

AS I LIKE IT—*William Lyon Phelps*

IN the year 1906 two excellent novels appeared in England which gave their authors both popularity and fame—"Joseph Vance," by William De Morgan, and "The Man of Property," by John Galsworthy. One of the first notable men in England to recognize the distinction of the latter book was the late Alfred Ollivant, author of the finest dog-story ever written—"Bob, Son of Battle." He was a good friend of mine, and when I wrote to him urging him to read "Joseph Vance," I received the following reply, written from Eastbourne, August 18, 1907.

I have not read "Joseph Vance" yet. Thank you for telling me about him. He has been well reviewed here in the considerable papers but I have not heard him talked about probably because I live a very secluded life, and know no literary folk. But curiously enough, two days after getting your letter I heard from Henry Jackson, the Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge, and perhaps our biggest scholar now Jebb is dead, and he advised me to read the book as being notable. And I shall certainly do so.

The literary sensation here to my mind has been the publication of a book called "The Country House" by a man called Galsworthy. It is the truth to say that I had not read a page before I found myself saying—"Here is a new mind." And further reading confirmed my first impression. In the first place G. is a consummate artist—how rare for an Englishman. I have heard him compared to Flaubert. In the second place he is soaked in our great modern idea of Evolution. It is this last characteristic which puts him in a place by himself, and distinguishes him from his contemporaries, and from those who have gone before. I may say I have been waiting for his coming for years. He is the first big mind who has applied the vast resources thrown open to the gaze of the men of our generation by Science to literature—perhaps it would be more accurate to say the first big Anglo-Saxon mind. Some of his effects in this kind are marvellous. He has written several books, but only two of note, I fancy—"The Country House" and "The Man of Property." The second is very strong, almost brutal. It is a purely critical book; there is no creative beauty about it; but G's genius is essentially critical. At the same time he is on our side, the side of the angels, right enough. And if he is brutal, it is with the brutality of the surgeon. He destroys to make alive. The other book has more poetry in it. Do get them and let me know what you think of them.

Mark Twain received a tremendous ovation from the undergraduates at Oxford when taking his degree there—far greater than Kipling.

I must have written him that I preferred "The

Man of Property" rather than "The Country House" (as I did and do), for on October 17, 1907, he wrote

As to "The Country House" I think one reason I like it so much is that it deals with the life I know best. Then again I think you hardly do justice to Mrs. Pendyce and her charm. There is true beauty, true romance, about her. Moreover up and down the book there are passages of poetry which say all manner of mysterious things to me—the dying rabbit bit, the bits about the race-horse, bits here and there about flowers. They whisper to me of the Oneness of things. Galsworthy is the first novelist I have come across who really understands the doctrine of Evolution; and for that alone, apart from his critical insight, his bitter humour, his philosophy, his work is for me remarkable.

I am quite sure that some readers will snort when they see Galsworthy called brutal—but in comparison with other novels published during the early years of this century, I can understand how "The Man of Property" seemed to Mr. Ollivant "very strong." And after all, it is stronger than many vociferous novels of these latter days—and seems to have enough virility and vitality to outlive more sensational works.

In 1909, "Observer," in the London *Daily Mail*, made the following comment:

Of all quickly made reputations, that of Mr. John Galsworthy is one of the most remarkable. A few, a very few, years ago only the really initiated ever heard of such a person; today, it may be proclaimed, both as playwright and novelist, Mr. Galsworthy occupies the central chair in the Areopagus of English letters for all-round talent and brilliancy. The case is an unusual one. Not many men succeed in fiction and the drama. . . . Now Mr. Galsworthy has succeeded in both these arts. And more. Not only does he practice them both, but he practices them both at one and the same time. . . . Yet another curious thing. He has had no failures, no positive stoppage or set back, and this is the more remarkable because he has never pandered to popular taste.

Indeed the quantity and quality of Mr. Galsworthy's production in the ten years beginning with 1906 are astonishing. "The Man of Property," "The Country House," "Fraternity," "The Patriarchian," "The Dark Flower," "The Freeland," together with the following plays: "The Silver Box," "Strife," "Justice," "The Pigeon," "The Fugitive," "The Mob."

