The WELSH REVIEW

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VOL. II, No. 1 ONE SHILLING AUGUST, 1939

The

WELSH REVIEW

A MONTHLY JOURNAL ABOUT WALES,
ITS PEOPLE, AND THEIR ACTIVITIES

★ CONTRIBUTIONS *are invited. MSS. (which should be typed), and all other communications intended for the Editor, should be addressed to him at* 3 LON-Y-DAIL, RHIWBINA, GLAM. *No responsibility for the safety of MSS. can be accepted, and return postage must be enclosed.*

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EDITORIAL

GWYN JONES

THE first sentence had better contain the good news: the WELSH REVIEW has weathered a bad storm and come, though not into the careless rapture of safe harbourage, yet into calmer water. It will continue publication, and with no diminution of strength or quality. For this I must thank those of its friends who came forward with the practical help that is worth a kingdom of sympathy and an ocean of sorrow. Their number was not so large as I had hoped for, and a fair proportion of them men and women with whom I have some personal contact; and the position still is that there must be a substantial increase in the number of subscribers before we can feel secure. Appeals long continued are baleful as drugs: the dosage increases and the subject dies the death; but this month again I do urge as strongly as I can the many hundreds of non-subscribers who buy, read, and enjoy the WELSH REVIEW, and who appreciate its value as the only journal of its kind in Wales, to take the step that will make all the difference to our future. It will be clear from our contents so far that the WELSH REVIEW or any journal like it depends for support upon no huge audience, but upon one thoughtful and faithful. There are many potential subscribers whom we have not reached, through lack of money wherewith to advertise ourselves, and we have suffered the inevitable handicaps which are best overcome by the goodwill of individuals. But the issue is really a simple one. First and foremost we need subscribers, secondly we need recommendation. I know from conversations how many last month intended to send in their financial help, but who hesitated, delayed, and forgot. Every subscription is of vital importance to us. If you wish the WELSH REVIEW well, send it in *now*.

To the new subscribers of July, to those who took out extra subscriptions, to the authors of suggestions and good wishes, to my contributors—thanks. None, I know, will be jealous if I single out for special mention the generosity and confidence that brought us one cheque of twenty-eight shillings for the next two years.

* * * * *

August of all months is the holiday month. True, it is almost always wet, but are not all other months almost always wet? Geographers and psychologists, patriots and publicity men, tell us that the British character has become what it is partly because of this climate which challenges us to make the best of things and conquer. We are contrasted, and to our advantage, with less happy peoples immobilised by cold or demoralised by heat. Nature neither convulses us with cataclysms, nor, while we sit and eat in dark-skinned ignorance, drops

her fruits into the aprons of our toiling wives. Our climate has made us workers, stirring folk, natural masters. It rivals Queen Victoria's Bible as the secret of our greatness. It is apparent, though, here as elsewhere, that we think ourselves better than nature. A considerable number of men and women we do not permit to work, and almost as many are careful on their own behalf. The first you may talk with on the street corners, the second are of use to those handsomely produced journals on glazed paper which are to be found in all but the poorest libraries and institutes. I should like to see a little levelling—the work-seeking unemployed *without* money given a week or two at Barry or Porthcawl, the work-dodging unemployed *with* money mulcted for the means. I can think of no good reason (it is easy to read the bad) why the country should not deal more harshly with its caterpillars—that is, with those who without contributing to the common good either their work, intelligence, or ministration, yet contrive to carry off the disgraceful prize of a lazy life. Whose easily-realized ambition is perfect slugdom, and who, born into this miraculous world with the capacity for comradeship, sympathy, and honest soul-satisfying work, seek only to enjoy themselves at the expense of all poor devils whatsoever. There never has been a society without its parasites, and I suppose we shall have to put up with our own for quite a long time yet. Meantime, several organisations exist for giving an infinitesimal proportion of the unemployed a brief holiday. Do not, I beg you, after a good dinner look on this as "pampering" the workless, but if you can, give a helping hand. If only as a sop to conscience when you pamper yourself.

* * * * *

I do not know what Corwen considers its chief glory. I have just visited it for the first time and with enjoyment, and regret that I could make no longer stay. It is at Corwen, in a house high above the Dee, that John Cowper Powys lives, and were I a Corwener I should think it no small distinction to have for fellow-townsman one of the greatest writers of this age. It is a charge often brought against members of my profession that we are wise in the past and bashful of the present, that like mere punters we are best discussing last year's winners. Maybe, maybe not. But one thing I regard as so certain that I offer it humbly as platitude and not laggardly as prophecy: that John Cowper Powys is the greatest creative artist who has set his hand to the English novel during this century. It does not necessarily follow that he has during the same period written the best English novels, but if we are seeking the imprint of genius—not talent, knowledge, or technical skill, but *genius*—in what work of modern fiction will we find it more unmistakably revealed than in *A Glastonbury Romance?* Slowly he is bringing into position the monoliths of a literary Stonehenge, bafflingly unlike our trimmer structures, at times admittedly showing a little crazy under the moon, but never to be mistaken for the work of

a lesser man than its proper artificer. And this is to say nothing of his other writings, for with Mr. Powys even criticism is re-creation. I would not recommend *The Pleasures of Literature* to the beginner nor, on the other hand, to those gentlemen with the rule and compass into whose complacent rears Sterne long since drove the hornet sting of his satire. It is writing for mature minds. But I am in danger of losing my purpose—which was to say that at Corwen lives a writer of genius, of Welsh genius, attached to this land of ours by ancient ties of blood, a student and lover of her literature as of her way of life. The quite incalculable value of his writings to the prestige of the Anglo-Welsh group of writers is apparent enough, and something they fully appreciate. It is well that these things be expressed, for the chorus of home praise is near to a man's heart. Among the pleasures of editing the WELSH REVIEW I place very high this of acting as intermediary between opinion, literary or public (and at times, as now, personal), and those who should know of it.

* * * * *

It is Corwen's good fortune to be a provincial centre of literature. A few miles away James Hanley has been living for five years. The presence at Rhiwbina, living within a couple of hundred yards of the Editor, of Jack Jones, Glyn Jones, and Iorwerth C. Peate, is easily explained. But the settling of two writers of distinction at Corwen is something that Mr. Hanley may explain for us in the article he will be contributing to the October number of the WELSH REVIEW. For writers who at the same time are personal friends of the Editor have no chance of escape these days. I try to persuade myself that by helping him drive pigs out of his garden I levelled up accounts. The act seemed symbolical. Those two rooting hogs are by no means the only ones of their kind that need a stick across their backs in Wales.

* * * * *

I am tempted this month to imitate the "Thought for To-day" offered by so many of our contemporaries. Walking the shore at Harlech I was told how when the castle was built the sea washed the base of the castle rock. In this corner of Wales the land is gaining on the sea. Over the way, in England, the sea gains on the land. Is this the index finger of Providence? When North Wales has expanded to the gates of Dublin, and the Isle of Man is but a fief of Anglesey, will not then the wretched remnant of the Saxons crouch despondently from Hereford to Cumberland? The legend will be of St. Paul's under the waves, the tolling of the bells of City churches. With the magnanimity bred of persecution and misunderstanding, a parliament sitting at Caernarvon will appoint a Secretary of State for England. And see that he does his job.

GWRI, THE STAR, AND THE GORSEDD

WALTER DOWDING

FAR away to the northward the hills lay black under the white moon. But on Moelfran, where Gwri Euryn lay, surrounded by his sleeping sheep, the pure light shone with an intense serenity.

On his back, his eyes rapt by the moon and the pale ghosted stars, Gwri was unconscious of all save beauty and light. For though he had never written an ode, or composed penillion, and knew nothing of the Twenty-four Metres, Gwri was a poet. With him were the seeing eye, the listening ear, and the quiet spirit, which discover the universal and give power to their possessors to be kings among men.

Slowly the moon's light paled, and stars which had been wan waxed bright and clear. Something of the tension, which moonlight always had for Gwri, relaxed and he lay more softly at ease.

The sky, behind the encrustation of stars, now had the deep, soft richness of dusky velvet. Gwri's eyes began to close, he was tired. The stars swam before him; the sky came low upon him. It held no menace of oppression—only a quality of peace and light. A warm breeze passed like a smoothing hand over the broad hilltop. Gwri slept.

Suddenly, there was a rushing music. Gwri could not tell whence it came or whither it went. It flowed about him in increasing and diminishing waves of melody. A wild, immeasurable joy awoke in his heart. He sat up, entranced by the ethereal beauty of the exultant sound. The sky was now almost completely dark. There was no moon. Only a few stars nodded sleepily in the blackness. Then it was as though a great light shone about him, the music grew clearer, he heard a voice—soft, tender, but commanding. It bade him "follow the star!" And behind the voice, the music poured on, a swelling sweetness.

Gwri gazed upward to where, out of the black depths of the night, one star discovered itself to his wondering eyes. It had a purity, an intenseness, an appearance of purposiveness that he had never before apprehended. His eyes followed it, as with slow speed it travelled from the east and mounted high, higher, and higher, and then stood, straight above his head. It moved on again, more slowly, more majestically, a little ahead of his gaze. It seemed to turn—though Gwri knew it was absurd to think of a star turning!—and beckoned to him. He remembered the voice: "Follow the star!" And as one in a dream he arose. The star moved on, and Gwri, as though bound to it by light chains of leading, followed after.

The four clear blasts upon the silver trumpet had gone out to the Cymry of

the four corners of the earth; warning them that the bards of the Isle of Britain were about to join in the Gorsedd. There followed a deep, reverential silence, as the people stood, heads bared and bowed, for the Archdruid to lead them in the Gorsedd Prayer.

It was at this moment that a commotion was heard among the people who were at some little distance behind the Maen Llog, on which the Archdruid stood. "I must speak to the minister," piped a sweet, boyish treble. "Which?" asked someone smartly, and a titter ran through the crowd—even the ranks of the Gorsedd stirred slightly, as standing corn moves to a wooing wind. A scamper on the grass, a sharp command: "Come back!" and then—

The Archdruid looked eye to eye upon Gwri Gwallt Euryn. Gwri put out his hand and said "Come!"—and the Archdruid went.

Before the astonished eyes of the crowd, as though taken by a fierce, yet tender wind, they went high into the heavens, hand in hand. At first, they were two rapidly dwindling specks, then one small point of blackness, and soon after were out of sight, leaving behind a mass of gaping awe-struck people.

As they travelled, Gwri told the Archdruid what had happened to him on Moelfran and after. How he had followed the beckoning star, straight across the hill, on to the Dinas—the next hill, down the valley and up again, on to Mynydd Pen Carn. How, at daybreak, still following, his eyes ever held upward, he suddenly lost the star and felt, for a moment, alone and bewildered. But only for a moment. The entrancing music, with which it had all begun, had never left him, and soon he was aware that, somehow, the star, the light he had seen in the heavens, had entered into his own soul; and he was borne forward, day after day and night after night, until he came to Ceredigion, where the Archdruid was. He rarely rested and hardly ate, though many offered him food and shelter unasked. Yet he was not tired or weary, for the light and the music together had taken away all fear and discomfort, and all sense of body need.

The Archdruid listened in silence. His eyes began to search the country above which they travelled. The Gorsedd had been gathered on the slope of a hill in Ceredigion. They had already travelled far from it. Past the blue waters of Cardigan Bay, across the great mountains of the south-west. They were now rapidly approaching the spoiled, upper portion of Morgannwg. All at once, the wind, which had borne them with such rushing speed, but without discomfort, quieted, and they began to descend nearer and nearer to the earth. The Archdruid coughed uneasily. Up until now, despite the singularity of the whole happening, he had been unafraid. But below them, a mass of huddled roofs, stacks, church steeples, seemed to be swiftly rushing upwards, and, had it not been that the music, which Gwri had described and which had been singing in his own ears the whole time, now took on a deeper, more serious loveliness, the Archdruid might well have been sick with apprehension. As it

was, his mood became attuned to the music. He felt on the threshold of great mysteries—his soul was quiet.

They descended into a mean street, without, however, touching the ground. They travelled through it at great speed. On and on they went, through street after street, each one as drab and ugly as the one just left. The Archdruid had no time to wonder why the spectacle of Gwri, in his rough shepherd tweed, and himself in full archdruidic robes, flying, sometimes at the level of downstairs windows, sometimes at the height of first floors, attracted no attention. All his feelings and perceptions were for what he saw—saw intensely, incredibly, considering the rush of their going by. He had heard, second hand, how the people lived in these mining villages, straggling along between the bare hills. He had even seen something of it on the occasions when he had preached in them. But now he saw fully. Saw the gross ugliness of *things* and the thwarted loveliness of lives, hidden under their crushing circumstance. Saw a hundred human dramas; saw pain and suffering so clearly that it hurt; saw joy, in quiet hearts, so intense that his soul was lifted.

And on and on they went. Over the mountains, away to the north again, passing over fields and fields—a few shining with ripening corn, but most, plain green stretches, spotted by cows and sheep.

They flew over high, wild moorland, where nothing grew but rushes and stunted trees.

They paused low over cottages and lonely, desolate farms. They heard the roar of the bombing aeroplane and the shriek of munition work sirens. They listened to the sad song of the human spirit, interpreted by the song of the wind. The miracle of the lark brushed by them in its flight. A great sadness came upon the Archdruid. He understood things that had hitherto been hid. Even the bravery of the people could not restrain his sorrow for their stunted opportunity—their might-have-been.

So, over all the lovely land of Cymru despoiled, perverted, prostituted for gain and war they went, gathering into their souls the meaning of its life, and the Archdruid was as one weighed down by a sorrow too heavy to be borne.

No-one had moved from the Gorsedd circle since the extraordinary disappearance of the Archdruid and Gwri except the reporters. They, of course, had all gone rushing back to the town, each striving to be first with the sensational news.

Within the circle, the bards, in their white robes, were gathered into knots of threes and fours. Anxious, puzzled, afraid, a little inclined to be angry, they knew not what to do. Some had suggested that the deputy-Archdruid might carry on the Gorsedd, but this was vetoed. The people were not in the mood for substitutes. They wanted to know what had happened.

Then, Sieffre of Fynwy and Seisyllt, who had been talking with Gwallter

Dyfi, the Sword Bearer, saw the Archdruid approaching from behind a bend in the hill. "Look!" they cried, "the Archdruid!" "The Archdruid!" was echoed by a thousand throats, and a veritable stampede began in the direction of the lost leader, who, slowly, with bent head, drew near.

As the running bards, who were first in the crowd, approached, the Archdruid lifted his head, and there was that in his eyes and in his whole mien which gave them pause. A deep sorrow was stamped upon his usually jovial countenance, but his eyes were soft with quiet. A light, such as none could explain, such as none had seen before, radiated from his whole being.

Awed, they stopped and stared. The Archdruid moved steadily forward. His eyes grew more intense, more flashing. The light about him increased in radiancy. Like parted waves the people moved silently into two sections, for him to go through, and then, still silently, filled in again and followed him.

He came to the Maen Llog, and there he paused With a firm gesture, he took off the chaplet from his head and cast it upon the Stone. Again, with an equally decisive movement, he removed the chain from about his neck, and that, too, he cast upon the Stone. He rent from his body his linen robe, and, throwing it beneath his feet, he moved forward, to beyond the outer edge of the Gorsedd Circle.

"Mad!" whispered the bards to one another.

"Mad?" asked the crowd in rustling tones.

