

THE EGOIST

No. 4.—VOL. V.

APRIL 1918.

SIXPENCE.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE		PAGE
PHILOSOPHY: THE SCIENCE OF SIGNS. XV (<i>continued</i>)—		TWO AMERICAN POETS. By John Gould Fletcher	60
TWO RIVAL FORMULAS. By D. Marsden	49	PROFESSIONAL, OR By Apteryx	61
SOLDIER'S SONG. By Richard Aldington	54	VIBRATIONS. By Leigh Henry	62
DISJECTA MEMBRA. By T. S. Eliot	55	THE ANGLO-FRENCH SOCIETY	62
BLACK EARTH. By Marianne Moore	55	A NEW ANNUAL	63
PASSING PARIS. By Madame Ciolkowska	56	CORRESPONDENCE	63
THE NOVELS OF DOROTHY RICHARDSON. By May Sinclair	57		

PHILOSOPHY: THE SCIENCE OF SIGNS XV (*continued*)—TWO RIVAL FORMULAS

By D. MARSDEN

V (= SECTION)

(28) IN the preceding sections of this chapter we determined (so we consider) the nature and constitution of the external world and have done so, moreover, by resorting only to logical means. By forcing the symbolizing instrument in relation to the ultimates of experience, to conform to one of its own plainly expressed characteristics, to wit, that of comprehensive and exhaustive classification, we found ourselves instructed as to the nature of the external world: and this with the conviction of certainty which comes of the knowledge that one may deny or ignore it only at the price of being involved in flagrant contradictions.

(29) In our next chapter we propose to make a like procedure declare for us also the nature of *reality*: a conception as vital to the scientist and philosopher as that of the external world itself: one which indeed is more often than not identified with it. But before assembling the grounds upon which we propose to justify our definition of the *real*, we need to look a little more closely at what is involved in our contention that logic is a sufficient and adequate basis for the scientific grounding of these ultimate concerns of our experience.

(30) Putting the matter into words as simple as we can frame them, we shall say that by this contention we mean we can arrive at a verdict as to the *constitution of things* by a subjection of *words* to already known laws of valid classification.

(31) The first point to note relative to this contention is that it implies no innovation as far as the history of science goes, while in philosophy the position has so entrenched itself that the most modern of theories despise it not merely for its infertility, but almost equally because it is dowdy.

(32) Nevertheless though the new philosophy scorns it, and science old and new accounts it merely a fantastic misuse of language, we shall here attempt to show that existent scientific conceptions—be they proved erroneous or valid—are built up on a basis of this precise character. We shall, moreover, endeavour to show not only that the existent basis of science is logical, but that it fails simply because it is not the right and adequate logical basis. The ultimate issue, therefore, is not as to whether the bases of our knowledge are logical or non-logical. The final question is one concerning the adequacy of specific logical formulas.

(33) The dominant strain of our science is mathematical. Early and late our scientific history testifies to the influence of the science of numbers. In our modern science this strain intensifies. The Newtonian physics upon which it is based was founded on astronomical considerations, and astronomy is a mathematical creation. In Bergson's phrase: "Modern science is the daughter of astronomy; it has come down from heaven to earth along the inclined plane of Galileo, for it is through Galileo that Newton and his successors are connected with Kepler."

(34) It would be a mistake, however, to think of modern science as in any way drastically cut off from ancient science. It is necessary to place it in its right perspective as a mere stage in the course of European philosophic culture. When so placed it is possible to see it as an orderly resumption and development of the quest of knowledge along certain lines unescapable once a particular formula has been adopted as its basis. The continuity of its career, however, is broken by an interlude which we can regard as taken up with an ardent but futile attempt to make a rival formula prove a superior adequacy.

Its triumphant reassertion in modern science is, on the other hand, the strong bound forward which it makes after its brief period of comparative obscurity.

(35) The two formulas are: (1) that which asserts the philosophy of nature to resolve itself into a science of the properties of numbers; and (2) that which asserts it to be the science of the properties of symbols in general. Of these two, the first has been definitely articulate from the very beginnings of European culture, while the second has been apprehended only by a blind dumb instinct down to this present day.

(36) When we turn to only ancient philosophy we find the Greeks working from both these formulas though without realizing that the one must ultimately claim precedence over the other. Necessarily so, since only one was definitely propounded. Very early the Greek philosopher Pythagoras, influenced no doubt by earlier and non-European cultures, enunciated the formula that the philosophy of nature is the science of numbers. Inquiry into the properties of numbers, he taught, would bring us to an understanding of the nature of things. The key to knowledge was *number*.

(37) As to the second formula which would assert that the key of knowledge is to be found in the properties of signs and the symbolizing faculty in its entirety: allegiance took the form of a questioning of the import of the whole of experience as embodied in general symbols, and in particular of the import of these symbols—such, for instance, as that of *being*—which seemed to embody the ultimate meaning of life and existence. In this case all efforts were tentative and provisional: as indeed they still are and must remain until the formula itself is definitely recognized and acted upon.

(38) It is not difficult to make clear the relationship which these two formulas bear to each other, inasmuch as both are reducible to a common denomination. What are numbers? Nothing surely but a species of symbol, and that species the one of meagrest connotation. Numbers are shorthand signs, easy to keep within their assigned orbits and classes because their simple content makes it easy to keep such content clear and fixed. Intrinsically, numbers are words, but words with a radically limited meaning. They are signs for a single aspect abstracted from things of which other words represent the fuller and more complex signs. And since these latter relate to objects of the external world, and since the numerical aspect by no means exhausts the aspects of the external world, the nature of the latter cannot be exhausted by a consideration of merely numerical signs. Therefore: the philosophy of nature will demand for its full rendering a complete science of signs. Such a science will comprehend both philosophy and science.

(39) Now the archetype of all signs is a word, and it is into words that all secondary forms of signs, numerical and other, must debouch if they are finally to be intelligible. Hence it follows that when we say we base the ultimates of our knowledge on logical grounds, it is not to be assumed we are trusting to supports less strong than if we were to declare them to be based on mathematical grounds. Mathematics is obviously a mere subsection of logic, and knowledge which declares itself grounded on the latter is at least—to say no more—as well grounded as that which is declared to have a mathematical basis. That the very limitedness of the connotation of numbers results in a simplicity of symbolic character which makes it possible to push the determining of their properties very far, and thus create effects which for the uninitiated have the appearance of profoundest complexity cannot, and does not, affect the nature of the source from which they have been drawn.

(40) It is this very meagreness of the numerical connotation which explains in relation to mathematical science its swift progress, its long and early start, and the articulateness with which its objectives were so early conceived. Conversely, it was the fullness and complexity of the majority of verbal symbols which caused philosophy proper to meet a fate which was exactly the reverse. For, granting that the numerical basis is not fundamental, the onus fell upon philosophy of affirming just what aspect of experience was. This task philosophy has been vaguely feeling after and endeavouring definitely to shoulder, and to its prosecution the sound vitality and balanced intellect of the Greeks made impressive contributions. The comprehensive intellect of Aristotle, for instance: the first great scientific formulator of psychology: made a decisive move towards grafting order upon chaos by reducing the assertions regarding experience to fundamental *classes*. The instinct which impelled Aristotle to formulate his *categories* is perhaps the soundest note ever struck in philosophy.