When Mr. Galsworthy finished writing "The Man of Property" and published it in 1906, he had no thought of going on with the Forsyte family; but either because these men and women interested him more than his subsequent creations, or because there was a widespread and sharp demand from his readers, he went back to this family; and his career as a novelist reached its climax exactly ten years ago, when he published "The Forsyte Saga" in 1922.

So far as one can judge, this book has a good chance for permanent fame. As a novel, it contains his most vital characters; as a social document, it ranks with "Jean Christophe," by Romain Rolland. If future historians wish to chronicle the political, artistic, commercial and social life of England from 1875 to 1920, they will find this work invaluable.

The development of the character of Soames Forsyte from an offensive, even disgusting boor to a sensible, kindly English gentleman runs parallel to the ripening personality of his author. I used to think that the title of one of Mr. Galsworthy's earliest books, "The Island Pharisees," might stand as a label for his complete works; his point of view, as recognized both in British and in German literary criticism, was sufficiently satirical to be called bitter; in his later works, he has mellowed and looks out on life with sympathy and charity. It is natural perhaps that with the gain in understanding has come a loss in cutting edge. This makes some of his later works—in comparison with the strong, almost putrid meat of contemporary novels—seem mild.

If Mr. Paul Cohen-Portheim is correct in saying that the finest flower of evolution is the English Gentleman, I do not know what better illustration of the type we could find than Mr. Galsworthy himself. Coming from an old and distinguished English family, he went through the regular degrees—public school at Harrow, New College at Oxford, the law, foreign travel. His pictures of English society are correct, because he has always "belonged."

In his latest novel, "Maid in Waiting," a thoroughly expert, competent piece of work, with living characters saying and doing things appropriate to their position, temperament, and class, we have a family album of portraits. Into this exclusive circle of English gentry bursts an outsize American, overflowing with irritating vitality. Although a university professor, he is one hundred per cent

masculine. His tremendous vigor, his ruthless scorn of nerves, his Rooseveltian emphasis on the virtues of reckless courage, vehement energy, and resolution, make him dominate every group. Instead of a pleasant breeze on a sultry day, it is as if he opened the windows in winter, and made all the company shiver in a distressing draught. The reticent, well-bred British ladies and gentlemen regard him with that inner horror which the quiet man feels for the genial backslapper. Such unpleasant contact was described once for all in the Bible.

He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him (Proverbs, 27:14).

In the early stages of this novel, I wondered if Mr. Galsworthy, who has done more than almost any other English writer to establish and preserve understanding and goodwill between English and Americans, had finally joined the large company of those who delight in representing Americans as vulgar and pushful. But as the story develops, we see that the American's excellent qualities change the attitude of his English acquaintances from hostility to cordial friendship.

Mr. Galsworthy's latest play "The Roof" is now published. There will, perhaps, always be a mystery concerning the relation of Vicki Baum's play "Grand Hotel" to "The Roof." I believe "The Roof" was written first.

This is a good time to buy a set of Galsworthy's works, either in the most expensive or least expensive form.



Those who are on the lookout for the "leafage and branchage" of a new poet, should secure, while it is still possible, a sonnet sequence called "Westward" by Harold Cooper, only two hundred copies printed, and published by the Athens Press at Iowa City, Iowa. Mr. Cooper is a graduate of the University of Cambridge; he spent one year studying at Yale and another at Princeton, at both of which places he introduced the English game of Rugby football. He is now instructor in English at Iowa City. This little book contains fifty-one love-sonnets, written with such passion in feeling and such beauty of language, as to make me believe in the arrival of another Poet.

A new Life of Ibsen in two volumes is by Halv-

dan Koht, translated from the Norwegian by Ruth Lina McMahon and Hanna Astrup Larsen. It is copiously illustrated and some of the portraits of Ibsen have not been seen in America hitherto. It is a reliable and readable biography.