Yet none dared interfere. For though his actions were swift, they were also deliberate and unhurried and pregnant with meaning. Stripped of his robes and insignia of office he stood before them, a rather more than middle aged man, short, ordinary, yet dignified in bearing, and the light still shone upon his face. He looked at none and yet upon all. He was obviously gathering himself for speech.

When he began, he used no formal address, but spoke simply and clearly, as though to a few friends, rather than to a multitude. And this was what he said:

"All the strange happenings, since Gwri Gwallt Euryn left his sheep on a hill in Brycheiniog, and came to me here in Ceredigion, are best left without an attempt at explanation, since they are beyond the range of normal happenings, and were but the vehicle of an experience greater than themselves—an experience which has brought me back to you different from what I was, so short a time ago, when I mounted the Maen Llog to open the Gorsedd.

"I have seen Cymru and the life of Cymru as a scroll unrolled before my eyes. And, in seeing, it has been given to me to understand. I have seen how greed has desecrated the loveliness of a landscape, and has perverted lives; how religion, based on the theory of an external God, has twisted the way of God in the world and in the human heart into a lie; how, in consequence, industry, government, society, all based on external authority, are all built upon a lie.

"The kingdom of God," he said—and his voice was as a bell—"is within us. In ourselves is the reason for our sorrow, but in ourselves, read in the light of God's way, is our shining hope. We must repent, think over again what is the truth of life, what is its purpose, what is God's way for men. Is it a denial of the beauty with which He has crowned every valley and hill? Is it a selfish, personal acquisition of what has been so freely given? Is it a thwarting of the functioning of His abundant gifts? For these are the ways in which we have walked—and we are lost in suffering and defeat. We must repent and seek the way of God where it may be found, we must make straight the paths we have twisted away from His willing feet. For His way is testified to in the beauty and fruitfulness of the earth, in the fertility of man's invention—a way of abundant giving. We must give ourselves, in loving co-operation with it.

"All this I saw, and, having seen, I could not come back to you to join in this mummer's play we call the Gorsedd. These ceremonies began in a lie. Real art begins in truth. We have known this—we have excused ourselves; saying that they provided relief to the drabness of life, provided an outlet for our Celtic sense of ritual and colour. We have used them to escape reality. If we are to live, fully, we must face reality—we cannot countenance a lie, and, therefore, I lay down my office and give up my membership of this priesthood of all unbelievers. For to remain would be to perpetuate the lie. Every time I have taken the Corn Hirlas and the Aberthged, to the accompaniment of flattering words, I have typified modern society, with its privileged classes, its external authority, its ultimate denial of God in everyman as brother. I renounce it. Henceforth, I pledge myself to follow truth, to seek to discover in love that which God waits to reveal. Will you not join me in this? Shall we not face together the reality of life? Not the superficial facts of our human society, but those deep, creative truths which underlie all, and which are the spring of life and its way.

"We Cymry have two great qualities. One of kinship. Oppression and conquest have given us a sense of community. It is, to-day, a weakened force, but it still lives. It can be revivified by understanding and become a creative factor in the New Cymru and the New World. Again, we have imagination. We have used it to escape from reality. Let us bring it into our search for reality so that we have insight instead of dreams, will instead of aspiration, power instead of hollow forcibleness. Let us come together in true repentance and humility—not despising ourselves as against other peoples, but measuring ourselves by the universal standard of God. Thus shall we end the dark night that is upon us, Thus shall we enter into our heritage as sons of God."

He ceased and stood silent awhile. And the people being moved away from themselves, into a greater harmony of being, there was a great quiet.

And in the midst of them he knelt down to pray, and he said:

"Dyro Dduw Dy Nawdd;
Ac yn Nawdd, Nerth;
Ac yn Nerth, Deall;
Ac yn Neall, Gwybod;
Ac yng Ngwybod, Gwybod y Cyfiawn;
Ac yng Ngwybod y Cyfiawn, Ei garu;
Ac o garu, Caru pob Hanfod;
Ac ym mhob Hanfod, Caru Duw;
Duw a phob daioni."

A long time after, out of the quiet came singing; and this was what they sang:

"O, Arglwydd Dduw ein tadau,
Ein Craig a'n Tŵr wyt Ti:
O gogonedda eto
Dy enw ynom ni!
Ni cheisiwn fwy anrhydedd
Na rhodio'n llwybrau'r groes;
Gan fyw i ddangos Iesu,
A gwasanaethu'n hoes."

It was more than an emotional release. Behind it was creative mind. And that is why men look back on the Gorsedd of 1940 as the place of the rebirth of the Welsh nation; and why men still tell the story of Gwri, the Star, and the Gorsedd as of old they told the Mabinogion.

The Gorsedd Prayer—"Dyro Dduw Dy Nawdd," etc. :—

"Grant God Thy Protection;
And in Protection, Strength;
And in Strength, Understanding;
And in Understanding, Knowledge;
And in Knowledge, Knowledge of the Just;
And in Knowledge of the Just, to love it;
And from loving to love every Essence;
And in every Essence, to love God;
God, and all goodness."

Elfed's hymn—"O, Arglwydd Dduw ein tadau" :—

"O, Lord God of our Fathers,
Thou art our rock and tower.
O glorify in us again Thy name;
We seek no greater honour
Than to walk the way of the cross;
To live to express Jesus,
And to serve our age."

POEMS

SEAGULL

Is there a thread from the heart of a happy one
up to the soar of the sailing gull
puppet-like
to our words chained
expression of joy?

No thread . . . blue
bow-taut to his loneliness
wingspread tossed on the sky.

Gull, white gull
wingspread
and cry.

URSULA LAVERY

BLACKBIRD

IN space of evening carven with sudden clarity
star-shaped the blackbird's song
hung on the sunset silence of the dying day
vying with Venus.

There ear
here eye
which for the happiest attention?

There ear
here eye
till blackbird twinkles like a promised meteor
Venus drips waterdrops of glimmering sound
to form a fragile stalactite of light
in twilit cavern of the coming night.

URSULA LAVERY

GATHER THE SUMMER MANNA.

GATHER the summer manna,
lie, less the impatient why
of watching frondfist yet again uncurl
to frank and open palm of peaceful fern,
less all the sapstirred ache
of budding possibility, slipped silently
to make the taperlight of winter quake
to blow aside the dusty curtained gloom
and stir the closelipped silence of that shuttered room.

Lie in the fields, now buttercup flushed
with summer sun, lie in the stillest shade
that trees (their springtime trouble hushed)
for the long months of changeless consolation
meticulously made.
Torrents of light break on a fragile shadow reef
—the welcome stream
tangles the happy linden leaf
with the force of its teasing beam.

Gather the summer manna.
Spread hands for the gold and the green.

URSULA LAVERY

WHEELS

POET,
As you weave your spell
Of words and tell
Of a song swelling like surf
Through the tunnelled gloom of earth,
As you stand and stare in the livid light
Where the gaping furnace burns the night,
Like the glow of a mighty sunset hurled,
Over the edge of the wind and the world;
There, where shadows reel
And you hear the clang of steel
Torn from the funeral dirge
Of seething, molten surge,
Muscle and bone of a mighty age
Forged of the fire and the fire's rage,

Poet,
As you weave your spell
Where smoke is curled,
Will you pause and tell
Your listening world

That men stand idle in the market-places,
Stand where all can see their idleness,
Stand muttering in the public-places,
In squares,
In windy corners,
In the turn of the lane
Where silent wheels are mute as shadows,
Where the drip of rain
Falls through the fingers of the weeds
On rusty track,
A huddle of idle men
With downward heads,
With sideways eyes,
And ears no sirens call?

Much of their world is pain,
A drumming of idle hands,
Moving of listless feet,
Spitting on rusted rail,
Biting of bitten nail.

They lean on the broken wall with the wheels silent
Watching the shadows of wheels and the wheels silent

Only the shadows move . . .
Idiot shadows.

Poet,
As you weave your spell
Where smoke is curled,
Will you pause and tell
The *un*listening world?

T. Rowland Hughes

THE BUTTERCUP FIELD

GWYN JONES

IT was too hot.

Far too hot. Gwilliam went slowly down the narrow path, regretful he had left the cold flagged inn. Once only he looked at the sun. White transparent flame licked at his eyes, and then patterns of black circles dripped before him. He blinked, his eyes wet, and the black circles changed to white suns revolving in blackness. He shook his head, muttered, and forced his vision to the bright buff dust of the cracking pathway, the glinting green of coarse hedgerow grasses, and through the high climbing hawthorn and hazel the intermittent flashing of the buttercup field.

But it was too hot. He was a fool to be out of doors. Back at the Rock and Fountain there were stone floors, fresh-wiped tables, cold beer; here in the blaze he could feel a thin spray of sweat pumped incessantly through his pores, and his shirt clung to his back like a snake. The brim of his hat was sore on his damp forehead.

The sun was still short of the zenith. Its rays poured fluently over a gasping world; its brightness was a barrier endlessly interposed between field and stream, flower and leaf, between Gwilliam and the fretwork shadows of the beech trees. The low line of the southern hills was clear and yet infinitely distant, fringed near Tanybwlch with a delicate massing of birch and mountain ash, gently declining on the left into the unseen valley of the Rhanon. To the north the high bare mound of Mynydd Mawr leaned away into mid-air, the lumps of his lofty barrows as distant in space as time. It seemed to Gwilliam that if he shouted in that loaded air, his voice would stop a yard from his lips. And he felt unbelievably alone.

Then he heard a swishing fainter than birds' wings over a lawn. He was almost at the gate and paused to listen. The silence was alive with the thousand thin voices of a summer's day: the humming, buzzing, zooming of insects, dry rubbings of sheathed bodies against grass and bare earth, quiet patterings in the hedges, the marvellously sustained vibration of seen and unseen living things. Then he heard the noise again and knew what it was—the death whisper of grass as it meets the scythe.

He checked at the gate. The buttercup field poured like cloth of gold to the hidden boundary stream, swept smooth and unbroken to left and right in half a mile of flowers, taking the noontide air with the yellow radiance of angels' wings in old manuscripts. The brightness made him unsteady. He had to narrow his eyes, tighten his jaws, for the whole world gleamed like the forehead of a god.

It was then he looked close right and saw the old man. He was dressed in funeral black, most old-fashioned. His hat had a low crown and a wide stiff brim; there were big flat lapels to his coat, which was cut square and long; his trousers were full at the ends and dropped stiffly to his glittering shoes—shoes with bright brass eyelets. Though it was later Gwilliam noticed the eyelets.

He was bending away from Gwilliam, and with a small sickle had cut a straight and narrow swathe some fifty feet long. The buttercups had collapsed like slain infantrymen, and those nearest Gwilliam were already screwing up their petals as the sun sucked the last sap from their stalks. He must have finished his row, for as Gwilliam watched he straightened his back, took off his hat for a moment, replaced it, swung the sickle from one hand to the other, and was setting off again at right angles to his former line when he discovered there was a watcher.

Gwilliam had the impression he was stupified to see anyone there. He rubbed the back of his left hand across his cheek, and shifted the sickle uncertainly. The sun poured blackly from the turning blade. Then he looked, as though in wonder, at his handiwork.

To make the best of it, Gwilliam opened the gate and went towards him, his feet tearing great gulphs in the spread flowers.

"You are looking for something?" he asked, and glanced from the sickle to its spoils, from the flowers to the old man's face. It was a strong, handsome, wilful face, with a hook nose, eyes deep as midwinter, white hair under the brim of his hat, and a stiff three-inch beard under the excessive curves of the mouth. There were blackish clefts in his tough-folded cheeks. Seventy, thought Gwilliam, or more. Not less.

"Maybe I am looking for yesterday," he returned slowly, jerking his chin forward, studying Gwilliam, who felt foolish and snubbed.

"I'm sorry. I made a mistake, I see." He turned away brusquely.

"No mistake," said the old man; and as Gwilliam halted, embarrassed: "I said nothing less than truth."

His voice was mellow but powerful, his accent Welsh, his words like rich red earth translated into sound.

Gwilliam felt the great hot hand of the sun against his left side. His heart was throbbing with a slow but mighty action. It was crazy to be standing full in the sun like this, yet his sudden sharpness lay near his conscience.

"Gold is easy enough to find here," he suggested, gesturing around at the buttercup field; "but that is not always as precious as yesterday."

The old man brought down the point of the sickle thoughtfully and cautiously against his heavy toecap. "My yesterday *is* a golden one." For a moment they stood silent. "I am looking for a gold finger-ring."

"Then let me help," said Gwilliam. He shook his head at the flowers crushed by their feet. "Just where?"

The other still held the sickle against his toecap. "Where?" He pointed to the drying swathe he had cut. "That was the back wall of the house."

Gwilliam frowned, puckered his eyes for the sun and puzzlement. The old man's face moved, but was far from a smile. "You do not understand. You cannot understand. But I am telling you—the house stood there. Tŷ'r Blodau Melyn, the Buttercup House, as this field is Cae'r Blodau Melyn, the Buttercup Field." He looked over towards Mynydd Mawr. "But it is of no concern."

"You mean—a house stood here?"

"A house, yes. That was the back wall." Gwilliam saw play in the muscles of his face. "But it is of no concern. Mae Tŷ'r Blodau Melyn wedi mynd. The Buttercup House is gone."

The words of his own language fell from him sombre and poignant, like stones into Gwilliam's hot brain. "Tell me——" he began, but—"Listen," said the old man. "Listen!" The urgency of his tone made Gwilliam strain for some noise around them, but he heard nothing save the gush of his own blood, and, once, the dry black voice of a crow, till the old man spoke again.

"You never heard tell of Ann Morgan of Llanfair. Lovely Ann Morgan was what the whole world called her. You never heard tell of her? Fifty years ago it would be, now."

"She lived in the house that stood here?"

"Where we are standing now. But I forgot. You are a stranger. You could know nothing." Gwilliam saw the sweat jerk down his cheeks.

"Tell me about it," he said.

"Tell you about what?"

"Tell me about Ann Morgan and the house and the gold ring. There is a story?"

He nodded, looking to the sickle. "A story," he repeated. "I have not forgotten it. Nor," he almost whispered, "lovely Ann Morgan."

Then, like the pouring of water from a jug he began. Gwilliam wanted to move towards the shade of the beech trees, for the sun had now reached the top of his climb and hurled his beams from behind Tanybwlch as though to burn and kill, but the old man was staring past him as he talked, he could not catch his eye, and so must stand in the trembling air, whilst honey-heavy bees made their broken flight from flower to flower, and the pollen fell in yellow dust about the brass eyelets of the old man's boots.

* * * *

"Ann Morgan was the daughter of Gwynfor and Jane Morgan, who lived in this house as Gwynfor's parents and grandparents had done. She was their only child, and would take all they had to leave, which was much. So without her beauty she would not have lacked for a husband—and she was lovelier than the falls of the Teifi at Cenarth.

"There was a man living at the stone house beyond Llanfair bridge who fell in love with her. Fell in love with her early, when she was 10 and he 12 years old. His father was blacksmith to the parish, and shoed horses, repaired waggons, and kept tools as sharp as this sickle. So far as he and the world could judge she too fell in love with him, but later, when she was 17 or more, and he full man. The parents on both sides were against them: hers because Eos y Fron was poor and a wild young man besides, his because they resented Gwynfor Morgan's notion of his daughter being too good for the son of a blacksmith. Eos y Fron! The Nightingale of the Fron was the name the people of the county put on him, for he sang lovelier than the thrush in April. From Llanaber to Cwmfelyn, from Maenan to the valley of the Rhanon, there wasn't a man to open his lips when Eos came into the company. Had he been born a prince a thousand years ago, we should read how he drew the stars out of heaven with the silver wires of his songs.

