

# AS I LIKE IT—William Lyon Phelps

THE award of the Nobel Prize to John Galsworthy was received with general satisfaction. His literary career began at the beginning of the century (the publications of 1897 and 1898 are of interest only to the biographer) and in 1906, with the appearance of "The Man of Property," he found himself famous. At that time he had no intention of writing anything more about the Forsytes; but the preference of thousands of readers was as intelligent as it was insistent; it was a happy day in English literature when he once more put that family on paper. Assembling five works in one volume in 1922 and giving it the faintly ironical title "The Forsyte Saga," he made what seems to be a permanent contribution to English fiction. He has had many imitators during the last ten years; but there are, in our century, only two "era" works of high distinction, "Jean Christophe" by Romain Rolland and "The Forsyte Saga" by John Galsworthy.

When I was in London in 1928 I picked up the morning newspaper and saw the headline

## DEATH OF SOAMES FORSYTE

the most gratifying compliment that any writer of our time has received.

And now, whether he wants to or not, he must live with the Forsytes until death do them part. His novel of 1932, "Flowering Wilderness," makes up in steady interest whatever it may lack otherwise. From first page to last, it holds the reader's attention, the touch of melodrama being as exciting as it is improbable. In this book we enjoy a novel written with the refreshing competence of a master.

Outside of the fortunes of the Forsytes, among the novels of Mr. Galsworthy I prefer "The Patrician."

If Mr. Galsworthy had never written a novel, he would still deserve the Nobel Prize. This rather bold assertion is based on his admirable plays; for in the magnificent florescence of the British theatre between 1892 and 1914, he has a garden of his own. Where he learned "the technique of the drama" I do not know; but the glorious year 1906, which

saw that masterpiece of fiction, "The Man of Property," also saw his first play, "The Silver Box," revealing a first-rate dramatist. 1906 was a red-letter year.

"The Silver Box," "Strife," "Justice," "The Pigeon," "The Skin Game," "Loyalties"—among living men only Barrie and Shaw have equalled John Galsworthy as dramatist.

His verse is respectable rather than remarkable; but his essays are very fine. There is a good reason for giving him the Nobel Prize, apart from his work as dramatist and novelist; he fulfills the intention of the original donor. Although John Galsworthy is a one hundred per cent Englishman in ancestry, breeding, and education, he is an internationalist. To him foreigners are human; as intelligent, *even as trustworthy*, as Englishmen.

Mr. Galsworthy is one of the few men now living who write all their work with pen and ink; so that not only his manuscripts—which he carefully preserves—will have value because he wrote them, but in time they may be noteworthy as twentieth-century curiosities.

Two Englishmen, two Irishmen, and one American have received the Nobel Prize. The English language may dominate the world in other respects, but it does not seem to overawe the Nobel Committee.

Mr. Galsworthy's great contemporary, Sir James Barrie, returns to prose fiction for the first time in thirty years, with the publication of "Farewell Miss Julie Logan." This is in the fourth dimension, of imagination all compact. No one but Barrie could have conceived it and certainly no one else could have made so fantastic a dream so vivid. It takes us back over forty years to "The Little Minister." Incidentally I learned more new words than I have from any English book in a long while. The Scots language has peculiar felicities; I wish I knew it better. It comes as naturally from Barrie as ghost-stories from A.E. When the latter gentleman appeared in my house, I rather expected to see him accompanied with a leprechaun.

The accomplished Percival Christopher Wren delights his enormous and

loyal constituency by writing another novel on the French Foreign Legion, and at the same time granting a wish I expressed in these columns three years ago, that he would continue the history of the prize-fighting hero of "Soldiers of Misfortune." He has done both in "Valiant Dust," a ripping yarn of adventure, filled to the last page with excitement.

New murder-stories that will hold you in thrall are "Valcour Meets Murder," by the dependable Rufus King; and "Rope to Spare," by Philip MacDonald. Works of this kind I select carefully; I have had the bad luck lately to read six would-be thrillers that were intended to "distil me almost to jelly with the act of fear"—but they didn't jell. Nothing is worse than a dull murder story.

