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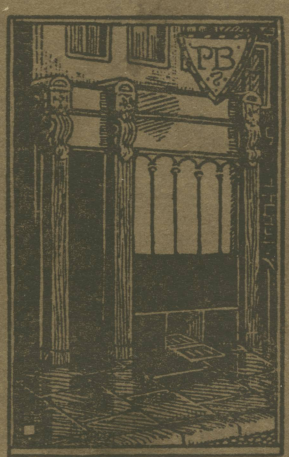
POETRY AND DRAMA



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The Cambridge Magazine; The Tripod; The Vineyard; The University Socialist; Rhythm; The Equinox (Vol. I No. 8. September 1912).

Irish

The Irish Review.

American

The Forum; The Literary Digest; The Hesperian; The Bibelot; Mother Earth; The Lantern; The Editor; The Conservator; Current Opinion; The Dial.

Australasian

The Bookfellow.

French

L'Ile Sonnante; Le Temps Présent; Le Thyrse; Burdigala; Flamberge; Flora; La Renaissance Contemporaine; Les Cahiers du Centre; Le Mercure de France; Poème et Drame; L'Action d'Art; La Revue Critique des Idées et des Livres; La Revue Française; Les Horizons; L'Indépendance; La Nouvelle Revue Française.

Italian

Il Marzocco; Rassegna Contemporanea; La Voce.

German

Der Sturm; Die Güldenhammer; Neue Blätter.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

POETRY AND DRAMA

THE editor of POETRY AND DRAMA begs to remind the readers of this number that the future existence of his periodical will depend on the support accorded it, not, as in the case of certain other more popular periodicals, by advertisement, but by subscription and purchase. The annual subscription is 10s. 6d., post free. The price of a single copy is 2s. 6d. net. The editor ventures to believe that every individual sufficiently interested in the arts of poetry and the drama to devote a small sum to the support of such a periodical as POETRY AND DRAMA will ungrudgingly either subscribe, or purchase through a bookseller, or newsagent, or from the Poetry Bookshop.

THE AWARD

THE premium of thirty pounds announced last July for the best poem, long or short, appearing in the pages of the *Poetry Review* during the course of the year 1912, has been awarded to Mr RUPERT BROOKE for his poem entitled, "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester," which was published in the November number.

The names of the seven judges were as follows: Mr Henry Newbolt, Mr Ernest Rhys, Mr Edward Thomas, Mr Victor Plarr, Mr E. Marsh, Mr T. E. Hulme, and the Editor.

Mr Rupert Brooke's poem received a decided majority of votes. The other poems which received votes were: "Beauty and Beauty," by Rupert Brooke; "The Stone," by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson; "The Last Judgment," by James Stephens; and "Killiney Bay," by Katharine Tynan.

Further poems mentioned by the judges as those from which they selected their final decisions were: "The Phantom of a Rose," by T. Sturge Moore; "Lord of Time," by John Drinkwater; "Love Songs of the Lady-Lord," by E. S. Lorimer; "The Poor Girl's Meditation," by Padraic Colum; "Madame Secret," and "The Sinner," by James Stephens; "There," and "Flowers of Paradise," by Katharine Tynan; "In the Bohemian Redwoods'" by Percy Mackaye; "London Interior," by Harold Monro; and "Mary and Gabriel," by Rupert Brooke.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

ON the cover of the last number of volume one of the *Poetry Review* the following announcement appeared:

> The Editor of the *Poetry Review* begs to give notice that, after this number, his periodical will be issued quarterly under the name of POETRY AND DRAMA. The scope will be widened to include the appreciation and criticism of modern drama. Otherwise the policy will remain as announced in the *November* number. The first issue will appear on March 15, 1913.

From the publication of that number the *Poetry Review* ceased, as far as I was concerned, to exist. Subsequently, however, in the months of January, February, and March 1913, a magazine of that title appeared first in a pink then in a green cover under the auspices of the Poetry Society and the editorship of Mr Stephen Phillips.

In the tenth and eleventh numbers last year I made announcements to the effect that in 1913 the *Poetry Review* would be issued quarterly from 35, Devonshire Street, the present offices of POETRY AND DRAMA. In the twelfth number, at the moment of going to press, the Poetry Society stultified my announcements by printing at the head of the section devoted to its own affairs and conducted by its Hon Director the following words (in justice to the Hon Director, I may say that he sanctioned the addition by me of the first sentence down to the words POETRY AND DRAMA, and the slight alteration of certain other sentences, so as to make the whole announcement less unintelligible):

> Mr Harold Monro, having decided to enlarge the scope of his periodical by issuing it quarterly under the title POETRY AND DRAMA, the journal of the Poetry Society, beginning with the next number, January, will be issued under the editorship of Mr Stephen Phillips, and a brilliant list of contributors has been secured, including all the principal leaders of modern life and thought and criticism who are associated with Poetry. In

addition to his editorial functions, the poet-dramatist who thrilled the world with *Paolo and Francesca*, and fascinated us with the rare beauty of *Marpessa*, *Herod*, *Ulysses*, *Nero*, will contribute a monthly leading article on the eternal significance of Poetry. A feature of the January issue will be the complete text of Lord Dunsany's phantasy, *The Gods of the Mountain*, produced at the Haymarket Theatre last year.

I must not fail to remark immediately that, in adopting this arbitrary course, the Society was acting fully within its legal rights; *but* it should have formulated its decision two months earlier.

It concerns nor poetry, nor the public, nor me that I should parade my differences with the Poetry Society. I am offering the following brief explanation only because the Society has forced me into an apparent position of wilful misrepresentation to the small but most encouraging public which gathered about the *Poetry Review* during the course of last year.

In the autumn of 1911 the Hon Director of the Poetry Society wrote to me that the Society needed "my active serious help," inquiring at the same time whether I knew "any one anxious to become a publisher of verse who would take up the development of the *Poetical Gazette*" (the journal of the Society) "as a half-interest." I replied that I thought I did, and in a few days went to see the Hon Director and told him I would gladly edit a periodical for the Poetry Society, though I would not undertake, for the moment at all events, to publish verse. He seemed gratified at my proposal. Realising, however, that its traditions would be fatal to any serious new literary venture, I repudiated from the first his suggestion that I should buy for fifty pounds a half share in the *Poetical Gazette*.

Several further discussions took place between the Hon Director and myself, and, as we did not seem able to arrive at an understanding, I eventually suggested that I should found an independent monthly such as the Society required, which might prove of direct benefit to its members, though not its own actual property. The Hon Director was "gravely concerned" at my proposals. At the same time he wrote that he knew of no one better able to realise the Society's ideal of a poetical journal. The Hon Director evidently misjudged personality.

One way or another, I wanted to get to work immediately, and after this, in a moment of impatience, entirely on my own initiative, I practically sold myself to the Society. I proposed, in fact, the formation of a Committee to

conduct the periodical. I consented to defray expenses for one year, and, if there were any profits, to hand them over to the Society, after payment of interest on my own money. I offered to supply the Society with up to a thousand copies of each number for the sum of five pounds; I volunteered to respect any censure that the Council might have to pass during the course of the year, at the end of which I suggested that a Council-meeting should be called, if necessary, to consider the situation.

The Hon Director embodied my suggestions in the Council's Minute-book and accepted them. I ventured the request that an agreement should be drawn up and submitted to the Secretary of the Authors' Society. The Hon Director repudiated my suggestion. The Hon Director is undoubtedly the better man of business.

In a few weeks, however, our irreconcilable divergencies became apparent. The Committee could never agree, and its meetings dropped into abeyance almost immediately. From the start I absolutely refused compromise to advertisers, supporters, famous people, or friends; I insisted on bad verse being called bad verse as often as occasion required; I objected to the tone of the *Gazette*, to the irrelevant snobbery of the Society's list of patrons, and finally to a notice inserted without my authorisation to the effect that "authoritative critical opinion and criticism" could be obtained *for a fee* on MSS addressed for that purpose to the Poetry Society.

As to policy, I made it my aim to establish the *Poetry Review* as the representative organ chiefly of the younger generation of poets, a course which proved of considerable discomfiture to the Hon Director. Mr Phillips has enunciated the policy of the Society far more adequately in the ringing sentence of one of his editorials this year: "Let the singing be full-throated, and from any bush."

I cannot pretend that I adhered any more exactly than the Society to the clauses of our arrangement. I also admit myself to blame for many flaws in the *Review*. It was a year of experiment, in which, however, the public obviously became interested, for, with the exception of two bad drops on two obviously bad subject-numbers (May and October) the circulation steadily increased. By September it had become quite plain to me that the future of the *Review* depended entirely on the degree to which it could be kept clear of the influence of the Poetry Society. I had become deeply interested, and I failed to calculate that the Society apparently desires to preserve some kind of monopoly in poetry. In reply to my proposition

to convert the *Poetry Review* into a quarterly, the Hon. Director wrote: "My Council claims that the Society must be a party to any project for continuing the present journal as a quarterly, which I understand to be your personal proposal." I repeatedly applied for a more explicit definition of the manner in which the Society wished to assert its claims. Not till November 22, however, did I receive the information I required, in a formal letter from the Secretary which ran as follows: "I am directed by the Council to point out that, under the agreement proposed in your letter of October 31, 1911, and the subsequent minutes of the Council, the *Poetry Review* is the property of the Society. All rights in the *Poetry Review* are vested in the Society and will pass into the direct control of the Council of the Society at the end of this year."

Obviously the Society had me in its power, and some form of announcement was patched up as quickly as possible to meet the circumstances. At the same time it is quite clear that the Society had no moral right to the title *Poetry Review*, which, however poor a one, was, after long consideration, for want of a better, adopted entirely on my own initiative.

Thus began and ended my association with the *Poetry Review*. Poetry is not an art to be made the subject of squabbles, and I must repeat that I would infinitely have preferred to allow the whole subject to die, had it not been that, owing to the failure of the Society until the end of November to inform me in any explicit manner of its intentions, I have misrepresented myself to the public and to my friends in announcements, advertisements, circular letters, and conversations.

As far as I am concerned, however, this explanation closes the matter, and if the Society offers a reply I shall not make myself heard again unless I am driven to do so by accusation or challenge.

HAROLD MONRO

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

I PROPOSE to attack here one of the holiest institutions of the Empire. The cackle of the Geese of the Capitol was not more sacred. Wherever the British flag waves, there is sung a hymn which causes the heart of every Briton, home or colonial, to beat more quickly. Those degraded Britons who, for commercial or other reasons, have become naturalised foreigners, when they hear it are stung to remorse. It brings to a devotional close the heavy joys of an evening at the music-hall and the milder sport of the school-feast. It bores the sovereign whenever he makes a state appearance. To the popular imagination the National Anthem consecrates and symbolises the august continuity of the kings and people of England, it suggests the heroic lessons of the past: in piety—that safeguard of the State—it places the security of the future. All this it does for us. And yet it is one of the vilest pieces of doggerel in existence. Its rhymes are childishly atrocious, its grammar is dubious, while its history is such as to disqualify it as the expression of contemporary English nationality. All that is necessary in order to dispose of the literary question is to quote:

God save our gracious King,
Long live our noble King,
  God save the King.
Send him victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
  God save the King.

O Lord our God, arise,
Scatter his enemies,
  And make them fall:
Confound their politics;
Frustrate their knavish tricks;
On him our hopes we fix;
  O save us all.

Thy choicest gifts in store
On him be pleased to pour,
  Long may he reign.

May he defend our laws,
And ever give us cause
To sing with heart and voice,
God save the King.

Criticism would be impertinent—to the reader.

The question of tradition remains. That tradition is very different from what most Englishmen think it to be. Here briefly is what it amounts to. The *Daily Advertiser* of September 30, 1745, records the first public performance of "God save the King": "On Saturday night last the audience of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, were agreeably surprised by the gentlemen belonging to the house performing the anthem of 'God save our Noble King.' The universal applause it met with, being encored with repeated huzzas, sufficiently denoted in how just an abhorrence they hold the arbitrary schemes of our insidious enemies and detest the despotick attempts of Papal power."[1] This arrangement of the National Anthem was due to Dr Arne, whose sister, Mrs Cibber (for whom Handel composed the contralto airs in *Samson* and the *Messiah*) took part in the performance. The anthem was sung as a trio for contralto, tenor, and bass. The *Gentleman's Magazine* for October in the same year also mentions this performance, giving as the first line "God save great George our King." John Beard sang the tenor and Thomas Rheinhold, a native of Dresden, was the bass.

The performance, being such a success, was continued, and the stage management of it developed. Bery Victor writes on October 10 to David Garrick, incidentally identifying the second stanza: "The stage of both houses is the most pious as well as the most loyal place in the three kingdoms. Twenty men appear at the end of every play, and one, stepping forward from the rest with uplifted hands and eyes, begins singing to an old anthem tune the following words: "O Lord our God arise," etc., which are the very words and music of an old anthem that was sung at St James's Chapel for King James II when the Prince of Orange was landed to save us from Popery and slavery." Dr Arne, being asked for the names of composer and author, replied that he had not the least knowledge, nor could he guess at all who was either the author or composer, but that it was the received opinion that it was written for the Catholic Chapel of James II."[2] To this statement Dr Burney adds: "We believe it was written for James II while the Prince of Orange was hovering over the coast, and when he became King, who durst own or sing it?" Charles Burney, who was a pupil of Arne's, wrote some

twenty years later to Sir Joseph Banks: "Old Mrs Arne, the mother of Dr Arne, assured me at the time (1746) that 'God save the King' was written and sung for King James in 1688, when the Prince of Orange was hovering over the coast: she said that she had heard it sung not only in the Playhouse but in the street." Sir Joseph Banks adds some notes to this letter which sum up the matter completely: "That the loyal and popular hymn of 'God save the King' was originally written and composed for the advancement of Popery and Jacobitism is scarcely credible, and yet it is almost certain. . . . That a King whom God is so earnestly called upon to save must have been in some danger seems evident. The second stanza makes it appear that the danger arose from political enmity and popular disaffection. . . . That the earnestness with which the direct interference of the Divinity in favour of the King is repeatedly implored, the total silence that reigns throughout the whole respecting the established religion of the Church, and the supreme excellence of the melody, which is in the best choral style, savour much more of concealed Popery than of avowed Protestantism, for surely no one who preferred the established religion of a country would forego the use of that powerful instrument in an attempt to excite a national enthusiasm which this song undoubtedly is. Curious it is that it failed entirely to produce the effect intended by the author, and has succeeded beyond example in producing the direct contrary one. . . ."

In Dr Burney's letter, already quoted, he says that "a monkish version of this kind of hymn in Latin is pretended to have been written and sung for Charles II." A dog-Latin paraphrase occurs in a book, printed for a performance given on November 18, 1743, in honour of the birthday of Princess Augusta, wife of Frederick, Prince of Wales, which may be the monkish version referred to by Burney.

It is clear that the National Anthem of to-day is an impostor. It can claim no particular antiquity. It has been violently distorted from its original intention and meaning. On its first appearance Heaven ignored it; only the force of habit enables us to put up with it to-day. Away with it! Has England no poets?

ALGAR THOROLD

THE GREEK GENIUS

I

AT the time of the Renaissance it was the high civilisation of the Græco-Roman world which appealed to men who were then emerging, with ill-grounded enthusiasm, from a healthier semi-barbarous state. With their growing knowledge of Greek art and history, and their growing experience at first hand of the civilised life, their ideal gradually receded to the fourth and fifth centuries, and has there till quite lately remained. But the modern Greek revival, which is surely heralded by the publication in rapid succession of three such important yet very readable books as Prof. Gilbert Murray's *Rise of the Greek Epic*, Mr Zimmern's *Greek Commonwealth*, and Mr Livingston's *The Greek Genius and its Meaning for us*, tends to insist rather, as Nietzsche insisted, on the virtue of the pre-Socratic Greek; and this revival in its general effects, and, as I wish to show here, in its effect on English poetry in particular, should prove at least a useful auxiliary force to that spiritual inroad of the barbarians of which Rousseau and Nietzsche were the pioneers, and by which alone, if it is proof against their coming in the flesh, society can now be saved.

The Greeks, we know, would not be flattered if they thought themselves confused with the barbarians. But whereas the Greeks applied the word "barbarian" as a term of contempt to all men of alien race, and often therefore to men more highly civilised than themselves, we apply it only, and usually as a term of contempt, to men less highly civilised than ourselves; to men intermediate between the savage and civilised states. We still apply it usually as a term of contempt, as our forefathers of the Renaissance applied "Gothic" to the architecture of the Middle Ages; but whereas both words will probably now retain their present significance, the word "barbarian" will soon no more be used as a term of contempt by intelligent people than is the word "Gothic." And our Greek revivalists are coming, however cautiously, to the conclusion that the essential virtues of the Greek were the virtues of the barbarian in the best modern sense of the word; and that the spirit—the Gothic spirit—of our own art and literature prior to the Renaissance, though by no means Greek, approached more nearly to the best Greek spirit than it has usually done since.

Of the three books already mentioned, Mr Livingston's, the most recently published, is the most definite in this conclusion; but even this book is not always entirely worthy in thought and manner of its courageous theme. Certain phrases are reminiscent of our grandmothers rather than of the youth of the world; such a phrase, for instance, as "very human" repeated in two consecutive lines; such a phrase as "The Note of" Beauty, Freedom, Humanism, etc., repeated at the head of nearly every chapter.

A more serious fault of the same mid-Victorian tendency is the writer's apparent assumption that these "notes" of beauty, freedom, and so on, though they are certainly attributes of the Greek genius, are racially distinctive attributes. He tells us quite truly, though rather too often, that the Greeks were "very human," but he still more constantly implies that they were very Greek. And though, under the diverse conditions to which they have been variously subjected, the different races of man have no doubt developed their distinctive attributes, the assumption that these attributes are originally distinctive or inherent by the act of God has been responsible for a great deal of loose thinking, whilst it is not, and is never likely to be, warranted by established facts.

It is not specially from the Greeks that we are distinguished, for instance, by our "picture-gallery sense of beauty" coupled with our gross indifference to the ugliness of our own works and surroundings; we are thus unenviably distinguished from the Japanese, and from our own medieval forefathers; we are thus, indeed, distinguished from every savage and peasant race which is known to us by the work of its hands.

It is not, again, specially the Greeks who are distinguished from us by their love of freedom, their primitive democratic instinct. This love of freedom is a usual attribute of barbarian peoples in our modern sense of the word. It was an instinct, for instance, of the pagan Northmen so strong that many of them preferred exile and the inhospitable shores of Iceland rather than subjection in their own country to the newly centralised Christian monarchy; it has been proverbially an attribute of our own Anglo-Saxon race in its more barbarous past, though Mr Livingston has good reasons for denying it to us at the present time. But the Greeks—and here perhaps we really come near to the heart of the matter—were peculiar in this respect: that their love of freedom, owing probably to the naturally broken character of their country rather than to any inherent virtue of the Greek peoples,

survived that crisis, the corruption, namely, of their tribal governments, which has been usually fatal to this instinct in the history of other nations. They were protected, that is to say, in Greece, as the Northmen were so nearly protected, by the broken nature of their country, against the organisation of any strong central government over an area large enough to prohibit the counter-organisation of rebellious forces; and their primitive democratic instincts proved too strong alike for the corrupt oligarchies and the usurping tyrants of their petty States. And their freedom was also promoted through that critical period during which their genius developed in that they suffered no serious danger of conquest by a foreign power; this fact also partly explaining their non-development of a central monarchy.

Now compare the history of the Greek in these respects with that of the Hebrew, and this important truth clearly emerges: that whereas intellectual power is developed by social and political freedom, as by every kind of free activity, spiritual power is accumulated under political or other kinds of restraint and pressure—pressure such as that to which the Hebrews were subjected in their Egyptian bondage, again under an oppressive monarchy to which they submitted in their fear of external enemies, and yet again in their bondage to Babylon and Rome. Under this exceptional pressure the spiritual development of the Hebrews was as remarkable as was the intellectual development of the Greeks in their exceptional freedom; the one was naturally transmitted, whilst the other was lost, to the oppressed subjects of the Roman Empire; it was encouraged and organised in their own interests by the ruling classes; and transmitted again to the barbarians of north-western Europe, who were doubtless more predisposed to spiritual development than the Greeks by the greater poverty and the more superstitious fear of natural forces which resulted from their northern environment.

Now the sense of beauty which is natural to most primitive peoples may be so far subordinated to spiritual development that the genius of the nation expresses itself almost wholly in religious literature, as in the case of the Hebrews; it may develop hand in hand with a less intense spiritual development, and we have art and literature of the more or less romantic, the Celtic, or the Gothic type; it may develop hand in hand with an intellectual development, and we have Greek art and literature at its best, far removed, as Mr Livingston points out, from that, for instance, of the Irish school.

Man for the most part "moves," says Mr Livingston, "in a narrow and carefully watched round of existence. He may not do this, he must do that.

Maimed and mutilated, with one hand or one eye he enters into the kingdom of heaven. This is true of nearly every nation except Greece. Here alone man was not sacrificed to his god or his country, but allowed 'to see life steadily and see it whole.'" Partly to this freedom of the Greeks, surviving as it did the growth of a comparatively wealthy and leisured class, is to be attributed their intellectual development; partly it is to be attributed to their stimulating contacts, each city-state with the others, and all with a great variety of other peoples more and less civilised than themselves; partly to a third factor to which I shall refer presently. But it was, I suggest, this precocious development of the intellect under still primitive social and political institutions which was the secret of the Greek genius, if its secret can be ascertained at all. Their "directness" especially was that, says Mr Livingston, "of children with the intellects of men."

This chapter on the Greek "Note of Directness" is perhaps the most important contribution to the criticism of poetry which has been made for years. But the vigorous trial by comparison of English with Greek poetry which culminates here begins in an earlier chapter with the proposition that the sense of beauty of the Greeks explains their "sustained perfection of style." The explanation, as I think, is here imperfect. It is not their sense of beauty alone, since they have this in common with most primitive peoples; it is their sense of beauty directed by their intellectual power which explains the Greek sustained perfection—a perfection sometimes approached in art, but never in literature, by the merely primitive or by the medieval genius. This perfection of style is only equalled indeed, says Mr Livingston, by Milton and Pope amongst English poets.

Coming now to the Greek directness, "Romanticism and sentimentality had not yet taken hold upon them. Like children, they had an amazing power of going straight to the point . . . and very childlike is the directness which saw in things no more than is actually there." This primitiveness is responsible for "their lucidity, their eternal outline"; "the mysterious as a whole was disagreeable to them, and they were infinitely far from the deliberate exploitation of it by which Maeterlinck, Verlaine, and the modern symbolists live." So Mr Livingston gradually erects a standard by which not only modern symbolists, but the greatest of Roman and English poets are tried in succession and almost invariably found wanting.

But let us look a little more closely here. For my own part I can well spare Mrs Browning's "Seagull," Shelley's "Skylark," and his "Adonais," Blake's

"Rose," Dryden's "Mrs Ann Killigrew," together with the "poetry of failure," such as Browning's "Last Ride," which Mr Livingston so frankly dismisses; but from my own observation of beasts and birds I should hesitate to deny with his confidence a soul to the seagull or 'a blithe spirit' to the skylark. I should hesitate indeed to say that a poet sees in any object more than "is actually there," for how do I know what is there, or how does any man? And, after all, there are objections to sparing almost the whole of English poetry for an Englishman who is not a Greek scholar. The line between classic and romantic, or between good and bad, must be drawn more carefully; for, as Mr Livingston admits in places, fine poetry, and poetry which is even in the best Greek spirit, has been written by our English poets.

Using the word "spiritual," as I have already done, in contradistinction not to "physical" but to "intellectual," I say again that the prime factors in romantic poetry are a sense of beauty+spiritual power, and, in classic, a sense of beauty+intellectual power; and that, whilst all three factors will usually contribute to the greatest poetry of either kind, the defect of intellectual power is more often fatal to romantic than is the defect of spiritual to classic poetry. And it is, I suggest, a sheer defect of intellectual power, or a sentimental disinclination to use it in seeing the bare facts as they are, rather than an imaginative tendency to see more than is obvious, which characterises most of the poetry that Mr Livingston condemns by comparison with his Greek standard. It is not in attributing a soul to a skylark that Shelley's poem really fails; it is because the poem has no intellectual backbone, because the similes are unrelated and clearly artificial, and because the diction and the metre are wanting in simplicity and dignity, that Shelley's poem fails as tried by the Greek standard. But Wordsworth attributes a soul to a skylark in a poem which compares well with the Greek alike in its sustained perfection of style and its intellectual backbone; the last perfect metaphor alone,

> Type of the wise, who soar but never roam,
> True to the kindred points of heaven and home,

being more than worth all Shelley's laborious similes.

Since I am known to the very few people who know me at all as a humble disciple of William Morris and the so-called medieval revivalists rather than as a Greek scholar, I may be accused not only of presumption but of inconsistency in my championship of this Greek ideal, which is so often, and

in many respects so rightly, contrasted with that of medieval art. But the craftsman, the educated working man, has at least one advantage over the majority even of Greek scholars, in that he represents the audience to whom mainly, rather than to students or to mere idlers, the Greek poets themselves appealed, and from whose hands, if at all, the English poets and the Greek scholars of the near future must be content to accept their laurels. And the sympathies, I do not say of the routine worker, the oppressed mechanic of to-day, but of the free and intelligent craftsman of the early Greek, of the medieval, and, as I hope, of the coming age, are necessarily intellectual rather than spiritual, and in literature therefore classic rather than romantic. For intellect, the directing power, is developed and worked into a man by every stroke of intelligent work that he does; whilst spirit, which is at best perhaps a too artificial kind of driving power, and, if it does no work, is emitted as a formless cloud, or accumulates under pressure as a morbid and destructive force, is healthily and imperceptibly released and worked out of a man in every kind of free activity. It is partly for this reason that a preference for the romantic in art is by no means inconsistent with a preference for the classic in literature; it is almost impossible for the worker in things, whilst it is not impossible for the dreamer in words, to be wanting in intellectual power; a Gothic cathedral may be more spiritual and romantic in character than a Greek temple, but it is by no means less intellectual; and in any case it cannot be romantic or spiritual to the extent of failing in reality or solidity; it cannot disappear, as the work of a modern poet will sometimes do on perusal, into the "illimitable inane." We hear much to-day about the importance of atmosphere to a work of art, that the imperfections, no doubt, may less clearly appear; but it is better, at all events, that there should be no atmosphere than that there should be nothing else, as sometimes happens.