"Yet his voice was his danger. There was always open house and free drink for Eos y Fron. That was why he ran wild when very young, and wilder when old enough to know better.

"It was his voice that won Ann Morgan's heart. Jane, her mother, died in the winter of one year and Gwynfor in the spring of the next. The suitors were thicker than these flowers: a man to a buttercup in June, and twice as many in July, and all with a house, a trade, a flock of sheep, or a bag of golden sovereigns. And all, so they said, willing to take Ann Morgan in her shift. Though her house and her money, they admitted, would come handy. But one night Eos y Fron came down the narrow path, just as you came to-day, and so to her window, standing ankle deep in flowers. The drink was in him, maybe, but he sang that night to justify his name—and he sang many nights after. No need to be surprised the dog was not set on him. It was a time of full moon, and the field in its light a pale paradise. The quick hour was too beautiful for earth.

"A fortnight later he met her one evening on the road to the quarry. They stopped and talked, and he saw her home. The same night next week he saw her again, and often after that, and by bragging, flashing his white teeth, and by singing quietly the songs of the countryside, he made her fall in love with him for all the world to see. He went to work like a slave at the harvest, hoarded his wages though his fellows laughed at him, and before November was out she was wearing his gold finger-ring. They were to be married at midsummer.

"Eos y Fron gave up his pot companions. He accepted no more invitations

to houses and taverns, but stayed at Llanfair in his father's house and learned all he could of his father's trade. It dumbfounded the village that a girl could so change a man, and there were plenty to bring up the old proverb: 'Once a lover, twice a child.' But he did not care. For lovely Ann Morgan he would have done all things under the sun save one, and that one—give up Ann Morgan.

"Before the turn of the year he was oftentimes at Tŷ'r Blodau Melyn. Sometimes the old servant was there in the room with them, sometimes it was his own mother who went with him, for though he had smutted his own reputation twice or thrice he would have burned in hell before a bad word came on Ann Morgan."

For the first time his eyes found Gwilliam's. They frightened him. The old man swallowed, nodded several times with harsh movements of his head, and for a moment seemed to arrange his thoughts in order.

"Lovely Ann Morgan!" he said. "A lovely name for the loveliest woman who ever set foot in the fields of Ceredigion."

"You knew her well?" Gwilliam asked, knowing his question a foolish one.

"I knew her well. But the tale is of Ann Morgan and Eos y Fron, and John Pritchard the bard of Llanbedr. You must hear the rest of it now." For Gwilliam had put his hand to his forehead. "Listen! For three months Eos y Fron found himself in God's pocket, and then, four days after Christmas, John Pritchard came to Llanfair. He was a relative of Jane Morgan, Ann's mother. As was to be expected, he called at Tŷ'r Blodau Melyn. As was to be expected, he fell in love there. No one out of childhood would blame him for that."

"But if he knew she was engaged to be married to Eos y Fron?"

The old man stared. "If you were John Pritchard—if Eos y Fron had been John Pritchard—it would have gone the same. I tell you, no man in this world could see her as she was that winter at Tŷ'r Blodau Melyn without throwing the world at her feet." He looked from the field to the horizon. "There is nothing in Wales to-day that can give you a notion of Ann Morgan's loveliness."

"But what did Eos y Fron do?" asked Gwilliam.

"He knew at once. Within an hour. From the way he looked, the way he talked. And John Pritchard knew that he knew, and he cared not a buttercup for all his knowing. He was a bard, as I said, from Llanbedr, and if Eos had the nightingale's voice, John Pritchard had the language of heaven. In a full room, you'd see as many men cry at a poem of his as at a song of Eos y Fron's—and more men laughed when he changed the tune. They reckoned at Llanbedr that John Pritchard knew the metres better than Lewis Tywern's brindle bitch her pups, and if he recited to the weasels he could lead them from the burrows.

"He set himself to win Ann Morgan. Eos y Fron had to work in the daytime, and it was then John Pritchard did his courting. He sat with her

for long hours, and from his lips came words finer than Taliesyn's. He could talk like the little waves on the shore at Tresaith, with a music that lapped into your soul; his poems imprisoned the mountain brook; and when he wished his voice was serene as meadows under snow.

"Soon Eos y Fron knew he was losing Ann Morgan. Not that for months she did not keep face with him, but that is one knowledge native to all lovers. In March there were bitter scenes between them. He struck John Pritchard, who did not strike back. One night he struck Ann Morgan. And for that may God hate him through all eternity!

"That was the end. He did not see her for a long while. I have said that he was a wild young man until the last autumn, but now he seemed mad in his wickedness. He went back to the drinking, was out mornings with the mountain fighters, grew foul-mouthed enough to disgust the foulest, and in less than two months was packed from the house by his father, old Dafydd Glo. This was a heavy blow to his mother, but he made it heavier by cursing both parents as a man would not curse the dog that bit him and swearing he'd burn the smithy over their heads when next he set foot in Llanfair. That night he went to Tŷ'r Blodau Melyn with a short iron bar in his hand, and when they refused to open the door, smashed in the biggest window frame and would have done who knows what damage inside had not the labourers run up from the village and bound him.

"For a month he was in gaol in Cardigan, and then came out to terrify all who met him." The old man looked square at Gwilliam. "He was a brute, and he lived like a brute. It would be better had he died like one, then."

"I thought——" Gwilliam began. He was dizzy with the heat. The buttercups seemed to his aching eyes a pool of metal from the ovens, a-flicker, cruel.

"Do not think," said the other. "Listen! John Pritchard stayed on at Llanfair. He went oftener to Tŷ'r Blodau Melyn now. He was a man reckoned handsome, much my height, and had grown a beard as a young man. He was a kind man—the whole world would grant him that. And he loved Ann Morgan as much as man can love woman. No one can tell, but it might well be that between his love and that of Eos y Fron there was no more than a pinhead. But while his rival was giddy and fierce-tempered, even savage in the end, John Pritchard was kind and gentle and yet impassioned. So with time Ann Morgan did not forget Eos y Fron but was glad she had been saved from him. For his name was now filth throughout the countryside."

The sickle had slipped to the ground. The old man stood there like a black statue, grotesquely still in the blaze of afternoon. To the heat he now seemed indifferent. Even the sweat had dried off his cleft cheeks. The square cut coat set off his stooping shoulders, as though they were carved from wood. His brow was shaded, but a shaft of yellow light lit the dryness of his lips.

"John Pritchard and Ann Morgan were married on the twelfth day of June." Gwilliam lifted his head at the date. "As it might be—yesterday. They were married at the chapel in Llanfair. There was a great to-do in the village, and a feast all day at Tŷ'r Blodau Melyn. They walked back to the house in the buttercup field, all flaming with flowers as you see it now, men and women, boys and girls, two by two, and John Jones's fiddle to keep their feet and hearts in tune. The guests stayed on late, as they still do in these parts—later by far than John Pritchard wanted them to. For if Ann Morgan had been lovely before, that day she was enough to give eternity for.

"It was eight o'clock when the last guest arrived. It was Eos y Fron, not too drunk. If John Pritchard had killed him then as he crossed the threshold from the buttercup field——. But inside he came, and for a while was civil. Most there were afraid of him, the women all. He took the colour from Ann Morgan's cheeks, which before carried such red as Peredur's maiden, like drops of blood on snow. She was Ann Pritchard now, but who would ever think of her as that? Lovely Ann Morgan!"

He fell silent, and Gwilliam, his head a-throb, the hot blood shaken through his bursting veins, was silent with him.

"He came at eight o'clock. Soon after the guests began to take their leave, but he settled himself into the ingle and went hard at the drinking. Some who were there dropped a hint, some were blunt, but Eos y Fron stayed on. At last the only folk there were John Pritchard and Ann Morgan, Eos y Fron and Abel Penry the mason and his wife, who did not wish to leave the three of them alone. Then Abel said outright that they must all be going, and shook Eos y Fron by the shoulder, but he dashed his hand aside and said angrily he'd go in his own time. Abel then made it plain they would be going together—and Abel was craggy as his trade and not a long-suffering man. It was when he found himself slowly levered upright by Abel that Eos y Fron told why he was there. He wanted his ring back. This amazed John Pritchard, for Ann Morgan had seen no reason to tell him that the ring now caught below her knuckle was the other's gift. But he was a reasonable man; he pointed out that the ring could not be buttered off that night, but that it should be sawed off the next morning. This calmness of his maddened Eos y Fron, who swore she'd not go into the same bed as John Pritchard wearing his ring. He'd see the pair of them in hell flames first. He raved, but as he grew grosser than the sty Abel struck him so hard on the mouth that the teeth cut through his lips and from nose to chin he was a mess of blood. Then he went, and what he said at going was known only to himself."

The old man, still as a stone, watched his listener. "There is little left to tell. Not long after midnight a fire broke out in Tŷ'r Blodau Melyn. It burned with a terrible fierceness, as though it fed on oil and fats and bone-dry wood." His voice came deeper from his chest. "John Pritchard and Ann Morgan were

trapped in their room at the back of the house. They found the shutters of their window barred from outside, though they had left them open, and John Pritchard lacked strength to burst them apart till the flames spurted up the wall to help him. By that time the clothes were burnt off his body." He pointed with the sickle, which he had picked up. "The back wall was here. The window here. The buttercups grew to the very stone. He fell through it, still alive, but the yellow fire took Ann Morgan. All her loveliness went out like a moth's wings in flame." His hard fingers ripped the rigidity from his face. "Lovely Ann Morgan!" he sobbed, and crouched into the buttercup field.

The angry sunshine ribbed his black coat with yellow. Sickly, Gwilliam saw how the buttercups threw their pale reflection on the mirror of his polished boots. He swayed a little, hearing him from the ground, brokenly. "They found John Pritchard that night and took him to a house in the village. It was late morning when they found Ann Morgan. Neither John Pritchard's nor Eos y Fron's ring went into the coffin with her. A beam had crashed on to her left side, and the dust of her hand and arm lies somewhere in this patch of earth. Where I seek my yesterday."

An age passed for Gwilliam while he did no more than swallow drily. Then he moved nearer, set a hand to the old man's shoulder, to raise him. "Mr. Pritchard——"

"Pritchard! You fool, you fool!" cried Eos y Fron, and his hand sought the sickle. "John Pritchard died that day, good riddance to him! What was his loss to mine? Fool!" He glared up at Gwilliam. "And what if I did it?" His voice was cut off, his mouth gaped. "Listen!"

In his eyes Gwilliam saw the chasms of hell. He stumbled backwards, and as his head rocked the buttercup field flashed into living flame. It tilted, flaring past the horizon, licking the mountain tops, filling the sky with masses of unbearable yellow. Then to his unbelieving ears came the hoarse crackling of fire, the snap and splinter and fluttering roar of a conflagration, and through it, for one moment of agony, the screaming of a woman in terror and pain. He shut his eyes, clasped his hands over his ears, and fell backwards to the ground as red-hot pain welted his cheek. Then, his eyes open, his hands from his ears, he saw Eos y Fron with his sickle and heard his dry cracked laughter. He stepped nearer for a second blow, but Gwilliam lost his faintness under peril, and lightheadedly ran for the gate. Into the overgrown path he went, running like a maniac from the sun, hearing a maniac's shouting behind him, and feeling the drip of blood from his jaw to his chest.

His footsteps were set to a tune, and the tune went: "Eos y Fron is looking for his ring." But his heart pumped blood to a different rhythm, and the rhythm was: "Lovely Ann Morgan!"

EDWARD THOMAS

JAMES GUTHRIE

WHEN Edward Thomas first walked into my studio at South Harting, he came with other recommendations than his friendship with Gordon Bottomley. He had, like me, lately made the change from town to country, and was under the same necessity to earn a livelihood and bring up a young family. It is easy to see long afterwards that we might have been more worldly-wise, studious of employment, and all the rest; but a merit of youth is that it can brush timid prudence aside and dare a great deal for the sake of an idea. It can put first things first. For, to live next door to a publisher or a picture gallery, though that may commend itself to some, solves no problem, if at the same time a man is not able to pursue the essential part of his labours in a normal atmosphere. An author must write books, and an artist must paint pictures; and to do so they need to have a degree of solitude.

We had brought our families and few sticks, our hopes and fears, into the interior, awaiting whatever fortune might bring us. The landscape was delightful; it only remained for us to find a way of expressing our opinion of it in terms of art, as best we could.

At that date the round frock had not wholly gone out of use among the old men in our village, who added a tall hat upon special occasion. I remember seeing a sheepskin coat on a shepherd who had descended from some remote spot among the Downs. But Thomas was in the more civilized neighbourhood of a large school, and had a main line station within reach, advantages he did not value very highly. His long legs often brought him over to our house around tea time, by way of places far from the direct route; for he had none of that timidity about distance which is bred in towns. The road, for him, lay across any forest or hillside as plainly as it did where it was marked with telegraph posts and macadam. There, with a stick taller than the ordinary, and his yellow hair blowing in the breeze, he strode along at a level effortless pace. His expression was at once reserved and humorous, rather boyish indeed, as I recollect it. He smoked an antique clay pipe which he used to put into the red coals to restore. Later, when advised to smoke less, he divided a pipeful into two half, or four quarter pipefuls, reckoning to get what he called "the turn of the scale" in his favour.

We were quiet spirits of a time that was quiet, saunterers in quest of a Holy Land where we might live and work after our own fashion—which is always the artist's simple impossible dream. John Masefield, speaking at Steep when the Thomas Memorial was unveiled, referred to the "literature of escape" in this connection; but I have never been entirely convinced that industrial life is the positive condition, or that serious literature is based upon the tired business

man. Certainly the author regards his work as an essential of life, and not as a laborious pastime. That bargain by which men are permitted to express only a fraction of themselves, giving the best hours of the day and the best years of their lives in exchange for the right to exist, is precisely the one that every artist repudiates. He does not do so in order to embark upon a prolonged summer holiday; but to enlist under a more exacting employer, without prospects or pay. How a poet can be employed still remains a problem that is unsolved. He may be as good a poet as he likes without arousing any attention; his distress and despair rather flatter the popular notion that men of genius find themselves where other men would be lost. The answer to the question is not in commercial employment. Perhaps there is no answer to it; but I have a suspicion that learning in suffering what is taught in song might give place to a better condition without greatly harming poetry.

Thomas had no illusions about the "trade book." He put into the work the best that he had to give, and laboured to please. He used to say that, as nobody ever read Colour Books, but left them on the drawing-room table, he could write as he liked. At times he averred he had no opinion at all, and had to "mug up" the material in the museum in order to get a view of the subject; the sort of thing which must have galled an original artist like him. But it was not all such hard going, and sometimes he found a subject in which he took a lively interest, never failing to be grateful for the opportunity afforded by any commission to earn his bread in an honourable way. As many men are glad enough to find employment without pining for the more hazardous occupation of creative work, and begin and end in obscurity, we do not need to mourn Thomas's willingness to do what lay at hand. The practice gave him a kind of expansion, valuable to a writer, and a wide range of reading. That his writing remained always a clear reflection of his mind shows that he did not descend to tricks of journalism, or lose, what is the essential of a fine writer, a sense of style. His characteristic tone was quiet, without strain or ornament. He said it was the only tone he had; but it was amply sufficient, and is in its way unmatched for brief statement and for conveying his mood. His essays are unlike the ordinary: they embody some of his interest in people as well as in nature; but with a perfection of balance and a beauty of phrase peculiar to him. In his poems he gets closer to a pure mood, shedding the detail which goes to make an essay an essay and not a poem. That, at least, is how I make it out, and I have the advantage of having several of his ideas for things he had in mind described to me. One about a dragon hunt I have not found in his books, but may have missed it, my set not being complete.

