

THE POET OF REVOLUTION

ARTHUR RIMBAUD, by Enid Starkie (Faber and Faber, 15/-).

RIMBAUD IN ABYSSINIA, by Enid Starkie (Oxford University Press, 7/6).

'The aim of poetry,' said Ducasse, 'must be practical truth.' During the nineteenth century the poet's conception of his function underwent a change and poetry was made to serve an extra-literary purpose. Its aim was no longer to glorify the existing order, as great poets of the past had glorified it, but to 'change' it; it was not 'a superior amusement,' but a means of solving metaphysical problems. This meant that the horizon of literature was immensely extended and the relations between literature and life were revolutionized. It follows that the poet's life assumes a new importance for the literary critic, and a writer like Mr. Edmund Wilson seems disposed to treat Rimbaud's later life as a continuation of his poetry.

Mr. Wilson's view is perhaps a debatable one, but his instinct is surely right. There is nothing in Rimbaud's life that the critic can safely disregard. But we must remember that though his life may help us to understand his poetry, the study of his life must not become a *substitute* for the study of his poetry as it does in many of the books written about him. 'There are times,' said Rivière, 'when I almost believe that he is the greatest poet who has ever lived.' That of course is an exaggeration, but the emphasis falls in the right place. There have been greater poets than Rimbaud, but it seems to me that whatever the limitations of his achievement, his natural endowment was superior to that of any other French poet. An accident of birth made him not simply a great poet, but a great leader; and for this reason he seems to speak to our generation with a greater urgency than any other modern poet. He was not (to borrow words that Mr. Eliot once used of Baudelaire), important primarily as a 'human proto-type of new experience' and 'only secondly because he was a poet.' There can be no distinction between a great writer's poetry and what we are pleased to call his 'message.' It is simply because they were first and foremost great poets that the work of Baudelaire and Rimbaud possesses what for want of a better word can only be called an extra-literary importance.

Miss Starkie's *Arthur Rimbaud* is a useful and informative life of the poet. It provides the critic, approaching his work for the first time, with all the facts that he is likely to need, and it is pleasantly free from the fashionable doctrinaire bias which has been a serious obstacle to the study of his poetry. The smaller book, in particular, contains a lively account of the political background during Rimbaud's stay in Abyssinia and throws a good deal of light on his activities as a trader. It brings out Rimbaud's natural generosity of character, but it proves conclusively that he was far from being the shrewd man of business that he is sometimes thought to have been.

Miss Starkie's book, however, is much more a popular life than a work of serious scholarship. It is difficult to avoid the impression that her air of scholarly detachment conceals a fundamental uncertainty about some of the main problems of the poet's life. There is no evidence (except a bad poem of Verlaine's) to support her 'central theory' that 'Rimbaud, at the time of his greatest creative power, believed that he had become God.' Rimbaud's own words at the close of *Une saison en enfer*—'[Je] me suis dit mage ou ange, dispensé de toute morale . . . '—will hardly bear this interpretation.

The relations between Rimbaud and Verlaine have aroused a good deal of unhealthy curiosity among the biographers of both poets; but though Miss Starkie displays considerable interest in the problem, one cannot help feeling that its significance has escaped her. Rimbaud's homosexuality (unlike Verlaine's) cannot be treated as a mere aberration or as an interesting psychological problem according to the taste of the writer: it must be related to his poetry and that is what Miss Starkie fails to do. Rimbaud was the poet of revolution. The driving impulse behind his work was a desire to demolish the existing order and to create a fresh one. The *Premiers vers* are a destructive survey of contemporary society, its institutions and beliefs, and they are only fully intelligible as a prelude to the metaphysical revolt of the *Illuminations*. The words from *Une saison en enfer*, '*l'amour est à réinventer*,' suggest that Rimbaud's homosexuality was, to some extent at any rate, an attempt in the *practical* sphere to divest himself as completely as possible of traditional morality and traditional ways of feeling; and it has its parallel in the attempt

to discover a new mode of consciousness in the *Illuminations*.