The intellectual power of the Greeks was due then, not only to their political decentralisation and freedom, nor to the variety of their "culture contacts," but to that widely spread industrial activity, neither highly specialised nor wholly professional, which is one of the surest and healthiest characteristics of a primitive people. Mr Livingston calls the Greeks primitive as compared with ourselves, because they "stood nearer the morning of the world," though, for the matter of that, they stood almost imperceptibly nearer even to the highly skilled artists of palæolithic times than we do. It is more instructive to notice that they were primitive as compared with their

Egyptian contemporaries; for in Egypt, says Herodotus, "the order of nature was reversed" in that the men did the weaving. In Egypt, that is to say, the worst but most characteristic feature of what we call civilisation existed in the specialisation of industry; in Egypt there were at all events professional weavers and there was a standing professional army; whilst in Greece, as in all primitive States, every man was a soldier on occasion just as all the women—fit mothers therefore of an intellectual race—added the occupation of weaving to the rest of their manifold domestic industries. And though no doubt many of the crafts were specialised, the craftsman, according to Mr Zimmern, enjoyed that freedom which is essential to intelligent as distinct from mechanical creative work. Every man indeed was his own master; "it was very seldom that they worked for wages at all because, as the London clerk said of his summer holiday, it interfered so much with their daily habits"—their civic duties, their recreations, their perpetual discussions. Let everybody read Mr Zimmern's chapter on "Craftsmen and Workmen," and indeed his whole *Greek Commonwealth*, who is interested in the internal economies of an art-producing State, so similar as they were at Athens to those of medieval Europe.

And not only was every Greek worker, if he was not definitely a slave, a free man, but every free man was a worker; and the poets and literary men of Greece, prior at all events to Euripides, were no exception to this rule. They, too, were not mere "study poets," but soldiers and sailors and craftsmen; so that Greek literature was produced, not by students and idlers for students and idlers, but by and for the educated working man.

If any reader of this article should suggest that, so far, it has little to do with poetry, Greek or English, I must offer the apology that I wish not so much to discuss poetry as to investigate the conditions under which it is written, or at least to call attention to the investigations of more competent persons. I might even call upon the Greeks to defend me; for, says Mr Livingston, they "were lovers of literature and art; but their ideal of existence was not a round of literary and artistic small-talk."

A ROMNEY GREEN

(To be continued)

SHAKESPEARE AND MR GRANVILLE BARKER

SURELY significant was the attitude of certain of the Daily Press Critics when, after a few weeks' run, *The Winter's Tale* gave way to *Twelfth Night* at the Savoy. Not many of our present-day critics are of the calibre that one remembers their verbal felicities six months after utterance, but the implication was that the first production had been wilful, perverse, "arty," false, and that during those few weeks, as a result of the tuition of the critics, Mr Barker had reformed himself, so that *Twelfth Night*, though not perfect, would do. A blessing was pronounced, and *Twelfth Night* has drawn society over since, on one occasion lately three persons sitting together the sum-total of whose previous visits amounted to something near a hundred, a circumstance worthy of *Our Miss Gibbs*, or *The Sunshine Girl.* But critics live in a queer world, the commercial theatre world, in which the superficial things are the profound things and the unimportant things matter, till they appear to forget that art is the expression of the spirit, and that such a spirited individual as Mr Barker, having had his Shakespeare productions in mind for years, having probably envisaged his *Twelfth Night* long before *The Winter's Tale* was even in rehearsal, was not likely to be able to do more than change a few spots for the benefit of those who only see skin-deep. It is this inability to realise that art springs from the intimacy of a mind, this inability to feel the presence of an idea, this lack of responsiveness to atmosphere, that assimilates so much of our criticism to mere reporting of externals, or else to a commentary on the moral and intellectual nature of the work under consideration, or at best to an objective and arbitrary statement of certain canons of taste. The æsthete is the pers on who feels and realises the atmosphere which has been created, and if there is one person who should be æsthetic it is the critic, the middleman who has to convey to the public what the artist created possibly without being aware of it or understanding it. But some of our critics are so little æsthetic, are so much at one with the public, that they would treat Sir Herbert Tree's work from the same point of view as Mr Poel's. The one would be

gorgeous, the other eccentric, in their eyes. It is the "æsthete" who is hurt by the absence of creation, who feels that the dead thing is actively harmful.

Now Mr Barker's *The Winter's Tale* undoubtedly made an immediate impression on the minds of most perceptive people. All that clear-cut whiteness of the stages themselves, the absence of flare and noise, immediately conjured visions of the theatre as a temple of art; every item in the scenery and designs of Mr Rothenstein and Mr Wilkinson breathed of the craftsman's finish. The play, thoughtfully enough, was broken into three different sections with three differing atmospheres: the first turbulent, lurid, rapid; the second arcadian; the third grave and conclusive. Each section, save perhaps the last, seemed remote from Shakespeare; but one's final emotion was analogous to that given by Shakespeare. The door had been closed against Shakespeare, yet at the end we had been stimulated to open it for ourselves. So far, good. But we came away feeling rather miserably that Gordon Craig was right, feeling that a play cannot be produced because the producer's spirit will be clashing with the author's, feeling that Mr Rothenstein carefully realising himself through his pinks and golds, and Mr Wilkinson carefully realising himself through his yellows and blacks, and Mr Barker carefully realising himself through his well-trained actors' voices did not add up into Shakespeare, realising himself in *The Winter's Tale*. Then came a visit to Mr Poel's *Troilus and Cressida*, and, though half the dialogue was inaudible and the interpretation of Cressida's significance wrong (as it seemed), we found ourselves magically in the Shakespearean world, and gladly felt again that art, even the second-hand art of the producer, was not a matter of logic and definition, but one of mystery and imagination. Mr Poel's may not have been a Shakespearean world, but at the time he made us accept it for such a world, and therefore it was such a world for us to live in at the time and remember. You cannot ask for more than that of art, for the painting of a rose can never be the rose itself. And it is here that you ultimately discover the practical weakness of Mr Craig's position when in his philosophic (as opposed to his artistic) person. He says that no man in the world ever could produce Shakespeare perfectly, because always, in so far as he was artist, he would be creating something new as well, and therefore Shakespeare should only be read. But every man in the world who reads Shakespeare creates for himself an image different from that of every other reader, and indeed different each time he reads. A thing in itself is meaningless; it cannot even be conceived as existing unless it comes into relation

with mind, and because we can go to the rose itself we are not prevented from feeling perhaps still deeper truths about the rose through the aid of the painter who paints an illusion of the rose, however much of himself he gives as well. And so, grateful to Mr Poel for showing us that, so far as words mean anything, it is true to say that Shakespeare can be expressed through the imagination of the producer, we went back to the Savoy to discover where and in what ways, in the midst of so much that was beautiful, Mr Barker's imagination had failed to work; where, in fact, his "atmosphere" had become tenuous like unto that of the unholy.

The most unsatisfactory part of the production was perhaps the treatment of the Bohemian scenes of *The Winter's Tale*. Here one could see Mr Barker flagrantly not imagining Shakespeare's Perdita, but asking himself in general terms what sort a girl would be, brought up by an old shepherd in the country. His answer was, a tomboy. But then, he seemed to allow, she must not be quite an ordinary "real" tomboy any more than the shepherd must be quite an ordinary west-country shepherd. So he dressed her quaintly and gave her pretty gestures and a garden-city house to live in. Is not this, for all the simplicity and economy of means in execution, what we call, in remonstrance with Sir Herbert Tree, "a combination of realism and decoration"? In his plays Mr Barker tends to say everything, to set finite and baffling walls; only in the last scene of *Ann Leete* does he clearly open vistas. In his production of *Twelfth Night* he had to have a passage of music. So he dressed very charmingly a capable string quartette, and instead of something—how can we describe it when we do not *know*?—some exquisite hint of floating melody giving quick birth to Orsino's lovely opening verse, we were supplied with a considerable and finished introduction, the quartette then carefully and deliberately bowing itself off. No doubt, if *Twelfth Night* is an historical record, that is pretty accurately how it would have happened; but art, by selecting from human life, achieves a spiritual life of its own, and Mr Barker, by consciously trying to get back to the actual facts of life, partly undoes the artist's work. His "realistic" tendencies (which word means his instinct for analysis), when brought to bear on an already created piece of poetry, seem to induce him to resolve the "art-stuff" back into its own raw material and not to create it anew. And from any true critical standpoint we cannot ask of a production if the interpretation of the characters is correct, any more than we can discuss the fidelity of a portrait in painting, unless we are first clear that such a production or

portrait exists as art. Mr Poel's productions do so exist; most West-end productions do not; Mr Barker's *Twelfth Night* wavered.

This destruction of artistic life manifests itself, of course, in lack of proportion and unity, the parts kept alive being prominent; the closing procession and Feste's song were beautiful, and, like the introduction, much too long. Shakespeare had already given us the sense of close in his own way. Again, supplementarily, the dead matter (artistically speaking) also becomes prominent. When characters which should be poetic are reduced to history, the audience comes to know them as it were colloquially, and "Falstaff is to them nothing more than a gross fat man." By the time Orsino reached the line—

> Notable pirate, thou salt-water thief,

the audience had come to know him as not at all that sort of man; it seemed a queer phrase for such a fellow to use, and, frankly, we did right to laugh. And all the time we were wondering when such a sensible woman as Miss McCarthy (Viola) would realise that Sebastian had been saved, and (at the end) how Orsino was capable of such a ready change of affection. It is easy to say, with Dr Johnson, that Shakespeare ended his comedies carelessly; better to accept *Twelfth Night* as containing one dark spot of tremendous intensity (Malvolio) set in encircling light. Psychology is surrounded by laughter and poetry. Mr Ainley was a tremendous centre of intensity, but, not to throw too much blame on Mr Barker's sole shoulders, the poetical characters, like the walls of the background and the rhetorical delivery of the verse, were so finite that we began asking scientific questions of them. Orsino actually had a string quartette; then, had Olivia's garden really white walls and toy trees? And, when you come to it, did such people really speak in verse at all?—for that is always the end of these questions once you are allowed to begin. A realistically minded member of one audience pointed out, in the matter of the quartette, that Orsino's words "Enough, no more" had been rendered superfluous by the fact that the players had already manifestly finished. Such criticism merely shows how "realism" ends in breaking the illusion even for the layman.

All the same, *Twelfth Night* suited Mr Barker better than *The Winter's Tale*, and the reason is not far to seek. An able critic has written that Shakespeare gave us no comedy (which implies a critical attitude towards life), but fantasy. But *Twelfth Night* does contain much comedy, much laughter at

fools, much wit, much happiness of phrase and situation, all of which would suit the Mr Barker of *The Voysey Inheritance* and *Rococo*. The midnight drinking scene was excellent; even the setting seemed truer than that of other passages. It has been supposed that Mr Arthur Whitby and Mr Leon Quartermaine and Mr Henry Ainley put in a flesh-and-blood quality that would be ill-pleasing to the cold and intellectual Mr Barker. Mr Barker perhaps likes to work on his characters rather than through them—a mistake so long as you have human actors at all; but his sympathy with the satiric element in the play would naturally result in precisely those characters having most "flesh and blood," which phrase only means conviction and artistic vitality. The "romantic" characters were only too much flesh and blood as Miss McCarthy and Miss Evelyn Millard and Mr King of contemporary life, and on that account the less real as creatures of Shakespeare's fancy. Strictly speaking, Mr Barker ought not to produce Shakespeare, but Molière, the Restorationists, Sheridan, Tchekof, and perhaps Goldsmith. He, with his comic instinct, does not destroy the artistic life of comedy, but only of fantasy and tragedy which he does not so well imaginatively understand. But this is a counsel of perfection. In the workaday world his Shakespeare is of infinite value; the refining influence of his art in individual passages and of his unflinching craft throughout, make themselves felt as one hurries along the Strand, recoiling from tawdriness and some vulgarity advertising the non-existent, which is Death Itself.

LEONARD INKSTER

A NOTE ON JOHN WEBSTER

THE genius of John Webster is one of the most powerful and splendid that adorned the Elizabethan drama. Light upon the details of his dramatic method or mental processes might be valuable. Scholarship, in one small and interesting particular, has made such light possible. John Addington Symonds remarked with insight a good many years ago that Webster must have used a note-book. His plays read like it. And now Mr Crawford has discovered some of the sources he compiled his note-book from.* The instances of borrowing are very numerous, and chiefly from two books, Sidney's *Arcadia* and Montaigne—favourite sources of Elizabethan wisdom. They are very clearly marked, and consist in taking striking thoughts and phrases in the original, occasionally quite long ones, and re-writing them almost verbally, sometimes with slight changes to make them roughly metrical. It is a quite different matter from the faint "parallels" of ordinary commentators. I give one of the more striking instances, to illustrate.

But she, as if he had spoken of a small matter when he mentioned her life, to which she had not leisure to attend, desired him, if he loved her, to show it in finding some way to save Antiphilus. For her, she found the world but a wearisome stage unto her, where she played a part against her will, and therefore besought him not to cast his love in so unfruitful a place as could not love itself. . . .—*Arcadia*, Bk. II.

It happened, at that time upon his bed, towards the dawning of the day, he heard one stir in his chamber, by the motion of garments, and with an angry voice asked who was there. "A poor gentlewoman," answered the party, "that wish long life unto you." "And I soon death unto you," said he, "for the horrible curse you have given me."—*Arcadia*, Bk. III.

DUCHESS: Who must dispatch me?
I account this world a tedious theatre,
For I do play a part in't 'gainst my will.

BOSOLA: Come, be of comfort; I will save your life.

DUCHESS: Indeed, I have not leisure to tend
So small a business.

BOSOLA: Now, by my life, I pity you.

* Crawford, *Collectanea*, I, 20–46, II, 1–63

DUCHESS: Thou art a fool, then,
To waste thy pity on a thing so wretched
As cannot pity itself. I am full of daggers.
Puff, let me blow these vipers from me!

Enter SERVANT

What are you?

SERVANT: One that wishes you long life.

DUCHESS: I would thou wert hang'd for the horrible curse
Thou hast given me.

The Duchess of Malfi, IV, 1.

There are three explanations of all this. Either Webster knew the *Arcadia* so well that he had a lot of it by heart. Or he had the book and worked from it. Or he kept a note-book, into which he had entered passages that struck him, and which he used to write the play from. Certainly the third is the true explanation. We know that Elizabethan authors did sometimes keep such note-books. Bacon did so, and Ben Jonson, whom Webster admired and rather resembled, worked most methodically in this way. The memory theory could scarcely explain the verbal accuracy of so many passages. But there are other considerations, which make the note-book probable. The passages from the *Arcadia* or from Montaigne come very often in lumps. You will get none, or only one or two, for some scenes, and then twenty lines or so that are a *cento* of them, carefully dovetailed and worked together. It is very difficult to imagine a man doing this from memory or from a book. But it is exactly what would happen if he were using a note-book which had several consecutive pages with *Arcadia* extracts, several more with Montaigne, and so on. The passage I quoted, which brings together an extract from *Arcadia* III and another from *Arcadia* II, exemplifies this. There are other better instances.

A good many of these passages Webster copied out identically, except sometimes for a few changes to make them go into rough verse. Others he altered in very interesting ways. It was not necessarily part of his goodness as an author to alter them. His genius comes out equally in the phrases he used to produce far greater effect than they do in the original, by putting them at some exactly suitable climax. We are getting beyond the attitude, born of the industrial age and the childish enthusiasm for property as such, which condemns such plagiarism, imitation, and borrowing. The Elizabethans had for the most part healthy and sensible views on the subject.

They practised and encouraged the habit. When Langbaine, in his preface to *Momus Triumphans*, "condemns Plagiaries" (though he is only thinking of plots, even then) it is a sign of the decadence towards stupidity. The poet and the dramatist work with words, ideas, and phrases. It is ridiculous, and it shows a wild incomprehension of the principles of literature, to demand that each should only use his own: every man's brain is filled by thoughts and words of other people's. Webster wanted to make Bosola say fine things. He had many in his mind or his note-book; some were borrowed, some his own. He put them down, and they answer their purpose splendidly.

> I stand like one
> That long hath ta'en a sweet and golden dream;
> I am angry with myself, now that I wake.

That was, or may have been, of his own invention.

> The weakest arm is strong enough that strikes
> With the sword of justice.

That he had found in Sidney. There is no difference. In any case the first, original passage was probably in part due to his friends' influence; and the words he used were originally wholly "plagiarised" from his mother or his nursemaid. "Originality" is only plagiarising from a great many.

So Webster reset other people's jewels and redoubled their lustre. "The soul must be held fast with one's teeth," he found Montaigne remarkably saying in a stoical passage. The phrase stuck. Bosola, on the point of death, cries:

> Yes, I hold my weary soul in my teeth;
> 'Tis ready to part from me.

It is unforgetable.

Webster improved even Donne, in this way; in a passage of amazing, quiet, hopeless pathos, the parting of Antonio and the Duchess (*Duchess of Malfi*, III, 5) which is one long series of triumphant borrowings.

> We seem ambitious God's whole work to undo;
> Of nothing He made us, and we strive too
> To bring ourselves to nothing back,

Donne writes in *An Anatomy of the World.*

> Heaven fashion'd us of nothing; and we strive
> To bring ourselves to nothing,

are Antonio's moving words.

This last example illustrates one kind of the changes other than metrical Webster used to make. He generally altered a word or two, with an extraordinarily sure touch, which proves his genius for literature. He gave the passages life and vigour, always harmonious with his own style. You see, by this chance side-light, the poet at work, with great vividness. "Fashion'd" for "made" here, is not a great improvement; but it brings the sentence curiously into the key of the rest of the scene. The metrical skill is astounding—the calm weight of "fashion'd"; the slight tremble of "Heaven" at the beginning of the line; the adaptation from Donne's stiff, heavy, combative accent, the line ending with "and we strive too," to the simpler, easier cadence more suited to speech and to pathos, ". . . and we strive"; and the repetition of "nothing" in the same place in the two lines.

The long first example I gave of borrowing from Sidney gives good instances of change, among others the half-slangy vividness of—

> Thou art a fool, then,
> To waste thy pity on a thing so wretched
> As cannot pity itself. . . .

for Sidney's mannered, dim—

> And therefore besought him not to cast his love in so unfruitful a place as could not love itself.

But the same places in *The Duchess of Malfi* and the *Arcadia* have a much finer example. The description of Queen Erona is transferred to the Duchess again. Sidney says that, in her sorrow, one could "perceive the shape of loveliness more perfectly in woe than in joyfulness." Webster turned this with a touch to poetry in its sheerest beauty.

> Bosola: You may discern the shape of loveliness
> More perfect in her tears than in her smiles.

It is just this substitution of the concrete for the abstract—which is the nearest one could get to a definition of the difference between a thought in good prose and the same thought in good poetry—that Webster excels in. Even where his adjectives gain, it is in this direction.

> Or is it true that thou wert never but a vain name, and no essential thing?

says Sidney in a long passage on Virtue. Webster makes it a shade more visual, and twenty times as impressive:

> Or is it true thou art but a bare name
> And no essential thing?

So Bosola gives life to a meditation of Montaigne. Montaigne's democratic mind pondered in his study on the essential equality of men. "We are deceived;" he says of princes, "they are moved, stirred, and removed in their motions by the same springs and wards that we are in ours. The same reason that makes us chide and brawl and fall out with any of our neighbours, causeth a war to follow between Princes; the same reason that makes us whip or beat a lackey maketh a Prince (if he apprehend it) to spoil and waste a whole Province. . . ." Bosola is the heart of democracy. "They are deceived, there's the same hand to them; the like passions sway them; the same reason that makes a vicar to go to law for a tithe-pig, and undo his neighbours, makes them spoil a whole province, and batter down goodly cities with the cannon." The tithe-pig carries you on to Parnassus; Bosola has the vision of an artist.

The liveliness of the "there's" for "there is" in the last quotation is typical. Webster, like all the great Elizabethans, knew he was writing for the ear and not the eye. They kept in close touch, in their phrases, rhythms, and tune, with speech. Their language was greater than speech, but it was in that kind; it was not literature.

But there is one example of adoption and adaptation where Webster stands out quite clear as the poet, with the queer and little-known mental processes of that kind of man suddenly brought to the light. Montaigne has a passage:

> Forasmuch as our sight, being altered, represents unto itself things alike; and we imagine that things fail it as it doth to them: as they who travel by sea, to whom mountains, fields, towns, heaven, and earth, seem to go the same motion, and keep the same course they do.

The sense is clear and on the surface. He is illustrating the general rule by an interesting instance from ordinary experience. When you go in a train the sky, the earth, and its various features, seem to be moving in the same direction.* In *The White Devil* Flamineo is tempting Vittoria with the happiness Brachiano can give her.

> So perfect shall be thy happiness, that, as men at sea think land and trees and ships go that way they go, so both heaven and earth shall seem to go your voyage.

Webster took this instance of Montaigne's and used it to help out quite a different sense. He used it as a simile of that elusive, unobvious, imaginative

* As a matter of fact, he got it wrong, because they seem to be moving in the *opposite* direction.

kind that illuminates the more that you can scarcely grasp the point of comparison. But he did more. He was led to it by thinking, as a poet thinks, only half in ideas, and half in words. Or rather, ideas lead to one another, suggest one another, through ideas, with ordinary people; with poets they do it through words, quite illogically. The paths of association in the brain are different in the two cases. A word is an idea with an atmosphere, a core with a fringe round it, like an oyster with a beard, or Professor William James's conception of a state of mind. Poets think of the fringes, other people of the core only. More definitely, if the dictionary meaning of a word is *A* and the atmosphere *X*, the poet thinks of it as $(X + A)$, and his trains of thought are apt to go on accordingly. So here, Webster found, vaguely, "heaven and earth" . . . "going the same motion" . . . and he leapt to the mystical conception of supreme happiness. He took "heaven and earth" from their original, half material, significance, and transfigured them. He took them from the illustration and put them into the thing illustrated. The meaning of the original suggested one thing to his mind, the words another; he combined them—in another world. And the result is a simile of incomprehensible appropriateness and exquisite beauty, an idea in a Shelleyan altitude where words have various radiance rather than meaning, an amazing description of the supreme height of the ecstasy of joy.

RUPERT BROOKE

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

FROM all that I have heard it seems likely that more copies of Wilcox's works have been sold than during their lifetime were sold of Wordsworth's, Coleridge's, Shelley's and Keats's together. (I drop the "Mrs" and the further unnecessary distinction of "Ella Wheeler" because one says "Wilcox" just as one says "Shakespeare.") Some nibbling faddists may argue that, since ours is not an age of poetry, her very circulation proves her no poet. Others would have it that she must be a greater writer than Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, or Keats: "not perhaps" they would say "of pure literature, whatever that may be, but of palpitating human stuff." I should not care to go so far. Only, a poetess who has slain her thousands can no more be ignored than the Crystal Palace or Sandow's Cocoa. We must be on our guard lest this distinction between pure literature and palpitating human stuff should have become an accomplished fiction unknown to us. We must not be content to sniff the empyrean with unpublished or unsold poets. "The most widely read poet of the day," as her publishers proudly entitle her, concerns the superior person as well as the man, woman, or child who is allured by this addition sum on the cover of her *Selected Poems*:

21 from *Poems of Passion.*
21 „ *Poems of Pleasure.*
14 „ *Poems of Power.*
8 „ *Poems of Cheer.*
8 „ *Kingdom of Love.*
6 „ *Poems of Progress.*
6 „ *Poems of Sentiment.*
6 „ *Poems of Experience.*
6 „ *Maurine.*
4 „ *Yesterdays.*

100 Poems.

Even if we can resist her and her tens of thousands, *ought* we to resist her? Should we not rather sink ourselves in the multitudes joyously devouring this palpitating human stuff?

There are many inducements. For example, her poems are to be had everywhere, not only at the Poetry Bookshop. Furthermore, the price is

uniform and low—one shilling a volume. Also the titles cannot be forgotten, though a little confusion may arise from their very simplicity, so that I am never sure whether *Poems of Vice* and *Poems of Fun* have yet appeared. Then, again, such inspiriting reports as to the potency of her works are current. They will move an elephant and will not hurt a child. Only the other day I was assured that at a dinner (whether given by or to Wilcox) her publishers, printers, binders, and the rest of the humbler auxiliaries of her fame, with others of the outer world, had voluntarily stood up to announce either that they were the better for reading Wilcox or that they never let a day pass without doing so. Is there any other living poet, even with a small circulation, of whom this can be said? Has Mr Yeats had the pleasure, or Mr W. H. Davies, or Mr Crowley? I doubt whether even among prose writers, whose temptations are notoriously by comparison inconsiderable, there is one who has made so many better men.

The poetess is not unaware of her exalted position. Her manner of accepting and holding it is the best proof of her greatness. Take the sonnet where she refutes the opinion that "Anticipation is sweeter than realisation":

> It may be, yet I have not found it so.
> In those first golden dreams of future fame
> I did not find such happiness as came
> When toil was crowned with triumph. Now I know
> My words have recognition, and will go
> Straight to some listening heart; my early aim,
> To win the idle glory of a name,
> Pales like a candle in the noonday's glow.
>
> So with the deeper joys of which I dreamed:
> Life yields more rapture than did childhood's fancies,
> And each year brings more pleasure than I waited.
> Friendship proves truer than of old it seemed,
> And, all beyond youth's passion-hued romances,
> Love is more perfect than anticipated.

I have quoted this entirely because it admits us to intimacy with one of the forces——"Does it?" interrupts an old Wilcoxian; "if so, then the less Wilcox she." For the moment the interruption can be ignored; if, that is to say, it is not refuted by the further quotations I shall give. Describing a female character with a great talent for lowering things, she says:

> Whenever I encounter her, in such a nameless way
> She gives me the impression I am at my worst that day.

And the hat that was imported (and which cost me half a sonnet),
With just one glance from her round eyes becomes a Bowery bonnet.

This can hardly be other than a graceful, half-humorous allusion to her princely prices. And if the end of "All in a Coach and Four" is artistically questionable, so it gives us beyond question another similar glimpse of the poetess:

It is only a foolish and fanciful song
That came to me as I rode along,
All in a coach and four.

The humble admirer paying a shilling for "The Englishman" may well glow as he thinks that by this very act he is contributing to that coach and four or its maintenance. I find an even more charming indoor glimpse of the poetess in this, the second of her "Songs of a Country Home":

One of the sweetest hours is this
(Of all I think we like it best):
A little restful oasis
Between the breakfast and the post.
Just south of coffee and of toast,
Just north of daily task and duty;
Just west of dreams, this island gleams
A fertile spot of peace and beauty.

We wander out across the lawn;
We idle by a bush in bloom;
The household pets come following on;
Or if the day is one of gloom,
We loiter in a pleasant room,
Or from a casement lean and chatter.
Then comes the mail, like sudden hail,
And off we scatter.

It is pleasant to think of Wilcox in full enjoyment of the simple good things of this world. For domestic felicity raised to the point of ostentation, there is nothing in the life of Keats to equal it, nothing in that of Wordsworth to surpass it.

Wilcox is not lavish of such glimpses. She is not very fond of talking about herself. As the Wilcoxian aforementioned implied, she does not frequently and unmistakably unlock her heart. Great care must be taken not to attribute to her what she wrote dramatically or histrionically. Sometimes I feel safe. Surely it is the poetess herself who vindicates against a certain decadent school the "old rhythm and rhyme":

Oh! the great pulse of it, right from the heart,
Art or no art.

Surely hers are the sentiments of "The Truth Teller":

. . . Yet out of the blackness groping,
My heart finds a world in bloom;
For it somehow is fashioned for hoping,
And it cannot live in the gloom.