(41) Unfortunately his disciples of a later age, in their preoccupation with a made branch of logic which they mistakenly conceived to be the whole, failed to follow up this fruitful lead in “psychologic.” Precisely speaking psychology is just logic redundantly named. When logic claims what belongs to it, psychology will merge into logic. And logic being the science of symbols, and *mind* being our collective term for the entire phenomena connected with symbolization, there is obviously excess in the interpretation of this “psycho.” The fact that the genius of the schoolmen did not rise to a conception of the oneness of psychology and logic explains the overwhelming disrepute which betook them notwithstanding their most admirable achievements in connexion with syllogistic logic.*

(42) As the work of the mediæval scholars is to be regarded as embodying an unconscious bias in favour of the second formula which, tacitly, was being given an opportunity to prove itself, their failure amounted practically to a confession of the inadequacy of this formula. Their inability to conceive the unity of syllogistic logic with the broader logic of the mental processes in general appears, moreover, to have left no barrier between them and an abyss of verbal frivolities into which they plunged with an abandonment so outrageous that the makers of modern science found ready justification in the eyes of all men in their irritated recoil, not merely from the superficial frivolousness of scholastic dialectics, but from the basic formula of which the schoolmen have to be regarded as the uncomprehending champions. If modern science did not commit itself to a definite rejection of this formula, it did so as far as all practical consequences were concerned by committing itself to the exclusive adoption of the mathematical basis. Comparatively speaking, the position of unchallengeable authority with which modern science became invested represented the triumphant bid on the part of the more obvious and showy for the best of men's intellectual energies at the expense of intellectual tasks which, though subtle, were the more basic and essential.

(43) We have attributed the wresting of authority from philosophy and the investment of it in the hands of an essentially mathematical science to the schoolmen's neglect to follow up Aristotle's psychology on the lines indicated by the *categories*. That we are not wrong in doing so is proved by the course which events took when psychology finally re-emerged at the hands of Locke. Locke galvanized his subject into life by submitting it to an honest and vigorous treatment which was characteristically his own. He did not, however, make approach to

* In future this series will appear under the title of *Philosophy: The Science of Signs*.

the subject by way of the categories : a fact of which the adverse consequences are to be seen when Berkeley, following closely at Locke's heels and developing his position, made philosophy's supremely great discovery. Berkeley's famous formula *esse = percipi* was an answer to the first great question which emerges if we adopt the formula that philosophy is the science of the property of signs. That question resolves itself into a demand for the symbol expressive of the attribute of experience which in more comprehensive measure than any of which the numerical aspect is capable should include all experience and every aspect of it. The formula *esse = percipi* asserts that the required attribute is perception : feeling. Berkeley might well have exclaimed "Eureka!" He had determined the particular symbol for the discovery of which the whole course of philosophy was held up.

(44) The irony of the situation, however, was that having found it, both he and his contemporaries were at a complete loss to know what to do with it. He was in the tragic position of one who joins in a hunt and stumbles upon the objective before having made himself aware just what that objective is. Accordingly, neither Berkeley nor his contemporaries were able to *place* his find. This is the fact we have to bear in mind when we are considering why Berkeley's formula should have exerted so divided an influence over subsequent philosophies, and no influence whatever over subsequent science. Much has to be accounted, of course, to the particular period in which it found expression. Mathematical science had made extraordinarily great strides and was in mid-course of a royal progress, while logic had not yet recovered in repute. But for the main cause, we have to refer to Berkeley himself. A commander of ideas, no less than a commander of armies, requires a ruthless and clean-edged hardness in his intellectual dealings if he is to be equal to the tasks laid on him. Berkeley, almost to the point of moral defect, suffered a spirit of accommodation among his ideas. That sweet reasonableness which is very tolerable when it comports itself amiably towards all sorts and conditions of men, becomes little short of intolerable when it undergoes translation into a form which allows the indiscriminate shake-down of all sorts and conditions of *assertions*. It is this curious kind of amiability which, notwithstanding his youthful genius, was characteristic of Berkeley. He was, in fact, born with a temperament comporting better with the philanthropist who was to die a beloved bishop than with the rôle of an intellectual force destined to turn back an onrushing tide of conceptions swollen momentarily to the assuredness of dogma.

(45) Without a doubt Berkeley was convinced of the accuracy of the discovery he had made, but he regarded it as something of a curiosity : a logical freak, the finding of escape from which philosophy must assume as its ingenious and peculiar task. As his later works prove, conviction regarding this achievement of his youth never really got into his blood. Not all his originality and genius was sufficient to make this true—but alien. Truth acted as disintegrant of the curious mythological matter which his later works reveal as the native stuff of his mind. *Esse = percipi* remained something he neither could nor would disown, but at the same time something which he was powerless to assimilate.

(46) And if this is true of Berkeley it is equally so of the philosopher who followed him, and who had perforce to take his discovery into account. The criticism of modern philosophic speculation is the harshest that can be ascribed to philosophic speculation. It is loose : it is slack. It allows the logical noose to hang about ill-assorted and disagreeing conceptions, with a lightness which the humanest judge would frown upon, were the issue at stake the verdict on some unhappy wretch fighting for his life.

(47) So the centuries have rolled on and science and philosophy have pursued their increasingly divergent ways, with the latter feebly endeavouring to exert an opposing authority. But now it seems a time has come when a strange new doubt has overtaken science. Thanks to its own unceasing endeavours, out of its own works have sprung effects which strip its established conceptions bare of their assurance. Those very conceptions of time and space upon which Newton founded modern physics find themselves called in question, and in spite of the discounting by those qualified to judge of the effects which such a condition of affairs must have upon the scientific outlook, it is certain that these effects must be too great to be at present even conceivable.

(48) It is not, however, considerations of the amount of accommodation, more and less, which such facts must entail for science which constitute their significance for philosophy. Their philosophic significance will be of a different kind. Faced with them, the philosopher will call to mind how human intelligence has been cowed—not to say bullied—by these conceptions, so that no layman would have dared directly to call them in question. Even the initiated would not have dared make any direct onslaught on their truth. On the contrary, they arrived at their scepticism indirectly. These conceptions, they held, were true ; therefore something else must be true. But this expected sequence proved itself *not* true : whence the shadow cast on the accuracy of the antecedent "truth." Their significance for philosophy is, therefore, of this kind :

(49) The bases of our physics seemed to have been put in permanently and for all time. But these bases dissolve ! The hour accordingly has struck when our conceptions of physics must necessarily be overhauled. And not only these of physics. There must also ensue a reissuing of all the fundamental values. The entire question of knowledge, truth, and reality must come up for reassessment. Obviously, therefore, a new opportunity has been born for philosophy, for if there is a theory of knowledge which can support itself the effective time for its affirmation is now when all that dead weight of preconception, so overwhelming in Berkeley's time, is relieved by a transmuting sense of instability and self-mistrust appearing in those preconceptions themselves.

VI

(50) It may help to make clearer the nature of the antagonism which has grown up between philosophy and modern science if, side by side with this sketch, we indicate just what kind of difficulty appears to have called the philosopher into being, and what is, therefore, the particular question whose settlement comes under his special authority. Let us ignore for a moment these positions for which we have been contending, i.e. that our science, in spite of its practical spoils, is fundamentally perverse, and that its perversity is to be traced to its mathematical basis. Let us rather revert to our definition of a *known* phenomenon, and from that basis see whether it is not possible to arrive at the particular kind of ailment infecting our structure of knowledge which has made the philosopher : the physician of the intellectual body : an urgent necessity.