The second volume of Arnold Bennett's "Journal," covering the years 1911-1920, is even better than the first. His observations are acute; whatever one may think of his novels and plays, he was a born journalist. He told me in 1912 in London that he would certainly visit America again, and possibly he would have done so if it had not been for the interruption of the war. I have seen reviews of these two volumes of the "Journal" which complain that they are commonplace. I find them extraordinarily interesting—not a dull entry. His conversations with Barrie, Hardy, Wells, Moore, Shaw, etc., are thrilling. The Journal abounds in good stories—Mrs. Patrick Campbell, after being rebuked by Shaw at a rehearsal of one of his plays, said "You are a terrible man, Mr. Shaw. One day you'll eat a beef-steak, and then God help all women."

Recently I heard that on a certain occasion Bennett came up to E. F. Benson, and said "I have just been reading your latest book, and it is plain you can't write." Benson replied, "When I took up your latest book, I found I couldn't read."

Esmé Wingfield-Stratford's "The Victorian Sunset" is not nearly so good as its predecessor, "Those Earnest Victorians." It bears the marks of haste and of something more unfortunate—the determination to finish a job.

As this is about the time when those who migrate in the winter are thinking of Bermuda, I take pleasure in recommending a book on that beautiful island that seems to me ideal, "The Story of Bermuda," by Hudson Strode. This is a sumptuous volume of nearly four hundred pages in large type, embellished with *seventy-five* illustrations. It is divided into the following sections—History, Bermuda Today, Writers on and in Bermuda, Architecture, Gardens. The full-page pictures are superb; and as Mr. Strode is a scholar and man of letters, the prose style is worthy of the scenery.

An able and decidedly readable survey of the present condition of literature, with conjectures as to its immediate future, is found in a smallish book "The Outlook for Literature" by Professor A. H. Thorndike of Columbia. "The one safe prediction that can be made of the literature of the future is that it will go on increasing in quantity." Long before the Christian era, a philosopher made the petulant remark, "Of making many books there is no end," just as one hundred years ago people complained of the "roar" of the crowded streets of cities. As Carlyle shouted at the top of his voice to proclaim the wisdom of silence, as Bernard Shaw spoke half an hour over his allotted time to proclaim the folly of public speaking, so the only way to call public attention to the excess of books is to print another. Professor Thorndike is not going to be disturbed because of the thousands of new books, because of their indecency or vulgarity, or in fact because of anything. He has the wise attitude of accepting what cannot be altered, and commenting thereupon. Speaking of the popularity of contemporary pessimism, he says "the original Puritans were not more lacking in geniality and urbanity or more vociferous in their objurations. . . . Surely this is a passing mood, for even if the world seems very ill, it can't be any worse than it has often been before, and it may still incite hope and humor."

As to the increasing custom of printing words in books that used to be seen only on fences, Mr. Thorndike says, "nothing is more tedious than the repetition of sexual indecencies, or, let us say, improprieties. The sensation produced by a word tabooed in polite society cannot survive its frequent recur-

rence; even the small boy who retires behind the barn to hear himself say naughty words finds the exhibition eventually unexciting."

I recommend to all who are interested in the correct pronunciation of English and in good usage to read the little tract by the scholarly and urbane R. W. Chapman, called "Oxford English." This is a reply to an American accusation; is full of specific instances, and therefore valuable. The dog-letter "R" is one of the chief differences between the English of our Middle West and the English of the Oxford lecture-room; but there are others. The vowel "O" in words like "wrong," for example.

The best one-volume life of Scott that I have seen is "The Laird of Abbotsford," by Dame Una Pope-Hennessy. It is called "An Informal Presentation of Sir Walter Scott." It is exclusively biographical, and as fair an account of his virtues and weaknesses as seems possible. It should serve as a healthy corrective to the devastating attack on Scott by Donald Carswell, called "Scott and his Circle," if it were not for the fact that apparently Hugh Walpole and I are the only persons who have read Carswell's book.