Many who were called "War Poets" are now only found in the anthologies of that time; but, since his death, a good deal of writing has accumulated round the name of Edward Thomas, one who was the least conscious of any greatness or lasting fame. I account it a virtue in him that he took no stock of posterity,

living and working in perfect simplicity as his condition permitted. The character of his work is a quiet austerity, in keeping with his life. Where others had personal ambition, some scheme for gain or place, pride or authority, he was innocent of more than the simple impulsion of his art, impatient only of those tasks which the need to live and provide laid upon him. He desired above all things freedom to do his own work in his own way, as all artists do.

I have been struck by the varying accounts of him by his friends. Often these suggest that I knew little of him after all, or that the same man can be a separate and different person. One notes an acidity of judgment, another his melancholy; but, as it seems to me, the isolation of these parts of his character from the context gives them an emphasis greater than is necessary for a true picture of the man as he was in reality. They indicate a desire to look beyond the everyday facts for some deeper motive or permanent trait which will appear more picturesque or striking. Nobody who knew Thomas would pretend that he was evenly patient, wise, or forbearing; for as well as being a poet he was a man who had to live among other men. The spirit of friendship does not require such readjustments, even should it turn out that one's friend is found to be greater than the ordinary. This is rather a literary trick of viewing the poet as a theme instead of as a man, being too acutely critical and realistic, to serve a theory or an attitude.

For myself, I have to remember that we were young together; that we were both in our separate ways undergoing difficult times, which, if they give rise to impatience, also serve to draw men together for companionship and sympathy. Our association was of a simple kind; our conversation, interesting as it was to us, not all fine-spun prose.

I remember Thomas for his active sense of friendship and his quiet way of talking. Like many good talkers, he was at his best with a single chosen companion; for the presence of a third party tends to distract and disturb, to introduce a foreign element of criticism or banter, in which the spirit of the best conversation evaporates. This was especially true where Thomas was concerned, and it accounts for the ironic reserve which some noticed in him when in a mixed company. His attitude then was that of an observer, unwilling to venture an opinion where there were already too many. Shy as he was, he did not suffer fools gladly, nor permit any personal liberty against himself. The defects, distinct as they were, did not obscure those rich qualities which were at the roots of all that he achieved in his short and laborious life.

It is strange to reflect that of all those who were his literary contemporaries, few survive by virtue of their work to-day. The most confident of their powers, surest of their knowledge of how to handle the world and make a career, are already obscure or forgotten. There is, it would appear, some real justification for the natural reserve of artists who believe that they must attend to the perfecting of their talents rather than to the employment of them in any cause not

strictly along their line of march. For, to succeed in art, they must succeed as artists, since nothing else will sufficiently compensate for the loss of their birthright as original creators.

Imbued with these ideas, I used to think that Thomas was too carelessly attached to what he called his "trade of writing," until I observed that he was less theoretic and more practical in his devotion, insisting always upon getting the utmost out of himself. If he went in search of work, it was because he had no choice, not because he needed any spur to write. He would then don his bowler hat, and attend to the business of looking the part for fixing up a book. It was always with great relief that he returned to the country after having appeared among the men of his craft, and seen what was going on in Fleet Street. Sometimes the result was that he undertook to write so many thousands of words upon some theme about which he had not by any means all that to say, books having to be value for money, judged by their thickness, not by their unity as works of art. He thought the *Richard Jefferies* too long by a third, and, reading it lately, I wondered how he could have written so much on the subject of Maeterlinck, whose work he had no love for. In the same spirit Thomas produced a body of critical writing for newspapers and reviews, writing being his trade and livelihood. He fretted against conditions completely at variance with his own sense of what was worth doing, while at the same time keeping meticulously to his bargain, however irksome it might be.

I used to consider him rather fortunate than otherwise in this employment for his pen. At least he had the opportunity and the capacity; and such time that was left was his own. He was able to bridge the gap between himself and the public, as not so many can, and to earn a firm place for himself with editors and publishers. It was a period during which many attempts at establishing new journals were made. Usually they were short-lived for one reason or another, the general indifference of the public being the chief one; and authors often gave their services in the cause. The general decay of the literary journal to-day may, perhaps, be taken as the final judgment upon such gallant ventures.

It happened that I was able to introduce some of Thomas's early poems into one of these new magazines at a time when his pseudonym carried no weight with the regular run of editors. They were, unfortunately, found to possess little judgment when an old hand with a new name produced a packet of verse. It might be unfair to dispute their attitude towards familiar names, since men of repute deserve to be given a place on the strength of their work. What I do find odd is that those who should be able to judge with decision are capable of excluding material which is so palpably done by a practised hand, and is neither obscure nor difficult. The problem always present in the case of poetry is this one: the doors are shut against it, or there is no door by which it may enter and be seen. Poetry is in a worse condition than other forms of art; it has to

EDWARD THOMAS
Drawn and Cut by
ROBIN GUTHRIE

depend upon a kind of back-stairs method of progression before it has the least chance of being read by the general public, and must, therefore, tend more and more to lose its old freedom and vitality as an expression of all sorts and conditions of men. The present tendency to shift from point to point the manner and matter of poetry, to make it less magical in itself, and more a subject of professional knowledge and technical experiment, leaves us with no standard upon which we may depend with any confidence. As a result, there is a great deal of pretension in poetic form, and little that is authentic poetry simply as such. We substitute, that is to say, one gift for another. This might not be worth so many words, except that in the minds of many people, a new mode automatically consigns older ones to oblivion. The new may to-morrow prove to be a mere fancy, born of abnormal conditions, a kind of glorified journalism; but the taste for novelty and excitement will always make occasion to express some attractive patch of eternity.

A good many of Edward Thomas's contemporaries derived their literary impulse from books at second hand: his more realistic temperament took him out-of-doors, where an intense and meticulous curiosity about nature could operate. His background was, therefore, absolutely substantial and sound; his knowledge those things he had learned for himself. Delicate and evasive as much of his work is, the basis is ever the strength of his natural feeling for nature in the open air. The prose style which he developed was less the result of purely literary friendships than of his capacity to express his own mind independently. At first derivative, it grew to be flexible and exacting, from a habit he had acquired of thinking as a naturalist does of facts, and of valuing the truth for its own sake. Upon our early walks, we used to compare our different ways of looking at nature; the one literary (translating things seen into words) and the other artistic (looking for form and colour). I teased him about trying to fit Keats into what he saw, and he me for finding a sentiment where I ought to consider shapes. There was a little in both of these suggestions; but we probably learned something from each other even while we joked. A mere dabbler in literature myself, I have always been grateful to Thomas for his consideration when he might so easily have scored off me. To my first little book of verse he had been kind before we met, and in many ways he was helpful and encouraging. His criticism of poetry, of which he did a good deal at that time, was shrewdly balanced. For pretension of any kind, or for that peculiar obtuseness often revealed in minor verse, he had no good word to say; but any modest talent might be sure of some praise at his hands. He was the first to write enthusiastically of the early poems of W. H. Davies, for example. He also welcomed the author of the Bettesworth books, whose passion for the facts about rural life and crafts was in a line with his own. W. H. Hudson held to the end a very high place in his affections, as the correspondence with him amply shows. When he turned poet himself, there was nobody quite like the critic

or the friend he had been, to say a bold word on his behalf, although many poets were flourishing in the poetry shop. Sadly as he felt this neglect, he did not have too long to wait before his work began to make itself known. At least it is fair to remember that he was not palpably sweet, nor did he indulge in any boosting of his wares. The poems demand some quality of mind, too, for their appreciation, being rather reticent in their expression and delicate in their rhyming.

I have said before that Thomas did not suddenly become a poet. He did, it is true, get an encouraging impetus from Robert Frost; but anyone who has read his best prose work will understand that the capacity to create a mood by the play of his mind with words was already there, and that he was at the point at which the change from prose to verse was simple and natural. This might easily have been made aside from the dislocation of the war. At any rate, the assumption that his new-found freedom from literary task-masters had the power to create something out of nothing is quite unjustified. His sword was never at any time so keen a weapon as his pen, which had a mission too humane to be sharpened except in the cause of beauty. There is nothing of what he wrote that does not rather rebuke false patriotism and strident politics, and all those things of which he was an innocent victim.

When we had removed into William Blake's country, Thomas used to come over by way of Chichester, where I often met him for the pleasure of walking home in his company. And he would spend a day or two with us, slipping out in the early hours into the water-meadows, and idling on the beach. He was one of those strong swimmers who disappeared over the horizon while we only swam in home waters. His way with children was natural and without any condescension. Their interests were his own for the time being; so that they regarded him, and regard him still, as their special friend. I have told how he got my small son to sing to him, exchanging his own songs with complete gravity; and it is recorded that he fished all day in a pond which had no fish in it, to please another lad. A tale was always to be had for the asking, and I well remember his high-pitched laugh of delight when any fun was going, which there often was. From him, Thomas's own children got their knowledge of bird life and wild flowers in their own woods and fields. He liked children to be themselves, without too much politeness or correction. Their home was on simple lines, where everybody was free to develop without undue restriction. I do not think he had any set theory about education; for he suspected theories of any kind, judging men and women by what they could do. His range of friends was such that it would have been hard to reconcile them together. So large a sympathy must be rare in any man; but with him it was perfectly easy and natural to be that person, who, without sacrificing his individuality, is the friend and confidant of each in turn. Nobody was less jealous or exclusive

than he, and any turn he could do, he did without hesitation. The more worldly idea of reserving the best for himself had no meaning for him. If I were going to London to look up a few people, Thomas generally had somebody to suggest as a useful person; and we planned to do work in which the text would be his and the pictures mine. A *Book of Houses* was one of these schemes; but we could not find a publisher for it. Instead, I printed his first book of poems from plates, which, indifferent as it is as a bit of printing, is now a rare first edition. Since then I have printed *The Friend of the Blackbird*, as a work more in keeping with my regard for him as a writer and a friend.

The onset of the war threw us all into confusion. It seemed that there was nothing left for us to do, and nowhere to go. I had been upon a visit to Vivian Locke Ellis, and went immediately to see Thomas, going the old way by Chichester. Traffic was little at that hour save for one solitary car bearing a coffin draped with a Union Jack, a vivid reminder that war was taking toll of men. I found Helen at home, expecting Edward, who came in later, tired and worried, from London, where all the talk was of the war. Next day, however, he walked part of the way with me, glad to get into the fresh air again. We parted on a small bridge beneath which a milky stream ran, he to return, and I to go on, both equally in doubt about what change might be made in our lives by the tide of war. He was as yet undecided whether to join up or not, and was resentful of the people who cheerfully consigned young men to the trenches, and of the glib patriotism of the newspapers. Our work swept away, we had still to discover some tolerable alternative under these unfamiliar conditions thus suddenly brought about. But when next I saw Thomas, he was in the uniform of a private, solemnly ready at any moment to salute his superior officers, who were often very young second lieutenants fresh from the O.T.C. He told me he had turned schoolmaster, teaching map-reading, and that he liked the life more than he had thought he might. Early-rising was his habit, so that he had more time on his hands than before. The army boots he found strong and comfortable; but no mackintosh would keep out the wet. It was while in training that he explored a bit of country familiar to me in earlier years. He celebrated it in several poems.

We were to see Thomas only once more, when he and Helen came together before he went to the front. The same fear was in all our minds that day. It seemed too much like a last farewell, though we talked in the old vein, of our work and the children, until they turned into the field path out of sight, like a pair of lovers.

As I turn the pages of *Last Poems*, I seem to find farewells very often there; but who they are for is not clear, and need not be clear. We had no liking for displays of any kind between ourselves, and a long level friendship leaves little to be said that might not be said of any similar spell of uneventful laborious

years. We may regret that the world was not kinder than it was to Edward Thomas; we may feel that he had more for us than he had the opportunity to give; that here was a life thrown away just when a great talent was at its brightest. Yet this man did fulfil himself to the utmost, not only as a poet and writer of delicate prose, but as a stout character and unequalled friend. The events of his life are his books, done in solitude, and in those we must look to find himself as he would wish to be found. After many years, those who knew him remember him as a young man, while they are old and altered. These are indeed no times for men like him to be living in. His time has gone along with the sweetness which he drew from it; and in his work we savour it again.

Design for title of "To the Memory of Edward Thomas", by James Guthrie
(*Pear Tree Press*)

WELSH DRAMA TO-DAY

J. ELLIS WILLIAMS

THE literary life of Wales suffers from what Pharaoh would call minor plagues. You know the kind I mean. R. Williams-Parry started writing his incomparable sonnets. And immediately there descended upon us an army of sonneteers who wrote fourteen-lined stanzas of an extensive and peculiar pattern. Then Wil Ifan was given a chair for a fine piece of *vers libre*. And thereupon every budding poet who found it difficult to get a word to rhyme with *bedd* began to spin the stuff by the fathom (and incidentally acquired for Shakespeare's "Shuffle off these mortal coils!" a newer and a deeper significance). At the moment, the craze is for "comic" verse. Several of these songs would make a hyena laugh. A hyena, I am told, laughs at everything.

These plagues, like Pharaoh's, are severe while they last. But fortunately they don't last long. Take the playwriting plague, for example.

It is only a few years since a friend and I went for a day's fishing. To be exact, it was he who wielded the rod. Mine was the more prosaic task of carrying the basket and the worms. I need not have taken the basket, but the tin of worms was soon emptied, and I had to reconnoitre for supplies. There was a small boulder not far away which looked a likely sanctuary for worms, but it was too heavy for me to shift by my own exertions. I called to my friend for help.

"For God's sake," he entreated, "leave it alone! There may be another Welsh dramatist lurking underneath it."

It was only too true. For the time was 1930, and every Welshman who could afford a penny for a pencil was then busy writing a play.

Nine years ago, that was. And now I read that the Swansea Welsh Players are forced to perform translations because of the sad and utter dearth of original Welsh plays. In fact, companies all over Wales looking for new plays are to-day turning every stone to find one. Well, well!

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Why this dearth? Is it a case of hope deferred making the heart sick? Every year, with monotonous regularity, the National Eisteddfod prize for a new Welsh play is being withheld. There is much to be said, certainly, for maintaining a high standard. But it can be overdone. I am not blaming the adjudicators, for I withheld the prize myself when I was judge. The fault lies with the Eisteddfod procedure, which rules that the adjudicator must withhold the prize in cases of insufficient merit.

I should like to see an Eisteddfod Committee try out a new experiment. Let them instruct the judge to pick the best play submitted, even if it does not come up to the required standard. Hand the manuscript, just as it is, to the Swansea Welsh Players. Ask D. T. Davies, Mrs. Mary Lewis, and Clydach Thomas to produce the play during the Swansea Welsh Drama Week the following March. Give them *carte blanche* to cut, alter, and amend. Then invite the author to see a production of the revised play. Give him a small cash prize to cover his expenses. It would be a far, far better thing to do than to withhold the prize.