Nor should I much hesitate to say that her books prove her to be an upholder of her sex, a believer in progress, a sympathiser with advanced thought. Thus she has said, once and for all, in an address to men:

We do appreciate God's thought
In forming you, before He brought
Us into life. His art was crude,
But oh, so virile in its rude

Large elemental strength: and then
He learned His trade in making men;
Learned how to mix and mould the clay
And fashion in a finer way.

Her belief in progress is written everywhere, whether or not she is recording a dream, as in—

I dreamed a voice, of one God-authorised,
Cried loudly thro' the world, "Disarm! Disarm!"

or in the poem where she dreams of a world where there were no beggars or unemployed, each man owned a plot of ground, children "grew like garden flowers," motherhood was an art, prisons were replaced by schools, and so on. As she speaks for the whole of her sex, so she speaks for those "who cannot speak for themselves," the animals, saying, "I am the voice of the voiceless," and proclaiming:

The same Force formed the sparrow
That fashioned man, the king;
The God of the Whole gave a spark of soul
To furred and to feathered thing.
And I am my brother's keeper,
And I will fight his fight,
And speak the word for beast and bird,
Till the world shall set things right.

Her sympathy with advanced thought may be further briefly indicated by the fact that she has written :

> Pain has its use and place ;
> Its ministry of holiness and grace.

With respect be it spoken, however, there is little in what Wilcox says under these important headings which distinguish her from other members of circles in sympathy with advanced thought, etc. "But," says the old Wilcoxian, " they speak in prose ; Wilcox in song." It is a fine distinction. She says in verse what nearly all who think with her have said in the ephemeral form of prose. I say this, with the reservation that perhaps, after all, Wilcox is not expressing her own convictions in her poetry. For it is a great and notable part of her faculty to constitute herself the spokesman of large bodies of her fellow-creatures. Instances have been given ; similar ones abound to a degree perhaps even beyond the belief of my old Wilcoxian. I doubt sometimes if she means us to take these lines as her own private feeling :

> I never stand above a bier and see
> The seal of death set on some well-loved face
> But that I think, " One more to welcome me
> When I shall cross the intervening space
> Between this land and that one ' over there ' ;
> One more to make the strange Beyond seem fair."

She may have written it that a more simple soul might read it and find comfort or recite it to a multitude and wring their hearts with celestial gladness. So, too, the poem on the little white hearse which she saw during a walk— " the morning somehow seemed less smiling and gay " after it—bears no mark of intense personal experience. It is a lucid versification of a tender sentiment. Another example is the poem beginning, " God, what a joy it is to plant a tree ! " It is suitable for recitation, especially where a " regard for inanimate nature " and the " dignity of earth " is to be fostered among the humble. It does not suggest tree-planting : a less earthy poem could not be imagined.

It is true that Wilcox speaks with admiration of art " straight from the heart," but then in the next poem she asks pardon for a story—" a foolish and fanciful song "—which came to her in her coach and four. She has a warm, impulsive heart. She is all sympathy. Wherever, in her own fancy, in

the newspaper, in a book, she comes across what might cheer or melt a human being she is inclined to make a poem of it, and often does. She has "A Ballade" where "the unborn dead" plead for the mothers who have rejected them:

"But may we pray for them?" the phantoms plead.
"Yea, for they need your prayers," the Angel said.

She has in the same volume two allusions to perfume and lace combined, thus:

Like some pervading scent that clings
To laces, touched by vanished hands.

She takes the side of women as against men, of poor as against rich, asserting:

And in a tiny cabin, shaped for two,
The space for happiness is just as great
As in a palace.

But she does not, as might a poet less powerfully organised, allow herself to be fettered by a view that she happens to have expressed. On the contrary she has the courage to express a different one with equal vehemence. She cries, "Love much"; she also makes one who has prayed for love and had it regret that he had not prayed instead for a contented mind. She says:

I know that the earth exists,
  It is none of my business why;
I cannot find out what it's all about,
  I would but waste time to try.

She says also in another "Poem of Power," that "Life is a privilege," and remarks:

What stores of knowledge wait our opening key!

She sings love as fierce as the tiger, and sings also—

You can make a little Eden
  Of the sphere you occupy. . . .

And—

Come, cuddle your head on my shoulder, dear,
  Your head like the golden-rod,
And we will go sailing away from here
  To the beautiful land of Nod. . . .

It is impossible to tell if she prefers amorous excess or "scattering seeds of kindness," or would combine thetwo. Her breadth is great. She combines the tolerance of "All roads that lead to God are good" with an insistence on the fact that an atheist is brought by adversity to beseech Jehovah. Either view is suitable for recitation. Wilcox, out of the abundance of her heart and her intellect, turns both to eloquence.

When she has for the moment taken a side she employs all her warm heart on it. She likes strong expressions, of breaking hearts, etc. This passionateness is not assumed. It is natural to her to say that music kills as many as war:

> But here, in the halls of fashion,
> Hearts break, and make no moan. . . .

to make a soldier say:

> I shall go home from the wars,
> Crowned with glory, seamed with scars. . . .

to make the sun meet the mist thus:

> Close to his heart she was clasped and kissed,
> She swooned in love's alarms,
> And dead lay the beautiful pale-faced Mist
> In the Sunbeam's passionate arms. . . .

to say that Keats wrote his last poem at the inn where Nelson "last looked on the lovely face which made his world." Again and again she impersonates a man or woman crying out in this manner:

> And on nights like this, when my blood runs riot
> With the fever of youth and its mad desires,
> When my brain in vain bids my heart be quiet,
> When my breast seems the centre of lava-fires. . . .

Of herself and the sea she exclaims:

> We two were lovers, the Sea and I;
> We plighted our troth 'neath a summer sky.
> And all through the riotous ardent weather
> We dreamed, and loved, and rejoiced together.

She makes the sea, the dawn, the night, the bee, as amorous as herself. It should be observed, too, that she is not one of those who believe in "Pla-

tonic" affections : more than once she flings her fiery laughter at them and at talk between men and women " tinctured with science and everything else save love."

In fact, if there be a personal element in Wilcox's work, showing itself perhaps unconsciously, and not, as the greater part is, consciously put forward as comfort or advice to weaker brethren, it is this sexual element, so pervading that in another writer it might be called an obsession. She thinks not only of falling and fallen women, of the childless mother praying for children in the next world, of the spinster questioning—

> Wherefore the wonder of my woman's breast,
> By lips of lover and of babe unpressed . . . ?

of the little girls, "dear little Mothers, of Men to be"; of the need of sexual teaching—

> It must be the mother's teaching of the purpose, and the cause,
> And God's glory, lying under sex appeal ;

but she thinks of married men recalling "the crimson madness of *her* mouth," red lips that "were pearl-edged bumpers of wine" when they laughed; and of "the squanderer,"

> With Love's large fortune spent
> In petty traffic, unproductive, mean—
> A pauper, cursed with impotent desire.

Thus she unexpectedly mingles echoes from the propagandist and from Swinburne. For that she is a descendant of that poet no reader can doubt who knows "Ad Finem" in *Poems of Passion* with five such reckless verses as this :

> I know, in the way that sins are reckoned,
> This thought is a sin of the deepest dye ;
> But I know, too, if an angel beckoned,
> Standing close by the Throne on High,
> And you, adown by the gates infernal,
> Should open your loving arms and smile,
> I would turn my back on things supernal,
> To lie on your breast a little while.

The feeling is repeated in her last book.

Wilcox is not ashamed to repeat. It is part of her lofty vocation as

adviser to men and nations—I say "nations" because, for instance, she bids England consider the position of Canada:

England, father and mother in one,
Hear the cry of your son. . . .

and addresses the Japanese as "Brave little people of large aims." How many times does she repeat the lesson contained in this?—

Don't look for the flaws as you go through life.

Well she knows that you cannot have too much of a good thing. Nor will she refuse to repeat what has often been thought and expressed, as when she says:

Whatever is—is best. . . .

or—

No question is ever settled
Until it is settled right.

Like Shakespeare, she is a plagiarist, but her motive—to do good and to sell—justifies her, as art would not. In her opinion it is the artist's business, even the actor's, to serve mankind, and to this service he must consecrate himself, must "weed from his heart the roots of wrong." She herself has achieved this self-mastery. It is to be seen, for instance, in her confessed scorn of mere art, and a hundred times in her practice. She writes that he who runs may read: therefore she writes as she runs along—always thinking of others, what they would like, what would be good for them. Even in a grey mood she thinks of mankind, and can say:

This world is a vaporous jest at best,
Tossed off by the gods in laughter;
And a cruel attempt at wit were it
If nothing better came after.
It is reeking with hearts that ache and break,
Which we ought to comfort and strengthen,
As we hurry away to the end, my friend,
And the shadows behind us lengthen.

A more frequent mood is that of "A Song of Life":

In the strength and the glory of power,
In the pride and the pleasure of wealth
(For who dares dispute me my dower
Of talents and youth-time and health?),

I can laugh at the world and its sages—
I am greater than seers who are sad,
For he is most wise in all ages
Who knows how to be glad.

And she bids common men—

Come up where the rare golden wine is
Apollo distils in my sight,
And your life shall be happy as mine is,
And as full of delight.

If they cannot in the flesh ascend to her heights she can tell them what will be gained in the next world by a thoroughly well-conducted life; for she depicts a simple soul in heaven meeting the friends who had preceded her:

They led her through the palace halls;
From gleaming mirrors on the walls
She saw herself, with radiant mien,
And robed in splendour like a queen,
While glory round about her shone.

Here she says what the simple oft have said, and though perhaps they have never so well expressed it, they must feel that, with a better education, they might approach her. That is her triumph. She says familiar things energetically, for the most part cheerily, not once but many times. A man who has his Wilcox needs no Shakespeare. The more he reads Wilcox the less he thinks of Shakespeare; he growls: "I never heard of any one rising from Shakespeare a better man." Not that Wilcox is a jealous god; it simply happens that Wilcoxians do not want the mere art of those who—

Sing no more unto the hearts of men,
But for the critic's pen.

They can be content with the fiery-hearted, stainless lady who gives them "that feeling of reserve force and energy"—as one of her countrymen has written—"which does not easily tire, and is so necessary for the successful prosecution of one's life-work." Who, if he had to choose between Wilcox and Life on the one hand, Shakespeare and Poetry on the other, would hesitate, even had I never written this little and all too-imperfect encomium? Her glory is the more bright that it has been attained with the help only of a metrical skill commonly possessed by minor poets, a light sympathy with all sorts of ideas, and without principle or sense of beauty.

EDWARD THOMAS

THE THEATRE IN WHITECHAPEL

STRINDBERG'S *Fathers and Children*, Tolstoi's *Powers of Darkness*, Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*, and Andreef's *Anathema*, have been produced by Mr Moscovitch's repertory company during the last two months; surely a formidable list. Of these, *The Powers of Darkness* and *Anathema* are absolutely new to England, while *Fathers and Children* has, I think, been produced twice by the Adelphi Play Society at specially subscribed performances, and *Thérèse Raquin* in a series of "Lydia Yavorska" matinées at the Court. It should be noted—for it is an important point of difference—that these English productions were ministering wholly to the wants of some few intellectuals, whereas the appeal of the Whitechapel Pavilion Theatre is to the whole Jewish colony in London. Every facility is given the Jewish worker to attend the performances. The play does not commence until 8.30, and the cheapest seat is fourpence.

The Pavilion is for the moment the perfect theatre. Luckily, owing to lack of funds, it is unable to supply that elaborate staging and over-refined acting which make so largely for the emasculation of our own drama; and it is practically unhampered by the Censor, since it is, I am informed, the merest formality to send the work to be produced through his office; unless, of course, the immorality of the play is of European repute. Ibsen's *Ghosts*, for instance, I was only able to see at a subscribed performance.

The effect of this is to produce a drama of tremendous virility and irresistible carrying force. The unconventionality of the audience—which seems at first sight a typically music-hall one busy with oranges and nuts—frees one from all constraint, while in the intervals your neighbour will discuss the play with some erudition and much enthusiasm. Unfortunately—for reasons which afford an obvious parallel with our own drama—the work of the "masters" is not so keenly appreciated as that of the second-rate native writers, with the result that for two or three nights a week the theatre is forced to pander to its public by supplying the needed fare.

It is in the native work that the Jewish temper is really made manifest. Everywhere is that "melodrama" which one finds more especially in Jewish

life. It is the crudity and the strength of Zola and Strindberg, rather than their psychology or their characterisation, which have made them popular with these audiences. The refinements of Shakespeare or Goethe leave them quite cold, unless they are served in the adapted forms of Gordin's *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil:* a title very significant of the Jewish outlook upon *Faust*—or the same writer's *King Lear*, where melodrama is given splendid play. It is not strange that an audience, for the most part ignorant of every other language save its own, accustomed to continuous persecution, should have the iron so deeply in its soul that the stage is only the mirror of life when an atmosphere of deep melancholy broods over the play. In Tolstoi, Zola, or Andreef they find the expression of all their fatalism, that legacy from their eastern origin and the conditions under which they have so long lived.

And everywhere the Jewish temperament remains constant. In Paris, where Mr Moscovitch purposes going after Whitechapel, in Russia, Hungary, and Roumania, where he will be in 1913–14, and in South Africa and the United States in 1914–15, he will find the same enthusiasms, the same yearnings. Always he will be at home—always in a circle of intellectuals who appreciate truly the developments in the theatre of their foster-mother countries, and are able to translate them into the Jewish tongue.

This universality—if one may so call it—of Mr Moscovitch and his company has made the plays mentioned above somewhat of commonplaces to him. He produces them, not wholly because they are great, or because they are new to England, but because the Jews have no drama of their own, and it is better to place good work before them rather than mediocre. Slowly, yet very surely, he is making the Jewish public want what he wants—for the Jew is the most ardent playgoer in the world, and, rather than not go, he will endeavour to appreciate what is being placed before him.

When the play promises to be above his head, as in the case of *Anathema* —not a very strange thing this, if it be remembered that more than two hundred treatises have appeared in Germany upon it—Mr Moscovitch makes a point of explaining the play, delivering an explanatory speech from the stage. It says much for the indulgence of the audience that it will listen patiently, though the probabilities of the play finishing before twelve grow ever remoter.

J. RODKER

CRITICISM

GEORGIAN POETRY 1911–12. Edited by E. M. (The Poetry Bookshop, 35 Devonshire Street, Theobalds Road, W.C. 3s. 6d. net.)

"TO-DAY," said a lecturer ten years ago, "to-day we have no great novelist: will any one suggest that we have a poet?"—and the audience echoed his contempt. They probably knew as well as he did that Hardy and Meredith, William Morris and Swinburne, were not only then living, but had already brought in the bulk of their harvest. In their eyes, as in the lecturer's, it all counted for nothing, because it was not what they were looking for. Dickens and Thackeray were great novelists, Tennyson and Browning great poets: no one living resembled these, therefore no one living was either poet or novelist. The same argument is reported to hold good among the savage tribes of North Africa, who will refuse all your gold and accept only a silver dollar with the head of Maria Theresa upon it. The metal counts for nothing: they know what money is—money is that which they have seen before.

It is unfortunate that in our own country this way of looking at things is not confined to the less civilised tribes: it is perhaps most common among the educated and the professed lovers of literature. Their very education, their very love of the beauty they know, lays the fatal spell of habit upon them: the unfamiliar becomes the uncomfortable, and they spend, at any rate, the latter part of their intellectual existence in lamenting as decadent whatever in art possesses any newness of life. No doubt Time brings in his revenges: no doubt, as the years go on, the saplings prove to be something more than hazel or dog-oak. They grow to undeniable timber and replace the old kings of the forest. But no one is converted: their greatness is now a part of the laudable past and is used in its turn as a standard by which to depreciate the newer growth around them. This perpetually repeated error is a costly one. Poets are a part of their age: a generation that does not realise its own literature is an unwholesome generation, an organism unrefreshed, cut off from that renewal of the blood which is among the first conditions of health.

How, then, is the public to be convinced? How is the most willing reader to discover the best poets of his own day? The number of those who are writing in verse is very large and they cover an immense field of thought: they are little talked about, and in the Press they are too often either neglected altogether or reviewed in batches of twenty at a time, with five lines of comment apiece, and perhaps in favourable cases a single haphazard quotation. We have well-known reviewers of fiction, and stalls-full of dramatic critics; but what editor would think it worth his while to keep a reviewer on his staff who should write week by week on the whole output of current poetry, not as an anonymous and casual impressionist, but pledging the credit of his own name for a serious and consistent judgment? And perhaps for this state of things the critics are more to blame than the editors, for they have long been accustomed to lighten the responsibility of praise or blame by concluding with a traditional remark on the im-

possibility of estimating the work of a contemporary, and the comfortable assurance that the ultimate verdict is for posterity and posterity alone to pronounce. Hopes of the verdict of posterity may afford some gratification to a sanguine poet, but how can it benefit his hungry contemporaries—the would-be readers—to know that the food they are starving for will be adjudicated good or bad a hundred years hence? That verdict, moreover, of absolute good or bad, is not the one they need. What concerns them most is to know, not what may be good for posterity, but what is good for them, which is not necessarily the same thing. The right poetry for any age is not the poetry of the future, but the poetry of the past and the present. A poet writes to express himself, but he does so nearly always with an ardent belief that he is serving his fellows. If he looks forward to a fame that shall survive him, it cannot in reason be for his own sake, but rather that his service may not be limited to the period of his own generation, which perhaps has given him but a partial and long-delayed opportunity. What would most benefit him and his contemporaries alike is the action and reaction of sympathy between the living writer and his living audience. To secure this result what experiment would not be worth making?

Several experiments are in fact being tried, and one of them has already achieved a considerable amount of success. A certain "E. M." has published in the volume which he calls *Georgian Poetry* a selection from the work of seventeen living poets. The qualification for admission is that the verse chosen should have been first published during the past two years, and that the authors should be only such as were practically unknown two years ago, or such as have since that time gained some accession of power. The editor believes that his collection "may, if it is fortunate, help the lovers of poetry to realise that we are at the beginning of another 'Georgian period' which may take rank in due time with the several great poetic ages of the past." Let us grant to the critics, if they will, that since we are only at the beginning of the period we cannot know what rank it may or may not take in due time. The important point is that E. M.'s enthusiasm is amply justified. The book is a striking one: it has been eagerly bought up, and I believe that it cannot fail to astonish most of its readers, for there are probably but few who have been carefully noting the scattered appearances which together prove the coming of a new breath of poetic emotion. And the reader who has no standard of condemnation ready, who desires life and the movement of life rather than a belated copy of it—he, I think, will be not only astonished, but delighted.

Let us turn to the poets themselves: for a first survey any order is equally good. Mr Lascelles Abercrombie is represented by his "Sale of St. Thomas," a legend or morality play, put before us in a single scene of some five hundred lines, one half of which are spoken by Thomas himself. The story is a simple one: Thomas is a soul of flame blown this way and that alternately between the impulse to preach Christ among the heathen and the even stronger impulse to draw back and take shelter in prudence from the dangers which his too vivid imagination presents to him. He has already turned back from Baghdad: rather than face the desert he will go by sea to India. The captain of the ship he is to sail in, with his quiet humorous hints of danger, and his horrible tales of Eastern cruelty, sets him wavering once more; once more his own teeming imagination fills the world with enemies and apes, and flies and fevers. Then comes the Stranger, claims Thomas as his runaway servant, and sells him to the

captain for twenty pieces of silver. He will go the voyage after all, in irons. His sin, so his Master tells him, was not fear, but prudence—a more deadly thing:

> For this refuses faith in the unknown powers
> Within man's nature: shrewdly bringeth all
> Their inspiration of strange eagerness
> To a judgment bought by safe experience;
> Narrows desire into the scope of thought.
> But it is written in the heart of man,
> Thou shalt no larger be than thy desire.
> Thou must not therefore stoop thy spirit's sight
> To pore only within the candle-gleam
> Of conscious wit and reasonable brain;
> But search into the sacred darkness lying
> Outside thy knowledge of thyself, the vast
> Measureless fate, full of the power of stars,
> The outer noiseless heavens of thy soul.

This is the moral; but, full of high imagination as the lines are, they give no idea of the almost physical intensity with which we are made to see and feel and fear with Thomas himself, or of the delicate and humorous skill which contrasts with these agitations the cool worldly wisdom of the captain and the calm heavenly wisdom of the Stranger.

Mr Gordon Bottomley contributes two pieces, both of blank verse. The successful one is called "The End of the World":

> The snow had fallen many nights and days;
> The sky was come upon the earth at last.

Here, in sixty lines, is the more extended realisation of a vision seen long ago by Mr Bridges—the vision of

> The Earth that, sleeping 'neath her frozen stole,
> Shall dream a dream, crept from the sunless pole
> Of how her end shall be.

Mr Bottomley's effect is produced by direct and literal narrative; it passes from apprehension to terror, and from terror to a deep pathos of human tenderness. It is haunting in retrospect: it revives that old panic of childhood when the joy of the white world turned suddenly to the thought, "But there is too much snow; what shall we do if there is too much? what if it should never stop?"

Mr Rupert Brooke has not only distinction, but a distinction which is of rare interest. He is gifted with an intellectual curiosity and a natural and habitual intensity of feeling that recall the work of Donne, and of Donne only, among the English poets. In some of his poems there is the vital directness which startles one in such a line as the famous—

> For God's sake hold your tongue and let me love.

The selection here given is not quite representative—it does not cover the whole range—but three of the five poems are of great beauty and originality. In " The Fish " this poet has so used words as almost to endow humanity with a new and non-human rapture of sensation. In the poem called " Dining-room Tea " he has done what only the greatest of painters succeed in doing. First, he has arrested, in a familiar moment, the kinematograph of eye and brain by which life is displayed to us as an unending, unseverable tissue of everchanging action. But he has done more: he has not merely made his picture—a commonplace, bright domestic interior—he has thrown over it the light, invisible to others, of the eternal reality lying behind the appearances of our transitory life. The poem called " Dust " is a triumph of Passion over Reason: the lovers that are so surely to be dust shall yet, as wind-blown dust, come together again, and bring a radiant ecstasy to other lovers in other sunset-gardens. Here, as elsewhere, Mr Brooke's bravely hopeless philosophy is burnt up in the flame of his poetic faith.

Mr James Stephens is another contributor who is but half represented here. His own volume, *The Hill of Vision*, opens with a " Prelude and Song " which can only be read—and cannot quite be read—in one breathless rapture. Many poems have been made about the skylark's singing: one, at least, has described it with supreme felicity. Mr Stephens does not describe at all—he sings: his song is the very song itself, the profuse strains of unpremeditated art, joyous and clear and fresh, a rain of melody showering from rainbow clouds. But here, instead of this, we have a poem equally arresting but of much less certain acceptability. " The Lonely God " is a fine piece of criticism in the form of an epic fragment. It will shock; but it will shock only those who claim for themselves and refuse to others the right to make God in their own image. Milton took the God of Genesis and recreated Him as an irresponsible being with the ideas of a Puritan politician. Mr Stephens has accepted the outline of the story and of the supreme figure, but has changed the Creator's mental and moral attributes to those demanded by a philosophy and humanity which are of to-day.

And so along the base of a round hill,
Rolling in fern, He bent His way until
He neared the little hut which Adam made,
And saw its dusky roof-tree overlaid
With greenest leaves. Here Adam and his spouse
Were wont to nestle in their little house
Snug at the dew-time: here He, standing sad,
Sighed with the wind, nor any pleasure had
In heavenly knowledge, for His darlings twain
Had gone from Him to learn the feel of pain,
And what was meant by sorrow and despair—
Drear knowledge for a Father to prepare.

* * * * *

O solitude unspeakable! to be
For ever with oneself! never to see
An equal face or feel an equal hand,
To sit in state and issue reprimand,
Admonishment or glory, and to smile,
Disdaining what has happened the while!

O to be breast to breast against a foe!
Against a friend! to strive and not to know
The laboured outcome: love nor be aware
How much the other loved, and greatly care
With passion for that happy love or hate,
Nor know what joy or dole was hid in fate.

* * * * *

And so, He thought, in Mine own image I
Have made a man, remote from Heaven high
And all its humble angels; I have poured
My essence in his nostrils; I have cored
His heart with My own spirit; part of Me,
His mind with laboured growth unceasingly
Must strive to equal Mine; must ever grow
By virtue of My essence till he know
Both good and evil through the solemn test
Of sin and retribution, till, with zest,
He feels his godhead, soars to challenge Me
In Mine own Heaven for supremacy.

The concluding part of this poem may be thought fantastic: if so, the fantasy is such as would have seriously pleased Coventry Patmore. But, in any case, Poetry is not Dogma; and this is poetry.

Two of the longer poems in the book are autobiographical. Mr Masefield's, which bears the title "Biography," is almost an essay on the subject, with poetical passages by way of illustration. It is highly epigrammatic, and would yield a number of striking quotations; but it has not the qualities for which its author is best known and admired. Mr Drinkwater's ode "The Fires of God" is one of the most careful and accomplished pieces of writing in the book: the unfortunate result is that the thought, in so elaborate and finished a form, seems to fail of its due impressiveness. Mr Gibson and Mr Sargent achieve more conviction with far less artifice. The style of the former's gipsy romance, "The Hare," is a triumph of the happy-go-lucky: it gives the story both charm and reality. Wordsworth would have liked this poem, in the days when he was so unpunctual for meals, and of a mood not to mind the aversion of the heroine's father for clergy and police. Mr Sargent will also please and convince those who get entangled in his magic "Cuckoo Wood." The underwood may need a little cutting, but it is impossible to doubt that the poet did really get inside that wood and see all the little flying things, and the snows of the anemones, and the shifting light and shade—and all but saw, if only he had dared to stay, the goatfoot himself.

Mr Lawrence, it would appear, has seen him—Pan, that is more and less than human, the divine brute, the bringer of madness. The poem called "Snapdragon" is flooded with the distress of mere animal impulse—the man is beaten down and blinded with it, as one may be made sightless and almost breathless by unendurable excess of sunlight. The reader is driven to wonder what such a power as this will make of other scenes and less painful emotions. In this book the poem stands quite alone, for the realism of Mr De la Mare is of a totally different character. He too conveys an extraordinarily vivid sense of physical reality; but he conveys it, like the Pre-Raphaelite

painters, through the eyes, and mingles with it a spiritual suggestion which makes it act like a spell rather than a drug. "The Sleeper" in his poem is—

Fast—fast asleep; her two hands laid
Loose folded on her knee,
So that her small unconscious face
Looked half unreal to be.

So fast asleep indeed that—

Even her hands upon her lap
Seemed saturate with sleep.

In the poem called "The Listeners," which gives the name to his latest volume, this power is turned to the uses of romance.

"Is there anybody there?" said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor.

When the reader comes to the end of this piece it is no longer only the bodily nerves that are awake: there is also stirring that unexplained sense which gives such a pleasurable shiver to those who feel it and such indignant pain to the more scientific who do not. In Mr Chesterton's "Song of Elf" the feeling is no longer romantic: it reaches the point of "sheer superstition."