I was talking about Scott at one o'clock in the morning with the Governor of Connecticut, who, it is safe to say, knows more about Scott than the Governor of any other State. We were discussing Scott's irregularities in financial matters, when the Governor said that Scott's action at the end wiped every previous peccadillo off the slate. And so it did. It is well to remember that just as a noble career of thirty years can be destroyed by one foolish or criminal act, so one splendid deed may erase all black marks. Unfortunately the latter is much rarer than the former.

"Love Lyrics from Five Centuries" is a handsome quarto, beautifully printed and illustrated in color. The poems have been chosen by George G. Harrap, the pictures were made by Baron Arild Rosenkrantz, and there is an interesting introduction by John Drinkwater. I wonder why the lovely lyric "There is a Garden in her Face," one of the best poems of Thomas Campion, is ascribed to Richard Allison.

"Life and Lillian Gish," by herself and Albert Bigelow Paine, is a book that will delight many thousands of

readers; and the numerous portraits of Miss Gish in various rôles add to the value of the biography. Her beauty is so impressive that it will become legendary, like that of Mary Anderson. The best thing that has been said about her art as an actress is by George Jean Nathan, who wrote in *Vanity Fair*, "The particular genius of Lillian Gish lies in making the definite charmingly indefinite. . . . The whole secret of the young woman's remarkably effective acting rests, as I have observed, in her carefully devised and skilfully negotiated technique of playing always, as it were, behind a veil of silver chiffon. . . . She is always present, she always dominates the scene, yet one feels somehow that she is ever just out of sight around the corner. One never feels that one is seeing her entirely. There is ever something pleasantly, alluringly missing."

The purest beauty is always elusive. Miss Gish is like the Madonnas of Andrea del Sarto, that we see through a silver mist.

Those critics who insist that she did not *act* in "Uncle Vanya" and in "Carmille" had better consider the words of Mr. Nathan; for she is truly a great artist. No one who has seen her can possibly forget her; and it took adverse critics so many columns to explain why she was not a great actress, that I am reminded of what Oscar Wilde said when Labouchère wrote three columns headed "Exit Oscar": "If it took Labby three columns to prove I was forgotten, then there is no distinction between obscurity and fame."

"Theatre and Friendship: Some Henry James Letters," with a Commentary by Elizabeth Robins, is a book full of charm; furthermore it shows Henry James's intense interest in the theatre. It was one of the disappointments of his life that he could not succeed as a playwright. Bernard Shaw clearly explained why. It was in his *language*, which could not get over the footlights to the ears of the audience.

Here is a book that will please all cultivated people, whether they know much about etching or not—I heard Childe Hassam say the other day that there were many (otherwise intelligent) persons who supposed that etchings were done with pen and ink. Well, this new book is called "The Etching Hobby," is written by William D. Cox, and

explains what most cultivated people will want to know. It is a work primarily for the general reader, but is also valuable for collectors. It has thirty-one excellent reproductions of etchings; and the various chapters are headed "Engraving," "The Lithograph and the Woodcut," "Familiar Marks, Margins, Proofs, Bookplates, Prices," "Contemporary American Etchers," "Contemporary Foreign Etchers," and there are also separate chapters on Albrecht Dürer, Rembrandt, Whistler. This is a book that ought to have been written; so far from being superfluous, it will fill an empty place.

Virginia Woolf has the critical rather than the creative temperament; her essays are stimulating and illuminating. Her latest book, "The Second Common Reader," has essays on Donne, "Robinson Crusoe," James Woodforde the Diarist, Beau Brummell, Thomas Hardy's Novels, and many others. They are just as good as you thought they would be.

If you liked the humor of "1066 and All That," and you liked it if you read it, you will as certainly enjoy another little volume by the same partners—W. C. Sellar and R. J. Yeatman. This is called "And Now All That" and is curiously illustrated by John Reynolds. It is filled with terrific puns and plays on words.

It is generally agreed that in the immediate future there will be plenty of leisure for everybody, whether one wishes it or not, and whether the leisure is voluntary or otherwise. A distinguished scholar, Professor Jacks, made a journey of months through the United States to discuss the proper use of leisure, because he rightly believes that civilization depends on just that thing. Now appears a timely work called "Leisure in the Modern World" by C. Delisle Burnes, written in the manner of a popular address. He discusses leisure for children, for youths, and for adults. If Satan really finds mischief for idle hands to do, Satan is going to be busier than ever; and hitherto he has seemed to be the only person in the universe who has no leisure at all.