The Denbigh Committee of this year's National Eisteddfod rather pride themselves on the fact that they are offering a £100 prize for a new Welsh comedy. "A wonderful opportunity for Welsh dramatists," said one eisteddfodwr to me the other day. I am afraid the offer leaves me cold. I admire the business acumen of the publishing-firm who are the donors of the prize and will become the owners of the copyrights in the play. But I really cannot see anything else in it that is so very admirable. The prize offered for a serious play is £30. This does not mean, as one might assume at first glance, that the National Eisteddfod of Wales considers writing a comedy to be so much more important than writing a serious play. All it means is that a comedy is a far better business proposition for a publishing-firm. The firm who offer the £100 for the comedy do not offer the £30 for the serious play.

There is also a prize of £10 offered for a textbook on producing, staging, and acting plays. A similar prize was offered some time ago at another eisteddfod for a similar textbook on the writing of plays. It attracted no competitor, and I shall be surprised if anybody competes again this year. Writers and producers have such a rich choice of English books that I cannot see any real need for a Welsh textbook couched in terms so general. What we do need is a book on the specialized use of an arras stage. Welsh village companies stick to kitchen-comedies simply because they cannot afford more expensive settings. "We know where we are with a kitchen," they tell me, "but we cannot afford to produce plays requiring two or more sets."

In my latest play, *Chwalu'r Nyth*, I have tried to meet this difficulty by illustrating how easy it is, using a curtain stage, to change scenes without changing the set. Act I takes place in a garden, Act II in an indoor room, and Act III in front of a house. The same set serves for the three scenes, and need not be changed between acts. I suggest that the next National Eisteddfod Committee offer a prize for a series of ten or more scenes which can be put in one setting, using an arras stage. Curtains are so cheap, and are so easily adaptable to any size of stage, that such a textbook would be of real value to village companies with a small stage and little money.

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And now let us turn to the acting of plays. Whatever our views about the writing, I think we can all agree that the standard of the acting seen at the National Eisteddfod improves year by year. We used to lament the scarcity of good producers. There is need to mourn no longer. Production has improved tremendously during the last ten years.

I feel, however, that the time has come to divorce the Drama and the Eisteddfod. National Eisteddfod week—the first week in August—definitely is *not* the best time of year to stage a national drama contest. Many of the places where the Eisteddfod is held have no suitable theatres to stage such an event. The halls are very often too small, and are seldom properly ventilated. As a result, the audience suffers agonies from the heat, and the actors have to do miracles on ill-equipped and wholly inadequate stages. Caernarvon had to build a large wooden hut to accommodate the contest, and the rumble of trains passing within a few yards of the place spoilt the afternoon performances. Wrexham had to stage the contest in a hall five miles away. Fishguard had to make do in a pokey little cinema, Machynlleth in a tiny town hall that couldn't possibly cope with the Eisteddfod multitude.

We shall never get the best of Welsh acting unless we supply the best of facilities. Time and place demand a divorce. I suggest a week's festival during Easter at a centre like Aberystwyth, where they have a commodious stage and an excellent pavilion. At that time of year, it is not too hot to act, not too cold to keep visitors away. Mornings could be spent in lectures and demonstrations, afternoons in debates and discussions, and the evenings devoted to the competitions proper. We all complain that the National Eisteddfod is far too cumbersome as it is. It would do good to both the Drama and the Eisteddfod to part. The new Archdruid at the Bridgend Eisteddfod would do well to pronounce the valedictory: "We're sorry to lose you, but we think you ought to go."

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These random reflections are not intended to be a detailed survey of Welsh Drama To-day, and I must apologize if they are as full of I's as a Godfrey Winn article. (Gentle reader, be not dismayed. I hate lap-dogs, and seldom put my head in my white-haired mother's lap. You'll escape that, anyway.)

Much ink has been spilt (an article on Welsh Drama is incomplete without at least one *cliché*) in discussing the relative value of competitions and festivals. Some writers wax very wrath, and pour scorn and contumely on competitions. Strangely enough, it is seldom that these bitter critics refuse an engagement to act as judges in the competitions they revile, and I greatly fear that their opposition is academic. Personally, I have never had much sympathy with these diatribes. After all, the committees organizing the competitions are

quite honest about their objects. They say bluntly that the chief aim is to augment the funds of some local charity, and that whatever cultural benefit ensues is a casual by-product. It is as legitimate a way of raising funds as any other. The only possible criticism is that some committees, in order to save a pound or two in adjudicators' fees, engage judges for their cheapness. It is true that at one time the only necessary qualification was to have a Rev. before one's name or a degree after it. A science degree sufficed at a pinch, or even an M.R.S.T., which teachers can buy outright for three guineas. The resulting mess that some of these judges made of the competitions soon brought a change of policy, and most committees nowadays do make a serious effort to get competent judges.

It is to be regretted that there are so few drama festivals in Wales. Swansea, it is true, have done great pioneer work with their annual Welsh week at the Grand Theatre. It is a pity that they have had to stage so many translations. When he reads this, I know T. J. Williams-Hughes will scribble me one of his pencilled notes to say it's our own fault for not writing more plays. But Swansea are not wholly blameless. Their festival comes at the end of the season. Those of us who write plays make an effort to get our work on the market by the beginning of winter. Swansea insist on *new* plays, but it is too much to ask of an author to keep his play off the market so that they can have first cut at it. I think Swansea would find it less difficult to get new plays if they could arrange their festival during an October week.

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Why has so little been written of the excellent work done for Welsh drama by the Women's Institutes? I listened to fourteen companies at the Denbighshire festival this year, and marvelled at the great work done by them. The sad part is that of the fourteen competitors only three companies performed Welsh plays. Not because they preferred to do English plays, but because there is an utter drought of new Welsh plays for all-women casts. I am glad that the Bridgend National Eisteddfod is trying to remedy matters by offering a special prize for female plays. We must not let our village institutes slip out of the Welsh Drama movement for lack of suitable plays.

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These notes would be incomplete without a tribute to the work done by Haydn Davies in Glamorgan, and Cynan in Anglesey. Rather odd, isn't it, that the two should be so far apart, extreme north and extreme south? It is too soon, as yet, to reap the harvest of their sowing. What one is apt to forget is that the pupils they now teach will in time themselves become teachers. Twelve years ago, the late Silyn Roberts (a gay and gallant adventurer in adult education) persuaded me to establish at Blaenau Ffestiniog the first W.E.A.

evening class in drama. The class met regularly every week for seven winters. To-day, some of these pupils have their own little drama companies, and are now putting into practice the precepts I tried to teach them then. It's a grand feeling to see the torch pass on. Haydn and Cynan are doing the same kind of thing on a much larger scale, and are piling up a debt of gratitude which we shall find it difficult to repay. (By the way, can't somebody suggest to the Welsh University, which is so fond of conferring degrees on foreigners, that it would be a very appropriate gesture to confer a degree on these two workers? There's Gwynfor, too, who did such a lot for Welsh acting at the time of its greatest need.)

And now, in conclusion, to the most courageous experiment of all. Lord Howard de Walden, in the letter I quoted from in my last article, described himself as the godfather of Welsh drama. Never was infant blessed with so generous a godfather, and his latest gift promises to be the best yet.

At Plas Newydd, Llangollen, there is at this moment a group of Welsh men and women being taught how to act by a professional coach, Miss Meriel Williams, who sacrified a West End career to take charge of the Welsh National Theatre. These men and women have already been at Llangollen for several months. Their training completed, Miss Williams intends taking them on a tour of North and South Wales. They will produce original Welsh plays, Welsh translations of the classics, and English plays of Welsh life.

The last tour of the Welsh National Theatre players—a conglomerate crowd of unequal actors brought together in too great a hurry by her predecessor—was a financial and artistic flop. Village companies who went to see the performances returned from them disgusted, disillusioned, and disheartened. When Meriel told me that she was planning a second tour, I scoffed. But when she elaborated on her plans, I remained to pray . . . that her indomitable courage would meet with its just reward. She held over three hundred auditions, retained the fifteen who showed most promise, is now giving these players a nine months' intensive course in stage acting and deportment and enunciation, and is putting into the work all that she is capable of.

It will be a sad thing for Welsh drama if this—the only *national* effort being made—proves another flop.

LOVE SONG OF THE GOLD CRESTS

ROY SAUNDERS

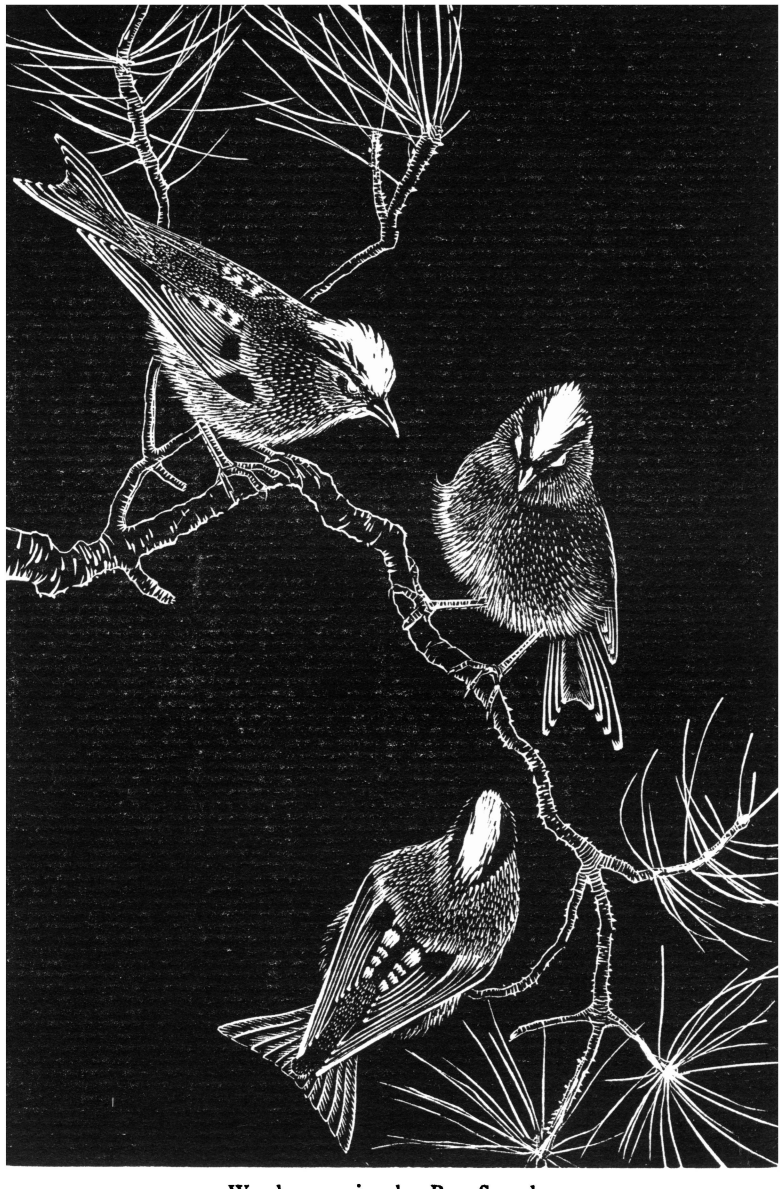
THE dark line of fir trees crowning the hill above the town stood out in resolute array against the winds that swept along the vale of Teifi. Like some watchtower of old, the hill rose steeply from the houses crowned by its battlement of conifers.

To most of the townspeople it meant nothing, but there was one for whom the wood enclosed great treasures, great secrets. At all times of the year it was a paradise he could fly to, a place where his empty life took on a fuller meaning. As a child he had passed truant hours there. Later on, when no job had turned up, his sense of hopelessness drove him often to its sanctuary.

One cold, fresh morning towards the end of spring he crossed the little station and began the ascent. Immediately the keen wind came to meet him, fanning his overriding love of nature and the wild. A deep-throated croak from the heavy sky brought about a sudden change in his appearance. His eyes shot skywards to where five dark specks were gliding and diving before the wind. He smiled with satisfaction. There had been four young ravens but one had tumbled from the nest leaving three, and now, with their aged parents, the five were returning from some foraging expedition. A female kestrel hawk shot into sight; its strange hesitant flight and disinclination to leave the scene told clearly of a nest in the quarry. Far away a great bird on motionless wings drifted against the grey sky. It was the rare fork-tailed kite. There were only three nests in all Britain, and with pride he knew they were all in his corner of Wales.

The life of the pine wood was his interest this morning, to be lost once again in the deep five-acre blanket of sombre trees, to tread on the soft, warm needles, and breathe again the resin-scented air.

The vale of Teifi had long since received its bird migrants, and even the mystic crooning purr of the nightjar had become a commonplace note as the warm nights of early summer approached. Several pairs of woodpigeons were already on their second clutch of eggs, and they rose, thrashing the branches with strong wings, at his approach. Silently he stepped over the fallen twigs, scanning them as he went. There were many dreys of the red squirrel, some old and disused ; others had their litters of bright-eyed babies. Overhead a pair of long-tailed tits seemed to dance through the pattern of twigs, and two mouse-like tree creepers climbed in spirals up the fir trunks, cheeping and picking with long beaks as they climbed, supported by their



Wood engraving by Roy Saunders

short, stiff tails. A nut-hatch flew between the branches, dashing and handsome with his chestnut-pink breast and slaty-blue back, and he too hung on the bark, picking and climbing with ease and grace.

For over an hour he sat watching and listening. A dog fox had passed close to him, and all the time a tiny wood mouse, squirrel colour with white breast and clean pink feet and tail, had been scouring the brambles beside him. On two occasions it flashed out of sight, first when the shadow of a hawk passed over the undergrowth, though shadows of crows and pigeons meant nothing, and again when there came a strong smell, musty and horrible, to the watcher. The woodmouse got it too, and disappeared. Then over the dead leaves danced the fiery-eyed fury of the woods, a little weasel, twittering with rage at the vanished mouse and the strange presence of something else. All the time the man remained still.

At last came the notes for which he had been waiting, inaudible to an ordinary listener above the cooing of pigeons, the pinking of finches, and the song of blackbirds, with the continual piping serenade of coal-tits in different parts of the wood.

He had heard the tiny chirpings of goldcrests. He loved to watch those tiny mites whose lives are linked so closely with the pine tops. Their presence in spring and summer gave the firs a real fascination. For him, the wood without the goldcrests resembled a home without its children, but now the twitterings that were an essential compliment to the character of *his* home had arrived.

Fluttering on tiny wings, they climbed about the cones and shoots. He knew they were the same birds that had reared their twelve babies the previous year from eggs that could go into any fountain pen cap, in the mossy nest suspended underneath a swaying branch. The smallest birds in Europe, yet in the autumn they had left for Africa, and now the little feathered things were back, and he was happy at their safe return.

He watched and watched, until finally came the music he loved more than any other bird song, the love call of the golden crested wren. Tremulous and vibrant, it poured sweetly through the pine trees like trilling on a muted violin, and then, as suddenly as it started, it died away.

Later he returned to his fellow men, but in his heart he still carried the happiness of his tiny feathered guests from Africa.

SHONI IN SHAFTESBURY AVENUE

JACK JONES

SHONI, as the South Wales miner is affectionately—and otherwise—known, has left the West End of London, where, had he drawn it mild, he might have been to this day. Anyway, he lasted longer than his brothers Dai and Will, who only appeared three times with an amateur company in a little theatre tucked away behind Drury Lane Theatre. But Shoni appeared 53 times in succession in a theatre which is the pride of London's "Theatre Street," a theatre whose traditions and glories are, perhaps, more than Shoni can appreciate as he should.