Our American novelist, Joseph Hergesheimer, has turned from writing novels on American history to American history itself. His "Sheridan—A Military Narrative," with an elaborate bibliography and excellent index, should take its position as a standard work. As might be expected, it is admirably written; sensational and theatrical effects are studiously avoided, but it carries the reader on a swift current. What the author says of "Sheridan's Ride" will be found particularly interesting. I remember how in schooldays we used to belch that poem out at "declamation exercises." When I was ten years old, at school in Providence, I remember a young lady telling me that when General Sheridan made a triumphal progress through Providence some years after the war, she, a little girl, recited this poem in the open air, while Sheridan listened attentively. At the close, she was brought to him and he kissed her *coram publico*.

Mr. Hergesheimer gives a vivid account of Sheridan's various campaigns and battles, and conspicuously avoids the conventional summary at the close. The reader may summarize for himself.

I commend to all intelligent and thoughtful readers the philosophical remarks on war that appear on pages 42 and 43. However much we may detest war, it is evident that a general to be successful, must not and cannot spare his men; he must not even think of them as individual souls; but only as masses to be hurled or deployed or drilled, "without a thought of their possible importance and personal divinity." Mr. Hergesheimer believes that McClellan was a failure because he was reluctant to lead his men to slaughter. A competent commander must not consider such things.

It is curious to observe, since the war of 1914-1918, the enormous and ever-growing prestige of the American generals of our civil war. If we may judge by expert foreign military opinion, five Americans in one local war—Lee, Jackson, Grant, Sherman, Sheridan—stand higher in military annals than any general from any country in the war between nations. I know nothing about this myself; I am merely recording the opinions of experts.

"Hatter's Castle," by A. J. Cronin, a very long novel dealing with one of the most despicable men ever created by a fictioneer, has received immense acclaim. It is admirably written; but in the endeavor to harrow the feelings of readers and to show what a hellish thing human life is, I wonder if the author has not somewhat overshot his mark, especially in describing the circumstances leading up to the birth of Mary's child. Anyhow, we must all love Mary, for she is the only lovable character in the narrative. I love her so much myself that I did not mind in the least when her High School sister hanged herself; because I was so absorbed in seeing what was going to happen to Mary.

So far as I know, there is no living person whom I really hate intensely or continuously. Perhaps this is not well for me. Perhaps there is an antiseptic quality about hate that may be valuable. Hence one reason why I like "Hatter's Castle," which my friend Percy Hammond calls the "world's worst novel," is my hatred for its hero. I can give hatred here its full and unqualified fury.

I believe that of all human characteristics, I dislike most of all cruelty and intolerance; the average person suffers so much anyhow that it seems to me abominable for any one deliberately to torture either his body or his mind. Hence also my disgust for war. There is such an enormous amount of hideous and apparently unavoidable suffering in the world, it seems to me the last extreme of folly for thousands of individuals to go out looking for it; especially when they go out toward anguish, crippling, blinding, idiocy, death, with bands playing sentimental music and ladies waving handkerchiefs. Golly! what a world!



Professional clergymen have the admirable custom of producing sons and daughters who write excellent novels, poems, and plays; but the clergymen seldom write these things themselves. They are too busy living to write about life. Yet the Reverend Victor Whitechurch in England writes charming murder stories; and the Reverend Robert Norwood in America writes authentic poetry. If you doubt this, let me suggest that you read Doctor Norwood's latest book of verse called "Issa."

Hamlin Garland continues his entertaining literary autobiography in a new volume, called "Com-

panions on the Trail." All who enjoy literary gossip and anecdotes of men and women famous in the world of letters, will have a good time in these pages. There should be an index—perhaps there will be one in the final volume.

Two beautiful art books have appeared recently, which will be a fine addition to any private or public library—a quarto with handsome letter-press and twenty-four full-page plates, called "Claude Monet." The second is folio size, "The Legend of St. Francis as Depicted in the Assisi Frescoes" and faithfully copied (in colors) by Edith M. Cowles, with a foreword by G. K. Chesterton. Anybody with some money in his pocket who should see either one or both of these books would not keep the money. Temptation is no word for it.