Previously I have praised in these columns the Reverend Doctor John Haynes Holmes's edition of Scott's verse; and now, as another tribute to Scott in his centenary year of 1932, we have a selection from his prose, called "The Wa-

verley Pageant," consisting of the best passages from his novels, with introductions by Hugh Walpole, and notes by Wilfred Partington. Hugh Walpole's prefatory remarks are written in a better English style than the chapters they introduce, but Scott does not hold his place in the front rank of English fiction because of stylistic elegance. I wonder how many Americans read Scott today. Those who remember him for the pleasure he gave them in youth will find this volume (662 pages) enchanting. Mark Twain and Stevenson, both of whom expended tremendous labor on perfecting their prose, could not forgive Scott for his carelessness.

Perhaps too many think of the age of Shakespeare as the age of drama; it is not an impertinence to remind readers that the spacious times of Queen Elizabeth were magnificent in everything except electric lighting, and other conveniences that had not been invented. There is no English prose comparable to that of the Authorized Version of the Bible; Bacon's Essays are supreme of their kind. The songs and lyrical verse had a spontaneous melody which modern writers have tried in vain to recapture. Thus I welcome "The Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse" edited by the scholarly Sir Edmund Chambers; a handy little volume of over nine hundred pages. It is a marvel of "infinite riches in a little room." I am always interested in any selection from Shakespeare to see what Sonnets will be chosen—the great difficulty, of course, being to decide what shall be omitted. Sir Edmund Chambers takes fifty. The favorite Sonnet of the late Professor Henry A. Beers was

Then hate me when thou wilt; if ever, now;

In reading the Sonnets, one is impressed by Shakespeare's physical fear of the English climate, which was as detestable then as it is now. How often he speaks of the brevity of summer, of the rare sunlight, of the coming on of the winter cold; he must have been very sensitive to harsh winds and overcast skies.

Among the best volumes of American poetry published during the last year is "Earth's Processional" by David Morton. He is one of our foremost nature poets. He rejoices in the beauty of Autumn as in the beauty of Summer. I ad-

mire the splendid *health* of his verse, and recommend it to the despondent and the timid. Probably one reason why Americans enjoy Autumn and Winter more than foreigners, is because we view these changes with comparatively little personal discomfort; just as it is certain that one reason for the modern love of mountains is that they are no longer perilous as they were in the seventeenth century. Then the Alps were a disagreeable and dangerous barrier on the road to Italy. Very few travelers thought them beautiful.

Those who like an unusual sensation in poetry will do well to read the verses of Doctor Sum Nung Au-Young, Founder and President of the School of Chinese Philosophy. This tiny volume is called "The Rolling Pearl," and has a Foreword by Edwin Markham. The poems show imagination, adoration of beauty, love for humanity, and idealism. They are all written in English but they breathe the spirit of centuries of Oriental traditions.

To the large number of American writers who despise their native land, who are without faith in its future, who "view with alarm," etc., etc., I recommend "The Soul of America," by Arthur Hobson Quinn. This is more thoughtful, more carefully considered, nearer to the truth, than the majority of the wails of our pretentious pessimists.

In judgments on human nature, I have more respect for the opinions of the Headmaster of a boys' school, than for the pronouncements of professional psychologists. If I had to pick a class of men to represent the best in American citizenship, I think I should select the Headmasters and Principals of our great schools. No matter how busy these men are, they should, after the experience of years, give the public the benefit of their observations. Thus I am glad to see a little book called "The Art of Behaviour, A Study in Human Relations," written by Frederick Winsor, the Head of Middlesex School in Concord, Mass. Here is a book for parents to consider.

Through the kindness of Doctor Emanuel de Marnay Baruch, President of the Goethe Society of America, I had the honor of attending the exercises at



the dedication of the Goethe Monument in Bryant Park, New York, on November 26. The luncheon preceding the outdoor exercises was the most amazing I have ever attended in that, although there were eight or ten speakers, not one spoke over five minutes! I have attended one million public banquets, and this was unique. The occasion was graced by the presence of the German Ambassador to the United States, His Excellency Doctor von Prittwitz und Gaffron. He is a model of what all Ambassadors should be. His extempore address was in fluent and perfect English, his manner had that distinction which only high-bred gentlemen possess, and his scholarship was without pedantry.