Miss Starkie's summary of the æsthetic theories in Rimbaud's letters¹ is clear and useful, but her chapter on the influence of 'occult' literature on his poetry is less satisfactory. It is perfectly possible to summarize a poet's theories without being a literary critic at all, but a discussion of influences can only be fruitful when the findings are constantly checked by the critic's responses to his text. I doubt myself whether the 'occult' literature had any *direct* influence on the *Illuminations*, though it may indirectly have stimulated Rimbaud's taste for speculative thought. But it is a pity that Miss Starkie suggests, as she appears to suggest, that this influence (supposing it existed) is of the same kind that we find in Balzac's novels, *Louis Lambert* and *Séraphita*. No one doubts the influence on Balzac, but in those novels he was simply dramatizing—with unfortunate results—the cloudy theories of some very second-rate 'thinkers.' Now the *Illuminations* are the work of a genuinely speculative mind making an independent approach to reality through the medium of poetry. Unless this is clearly grasped, we run the risk of missing the significance of Rimbaud's poetry altogether.

It is particularly unfortunate that a book which is likely to be many readers' first introduction to Rimbaud should be entirely inadequate in its treatment of his poetry. It is a curious fact that as soon as she comes to Rimbaud's poetry, Miss Starkie's writing loses all its vitality and becomes flat and lifeless as though she were not really interested in poetry at all. Her description of *Aube*—that incomparable poem—as 'one of the finest nature poems in the French language' might have come from one of the weaker manuals of French literature; and the comparisons between the *Illuminations* and a very undistinguished passage from Ballanche (p. 113), and the wretched fragments from Judith Gautier's *Livre de jade* (pp. 193-4) show something resembling an incapacity to read Rimbaud at all.

¹These letters are published in J. M. Carré's valuable *Lettres de la vie littéraire d'Arthur Rimbaud* (Gallimard, 1931). This book also contains what purports to be the first authentic account of the destruction of *Une saison en enfer*—an incident which Miss Starkie only discusses in a very summary manner.

The chapter on the *Illuminations* is altogether too ambitious and contains theories which are really misleading.

'It is not surprising,' writes Miss Starkie, 'to find that many of *Les Illuminations* are the expression of Rimbaud's transcendental experience of God. There can be no doubt of the certainty of his vision of God, though no one would be so bold as to claim that it was Catholic or in any way fundamentally Christian. Many conflicting claims have been put forward for Rimbaud, but out of all these claims the conviction emerges that when a man has reached the ultimate heights of mystical, transcendental experience and union with God, creeds and dogmas are of no more account, and the experience will be precisely the same for the members of the different religions, whether of the East or of the West.'

'Mysticism' is a scientific term borrowed from speculative theology. When used by a trained theologian, it may have a precise meaning; but its appearance in literary criticism is nearly always a sign of critical indolence—an attempt to give the illusion of precision without the effort of rigorous thought. The study of a work like the Jesuit theologian Maréchal's *Études sur la psychologie des mystiques*, which is an object lesson in the extreme caution required in making any pronouncement about mystical phenomena at all, would, I think, make critics of Rimbaud less eager to jump to conclusions about the content of the *Illuminations*. I must state clearly that I am not here concerned with the authenticity of the mystics' claims, which lies outside the field of literary criticism, but with their *psychology*. There seems to me to be no possible parallel between Rimbaud's psychology and that of the mystics. There is none of the mystic's sense of possession. It is a striking fact that all through Rimbaud's poetry the revelation which he was seeking eludes him. '*J'ai vu quelquefois ce que l'homme a cru voir*,' he says in the *Bateau ivre*; but when he tries to tell us what he has seen, his poem goes to pieces. It ought to be plain, too, that if he had enjoyed the transcendental 'union with God,' he could never have written *Une saison en enfer*. For that poem is a confession that his quest (whatever it was) had failed. Nor is there any parallel between the 'spiritual dryness' of the mystics, caused, as they believed, by God's withdrawal from them for a time to test their faith, and the extreme disillusion of parts of Rimbaud's poem.

Most of the mystical writers, whatever school they belonged to, appear to have started with belief in a personal God and a desire for union with him. Now I can find no evidence in Rimbaud's letters or his poetry that he shared this belief. Indeed, his statement that the poet should 'define the *amount* of Unknown arising in his time in the universal soul' makes any attempt to equate God with Rimbaud's 'Unknown' arbitrary. In the *Illuminations* Rimbaud tries to pierce the sensible appearances of things in order to reach the 'Unknown' which he thought was concealed behind them. This theory explains the curious tricks he plays with material reality:

'Un souffle ouvre des brèches opéradiques dans les cloisons,
—brouille le pivotement des toits rangés,—disperse les limites des
foyers,—éclipse les croisées.'