(51) A *known* phenomenon is one which the organism is capable of experiencing simultaneously in two distinct but co-ordinated forms : (1) In an externalized *perceived* form, and (2) an inner mental *conceived* form. (We will not confuse the argument by considering here the possibility of an exclusively conceptual form.) A *perceived* form becomes a *known* form in virtue of being overlaid with a *conceptual* form.

(52) Now the characteristic of the conceptual form of things is that it springs into existence at the

instance of a symbol, and the characteristic of *known* forms being the co-existence of the mental form, side by side with the sensed one, it becomes clear in what sense the activity of *knowing* has to be described as the creation of the symbol. *Knowing* is the effect produced when the concept-creating symbol is put into action. Hence *mind*, which is our collective term for the faculty of knowing, is thus the creation of the symbol. So, too, is *knowledge*, which is our collective term for the products of this faculty, also the creation of the symbol.

(53) Such being the close connexion between *knowing* and the power to *make and use symbols*, it is obvious that the quality of this power will find an immediate reflection in the structure of our knowledge. Any stuntedness, which for any reason infects this power, will entail a halt in the growing fabric of knowledge.

(54) Consideration of the properties of this power will constitute the main part of the future work of philosophy, inclusive of science, but we shall here concern ourselves only with certain of its more obvious features. The first of these, which our immediate purpose requires us to emphasize, is the *spontaneous* character of the faculty's activities. Its powers are inherent and untaught. Its effects and all the modes of its procedure were established countless ages before philosopher and scientist were needed or conceived of. Like the other faculties of sense, this faculty also derived the power to shape and deploy itself from the inherent intelligence of the flesh. Just as the eye, because it could see, produced *seen* effects, and the ear, because it could hear, produced *heard* effects, so the symbolizing power inasmuch as it was empowered to make and apply symbols went to work and produced all those effects which collectively we call *mental*.

(55) Among these mental effects of the symbolizing faculty we shall make a division into: (1) the matter of mind; (2) the mode of mind: respectively the stuff and procedure of our mental world. Symbols in their rôle of quickening cues create the organic movements which constitute the mental *elements*: the *concepts*: the *thoughts of things*. But in their second rôle of custodian of their own products, symbols succeed in impregnating their forms with the appearance of an interrelated order. Their power in this is like that in a seed which sends out from within itself the differentiated items of flower, leaf, branch, trunk, and root, every such item bearing a related difference one with another.

(56) Let us, however, turn from similes to the facts themselves. Let us look at this interrelatedness of signs. The typical sign is a *word*, and the typical word is a *name* or *noun*. Now of nouns there are two main varieties—*proper* and *common*. The proper noun is the name of an *individual*, and as such its function is limited to the primary work of the symbol, i.e. that of ensuring exclusively the regular conceptual creation of the individual named. Automatically, therefore, it serves to distinguish conceptually the individual named from all other experienced forms. It makes a "class" of dimensions limited to an isolated unit.

(57) The function of the common noun, on the contrary, exemplifies *both functions* of the symbol. It creates the conceptual form of that which it names, and it indicates that the latter is merely one of a group of forms which, in respect of some particular feature, are all alike. The one act of naming serves for both *conceptual creation* and *classification*. In thus being able to exercise this second function, our symbols are able to reflect a marked characteristic of our perceived experience. The latter tends to multiply itself into similars and repeat itself to an enormous extent. The symbolizing instrument is able to take note of this, and, moreover, effect a large economy on the conceptual side, for it makes one symbol serve to indicate a vast number of indi-

vidual items grouped under one name. The secondary function of this name will thus be to intimate that all the items thereunder grouped possess one distinguishing feature which is to be recognized as the mark of the entire class collectively. It will be in terms of this feature that every member of the class will have its character defined. The name *pen*, for instance, serves to start a mental image of a pen into being: possibly of several pens in swift succession. If one had time and cared to spend it in such a manner the one name *pen* would enable us to bring into memory every form of pen of which we had ever had acquaintance; but it would also, in contradistinction to these individual mental creations, all the time be asserting the one essential characteristic which makes all pens recognizable whatever their individual differences might be.

(58) It is into the shaping of those common names of things and action that the untutored genius of the human race, in a spontaneous exercise and on the model of an organic growth, has expended the classifying powers inherent in the symbol. Beginning, let us say, with the name of an individual experience: with the mental element, that is, men have with increasing observation proceeded to graft like upon like, constantly choosing new aspects of things to make into new bases of likeness, until languages have been formed which produce the impression of some overwhelmingly colossal tree whose branches vein our total experience. Conception and classification—the two factors of knowledge—have thus grown together out of the one power like the comb and the honey originate from the bee. From a common root has sprung the trunk of conceptions with branches springing therefrom, and branches from branches, to almost interminable length. Finally, travelling in the direction of increasing differentiation the process can always be pulled up short in the name of the individual—twig, leaf, flower, fruit, as the case might be. For it is to be observed that each common item may be a subdivision of a class still more comprehensive and, on the other hand, may itself be the class-name of which another name is that of a more differentiated sub-class. It is part and parcel of the meaning of the process that it shall be workable in both directions: *outwards* towards greater differentiation and individualization; *inwards* towards unity and an all-comprehensive identity.

(59) Need we say that the account of this process has long ago been written out by four logicians, and with a most admirable degree of fineness. We shall not then need to do more here than indicate the fact and mention the terms which they have given to the two extremes of the classifying process. These terms we propose to utilize. They are: (1) *Infima species*, and (2) *summum genus*. The first is the term applied to that item in a scheme of subdivision which is so particularized that it is incapable of subdivision because there are no two of its kind. It represents the terminus of a subdividing based upon any given principle of division.

(60) The second is the term applied to the terminus when the process is applied in the reverse order: that towards a comprehensive all-embracing unity. Between these two termini the dual process of subdivision and unification should run smoothly and without hitch. A cataract on the eye, and a hitch in the classification process, would constitute equal types of defect if we were to compare the two processes of *sight* and *symbolization*. The meaning of intellectual uneasiness and discontent consists in the classifying process applied in any connexion whatsoever being held up at a point. Intellectual satisfaction consists in the fact that the process links or unravels itself with the ease of a smoothly knit chain.

(61) Thus far the proposition sounds sufficiently simple. To explain why in practice it is not so

simple we must revert to the figure we used for the classification structure: that of a branching tree. The *merit* of this simile is that it gives the idea of an organic growth presenting differentiated members as parts of an interrelated whole. Its *demerit* is the simplicity with which a tree throws off its sub-forms. This simplicity of structure does not obtain in the structure of classes. In the verbal structure the subsidiary branches spring not only from the trunk to redivide themselves in like form; but every item in virtue of one or other of its many aspects sends out innumerable connecting strands of likeness with a vast number of others widely disconnected in respect of their other aspects. This multiplicity of aspects involving the emergence of bases of likeness in widely differing items results in a system of almost indescribably intricate cross-division. It is the steering of a strict logical way among these communication-lines which constitutes that important process called *reasoning*. To *reason* is to say *what* is *what*: to assert whether or no some particular item of our experience belongs in a class of which some particular feature is taken as the basis of likeness.

(62) We have already said that the properties of the symbol are inherent and exercised spontaneously. As *reasoning* is a synonym for classification that remark will apply equally to the latter also. Reasoning is as old as speech: at least, it is as old as the general name. It had no more to wait for the logician than the eye had to wait for the oculist for instructions how to see. The rules of the syllogism are, therefore, merely an elucidation of the manner in which uninstructed man employed his unique faculty. They are culled from an examination of a procedure which was already an established fact. The injunctions of formal logic can be considered so many sign-posts indicative of nasty turns and corners: *warnings to reasoners*. To listen to them constitutes a voluntary discipline to which men elect to submit a native and inborn gift, exactly as one who pursues some art or craft disciplines a power which has already affirmed its type and mode; and there seems to be nothing to prevent us from concluding that the discipline is productive of as educative effects in the one as in the other.