The management who, greatly daring, presented Shoni at their theatre in Shaftesbury Avenue, lost money on him. Yet they are proud of him for the fight he put up for their money. And so I am proud of him. I shall never forget the way he faced the brilliant and fashionable first night audience the last night of May, 1939. Contributors to the WELSH REVIEW and its Editor were amongst those present, applauding like ten men . . . but what am I talking about, anyway?

Briefly it is this. My play, *Rhondda Roundabout*, has finished its run of 53 performances at the Globe Theatre, London. On Saturday, July 15, it went down fighting. The public was impressed, but not to the point of support. Despite the excellent notices received, the play went the way of many other gallant failures. But is it, when all's said and done, a failure? Are the most disappointing box-office returns conclusive?

No, they are far from being conclusive. The indifference that killed the body of the play will never stop the march of its spirit, that rich, regional spirit which the moribund metropolitan theatre stands so badly in need of. Personally, and whilst not a penny the richer for the run of the pay, I feel that it has been an experiment which has justified itself in almost every respect. It has taught me quite a lot, and it has enabled the management responsible for its presentation to estimate the width of the gulf between what the London theatre is dying of and what it is dying for. Then it has illuminated for those of the public who witnessed it a tract of life they were previously so much in the dark about.

Sometimes playwrights, when their plays go under earlier than they think they should, blame the public. I don't feel that I can, for it has had almost as much public support as I expected. For if I am to live up to the keynote of the play, which is sincerity, then I must admit that the play, good as it is, is far

from being perfect even of its kind. Certain of the critics' reservations with regard to it arose from its construction, which I now realise is faulty, though this does not account for its commercial failure, for plays whose structure do not bear comparison with mine are amongst the "smash-hits" now running in London. Yet that fact in nowise betters the construction of my play. What I have gathered from this experience is that in future I must "build" more carefully what has up to now been "thrown-up" in rather a hurry.

There are also minor weaknesses of characterisation that affect the balance of the play which ends, I fear rather lamely, and with the character around which the play is built, namely Shoni, off-stage in the tap-room of a pub partaking of a bookmaker's hospitality. These are minor weaknesses, but weaknesses nevertheless, and it behoves me, as a promising old playwright to recognise them as such, for I have little time in which to fondly cherish or try to defend them.

Now, after having admitted so much, I think I can go on to deal with other factors which have operated disastrously on the play's prospects. Firstly, there is the public, from the money-bagged to the moneyless. When a play dealing with the life of the working-class fails, the cry which almost invariably goes up is one to the effect that it has failed owing to the boycotting of it by the money-bagged, without whose presence in the stalls and dress circle no West End theatre can keep going. Well, so far as my play was concerned, this was far from being the case, for the stalls and dress circle were, if anything, better patronised than the cheaper parts of the house were.

In this case the old saying about the poor helping the poor was falsified. The appeal for support for the play made by an ex-Cabinet minister to the working-class generally was made in vain, and the gallery and pit were less than half-full most evenings. Had the gallery and pit been patronised as this enthusiastic Labour leader thought they should be, then the play would have been kept going until the autumn, by which time it would be established with performances running into three figures to recommend it, for with the average playgoer nothing succeeds like success, and plays which have scored centuries are automatically elevated to a place amongst the things which simply *must* be seen.

This raises the problem of what is, I think, called "working-class art," and I want to discuss the problem without resentment or any sense of grievance. Can it be developed in the commercial theatre? I think it can, provided it steers clear of propaganda of a partisan nature. Those whom we sometimes contemptuously refer to as the "money-bagged stiff-shirted" will, I think, support dramatisations of the lower levels of life—providing they live. But will the working-class support dramatisations of their own life? I very much doubt it. "No! no realism for us," is what the working-class implies by its

almost complete absence from places where anything of a realistic nature is being presented, and by its crowding of places where plays and pictures devoid of social significance can be seen.

Facts which cannot lie are bearers of blame, which in this connection they lay across the shoulders of the working-class. Life in terms of art and art in terms of life, this life and that life, the upper-class seeking escape in reality, the working-class seeking escape from reality, and unanswered questions coming forward along the march of time. What is art? What is working-class art? boss-class art? pure art? Is there any such thing as art?

Anyway, those are a few of the questions which come out of the chaos of to-day to confront those who seek the reasons for the failure of plays proletarian and the success of plays not of the proletariat. What little I can say here about the numerous questions which arise from a more or less negligible theatrical incident might make a passable preface for a book on the subject, a vast, indefinable subject which is beyond my capacity. I should be happy if only I could open it up so that others could deal with it more or less adequately.

So perhaps the experience of having my play of mining life presented in the West End of London may prove a key which will open it up. The "intelligentsia," which with its mouth seeks to lay waste systems, ideologies, and creeds, may tackle this vast subject with more enthusiasm than they supported my play. For that no one can blame them, for the sympathy of the intelligentsia for the working-class and its expression in terms of art was never meant to be translated into active support. After demolition the intelligentsia stop short at explanation. If, and when, they do patronise a play dealing with the life of the working-class it is on the strength of a complimentary ticket accepted as condescendingly as they accept free copies of books written by working-class authors. Pity the poor intelligentsia in the world of to-day, between the devil of capitalism and the deep sea of the proletariat. They neither toil nor spin in the city or a mine, but live marooned on the Isle of Captious Criticism, bleating shy-making comments on the world whose life they cannot share.

Perhaps the weakness of the working-class in the realm of art and its confusion in art arises from the gratuitous distinctions it accepts from the intelligentsia. In mining valleys miners in their amateur dramatic societies perform not only "escapist" high society plays, but also highbrow plays which have received the blessing of the intelligentsia, such plays as *Murder in the Cathedral* and *I Have Been Here Before.*

What has all this to do with the play of mine which recently died in London? Well, it is my way of going the longest way round in search of reasons for lack of support. Perhaps the least said now the better. In the growing interest in matters Welsh the play has at least made a footing which other and

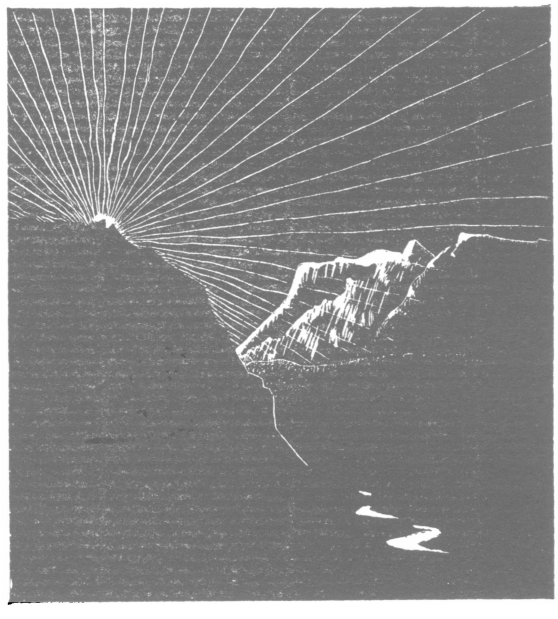
more experienced Anglo-Welsh playwrights should be able to take advantage of, and when they do, I hope they will fall into the hands of as courageous and enterprising a management as I was associated with so happily, and that the support will be forthcoming before the play begins to sag for want of it.

What an experience it has been! I would not have missed it for anything. Meetings with great actors, Welsh-Americans over on a visit being surprised to find the name *RHONDDA* boldly displayed over the entrance to a West End theatre, and even more surprised to find such a homely name as "Jack Jones" in lights on Shaftesbury Avenue. Nights when, during the intervals, talk in Welsh echoed along the corridors of the Globe Theatre, are now among my unforgettable memories. As the result of this experience I am richer in memories than ever I dreamt of being.

For there are riches which are incorruptible, and I have salvaged an abundance of such out of this experience. Meetings resulting in new friendships with such Welsh men of the theatre as Emlyn Williams and Ivor Novello, meetings with old friends I have not seen for years, friends drawn from all parts of Britain and abroad to the little bit of Wales which Shoni was creating out of the stones of Shaftesbury Avenue. For the first time in its long and historic career the Globe Theatre shone with the beauty of homeliness. From the stage a miner in his pit-clothes, his walking-out clothes, and his "bit o' best," walked right into the heart of audiences who will never forget him.

The spirit of Shoni will linger in Shaftesbury Avenue long after Mervyn Johns, who played the part, has departed to play elsewhere. For Shoni's spirit is the undying spirit of the miners of South Wales, and once that spirit is sown anywhere there is no getting rid of it. It will remain there in the West End preparing the ground for those playwrights whose work will follow mine into London. Artistically Wales is on the upgrade, of that there can be no doubt. The younger school of Anglo-Welsh writers should be able to consolidate the position for Wales which Emlyn Williams won almost single-handed. His comedy of social significance, *The Corn is Green*, was the first major effort to establish Wales in the world of the theatre, and I am consoled for the comparative failure of my play by the outstanding success of his. I have heard people presuming to doubt Emlyn Williams' sincere attachment to the land of his fathers, but they would not do so if they knew, as I know, of what he has done for his country and fellow-countrymen. It was mainly his recommendation of my play that led to its production in the West End. He will, if only people refrain from bothering him for help as I bothered him, some day write *the* play of Wales. He has my best wishes, with a promise never to bother him again for help. Why should a man with his head full of plays be bothered to read and recommend the plays of other people, anyway?

What can I say in conclusion, at the end of this most glorious adventure? I can express the hope that the next Welsh playwright who manages to "make" the West End will be more loyally supported by the now enormous London-Welsh population than I was. For whilst it is true that certain London-Welsh chapels organised parties to attend my play, it is also true to say that the percentage of London-Welsh who came was as nothing to that which came not. So many were coming "next week," as so many of those who had long bemoaned the want of such plays as mine were. Well, there will be no "next week," not for my play anyway. But there may for a play by Gwyn Jones or Glyn Jones, Ken Etheridge, Rhys Davies, or Eynon Evans. If so, then jump to it, is my advice in the best spirit to those who have, in a way, let my play down. But I cherish no grievance. No fear! I am back at work as happy as ever, feeling all the better for my sojourn in London.



NANT FFRANCON PASS

Scrape-board drawing by Edmund Vale. From "Straw into Gold" (*Methuen*).

BEYOND OUR FRONTIERS

GWILYM DAVIES

AUGUST the Fourth is the anniversary of the day when the British Empire, twenty-five years ago, set out to war. No doubt there will be in the press of many countries a review of what happened then and what continued to happen until the first world war came to an end in November, 1918. Here, perhaps we might more usefully glance not twenty-five years back but over the twenty years since 1918, the years of the greatest effort ever made to establish a reign of law between sixty or more self-governing states.

The story covers two decades, and we have now entered upon the third. In international co-operation, the first decade, 1919–28, was the decade of advance, when a wave of idealism ran round the world; the second decade, 1929–38, was just as much a decade of retreat. Of the third decade, which will stretch from 1939 to 1948, no one as yet can give it a name or be any too certain about its character.

Let us look for a moment at the first decade, the decade of advance which opened in 1919 with the framing of the Covenant once described by Mr. Lloyd George as the greatest document of international behaviour since the Sermon on the Mount. This was the decade which closed with the signing in Paris of the Kellogg Pact with its solemn renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy by all the Great Powers, including Japan, Germany, and Italy. It was a decade filled with the mystic belief in the unimpeded progress of international understanding. Great things were attempted in those years, and great things were done. The League of Nations, the I.L.O., the World Court of Justice at the Hague; these were, and are, monuments to the faith of their creators such as no other decade can claim in the history of Christendom. If to-day the League of Nations is politically paralyzed and the World Court of Justice derelict, it is because in the first decade the greatest things were not attempted and consequently were not done.

President Wilson, Mr. Lloyd George, Aristide Briand—they all three belong to history and to all three humanity is debtor. It would be a greater debt if they could have grasped the opportunity which Providence placed within their reach.

Woodrow Wilson saw the world community. His great country the United States might, from the first, have been an active member of it if only the President had consented to work side by side with Senator Lodge and his other political opponents. This Wilson would not do. When it came to the choice between creating the world community and triumphing over his political adversaries, Wilson preferred to essay the triumph. In the domestic struggle he fell, and the possibility of a promising start for the world community, in the first decade after the war, fell with him.

And whatever may be said of Mr. Lloyd George in the making of the Versailles Treaty, he failed to insist that the making of it should be a joint venture of victor and vanquished. A negotiated treaty might not have succeeded in ensuring peace, for the German Republic was a republic without republicans, a democracy without democrats, but a negotiated treaty would have deprived any German *Führer* of that immense moral advantage which the unilateral enforcement of a *dictat* gave to Adolf Hitler.

Of the third member of the democratic triumvirate that did so much to shape the first decade, Aristide Briand, it can be said truthfully that he was entitled to the name he loved best—"the pilgrim of peace." That Germany entered the League in 1926 was largely due to him. Once, however, Germany was within the fold, Briand did nothing much to make it easier for Germany to remain within it.

The first decade of 1919–28 was the decade of the possibility of fashioning world-citizenship had there been world-citizens amongst the foremost democratic leaders. The pioneers were entitled to argue that where they failed their successors would succeed. But the democratic governments in the second decade (1929–38) were given chance after chance and at every turn they failed. Never once in the face of the boldest challenge of international anarchy could they be brought to pool their resources disinterestedly in defence of the principles they professed. Japan to-day is deep in China because Britain and the United States, at the most critical stage, were much more concerned about their rival financial stakes in the Far East than with the common preservation of international honour. Italy ravaged Abyssinia because, as the French now remind Mussolini, the France of M. Laval was more anxious to save him and his regime than it was about loyalty to the Covenant. And all along there have been powerful people in high places both in France and in Britain on the side of the dictators, since the dictators to them represented "order" of which these powerful interests are so careful in domestic and so careless in international affairs.

Nor is it just to say that all the blame for the failure to win the peace is to be laid at the door of the reactionaries. Indeed, one of the best chances in the twenty years was missed when in France and in Britain there existed the two most enlightened governments, internationally, of the two decades. I have a vivid recollection of the 1929 Assembly—the Tenth—the Assembly of Ramsay Macdonald, of Arthur Henderson, of Briand and of Stresemann. One of the high lights of that Assembly was the attempt of the Chinese delegate Dr. Wu to raise the whole question of "peaceful change" and the revision of treaties, in other words the whole question of puttling life into Article XIX. "The League of Nations," said Dr. Wu in 1929 at Geneva, "will find its strength not because it is a League of strong Nations but because it is a League of just nations." Nothing came of the venture of the Chinese delegation in the most favourable international atmosphere which had prevailed since the Great War, because not a single government at the Assembly, other than the Chinese, was eager in 1929

to see Article XIX more than what it was, a dead letter. And the truth is that whatever government has been in power in the great democracies, when League principles were genuinely in conflict with National Sovereignty, League principles invariably went under.

And this third decade, 1939–48, will it be the decade not of the leaders and not of the governments, but the decade when the peoples will speak?

