, as he now hopes to, the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides.*

Incredible as it sounds, this will be the first complete translation of the *Life of Johnson* into *any* foreign tongue. In 1797 a German blue-stocking by the name of Liebeskind planned an abridgment of the work in three volumes. She published the first, but her book seems to have failed; at any rate, she went no further. In 1851 the Russian critic Druzhinin published in Russian a long critical essay, "Johnson and Boswell" which translates considerable extracts from both the *Life of Johnson* and the *Tour to the Hebrides.* This, I believe, is the sum total of the previous attempts at translation of Boswell's masterpiece.

There is probably no other English classic of the magnitude of the *Life of Johnson* so absolutely unknown to the non-English-speaking world. To assign a reason for this indifference is a nice critical problem.

The death of Alfred Ollivant on January 17 was a severe loss to English literature. He was the author of the best dog-story ever written, "Bob, Son of Battle," which is an imperishable classic. It is interesting to remember that although written by an Englishman for English people, it made no stir in Great Britain until years after it had an established reputation in America. Of his other novels, the most original is "Redcoat Captain," which I never tire of recommending to persons who are gifted with imagination. Mr. Ollivant was an invalid, possessed of indomitable courage, optimism, and faith in mankind. I take pleasure in quoting from an English journal the following tribute to him by a friend, Mr. Barclay Baron:

> In 1914 came the happiness of his marriage, and then the war. He volunteered for war service, and, instead, found himself in a sanatorium in Switzerland, condemned to inaction until the war was over. Since 1919, in London or in Sussex, Alfred Ollivant pursued his unconquerable, unseen way of life—a ways with some writing on hand, refusing to the last to be accounted an invalid "on the shelf." Neighbours and friends took their doubts and depressions to him, and to see him enter the room on his crutches, or to receive his welcome from the bed where he lay, immovable by the open window, was an unfailing tonic to them. For this sick man was full of health, and bent all his desires and all the powers of his mind and spirit towards the healing of the world's ills. Above all, he trusted passionately in the future; he was constantly sustained by his belief in the rising generation and by his clear faith in the new day coming. He strove to express this in his last book, finished before his death, and now about to be published. The title, "To-morrow," may stand as the motto of his life-long optimism. If the public thinks of Alfred Ollivant as a writer of stimulating stories, his friends will remember, above all, the man—a soldier, disabled but never out of action, a prophet when they had great need of one, a high and abiding example to them of fortitude, gentleness, and faith in God and men.

The Reverend Doctor John Haynes Holmes, of New York, who, whether one always agrees with him or not, is a courageous, sincere, and powerful advocate of idealism in life and letters, says that in the future the decade from 1920 to 1930 will be known as "The Dirty Decade." Dirt in the subways, dirt in the streets, dirt in modern novels, dirt in the newspapers, dirt on the stage. It is an accurate appellation, and we deserve it. One redeeming thought is that we recognize its justice. The cap fits; let us put it on, and look in the mirror.

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WHEN Carpeaux's famous group of La Danse was erected against the façade of the Paris Opera in the 60's some scandalized vandal broke a bottle of ink upon it, and this was only one incident in a fusillade of protest. Yet within a comparatively few years of the sculptor's death there was established in the Louvre a "Salle Carpeaux." The swift transition from obloquy to "la gloire" is characteristic of the career of this Frenchman. Its lights and its shadows are very sharply contrasted. He would excite violent opposition and then Fortune would smile upon him. There is something typical in the experience of the Goncourts where he is involved. Their first impression of him was unfavorable, as an entry in the *Journal* for 1865 clearly indicates, but a later foot-note records that they came to consider him the greatest French artist of the nineteenth century. That is in its turn perhaps too fervid a judgment, but Carpeaux's eminence in plastic art nevertheless remains indisputable, and there is bound to be impressive recognition of it by his countrymen this month when his centenary is celebrated. The French always make much of such occasions. There are official observances, the periodical press is full of eulogy, and in every way a nation that is dedicated to the arts is quick to honor a notable artist. Carpeaux's fame, indeed, extends well beyond his native land, and though it has been a little obscured by that of Rodin, I need make no apology for recalling it here.

JEAN-BAPTISTE CARPEAUX was born at Valenciennes, Watteau's town, on May 11, 1827. M. Mabille de Poncheville, in his "Carpeaux Inconnu," has piously assembled all the available souvenirs of the artist's infancy and youth in a *milieu* which had possibly less influence upon his subject than the zealous biographer imagines. That is to say, I cannot perceive in Carpeaux's art anything precisely attributable to traits in the air at Valenciennes, unless possibly he caught there some faint reverberations of the genius of Watteau. But in ponderable matters there is no ignoring his alliance with his native place. His people there belonged to the industrial class. His father was a mason with certain aspirations, as is denoted by his willingness to have his son Charles turn violinist. But one artist in the family was enough, and Jean-Baptiste, whose fingers precociously itched to touch clay, was destined to get at it only after a good deal of discouragement. The Carpeauxs were very poor, and an artistic predilection was a luxury to be grudgingly indulged even if it were to be allowed at all. In so far as the indigent stone-mason was inclined to yield to the lad's wish, he preferred to see him an architect, that vocation, I suppose, holding out a little better prospect of material advantage. It was in the direction of architecture that the young Carpeaux was allowed to make some study at Valenciennes.

In 1844, when he was still in his teens, the whole family went up to Paris seeking betterment, and though conditions there were still full of hardship, so that we read of him actually serving as a porter in the Halles, all obstacles were presently broken down, and we find him a pupil at "l'Ecole Royale," familiarly known as the little Ecole des Beaux Arts, presided over by one Belloc, a friend of Ingres. Drawing and mathematics were supposed to be the particular objects of his study, but he contrived to find some play for his plastic instincts, and even in this formative period he could produce modest decorative pieces for commercial purposes and thereby earn a few sous. Meanwhile the external benefits accruing from his tie with Valenciennes were slowly developing. Friendly souls there, hearing of his plight, interested themselves, and from time to time helpful sums were forthcoming. I wonder if the strug-

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