(63) If then we say that the practice of formal logic, in a manner analogous to that in which teaching and practice make a man with a gift for music into a better musician, has made men better reasoners, able to find their way more skilfully and delicately through the labyrinth of cross-divisions, we have allowed ourselves sufficient to yield the statement that syllogistic logic ought to have paved the way to a solution of the ultimate questions of philosophy and science. These questions are purely affairs of classification: of getting such a grip of the sum of symbols that they can be arranged in an unbroken sequence from supreme *summum genus* to the *infima species* of any scheme of division whatever.

(64) Let us, therefore, revert again to the interlaced tree of classes in which our symbols have gripped our sensations into the net of the *known*. Just as men have found themselves able to augment the verbal structure and the stock of the *known* by being able to apply symbols to an ever-increasing number of differentiations, they have in the reverse direction been able to detect ever-widening schemes of identification. Men have spontaneously marked out great fundamental classes with valid and permanent marks. Spontaneously, they have plotted out comprehensive specifications corresponding to those we now know as the *external world*, the *organism*, *reality*, *truth*, *time*, *space*, *substance*, and the like. Into their making has gone the accumulated observations and wisdom of countless generations of men. And side by side with these, vaguely, there began to form the conception of some *single* aspect of experience which must

be common to them all: an aspect of similarity which would envelop the whole. Like a sheath it would enclose every form; like a vital fluid it would run through every fibre; as the very stuff and ultimate constituent of experience it would compose the fibres too. It would, in short, be an attribute so comprehensive that we should be forced to say that it was the very material out of which all forms of experience, no matter how diverse, are formed. Of this prime constituent all forms of experience would be merely differentiated species: their particular differentiation when added to their particular species making them one again with the *parent type*. What was this parent aspect?

(65) To account for the long delay in the answering of this question let it be acknowledged that, owing to the complexity of experience, not merely is the answer difficult to find, but the question itself is difficult to formulate. Only when reasoning had reached the level of the finest art could such a question be propounded. Faced with the whole structure of symbols crowded indiscriminately together, it is not easy to stand back from it and by a comprehensive effort gather it together in a single grip and demand that its parts shall become salient in the measure of their ultimateness.

(66) Men certainly did not find the task of propounding the question in any way easy. This particular demand remained indeed a dumb instinct rather than a definite conception. That it existed in the shape of a vaguely desired objective is certain. In fact, it was not possible for men to escape desiring it, since though they found the classifying process to run smoothly in the direction of an increasing differentiation, they found it making knots and tangles—worse still, *making leaps*—whenever it reached the penultimate stage of the route towards a supreme *summum genus*. In the neighbourhood of its roots, the conceptual tree presented the aspect of a phantom growth. Its parts seemed to spring up and then end in a gap of nothingness: a weird hiatus: above and beyond which the superstructure arose baseless and without supports. Half a score of possible roots seemed to present themselves. Rival conceptions tilted into one another, overlapped one another's borders, and in some presented that aspect of confusion which has caused the sickness of the intellect and been the *raison d'être* of philosophy.

(67) Hence as soon as history opens we find men groping after some radical scheme of classification which should be competent to give them their ultimate bearings in the logic of the universe. Out of the sense of being lost in a jungle of ultimate verbal terms there awoke in men a religious sense: a desire for ultimate truth: and it is out of this sense of something going ill with the classifying power, and a desire to set it right, that wizard, medicine-man, priest, philosopher, and man of science came to be born. These men were specialists called in—perhaps self-nominated—to diagnose the seat of the confusion among symbols. Tacitly they were asked to submit the already established ultimate terms to a closer scrutiny than any which they, removed as they were from everyday practice, were likely to receive in the normal way of examination. Tacitly they were asked to trim these terms at the edge, and apply to them a sharper definition. The genius of each was weighed unconsciously in relation to the manner in which his system promised to indicate the *summum genus*, and to prove itself in reference to the latter by such a placing and defining of immediately allied terms: the *world*, *reality*, *truth*, and the like: as to make all their relations with the said *summum genus* and each other self-evident, inevitable, and mutually exclusive and self-contained.

(68) Relative to such a *summum genus* at the opening of our historic civilization, we find the philosophers proper, scrutinizing a whole bunch of

probable-seeming terms, and from Aristotle to Mill we find logicians at work endeavouring to grade them in the order of their relative ultimateness. These philosophers sought to mark them into their fundamental categories of difference. Philosophers revealed, however, a dead likeness of mentality in their failure to reduce them to unity. Aristotle, for instance, affirmed ten great categories: these of *substance, quantity, quality, relation, time, place, situation*, and others. His disciples, the schoolmen, did nothing to reduce these categories to any more fundamental basis, and when later Kant reverted to the idea of the categories he even enlarged their number! Kant took it that the classification required was that of the possible form of judgments, and he proceeded to set up the categories of *unity, plurality, and totality; reality, negation, and limitation; inherence and subsistence; causality and dependence; possibility and impossibility*, and the like. In our own times, John Stuart Mill, criticizing in his *Logic* Aristotle's classification, commits himself to the extraordinary fourfold division of *feelings, minds, bodies, and relations*!

(69) No doubt the form which these historic categories assumed was determined by the particular twist which their respective authors gave to what they considered to be philosophy's crucial question. The latter, on the other hand, would be given the form which the author considered best calculated to elicit what he prejudged to be the answer. And none of them appeared to realize that this answer required to be a *single attribute*, while Berkeley, who stumbled on the right answer, i.e. *Feeling*, by a different mode of inquiry, did not realize the significance of that answer in relation to the total labours of philosophy and science. It is indeed only in relation to the categories that the Berkeleyan formula can be given its significance. The fact that it was not brought into relation with them explains why it has remained a curious and unrelated outwork rather than what it actually is: the foundation-stone of the structure of all knowledge.

(70) The foregoing sketch should have made clear what we conceive to be the function of the philosopher, his origin, his work here and now, and his work in the future. His calling has meaning only in relation to classification and definition. This translated into practical maxims means that the philosopher has to clarify his mind as to the nature of his objective, and thereafter particularize and identify it. That objective is the *universal attribute of experience*, and such attribute is—we hold—the characteristic of *being felt*. A universe must, therefore, be the sum of an organism's feelings.

(71) We have spoken of the philosopher's work here and now. That particular work is to arrive at a self-respecting decision in respect of the foregoing formula concerning the constitution of any given universe, and thus to abandon the disreputable coquetting with a straightforward assertion of fact which philosophy has been guilty of since the time of Berkeley. If philosophers have not the temerity to discard Berkeley's formula, they must assume the courage, whether they possess it or not, to *keep it*. For into such a lax condition has opinion been permitted to degenerate that one would be tempted to say courage of the hard keen-edged type is beyond the capacity of philosophers. Never do they dare to fire their boats: always they keep open a way of retreat until the spirit of retreat indeed has become the principle of the campaign. Philosophers conceive their work as the discovery of a means of escape from their definitions. Certainly as far as this elementary formula is concerned their quest is: how to retain it and yet escape from it. It is surely high time a decision should be affirmed on the subject. Either the contention is valid or it is not. If it is invalid, the pronouncements of philosophy would

ring the more impressively for being rid of its furtive plucking by the sleeve, and the paralysing uncertainty which is now unceasingly infiltrated into them. And if it is valid, then it is time for philosophy to insist that science shall take account of it and rectify its prejudices in accordance. In short, the time is ripe for the engrafting of something more akin to audacity upon philosophy. In the cycle of endeavour opportunity is once again with philosophy so that its authority might again become restored to it. What is necessary is that philosophy should evince that courage which alone innerves one for the resumption of authority, and the assertion of one's claims with an assured voice.