When the decade began there was nothing substantial left of the gains of the pioneers in their search for a new world order. There was nothing left of the protective Articles of the Covenant. Mr. Chamberlain buried them when he said in the House of Commons on February 22, 1938, "We must not try to delude small and weak nations into thinking that they will be protected by the League of Nations against aggression." Neither was there anything left of the Washington Treaty of 1922, the Locarno Treaties of 1925, the Kellogg Pact of 1928. These are grievous casualties, but the most grievous casualty of our time is the loss of faith in the truthfulness of any international declaration and in the disinterestedness of any international undertaking. The reluctance, for example, of the small neutral, defenceless states in 1939 to follow the lead of the great democratic powers, as, to their hurt, they did eagerly follow the lead of Britain and France in the Abyssinian dispute is, at bottom, the reluctance of any state to believe any longer in the pledged word of any other state. In the moral and spiritual chaos of to-day Faith has gone, and without Faith of what avail is any pact or any treaty?

Over against this loss must be placed a gain; it may be an enormous gain. Never in history have the peoples of the Great Powers of the world been more peacefully inclined toward one another. And in the end it is for the peoples to say how long they will endure the perpetual menace of armaments which their leaders think essential for their safety or their prestige.

In other centuries renewal came through the act of the people breaking through in revolt, rebellion, and revolution. It is said that no revolt, rebellion, or revolution is possible any longer. Concentration camps, with their devilish torture, are the graveyards of potential rebellions. The Gestapo, the Ovra, the Cheka, the technique of the Secret State Police, is by this time so perfected that no revolution can break out anywhere. For all that, it is hard to believe that man who was born for freedom will endure for ever the dwarfing of human personality and the mass manufacture of mechanized minds. Such re-creative forces of the people and for the people as broke out in the French revolution of 1789 or in the European revolution of 1848 may not assert themselves in the same way. But assert themselves they will before this decade is out in 1948.

Of two things, one. Either we are witnessing the twilight of Western civilization or we are actors in a tremendous drama, the drama of Human Society moving its foundations from a competitive to a co-operative basis.

Or, as the second alternative has been more expressively put, "our generation is in travail with the World State."

BOOK REVIEWS

RAINER MARIA RILKE: DUINO ELEGIES. The German text, with an English translation, introduction, and commentary by J. B. Leishman and Stephen Spender. The Hogarth Press. 7*s.* 6*d.*

In this long-awaited publication I looked forward to the results of what seemed to be an interesting and courageous experiment. As the "Duino Elegies" express the final phase of the poet's life we naturally expect for an adequate English version the hand of a sympathetic creative poet. Mr. Leishman has given us a praiseworthy series of Rilke-translations and painstaking interpretations (*Poems*, *Requiem and Other Poems*, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, *Later Poems*, all published by the Hogarth Press). Yet, grateful as one should be, one can not claim for them a creative impulse. For the present venture Mr. Leishman joined hands with Mr. Spender. The result, unfortunately, is not so satisfactory as we hoped. The two authors have tried "to reproduce as faithfully as possible both the meaning and the metre of the original." But how much they have disturbed the poetical "sound" of the whole. It is only fair to state that one does not find the glaring mistakes and the disheartening distortions of E. and V. Sackville West's translation. Rilke once wrote to his publisher (September 5, 1909) with reference to Mr. J. Bithell's translations of some of his poems: "Mir scheinen die Übersetzungsversuche nicht anfechtbar, aber kalt und schematisch." This applies also to the present work, though there are many disputable (*anfechtbare*) renderings.

After all, Rilke is no Verlaine or Baudelaire, and there is as yet no wealth of studies on him to aid lovers of his work. Several of the critics of Mr. Leishman's earlier books could disguise only with difficulty their awkward helplessness. Rilke has been discovered in this country, but the poets that lend depth to his world, like George, Dauthendey, Borchardt, are unknown to the ordinary reader.

I do not doubt Mr. Spender's knowledge of the German language, but as his original poetry shows him to be a fine, sensitive, highly individual poet with word-colours and thought-associations quite different from Rilke's, he either could not forget his own world of to-day's facts and imagery or found Rilke's world too distant to explore. Mr. Spender (*vide* his review of "R. M. Rilke: Aspects of his Mind and Poetry" in the *New Statesman*, April 2, 1938) looked in Rilke for things and ideas for his own immediate daily needs, so that we could hardly expect a creatively successful *Umwertung* of the poet's philosophy, imagery, rhythms, and sounds. Mere interpretation might have been better

than this attempt at a unity of style whereby Mr. Leishman prepared a draft of the whole work, on the basis of which Mr. Spender prepared a second version; then, with these two versions before him, Mr. Leishman prepared the final version, which was approved by both of them. No one who knows Rilke sees any fruitful possibilities in such a method; Rilke being a "Geist- und Formgrübler," one cannot enter his world so and show its beauties to others.

In a short, informative introduction, Mr. Leishman outlines the history of the growth of the "Elegies" (his reference on page 11 to Rilke's *Five Songs: August* 1914, is liable to be misunderstood in this connection). He also adds a few careful words about the difficulties of the poems, quotes some illuminating passages on Rilke's symbolization of nature (Dauthendey should prove interesting in this respect to many, e.g. his *Kriegstagebuch*, 1914–1918) and on his awareness of the limitations of language.

Lovers of poetry and of great thought will derive utter satisfaction from the ecstatic outburst of the Duino Elegies. They introduce gently and yet completely the themes of Rilke's poet-life: the recognition of Man's transitoriness, the ideal of complete and undivided consciousness, the themes of Childhood, of the Great Lovers and of the Hero, his symbols of life-forces, of the Angel, and of his conception of the "Whole." Ultimately, every reader will discover the beauties and overcome the difficulties of this work himself. He will realize that Rilke was probably the most un-literary writer; he lived his experiences. And this provides perhaps the only link between him and Goethe, that he grasped the world through his eyes. But, compared with him—and this makes the task only the more difficult for some translators—Rilke was the most *gegensüdliche* being.

Rilke's creative power of thought-images, his summing-up of experienced speculations demand extreme concentration on the part of his translator so that he may not substitute a calculated concept for a lively, visible image. Nobody will understand this poet unless he grasps his characteristic imagery; it is a highly responsible and terrifying task to re-create in English those clear symbols.

In Rilke, form, music, and content are so closely related and interrelated that to fail in one is to fail in all, for such a failure will deprive the word and the music of their charm and leave the meaning hazy. Trying to be fair to the printed word, the authors lose sight of Rilke's vision, recapture with difficulty the more obvious cadence of his lines, complicate symbols, and sacrifice a characteristic Rilke expression to an experiment in sound-imitation. What is difficult yet transparent in the German, is too often merely confused in English.

Let me quote from the first elegy a few renderings that obstinately refuse to resemble the original or to form a poetic line:

> "And so keep down my heart and swallow the call-note
> of depth-dark sobbing."

"... a violin
would be giving itself to someone."
"... the fame
of all they can feel is far from immortal enough."
"Ought not these oldest feelings of ours to be yielding
more fruit by now?"
"... yet they went impossibly
on with their kneeling, in undistracted attention."
"Rustling towards you now from those youthfully-dead."

I do not wish to appear unfair, or to ignore the difficulties of the translators who have here and there shaped from overwhelming riches some very fine and poetically pleasing lines. Yet on the whole their language is poor, the expression awkward, highly conventional, and without creative urge.

Two attitudes I suppose are possible with regard to the commentary. Mr. Leishman has made it as brief as possible; he wishes his explanations to be regarded as scaffoldings, not as an attempt to confine Rilke's statements within a rigid logical frame. But that is precisely what the uninitiated needs. The introductions to the poet's thoughts and symbols, on the Angel, the Child, and the Hero are too fragmentary, more quotations might be given from the letters and especially references made to the elegies themselves. A fuller and more critical analysis of Rilke's famous essay entitled "Ur-Geräusch" would have helped greatly; this work appears as "Beiwerk" and loses somehow its fundamental philosophic importance. On page 126 a serious mistake occurs: *D* for *Dasein* instead of *Dastehn*. If you look at Picasso's picture you will notice that all the figures that go to make up the letter *D* are standing and that the reference is to this. Mr. B. J. Morse, in whose possession the letter is, has drawn my attention to Rilke's unpublished letter of July 14, 1907, in which he describes his visit on that day to the Jardin du Luxembourg, and how he again saw the same troupe of acrobats that he and Dora Heidrich had seen there on the same festive day in 1906. Only four acrobats are mentioned in this letter, as in the elegy; there are six people in Picasso's painting. There is no reference in the commentary to Werner Wolff's interpretation of the elegies (1937), which is interesting if only for the fact that Picasso's *Les Saltimbanques* was first printed as a frontispiece in this book.

We are nevertheless grateful for this moderately-priced German-English edition of the *Duino Elegies*, and hope that the publishers will in the near future entrust a poet who is in complete sympathy with Rilke's world with the task of yet another translation. Rilke is a great, a Goethean mind—only thus can we explain his influence on contemporary English poetic thought. May we also hope for a full Life of the poet, for selections from the letters, and for justice to his fellow-writers, Stefan George and Josef Weinheber?

F. W. SCHOBERTH

SCIENCE AND POLITICS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD. Benjamin Farrington. Pp. 243. Allen and Unwin. 10*s.* 6*d.*

Professor Farrington has earned the gratitude not only of professional classical scholars, but also of that wider public which is glad to learn of the past conduct of man, and to observe its present implications. Briefly, his thesis is as follows: he believes that the state religion of the Greek cities was threatened by the spread of the scientific knowledge of the Ionian philosophers: that this state religion was recognized by the governing classes as being, although false in itself, a useful instrument for the subjugation of the common people to their form of rule: and that the decay of the Ionian scientific tradition was due to the conscious hostility of the governing classes. This hostility is typified in the attitude of Plato, who in his latest work, the *Laws*, combines a polemic against the Ionian rationalism with the proposal to establish religious uniformity by means of an inquisition. But the scientific tradition lived on, and was preserved at its best in the system of Epicurus: Epicureanism, according to Professor Farrington, represents not the decay of Greek philosophy, but its summit. Epicurus set himself consciously to combat the state religions, by spreading scientific enlightenment not only among the educated classes, but among all who would receive it.

This leads us to Rome, and to Epicurus' greatest disciple, the Roman Lucretius: the politicians of Rome knew better than any others how to use religion for the subjugation of the common people, and Lucretius' fervour is due to his burning desire to free them from this yoke. This explains, what otherwise is obscure, the ignoring of Lucretius by the other literary figures of Rome, in particular by Cicero. Cicero saw, and saw truly, that in the poem of Lucretius there was a leaven which might threaten the oligarchical structure of the Roman state.

The oligarchical opposition to the scientific tradition was successful: and its part in the drama was later taken over by the apologists of Christianity.

This view of the history of ancient thought differs radically from that which has been the received opinion of classical scholars: and Professor Farrington, who makes no secret of the side on which his sympathies lie, is bound to come into conflict with the views of his predecessors. In my judgment he is successful in establishing his main thesis: and, while his polemical tone issues at times in generalizations which require modification, his case is clearly stated and brilliantly argued. For the scholar, the book is well documented: and the general reader is assisted by pleasant and readable translation of the relevant quotations. Both classes of reader will, I think, find this work not only instructive, but exciting.

GEOFFREY PERCIVAL

A COUNTRYMAN'S JOURNAL. H. J. Massingham. Illustrated by Thomas Hennell. Pp. 180. Chapman and Hall. 5s.

The essential theme that underlies the forty essays gathered into this book is "that bitter rift between the urban and the rustic mentality that sets our teeth on edge to-day." Mr. Massingham sees two peoples in England, the town and the country, the conquerors and the conquered. Essay after essay records some indignity inflicted on the conquered, some brave survival against impossible odds, or the betrayal and extinction of something gracious and sound and cultured.

"I forget that these bright things are no more and that, possibly for some crime that I committed in a previous existence, I am a child of the dreary present." This is the mood in which Mr. Massingham describes survivals from England's rural civilization; the making of cider by the old methods on a Gloucestershire farm; the Chiltern woodworker and his pole-lathe; the wonderful thatching of the Dorset "reed-thatchers"; or strangest survival of all, the tide-mill at Beaulieu, which is still working.

Mr. Massingham, as is well known, is in the direct line of the great downland naturalists that begins with White of Selborne and descends through Richard Jefferies and Hudson. He has their eye for topography and their close and loving observation of bird and insect, tree and flower. Notable essays in this sort are "The Old Campden Road," describing one of the prehistoric trackways of the Cotswolds, and "Egdon Heath."

Hard times have come upon the countryman, whether landowner, farmer, or peasant. He is being forced off the land and into the town, and there the old individuality of character and speech is lost. Mr. Massingham shows us in delightful little anecdotes precisely what is being lost.

> "Doctors be proper men. Folks about here respecks and trustes 'em and rightly so it be. Poor old Daniel was mortal bad; and there lay he, white as a cloud and still as a pool in summer time. 'Dear old chap! I'm afraid he's gone,' said the doctor. 'No, I bent then,' cherruped old Daniel. 'Bent indeed!' sez his old 'ooman. 'You bide quiet, Doctor knows best'."

"White as a cloud!" What a phrase! And think what underlies the excuse of a farmer before the bench on a charge of driving at night without lights. "Well, 'twould have been an insult to God Almighty to have carried a light on a night like that."

It is probably true to say of civilization in England to-day that it must "de-urbanise or die." Will that deurbanization mean a return to the gracious past reflected in this book, or will it mean the final destruction of what little remains from that past by spreading the town out thin over the countryside? Will the Cotswolds and Dorset go the way of the Vale of Glamorgan?

E. C. LLEWELLYN

ACTING: ITS IDEA AND TRADITION. Robert Speaight. Pp. 93. Cassell 2*s.* 6*d.*

Tradition has it that actors are bad after-dinner speakers. They also have a reputation for publishing long and exhausting memoirs which have little interest for the general reader, for they are usually written with one motive—the glory that has departed. It is all the more pleasing then to find one actor who can write concisely and with energetic conviction about his art. Mr. Robert Speaight is well known to playgoers as one of the finest living exponents of dramatic art. Now he has compressed into this little volume much that should interest and stimulate the amateur player.

His is no patronizing attitude; he states at the outset his contempt for the ". . . ignorant and vulgar sort of snob who affects to despise the Amateur Stage." The three sections of the book—on the idea, the tradition, and the technique of acting—are complete in themselves; how the author has dealt so fully with each one in so small a volume is amazing. He writes with authority of the Attic theatre, the Elizabethans, Garrick and Mrs. Siddons, and lastly of Henry Irving, for whom he obviously has the greatest regard. He has some very interesting observations on the methods of the Greek actors, their rigid conventions, and their wonderful command of voice technique, and describes how he tried out his own voice in the Roman theatre at Orange in Provence where the company of the Comédie Française still play occasionally.

Referring to the amateur theatre movement, Mr. Speaight admits that the best performances he has ever seen of the Ghost in *Hamlet* and of Sir Peter Teazle and Lady Candour in *The School for Scandal* were given by amateurs. "Your only limit is your ability," he adds. He deplores the tendency of some modern producers to emphasize the co-operative side of the drama. In the theatre it is the individual actor who counts most, and from that individual, says Mr. Speaight, ". . . the best acting—the only acting that lives in the memory of playgoers—comes from within, and is equally the fruit of experience as of observation. . . . What the actor is, that, ultimately, he plays."

In his concluding section Mr. Speaight pays tribute to the work of the late William Poel whose productions of Shakespeare still exert their influence on the work of Lewis Casson, Harcourt Williams, Bridges Adams, and Iden Payne. Robert Speaight himself was for a period trained by Poel, and says: "He taught me, as he taught others, the secrets of acting with an energy of conviction and a humility of heart which will abide with me as long as I live."