There is always a thing forgotten
When all the world goes well;
A thing forgotten, as long ago
When the gods forgot the mistletoe,
And soundless as an arrow of snow
The arrow of anguish fell.

The thing on the blind side of the heart
On the wrong side of the door;
The green plant groweth, menacing
Almighty lovers in the spring;
There is always a forgotten thing,
And love is not secure.

Unfortunately this tells us very little about the writer, and the same complaint may be made of the few lines contributed by Mr Flecker and Sir Ronald Ross. Mr Trevelyan, too, has only a single page, and, poignant and sincere as the tiny stanzas are, they can only set the reader upon inquiry. Mr Monro's two pieces are both pleasing, but they also are hardly representative: they have neither the incisiveness nor the more memorable charm which may be found in some of the short poems at the end of his *Before Dawn*.

There remain two poems only, and of them, for different reasons, it is hardly

necessary to speak. "The Child and the Mariner," by Mr Davies, is a character-sketch; a sketch of a figure with a kind of double rainbow round it, made by the light of humour in an old man's eyes and the light of romance in a child's. It is a delightful piece, the best and the most personal that Mr Davies has yet given us, and it needs only to be read. The "Sicilian Idyll" of Mr Sturge Moore also needs only to be read. It is undoubtedly the finest piece of work in the volume, as it is by far the longest and most elaborate. Strictly, it ought not to be here at all, for Mr Sturge Moore can by no stretch be brought within the new group of Georgian Poets. His reputation, and much of his finest verse, was made ten years ago. But the inclusion of this Idyll certainly adds to the value of the book, for the poem throws much light on the work of his younger contemporaries and takes none from them.

I have spoken of these poets one by one; but what of the whole company of them? Is their book merely an agreeable and various anthology, or is it something more? Has it the force of accumulated evidence? and, if so, what does it prove?

To these questions two entirely opposite answers will be given by the two classes of readers. Those who are accustomed to consider the poem apart from the poet, to regard it as a work of skilled craftsmanship, an external or decorative scheme with a possible perfection of its own—certainly for them the collection will be merely a collection, without any kind of unity; a chaos, if not a discord. But to those who look rather to the essential elements of poetry than to its external form it will, I think, be clear that at least three qualities are strikingly exemplified in this book. They may not be—they are not—all present in all the poems; but each of the three is to be found in a majority of them. The first of these qualities is poetic imagination, the power of the poet to grasp the things of earth and to transfigure them, to take the world of the senses and to recast it—to send it forth glowing from the furnace of his own heart. This is a power which has been given to the generations of men in very varying degrees: it was as common in the age of Shakespeare and Lope de Vega as it was rare in the England of the eighteenth century. It came back with Blake and has never since entirely failed us. But it would be difficult to point to a time when it has been seen more suddenly, more widely and more strongly at work than it is at the present moment. This, it may be said, is merely a personal judgment, merely the record of answering vibrations in a particular receiver. I reply that the testing apparatus is, and must always be, a particular one; but the actual test, though every one can make it for himself, is not an individual one—it lies in the comparison of the new work with those poems which have always and by all been acknowledged as supreme in the quality of imaginative intensity. Let those readers who are looking for poetical imagination look here, and let them impose as they will the ordeal by juxtaposition: they will not, I believe, be disappointed.

The second quality of which I spoke is constructive power. It is not properly separable from the first, being in reality included in the power of intuitive creation. Shapeless or incoherent poetry is simply inferior poetry, the expression of a defective or immature imagination. But there is a degree of constructive power which is needed only for poems of a certain form and magnitude, and this may well be spoken of separately. It is certain that, by the lack of it, many poems of great intensity have been rendered almost ineffective. Keats's *Endymion* and George Darley's *Nepenthe* would probably have had a different fate if their readers had not seen that each of

these poets had to some extent failed to determine and mark out, before the fiery process of fusion began, the lines within which his molten metal was to run. In the poems before us there is no such failure. Mr Sturge Moore has long been recognised as a master of his favourite form of expression—the idyllic drama. Mr Lascelles Abercrombie, whose "Emblems of Love" seemed to suffer from having been written piece by piece at different dates and under different impulses, has in the "Sale of St. Thomas" made a garment for his spirit as perfect in outline and fashioning as it is rich in texture. Mr Gibson has told his romantic story with as sure a sense of proportion as Mr Davies has shown in his romantic portrait. Proportion has been kept too by Mr Stephens, one of the two most impulsive poets in the company: the other, Mr Masefield, is perhaps the only one who has not quite realised where intuition ceased and intellect alone prolonged the flow. In the shorter poems there is plenty of freedom, some uncertainty perhaps, but no eccentricity.

The third quality is truth of diction—an achievement so hedged with entanglements as to seem, theoretically, almost beyond reach for a modern poet. The absolute impossibility of forgetting the richly coloured words and haunting cadences of the past; the more absolute necessity of speaking in a natural voice and in the language of to-day; the risk of distracting or offending a hearer whose ear is differently tuned; the increased difficulty of dyeing speech of commoner material with deep shades of thought,—if all this were in the poet's consciousness at once we may be sure we should have little poetry. Fortunately, it is hardly in his consciousness at all. The younger poets of to-day—it follows inevitably from their imaginative gift—have no temptation to a false and embarrassing æsthetic. They are not for making something pretty, something up to the standard of the professional patterns; they are not members of an arts-and-crafts industrial guild. They write as grown men walk, each with his own unconscious gesture; and with the same instinctive tact as the walker they vary their pace and direction, keep their balance, and avoid collisions. In short, they express themselves, and seem to steer without an effort between the dangers of innovation and reminiscence. In the whole book there are only two disconcerting cases of resemblance: Sir Ronald Ross has once seen Shelley plain, and Mr Masefield has bowed too completely to the spell of Mr Bridges' "Recollections of Solitude." The rest speak in tones so natural, so characteristic, and so flexible that the reader may easily fail to note the degree of mastery implied. That eighteenth-century dodo, the pseudo-Miltonic Diction, with its half-bred varieties, has made a long struggle for existence, but it would seem to be extinct at last. If it troubles us again it will not be as a thing of life but as a triumph of some taxidermist's craft. The new English is to be one with life itself: to slip like running water over rock, sand, or weed with the same swift adaptability but with ever-varying sound. The secret of this adaptability is no discovery of the Georgian Poets—it is their birthright, inherited from those predecessors who from Wordsworth and Coleridge onwards have worked for the assimilation of verse to the manner and accent of natural speech. In recognition of one of their more immediate benefactors they have unanimously inscribed their volume with the name of Robert Bridges. Better still, they have secured the continuance of his line.

HENRY NEWBOLT

POEMS. By W. B. Yeats. New Edition entirely Revised and Reset. (Unwin, 7s. 6d. net.).

A NEW edition of the collected *Poems* of 1895 is a poor substitute for a new book by Mr Yeats: it is, however, very interesting. The poet has been altering "Countess Cathleen" and "The Land of Heart's Desire"—"Countess Cathleen" to such an extent that he calls the first two scenes "wholly new": the same with the last scene. The shorter poems are untouched, I believe; but two or three pages that he "always knew to be wrong" have been changed in "The Wanderings of Usheen."

Those who have seen Mr Yeats's other late revisions—of "The Shadowy Waters," for example—are more likely to be annoyed here than surprised. Of the theatrical improvements in "Cathleen" I can say nothing, except that some of the characters are now more sharply defined, the action is clearer, the stage directions more full. The piece is no longer a musing narrative divided artificially by dialogue, but a play intended to attain only on the stage its most perfect life. All through, Mr Yeats has been striving to convert the sort of reader who will not care much for a drama where a peasant can say:

> They are off again: ladies or gentlemen
> Travel in the woods with tympan and with harp.

He now says:

> Who's passing there?
> And mocking us with music?

and his son answers:

> A young man plays it.
> There's an old woman and a lady with him.

Mr Yeats has removed the "strange weariness" from the merchants. Aleel is no longer a poet not unlike his creator as he appears to us in his books:

> A man of songs:
> Alone in the hushed passion of romance,
> His mind ran all on sidheoges and on tales
> Of Fenian labours and the Red Branch kings,
> And he cared nothing for the life of man.

In the *Collected Works* Cathleen, on her journey to the "long empty castle" (it is no longer such) in the woods, apologises for the music with these words:

> I was bid fly the terror of the times
> And wrap me round with music and sweet song,
> Or else pine to my grave.

Now she says:

> The doctors bid me fly the unlucky times
> And find distraction for my thoughts, or else
> Pine to my grave.

The play is thus relieved of a little poetical unreality. So where Oona once ended the second act with—

> The demons hold our hearts between their hands,
> For the apple is in our blood, and though heart break
> There is no medicine but Michael's trump.
> Till it has ended parting and old age
> And hail and rain and famine and foolish laughter;
> The dead are happy, the dust is in their ears.

Now Mr Yeats dares to sacrifice what was due to the excess of lyricism created in him by his work. I doubt if he has done more than substitute another, perchance more relevant, merit, by the words:

> She has found something now to put her hand to,
> And you and I are of no more account
> Than flies upon a window-pane in the winter.

(Oona speaks to Aleel, bandaging his wound.) Where Oona used to sing "Who will go drive with Fergus now," Aleel sings to his lute:

> Lift up the white knee;
> That's what they sing,
> Those young dancers
> That in a ring
> Raved but now
> Of the hearts that break
> Long, long ago
> For their sake.
> But the dance changes.
> Lift up the gown,
> All that sorrow
> Is trodden down.

So the spirits in the third scene are given, not blank verse, but lyric to speak.

Another set of changes discloses the poet's wish not to insist on Celtic terms. Where Cathleen once said "Aengus of the birds" she says "One of the old gods"; and in the acting conclusion, here printed as an appendix, Balor and the rest become "fat Asmodel and giddy Belial."

As a rule Mr Yeats, by altering, attains brevity. If he lengthens it is for the play's sake, though here it is neither for brevity nor in any sense a gain when the merchants, instead of crying "They have still their souls," and making Maire cry out, speak thus:

> For there's a vaporous thing—that may be nothing,
> But that's the buyer's risk—a second self,
> They call immortal for a story's sake.

(Why should he speak thus to peasants?)
There is little gain in the change from—

We are two merchant men,
New come from foreign lands.

to—

We are merchants, and we know the book of the world
Because we have walked upon its leaves.

Some changes are trifling. Thus:

You shall eat grass, and dock, and dandelion,

becomes—

You shall eat dock and grass, and dandelion.

Thus the swallow who gazes on the nest " before he wander the loud waters " is now the hen; and the sound gains.

The play now boasts more of Mr Yeats's intellect. It is likely to be more entirely effectual on the stage; it is more austere in style: but it is often less like Mr Yeats, and, while it is no longer youthful, it is not mature work—it is an interesting revision, not a fresh creation.

The changes in " Usheen " are less numerous, less important. Instead of

My father and my mother are
Aengus and Edain, and my name
Is Niamh, and my land where tide
And sleep drown sun and moon and star,

Niamh says:

My father and my mother are
Aengus and Adene, my own name
Niam, and my country far
Beyond the tumbling of this tide.

A vagueness has gone, but with " tumbling " perfection is unachieved. Some of the changes are certainly not improvements. The lines—

And with quenchless eyes and fluttering hair
A beautiful young man followed behind

are now transposed and " gaze " put instead of " eyes." Where Oisin used to say:

I drew out of the numberless
White flowers of the foam a staff of wood
From some dead warrior's broken lance,

Usheen now says:

I found in that forgetfulness
Of dreamy foam a staff of wood. . . .

This is surely a piece of intense and most inappropriate Yeats, with the further dis-

advantage of abstractness, and it substitutes what is limp for what was only limp in another kind. Nor is it any better when

> Nor shook my firm and spacious soul one jot

(a poor, unnecessary sort of line) is struck out for

> Moved not
> My angry, king remembering soul one jot.

Here the printer interferes, by no means for the only time, in a dangerous manner. One or two weakish expressions have been left. For example in—

> For we well knew the old was over,

" the old " without any help from the sentence before, is still made to stand for something like " the old life." The line

> For there moves alive in your fingers the fluttering sadness of earth

and the phrase " with much-toil wet " are still causes of pausing. Why the hyphen? Has it strayed from " king-remembering "? On page 285 the printer gives " foam-pale distance," but " mist cold hair," and on page 251 " foam wet feet," which is followed by a new imperfection in—

> Yet now I choose, for there four feet
> Ran through the foam and ran to this
> That I might have your son to kiss,

where " this," without help from the context, must mean something like " this land." Here Mr Yeats still falls short of the quite possible best which was open to him. He seems to have been revising in cold blood what was written in a mood now inaccessible. I cannot but be surprised that he has made the attempt, since it is one which he might find it necessary to renew indefinitely at intervals, should his energy remain unclaimed by creation.

EDWARD THOMAS

FIRES : Books I, II and III. By Wilfrid Wilson Gibson. (Elkin Mathews. Paper, 1s. net each ; cloth, 1s. 6d. net each.)

MR GIBSON'S celebrity is deservedly great. The Atlantic itself could not bar its progress. Many who were almost, or wholly, unattracted by reading poetry have found themselves unexpectedly moved by his latest work. Others, the ordinarily cultured, who felt secure that, though fresh achievements were possible, the kinds and forms of poetry were for ever settled, grew aware of a disturbingly new variety, difficult to classify, but certainly good. It would be impertinent to suppose readers of POETRY AND DRAMA ignorant of the direction of Mr Gibson's work ; but it may be

useful to consider and define its nature. For, in addition to all his many admirers, and sometimes among them, are some who say, "This isn't what I call *poetry!*" The answer, "Anyway, it's just as good," will suffice for the moment. But their comment is only a symptom of a deeper misunderstanding between them and Mr Gibson, the elucidation of which would throw light on both. It is queer in what diverse ways men pursue, and have pursued, Beauty, or Poetry, or whatever name you wish to give to the Snark; and how passionately each is unable to understand other methods of the chase than his own.

> They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care,
> They pursued it with forks and hope,
> They threatened its life with a railway share,
> And charmed it with smiles and soap.

So Mr Gibson has, in these books, his own very definite, unique plan of campaign, sometimes incomprehensible to those *retiarii* who use forks for the death-blow, or to the wheedlers with soap. His distinction is twofold. In the first place, his subject. His poems are narratives, generally in the first person, of the important, but not extraordinary, events in the experience of fairly ordinary "lower-class" people. The lives of fishermen, miners, young poachers, and such afford him material—folk nearer actuality than most of the rich, but scarcely touched with the romance that hangs about Mr Conrad's denizens of the tropics, or Mr Masefield's bygone peasants and far-wandering sailors. "Romance," though he achieves much of the better part of it, is, indeed, what he splendidly and almost determinedly avoids. No one could suspect him of "How full of romance modern life is, after all!" He is far too cleanly-minded, and too near to life. That sort of "romance" implies foot-lights between you and reality. Mr Gibson, by virtue of his emotional sincerity, knows some of the actors, as well as Life, the author, and so takes up his position where a poet (*quâ* poet) should stand—in the wings. He deals with what he calls—

> The things I care to hear about,
> The little things that make up life;

that is, with love, friendship, hatred, child-bearing, and death. Not seldom, indeed, the supernatural appears. But it is generally treated with the same sensitive kindliness as any of the "natural" events; and so sinks into its proper place in the line of the poignant commonplaces of life.

So far, if you compare the jewelled love-sonnets or odic ecstasies of other poets, Mr Gibson seems to have struck out a fresh line; but he is not entirely alone in it. With regard to subject, though not identical with, he is very similar to, Mr Masefield. It is in his style that he is entirely original. Other writers, handling a modern theme, would either heap all their literary treasures and skill in an endeavour to convey these novel atmospheres—

> Fog's tenebrous opal dream swooned thwart the lamps—

or descend to the equally literary absence of literature which is always supposed to give the "folk" feeling:

> I stand alone in a stark night.

Mr Gibson, extraordinarily, does neither. With an almost terrifying severity he abstains both from the realistic " bloody," and other colour-giving idioms of the lower classes, and from poetical generalisations or morals. These " romantic" devices—devices, that is, which aim at the beauty or power of some single line or part of the work of art, rather than at the effect of the whole—are alien to his purpose of telling a plain tale. So he is at the utmost pains to keep out of his metre or language anything which would disturbingly arrest the reader's attention on its own account. His rhythms are of the most ordinary; his language is of the commonplace, middle-class kind, rather stronger and more actual than the average, and with a certain conscious and unrealistic convention, but studiously unobtrusive.

It is this style of Mr Gibson's that makes some deny that he writes poetry, and others declare that they could turn out precisely similar stuff in any quantity. Both are prodigiously mistaken. His good poems are more impossible to imitate than those of almost any poet; and they achieve an effect unattainable by prose or by any other kind of verse, and very valuable. It is easy to be deceived by the apparent simplicity of them. Close examination will reveal, to the increasing admiration of the critic, the closeness of the weaving, the careful pruning of every unnecessary part, the perfection of technique. They are like a boxer in training, every superfluous ounce removed, and every sinew and limb industriously subordinated to the whole poise and movement and purpose of the body. Perfect technique in poetry consists in that—keeping carefully before the mind the precise shade of feeling of the idea, the feeling you want to evoke, and working out each part of the poem to harmonise most fully with it. It is a task far too laborious for most poets. How perfect is the style Mr Gibson has worked out, is suddenly perceived by the reader when he comes to one of the rare lapses. Compare the stark simplicity and light, sufficient strength of such a passage as this, from one of Mr Gibson's best poems, " The Hare ":

> And all about us, through the night,
> The mists were stealing, cold and white,
> Down every rushy syke and slack:
> But soon the moon swung into sight,
> And, as we went, my heart was light
> And singing like a burn in flood. . . .

or, at the beginning of a fine poem, " The Ovens ":

> He trailed along the cinder-track,
> Beside the sleek canal, whose black
> Cold, slinking waters shivered back
> Each frosty spark of starry light;
> And each star pricked, an icy pin,
> Through his old jacket, worn and thin;
> The raw wind rasped his shrinking skin
> As if stark-naked to its bite. . . .
> He felt the cold stars in his bones,
> And only wished that he were dead;

With no curst, searching wind to shred
The very flesh from off his bones,—
No wind to whistle through his bones,
His naked, icy, burning bones : . . .

with this from "The Flute," one of Mr Gibson's less intense, but most characteristic and beautiful poems :

I knew once more the board was bare,
With no young woman standing there
With hazel eyes and thick brown hair ;
And I, in vain, for her should seek,
If I but sought this side death's door.

For some reason, the artist's care or skill has failed him, suddenly, in these last two lines. For once the metre drags, the thought is involved and dull, and the expression stodgy. He lets you down—and you realise on what artistic heights you have been dwelling. But these lapses are infrequent.

Mr Gibson has not reached the remarkable fitness of his method to his purpose at a bound. He has worked gradually towards it. This is especially to be seen in the matter of prosody. He has tried rhymeless verse, and the exigencies of form drove him to rhyme. In these little books he rhymes, but often has lines of very various length. Sometimes his metre seems more suitable to an ode than to these slightly lyrical narratives. The truth is, his purposeful and essential abstention from poetical adornment and romantic richness makes necessary a great deal of those gifts of poetical form—remoteness, and beauty, and a kind of eternal aspect. Without this atmosphere, which the music of regular metre and rhyme, beautifully used, brings, the tales are apt to be only tales, and to lose by repetition, unlike poetry. Some of those written in irregular lines are of this nature. It is remarkable that most of the good ones are written almost entirely in strict rhyming octosyllabics. These Mr Gibson handles with skill and an adequate narrowness. Occasionally a meticulous ear is bothered by two rhymes being too far apart—ten lines between them, sometimes—or by a line that doesn't rhyme at all. One licence, or device, Mr Gibson uses with great effect—dropping into shorter lines for the emotional crisis of the poem, or for a passage where the lyrical note requires to be especially strong. "The Dancing Seal," the most uncommon and supernatural of his good poems, exemplifies this :

And while those wild eyes challenged me,
I knew as well as well could be
I must keep step with that young girl,
Though we should dance to death.

Then with a skirl
The fiddle broke ;
The moon went out ;
The sea stopped dead ;
And in a twinkling all the rout
Of dancing folk had fled. . . .

And he gets something the same result, often, by ending several lines with the same words, as in my quotation from "The Ovens." So much variation in his musical accompaniment Mr Gibson uses with great success. His wider divergencies do not pay their way. They break the convention of his poetry, just as most of his speeches in *Oratio Recta* do.

It is apparent that short quotations from Mr Gibson's poems may illustrate his technique, but give unusually little idea of his general qualities. This is precisely because his qualities are of a classical nature, relating to the whole. Quotations give little idea of the impression the best of these tales leave: the ordinary and human tragedies of fairly normal people, the kindly bleakness of the style, the entire (but far from childish) simplicity of the narration. They are not of the recognised highest kinds of poetry—they open no eternal truth, their tragedy is not intense and stunning, their triumph not ecstatic. When they fail, they are tame and dull. When they succeed they give a feeling of the tragic lot of the almost commonplace living, their sorrows, joys, deaths, and even their nerves. If they are read in a country even farther than America, how they must shock Aristotle! But the feeling is positive and unique. And what is even more valuable is the common atmosphere that hangs over them—an atmosphere of sincerity perhaps—which it is almost impossible for anybody not to admire, and quite impossible not to love.

RUPERT BROOKE

THE "RIPOSTES" OF EZRA POUND WITH "THE COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS" OF T. E. HULME. (Mathews, 2s. 6d. net.)

THE *Ripostes* of Mr Pound is the fourth book of his own verse that has come to me for review, and it seems to me an opportune moment to say a few words about Mr Pound's art, as a whole. *La versification*, said Marmontel, *est une mosaïque dont il faut remplir le dessin.* It is a common error in England to suppose that poetry is versification, thus defined. Mr Pound's work is a vehement protest against this stupidity; he has sought to prove by example that poetry is, what its name implies, creation, and not the kindergarten art Marmontel thought it to be. Moreover, from the *Personae* to the *Ripostes*, there is evidence of a determination towards a mastery of his medium; he is one of the few people in this country who do care for poetry as an art, and not merely as an accident, or the lazy pleasure of expressing one's twopenny-halfpenny personality in the easiest possible manner. Mr Pound has served a long apprenticeship in the technics of his craft, and with the sapphics of "Apparuit," the "free" rhythm of "The Return" and *Δώρια* (all in *Ripostes*), he has attained a skill in handling words that is astonishing to those who understand. The sapphics of "Apparuit" and the alliterative verse translation from the Anglo-Saxon of the "Seafarer" (also in *Ripostes*) complete his analysis of the development of the poetic art from the Middle Ages to the present which was begun in the *Spirit of Romance*, a prose work, and continued in the experiments in polyphonic rhyme of the *Canzoni* and in the translations from Arnaut Daniel, not yet published in book form. The

book *Canzoni* (which, by the way, is a masterpiece of quiet, patient irony) contains five poems in forms never before attempted in English, the rhyme schemes of which had been considered too difficult for the language and incompatible with its genius. Nor must it be supposed that all this is a formal accomplishment merely; one does not get poetry into the shape of *Δώρια*, for instance, or of "The Return," without the genuine impulse; no amount of clever shamming, or borrowed ornament, or mosaïcism will produce the effect of a rhythm of this kind. Mr Pound has earned the right to put his poetry into any form he pleases; he has given his *vers libre* a solid basis in tradition, and may laugh at the critics. The laugh has all along been on his side. The *vers libre* was not, after all, invented by Whitman, nor even by Gustave Kahn.

The three best poems in *Ripostes*—"Apparuit," *Δώρια*, and "The Return"—admit of no cavil. They stand, I think, as Mr Pound's finest work: *Δώρια* as a perfect translation of pure emotion, "Apparuit" and "The Return" as transcripts of emotional vision. Next to them, I like best "The Tomb at Akr Çaar," wherein the soul addresses its mummy. In "Salve Pontifex" Mr Pound admires what was great in Swinburne, the Swinburne of "The Triumph of Time," of "The Ballad of Life," and of "The Last Oracle." This poem will please those of Victorian taste, and as rhythmic form it still holds good. "Portrait d'une Femme," "Sub Mare," "Plunge," and the two poems entitled "Effects of Music upon a Company of People" are attempts at precise rendering of exact psychology, the same kind of exact psychology, no doubt, which attracted Mr Pound to Guido Cavalcanti, and which caused him to take up the ungrateful task of translating that poet without rhetoric and without such music as would obscure the sense. The last-named poems are a curious statement of Mr Pound's visual perception of a group emotion. There are other poems in the book that are a pleasure to read, a poem addressed to New York, for instance; but you will find these for yourselves, I hope.

"For good fellowship, for good custom, a custom out of Tuscany and Provence," Mr Pound has printed with his *Ripostes* the "Complete Poetical Works" of T. E. Hulme, *videlicet*, five poems, thirty-three lines—and "for good memory," too, "seeing that they recall certain evenings and meetings of two years gone, dull enough at the time, but rather pleasant to look back upon." It is a pity that Mr Pound's preface says nothing more of these evenings, at which the part of organising secretary and of Cerberus, to bark away undesirable comers, was played by Mr Hulme, who, having created the Poets' Club and, like Frankenstein, been rended by it, started these Thursday evening meetings in a Soho restaurant as a solace and an amusement. They were not dull always: there were generally some six or seven of us—T. E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, Edward Storer, T. D. FitzGerald, myself, Miss Florence Farr, F. W. Tancred; at times the sculptor Epstein would come; Mr Pound himself did not join us until the third evening, and he may have forgotten or have been unaware of the excitement with which the diners on the other side of our screen heard him declaim the "Sestina: Altaforte," now in *Exultations*: how the table shook and the decanters and cutlery vibrated in resonance with his voice! I do not think that that evening was dull. However, the outcome of those meetings was three or four books of verse and Mr. Hulme's "Complete Poetical Works." We all had a hand in the editing of those Poetical Works; but here is one which we used to call "The Red-faced Farmer," and which is, I believe, entirely as Mr Hulme first wrote it, *editio princeps* (as, indeed,

are all the others, which somehow managed to stray back to their original form—an obstinate fellow, their author!):

AUTUMN

A touch of cold in the autumn night—
I walked abroad,
And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge
Like a red-faced farmer.
I did not stop to speak, but nodded,
And round about were the wistful stars
With white faces like town children.

For good reason, we were hugely pleased with this, and we were satisfied with it as Mr Hulme's standing contribution to the feast, until, one day, to our enormous astonishment, he produced four more short pieces, the "Complete Poetical Works." It is a good joke, with sufficient in the material to make one regret that Mr Hulme ever learned German, and read philosophy, and abandoned the making of little Japanese pictures in verses. The group lived vigorously for some months, then slow disintegration. I think we lasted a year or more.

F. S. FLINT

NOTE.—The Poems of Mr Ezra Pound are now first collected by Mr Elkin Mathews in two volumes. Volume I, *Personæ and Exultations* (3s. 6d. net). Volume II, *Canzoni and Ripostes* (3s. 6d. net).