(72) But let us suppose that a decision has been come to and the formula honestly adopted. What follows? Though philosophy will have made a beginning of its labours it will be only a beginning. For this formula must be proved sound enough to stand the test of development. It must indeed prove itself strong enough to support the whole superstructure of knowledge. And in our opinion philosophy will at once break away with a definition of *feeling* in concrete terms, such as those of *movements and tensions in the tissues of the experiencing organic body*. It will then follow with a definition of the *external world* in terms of some clear dividing principle applied to those movements and tensions asserted to constitute the totality of any given universe. Thirdly, it will proceed to define, in consonance with these established positions, the nature and constitution of *reality*. That will be our next task.

SOLDIER'S SONG

HOW sadly for how many nights
My love will lie alone,
Or lie in other arms than mine
While I lie like a stone.

If she remembers me and weeps
For her lost happiness,
Though dead, I shall be pierced at heart,
For her great loneliness.

If she forgets me, if she gives
Her lips and limbs to new desire,
Though dead, I shall be pierced at heart,
Burned stark by a sharp fire.

I would not have her weep and pine,
I would not have her love again—
Whatever comes if I should die
There would be only pain and pain.

I dare not ask for life, I dare
Only to ask for utter death
So that I may not know she breathes
Love from another's amorous breath.

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THE EGOIST, LTD.

DISJECTA MEMBRA *

MISS LOWELL, who not very long ago discovered six poets in France, has now mustered six poets from among her own nation. The six are E. A. Robinson, Frost, Masters, Sandburg, H. D., and Fletcher. In this book Miss Lowell has included much biographical information which casts new light upon the poets treated, and she further illuminates the subject with sentences on Life and Art which are pregnant with meaning. I say "pregnant" advisedly, for Miss Lowell herself is not averse to the obstetrical metaphor. Here is her summary of the three stages of poetry:

In the first, beauty is a thing remembered and haunting; in the third, it is rediscovered and intoxicating; but in the second, it is crowded out by the stress of travail, by the pangs of a birth which has not occurred.

This painful second stage is "embodied," we are told, by Mr. Masters. As Miss Lowell herself says, "words are stubborn things, it requires much training to make them docile to one's purpose." But Miss Lowell's words are well trained; and fly obediently from trope to trope at her bidding. Thus *Poetry* was to be "a forum in which youth could thrash out its ideas, and succeed or fail according to its deserts, unhampered by the damp blanket of obscurity."

* * * *

But what makes the particular delight of Miss Lowell's book is the personal tone. Her method is as remorselessly intimate as Sainte-Beuve's. Only quotation is adequate:

Mr. Robinson, as his name implies, comes of good Anglo-Saxon stock.

Mr. Frost . . . entered Dartmouth College. College, however, did not agree with his state of mind. . . . He stayed at Harvard for two years. . . . He was too old for college curriculums [sic] for one thing, for another, a married undergraduate is naturally set apart from his fellows and cannot, by the nature of things, get all that a university has to offer.

The whole farming industry of New England had been knocked on the head by the opening up of the West.

When Mr. Masters was about fourteen years old, there came to Lewiston, as assistant to the Principal of the High School, a certain Mary Fisher.

Carl Sandburg's father was a Swedish immigrant whose real name was August Johnson.

In 1911 Miss Doolittle went abroad. . . . She had known Ezra Pound years before.

Mr. Pound's connexion with Imagism is briefly mentioned on p. 254, in the words: "Mr. Pound withdrew from the group and joined the Vorticists." He would not appear from Miss Lowell's words to have had anything more to do with the inception of the Imagist movement than having been a member of "that small band of insurgent poets." Miss Lowell does not appear so well informed about Mr. Pound as about the poets with whom she is dealing.

* * * *

As for criticism, I need only observe that Miss Lowell considers Fletcher "a more original poet than Arthur Rimbaud," and affirms that *Spoon River* is the "great blot upon Mr. Masters' work." And I observe that although Puritanism is a "virulent poison," Miss Lowell exclaims:

How many excellent books of a past age are neglected because of this overinsistence upon sex! . . . The plays of Congreve would be as well known as those of Sheridan were it not for this. It is slow suicide for an author to commit this blunder.

But the important point is this. Miss Lowell says that art is like politics. Her own rôle is thus Director of Propaganda. It strikes me as a most unfortunate thing that this all-American propaganda should continue. Among the six victims of Miss Lowell's enthusiasm only one, Mr. Robinson, is negligible; and two, H. D. and Mr. Fletcher, have done work which entitles them to international standing. If one had only Miss Lowell's text, without the long excerpts which save the situation, one would envisage these poets as Laureates of some provincial Lycæum. Literature must be judged by language, not by place. And standards may come from Paris, or even Rome or Munich, which London as well as Topeka must respect. Provinciality of material may be a virtue, as in the *Sportsman's Sketches*; provinciality of point of view is a vice.

T. S. E.

BLACK EARTH

OPENLY, yes,
With the naturalness
Of the hippopotamus or the alligator
When it climbs out on the bank to experience the
Sun, I do these
Things which I do, which please
No one but myself. Now I breathe and now I am
sub-
Merged; the blemishes stand up and shout when
the object

In view was a
Renaissance; shall I say
The contrary? The sediment of the river which
Encrusts my joints, makes me very gray but I am
used

To it, it may
Remain there; do away
With it and I am myself done away with, for the
Patina of circumstance can but enrich what was

There to begin
With. This elephant skin
Which I inhabit, fibred over like the shell of
The coco-nut, this piece of black glass through
which no light

Can filter—cut
Into checkers by rut
Upon rut of unpreventable experience—
It is a manual for the peanut-tongued and the

Hairy toed. Black
But beautiful, my back
Is full of the history of power. Of power?
What
Is powerful and what is not? My soul shall
never

Be cut into
By a wooden spear; through-
Out childhood to the present time, the unity of
Life and death has been expressed by the
circumference

Described by my
Trunk; nevertheless, I
Perceive feats of strength to be inexplicable after
All; and I am on my guard; external poise, it

Has its centre
Well nurtured—we know
Where—in pride, but spiritual poise, it has its
centre where?
My ears are sensitized to more than the sound of

* *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry.* By Amy Lowell. Macmillan. \$2.50.

The wind. I see
 And I hear, unlike the
 Wandlike body of which one hears so much, which
 was made
 To see and not to see; to hear and not to hear,

That tree trunk without
 Roots, accustomed to shout
 Its own thoughts to itself like a shell, maintained
 intact
 By who knows what strange pressure of the
 atmosphere; that

Spiritual
 Brother to the coral
 Plant, absorbed into which, the equable sapphire
 light
 Becomes a nebulous green. The I of each is to

The I of each,
 A kind of fretful speech
 Which sets a limit on itself; the elephant is?
 Black earth preceded by a tendril? It is to that

Phenomenon
 The above formation,
 Translucent like the atmosphere—a cortex
 merely—
 That on which darts cannot strike decisively the
 first

Time, a substance
 Needful as an instance
 Of the indestructibility of matter; it
 Has looked at the electricity and at the earth—

Quake and is still
 Here; the name means thick. Will
 Depth be depth, thick skin be thick, to one who
 can see no
 Beautiful element of unreason under it?