William Butler Yeats, who is now in this country, is reported in *The New York Sun* as saying, "I've read O'Neill, but only a few of us know anything about Dreiser, Anderson, and your other writers." Hurrah for Ireland!

The depression accounts for the few additions to the FANO CLUB. But I take pleasure in enrolling the name of C. H. Morse, of the Junior Class in Yale College.

The FAERY QUEENE CLUB is enriched by the addition of Miss Vivien Thurber Barrett, of Brooklyn, who was one of three students in the New Jersey College for Women who read the entire poem. If the other two will send me their names, I will confer upon them immortality.

It is good news for Americans living far from New York that the famous actor, Walter Hampden, is, in Wordsworthian phrase, stepping westward. Last year he made a tremendous success "on the road" with "Cyrano." Beginning late in January, he will tour America all the way to the coast with "Caponsacchi," the beautiful and impressive tragedy made by Arthur Goodrich out of Browning's epic, "The Ring and the Book." As SCRIBNER'S is read in every town in every state, I remind my readers of this important theatrical event, and of the pleasure in store for them.

Harold Waldo, of Auburn, Calif., has been trying the experiment of re-reading extinct best-sellers, with the result that he likes Churchill's "The Crossing" and "The Crisis," and does not care for Stewart Edward White or "The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come." He adds: "Mary Murfree's books loom like her Great Smoky Mountains. I have read and re-read and read again her 'Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains' and by the living gods there is an American classic! It equals that other exquisite classic 'The Country of the Pointed Firs' which Willa Cather eulogizes. It has all of that exquisite rightness of word and phrase and character which Miss Cather and Wilder and others strive for."

Some years ago I re-read "Trilby" and it was as fresh and fine as when it first appeared.

The Reverend Doctor Eliot White uses the word *microfy* which was coined in these columns not long ago. He has an excellent article in *The Christian Science Monitor* headed "Microfying the Grand Canyon." And as many of my readers will behold this Wonder of the World in the next few months, let me quote from Doctor White: "a certain hotel daringly perched upon the precipitous north rim of the stupendous gorge of the Grand Canyon. . . . In one of the spacious window plates, there is discerned a diminutive bubble or 'flaw,' which proves, on closer examination, to be a perfect crystalline lens so clearly focussing objects beyond that it can no longer be considered a flaw at all, but rather an enthralling addition to the value of the entire pane."

Doctor White also sends me the following headlines: From *The New York American*, July 15, 1931:

#### ADULT ALIEN BORN IN LEAD

meaning that more New Yorkers over 34 years of age were born abroad than in the U. S.

From *The New York Times* of August 2, 1932:

#### BRITISH HONOR DEAD ON FIELD OF SOMME

where you must discover in the article that "dead" is a noun.