GITANJALI (SONG OFFERINGS). By Rabindra Nath Tagore. A Collection of prose translations made by the author from the original Bengali. With an introduction by W. B. Yeats. (Printed at the Chiswick Press for the India Society. 10s. 6d. net.)

IN an age of mechanical civilisation, the arts tend to become recreations of the spirit for leisurely amateurs. Poets of the present are so concerned with the graphic details of life that they seem to have overlooked its true signification. Thus it is in reverence if with hesitation that our western minds approach Rabindra Nath Tagore's *Gitanjali*. And this not on account of unintelligibility or abstruseness, but rather because of that very beauty and intenseness of expression which endows the whole with inexhaustible vitality. Tagore's quietism is not antagonistic or in juxtaposition to life. It consists rather in the perfect attuning of the will, the body, and the soul to a deeper and tenser form of existence. It is in this, perhaps, that one notices more particularly the violent contrast between the passionate ecstasies of St. Teresa, or St. Bernard, or St. Catherine of Genoa, and the serene, humble, and self-contained lyrics of the national poet-prophet of Bengal. The fine spontaneity, acute intuition, and artistic balance of the latter remove them even from other oriental writings of this kind, with which, at first, one is inclined to draw a comparison. The Songs of Tagore are never the product of emotional egotism. They are the voice of his people and are continually in their

hearts and on their lips. Those who have had the pleasure and the privilege of hearing some of the quaint barbaric rhythms to which the originals are set, will be able to appreciate more fully the difficulties which the translator has had to overcome, and the nothing short of extraordinary beauty and rhythmical quality of his English translation. It would be both difficult and presumptuous to attempt to add anything to Mr Yeats's sympathetic and able introduction. The *Gitanjali* must, indeed, speak for themselves. The following brief excerpts will serve to give a pale idea of the style and character of the work, which needs, however, careful study if one would fully appreciate the inexhaustible beauties of thought and expression it contains.

67

Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.

O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is thy love that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours.

There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand bearing the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth.

And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by herds, through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of peace in her golden pitcher from the western ocean of rest.

But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word.

73

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.

My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my sense. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love.

86

Death, thy servant, is at my door. He has crossed the unknown sea and brought thy call to my home.

The night is dark, and my heart is fearful—yet I will take up the lamp, open my gates and bow to him my welcome. It is thy messenger who stands at my door.

I will worship him with folded hands, and with tears. I will worship him placing at his feet the treasure of my heart.

He will go back with his errand done, leaving a dark shadow on my morning: and in my desolate home only my forlorn self will remain as my last offering to thee.

A. d. R.

Note.—The *Gitanjali* of Rabindra Nath Tagore will shortly be reissued by Messrs Macmillan at 4s. 6d. net.

STREETS. By Douglas Goldring. (Max Goschen, 2s. 6d. net.)

MANY poets have been trying recently to express London, London impressions, sights, sounds, sentiments, effects—all more or less unsuccessfully, because more or less insincerely. The town being the one stirring all-commanding reality of our present existence, and London town being the most thoroughly complete type of a town, the necessity for a London poetry is indeed so obvious that it is quite startling no sufficient one has sprung into existence. The fact is, the poetical product of town life turns out in its completed forms as artificial as the life itself. Henley and Mr Binyon can neither of them satisfy us, because the city has not forced them to write. We discover them *wanting* too much to describe London, and their poems seem constructed piece by piece like buildings.

Many ambitious persons, incited by their friends, have tried to write London epics. A few such compositions have come to my notice—extraordinarily funny. This most straggling and heterogeneous of all cities will never be caught in a long poem. Meanwhile quite lately good lilting songs and ballads have appeared which do indeed express something, in the impressionistic manner, of the true spirit of London. Ethel Talbot produced some, not very successful; Mackenzie and Herbert E. A. Furst have done rather better, but now these ballads and lyrics published under the title of *Streets* are surely the best of all. Mr Douglas Goldring knows his London thoroughly: out of that knowledge proceeds the promise of his series of rhymes. For he has neither tried to represent it largely as a whole, nor has he fallen away into the impressionistic manner, nor lapsed into the piecing together of phrases. But he has taken certain streets as typical of characters and scenes, and he has made songs about them, natural clear catches, that one feels he might almost have invented as he walked along, or as he waited at some corner. I will quote:

All down Acacia Road there are small bow windows
Jutting out neighbourly heads in the street,
And in each sits, framed, a quiet old woman.
They watch the couples who pass or meet.

again:

MARE STREET, N.E.

In Mare Street, Hackney, Sunday nights,
My Jim, he'd search for souls to save:
Beneath one of them showman's lights
He'd stand up white and brave.

"And who's for Jesus now?" he'd call,
"And who's for Love that's strong?
Repent, believe: there's 'eaven for all
That turns and flees from wrong. . . "

I wish no harm to my poor Jim,
But God strike Lizzie dead!
'Twas cruel of her to lead the hymn,
With me laid ill, in bed.

They're gone—last month—to Leytonstone;
Jim runs a chapel there;
And I'm left hungering here alone,
While *she* joins him in prayer.

Or:

Lonely young men walk, eager, to and fro
And search the passing faces—some find mates;
Against the railings leans a giggling row,
An amorous chauffeur puffs his horn and waits.

The crowds move up and down, white dresses gleam;
Some strolling niggers play a tune that trips,
While couples meet and glance, and leave the stream,
And youths look plaintively at young girls' lips.

The book is short, and is all simple enough; it is no very great accomplishment, but rather, indeed, promise. It is the natural manner of Mr Goldring that I praise; he is a real discovery for those in search of popular London songs. One will naturally expect much more of him later. When he has shaken himself clear of certain influences and learnt to sustain his thought on more difficult levels he will put some of our popular poets of the day to shame.

H. M.

IMMANENCE: A BOOK OF VERSES. By Evelyn Underhill. (Dent, 4s. 6d. net.)

"I come in little Things,
Saith the Lord:
Not borne on morning wings
Of majesty, but I have set My Feet
Amidst the delicate and bladed wheat
That springs triumphant in the furrowed sod."

Here in the first words of the book, significantly enclosed within a grain of wheat, lie lock and key of that mysterious world that to the seer interpenetrates the whole of life.

Miss Underhill's last book is one triumphant affirmation of an exquisite spiritual insight. Mere affirmation would be tiresome, but when line after line of lovely wording draws with a strong and sensitive touch the very *soul* from images familiar from exterior use, then we must realise that here indeed is one who can, in breathing through the hollow bones of death, invigorate them with vibrating harmonies.

Since Christina Rossetti passed, and Francis Thompson said the last permitted him to say, no such unwavering voice has sung "Celestial Beauty," or so tenderly revealed the grandeurs underlying little shabby things. In "Uxbridge Road" she sees the folk who have—

"Throughout the living joyful year at lifeless tasks to strive,
And scarcely at the end to save gentility alive;

The villa plot to sow and reap, to act the villa lie,
Beset by villa fears to live, midst villa dreams to die;
Ah, who can know the dreary woe? and who the splendour see?
The one who walked with starry feet the western road by me."

Her *Planting Time* harvests for us a sheaf of fertile thoughts.

"God dreams in plants, they say.
Ah, would that I might creep
Within the magic circle of his winter sleep:
Go, as the bulbs, with him
Into the dim,
There well content
To pitch my tent
And mark
Rapt from all other thing
The flowery fancies that elamp his dark."

This one verse of a poem exquisite throughout should serve to indicate Miss Underhill's acute perception of nature as known by the worshippers of Koré. Again and again some filament of intimate plant-life creeps like a floreated scroll between the strong impression of her vigorous thought.

"And lo! within each strong and sheltering blade
A baby poem, new-made."

If one should seek to characterise these "Verses," one might choose the qualities of wisdom and tenderness; a tenderness so wide as to include neglected weeds; humanity and "The Many-eyed and Many-winged" seraphs and cherubim.

A sure outline and fine sense of colour mark the book; there is no one poem of that indefinite muddiness too often associated with mystical work. The truly overpowering tenderness is no encouragement to the weakling.

"Regnum Cælorum Vim Patatur" is a battle-song of an heroic kind. The Mysterious Conqueror of the strong is a proud conception:

"He loves the valiant foe; he comes not out to meet
The craven soul made captive of its fear:
Not these the victories that to him are sweet!
But the impetuous soldiery of truth,
The knighthood of the intellectual quest,
Who ask not for his ruth
Nor would desire his rest:
These are to him most dear,
And shall in their surrender yet prevail."

A short notice is entirely inadequate for such important work.

GWENDOLEN BISHOP

POEMS : Second Series. By Richard Middleton. (Unwin, 5s. net.)

IT is a delicate matter to write about Richard Middleton. He says of himself nearly all that need be said in the first two poems of his book. He makes no overstatement when he tells us :

> For your delight I have no singing rose,
> No sensuous music stirred by love to riot :
> Wonder is all that my dim spirit knows—
> Wonder, and strange disquiet.

Almost invariably, indeed, he makes use of half-tones. His poems are vague reflections of longings "too driftless for desire," of love which neither is very exalted nor more than languidly stirred by passion. It is all a confession of failure. Too intent upon loving, "born a lover" (the phrase occurs twice), he was forced to be content with makeshifts, as his poem, "Understudy," testifies. He was ever wrapped in dreams, but they were earth-bound dreams that hardly ever touched the stars. And so, detached from life, with a distaste for it, yet gaining nothing in return, he utters his despairing cry, "My life, my beautiful life, all wasted !", and, one day, "suddenly, Death seemed the final boon."

This is the outlook on life inferred from his work. Gaining nothing from his dreams, he can give nothing. The worst of it is, we all feel like that sometimes ! But his poetry, as such, is beautiful to a high degree, the work of an artist ; and, if it lacks invigorating freshness, it is the very book for a sultry evening on the river, or that delightful half-hour when one wishes to go to bed and finds oneself too lazy to do so. One may quarrel with him for his poverty of imagery (the rose might well have been the only flower he knew, Spain the only country), but one cannot deny his unfailing grace and charm, his clear simplicity.

At rare intervals he is vivid, as in such a phrase as "Joy like a sudden spear," or the description of—

> The forest lad,
> With smooth young limbs that from a hundred streams
> Had stolen their white splendour ;

or again, in "A London Night," with its kaleidoscopic sense of colour and change. There is one poem at least, "The Lover and his Dead," which almost compares, for clarity and intensity. with Rossetti's "My Sister's Sleep." It is difficult to select a quotation :

> The earth yet lingers with me, and yet I seek the sky.
> The winds are here, and the sun and moon, and the stars that multiply.
> And sometimes she is cold and dead, and sometimes it is I.

His poems are, perhaps, utterances too individual to attain the greatness that denies mortality. He himself says they are "emblems of a morn that could not break"; but, being such, they bring some of the tremulous joys of a false dawn.

B. DOBRÉE

SAPPHO AND THE ISLE OF LESBOS. By Mary Mills Patrick. (Methuen, 3s. 6d.)

MISS or Mrs Patrick has compassed an extraordinary feat: she has turned Sappho into a "school marm." Let the author speak. There is one sentence in her book which is quite remarkable. Referring to the celebrated *Anactoria* Ode, Miss Patrick says, with a naïveté assumed to suit the purpose of her argument: "This has been described as a love-poem." It has. "The words," she continues, "do not describe love at all; but the unhappiness occasioned by the loss of the affection of her (Sappho's) friend was of so deep a nature that its full expression required a stronger use of language than is at present the custom." Here is the *Anactoria* in Miss Patrick's own translation:

> Equal to the gods seems that man to me who sits face to face with thee, and hearkens near by to thy sweet tones and enticing laughter, which make even my heart flutter in my bosom. For whenever I look at thee but a moment, my voice fails me, my tongue breaks down, and in a moment a delicate glow has suffused my skin; with my eyes I see not, and my ears ring. Moisture pours out everywhere and trembling takes full hold of me. I am paler than grass, and I seem in my madness to lack little of death.

The study of antiquity and the antique spirit should be left to those who have some sympathy with it. Miss Patrick approaches it with no enthusiasm for it, only the snobbism of the cultured for the elegancies of old Greece. I am sure she thinks Tennyson a finer poet than Sappho in her heart, and I am equally sure she would die before saying so. Her book is of little value as a monograph on "the poetess." Dr Wharton's volume remains by far the best on the subject in English. Hellenists and lovers of Sappho should possess it though, for it has this definite interest that it contains translations of the newly discovered fragments which are probably the first to appear in book form, having previously only been dealt with in the pages of the *Classical Review*.

EDWARD STORER

ANTHOLOGIES: GOOD AND BAD

OF all things in literature upon which men are unable to agree, the anthology produces the most decided differences. Famous anthologies are given their fame almost always by polite suppressions of opinion, and there is not a collection of English poems for which every competent critic does not feel a bitter enmity on account of at least one omission or inclusion. For the most obvious reasons, the anthologist cannot hope to satisfy all: more generally, he satisfies none. When at last he pleads that no man could exclude and include so as to please all his critics and claims that he has done an impossible work as well as he can, he is confronted with the inevitable pessimist, who dislikes all anthologies, on the ground that they are "collections of snippets."

The questions which agitate the critics of anthologies are chiefly these. Should the selector include such poems as are in conformity with his own tastes or such as he knows will be in conformity with that of his readers? From any given poet should he take the best poems or those most characteristic? Palgrave, in *The Golden Treasury*, was not concerned to present an educational survey of the progress of English poesy: far less, even, was it his aim to include only such poems as were likely to be pleasing to his readers. He consulted his own taste and, more particularly, that of Tennyson. That the result is a model anthology (I do not, of course, refer to the Fifth Book), is due to the fact that Palgrave and Tennyson were persons of excellent, if not superhuman, taste. Taking into account the limits of human appreciation, and the perhaps unusually narrow standard of morals observed in their time, *The Golden Treasury* is the most remarkable performance of its kind known to us. Yet no man can feel perfectly contented with it; for all its excellence it bears the stamp of its time, which was an unusually disagreeable one. We are unable to forgive the omission of Spenser's "Epithalamion," even if we can assuage our anger with a smile at the reason advanced, namely, that it is not "in accordance with modern manners," and we are deeply hurt by the absence of Suckling's "Ballad of a Wedding." Certain other omissions there are of lesser importance, one or two minor changes might be made in the earlier portion of the book, and the want is felt of an exquisite piece by Crashaw discovered after Palgrave had finished his work. There is also a perceptible want of feeling for the peculiar ring of seventeenth-century verse, betrayed by the inclusion of a piece by Scott in this section and by Palgrave's curious deception by Darley's one famous poem, but this does not damage the selection as much as might have been expected. With all these shortcomings, however, it is incumbent upon us to admit that there are not five pieces in the book that we would wish omitted, and not much above twice as many that we could wish inserted: it is, therefore, a masterpiece of its kind, a book that, were it more widely and more deeply studied, might cast into unfavourable shadow much of the bad taste and insincerity that our poetasters to-day take for strength and originality.

Having thus suggested Palgrave's compilation, in the first place, as setting something of a standard, we may proceed to examine some anthologies of recent appearance. Several of these detach themselves from the rest as being general in character, though

one is restricted to a single period. Unquestionably it is of more importance that an anthology should contain nothing that is actually bad, than that it should omit nothing which is good. The anthologist should be hastier to reject than to accept. though he of all men should in all things be the least hasty and the most deliberate, Judged in the light of this principle, one volume emerges triumphant, Messrs. Chambers and Sidgwick's *Early English Lyrics*. I pretend to no exhaustive knowledge of the poetry of the period treated by this volume; indeed, to be truthful, I will confess to having no knowledge of it that is worth speaking about. But, judging it by the standard of its conformity with the rule enunciated above, I can say with a clear conviction that it is good, since there is hardly a poem in it, Amorous, Divine, Moral, or Trivial, that does not give me a thrill of vivid pleasure.

The other volumes in this class are of a different stamp. *The Indian Treasury of English Verse* is designed to serve the educational needs of young Hindus, and, such being the avowed object of its editor, the critic must approach it warily, since he is again deficient, this time with more justification, in the special knowledge required. But it is a legitimate question, to ask how it happens that that portion of Occidental poetry which is suitable for Oriental minds contains pieces so far apart not only in merit but in conception as Herrick's "To Blossoms" and Longfellow's "Psalm of Life." Indeed Western poetry suitable for Eastern consumption seems to consist almost entirely of bad poetry, and I do not believe the editor of this volume will be prepared to defend such an illogical position. Surely if the gentle Hindu can be brought to endure Herrick, he can be brought to endure Keats also, and I should be prepared to substitute almost any eight pieces by Keats for the eight by Longfellow. And it is difficult to understand the educational purpose served by the inclusion of Peacock's "War-song of Dinas Vawr," delightful poem though it be. I can detect no other sign of a wish to increase the scholastic gaiety of Hindustan.

A book with a similar educational purpose is *Five Centuries of English Poetry*, edited by G. O'Neill, S.J. The students for whom this compilation is intended are those of University College, Dublin, and Mr O'Neill is very emphatic in stating that he did not undertake the work with a view to causing any one pleasure, but in order to provide a book for methodical study, presenting a picture of the development of English poetry from Chaucer to—de Vere, who may be regarded as a great poet in Ireland, though hardly anywhere else. On the whole, this work is well suited for educational purposes, but the binding and type are too revolting for any other. The pieces are not chosen with any view to providing a collection of the best in the English language. On an easily justifiable principle, well-known poems are omitted, since, it being the teacher's desire to give his pupil as wide a knowledge as possible of English poetry, that may be omitted which he is supposed to know already. Thus we have Herrick represented by a comparatively unfamiliar poem "To Violets," and we feel no resentment against Father O'Neill for the lack of "To Daffodils" and the other famous poems. His pupils will have seen these already in a dozen anthologies where they are not likely to see this poem.

The last volume in this class is of a nature not uncommon but that does not often find its way into print. Miss Matilda Sharpe, in *Old Favourites from the Elder Poets*, has apparently presented us with her common-place book. She makes no bones about the matter and frankly selects to please her own taste. When only one line in a poem

commends itself to her, she will quote that one line and no other. Thus she gives us—

> And sweet girl-graduates with their golden hair,

standing alone without context. There are some poems in this book which are not to be seen elsewhere, notably those which Miss Sharpe has written herself. It is not necessary to say more.

We now come to the second section, containing anthologies which deal with some special variety of verse or subject. Books in this class can rarely be made companions. They are more often collections of curiosities which can be taken up to fill an idle ten minutes, and one always has an uneasy suspicion that they are bought to give away. The interest they excite rarely extends more than twenty minutes beyond the three minutes spent examining them in a shop, but this interest may be lively enough at the moment to result in purchase. When they are inclusive enough thoroughly to cover any one subject, they commit the cardinal sin of the anthology, that of including bad work; when they are not so comprehensive, one feels that one could have found all these passages without the mediation of the anthologist.

Shepherd Songs of Elizabethan England, edited by Miss Gosset, is an attempt to show English pastoral poetry at a time when it did actually derive its inspiration from shepherd life. The result is only partially fortunate. If Thomas Nash's "To-witta-woo" be included, then many other poems that have no particular reference to sheep or shepherds might well be seen here also, and the book would be turned into a selection of slightly restricted scope from all Elizabethan verse. If the book is to be severely pastoral in the subject, more use might have been made of Spenser, and the only eclogue of his included should not have been thus curtailed. There is a certain arbitrary air about the volume, which is neither comprehensive enough to be a contribution to scholarship nor uniformly good enough to be a book for general reading. Miss Gosset cannot decide whether she wishes to give information or pleasure, and her work suffers in consequence.

A Book of Nature Poetry and *In the Garden of Delight* are volumes of similar scope though designed to different ends. The first is again frankly for teaching purposes, and, as such, is good. We find in it, however, strange bedfellows: Shelley's "Cloud" is followed by an extract from John Horne, and after that comes "Hark! hark! the lark," which it was surely a mistake to include. It is difficult to make sense, let alone grammar out of it, and surely children "between eight and eleven" may be excused the grappling with such problems. *In the Garden of Delight* produces a feeling of weariness. Most anthologies of this class are the purest hack-work. Three hundred pages of extracts on a certain subject are demanded and the compiler supplies them. Conscientious search for, and sifting of, materials would involve work far beyond that which he is paid for and he does not attempt it. Surely no person, however inconsequent in mind, would sit down to read such a book. It is one to be given away only.

Parodies and Imitations is a collection rather than an anthology. Unfortunately embarrassment of riches has compelled the editors to make a selection after the beginning of the last century when English literature first began to be rich in very good parodies, and the result is an unbalanced book. The earlier part is full of obscure and not very amusing poems included merely because they are parodies; from the later

part we miss many specimens that might well have been included, notably Owen Seaman's parody of Swinburne. The selection, too, is not always good. Thus, from Swinburne's *Heptalogia*, we find only the parody of himself, which is not very amusing.

The remarks made on *In the Garden of Delight* apply also without reserve to *An Anthology of Babyhood*, compiled by Mrs Edmund d'Auvergne. Such books are merely pieces of bric-à-brac.

A good anthology is the rarest of all books. Unless compiled for didactic or partisan purposes, it should be the ripe fruit of a lifetime's brooding. Continued reflection and debate is necessary for perfection, and one need not fall very far short of perfection to become unendurable. The dangers are so many that personal bias is comparatively unimportant among them. Only now and again is a man found with the true genius of the anthologist who can illustrate a literature or a period thoroughly without becoming "snippety." The majority of such books, designed to make a background for illustrations, are doomed to failure from the beginning. Weeks instead of years are devoted to their preparation, and the result is a volume which makes much show on booksellers' windows, which is much bought, and which is—invariably given away.

RICHARD BUXTON

DRAMATIC CHRONICLE

CANDOUR almost compels me, after a survey of the work of the theatres, to write: "Music-halls and Lyceum very prosperous. February 1913. Birmingham Repertory Theatre started. *Twelfth Night* still running and exciting the *Daily News* and *Pall Mall Gazette*." And then, with a reference to the birth of *Poetry and Drama* and a few genial remarks as to the magnificent prospects of the drama. I should like to lay down my pen or pusillanimously turn it to the service of some less stricken form of literature. That, however, the habit and the enthusiasm of many years forbids, and I become aware that I have not yet earned the luxury of silence, and that, having once accepted the service of the theatre, I cannot in honour, though I be paid only with kicks and no ha'pence, turn to any other master, or mistress. Though my mistress be barren as Sarah the wife of Abraham, yet will I serve her and fight to preserve what, rightly or wrongly, I conceive to be her rights in the world. A quarterly magazine to defend Poetry and Drama comes into existence and from its height I am to overlook the walls of the hostile city and discern the doings therein of the ox and the ass and the enemy within the gates. So be it.

Every year in the theatre there are two moments of hope: before the autumn and before the spring season. *Qu'est-ce qu'on va faire?* Will the leopard have changed his spots? Hope is, after all, only the desire to see the Ethiopian with a new skin, and it is linked with an unreasonable refusal to admit that the Ethiopian can only do his work after the fashion of his kind. Whether he does it well or ill matters nothing at all to the man to whom the Ethiopian point of view is anathema, the man who holds that in art there is not room at all for that point of view. That is all very well in an art which can exist only for the artist and then quite equably wait for its audience, and be

satisfied if they come single spies. But in the theatre the audience must come in battalions, or the game is up. In the theatre you must do as the theatrists do, and the artist must be prepared to make a hundred sacrifices in order to meet his collaborators and his audiences. If he is going to set up a rigid ideal beyond the comprehension of anybody but himself then he must be prepared to serve the theatre outside it, in theory, or in truth, or in some other artistic medium. On the other hand, if he goes into the theatre, then he must master the Ethiopian or the Ethiopian will master him, though it is not so certain neither that he might not, in such surrender, find his soul by losing it.

The upshot of this skirmishing is to declare my willingness to view the theatre from the Ethiopian point of view, subject always to my unfailing desire to find in it anything, however small, that may jump with the artist's point of view. Alas! I find very little. I find the theatre in a state of rather querulous helplessness in face of the much greater efficiency of the music-hall to subserve the interests of the Ethiopian and to confirm him in his impression that black is your Godlike colour. That is an assumption, and the music-hall is absolutely faithful to it, whereas the theatre has always a sneaking hankering after white; that is, the theatre is always dogged by a longing to become a place of art, insists on so presenting itself to the public, and, as things are, being worried by commercial considerations, it muddles its standards and its work is generally neither one thing nor the other. When, as in the His Majesty's production of *Macbeth*, you get a fragment of sound Ethiopian work like the rendering of the sleep-walking scene, in due course it is lifted by the music-hall and finds there its happy public. In the theatre the public, being tossed about from one standard to another, is unhappy and cannot let itself go in its receptivity of either kind of pleasure—black or white—because it is never certain from one moment to another which is going to crop up next. On the other hand it sometimes happens in the theatre that you get a very good piece of Ethiopian work like *Milestones* or *Bunty pulls the Strings*, and then for the time being the theatre becomes a music-hall and achieves an enormous sort of success. The theatre at present only succeeds when it gives up trying to serve two masters, two standards, and, unhappily, there do not seem to be enough men to collaborate in the service of the standards of art without reference to the standards of success. It is perfectly clear that a good intention is not enough. Imaginative work may never achieve the immense success of Ethiopian work, but there is this compensation, that no man need be ashamed of the failure of a sincere attempt in art, while he cannot escape chagrin and shame at failure to subserve the commercial interests in the theatre, and ought—ought he not?—equally to suffer at success.

It is clear, then—or I hope it is—that there are two standards, two kinds of work in the theatre: one which treats of life as it seems to be and another which strives to reveal life as it is and to translate into human terms forces which lie beyond our perception. In either kind the first thing to be looked for is efficiency, without which there cannot be understanding between performers and audience. The efficiency of the Ethiopian, like that of the good advertiser, seems to consist almost entirely in reiteration, whereas the efficiency of the artist is shown in the choice and creation of the convention proper to the subject in hand.

Now let us turn to the list of entertainments in the newspaper and see how many of the productions in the West-End call for the application of the standards of art. So

few, indeed, that the task becomes rather invidious. The alleged "funniest play in London" is an American farce; there is a drama of English country-house life (à la Galsworthy) by an American lady. *Ready Money* is American; the clever people in *Hello Ragtime* are, like the music, American; Mr Knoblanch, with one foot in each of two theatres, is American, while of native farce there are two revivals—*The Importance of being Earnest* and *John Bull's other Island*, and the Irish farce *General John Ryan*. Mr Jewson supplies *Esther Costways*, a melodrama, while Mr Houghton has made an unfortunate attempt to conform to conventions which were mentioned long before he brought his talent to the theatre (your conventions may be absurd, but you must believe in them if you are to carry conviction). *Doormats* still seems to prosper in its light fantastic-sentimental way. In solemn isolation, sole representative of the "serious" drama in London, the greatest city of the world, the capital of the greatest nation, stands *The Pretenders*, by Henrik Ibsen, and translated, with a foreword, by Mr William Archer. It is not a good play. There is genius in it, but genius struggling and overlaid. No man, not even the greatest, is at all times in his life a man of genius, and it is precisely with the work of men of genius that one needs to be careful and almost chary of acceptance. Whole-hearted, worshipping surrender is positively dangerous, very unfair to the poet, and confusing for his audiences, who are often left with an uncomfortable feeling that they are expected to gainsay their own impressions and to regard as a virtue in one man the dulness which in another they would deride. Was it not Mr Shaw who prayed devoutly to be delivered from his reputation, and that before it had grown to any large dimensions? Ibsen's genius and reputation cannot away with the fact that many scenes of *The Pretenders* are dull, that the architecture of the play is not good, and the people living in it often become difficult of comprehension because the scheme of the tragedy and its theme are disproportionate. The play seems to be sub-Shakespearean, and the poet is more faithful to an alien genius than he is to his own, with the result that he is looking all the time at something which he rather admires than believes. However, the production at the Haymarket must have given immense satisfaction to many of the serious souls, who, hating the false joy of the lighter sort of play, have come to believe that boredom has a positive merit as a medicine, and that nothing is serious which is not solemn. It is a misunderstanding. *The Importance of being Earnest* is a more serious play than *The Pretenders*.