MARIANNE MOORE.

PASSING PARIS

SURREALISTE is the denomination M. Guillaume Apollinaire—there is no doubt his astounding name continues to have good reasons for keeping well in evidence—has attached to his play, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, which has just appeared *en librairie* (éditions—sic). Thus he must be credited with the foundation of a successor to the *Unanimiste* and *Simultanéiste* schools. Anticipating the interrogation provoked by this novel definition he has found a rather delightful, though entirely fallacious, image. “When man,” he says in the preface, “wished to imitate his own walk, he created the wheel; he thus made super-realism,” and, he adds, “without knowing he did.” Because it has taken from the first wheelwright to M. Apollinaire to think of that word, “wheelwright No. 1” was an unconscious agent. We thus have an example of the philosophical theory that the thought follows the term. That super-realism may be accompanied by a form of humour, which for lack of a definition we may hazard as “superhumour,” is the opinion of those who attended the play.

M. Apollinaire also wishes his work to be known as a drama, “a term,” he says, “signifying action to establish what separates it from the *comédies de mœurs*, *comédies dramatiques*, and the *comédies légères* which have, for half a century, furnished the stage with works, many of which are excellent but secondary, and which are called simply—plays.” Can M. Apollinaire be dodged into committing himself to the opinion that his, therefore, is first rate? And why

shouldn't he? The fact that Mr. Shaw has done so is not blameworthy. What is, is that the plays are not first rate.

M. Sacha Guitry is sufficiently annoyed with some one for not expressing unqualified admiration for his last play to go in for a show of temper against dramatic critics in general in a new daily (it is to be understood that the paper crisis is said to be desperate) bearing the title *Oui*. (I shall found one called *Non*, for which title there are much better reasons.) Throwing all his sense of humour to the winds M. Guitry, junr., expresses the opinion that dramatic critics should be credited with letters patent from the authors themselves before having a right to express opinions in the public Press.

M. Paul Souday has replied to this diatribe with the consideration that the public would pay even less attention to criticism bearing the official stamp of the corporation they criticize than to that which assumes to operate independently. Seeing that M. Sacha Guitry has been, so far, the critics' pet, his ire sounds very much like that of a spoilt child.

* * * *

If a playwright of M. Sacha Guitry's fame might, if he liked, and despite his own view, to judge from his annoyance, snap his fingers at the critics, a newcomer cannot. At least not in Paris where opinion, public and private, is all-powerful.

Here a dramatist cannot work his way up slowly and by dint of sheer perseverance and merit like a painter or a novelist. It is absolutely necessary that he be boomed, by praise or by blame (some have acquired celebrity by the latter means), for where the stage is concerned anything is, as M. Paul Souday says, better than silence. It is a most hazardous enterprise to attempt to produce a play in this most *blasé* and whimsical of capitals without a huge body of pre-warned opinion at its back to support it. In no profession is the send-off more indispensable. The noise of commentary is as necessary to it as the limelight. There is no middle path in the playwright's career. He has to be successful or die.

And yet what is a candidate to do but to take the risks if he possess no occult means for inducing managers to read his work (apparently they can't read), far less to perform it? If he publishes it *en librairie* he deflowers it and depreciates its market value for the future. The alternative, except for the negative process of allowing it to slumber in managers' desks for years on end, is, by hook or by crook, to give the play independently. Harassed by the perplexing situation young authors have formed themselves into groups who pool the expense of giving their works trial runs. If managers and critics could be lured into attending these marginal performances some progress might be observed, but I fear the device has made but little inroad in their lines of defence.

* * * *

Under auspices of the kind M. Apollinaire gave his “drama,” and M. Pierre Berch *Le Retour*, a play which has no reason whatever for not being as successful as one by M. Henry Bernstein—and this not because of the Germanic similarity of their names. But I fancy managers take this kind of independence as a discourtesy, or an infringement on their prerogatives, and that these nonconformist productions are not short cuts to their sanctuaries.

Le Retour is an eminently stagey play describing the home-coming of an Enoch Arden from this war. The unformulated feeling working at the back of the man-and-woman dialogue in the last scene, the woman's pity, scarcely manifested but apparent all the same, brings the play, at its closing point, and exactly where it should, on to a horizon of suggestion, and nowhere is it, although conventional in structure, otherwise than affecting. No banality or serious error in taste or judgment detracts the attention from

the central tragedy. There are more powerful plays in the world, but thousands are given which are worse—that is, more unnecessary—and which are successful. Finally, as M. Apollinaire's "drama" is, as I am told, provocative of hilarity, so M. Berch's is, as I can affirm, provocative of emotion. Therefore both contain the essence of vitality.

The last act of *Le Retour* was also given at a poets' *matinée* held by the new Socialist daily, *Le Pays*, which has had time to degenerate so rapidly since recommended in these pages as to have almost reached a point of contact with its pet enemy, *L'Action Française*.

* * * *

M. Anatole France has authorized M. Lucien Guitry, the actor, to "film" (as the word goes in the latest profession) his book *Crinquebille*. The plastering of the walls of Paris in time of war (and "such a war," as people have got into the habit of saying; what kind of war would they like?) with huge bill-posters by Capiello for a new face-powder is not more offensive than the appearance of the name of Anatole France on the "screen."

* * * *

One of the two or three great women painters in the world is Mme. Mela Muter. In what the other creeds call the "advanced school" of painting her name is a by-word. She was always given good hanging-space at the Salon d'Automne, whose *habitués* remember her nude woman in pregnancy (actually bought by the modest State!), her idiots, her dwarfs and her giants, for this woman, nominally a Pole (with Eastern blood), has an attraction for human phenomena like that of the masters of Spain, a country in whose landscape-features she is as at her ease as was Gainsborough in the lanes of England. Where she differs from the Hispanic artists is in her rendering of themes to which they resorted not so much from choice, as she does, but because they were those at hand. She brings to them, besides the commiseration of the Slav for all misfortune, her modern partiality for sun, light and colour, taking no account of shadows, entirely ignoring black except as a colour and not as an obstruction to light, and Van Gogh is the painter from whom she more directly proceeds.

In her portrait of a blind soldier, one of the latest achieved in the set of brilliant pictures covering some ten years of toil and exhibited at Chéron's gallery in the Rue La Boétie, in her deformed jota dancers, in the *Madonna of the Streets*, in various portraits, her powerful genius is true to her. When she would direct it—as in a tamer composition of decorative intent: a vineyard scene—it gives her the slip. Enormous skill is evident, too, in her landscapes and still-life, and had one not the apprehension that her extraordinary capacities may have reached the limit of their range, and would she remember that painting means to weave a close texture (for whites which are gaps are not less culprits than blacks), Mme. Muter would please as completely as she astounds.

* * * *

The poems of M. Mario Meunier the Hellenist, translator of Sappho, at one time secretary to Rodin, and now a prisoner of war, were celebrated at the last festival *Montjoie*.

M. C.

P.S. *March 12*. Since the time of writing the above notes three bombs from German aeroplanes very nearly (that is by twenty yards or two seconds) prevented their ever being posted. But the little white cot was spared; its contents is (still to-day) joyfully ignorant of the peril through which it has passed, and the gay spring morning which followed upon the one night in three lives which had come nearest to bringing the most awful of deaths or suffering, showed the lilac-buds in the garden in greater progress than on the day before.