Such morsels should excite the appetite of the amateur actor for this book, which is written fluently and with discretion. Mr. Speaight may well write a longer book on acting: it is hard to imagine that he could write a better.

CHARLES WILLIAMS

EDMUND BURKE. Sir Philip Magnus. With many illustrations. Pp. xiv + 367. John Murray. 15*s*.

There is no doubt that in this book Sir Philip Magnus has given us the best life of Burke we possess. It is not likely to be superseded for a long time, and but for a deliberate limitation of scope would be a long-awaited standard work. The author has had access to the Burke papers at Wentworth Woodhouse and at Milton—access, we hear, hitherto not accorded to the Historical Commission or to previous biographers—and so far as any reviewer can pass opinion on what he has never seen or heard discussed, has made excellent use of them, especially in those later chapters which tell of Burke's retirement and collapse. There is much that is sad during those last years, and Burke was insistent at all times that his life had not been an easy one. He was not, he says in *A Letter to a Noble Lord*, "swaddled and rocked and dandled into a legislator." At every step of his progress he was "obliged to show his passport," and prove his value by hard work. His studies in history, political philosophy, and law were profound; he had a range of literature that is too much for many of his readers; and his artistic interests, though volatile, were intelligent and unfeigned. He helped Crabbe and Barry when he was none too sure he could help himself, and it does not undo his generosity to admit that it was generally at the expense of the country. The pages in which Sir Philip traces the financial dealings of the Burke family are highly instructive, for the prosecutor of Warren Hastings was himself a peculator of skill and rapacity, who never forgot his family and friends.

To Burke the principle of government was that power resides in "rank, and office, and title, and all the solemn plausibilities of the world." It was when these "solemn plausibilities" were brutally but inevitably disregarded in France that he turned his incomparable oratory against the Revolution and broke with the Whigs. We know that Tom Paine was right: he pitied the plumage but forgot the dying bird; but who can read without excitement the magnificent perorations on the passing of an age he chose to regard as chivalrous? Yet he stood for liberty, too, the liberty of the human spirit. He was, if the term be not too anachronistic, strongly anti-totalitarian. He kept a warmer heart for Ireland than most legislators for the place that sent them forth. He saw the rights and wrongs of the American question.

All this is treated admirably in this book. I think more attention might have been given to his literary significance, and there are times, like his earliest years in Parliament and the trial of Warren Hastings, when a fuller treatment seems called for, but the final verdict must be one of warm approval.

GWYN JONES

SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE AND ART. Peter Alexander. Pp. 247. Nisbet. 8s. 6*d*.

I began this book with admiration and liking; I ended it with dissatisfaction. The Regius Professor of English Language and Literature in the University of Glasgow has attempted a survey of a vast subject, has sought to sift rumour from fact and falsehood from both, and has assisted the less fortunate reader to pick his way through the ever-opening territory of Shakespearian scholarship and the particular and smaller terrain of newly discovered records. The life and the plays are treated separately but concurrently—an excellent method of procedure. Professor Alexander has treated with knowledge and commonsense what we know of the dramatist's life, and this part of his work may be recommended warmly to those whose notions so far are derived in vague fashion from rehashings of Aubrey, Betterton, and the rest, and who have not the time to read Chambers' massive study. At times he seems to be pleading a special case, and his Shakespeare appears from the beginning as a more substantial man than the majority of young students even to-day believe. He deals faithfully with some of the sillier gossip become gospel, and for that deserves warm thanks.

The external criticism of the plays is very good: the statistics in the six appendices, the general discussion of sources, date, and the like. It is inevitable that with some of his literary criticism of individual plays I find it impossible to agree. If I have time to make only one point here, it is because I regard it as of the utmost importance. Too often Professor Alexander falls victim to the very cancer of criticism, and works from theory to practice, from preconception back to the play. His criticism of *Hamlet* appears to me a new comedy of errors. When Hamlet does not run his sword through the kneeling Claudius, it is because "his purpose has been blunted by nothing more than the natural reluctance in a man of proved nerve, courage, and resolution, to stab a defenceless man.... Hamlet's adversary must strike the first blow. Not that Hamlet can admit to himself, even for a moment, that this is what holds his hand."

I think the reason for Hamlet's inaction to be wrong, but it is the last sentence of the quotation that appears to me an abuse of critical method. With all respect to the authority and reputation of the author, to his great learning and experience, I must bluntly state my opinion that such argument from what is admittedly not there, such reading into the play of one's own ideas, is indefensible. With my own ears I have heard it claimed (*horresco referens*) that the last act of *Romeo and Juliet* should be played as farce, and while Professor Alexander would give such lunacy short shrift, he cannot entirely escape the charge that his own methods permit such deplorable lapses from commonsense. Of many of the plays he writes too little, whetting the appetite for more. He is better on the comedies than the tragedies.

GWYN JONES

YOUNGEST SON. Chester Lloyd Jones. Pp. 111. Madison, Wisconsin. 1938. Privately published.

The proud claim was made in the United States Senate by John Sharp Williams of Mississippi (and was duly entered in the Congressional Record) that no nation according to its size had contributed more to the development of the American Republic than the Welsh. Whether this claim is justified or not would be invidious to argue and impossible to decide. Numberless men and women took part in the epic struggle of subjugating the wilderness who have scarcely left their names behind, but they brought to their task virtues of courage and industry, and they handed on to their children a tradition of sound living, and in a final reckoning no contribution to the growth of a nation is greater than that. It is fitting that the record of such a family should find a permanent form in this book.

The author's grandfather left Wales for America in 1844, crossing in a sailing vessel which took in all no less than eight weeks. The emigrant's youngest son was born ten years later, and from the age of 16 he kept a diary which his own son has now used in writing this book. It is the story of a relentless struggle against difficulties in the Middle Western States, difficulties arising from the nature of the soil, from the Civil War, and from the vagaries of the wheat market, but overcome by the same striving for a better life which brought the family across the Atlantic.

The book forms an interesting study in genealogy. The emigrant's maternal grandfather was the Rev. David Lloyd, nephew and successor of the Rev. Jenkin Jones, the founder of the famous Unitarian church of Llwynrhydowen. Surely no family had a better claim than this to be the fine flower of Welsh culture. What, then, became of this strain when transplanted to the new environment and, perhaps, wider opportunities of America? In the second generation the tendency was still to adhere to the old tradition of the family. The emigrant's third son was the Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, a man of power in the religious and educational life of the Middle West. But in the next generation come the distinguished author of this book, formerly attaché to the American Embassy in Paris, and his cousin, Frank Lloyd Wright, founder of the Taliesin Fellowship, and generally reputed to be the world's greatest living architect.

Even more interesting is the story of how the emigrant strove hard to keep his family together as one group, worshipping in the Welsh language. Most of his children married Welsh mates, but the environment was too strong; the language disappeared, and the family became merged in the larger community. Regret would be useless, but one can hope with the author that the qualities of the emigrant have been, in some degree at least, handed on to his descendants for all time.

DAVID WILLIAMS

THE ELEVENTH HOUR. Vincent Sheean. Hamish Hamilton. Pp. 318. 10*s.* 6*d.*

Mr. Sheean's book is the first piece of "crisis" literature it has fallen to my lot to read. I had, of course, heard (and not without admiration) of Mr. Sheean and of journalists like him who undergo risks, privation, and exhaustion in order to see as much as possible of Europe in its days of trouble. All such books as this, I have always felt, must be very distressing to read—a typical 1938 headline drawn out into 300 pages is not to be undertaken lightly. By a piece of irony I have read Mr. Sheean's book during my one holiday this year which is consisting of a week-end in London, a city about whose future Mr. Sheean gives no ground for feeling cheerful.

Certainly, *The Eleventh Hour* is distressing enough. But that—for the book is an account of Spain and Czecho-Slovakia in 1938—is hardly Mr. Sheean's fault; and he compensates as far as he can for the bitter confusion of the events he describes by writing racily and by putting his story within a framework of explication which is, at least, clear, even if we may judge it to be too simple.

Mr. Sheean is very hard on Mr. Chamberlain and his government. "Had England," he says, "had another government with men for leaders who could put their feet down and utter unmistakable, if not truculent negatives, Czecho-Slovakia would be where it was, and the Nazi menace nowhere." If this is true, it is dismaying enough. Fortunately for me I have a kind of prophylactic against the dismay bred of such thoughts. This is my belief—that there is no difference worth speaking of between Tories, Liberals, and Labour men, and that much the same thing would have happened in recent years whichever party was in power. Philosophers notoriously dwell in a night in which all cows are black. I make no claim to being a philosopher, but in the matter of politics so hideous and inspissated is the night of my ignorance that I cannot bring myself to believe, still less to see, that there is the slightest difference of colour between the Tory, Liberal, and Labour cows respectively (of course I mean when it comes to *doing* something instead of jabbering). Tories play fast and loose with the Empire; Liberals turn bloody, bold, and bellicose; and if there is a body more conservative than the Labour party (to say nothing of the Trades Unions) I for one should be glad of a chance to inspect it. By their deeds, not their talk, you know them; and, as I say, I suspect, no doubt ignorantly, that whatever party was in power last September much the same thing would have happened. Indeed, it is perhaps permissible to amuse oneself by imagining England despatching to Munich (and bringing home from Munich, flapping a miserable paper) not the fairly cool and phlegmatic Mr. C., but the dashing Sir Archie—or, quite as good, Mr. Attlee, ably

supported in his secretariat (let us fondly imagine) by the Editor of *The New Statesman and Nation*. On the whole I think Sir Archibald and Mr. Attlee have more to be thankful for than to be angry about.

I should be sorry if this shocking self-disclosure led any one to think I feel cynically or lightly about the miseries of 1938. I have thus disclosed myself to show (if, indeed, it can have any interest for anybody) how one deplorable specimen of humanity finds a mite of comfort in these disturbing days. One word more. England in the course of its history has had (not *produced*) two statesmen (and only two to the best of my knowledge) who were of the kind who could get outside history and, so to speak, knock history on the head. Mr. Sheean is an American. America also has had at least one statesman of this order; and *he* said that he lived that democracy might not perish, not from America, but from the earth. The shame of England may be great and deep. I hope, with all my heart, that no day may come when Mr. Sheean must judge America as bitterly as he now judges England.

D. G. JAMES.

OUR SEPTEMBER NUMBER

THE WELSH REVIEW for September will contain three short stories: "God and the War," by Eliot Crawshay-Williams; "At Sea," by Ll. Wyn Griffith; and "The Fair," by Edgar Howard. The poems will be translations from the Welsh by Philip P. Graves and Gwyn Williams. R. S. Wood writes on "The Caves of Wales"; and Gwilym Davies continues his "Beyond Our Frontiers." We shall again reprint extracts from the Broadcast Talks, and there will be book reviews by Harold Watkins, Iorwerth C. Peate, Franklin Evans, J. M. Lloyd, and others. The illustrations will be by M. E. Eldridge.

EYES ON AMERICA. The United States as seen by her artists. With an Introduction and Commentary by W. S. Hall. Pp. 150. 11¼ x 8¼. The Studio Ltd. 10*s.* 6*d.*

PORTRAIT OF NEW YORK. Felix Riesenberg and Alexander Alland. Pp. 213. With 62 plates. The Macmillan Company of America. $5.00.

NEW YORK PANORAMA. Prepared by the Federal Writers' Project, with an introductory chapter by Susan Ertz. Illustrated. Pp. 526. Constable. 12*s.* 6*d.*

Three things have combined of late to bring the United States at all times before our eyes: the World Fair, the visit to Canada and America of the King and Queen, and the unparalleled opportunity its citizens have of sorting out the most pressing troubles of the Old World. These three books come on the market at a proper time, then. The first deals with the whole range of modern American painting, the other with the face of one city, and that the most fantastic city in the world. All bring vividly to the reader (if the term may be applied to the student of reproduced paintings and photographs, as well as the print) the phrase we often hear without its making much impression, that America is a continent as well as a nation. In *Eyes on America* there are pictures of cities and deserts, of tropical forests and ice-lands, bays, swamps, and mountains, industries and agriculture, sports, entertainments, and such cataclysms of nature as we only read about on this side of the Atlantic. To turn over its pages is to move at your own chosen speed through a panorama embracing thousands of miles and hundreds of types. In treatment, so far as generalization is possible for the black and white reproductions, there is a hardness and brevity that contrast powerfully with the annual volume of our own Royal Academy. None of the work seems tired, and the compiler has done wisely to exclude all but a few portraits of celebrities. His comments on the pictures, refreshingly American for an American book, add no small enjoyment to them. There are eight plates in colour and over two hundred in black and white. There are brief biographies of the painters at the end of the volume.

Mr. Hall regrets in his Introduction that artists have fought shy of some of the most astonishing vistas of New York. These may be found in Mr. Alland's photographic contributions to *Portrait of New York* and the 64 pages of plates in *New York Panorama*. Whatever else be said for and against skyscrapers, they lend themselves to photography as no other type of building does. To the least imaginative the plate opposite page 63 of the first book, of the vast blank, myriad-windowed wall of a titanic "Bastille of the book-keepers" must be terrifying. Mr. Alland's magnificent plates are accompanied by a vivid impressionistic commentary in prose by Mr. Riesenberg the novelist. Writer and illustrator are in equal partnership, and do their job well, though

Mr. Riesenberg's final chapter, in the vein of "City of poisoners, politicians, solicitors, Nordics, wops, cops, town of good bad women and bad good women, centre of fights," etc., misses the mark badly. There is no need for rhapsody; sober fact is mad enough for bedlam here. The reader in search of information will do better with *New York Panorama*, which properly claims to be "a comprehensive view of the Metropolis prepared by the Federal Writers' Project and presented in a series of articles by various hands." The "hands" remain anonymous, but they have produced a good and solid account of the various aspects of their city. It is particularly strong on the statistical side, and throughout inspires respect. At times a little of Mr. Riesenberg's "pep" would help clinch matters, but I can best recommend the two books as in essence and method complementary. Between them they offer a picture of a megalopolis, with infinite possibilities for good and evil, and not a little frightening to the thoughtful.

M. F. WILMOT

ONE WORD THERE IS. Frank Gubb. Pp. 416. Quality Press. *7s. 6d.*

This is a good novel. At times it is a terrible one. The setting is the village of Izarra in the Basque country, the time during the Spanish Civil War. The characters are the varied folk of the town, most of them faithful to the Republican cause, but some few Nationalists. The larger issue of the war has not been allowed to overcome the everyday life of the place, and there are vivid sketches of an obvious first-hand quality. Manola is given the job of spying on Jose, himself suspected rightly of being a Nationalist spy; she falls in love with him, but is loved by Jose's brother. There is a fine study of the priest Padre Juan, who stays faithful to his flock till those last dreadful days when Izarra, like Guernica, is bombed and machine-gunned by German and Italian planes. This piece of butchery, too frightful to re-read, is the solution of all problems but one—how men can be so vile. "Men," cries Manola, "Men! It was men did this. There were men up there in those planes. Men who poured fire and torture over children. Men who sent them to do it, men who are gloating over the reports of it being done. Men, men, men! Oh, Christ, why must there be men in the world!" The novel concludes with the hope of the two young people that they may help regain the shattered liberty of an ancient, independent people.

J. R. RICHARDS

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