It is an unfortunate impasse, this sort of mutual cancellation of the solemn and the frivolous in the theatre. Once more the public will be abused, and we shall be told that the public only wants empty laughter. This may be true of the dwindling public which goes to the theatre. It is not true of the great public which goes to the music-hall simply because there it finds more efficiency and less pretentiousness. What has happened is this—that the music-hall has taken over the work of the theatre as Irving, the theatre's last man of genius, left it, so that the theatre has either to find other and higher work to do or cease to exist. That it should do the latter is inconceivable, and it is only a question of time for the young men to profit by the pioneer work of Messrs Shaw, Barker, Yeats and Craig, and to produce an art of the theatre which shall provide for the now neglected public the imaginative food of its desire. Meanwhile it seems to be impossible for the men who are seeking to set up the standards of art to come to terms with the men who live by the standards of commerce, and such work as can be

done must still be subterranean, the slow, patient laying of foundations, and it is left to critics and chroniclers to keep the interest and the hope of the public alive.

For the inspiration of achievement there are the Russian Ballet, and the work of the few men of genius who find expression in the music-halls, and the vitality of the other arts. Probably the healthiest theatres now in London are the Lyceum and the Prince's, where managers and authors adhere honestly to a tradition, are sincere, and do believe in what they are doing, and do see to it that the acting suits the play and that the play —such as it is—is not sacrificed to the actors.

But what of the English drama ? The West-End stage is given up almost entirely to American, and French, and German, and Hungarian, and Italian plays, or to native productions trimmed and cut to fit the personality of this and that actor or actress. Only in Mr Barker's theatres—and in the Repertory Theatres in the provinces—is the play allowed to exist for its own sake. In two productions at the Savoy Theatre a beginning has been made in the vitally important task of liberating Shakespeare from bad tradition. A Yiddish actor in the East-End is producing plays by Tolstoi and Gorky as though they meant something to him. At Oxford and Cambridge the young men are beginning to unearth the buried treasures of our dramatic literature. Some of our finest and most courageous young writers are interested first and foremost in the dramatic form. There are many play-producing societies. The Horniman Repertory Company is to visit the Coronet again this early summer and to drive home the lesson which London began dimly to realise last year, when it showed its realisation in a thoroughly metropolitan boom of Mr Houghton. The growth of the new theatre is almost swifter than the decay of the old. In a few years we shall probably have an *Annus mirabilis*, when the new theatre will burst into flower and bring with it new acting, new *décor*, new lighting, new criticism; and then the much-abused, the unjustly abused public will come back into the theatre. In the meantime it is unreasonable to expect those who are profiting or making their living out of the decay of the old theatre, or the interregnum, to be enthusiastic about, or even kindly disposed towards, those who insist that a drama that knows not poetry and is not poetically conceived is not drama.

GILBERT CANNAN

FRENCH CHRONICLE

IT would prevent misunderstanding, I think, if I began this French chronicle with a definition. In the *Irish Review* of October last, a certain Mr Bodkin quarrelled with me for calling the article published in the POETRY REVIEW of last August "Contemporary French Poetry," for, he said, "the really great poets of the age, such men as Paul Fort, René Ghil, A. Ferdinand Hérold, Gérard d'Houville, Francis Jammes, Camille Mauclair, Stuart Merrill and Henry Spiess are for the most part unmentioned" in my pages; all these writers are "contemporary in any possible significance that may be given to the word"; and the only explanation of my studied omissions must be that I consider them already out of date. Wonderful! And Hérold, Mauclair, Merrill, Spiess and Gérard d'Houville (who is not a man, but Mme Henri de Régnier) are great poets! We should be chary of the word *great*. Victor Hugo was great and . . . *bête comme l'Himalaya*. A man may be a good poet, an exquisite poet, even, and you will do him a disservice by calling him great. Let us keep the word for the poet whose work adds a new and important province to literature. Then from the mess of names above, only those of Paul Fort and Francis Jammes will emerge. But it is not Mr Bodkin's uncertainty as a critic that is my concern at the moment. A poet, I submit, is a contemporary of the generation in which he fought his youthful battle, of the generation in which he formed part of the literary *movement*. Having won consideration and reached the apex of his achievement, the *classical* period of his art, he no longer moves forward, but turns on himself, producing mature, perhaps perfect work, but work which still reflects the æsthetic of the period when he flung himself with ardour into the literary combat. Such men are Vielé-Griffin, Verhaeren, Paul Fort, Francis Jammes.

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It was "the contemporary movement in French Poetry" that formed the subject of M. Charles Vildrac's third lecture on Modern French Poetry at the Grafton Galleries in November last. The first two lectures were devoted to "Paul Verlaine, his character and influence," and "Art and Academic Art in the work of modern writers—Moréas, Verhaeren, Régnier, Maeterlinck, Jammes, Paul Fort." M. Vildrac said the right thing about each of these poets, and his remarks were illuminated by the very wonderful reading of M. Jacques Copeau, one of whose missions in life is to read poetry to people who will listen. But in the third lecture, M. Vildrac could only find, as representing the "contemporary movement," MM. André Spire, P.-J. Jouve, Luc Durtain, and Henri Herz (whom he mentioned in passing) and Duhamel, Romains, Arcos, and Chennevière, the author of a dramatic poem, *Le Printemps*. At the end of this lecture M. Vildrac fled from the room, and M. Copeau read half a dozen poems from the lecturer's *Livre d'Amour*, the book that brought him fame. Now, I have a great admiration for the strength, virility, and intellectuality of the group of poets whose names are Duhamel, Romains, Arcos, Vildrac, and Chennevière; they are as powerful a

group as any in France to-day ; but I think that M. Vildrac was not acting fairly and impartially in allowing an English audience to believe that these poets alone made the " Contemporary Movement in French Poetry." His answer, I know, will be : But they alone at least have brought new elements into French poetry ; and this may be true ; yet there are other good poets : and we should have been told of them.

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Those who wish for information about the literary movement in France to-day should get M. Emile Henriot's book, *A quoi rêvent les jeunes gens* (enquête sur la jeunesse littéraire), (H. & E. Champion, no price). Therein may be found a fairly accurate estimate, in the words of the men concerned, of what is going on, and an indication of its direction.

From M. Henriot's inquiry, one word seems to stand out more than any other, the word *classicism*. Every group uses the word. Even M. P.-J. Jouve, replying as a *unanimiste* (he is not one, by the way), means *classicism* when he speaks of their " need for economy " which " impels them to seek for the most naked expression, that which is most devoid of artifice and rhetoric, that which is most exactly *glued* (Flaubert's word) on to the initial *entrevision* of the mind." But, as M. Henri Ghéon points out in his book, *Nos Directions*, there are two utterly opposed solutions of the problem of classicism. There is that which consists in setting up as an example to be followed an acknowledged classical period—in France, the seventeenth century—and which finds favour in those writers who look for inspiration to the ideals of the now defunct *Ecole Romane*, founded by Jean Moréas with Charles Maurras, Raymond de la Tailhède, Maurice du Plessys, and Ernest Raynaud. Their journals are *la Revue Critique des idées et des livres*, *l'Action française* and *les Guêpes*. Their sponsors in this *enquête* are MM. Eugène Marsun, Henri Clouard, and Jean-Marc Bernard. They all owe a great deal of their driving force to M. Charles Maurras, the wonderful limpidity of whose style is in itself an argument in their favour. But there is another classicism, defined by M. Ghéon as " that perfect equilibrium which is the end of an art and its supreme victory,"—and " what was once classical cannot become so again." I find in the answer of M. Jacques Copeau some admirable words on this subject. " For my part," he says, " I am very pleased that the aspirations of the day are connected with that fine word ' classicism '—provided that you do not make of it merely a literary label, but that it designates an attitude of the will, a quality of the mind; provided that nothing human, nothing living is excluded from it, nor that notion of research and invention, in default of which culture is sterile; if, in short, to be classical is to bring a sentiment to its fulfilled expression, to the supreme point of its perfection, of its style, from whatever depth it may come, from whatever obscurity it may emerge, from whatever region of being, however unfrequented, it may be born." It will be part of my task, no doubt, as the year goes on, to say more about French classical tendencies ; but if I were asked now where their finest expression was to be found, I think I should answer, In *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, of which M. Copeau is the director ; . . . any corrective needed may be found in *La Revue Critique des Idées et des Livres*.

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I have four books that are classical in M. Ghéon's sense; they represent the perfect equilibrium of the art of their respective authors: Francis Vielé-Griffin and *La*

Lumière de Grèce, Emile Verhaeren and *Hélène de Sparte* (*Nouv. Rev. Franç.*, 3.50 both), Paul Fort and *Vivre en Dieu* (*Figuière*, 3.50), Francis Jammes and *Les Géorgiques Chrétiennes* (*Mercure de France*, 3.50).

La Lumière de Grèce is in three parts, *Pindare*, *Sapho*, and *La Légende ailée de Bellérophon Hippalide*. Like all the rest of M. Vielé-Griffin's work, these poems are written in free rhythms—free, that is, from regard for a conventional form, but absolutely in servitude to the poet's sense of movement; and the rhyme, or, in its stead, the assonance, is used to mark the rhythm. The dialogues in which Pindar and Sappho are made to speak their hearts and the legend of Bellerophon are full of passages of a very rare beauty. M. Vielé-Griffin is what the French call a *métèque*, i.e. a foreigner turned Frenchman, in this case an American; and it is a pleasant speculation that the creator of Yeldis owes his exquisite lyrical gift to an ultimate English extraction. M. Vielé-Griffin takes three characteristic moments in Sappho's life: in the first, Mnécédicé asks Sappho why she does not take a husband:

L'amour est désir, Mnécédicé,
grain semé, fleur d'avril;
si l'amour possédait, Mnécédicé,
que désirerait-il ?
Il désire et n'a pas, Mnécédicé ma prude,
l'amour espère et craint:
il est incertitude;
il doit craindre de perdre
ce qu'il croit posséder une heure,
sinon il n'est plus le désir,
Mnécédicé, ma fleur.

In the second, Sappho repulses the love of Alcæus, in whom she admires the hero and not the man. The third episode is Sappho's death. The winged Legend of Bellerophon is as admirable a story as it is possible to conceive in verse.

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It is disconcerting that, after having celebrated the Tentacular Towns, the Tumultuous Forces, and the Multiple Splendour of the modern world, after having sung the Whole of Flanders, M. Emile Verhaeren should turn to Greece for a subject, the homecoming of Helen to Sparta, where she finds, not the peace and the rest she had expected in the arms of Menelaus, but the tormented desire of her half-brother, Castor, and the illicit love of her niece, Electra, turning her haven into a place of disquietude and anguish. Castor kills Menelaus and is in turn slain by Electra, as he stoops to quench his thirst after the deed; and Pollux, who had stewarded for Menelaus while that king was besieging Troy, remembers the words of his father Zeus:

Tu seras maître
Et régneras dûment sur les peuples domptés.

But Helen refuses to share the kingdom offered to him by the popular voice; she is tired, and beaten by the desire she feels around her; and, in the last scene, amid the rut of nature, satyrs, naiades, bacchantes proclaiming their dementia towards her, she

implores Zeus to annihilate her, for even the earth would burn her dead flesh. Zeus answers :

> Il te fallait saisir l'adversité rebelle
> Pour en tordre la force et la suprême ardeur:
> Mais tu n'étais que femme et si ta chair fut belle
> Ton front n'imposa point l'orgueil de sa splendeur,

and, with a clap of thunder, he takes her up to heaven. I do not know how this play was received at the Châtelet. It is hardly a good play, since it turns on an anticlimax, the homecoming of Helen, with a weak central figure, a weatherwise and weary Helen; and, although the passage from *Les Villes Tentaculaires* by way of *La Multiple Splendeur* and *Les Rhythmes Souverains* to *Hélène de Sparte* is easy to follow, I am not sure that, in the end, either the glory of Helen or that of a great poet has been well served.

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"Vivre en Dieu" is to be a poet (*Entendez-moi bien: dieu? je veux dire un tel homme qu'il peut rêver sa vie d'un bout à l'autre bout*), and in the case of Paul Fort, a Prince of Poets. Every book that he publishes seals the appropriateness of that choice by the French poets. Mallarmé was a wise and lofty prince; and his disciples received the law from him in his quietude and seclusion. Verlaine was unwise, and, in his life, ignoble: his disciples followed him from café to café; his law was the caprice of the moment and the absinthe: *tout est bel et bon qui est bel et bon, d'où qu'il vienne et par quelque procédé qu'il soit obtenu;* but at the back of that caprice was a vivid appreciation of good poetry. Léon Dierx, third in the dynasty of princes, was a noble figure-head, who had but few dealings with the poets, his subjects. But Paul Fort is with them, of them, and for them, their friend, comrade and defender. Here is a passage characteristic of the man. Returning from Ferté-Milon, where he had been to watch the Birth of Spring, he reflects on the worthlessness of friendship :

> Et gardons-la, cette fierté, gardons-la bien. Repoussons l'amitié, ce fantôme aux cent mains. J'ai dit, je fais deux pas et rencontre, ô douceur! content de me revoir, un cher poète en pleurs.
>
> Je le console un brin—de toute ma tendresse. "Dis-moi ta peine." On va, bras dessus, bras dessous. "Hier elle est partie, je n'ai plus de maîtresse. Qu'avez-vous vu là-bas?" "Je n'ai rien vu du tout."
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> "Vous savez que sur vous, Spiess fait des conférences." "Où donc?" "Fribourg, Genève." . . . "Eh mais, vive la France!" "Je ne sais qui doit en faire aux Etudiants. Amusant ce voyage? Vous avez l'air content."
>
> "Oui, la! je suis content. C'est même ridicule. . . . Viens, nous la chercherons ta Laurette adorée! Figure-toi, mon cher, j'étais désespéré." "Pourquoi?" "Rien. "J'avais pris un mal de crépuscule."

Alone in a railway carriage with the recollections of a holiday and the melancholy of a return, he gives way to despondency; but the chance encounter of a friend, and hey! all is gone. He is like a sensitive mercurial thermometer with a recording attachment; he registers every change of temperature . . . of temperament; in doing so, he makes poetry of all the incidents of his life. They go through his brain, and come out clothed

in raiment of fantasy, of delicious humour and gaiety, or of tragedy. He is full of laughter; but it is that fine laughter which is not far from tears. In the poem called " Vivre en Dieu " he is grave and brave before the problem of life.

After " Vivre en Dieu " and the series of poems entitled *La Naissance du Printemps à la Ferté-Milon*, in this volume, Paul Fort publishes the third chapter of his poetical autobiography, *L'Aventure Eternelle* (the first chapter appeared in *L'Aventure Eternelle* and the second in *Montlhéry-la-Bataille*). I wish to quote one passage from this third chapter :

Ce que je dois à Moréas ne peut être dit en paroles. J'avais une âme obscure et lasse. Quasiment il en fit la folle

Fée des feux libres dans l'éther. "Aérez, aérez les mots! Qu'ils soient de ces flammes légères dansant plus haut que les flambeaux."

Ce que j'appris de Moréas fut mon secret. Non pas pour lui, puisque vivant—mon maître! hélas ! il savait tout comme aujourd'hui.

" Aérez les mots ! " Paul Fort's case is one of those wherein the influence of Moréas has not been pernicious—the influence of a stylist on an original poet. Each succeeding book that Paul Fort now publishes shows a growing clarity of style, or, to use his own—Moréas's—words, his poems are more and more *ces flammes légères dansant plus haut que les flambeaux.*

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What are we to say of *Les Géorgiques Chrétiennes*? M. Francis Jammes is a fervent Roman Catholic. "At the threshold of this work," he says in a prefatory note, " I confirm that I am a Roman Catholic humbly submissive to all the decisions of my Pope, H.H. Pius X, who speaks in the name of the True God. . . ." He lives a pastoral life at Orthez in the Basses-Pyrénées. His poetry hitherto has been cherished for three things: its simplicity, its sincerity, and its spontaneity, and for the scents of field and wood that seemed to emanate from his verses. And these verses were not made with a mechanical beat; they were at times deliciously awkward; they stammered; they did not always rhyme; the final syllable would evoke a trembling echo, an assonance, and that was all; sometimes, however, they were as melancholy and as sustained as the long sigh of the wind in an aspen-tree. But now :

Maintenant il me faut du calme pour écrire
Car ma barbe blanchit autour de mon sourire.

J'entreprends dans mon âge mur ce grand labeur.
Il est le fruit que donne au bel Eté la fleur.

And this " great labour " is the writing of the Christian Georgics, in seven books, composed of couplets like the two quoted, each making a complete statement, ending in a full stop—a form so restricted that its only use would seem to be for the rhyming do maxims and epigrams; but M. Jammes, in his ripe age and his conviction of grace, haf deliberately chosen it as a vehicle for the conveyance of his most earnest beliefs ans

his message, raising a mountain in the path of his genius, to make his work more worthy. *Les Géorgiques Chrétiennes* are a monument to his faith..

Needless to say, however, *Les Géorgiques Chrétiennes* are not georgics; they are not a treatise on husbandry; they might have been called eclogues, but there would have been no challenge in that word. The seven books describe the life and labours of a simple, pious peasant folk, that exists perhaps only in the imagination of the poet. Passages of the flattest prose—breathing-spaces, no doubt—alternate with passages of real beauty; and it is as a whole that the book will finally be judged.

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Two of the greatest influences in France, at the present time, are Francis Jammes and Paul Claudel, both Catholics. In *A quoi rêvent les jeunes gens*, their names are invoked eleven and twelve times respectively. Their most fervent admirers, no doubt, are on *l'aile gauche de l'armée littéraire contemporaine*, as M. J.-M. Bernard puts it in *La Revue Critique* of January 10. He himself is on *l'aile droite*—generalissimi, Maurice Barrès (seventeen times) and Charles Maurras (fourteen times). But M. Claudel is also much in favour with *l'aile droite*; you will find his praise by that wing both in the book cited and in the same number of the same review, and also in M. Bernard's Anthology, *Pages politiques des poètes français*. In truth, M. Paul Claudel, as a great poet, whose humanity is all-embracing, appeals to all the literary sects, except that to which M. Maurice Boissard of the *Mercure de France* belongs; and what is that? To some, M. Claudel has restored the sense of veneration; to others, he is a great lyric poet, whose seduction it is impossible to avoid; others he has taught how to think usefully and nobly, how to tear themselves from the consideration of their easy pleasures and ephemeral pains; to others, he is the most considerable dramatic poet of the time.

I have of the works of Claudel these volumes: *Théâtre* (première série), vol. I, *Tête d'Or*, first and second versions, vol. II, *La Ville*, first and second versions, vol. III, *La Jeune Fille Violaine* and *l'Echange*, vol. IV, *Le Repos du septième Jour*, *L'Agamemnon d'Eschyle* and *Vers d'Exil*, and three philosophical essays under the title *Art Poétique*—all these five volumes are published by the *Mercure de France* (3.50). I have also *l'Otage*, drame, and *l'Annonce faite à Marie*, mystère en quatre actes et un prologue—these two published by *la Nouvelle Revue Française* (3.50). But there are other works which I have not seen yet: *Cette Heure qui est entre le Printemps et l'Eté*, cantate à trois voix (*N.R.F.*, 10 fr.), *Connaissance de l'Est*, prose pieces (*M. de F.*, 3.50); and *Partage de Midi*, drame, *Cinq grandes odes suivies d'un processional pour saluer le siècle nouveau*, and *Hymnes*. These latter are out of print or have not yet appeared in book form. In his essay on Paul Claudel (*M. de F.*, December 16, 1912, January 1, 1913), M. Georges Duhamel, poet and critic of poetry for the *Mercure de France*, one of the most intelligent of the younger French writers, and one whose judgments are always interesting—we can ask no more of a judgment—M. Georges Duhamel says that Claudel's works should be read in this order: *Connaissance de l'Est*, *l'Otage*, *l'Echange*, *l'Annonce faite à Marie;* then, by comparing the latter with *la Jeune fille Violaine*, which is a kind of first version, you will be prepared to compare, each with the other, the two versions of *Tête d'Or* and *La Ville*. The *Odes*, *Hymnes*, *Partage de Midi*, *Repos du septième Jour* and other works may next be read; but, finally, *Art Poétique*,

which is an introduction to M. Claudel's whole work, but that kind of introduction which must be read last of all.

Although the bulk of M. Claudel's work is dramatic in form, none of his dramas had been produced before the end of 1912, when M. Lugné-Poé played *l'Annonce faite à Marie* at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre. It was, I have been told by a friend who was present, a revelation. This is what M. André du Fresnois, the dramatic critic of *La Revue critique* writes about it:

> Drama and personages have the simplicity of creations of genius. When literatures age and souls atrophy, characters are seen to become more and more complex. They are believed to approach nearer to reality thus. But one day, returning to some masterpiece, we perceive that everything was contained in its fecund unity. The personages appear as centres. They reach a degree in a higher life, a symbolic life, and yet they remain strongly human and true. At a certain height, realism and idealism are no more opposed than was for Moréas romanticism and classicism. It seems very much as if the art of M. Claudel had reached that height. Nothing would be more idle than to analyse in a few lines *l'Annonce faite à Marie*.... Innumerable quotations alone would convey any idea of it.... This work is wholly steeped in poetry, wholly animated by faith, but also wholly sustained by a just notion of the realities of the earth. It has sprung, incomparably fresh and young, from a secular tradition and from the very deeps of French Catholic consciousness. It is sublime and familiar, popular and mystical.

And M. Philippe Rendure in *l'Indépendance* (January 1913), writes:

> Since the representations by l'Œuvre (of *l'Annonce*) M. Paul Claudel is without contest the first of dramatists. We do not possess a legendary drama: it is true we have seen at our theatres *histoires à costumes*, but they were only stupid (certain contrivances of Sardou and of Catulle Mendès, for example). We have seen pretty little stories, rather well turned, sometimes quite captivating; but dramas that have come from the French race, dramas that speak to our hearts because they stir up in us the old forces which made our past greatness: faith and military courage, attachment to the land, idealism and will-power (think of Anne Vercors, who starts for the Crusades because he is too happy and because the country is overrun with too many bands of poor), dramas of this order we have never had.

After that, M. Henri Ghéon may well have said that the French possess to-day a great tragic poet, "capable . . . of communicating to the French theatre a vitality which it has never known" (*Nos Directions*, p. 93).

For Claudel, *I am, I breathe, I make a verse* are identities; into the mouth of Cœuvre (*La Ville*) in whom may be divined more than one trait that belongs to Claudel himself, are put these words:

> O mon fils! lorsque j'étais un poète entre les hommes,
> J'inventais ce vers qui n'avait ni rime ni mètre,
> Et je le définissais dans le secret de mon cœur cette fonction double et reciproque
> Par laquelle l'homme absorbe la vie, et restitue dans l'acte suprême de l'expiration,
> Une parole intelligible.

And this cadenced speech, this *parole intelligible*, pours forth with the changing speeds of dramatic necessity, of which its beat has the strength; it is easy to see therefore why Claudel's lyricism broke the bondage of the alexandrine. It is moreover a lyricism that

amplifies speech by the constant creation of new metaphors, new images—this, indeed, being the sign-manual of all great poetry.

The conflicts in Claudel's plays have no fixed relationships to any determinate time and place; they may be said to have the dimensions of an absolute. It is true that the time and place of *l'Echange* would appear to be the America of to-day; that *l'Annonce faite à Marie* takes place in a "Moyen-âge de convention," and *l'Otage* is apparently an historical drama of the French Revolution. But the characters in these plays emerge from the time and space allotted to them and become universal, the mouthpieces of the great sentiments and the great passions that have agitated humanity for all time. And this is even more so in the other dramas. Who could assign a time and place to *Tête d'Or*, or to *La Ville*, or to *Le Repos du septième Jour*? The characters, too, are creations worthy, I think, to be mentioned with Shakespeare's finest: Simon Agnel, Cœuvre, Besme, Avare, Louis Laine, Thomas Pollock, Georges de Coûfontaine, Toussaint Turelure, Anne Vercors, Jacques Hury; and the women: the princess in *Tête d'Or*, Lala, Marthe, Lechy Elbernon, Violaine, Mara, Sygne de Coûfontaine: they are distinct; they remain in one's memory. And this characterisation is intensified rather than weakened by the lyricism with which Claudel invests each personage—a lyricism that is often the speech of their creator himself.

I wish to close these notes on Claudel by quoting from a noble passage of M. Duhamel's essay:

"The God of Claudel! I discern him in all these dramas, as we find the same supernatural figure of Christ in all the pictures of Rembrandt. The images that Claudel offers us of the divine person proceed, all of them, from the same absolute model; but in the latter he has an angry bearing, while in Claudel he is mansuetude and sovereign compassion.

"I must confess to a secret and fervent delight in this God of *l'Otage*, for this God, of whom Badilon, "le gros homme chargé de matière et de péchés," is the humble and imperious advocate:

O mon enfant, quoi de plus faible et de plus désarmé
Que Dieu quand Il ne peut rien sans nous?—*L'Otage*, p. 122.
Dieu n'est pas au-dessus de nous, mais au-dessous.
Et ce n'est pas selon votre force que je vous tente, mais selon votre faiblesse.—*L'Otage*, p. 136.

"Who would refuse his admiration for such a conception of God? Who can disregard the sublime moral value of such a faith? . . . How I admire this human God who *is* according to the measure of men's honouring of him, who needs, in order to be great, the greatness and the generosity of men!"

These notes are inadequate, I know; but a work of art comes to us first as *sensation*; *appreciation* follows after; and the greater the artist, the harder will it be to express our appreciation, since we must meditate at length on a new interpretation of life. M. Duhamel's essay is a very able and maturely considered exposition of Claudel's art and philosophy; and the reader will find in that essay what I have been unable to give him here. But he must first of all read Claudel's own works. (NOTE: M. Duhamel's essay has just been published as a book by the M. de F., 2.50.)