THE NOVELS OF DOROTHY RICHARDSON*

By MAY SINCLAIR

I DO not know whether this article is or is not going to be a criticism, for so soon as I begin to think what I shall say I find myself criticizing criticism, wondering what is the matter with it and what, if anything, can be done to make it better, to make it alive. Only a live criticism can deal appropriately with a live art. And it seems to me that the first step towards life is to throw off the philosophic cant of the nineteenth century. I don't mean that there is no philosophy of Art, or that if there has been there is to be no more of it; I mean that it is absurd to go on talking about realism and idealism, or objective and subjective art, as if the philosophies were sticking where they stood in the eighties.

In those days the distinction between idealism and realism, between subjective and objective was important and precise. And so long as the ideas they stand for had importance and precision those words were lamps to the feet and lanterns to the path of the critic. Even after they had begun to lose precision and importance they still served him as useful labels for the bewildering phenomena of the arts.

But now they are beginning to give trouble; they obscure the issues. Mr. J. B. Beresford in his admirable Introduction to *Pointed Roofs* confesses to having felt this trouble. When he read it in manuscript he decided that it "was realism, was objective." When he read it in typescript he thought: "This . . . is the most subjective thing I have ever read." It is evident that when first faced with the startling "newness" of Miss Richardson's method, and her form, the issues did seem a bit obscure to Mr. Beresford. It was as if up to one illuminating moment he had been obliged to think of methods and forms as definitely objective or definitely subjective. His illuminating moment came with the third reading, when *Pointed Roofs* was a printed book. The book itself gave him the clue to his own trouble, which is my trouble, the first hint that criticism up till now has been content to think in *clichés*, missing the new trend of the philosophies of the twentieth century. All that we know of reality at first hand is given to us through contacts in which those interesting distinctions are lost. Reality is thick and deep, too thick and too deep, and at the same time too fluid to be cut with any convenient carving-knife. The novelist who would be close to reality must confine himself to this knowledge at first hand. He must, as Mr. Beresford says, simply "plunge in." Mr. Beresford says that Miss Richardson is the first novelist who has plunged in. She has plunged so neatly and quietly that even admirers of her performance might remain unaware of what it is precisely that she has done. She has disappeared while they are still waiting for the splash. So that Mr. Beresford's Introduction was needed.

When first I read *Pointed Roofs* and *Backwater* and *Honeycomb* I too thought, like Mr. Beresford, that Miss Richardson has been the first to plunge. But it seems to me rather that she has followed, independently, perhaps unconsciously, a growing tendency to plunge. As far back as the eighties the de Goncourts plunged completely, finally, in *Sœur Philomène*, *Germinie Lacerteux*, and *Les Frères Zemgann*. Marguerite Audoux plunged in the best passages of *Marie Claire*. The best of every good novelist's best work is a more or less sustained immersion. The more modern the novelist the longer his capacity to stay under. Miss Richardson has not plunged deeper than Mr. James Joyce in his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

* *Pointed Roofs*, *Backwater*, *Honeycomb*. Duckworth and Co.

By imposing very strict limitations on herself she has brought her art, her method, to a high pitch of perfection, so that her form seems to be newer than it perhaps is. She herself is unaware of the perfection of her method. She would probably deny that she has written with any deliberate method at all. She would say: "I only know there are certain things I mustn't do if I was to do what I wanted." Obviously, she must not interfere; she must not analyse or comment or explain. Rather less obviously, she must not tell a story or handle a situation or set a scene; she must avoid drama as she avoids narration. And there are some things she must not be. She must not be the wise, all-knowing author. She must be Miriam Henderson. She must not know or divine anything that Miriam does not know or divine; she must not see anything that Miriam does not see. She has taken Miriam's nature upon her. She is not concerned, in the way that other novelists are concerned with character. Of the persons who move through Miriam's world you know nothing but what Miriam knows. If Miriam is mistaken, well, she and not Miss Richardson is mistaken. Miriam is an acute observer, but she is very far from seeing the whole of these people. They are presented to us in the same vivid but fragmentary way in which they appeared to Miriam, the fragmentary way in which people appear to most of us. Miss Richardson has only imposed on herself the conditions that life imposes on us all. And if you are going to quarrel with those conditions you will not find her novels satisfactory. But your satisfaction is not her concern.

And I find it impossible to reduce to intelligible terms this satisfaction that I feel. To me these three novels show an art and method and form carried to punctilious perfection. Yet I have heard other novelists say that they have no art and no method and no form, and that it is this formlessness that annoys them. They say that they have no beginning and no middle and no end, and that to have form a novel must have an end and a beginning and a middle. We have come to words that in more primitive times would have been blows on this subject. There is a certain plausibility in what they say, but it depends on what constitutes a beginning and a middle and an end. In this series there is no drama, no situation, no set scene. Nothing happens. It is just life going on and on. It is Miriam Henderson's stream of consciousness going on and on. And in neither is there any grossly discernible beginning or middle or end.

In identifying herself with this life, which is Miriam's stream of consciousness, Miss Richardson produces her effect of being the first, of getting closer to reality than any of our novelists who are trying so desperately to get close. No attitude or gesture of her own is allowed to come between her and her effect. Whatever her sources and her raw material, she is concerned and we ought to be concerned solely with the finished result, the work of art. It is to Miriam's almost painfully acute senses that we owe what in any other novelist would be called the "portraits" of Miriam's mother, of her sister Harriet, of the Corries and Joey Banks in *Honeycomb*, of the Miss Pernes and Julia Doyle, and the North London school-girls in *Backwater*, of Fräulein Pfaff and Mademoiselle, of the Martins and Emma Bergmann and Ulrica and "the Australian" in *Pointed Roofs*. The mere "word-painting" is masterly.

... Miriam noticed only the hoarse, hacking laugh of the Australian. Her eyes flew up the table and fixed her as she sat laughing, her chair drawn back, her knees crossed—tea was drawing to an end. The detail of her terrifyingly stylish ruddy-brown frieze dress, with its Norfolk jacket bodice and its shiny leather belt, was hardly distinguishable from the dark background made by the folding doors. But the dreadful outline of her shoulders was visible, the squarish oval of her face

shone out—the wide forehead from which the wiry black hair was combed to a high puff, the red eyes, black now, the long, straight nose, the wide, laughing mouth with the enormous teeth.

And so on all round the school tea-table. It looks easy enough to "do" until you try it. There are thirteen figures round that table, and each is drawn with the first few strokes, and so well that you see them all and never afterwards can you mistake or confuse them.

You look at the outer world through Miriam's senses, and it is as if you had never seen it so vividly before. Miriam in *Backwater* is on the top of a bus, driving from North London to Piccadilly:

On the left a tall grey church was coming towards them, spindling up into the sky. It sailed by, showing Miriam a circle of little stone pillars built into its spire. Plumy trees streamed by, standing large and separate on moss-green grass railed from the roadway. Bright, white-faced houses with pillared porches shone through from behind them and blazed white above them against the blue sky. Wide side streets opened, showing high balconied houses. The side streets were feathered with trees and ended mistily.

Away ahead were edges of clean, bright masonry in profile, soft, tufted heads of trees, bright green in the clear light. At the end of the vista the air was like pure saffron-tinted mother-of-pearl.