The clue to these pieces must be sought, I think, in their very individual imagery which Miss Starkie scarcely mentions. The whole collection is a comment on that strange phrase which occurs in the letters and in *Une saison en enfer*:

'Car JE est un autre.'

Rimbaud believed that there were in him two beings—the simple bourgeois whose existence was bound up with convention, and the poetical self or 'Voyant.' In order to express the 'Unknown' he tries to free himself from the old life and the conventional categories of thought. He therefore constructs a stylized, a fabulous world, which is as remote as possible from the world we know. Its proportions and the materials out of which it is constructed are monstrous:

'Ce dôme est une armature d'acier artistique de quinze mille pieds de diamètre environ.'

It is worked by strange engines:

'Des chalets de cristal et de bois se meuvent sur des rails et des poulies invisibles. Les vieux cratères ceints de colosses et de palmiers de cuivre rugissent mélodieusement dans les feux.'

It is inhabited by metaphysical monsters who remind one of M. Valéry's *Teste*. In *Génie* he describes one of them:

'O ses souffles, ses têtes, ses courses ; la terrible célérité de la perfection des formes et de l'action!'

Miss Starkie thinks that this is a description of God. It seems to me, on the contrary, that all these monsters are emanations of the poet's own personality, are attempts to realize the new mode of consciousness attributed to the 'Voyant' in the letters. They are examples of minds which are governed by different laws from our own and are therefore free from our particular limitations.

Although Rimbaud regarded the poet as a 'Visionary,' the value of his work does not seem to me to lie in any mystic revelation. It lies in his power of modifying, and not merely of modifying but of reorganizing, our sensibility. To submit oneself to the new mode of seeing, to walk the crystal streets and ride in the diamond carriages described in the *Illuminations* is to undergo an extraordinary process of liberation from the stereotyped ways of seeing and feeling. Our usual conception of the real is based on the assumption that there is only one interpretation of reality, only certain prescribed combinations of feelings. Rimbaud's work is not a denial of that reality; it is an assertion that there are other possible interpretations and other possible combinations of feelings besides the ones to which we are accustomed. The order of the classic writers of the seventeenth century was a true order, but it was not the final order. The failure of their successors to realize that in literature no order can ever be final and their attempt to continue the work of the *grand siècle* meant that classicism hardened into dogmatism. It is Rimbaud's lasting achievement to have demonstrated that the classic view is only one of many possible views; and his protest against a narrow dogmatism which was impervious to the impact of living experience made him a revolutionary in the true sense. For great poetry is always in some sense the discovery of new truth and there are times when traditional poetic forms have to be discarded, not merely tinkered with, and new forms created in order to express the new vision. To have done this gives Rimbaud his gigantic stature among modern poets, but because he was without a living tradition to help him he was unable to consolidate his findings and his vision remains fragmentary and incomplete.¹

¹The piece called *Conte* is worth careful attention. It is not one of the best poems in the collection—it is more a *statement* than an *experience*—but, as often happens with a great poet's lesser works, it helps considerably to explain his method.

Une saison en enfer is less difficult than the *Illuminations* and its general meaning has been appreciated by most of Rimbaud's critics. Miss Starkie's discussion of the poem is more satisfactory than her chapter on the *Illuminations*, but she appears to think that once she has told us what the poem is 'about' her work as a critic is done. She makes no attempt to deal with its remarkable technical originality, and her statement that it contains 'some of the finest examples of French prose in the grand manner' is the reverse of helpful.

This poem has been described by one critic as 'the bible of the modern consciousness,' and the description is a good one. In it Rimbaud explores some of the central problems of our time; and the problems he explores are as pressing to-day as they were at the time when the poem was written. The three main problems are his unsuccessful quest for the 'Unknown,' his relations with Verlaine, and the problem of belief. Of the three it is the last which is the most important. In one of the finest sections of the poem he writes:

'Je dus voyager, distraire les enchantements assemblés dans mon cerveau. Sur la mer, que j'aimais comme si elle eût dû me laver d'une souillure, je voyais se lever la croix consolatrice.'