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The fourth series of M. Remy de Gourmont's *Promenades Littéraires* (*Mercure*, 3.50) opens with 92 pages of his "Souvenirs du Symbolisme." Why were they not 346 pages, the whole book? However, here is what M. de Gourmont remembers of Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, Jean Moréas, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, the groups that formed

round Anatole Baju, René Ghil and Gustave Kahn, and lastly a short history of *Le Mercure de France*. M. de Gourmont's criticism is one of the most satisfactory that I know; it always seems as though, once he has spoken, there is nothing more to be said. And this is true, because, from his point of view, he sees with absolute clearness and amazing penetration. To say anything fresh, you must change the point of view, and then you get a new truth, which does not necessarily displace the old. And this book is M. de Gourmont's journalism, made up of his articles contributed to *Le Temps* and elsewhere; yet what could be more satisfying than the following about Mallarmé?—"The obscurity of some of his verses was held up to him as a crime, no credit being given for all the limpid part of his work, and no attempt being made to grip the fact that, by the logic of his symbolist æsthetic itself, he had been led to reject all but the second term of the comparison. Classic poetry, so clear on that account, and so monotonous, expresses both. Victor Hugo and Flaubert united them in one complex metaphor. Mallarmé severed them once more, and only allowed the second image to be seen, that which served to throw light on and poetise the first." And so on. It is these qualities of clarity of expression and perfect comprehension—the two paired are not so monotonous, I assure you—that make M. Gourmont's *Deux Livres des Masques* so valuable a document in any consideration of the symbolist art—and these souvenirs the indispensable appendix to the *Masques*. The other essays in the book bear witness to M. de Gourmont's wide and amazing culture. His wisdomis a thing to rejoice in.

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This chronicle has dealt exclusively with *les maîtres*; in my next, I will return to *les jeunes*; I acknowledge now: *Présences*, poems by P.-J. Jouve (G. Crès & Cie, no price); *Dans l'Ombre des Statues*, a drama by Georges Duhamel; *Découvertes*, prose pieces, by Charles Vildrac; *La Danse devant l'Arche*, poem, by Henri Franck (*Nouv. Rev. Fran.*, 3.50 each); *Les Apartés*, poems by Henri Herz (Phalange, 2 fr.); *Les Fêtes Quotidiennes*, poems, by Guy Charles Cros; *Odes et Prières*, by Jules Romains; *Ariel Esclave*, poems, by Louis Mandin (*M. de F.*, 3.50 each); *Paroles devant la Vie*, by Alexandre Mercereau (Figuière, 3.50). Those who are in search of what is best in the younger generation in France should follow these poets: they will not be disappointed. The *Mercure de France* have published in a fine, well-printed volume under the general title *Œuvres d'Emile Verhaeren*, the books *Les Campagnes Hallucinées*, *les Villes Tentaculaires*—*Les Douze Mois*, *Les Visages de la Vie*. Uniform with this is *Œuvres d'Arthur Rimbaud*—vers et prose—revues sur les manuscrits originaux et les premières éditions, mises en ordre et annotées par Paterne Berrichon, with Poèmes Retrouvés and Préface by Paul Claudel. These two volumes are 7 fr. each. I shall return to both of them. I have also received: *Pages Politiques des Poètes Français* (Librairie Nationale, 3.50), an anthology by Jean-Marc Bernard; the anthology is royalist; *W. B. Yeats*, an essay by Jethro Bithell (Editions du Masque, no price); and an essay on *La Littérature Irlandaise Contemporaine* (Sansot, 2 fr.). All the books mentioned in this article may be obtained from the Poetry Bookshop.

F. S. FLINT

NOTE.—In the June number of POETRY AND DRAMA our correspondent, Mr T. E. Hulme, will contribute a German Chronicle, and Mr Arundel del Re will contribute an Italian Chronicle.

POETRY

MAURICE HEWLETT

JAMES ELROY FLECKER

LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

MICHAEL MECREDY

THE VOYAGE

THE night before our Lady's day
I came to a break in my outward way,
To where the land's end seemed to be;
For now in a dark immensity
Great water flowed, and out of the west
The wind came wet, bringing unrest
To all the earth from the open main;
And I felt the darkness her doors twain
Open and shut as the sea surged,
Like her pulse made audible.
There was nought that a man could tell
Between me and the ways of sleep,
Save that flood-water dark and deep,
And wind most hot and passionate
Which called me meet I know not what fate
Near or far off; but I knew that a man,
With bright blue eyes in his face of tan
And teeth as white as the cherry flower,
Was by who said, "This is the hour
When you and I take boat. The ship
Rides out yonder, the tide's at neap.
Come, you shall see the cities of men,
And the plains and mountains and rivers of them,
And what the folk do under the eye
Of the sun, and learn of their mystery."
Stilly he spake, as if from his bed
Of flowers and tapers the folded dead
Should speak, not winking his shut eyes
Nor breaking the dream wherein he lies,
Stilly smiling, wise and not fierce.
Rending the dark with eyes and ears,
I saw a ship but a bowshot out,
I saw her headlight leap and lout

As she dipt to the trough or climbed to be
Atop the ridges of that dark sea.
I heard the waves break at her bows
And the cries of sailors at work or carouse
As they clankt the anchor chain
Against the word to haul amain;
And I saw lights running here and there
Over the deck, and knew what air
Sang in her shrouds. Then I took boat—
He pusht her out and I felt her float
On unknown sea from the unseen shore—
I at the helm and he at the oar
Climbed the ridges of that dark sea
Through the black water racing free,
To rock in the lew of the ship's side,
Straining there, head to tide,
With broad dipt bosom and lifted wing,
Lightly swaying, a living thing,
Strained to windward.
The anchor weighed,
She shook herself, now stoopt, now stayd,
And drave her course into the wind.
The white foam flew and stream'd behind,
Flakes and splinters of pale gold—
So God further the ship! Behold,
The mast is a pointer, a wagging lance
Weaving arcs where the mad stars dance
Over the sky, as over the turf
The windy tree-tops! With snap of surf,
With surge and swallow along the keel,
With plunging nose and dripping heel
She took the seas. As for me I slept
While about the world's girdle the sun crept,
And stars paled, and Earth was tired,
Like a woman too much desired
And loved until she swoons away.
The stars went out, the Earth grew grey,

And I slept long on the breast of the sea
Till the broad morning awakened me.
O brave world that I lookt upon!
Out on the green-capt cliffs in the sun
The steeple bells were calling to God
Faithful people; white gulls rode
Placid the ponded sea; the trees
Out of heaven call'd down a breeze
And, whispering to it, wafted it
Over the sea. Like a wide sheet
Of fairy water silver-white
The sea lay dimpling in the light,
Streakt and fretted with stipples where
The wind had kist her bosom fair
And left a blush to tell his daring.
The breeze held on and shaped our faring
West by south. It came on our quarter
And drave us off into deep water,
Out of sight of homely thing,
Tilth and pasture and farm-steading,
White villages, red-rooft towns,
Gray manors in folds of the downs
Hinting the kindly gods of the hearth
Out from the confines of the earth
To where in sounding perilous seas
Lay hid the Cassiterides;
To water spread in a circle dim
To a faint far edge, to a silver rim:
And the sky was a whole unbroken cup
Of clear crystal, and hid us up.
Four nights, four days since we set sail
We drave the seas on a following gale
With never hint of the land or sight
Of passing ship; but the fifth night
The stars were suddenly quencht, there fell
A hush on the sea, with a long swell
Wherein we wallow'd and sat dumb,

Grimly waiting the storm to come,
Bow'd as a man is bow'd who saith,
The end is near, when the end is death.
Sudden it struck us flat, and the ship
Reel'd; but then, as horse to a whip
Shudders and lays his ears back
Before mad flight, so she lay slack,
Beaten, blind, and quivering,
Then leapt forward, a madden'd thing
Into a sea turn'd ravenous,
Following, threatening, harrying us
To forget God and the sun's cheer,
And Love and Sorrow, and serve Fear
And Lust-of-Living, his blood-brother.
We knew the waves racing each other,
Riding each other, each in haste
To be first upon us, and first to taste
Our dear blood; and so we fled
Derelict, bare before that dread
Space unmeasur'd and time annull'd.
  The fury past, the storm was lull'd,
The wind dropt, and we heard the rain
Sting the water and thud amain
On the deck of our beaten barque,
Making a heaven of the dark
Wherein we lay like a soused log,
Drown'd in rain and the rain-fog,
Sodden wrack upon the flood
Without signal or neighbourhood
Of aught but water above or below,
And the sound of water; and, drifting so,
On the sixth morning the clouds of storm
Lifted, and lo! in the sea a form
Vast and black, a lonely cliff
Rear'd up like a hippogriff;
And the foam flashing about his knees
Was as if with wings he should beat the seas,

To rise up and be free to soar.
About his knees the sounding roar,
About his head a cloud, we past
On a swift tide, and felt the blast
Of his fear like a stream of frozen air
Dry our eyelids and lift our hair;
And his howling follow'd us on our flight
Through the deep of the sixth night.
  But when the seventh dawn's white hand
Was on the latch I saw a land
Glimmering, husht and still asleep
Without shadow, of cliff and steep
And forest like a cloud. And in
We drew, and saw the waves breaking
On green flats, and heard the thrill
Of One who sang there long and shrill,
As to a harp a harp-player
Who tilts his chin to feel the air,
And holds a high continued note
Trembling in his narrow'd throat,
But finds no words. And there she stood
Who made the song, on the verge of the flood,
On a green shore in full sunlight,
A slim woman, naked and white,
With eyes that shone like the sun on swords,
So near that I saw the singing chords
Ripple as the sound past over.
High were her hands to call her lover
To kiss her and be glad of her;
For they say the Sun is her paramour,
And out of the sea she calls him to her
To her fair service, to be her wooer;
And he cometh to her every day,
And at eve goes.
  We on our way
Drave on a swift blue tidal race
By dreaming shores of strange face—

Forests and river mouths, with ships
Sailing into the land, and strips
Of emerald verdure on either strand;
Small white towns on the edge of the sand,
And beyond an infinite country with far
Mountains, wherein the Gods are
For crown of all the heart's desire.
And thence to a country burnt by fire,
A bare country of weald and wold
Brown and gasht, and a city old
With a wall about; and beyond the walls
Men plough'd the glebe. I heard their calls
Over sea as the heavy, slow,
Mild-eyed oxen went to and fro
With bent heads under the yoke.
So now the city, with thin blue smoke
To veil her face, before us lies
White and still, with her men like flies
Crawling her streets and waterways,
Her bridges and yards and busy quays;
And over all a great church
With a gilded dome. And I made search
For cross or crescent atop, but none
Was there, but instead a naked one
Straddled and stood that all might see
The glory of his virility.
Gold was his hair, and bright gold
The eyes of him. His hands he did hold
On high, with fingers all outspread,
As the sun himself, when low and red
He stoops to west, lets his beams fly
Like long fingers over the sky.
They say his name is Heëlios,
And his the city without a cross;
And his the priests and the priestesses;
And the altar-smoke and the blood are his.
The night fell under new stars,

And dawn came red with rumours of wars
And dry heat. Most desolate
Grew the shore as we coasted it;
For now the round world beautiful
Was bleacht like the dome of an old skull,
Sutured with dykes where no water was
And ridged under a sky of brass.
And so we came to a great plain
Of sand and stones, a place of pain
Under the grin of the sun; and there
Lay a dragon voicing his great despair.
There alone on the sand did he lie,
Bitter wounded and slow to die,
Rearing on high his smitten head
To challenge God; but the rest was dead,
Huddled in flat folds: so he
Served out his lonely agony.
But we drave on in the glare of noon
And came to a place of marsh and dune
Without trees; and there in that waste
Armies fought; horsemen in haste
Gallopt; and on the burnt knowes
Men lay hidden and shot with bows,
Kneeling up. I heard the twang
Over the sea, and markt the pang
When a king fell shot, and his charioteer
Fled, and left him glittering there
In the light, like a lamp in a sunny place,
A garish thing.
We went on our ways
Eastward now through seas of blue
And flashing bronze like the hot hue
That burns on a kingfisher's breast.
Thereon great birds floated at rest
Like lilies idle on a mere;
Or clouds of them did drift and veer,
Of wheeling flight and pondering eye

Turn'd adown as they oared by
About the ship's wake, crimson things
With trailing feet and pointed wings,
That glowed like fire behind a hill,
And seemed to throb and wax until
The glory was intolerable—
And never a cloud to break the spell
Of the long shining radiant days:
The sun rose clean out of the haze
That like a scarf of smoke was trail'd
About the distance, then and sail'd
Naked to the zenith, and then
Naked stoopt seawards again
And veil'd in ocean his red rim
And hid. And the gold air after him
Fainted to amber, and in green
Died. Rose then the silver queen
Of night, and spread her violet cloak
Over the world, and starlight broke
From every point the eye could hold
While her lamp burn'd, a disk of gold,
And flamed on the sea in fiery flakes,
And made a path for herself, and lakes
Of shining water wherein to float
Fishers in a fairy boat;
And made a witchcraft of the night
Until she paled, and the dawn light
Shiver'd anew across the sea.
  So in the glimmer of day-to-be
I saw a city her white arms wide
Stretch to the shore on either side
The bay. Her shipping was like a wood
Of silver poplars hemming a flood;
And her glory rose on terraces
Of temples and marble palaces
And broad stairways to cypress glooms
And the crowning of her place of tombs;

For she is a temple of the dead
Whom the living worshipt there, men said,
Counting no one fortunate
Until he share their calm estate.
For in all the clamour of life's unease
There is one thing to pray for—peace;
And neither beauty nor wisdom skill
Body nor soul ere they be still;
And riches buy no thing so rare
As sleep without dreams in windless air.

Fared we then over wide sea-ways,
And lost the land for a many days
And nights of charmèd solitude,
With never a thing to break our mood
Of spell-bound, high expectancy.
Then, behold! a cloud on the sea,
A dim isle, and the very ship
Seem'd to stay, as when to the lip
The finger goes, and the oncomer
Holds him, saying, Am I so near?
And so by perils we were come
Of warring over the sea foam
To the land where I would be.

MAURICE HEWLETT

THE GOLDEN JOURNEY TO SAMARCAND

I. THE PROLOGUE

I

WE who with songs beguile your pilgrimage
And swear that beauty lives though lilies die;
We poets of the proud old lineage
Who sing to find your hearts, we know not why,

What shall we tell you? Tales—marvellous tales
Of ships and stars and isles where good men rest,
Where nevermore the rose of sunset pales,
And winds and shadows fall toward the West:

And there the world's first huge, white-bearded kings
In dim glades sleeping murmur in their sleep,
And all the ivy rustles where it clings,
Cutting its pathway slow and red and deep.

II

And how beguile you? Death has no repose
Warmer and deeper than that orient sand
Which hides the beauty and bright faith of those
Who made the Golden Journey to Samarcand.

And now they wait and whiten peaceably,
Those conquerors, those poets, those so fair:
They know time comes not only you and I
But the whole world shall whiten, here or there:

When those long caravans that cross the plain
With dauntless feet and sound of silver bells
Put forth no more for glory or for gain,
Draw no more solace from the palm-girt wells.

When the great markets by the sea shut fast
All that calm Sunday that goes on and on:
When even lovers find their peace at last,
And Earth is but a star that once had shone.

II. AT THE GATE OF THE SUN, BAGDAD, IN OLDEN TIME

THE MERCHANTS

AWAY, for we are ready to a man!
Our camels sniff the evening and are glad.
Lead on, O master of the Caravan:
Lead on the merchant princes of Bagdad.

THE CHIEF DRAPER

Have we not Indian carpets dark as wine,
Turbans and sashes, gowns and bows and veils,
And broideries of intricate design,
And printed hangings in enormous bales?

THE CHIEF GROCER

We have rose-candy: we have spikenard,
Mastic and terebinth and oil and spice,
And such sweet jams meticulously jarred
As God's own Prophet eats in Paradise.

THE PRINCIPAL JEWS

And we have manuscripts in Peacock styles
By Ali of Damascus: we have swords
Engraved with storks and apes and crocodiles,
And heavy beaten necklaces, for lords.

THE MASTER OF THE CARAVAN

But you are nothing but a lot of Jews.

THE PRINCIPAL JEWS

Sir, even dogs have daylight, and we pay.

THE MASTER OF THE CARAVAN

But who are ye in rags and rotten shoes,
You, dirty-bearded, blocking up the way?

THE PILGRIMS

We are the Pilgrims, master: we shall go
Always a little farther: it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow,
Across that angry or that glimmering sea.

White on a throne or guarded in a cave
There lives a prophet who can understand
Why men were born; but surely we are brave
Who make the Golden Journey to Samarcand.

THE CHIEF MERCHANT

We gnaw the nail of hurry. Master, away!

ONE OF THE WOMEN

O turn your eyes to where your children stand.
Is not Bagdad the beautiful? O stay.

THE MERCHANTS, IN CHORUS

We make the Golden Journey to Samarcand.

AN OLD MAN

Have you not girls and garlands in your homes,
Eunuchs and Syrian boys at your command?
Seek not excess: God hateth him who roams.

THE MERCHANTS, IN CHORUS

We make the Golden Journey to Samarcand.

A PILGRIM WITH A BEAUTIFUL VOICE

Sweet to ride forth at evening from the wells
  When shadows pass gigantic on the sand,
And softly through the silence beat the bells
  Along the golden road to Samarcand.

A MERCHANT

We travel not for trafficking alone:
  By hotter winds our fiery hearts are fanned:
For lust of knowing what should not be known
  We make the Golden Journey to Samarcand.

THE MASTER OF THE CARAVAN

Open the gate, O watchman of the night.

THE WATCHMAN

  Ho travellers! I open. For what land
Leave ye the dim-moon-city of delight?

THE MERCHANTS (WITH A SHOUT)

  We make the Golden Journey to Samarcand.
The caravan passes through the gate.

THE WATCHMEN (CONSOLING THE WOMEN)

What would ye, ladies? It was ever thus:
  Men are unwise and curiously planned.

A WOMAN

They have their dreams, and do not care for us.

VOICES FROM THE CARAVAN, FAR AWAY, SINGING

  We make the Golden Journey to Samarcand.

JAMES ELROY FLECKER

THE ADDER

Produced at the Liverpool Repertory Theatre by Mr Basil Dean, March 3, 1913:

Seth:	LAWRENCE HANRAY.
Newby:	J. H. ROBERTS.
The Squire:	NORMAN MCKEOWN.
The Girl:	EILEEN THORNDYKE.

Woods in autumn. A charcoal-burner's hut at the back; a little to one side, a round flat-topt stack of wood, sheathed in turf, a thin blue smoke coming from the flue-opening in the middle. It is early evening, the undergrowth misted. Night falls as the play goes on.

Two charcoal-burners, SETH *and* NEWBY, *the latter a bent old man. They are seated on a log,* SETH *staring at the stack.*

NEWBY: You'll not be needing me to-night, I think?

(SETH *seems not to hear him.*)

It is main quiet in a copse these days.
Fall's here and no mistake: do you snuff the mould?
A queer good smell 'tis, when the mould is making,
And the mist comes bitter with it out of the ground:
Good as the brownest beer was ever brewed.
Nay, not to you, though—you, a Methody man
And sworn off beer and tobacco. Do you get
The worth of them, I wonder, in your chapel?
That Mister Startup, that flash parson of yourn,
Can daze your wits with preaching, and they say
You can deal prayers that smack upon your tongue.
But 'tisn't the same as a black pipe and a good tap.
Why don't you talk? You seem all in a mood.
You'll not be wanting me to-night, Seth?

SETH: (*Rousing himself*) No.
A sod or two is all the stack will need;
She's burning gently. But stay here awhile.—
Squire's come home, they say?

NEWBY: Ay: I suppose
He'd liever die at home.

SETH: As bad as that?

NEWBY: If a man like Squire rummages London town

For wickedness, all the wild spunk in him
Driving him on full hurl, chasing his lust
Mad as a trooper swording in a charge—
He's bound to shatter. Flesh ain't made for that.
Met him myself to-day. You never saw
A brow with such a fiendish writing on it.
"Hallo, Mud," says he; "Newby, sir," says I.
"What does it feel like to be earth," says he,
"Damn you!" I don't see why he damned me?—Lord!
The brow of the man! When he's in hell, he'll curse
The brindled devil himself for a tame lamb.

SETH: I know, Newby, what's in him. Once, my brow
Was sealed like his. How did he look beside?

NEWBY: Oh, his face as hard as a carving; though, as he talkt,
He foisted on his mouth a kind of twitching,
A kind of smile, that couldn't help but sneer.
But truly I lookt at naught but his hurt brow.

SETH: Hurt! Yes, 'tis hurt indeed.

NEWBY: It made me think
Of a hound I once saw, that was inwardly scorcht
With swallowed poison, and wrencht hard—that brow
With lines like two big weals running straight up,
Pucker'd on either side;—how comes a man
So signed? Deuce! I should think his forehead aches!—
You know how a green leaf put upon the fire
Twists and bends backwards, till you'ld think the heat
Tortured it? Well, somehow his brow's like that.
And he scarce gone thirty!

SETH: But he has laboured!
He has wickedly mown the harvest of his life;
Now it's all stubble, and it stabs his feet.
But stubble must be burnt!

NEWBY: Ay, gi'e us a prayer!
One of your clockwork rants.

SETH: (*Taking no notice*) I read the man.
His lusts follow him like tame dogs, diseased
And full of weeping sores; and let him rest

A moment, all the loving pack yelps up,
One or another leaps upon his knee,
Vile mange and all, and nestles at his heart.
Oh, yes, I know. He's tried to gorge his sin
And yet he cannot dull himself; his brain
Is bitterly tired of being always sin;
But still he must be imagining new evil;
And it all turns to the same small filthy tricks,
The same foul dabbling that he sickens at.
I know it all. My God, don't I know it!

NEWBY: A queasy hunger, eh? See now, you were
A pretty lot yourself, until you turned
Methody; why don't you try your prayers on Squire?

SETH: Hold your noise, old fool.

NEWBY: Well, I'll be crawling.

SETH: No, stay a bit. I want to ask you——

NEWBY: What?

SETH: Oh, has he had his milk? (*Pointing to the hut.*)

NEWBY: The adder? Why, you gave it him yourself.
'Tis an uneasy worm to-night. He lifts
His neck straight up, and keeps his tongue aquiver;
He looks for something. Worms should be sleepy now.
Why does he wake?

SETH: Pah! What should he look for?
You old men think an adder is a spirit.

NEWBY: We know the woods and understand their folk.
We aren't dazed with grammar. Schools and books
May grind the trade in a man to a Sheffield knife;
But put a scholar in the woods: he'll make
No more of them than a dog would make of a book.
(*Seizing* SETH'S *arm.*)
Listen to the air, Seth; look around. You fool,
Will you be wiser than these, my Methody?
Will you be telling me man's master here?
But I'll tell you; this half-light, the fall's quiet,
The harmless timber—they all bide their time;
They are all sworn together, and against us.

Keep still a minute now, and catch your breath,
And let the hour have you. Can you not feel
The woods crouch like a beast behind your back?
And now look round. Where's the beast gone that croucht?
But we're in the midst of something biding its time.
Don't you know men who fear the woods at night
Worse than a ghost? But was there ever one
Who kept an adder in his hut, the trees
Could have the soul of? Put your heel on the worm,
And in a year the trees will drink you up,
Take the man out of you, as a beech drains
And spoils the earth he stands in.

SETH: Heathen talk.
There's a belief can bless the prowling night,
Send off afraid the old terrors that come
To craze the soul with leering through its windows.
I have the faith. I am secure.

NEWBY: Now, Seth,
See here. You are the man for Mister Startup,
Your brummagem parson, and the Methody lot;
None like you at a prayer. What would they say,
Your ranters, if they heard you kept a snake,
An aged heathen adder, in your hut,
And there's no burner in the county puts
Such faith in the worm.

SETH: Not I: it's naught to me.

NEWBY: Good; then I'm going to kill him. (*He makes for the hut.*)

SETH: (*Springs up and holds him back*) Stop, you fool!

NEWBY: Ay, so it's naught to you? You might have known
I wouldn't kill him.

SETH: Newby, you'll keep it hid?

NEWBY: Why, the man's twittering. No, your chapel-folks
Shall have no word from me. What do they know?
What can their silly-fangled hymns and prayers
And Startup's preaching tell them of the woods
And the old things our trade comes up against?

SETH: Oh I'm not one of you pagan-witted burners.

There is a special bond for me.

NEWBY: Ay, so?
Well, let me keep my way. I don't shudder
As if the worm were sliding down my neck
When there's a mention of it.

SETH: Newby, 'tis said,
In foreign lands (it is a horrible thing)
Women in sleep have suckled snakes—they've been
Roused up by poisonous lips drawing their milk.
It's worse with me. For I am nourishing him,
That viper shut up in the box in yonder,
I'm nourishing him, Newby, with my mind.

NEWBY: (*Laughing*) And you the man for a prayer above them all!—
Hark!

SETH: What did you hear?

NEWBY: The footing of a man
In the long riding.

SETH: Who'ld be rambling now?

NEWBY: Squire, maybe, roaming the fever off him.
Sounds reach a long way in this quiet air.
But it is time I went, for I'll be missing
The best of the evening at the "Hark to Melody."

SETH: No, no, don't make to go.

NEWBY: What is it, then?

SETH: (*Hastily*) My girl's come back to me.

NEWBY: Well, what of that?

SETH: 'Twas yesterday she came. My sister's dead.
She'd nowhere else to live. What shall I do,
Newby, what shall I do?

NEWBY: What are you gabbling?
You're a queer father.

SETH: Newby, but it's the Squire!

NEWBY: Frightened of him, are you? Well, then, warn her.

SETH: (*Starting*) Warn her? No; warning wouldn't do.

NEWBY: Why not?

SETH: I dreamt my sister came out of her death
To me last night, and awfully she spoke:

"Seth, the girl's in your keeping now!"

NEWBY: Why not?
Who else should keep her? What's your fear in the girl?

SETH: I'll tell you: 'tis myself I fear in her.

NEWBY: I don't take that.

SETH: Why, in my wickedness
Was her beginning: out of my rebellion
She came!

NEWBY: I suppose she had a mother, though.

SETH: We'll leave her out of this. If there is sin
Sown in the girl, it is all mine; there was
Enough flourishing in my blood to choke
With tares and weeds the innocence of the heart
I forced to live.

NEWBY: Ay, and it is the truth
'Tis hard to make clean earth of twitch-grown soil.

SETH: And then to love the girl so much! Do you think
It can be right to love—one of such birth
So fiercely—Oh, so terribly to love her?
If lovers have a child, be they right or wrong
In loving, they must give the bairn their hearts.
But mine came into flesh so wickedly
She is a sin! My sin she is! My hate
Of the Lord God, my scorning of His laws,
My mere joy in delighting all my lust!

NEWBY: A child's a child, I think.

SETH: You know nothing.
I was all made of sin when she was born.
But out of the villainous hubbub of my life
The good hands of my sister stole my baby;
Took her away and kept her hid from me,
And I went on in wickedness. My Lord,
I did not want to sin.
I would be sickening at the beastliness
I'd forced my helpless spirit to devour;
And right into my ailing grief would blaze
Lust like a golden trumpet; and like singing

My blood would leap into its joy again;
And I was drabbing again.