### NEW BOOKS MENTIONED, WITH NAMES OF PUBLISHERS

*Books marked with an asterisk are recommended for use in reading clubs*

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| *"Flowering Wilderness," by John Galsworthy. Scribners. \$2.50.       | *"The Outlook for Literature," by A. H. Thorndike. Macmillan. \$1.50.     | *"Love Lyrics from Five Centuries," ed. Harlap. Crowell. \$5.            |
| *"Farewell Miss Julie Logan," by J. M. Barrie. Scribners. \$1.        | *"The Laird of Abbotsford," by Una Pope-Hennessy. Putnams. \$3.50.        | *"Life and Lillian Gish," by L. Gish and A. B. Paine. Macmillan. \$3.50. |
| *"Valiant Dust," by P. C. Wren. Stokes. \$2.                          | *"The Waverley Pageant," ed. Walpole. Harpers. \$4.                       | *"Theatre and Friendship," Henry James, ed. E. Robins. Putnams. \$3.50.  |
| "Valcour Meets Murder," by Rufus King. Doubleday Doran. \$2.          | *"The Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse," ed. Chambers. Oxford. \$3. | *"The Etching Hobby," by William D. Cox. Illustrated. W. F. Payson. \$3. |
| "Rope to Spare," by Philip MacDonald. Doubleday Doran. \$2.           | *"Earth's Processional," by David Morton. Putnams. \$2.                   | *"The Second Common Reader," by Virginia Woolf. Harcourt Brace. \$3.     |
| *"Journal," by Arnold Bennett. Vol. 2. Viking. \$4.                   | *"The Soul of America," by A. H. Quinn. Univ. of Penn. \$3.               | *"And Now All That," by Sellar and Yeatman. Dutton. \$1.75.              |
| "The Victorian Sunset," by Esmé Wingfield-Stratford. Morrow. \$3.50.  | *"The Art of Behaviour," by Frederick Winsor. Houghton Mifflin. \$1.75.   | *"Leisure in the Modern World," by C. D. Burns. Century. \$2.50.         |
| *"The Story of Bermuda," by Hudson Strode. H. Smith and R. Haas. \$5. | *"Oxford English," by R. W. Chapman. Oxford. 50 cents.                    | *"The Rolling Pearl," by Sum Nung Au-Young. March & Greenwood. \$5.      |



# The Crisis in Education

ARE WE TAKING IT OUT ON OUR CHILDREN?

*By William John Cooper*

*Federal Commissioner of Education*

*Doctor Cooper here presents striking evidences of the crippling of education caused by the depression and by the frenzy of economy which is a resultant of the financial conditions. He shows the need for immediate and wisely considered action to preserve our educational standards.*

MANY children returning after the holidays found the doors of the schools closed. Other schools are limping along with inadequate teaching force, an inadequate supply of textbooks, obstacles which are seriously limiting the educational advantages of which the American people once boasted. The depression has produced a crisis in education and raises the question of whether we are to consider education a luxury or a fundamental necessity. Despite the financial difficulties in which States, counties and communities find themselves, it is a serious question whether educational facilities should not be strengthened as a community service rather than curtailed, thereby injecting another element of insecurity and demoralization into a situation which has already had enough shocks. Economies can undoubtedly be made, but such economies should be the result of careful study. The obvious methods of decreasing teaching force and cutting textbook appropriations to the minimum may well be the very essence of false economy.



Doctor A. F. Harman, Superintendent of Education for Alabama, predicting that the schools of half the counties in his State would be forced to close at

the end of the half term, pointed out that such a situation would result in throwing more than a thousand teachers out of employment and would affect more than 200,000 children. His statement points to two of the many problems confronting the cultural forces in the nation which led to the recent calling of the President's Conference on the Crisis in Education. It was hoped that such a conference would set in motion the orderly survey of conditions and of methods whereby costs may be cut by increasing efficiency rather than by deep slashes in obvious items in the school budget.

Should there be more taxes? Should there be a tax of a different kind? Should the sales tax replace the tax on general property? Is the country itself now too poor to support the kind of an educational system which we have had? Has our free-school period been extended too far? Is it true that the camel's back has been broken by the fact that 53 per cent of those eligible for high school education now take advantage of this opportunity? Or have we built too elaborate buildings? Should we now spend less on buildings? Or should we build now as a means of relieving unemployment? In other words, what is the cause of our present trouble and what is the best remedy? These are some of the questions to be answered.

Reports from city superintendents have been received and tabulated from about half of these officers in the United States. Of the reports of county superintendents, the first four States tabulated were Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, and California. They showed some of the effects of the economic crisis on the schools.



California, it will be recalled, has a State and county aid law by which \$700 of State money is distributed to every elementary school having a population of 35 or less in average daily attendance. To this fund is added \$700 of county money. The State money comes from taxes on the earnings of certain selected corporations. The county money is levied on the general property of the county as a whole. Therefore each school district in California may have \$1400 on which to operate its schools without any local taxation whatever. Even better provision is made for high schools. Therefore the school situation does not reveal the effects of the crisis in this State.

Alabama's condition is very well illustrated by the statement of Doctor Harman referred to above. In that State school funds probably will not permit the majority of the schools to run six