What makes Rimbaud peculiarly representative of the modern world is his profound awareness of the need of a religious solution with an inability to accept traditional beliefs. The crucial word in these splendid lines is the word *consolatrice*. He had failed to reach the 'Unknown' by his own route, but to become a Christian seemed to involve a compromise with the life he had discarded. He felt, as others have felt, that belief was a *temptation*. In another place he writes:

'Les blancs débarquent. Le canon! Il faut se soumettre au baptême, s'habiller, travailler.'

It is clear from this that for Rimbaud religion was associated with colonization and exploitation. He could not believe that truth was clothed in such a corrupt form. '*M. Prudhomme*,' he said. '*est né avec le Christ*.'

Rimbaud's treatment of his subject lifts him out of the rank of men like Corbière and Laforgue, fine poets though they were, and puts him with the masters. Laforgue was not an intellectual

poet in the same sense as Rimbaud. His poetry is a skilful distillation of emotion from 'the contemporary situation,' or what he took to be the contemporary situation. It is simply a succession of feelings and its precarious unity a personal one—the mood of the poet—which could only be achieved as long as the writer did not probe too deeply into his problem. Now the unity of Rimbaud's work is not merely a personal one. He gives us the emotion *and* the situation from which it springs, that is to say, there is an organic, an objective relation between the poem and the events which produced it. The emotion is generated by the contemplation of the problem and it therefore possesses that impersonality which only belongs to the greatest poetry.

This leads to a consideration of its technical qualities. In spite of the immense influence of Laforgue on the development of modern poetry, Rimbaud's technical mastery is of a different order. Laforgue was essentially a virtuoso. The *Derniers vers* sometimes make one feel like the spectator at the exhibition match, applauding the brilliant images as one might applaud 'the lightning return'; and when it's over the appropriate comment seems to be not 'a great poem,' but 'a splendid performance.' The difficulty of the writer who lives in an age of instability is that he is unable to give cohesion to his work. The emphasis, instead of falling on the work as a whole, tends to fall on a succession of intense but unrelated 'moments,' on the individual image or the individual word. With Laforgue the image sometimes remains suspended without any precise relation to the poem as a whole, and it is this difficulty which Rimbaud manages to overcome. One of the principal themes of *Une saison en enfer* is fear—fear that the poet's experiments were leading him not to the 'Unknown' but to insanity, or possibly to something worse.

'Ma santé fut menacée. La terreur venait. Je tombais dans des sommeils de plusieurs jours, et, lève, je continuais les rêves les plus tristes. J'étais mûr pour le trépas, et par une route de dangers ma faiblesse me menait aux confins du monde et de la Cimmérie, patrie de l'ombre et des tourbillons.'

The short breathless sentences suggest the terror that seizes him. Instead of journeying towards his goal, his footsteps are directed towards the void. In the superb manipulation of the o's, m's and

n's we hear the hollow reverberations of someone wandering helplessly lost in the darkness of the void. The final image is clearly related to the staccato rhythm which is characteristic of the whole poem. In a passage like this—there are plenty of them—the movement of the poem rises to a crescendo and the image proceeds naturally, inevitably, from what has gone before. It is not a decoration, but the fullest expansion of the poet's emotion and seems to gather up the whole intention of a particular sequence.

Une saison en enfer is a dramatic poem—a conflict whose issue is in doubt until the last line is written. It is not all pitched in the same key like the *Derniers vers*; there are violent changes of mood and the problem before the poet was to find a medium that would reflect these extraordinary interior vicissitudes. The solution was the dramatic form in which the experience was presented. What Rimbaud did was to invent a new mythology. The 'I' of his poem is not at all the timid, shrinking young man of the *Derniers vers* or Mr. Eliot's early work. Rimbaud adopts a curious extension of personality and traces his own history, which is also the history of 'the modern man,' from his primitive origins down to the present time, compares what he has been at different periods of this continued existence with what he is now. In *Mauvais sang* he writes:

' J'ai des mes ancêtres gaulois l'oeil bleu blanc, la cervelle étroite, et la maladresse dans la lutte. Je trouve mon habillement aussi barbare que le leur. Mais je ne beurre pas ma chevelure . . .

' Pas une famille d'Europe que je ne connaisse.—J'entends des familles comme la mienne, qui tiennent tout de la déclaration des Droits de l'Homme . . .