NEWBY: (*Not hiding his disgust.*) And it went on
Till the blood was tired in you?

SETH: It may be.—No,
God forgive you! Heaven remembered me!

NEWBY: The two things happen together, very often.

SETH: The Lord sent down a burning blight upon
My mastery of sin, and like a flame
Undid the briars that were round my ankles,
Crippled the spiny fingers that had hold,
With hookèd thorns driven into my heart,
Upon my life, the wild thickets of sin.
He took me out of the devil's wood, and I
Have never left to serve Him.

NEWBY: And, O Glory,
Startup's right-hand man ever since, Amen!

SETH: Yes, I was saved. But then there was this soul
Mortally wearing flesh and blood of mine,
My girl, my little daughter—my flesh, Newby!
Ay, and there are those sins of mine! You know,
When the mercy of God whips off the hunt
That is so greedy after a man, they still,
His pack of sins, roam somewhere, empty and hungry.
My sins are lurking for the flesh they tasted
And liked so well, the flesh that is my daughter.

NEWBY: Then you'd do well to warn her ears against
Their barking, if it's dogs they are, your sins.

SETH: We did better than that. Dogs? Naught so fierce,
But something sly and quiet and creeping close
Upon the earth and waiting for to sting;
Yet they can only live in that dark wood
Where the fiend has his cave, and all the things
That are unholy crouch away from God:
You must go walking in the wicked ground
Before the poison of sin can strike at you.

(NEWBY *shrugs at him.*)

When I turned back from wickedness, I and my sister
Were of one mind. This little lass of mine
Should never know, till she were grown and safe,
Where evil lies; for sure must it not be
She could not stray there, if she'd heard naught of it?
Not knowing evil, could she find it out?
That fearful pride in disobeying God
At least would have no words to madden her!
My sister reared her, gave her all her schooling;
Her lonely house and the empty moor behind,
No more world than that should the girl have.
We did it to a marvel. 'Twas a risk,
I know; and I do fear it anger'd God.
For see where we are now. God toucht the sleep
Of my good sister, and made it be her death,
And to the clumsy keeping of my hands
Is put this girl, who knows nothing of evil,
Nothing of sins and wiles and temptations!

NEWBY: It's a wonderful sort of girl she is, my word!
What, never heard of Old Horns? You must have been,
You and your sister, wonderly afeard.
What, you a proper sweating Methody man,
And let a girl get past you all untaught
That a holy nose should sniff hell everywhere?
You, with the lungs to bawl the sinners down
Upon their knees, and fetch up out of their bellies
"I am a worm, I am a worm, Amen,"
As well as Startup can himself! Why, this
Will stick in my throat like a swallowed stickle-back;
'Tis all as good as the adder! What with him
And with your daughter, you're a rare Methody!

SETH: (*Jumping up*) Curse you, jibing fool! Put her again
In the same speech as—as the thing in there,
And I'll deal what your wicked head deserves!

(*He suddenly stops threatening, sits down, and puts his face in his hands.*)

NEWBY: Why, what the devil can there be between
The adder and your daughter?

SETH : (*Imploring him*) Don't say it, man!
Oh, don't put them together! Ah, Lord, stop him!

(*A short pause.* SETH *seems to be praying.* NEWBY *gazes at him astonisht.*)

NEWBY : I'll be bound, this is a strange affair.
So you've not seen your daughter till just now?

SETH : I've seen her; but she never lookt on me.
Yesterday was the first time that I've kist her;
I doubt whether I should have kist her, too.

NEWBY : You're a queer father.

SETH : What else could I do but hide?
I was afraid there might be in my face
Something of evil left; and then the way
I'ld look on her would make her wonder at me.
How could I look on her and hold away
From thinking on the blood that's in her heart,
And all there is of me sleeping in her?—
But I must see her, or the years would drown me.
There was a little orchard near the house,
With a high wall around; but there a place
Where I could hide and watch the girl's young play
Among the grasses, and her dancing round
The lime-washt apple-trees. And I was a man
With poison in his brain, to see her go
So joyously and be so glad with skipping!
When the lent-lilies had begun their gold
In the green sod, the little maid would prink
Before them with a lady's courtesies,
Then, petticoats held up, she'ld whirl
Madly delighted childish reels.
How could I tell, whether her wanton games,
Her merry tiptoe gait, were not in truth
Vile words prettily spoken?
And now, Newby, is it not perilous?

(*He looks restlessly towards the hut.*)

You'ld best be going among the drinkers now.

NEWBY : Well, I don't envy you your job with her.

But if you'll hear me, tell the lass her feet
Are in the world as on a tight-rope slung
Over the gape and hunger of hell. At least,
That's what you told your chapel-fellows once.
How they'ld grin to hear of your girl's schooling!

(He goes off chuckling. It is dusk. SETH *goes into the hut and brings out a box, and pores over it, kneeling.*

SETH: They are old wives' tales!
Is it a worship I am making of you,
My adder? Worshipping the evil thing?
Ay, but what has a beast to do with evil?
They say a snake goes footless from a curse,
And all this crooked zed upon his back
Is a curse written, could we spell it out,
And 'tis the fiend's own spittle in his mouth.
Wives' tales! And yet the man who laughs at them
May be more fooled than he for whom they're truth;
We can't tell what is going on at all.
I have known dawns when the earth, the trees and grasses,
Seem as they'd drifted here out of strange travel,
And all the creatures like the crew of a ship
Late from seeing marvels, and daring not
To speak of them. What's to be made of that?
And what does my heart make of you, my adder?
Worship!—why not?
Why not worship the evil in this beast
Since, while it has its evil, I am pure?—
That evening, when I knelt in agony
Here, and the Lord relieved me of my sins,
I was like one has suddenly slipt a burden;
And childishly, amazedly, I lookt
To find that bulk of sin: and, there, in the box,
Coiled and sleeping, the adder! Then I knew
What God had done for me!
My sins, that could not be destroyed, had past
Into the adder. I was pure as the sun:
There all my evil lay, hid in the adder!

Ay, creeping danger, were you curst before
Or not, is nothing to me; but now I can
Exult over you, greatly exult! For now
Iniquity you are, iniquity,
And my iniquity!
God has anointed with my wrong your head;
And it is mine, this jagged blasphemy
Scribbled along your back: my sins that weigh
Your body flat, my malice in your eyes;
That flickering tongue has spoken in my heart.
Oh, do you hiss? Ay, that's my hate of God
Shifted on you, fastened into your mind.
And I do right to worship you, my sins—
Nay, my salvation! And not I alone,
Adder, am safe by what I see in you!
For while God keeps my sins close shut and bound
In this cold thing, how can they visit her,
My daughter?

(*It is almost dark.* SETH *is croucht brooding over the box. Without seeing him,* NEWBY *and a* GIRL *come in.*)

THE GIRL: Oh, but there's no one here.

NEWBY: Hullo, where's he gone?
He won't be long away. Come, sit you down.

GIRL: I've not been out of doors in the dark before.
What are they doing, all these things? Asleep?
I think they're wide awake, for all their quiet,
Waiting for us to leave them. What will they do,
I wonder, when they have the woods to themselves?

NEWBY: Aren't you the lass that's never heard of the devil?

(SETH *suddenly and angrily leaps up before them.*)

SETH: Leave her alone, you old limb of the fiend!
Be off, or by the living God, I'll kill you,
Old wickedness!

(NEWBY *slinks off from his rage.*)

(*To the* GIRL) What are you doing here?

GIRL: But is there any harm in coming out?
Let me stay with you, father!

SETH : (*Grim.*) Yes, my girl,
You'll have to stay here now, like it or not.
Under my eyes you're safe.

GIRL : Why, how you quiver!
Tell me, is he a wicked man, that fellow?

SETH : Ay, one of Satan's own. What do you mean
By coming here?

GIRL : I was tired of the house;
And there were thoughts plaguing me like midges.
Oh, I wish I'd known that was a wicked old man!

SETH : (*In fear*) What? What's behind this?

GIRL : I might have had
Something from him I want. I suppose, father,
You aren't a wicked man?

SETH : (*Roughly taking her arm*) Give me your meaning,
And no more foolery.

GIRL : Why, but that's it;
I don't know even what my meaning is.
Have you seen flowers grown in a cellar?

SETH ; Well?

GIRL : How can they know there is a sun outside?
Yet the pale leaves they have, show they can tell
They're cheated out of something. So am I!
I'm cheated! There's a brave colour growing somewhere,
And I know naught of it, but that my life
Has been shut off from it, somehow. Father, sins
Are scarlet, are they not?

SETH . (*Scared.*) Sins? What do you know
Of sins?

GIRL : Why, there again! I know nothing.
I'm like those cellar-plants, fooled and cheated.

SETH : Satan has had your ear, girl.

GIRL : (*Simply.*) No, father;
No one has told me this; I just feel it.
What is this evil, then?

SETH : Darling, don't ask!

GIRL : Do you not know it either? Listen, then.

Once to our door, on a cold and drenching day,
A halt old tramping beggar-woman came,
Her lean form lapt in a shabby duffel cloak
Tattered with going through the weather, stained
With dirt and wear. But when she turned away
I saw that, on the back of her poor cloak,
Was a great patch of scarlet cloth stitcht on;
And as she limped off through the rain, indeed
That old grey cloak had something fine about it;
She'ld have some pride in wearing it! And then,
I overheard my aunt once muttering,
"Our sins are scarlet!"
Scarlet!
That was a wonderful thing for me to hear!
And all at once I seemed to be wearing life
Like a beggarly cheap cloak; and some know how
To clout their drab stuff with a gaudypatch!
Scarlet!
Why, scarlet is for fire; and look how mild
The green and blue and common brown of earth
Seem when the day ends in a scarlet light!
Scarlet! I think it is a kind of power.
And blood is scarlet!—Do you know what I did?
I took a thorn and scored my arm, and watcht
The blood come beading, loving the colour of it.
But then I cried; for what's the good of blood
So shining scarlet, if life takes nothing from it?
But I had heard my aunt speak of a thing
That can in life be scarlet; and it must be
A thing of power and pride. Why don't I know it?

SETH: O God, is this Thy punishment at last?

(He looks round wearily. Then whispering fiercely.)

Into the hut!
Quick, into it, and stay hid! Do you hear me, girl?

(Seizing a stick and threatening her.)

Enough trifling! In there, till I let you out.

(The girl yields, frightened; he pushes her in, and she is not seen. It is quite dark. A pause. Then the SQUIRE *saunters in.)*

SQUIRE : Who's this chap? Burning charcoal, by the smoke.
Is it any one I know ? (*Peering close at* SETH.)
Yes; and your name is somewhere in my mind.

SETH : 'Tis Seth, sir.

SQUIRE : I have you! Seth! The shame of the parish, Seth!
Ah, but you've lapsed since then. Indeed, I know
It is not every one can keep it up:
I'll not reproach you. I suppose you are
Still the reformed lecher? And do you still
Strictly ride your flesh with a martingale?

SETH : (*Giggling*) Good even, sir.
Yes, thank you, sir, I'm doing pretty well.

SQUIRE : Let's talk a little: for what you were you are,
However sadly changed, and so we're equals:
Lechery is the one thing makes men equal.
So come, man to man, lecher to lecher,
Let us be honest—no one can overhear—
Let's have it out. Is it worth it, Seth?
Ay, there's the point for both of us. For me,
Is it worth while keeping hard at the game?
And then, for you, quite on the contrary,
Is it worth while to switch yourself from one,
Simply to fiddle in another game?

SETH : A game? Ha, ha! That's good, sir! Yes, a game!

SQUIRE : Yes, but I reckon you're no happier
In your new game than I am in my old.
So here's the point: is your religion worth
To you, more than my lechery's worth to me?
I'll tell you what I think, Seth.
(*He lowers his voice, as if he were confiding.*)
They're both worth mighty little, mighty little:
They've both the worth of diseases—no, they're both
A living man's misery about death.
(*He resumes his former tone, half sneering, half gay.*)
Well, we can't help ourselves. To every man
His own game; a man's pleasure is his fate.
But I shan't follow you: for in your style

There's this offends me. If there's a thing I hate,
It is these travelling menageries:
To see a couple of rusty string-halt geldings
Tugging a square-wall'd cover'd truck through mud,
And to know that, crampt within that clumsy wagon,
Lumbering, jolting, unlit, airless—lie
Lions, Sahara lions!—And in you
Once there were lions, Seth, the lions of sin;
Mangy, perhaps, but still—lionish voices.
And now you've shut your sins up in a box—

SETH : (*Startled*) A box?

SQUIRE : Yes, in a dirty travelling cage;
You sit on the shafts, and a miserable gelding
You call religion, draws you through the world;
A creaking, groaning pace! And after you
You drag, lockt in a cruel, narrow den
Those sins had such a free life in you once.
Seth, I could never do that! Something there was
The keeper told me about you. Was it poaching?
No, no;
The jackals are all penned up with the lions.
What was it now? I laughed at it. Ah, yes—
They say you've got your daughter back.

SETH : Who? I?
I have no daughter, sir.

SQUIRE : What, is she dead?

SETH : I mean she does not live with me, you know.
My sister keeps her; a strong-minded woman—
Won't let me see the girl.

SQUIRE : Surely I heard
Your sister *is* dead.

SETH : Oh no! There's a mistake!
I saw her Tuesday last—Oh quite alive.

SQUIRE : (*Yawning*) So am I, God be curst. Seth, I can feel
Your eyes glooming upon me through the darkness.
What, you leaky pipkin, that has lost,
Through flaws, the burning wine of your damnation,

You will be pitying me, a vessel sound
And perfect, that has never lost a drop
Of the bright wrathful wine I am charged to carry?
What's this thin vinegar that is in you now,
That cracks of you caulkt with charitable clay,
That makes you dare be proud above me—me
Brimmed with the ancient liquor I have kept
Faithfully mellowing, till I am soakt through
With the power of it, with the scarlet fire of it?

(The GIRL *comes out of the hut.)*

A girl! A young girl!
My Satan, you begin to weary me.
The skill's too noticeable; 'twould be pleasant
To see you fumble in the tricks you play.
—Well, who are you this time?

GIRL : I am his daughter.

SQUIRE : Aha! Let's have a look at you.

(He strikes a match and studies her face.)

Seth, Seth,
Would you have kept this from me? She's the sort
One dreams of. But it always comes to this:
Religion takes all comradeship from a man.
His daughter, are you? Then I hope you are
The daughter of his wickedness;—that should make you
Full of sin as a hive is full of honey.

GIRL : I cannot say, sir; for I don't know at all
What sin may be. But I know well there is
Something sealed up within me—in my heart,
I think; and it is troubling for its freedom.

SQUIRE : Very likely; and I should say will still
Go on kicking and bothering in your heart
Unless you help it out. Then, you will find,
The grub will hatch into that notable fly,
Evil!

GIRL : You speak kindly, and I think you'll help me:
If you saw the Morecambe tide chase a lame man,
You on a horse, would you not give him help?

And in this matter I'm a cripple. Sir,
You'll help me out? You'll tell me what sin is?
For I will get to know.

SQUIRE: Are you a fool,
Or making a fool of me?

GIRL: No, I'm the fooled.

SQUIRE: Seth, you don't seem to be amused at this.

GIRL: I heard you say the word; "scarlet," you said.
There is something in you that you feel like scarlet.
Is that not sin? So tell me what sin is.

SQUIRE: No, no, no, no: Satan, it will not do.
The show runs far too smoothly—far too like
What my desires expect. Somehow, at last
Mere skill becomes disgusting. Even a cook
Who gives me always everything I want
Turns out an odious person. So, my dear,
You come so apt, just as my hunger woke,
And are so thoroughly spiced with what I want,
That I—will bid you a good-night.

GIRL: O sir,
You will not learn me this?

SQUIRE: Why, no, not now;
But I dare say the mood will change: we'll try
Some day, if we can find out what sin is.

(He looks at her a moment, and then goes abruptly.)

GIRL: *(Dancing round the stack.)*
O life of mine, I shall love you yet:
We shall be changed, my life and I.
Dancing will no more be a game
Played to pretend we're hearing a tune.
There will be singing of tunes enough,
To make us dance when we know it not:
They'll be living within us, the tunes,
Water of brooks in spring for happiness,
Scarlet fire for power and pride.

SETH: *(Seizing her by the arm as she passes him.)*
Do you see that stack?

GIRL : (*Breathless.*) It's only a pile of wood.
SETH : Ay, in the dark that's what it seems; but listen!
Within it there's a heart, a smouldering heart—
Fire is smothered there.
GIRL : And smothered in me.
SETH : And I'll keep it so! For look, if I
Broke through the sheathing turf, and thatch of boughs,
And left it open, the hidden fire would come
Fiercely daring out on us, turning the whole
Stack, and the whole of the woods, to bellowing flame
No one could quench.
GIRL : (*Breaking away.*) And I shall be alive,
Alive in the manner of scarlet and golden flame.
SETH : (*Gripping her again.*)
Listen—my father, climbing on a stack
Like this one, to be tending it, trod through
The turf and branches, and the fire caught him
And charred him to the knees. Girl, there are hearts
Unsafe as heaps of dried wood, and within
Mined by eating fires. And I, your father,
Worse than my father fared; for into the hot
Heart of my heart I broke, and I was caught,
The whole of me, in the blazing rage of hell.
And as my heart is, so is yours—a thing
To choke and stifle; or, once set it free,
The flaming of your heart will seize you and
Everlastingly burn you.
GIRL : This is talk
I can make nothing of. Who would refuse
A splendid thing? I know there is a power
Can make my life seem as if it were scarlet.
And it is like to fire, you say. Why, then,
That is the splendour I have dreamt about.
What should I do refusing it? What gain
Choking it down, but the old dull want I have?
SETH : Watch now, while I kick a hole in the stack.
Do you mark the glowing danger, the red lust

Biding within? See, all the dark's ashamed
That such hot mischief lights it up. A sod
Plugs the hole now; but, had I left it open,
The stack were gone in a ravage of wild flame.
You've lookt into your heart now: are you not fear'd?

GIRL: I say, I can make nothing of this. My heart?
Is my heart stored with such a glowing light?
And I must be afraid of it? I will not!
But if this power is in me, it shall burn
To freedom—yes, and fill me with the burning.

SETH: O girl of mine, if you knew how I loved you!
Promise me now, you won't go near the Squire.

GIRL: Why not?

SETH: Darling, believe me! Oh, he would
Treat you fiendishly—God, and laugh to do it!

GIRL: Father, let's have this out. What right have you
To cheat me of a knowledge all folks have?
Is it for sin that my heart so desires?

SETH: It cannot be that; no, it cannot be that.

GIRL: So, then, what harm in finding what sin is?

SETH: Yes, it is sin you want! But stifle it.

GIRL: And why? And why? You cannot show me that.
I tell you I mean to find this out!

SETH: (*Letting her go and standing bemused.*)
What do I, fighting with the evil heart
She has from me? If God has any mercy
He'll fight it down in her now, once and for ever.
You'ld know what sin is? Well, I can tell you.

GIRL: You can, father?

SETH: The very spirit of sin
I can show you; for I have it with me.
Show it you? You can handle it, play with it.

GIRL: Where have you got it?

SETH: Here, in the midst of us.

GIRL: 'Tis something I can touch?

SETH: (*Leading her to the box.*) Come you and try.
Bend down—do you see? it is in here I keep it.

Undo the sneck of the lid, put in your hands,
And grope, search it thoroughly.

GIRL : (*Kneeling to the box.*) In this box?

SETH : (*Standing over her.*)
Lord, I perceive you will not let my sins
Go past her. There is no escape for her
But through my torments; but, O God, my sins
Will come too strong upon her; and already
Her blind heart fills with longing for my evil.
Give her the whole of it now, O Lord my God!
Satisfy all her longing at once; and let
The evil which her hands discover, Lord,
Be death!

GIRL : Ah, it is wet—no, but how cold!

(*She cries out.*)

Oh, I am bitten, father. There is some anger
Hid in your box, and it has bitten me.

SETH : Show me. Let's have some light.

(*He makes a small hole in the stack. The red glare again leaps out.*)

Ay, on the wrist.
Both fangs right on a vein. They must have sunk
Up to the gums in your flesh.

GIRL : Shall I suck the bite?

SETH : (*Seizing her arm*) No need: sit down by me, and keep you quiet.
How does your arm feel?

GIRL : Strangely: very numb,
And as if 'twere swoln.

SETH : Cold?

GIRL : Icy: is it all right?

SETH : All right, darling.

GIRL : (*Struggling a little*) Why must you hold my arm?

SETH : 'Tis better so. Bide you still awhile.
Very soon it will be in the heart of her.

(*He plugs up the hole in the stack.*)

(*Darkness.*)

CURTAIN

LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE.

FIVE POEMS

By Michael Mecredy

THE EXCHANGE

THE MAN : I HAVE given you all that I promised you:
A cottage with white walls by the side of the lake;
Apple-trees and flowers and bean-rows,
And a great stack of turf against the Winter-time.
And I have given you a cow and a calf.
We have sat at the same table and eaten from the same dish,
And our chairs have been drawn close together
By the turf-fire.
I have warmed and clothed and fed you.
—You have given me nothing in return.

THE WOMAN : For the cottage with the white walls and the garden,
And the shelves of shining delf and the warmth and the food,
I have given you all my life,
And the blackness of my hair,
And the darkness of my eyes,
And the colour of my cheeks.
I have given up the freedom that I loved,
And I have sat by your side and listened patiently to what you spoke.
I have forsaken the rough mountain track for you,
And the silver stream in the valley,
And the faery-ring on the bog.
But my soul is God's, and my heart is my own.

THE MAN : You return me emptiness
For all I have given you.
Death will snatch your life away from me;

The blackness of your hair will fade;
Your dark eyes look across the lake
From the door of my cottage
And see only the heaving of the water,
And the glimmer of the ripples,
And the streak of silver where the wing of a wild bird has dipt.
The colour of your cheeks will pale;
And the words I have spoken you have never understood.
The freedom you love is still yours,
For your heart is in your own keeping,
And your soul is God's.

But for all that, I worship the blackness of your hair,
And your eyes and your wild-rose colour;
And I will keep you with me till the last sun has set
And till you have lost your freedom,
And your heart is mine.
Come with me across the brown lake;
Climb with me up the mountain track;
Stand beside me in the valley by the stream;
Follow me over the bog to the faery-ring.

I cannot speak when four walls close me in.
And the flickering fire throws a shadow over you.

Come with me, dark love, till your heart is mine,
But let your soul rest in God's keeping.

THE WITCH

GO long, you ugly witch, you skinny, bony hag!
Don't wag your hands at us, you ould, ould thing!
If me and all the other childer here could fling you in the pond,
We'd do it sure, and laugh to see you drown.

Always you will be mumbling to yourself,
Shaking your yellow head. And what's that for?
Is it you shaking Death away when he comes for you?
Sure, he might take you now for all we'd care!

We can't see them, but Dad says that you have
A crowd of demon things to follow you.
When we've grown up and can do as we like,
We'll fling ye on a fire to watch you burn.
And you and all your demon things will go
A million miles below the earth to hell.

DEAD BEAUTY

THEY would be saying from day to day
That what was fair would fade and die,
And what was sweet would turn to bitter.
God, I have proved it so.

Now when they sit in the glow of the fire,
They say one to one, hushing their voices:
" The world that she scorned will have passed her by,
She was too proud to take what was offered,
Till hands that were full are dropt and empty.
And the hair of her that was gold like corn,
And the eyes of her that were grey like mist,
And the lips of her that smiled all day,
Are tired and old and worn with longing."

Then they will say, " Hush, here she is coming,
Move up and leave her a place by the fire.
Feed her and warm her for what she oncst was,
When us and the rest of you worshipped her beauty."

Oh, I crouch by the turf-fire wrapt in my shawl.
The eyes that were shining are dull with the sorrow,
The hair that was gold will be falling to grey,
The head that was proud is hid on my breast.

WINTER

WINTER is an ould, ould woman:
The falling snow is her long white hair.
Her two feet are set from valley to valley,
And her hands rest on the mountain-tops.
The moaning wind is the sound of her keening,
—Keening the death of her lost youth.
And the greyness of the sky
Will be the sorrow in her eyes.
The shrill scream of the wild bird is the cry of her broken heart.
The rustling of the rushes is her last song;
And wherever she is passing
It is desolation she will be leaving behind her.

THE RUSHLIGHT

I HELD the rushlight up for him to light his pipe.
It trembled in me hands. It brought us awful near.
He gave one pull, then waited for a bit.
The red light flickered with a puff of wind.
" Let you be holding it a wee bit nearer;
There, that will do "—he laid his hand on mine.
And somehow then the rushlight dropt between us,
An' we were starin' in each other's eyes.
His eyes they seemed to grow an' light an' darken;
An' my breath choked, an' all me throat was dry.
An' then we two drew ever close together,
An' our lips met.
The rushlight flickered out.

MICHAEL MECREDY.

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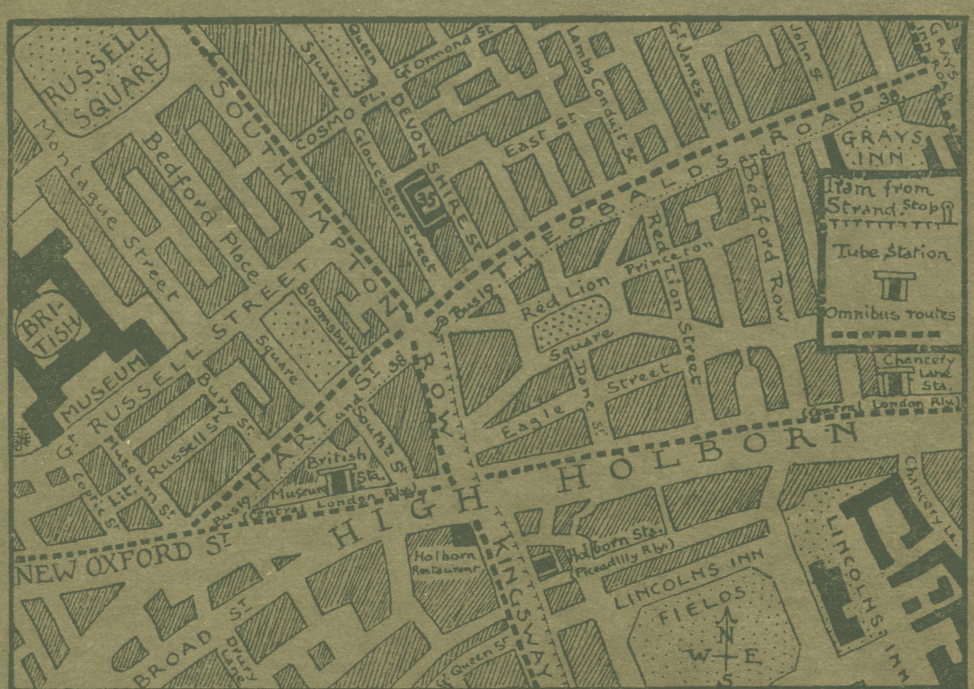

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