By the will of the late Avery Hopwood, some magnificent prizes are offered annually to students at the University of Michigan. It is hoped that ambitious young writers will come to the University to study English, and that graduate and undergraduate students already in residence may be freed from financial difficulties by winning one of these prizes. For the present academic year four prizes of \$2,500 *each* are offered for the best plays, poems, fiction, or essays; and eight prizes of \$250 each. Any one interested may learn the conditions by writing to the English Department of the University of Michigan.



Those who remember the first appearance (1890) of William Watson's magnificent poem "Wordsworth's Grave," greeted by the aged Tennyson with the remark "Always it is verses, verses, but now at last comes a poet," will be grieved to know that Sir William is in dire need for the bare necessities of life. In England a committee has been formed, among whose members are Lascelles Abercrombie, Sir James Barrie, Walter de la Mare, John Galsworthy, Rudyard Kipling, Bernard Shaw and others, to raise a sum sufficient to keep the poet's declining years free from absolute want. A good deal of money has been raised, but more is needed; and if any Americans wish to help (I do) they may send contributions to the Honorable Robert Underwood Johnson, 26 East 55th Street, New York. The fund will be administered by an English Com-

mittee, who in their appeal send out the following poem, composed years ago by Watson.

JUST A POSSIBILITY

I'll take life's hazards, rue not hours well wasted,
Hide my heart's wounds, ask no miraculous balm;
And ere I die, perhaps I shall have tasted
At last a little calm.

If one prefers to send directly to England, the organizer and honorary secretary is F. C. Owlett, 14 Queen Victoria Street, London.



Mrs. Herbert L. Hill, of New York:

An acquaintance of mine used to coach each summer the two sons of Professor Plum of Amherst—the boys being deficient in credits in mathematics. One morning she found on her desk the enclosed rhyme. They might be deficient in mathematics but they certainly excelled in other subjects.

Comes summer, come again these sums—
Each summer more sums for these Plums—
No winter of our discontent
Was e'er in such vexation spent
As to our summers sums have lent.
Somewhere some sumless summers shine,
Consummate sum of joy divine.
O were such sumless summers mine!

Here is a good letter for these times from Gerald Stanley Lee, and also a quotation from "How I Came to Write This Book," the book being "Heathen Rage" (1931).

My dear Billy

Isn't it pitiful? I agree with Wells that economists and experts must—when they get permission from the people to do it—rearrange the world but in a great emotional crisis of the nations why should literary men abscond from literature—from expressing and releasing the hearts of men—and why should our prophets back down out of their pulpits and leave the planet in the hands of the economists—when the only way to get the people to let the economists do what should be done, is to have books written and sermons preached in which the faith of men in one another is exultantly expressed and the credit of man and the reputation of God defended in his world!

A PRAYER FOR A BOOK

I see forty nations choking themselves to death with ships, poison gas, guns and godlessness . . . people afraid of their own governments . . . afraid of their churches . . . afraid of their banks. . . . I see picture-temples,

radio-prophets, whispering tabloids, nightclub altars, Aimee McPherson saints, Shaw-religions, Ghandi-economics, boy choirs, jazz and lullabies, Stalin-saviors, Musolinis, Al Capones, Charlie Chaplins, Jimmy Walkers, Borahs and Banks of England standing helpless by! . . . and Prayers and Statistics and Commissions and Omissions, and I see the man in the street go by feeling beerless, feeling bookless, bankless, leaderless, one hand on a rosary, one hand on a tin box fleeing from The Fear behind him to The Fear That stalks ahead. . . . And Wall Street lifting up its eyes to Heaven wanting some one in the next few days to write a bible or something—a hearty serene believing book, which will restore The Credit of Human Nature, which will take Fear—forty kinds of fear, forty nations of fear out of the hearts of the people. . . .

From Roy Murray, of Chicago:

Cats are not altogether stupid when they refuse to leave a tree after being chased there. In the presence of an enemy it is a safety measure. At tree climbing they are one-way animals. If they do not jump from the tree they must come down as they ascended—head up.