' Il m'est bien évident que j'ai toujours été *race inférieure* . . .¹

' Je suis assis, lépreux, sur les pots cassés et les orties, au pied d'un mur rongé par le soleil.—Plus tard, reître, j'aurais bivaqué sous les nuits d'Allemagne . . .

' Je n'en finirais pas de me revoir dans ce passé. Mais toujours seul; sans famille; même, quelle langue parlais-je? Je ne me vois jamais dans les conseils du Christ; ni dans les conseils des Seigneurs,—représentants du Christ.'

¹Italics mine.

This is contrasted with what he has become and enables him to make the necessary comment on the popular slogans and palliatives of the day:

'Qu'étais-je au siècle dernier: je ne me retrouve qu'aujourd'hui. Plus de vagabonds, plus de guerres vagues. *La race inférieure*¹ a tout couvert—le peuple, comme on dit, la raison, la nation et la science.'

The picture is filled in by a series of *personæ* which are sometimes representations of the poet like the 'Epoux Infernal,' or of another as Verlaine becomes the 'Vierge Folle.' In this way the various themes and problems are dramatized and their relation to one another forms the pattern of the whole poem.²

There is no room to illustrate the remarkable variety of Rimbaud's great poem, but the last section deserves particular attention:

'L'automne. Notre barque élevée dans les brumes immobiles tourne vers le port de la misère, la cité énorme au ciel taché de feu et de boue. Ah! les haillons pourris, le pain trempé de pluie, l'ivresse, les mille amours qui m'ont crucifié! Elle ne finira donc point cette goule reine de millions d'âmes et de corps morts *et qui seront jugés!* Je me revois, la peau rongée par la boue et la peste, des vers plein les cheveux et les aisselles et encore de plus gros vers dans le coeur, étendu parmi les inconnus sans âge, sans sentiment. . . J'aurais pu y mourir . . . L'affreuse évocation! J'exècre la misère . . . '

'Un grand vaisseau d'or, au-dessus de moi agite ses pavillons multicolores sous les brises du matin. J'ai créé toutes les fêtes, tous les triomphes, tous les drames. J'ai essayé d'inventer de

²Compare particularly the confession with which the poem opens with the ironical confession of the 'Vierge Folle' in *Délires I*; and the passage in which Rimbaud sees himself as a condemned criminal ('*Prêtres, professeurs, maîtres, vous vous trompez en me livrant à la justice . . .*') in *Mauvais sang* with the passage in which he becomes the mountebank in front of his stall (*J'ai tous les talents!—Il n'y a personne ici et il y a quelqu'un . . .*) in *Nuit de L'Enfer*.

nouvelles fleurs, de nouveaux astres, de nouvelles chairs, de nouvelles langues. J'ai cru acquérir des pouvoirs surnaturels. Eh bien! je dois enterrer mon imagination et mes souvenirs! Une belle gloire d'artiste et de conteur emportée!

'Moi! moi qui me suis dit mage ou ange, dispensé de toute morale, je suis rendu au sol, avec un devoir à chercher, et la réalité rugueuse à étreindre! Paysan!'

Instead of carrying him away into the 'Unknown,' as it did in the *Bateau ivre*, the vessel is bringing him back to 'rugged reality.' The image of the stately vessel, half lost in the mists, is a symbol of the poet's own serenity. *Immobiles* is the focal point of this passage as the word *insoucieux* is of the *Bateau ivre*, and the calm movement of this section forms a strong contrast with the helter-skelter movement of the earlier poem. The ironical *Paysan!* is a reference back to an earlier passage in *Mauvais sang* and is a good instance of the skill with which the different themes are linked together. The witty renunciation of the poet's super-human powers, which sometimes reminds me of Prospero's dismissal of his magic spirits at the end of *The Tempest*, strikes a note which is unique in French literature of the last century. It stands out against a background of uncertainty as the unrivalled expression of complete spiritual health.

The close of *Une saison en enfer*, however, is remarkable not as an example of 'French prose in the grand manner,' but as an example of the way in which the grand manner can be adapted to the needs of the modern poet. It has all the dignity, all the spaciousness of the grand manner without any of its corresponding defects.

Miss Starkie tells us 'that there is no modern poetry, in whatever country it may be, that does not claim to owe its source to Rimbaud.' It is true that his influence has been immense, but it has also been an immense disaster. For the *Illuminations* have been imitated and the discoveries of *Une saison en enfer* neglected. What happens when the method of the *Illuminations* is imitated by writers who do not possess Rimbaud's vision can be seen from the experiments of the Surréalistes and the dramas of Claudel. A medium which is capable of such matchless variety of expression as Rimbaud's prose-poetry clearly deserves to be studied by living poets. There is a further reason why the poem has particular

importance for modern poetry. The development of free verse seems to have been carried as far as it can go and the next step is likely to be either a return to traditional measures or a poetry written in the medium which Rimbaud used with such consummate skill. For, properly used, prose-poetry is capable of a greater range of feeling than free verse, or at any rate than the free verse that has so far been written.

It remains to point out that Miss Starkie's bibliography will hardly add to her reputation as a scholar. A critical bibliography in a book of this sort would have been useful, but Miss Starkie's bibliography appears to be purely ornamental. There is little in the text and nothing in the bibliography to tell us which of the fifty 'authorities' mentioned are worth reading, or from what point of view they are written—always an important factor in the case of Rimbaud. No publishers' names are given, and the titles of the books and the authors' names are not always correct. Among the critical studies mentioned here two strike me as indispensable: Edgell Rickword's *Rimbaud: the Boy and the Poet* (Heinemann, 1924)¹ which is probably the best general study of the poet that has been written, and Rivière's *Rimbaud* (Kra, 1930). Ruchon's *Jean-Arthur Rimbaud* (Champion, 1929), though rather academic, is useful. In order to get an idea of the various approaches it is worth looking at Coulon's *Problème de Rimbaud* (Rationalist), Daniel-Rops' *Rimbaud: le drame spirituel* (Catholic) and Etienneble and Gaucière's *Rimbaud* (Marxist). I cannot imagine what principle of selection led Miss Starkie to include Lalou's *Histoire de la littérature française contemporaine* and leave out Edmund Wilson's *Axël's Castle*. And Mr. Samuel Hoare's article on Rimbaud, which appeared in *The Calendar of Modern Letters* for June, 1925, might have been mentioned in the list of articles in reviews.

The proofs of the book do not seem to have been read with the care they deserve. The quotations themselves are often inaccurate, genders are uncertain and the manipulation of the past participle appears to have been left in places to the printer's discretion.

MARTIN TURNELL.

¹This book is unfortunately out of print, but I believe that remainders can still be picked up cheaply.

RAINER MARIA RILKE

RAINER MARIA RILKE : Aspects of his Mind and Poetry, edited by William Rose and G. Craig Houston, with an Introduction by Stefan Zweig (Sidgwick and Jackson, 6/-).

LATER POEMS, by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated with an Introduction and Commentary by J. B. Leishman (The Hogarth Press, 10/6).

RILKE'S APOTHEOSIS : A Survey of Representative Recent Publications on the Work and Life of R. M. Rilke, by Eudo C. Mason (Basil Blackwell, 2/-).

Rilke died on the 29th December, 1926, and in the years that have elapsed since his death an immense quantity of material, critical and biographical, has been published in Germany, in France, in Switzerland and Italy, to mention only the principal countries where interest in this poet has been intense and shows no sign of abating. Indeed, everywhere in Europe this interest has deepened as his works become better understood and information about the history of his life is gradually assembled and placed on record. Everywhere, that is to say, except in England. In spite of the fact that translations of his major writings have been appearing at intervals here since 1930, Rilke is still hardly more than a name to the majority. It must, however, be admitted, if in no carping spirit, that Rilke has not been especially fortunate in his English translators. I mean, he has not enjoyed the privilege of literally being recreated in another tongue like Proust, or like Paul Valéry, who had the advantage of Rilke's own incomparable skill in this branch of literature. Still, we now have passable versions of the early *Stories from God*, we have the celebrated *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (too often misleadingly described as an autobiographical novel), while Mr. Leishman has attempted the exacting and rather thankless task of turning selections from the *Neue Gedichte*, the *Letzte Gedichte*, the *Requiem* and all of the *Sonnets to Orpheus* into English rhymed verse. Last but not least there is the blank verse rendering of the *Duinese Elegies* by Edward and Vera Sackville-West, which, in spite of imperfections, is a feat that deserves high praise considering the prodigious difficulty of the undertaking. It is characteristic of the sort of reception accorded