Squirrels have swivel-jointed ankles. When they come down a tree head first the claws are in the same position as when they ascended. Cats are not so fortunate.

I did not know that squirrels had swivel-jointed ankles. But I once saw a cat run straight down the trunk of a tree, as easily as a squirrel. But it had a rifle-bullet through its brain.

From J. Henderson, of New York City:

I see on p. 554 of the Nov. SCRIBNER's that you question the English origin of continental bathrooms. If you consider the matter of any importance, and will think it over, you will find, I believe, that the English put in the *first* bathroom, and that the *second*, to the two hundred and second, came through America. One bathroom to a house is a real innovation, two to a house is just a convenient and comfortable addition. As to evidence, see Prince Bülow's Memoirs on the English princes, and the sanitary condition of Prussian palaces. You are regarding matters from an aspect of 20 or 30 years, which is too short.

It was the first bathroom in a house that really counted. The others just came—the *possibility* of being clean as compared to the *easiness* of being clean.

But it was not a bathroom in a house that I was discussing. I was discussing hotels that had rooms with private baths. So far as one bath goes, either for a house or in a hotel for general use, I suppose the Romans had that.

From a correspondent in Chicago:

Now a much more serious matter. In a recent SCRIBNER you took occasion to speak as a champion of a classic garment now somewhat in disrepute. You shivered a lance for the nightgown of the male anthropoid. My humble and abashed valor stirred within me. Instantly I took heart, I burned to organize something—"Cooperative Society of the Masculine Nightgown, Inc." (*In corpore delicti*)—or anything, but something. I fostered a growing insurgency—I just had to join something.

Meanwhile, what are you doing about it? I am much het up. Rightly? Believe me. A spirited granddaughter had been reproved by me. She entered my bedroom. There I stood helplessly, clad in innocence and my compendious *robe de nuit*. Scornfully she looked me over and witheringly exclaimed:

"Grandfather, you're a fussy old man, and you wear a woman's nightgown."

Mehercule! Phelps of Yale, what are we going to do about it?

A former pupil, Harry Dodge, Yale 1905, writes from the neighborhood of Phoenix, Ariz., a town I have always wanted to see. Both Mr. Galsworthy and Mr. Granville-Barker believe the climate to be celestial.

I am in the desert a few miles from Phoenix,—a wonderful climate, and the day or two I saw of the town opened my eyes to a wonderful city. Believe it or not, the citizens call themselves "Phœnicians." I said to one of them yesterday that I presumed it was because they put so much Sidon that they became Tyreing. The local paper had your picture a few days ago, in your library chair with your dog. It was captioned "Literature and Dogma." I showed it to one of my fellow lungers here, an editor of a St. Louis newspaper, and he thought it should have been called "The Sitter and the Setter."

BOOKS MENTIONED IN ABOVE ARTICLE, WITH NAMES OF PUBLISHERS

"Maid in Waiting," by John Galsworthy. Scribners. \$2.50.
 "The Roof," by John Galsworthy. Scribners. \$1.
 "Sheridan," by J. Hergesheimer. Houghton Mifflin. \$4.
 "Westward," by Harold Cooper. Athens Press, Iowa City.
 "Life of Ibsen," 2 vols., by H. Koht. Norton. \$7.50.
 "Companions on the Trail," by Hamlin Garland. Macmillan. \$3.50.

"Hatter's Castle," by A. J. Cronin. Little, Brown. \$2.50.
 "The Legend of St. Francis," by Edith M. Cowles. Dutton. \$10.
 "Claude Monet," by Xenia Lathom. Macmillan. \$5.
 "Issa," by Robert Norwood. Scribners. \$2.50.
 "Heathen Rage," by G. S. Lee. R. R. Smith. \$2.50.

STRAWS IN THE WIND

Significant notes in American life to-day

THE United States had between one and a half and two million unemployed the month before the fateful October, 1929, and in the ensuing winter the number of jobless probably doubled. But the press of the country, except of course the small and ineffective radical journals, manifested no awareness of the national unemployment situation till March, 1930.

Then, of a sudden, unemployment hit the front page everywhere, because on March 6 the Communists staged large "hunger demonstrations" in various cities. Some of the demonstrations—the one in New York, for instance—were extremely impressive and culminated in riots, during which the police rode down people and clubbed them.

The Red mob-steerers possess a keen instinct for doing things which result in publicity. In the March 6 demonstration, as well as in some later ones, they purposely so manipulated matters as to provoke the police—no difficult matter—to charge the mobs with clubs, knowing that riots and bleeding heads almost invariably led the press to print sensational front-page "stories" and pictures. The publicity which resulted from the riots, of course, was not of the most favorable kind, but then "bad" publicity often is better than no publicity at all. As unfavorable as were most write-ups, picture captions and editorials about those early Communist riots, they began to force the unemployment situation, growing steadily worse, on the national consciousness.

Late in March and early in April, 1930, there were more demonstrations and riots in various cities, and unemployment stayed on the front pages of even the most conservative papers till the middle of April, when it was relegated for about two weeks to inside pages. On May first more riots occurred and, as if by magic, labor and unemployment once again reached the front page and editorial writers began to take notice of the situation, some of them going so far as to question Mr. Hoover's optimism. But by mid-May the labor problem was off page one once more, to stay off it till early fall.

THE PAPERS PRINT THE RIOTS

By Louis Adamic

In September the Reds again demonstrated and provoked the police to club them; they raided Salvation Army stores in Manhattan and Brooklyn and grocery stores in Oklahoma City and Akron, Ohio—and, presto! front page again for labor and unemployment. Largely, it seems to me, as a result of this publicity, Mr. Hoover admitted in October that there was a national unemployment emergency, and in December the official Washington estimate of the number of jobless in the United States was six million.

From November, 1930, to March, 1931, unemployment was front-page "stuff" in the large cities on an average of twice weekly. The various relief organizations got no end of valuable newspaper space. But one who takes the trouble of going through the files of New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and Philadelphia papers for those months, notices this striking fact—that unemployment and jobless relief were played up in a specially big way on the front pages for three or four days immediately after every Communist demonstration, food raid, or riot.

The Communist leaders' main purpose in staging the demonstrations, in organizing food raids, and in engaging their followers in battles with the cops, of course, was not to rouse the country to a realization of the critical situation, but to advance their cause, not so much here as abroad, by sending out greatly exaggerated reports of riots and trying to make the proletariat in other countries believe that the American workers were about to join them in a world revolution. Nonetheless, by dramatizing the situation with violence, they forced

the press in America to play up unemployment, to inflict it upon the public mind, and to compel responsible government and civic leaders to pull their ostrich heads out of the sand.

Millions of jobless and work-eager people were not newsworthy in the eyes of the press in any big way—or at least the press did not become acutely cognizant of their existence and their plight—until the situation was dramatized or intensified with violence and bloodshed. Quietly suffering millions are not news; they are not dramatic enough. When one of them commits suicide in some alley, he gets possibly three lines on page ten. But when a mob raids a food store, or a few of them get their heads banged up, that is front-page news; that is dramatic.

Which, I think, is rather interesting, especially since the newspapers are inclined to get morally indignant when labor or radical groups resort or provoke the police to violence. Publishers and editors do not realize that by playing up largely news of violence and ignoring most of the non-violent labor news, they indirectly—and unwittingly, of course—urge labor to violence. Yet this obviously is so, not only in the great matter of nation-wide unemployment, but also in local strikes and other disputes between capital and labor.

For nearly three years the labor conditions in the bituminous regions of West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Kentucky were worse than slavery conditions eighty years ago which produced the Civil War. But they were not important news to the American press—not even to such liberal journals as *The Nation* and *The New Republic*—until last summer, when the miners heaved up violently and bombs began to explode and some eight or ten pickets were butchered by the "Cossacks."

Evil labor conditions or even strikes in the United States are big news, as a rule, only after either the workers or the police, or both, employ violence. Last spring I happened to witness an intensely dramatic and complicated dispute in the anthracite towns of Penn-