Or this "interior" from *Honeycomb*:

... the table like an island under the dome of the low-hanging rose-shaded lamp, the table-centre thickly embroidered with beetles' wings, the little dishes stuck about, sweets, curiously crusted brown almonds, sheeny grey-green olives; the misty beaded glass of the finger-bowls—Venetian glass from that shop in Regent street—the four various wine glasses at each right hand, one on a high thin stem, curved and fluted like a shallow tulip, filled with hock; and floating in the warmth amongst all these things the strange, exciting, dry sweet fragrance coming from the mass of mimosa, a forest of little powdery blossoms, little stiff grey—the arms of railway signals at junctions—Japanese looking leaves—standing as if it were growing, in a shallow bowl under the rose-shaded lamp.

It is as if no other writers had ever used their senses so purely and with so intense a joy in their use.

This intensity is the effect of an extreme concentration on the thing seen or felt. Miss Richardson disdains every stroke that does not tell. Her novels are novels of an extraordinary compression, and of an extenuation more extraordinary still. The moments of Miriam's consciousness pass one by one, or overlapping; moments tense with vibration, moments drawn out fine, almost to snapping-point. On one page Miss Richardson seems to be accounting for every minute of Miriam's time. On another she passes over events that might be considered decisive with the merest slur of reference. She is not concerned with the strict order of events in time. Chapter Three of *Pointed Roofs* opens with an air of extreme decision and importance: "Miriam was practising on the piano in the larger of the two English bedrooms," as if something hung on her practising. But no, nothing hangs on it, and if you want to know on what day she is practising you have to read on and back again. It doesn't matter. It is Miriam's consciousness that is going backwards and forwards in time. The time it goes in is unimportant. On the hundredth page out of three hundred and twelve pages Miriam has been exactly two weeks in Hanover. Nothing has happened but the infinitely little affairs of the school, the practising, the *vorspielen*, the English lesson, the *raccomodage*, the hair-washing. At the end of the book Fräulein Pfaff is on the station platform, gently propelling Miriam "up three steps into a compartment marked *Damen-Coupé*. It smelt of biscuits and wine." Miriam has been no more than six months in Hanover. We are not told and Miriam

is not told, but we know, as Miriam knows, that she is going because Pastor Lahmann has shown an interest in Miriam very disturbing to Fräulein Pfaff's interest in him. We are not invited to explore the tortuous mind of the pious, sentimental, secretly hysterical Fräulein; but we know, as Miriam knows, that before she can bring herself to part with her English governess she must persuade herself that it is Miriam and not Mademoiselle who is dismissed because she is an unwholesome influence.

In this small world where nothing happens "that dreadful talk with Gertrude," and Fräulein's quarrel with the servant Anna, the sound of her laugh and her scream, "Ja, Sie Können Ihre paar Groschen haben! Ihre paar Groschen!" and Miriam's vision of Mademoiselle's unwholesomeness, stand out as significant and terrifying; they are terrifying, they are significant; through them we know Gertrude, we know Fräulein Pfaff, we know Mademoiselle as Miriam knows them, under their disguises.

At the end of the third volume, *Honeycomb*, there is, apparently a break with the design. Something does happen. Something tragic and terrible. We are not told what it is; we know, as Miriam knows, only by inference. Miriam is sleeping in her mother's room.

Five o'clock. Three more hours before the day began. The other bed was still. "It's going to be a magnificent day," she murmured, pretending to stretch and yawn again. A sigh reached her. The stillness went on and she lay for an hour tense and listening. Some one else must know. . . . At the end of the hour a descending darkness took her suddenly. She woke from it to the sound of violent language, furniture being roughly moved, a swift, angry splashing of water . . . something breaking out, breaking through the confinements of this little furniture-filled room . . . the best gentlest thing she knew openly despairing at last.

Here Miss Richardson "gets" you as she gets you all the time—she never misses once—by her devout adhesion to her method, by the sheer depth of her plunge. For this and this alone is the way things happen. What we used to call the "objective" method is a method of after-thought, of spectacular reflection. What has happened has happened in Miriam's bedroom, if you like; but only by reflection. The first-hand, intimate and intense reality of the happening is in Miriam's mind, and by presenting it thus and not otherwise Miss Richardson seizes reality alive. The intense rapidity of the seizure defies you to distinguish between what is objective and what is subjective either in the reality presented or the art that presents.

Nothing happens. In Miriam Henderson's life there is, apparently, nothing to justify living. Everything she ever wanted was either withheld or taken from her. She is reduced to the barest minimum on which it is possible to support the life of the senses and the emotions at all. And yet Miriam is happy. Her inexhaustible passion for life is fed. Nothing happens, and yet everything that really matters is happening; you are held breathless with the anticipation of its happening. What really matters is a state of mind, the interest or the ecstasy with which we close with life. It can't be explained. To quote Mr. Beresford again: "explanation in this connexion would seem to imply knowledge that only the mystics can faintly realize." But Miss Richardson's is a mysticism apart. It is compatible with, it even encourages such dialogue as this:

"Tea!" smiled Eve serenely.

"All right, I'm coming, damn you, aren't I?"

"Oh, Mimmy!"

"Well, damn me, then. Somebody in the house must swear.

I say, Eve!"

"What?"

"Nothing, only I say."

"Um."

It is not wholly destroyed when Miriam eats bread and butter—thus:

When she began at the hard thick edge there always seemed to be tender places on her gums, her three hollow teeth were uneasy and she had to get through worrying thoughts about them—they would get worse as the years went by, and the little places in the front would grow big and painful and disfiguring. After the first few mouthfuls of solid bread a sort of padding seemed to take place and she could go on forgetful.

This kind of thing annoys Kensington. I do not say that it really matters, but that it is compatible with what really matters. Because of such passages it is a pity that Miss Richardson could not use the original title of her series: "Pilgrimage," for it shows what she is really after. Each book marks a stage in Miriam's pilgrimage. We get the first hint of where she is going to in the opening of the tenth chapter of *Pointed Roofs*: "Into all the gatherings at Waldstrasse the outside world came like a presence. It removed the sense of pressure, of being confronted and challenged. Everything that was said seemed to be incidental to it, like remarks dropped in a low tone between individuals at a great conference." In *Backwater* the author's intention becomes still clearer. In *Honeycomb* it is transparently clear:

Her room was a great square of happy light . . . happy, happy. She gathered up all the sadness she had ever known and flung it from her. All the dark things of the past flashed with a strange beauty as she flung them out. The light had been there all the time; but she had known it only at moments. Now she knew what she wanted. Bright mornings, beautiful bright rooms, a wilderness of beauty all round her all the time—at any cost.

And yet not that:

Something that was not touched, that sang far away down inside the gloom, that cared nothing for the creditors and could get away down and down into the twilight far away from the everlasting accusations of humanity. . . . Deeper down was something cool and fresh—endless—an endless garden. In happiness it came up and made everything in the world into a garden. Sorrow blotted it out; but it was always there, waiting and looking on. It had looked on in Germany and had loved the music and the words and the happiness of the German girls, and at Banbury Park, giving her no peace until she got away.

And now it had come to the surface and was with her all the time.

There are two essays of Remy de Gourmont in *Promenades Littéraires*, one on "l'Originalité de Maeterlinck," one on "La Leçon de Saint Antoine." Certain passages might have been written concerning the art of Dorothy Richardson.

Si la vie en soi est un bienfait, et il faut l'accepter comme telle, ou la nier, la fait même de vivre le contient tout entier, et les grands mouvements de la sensibilité, loin de l'enrichir, l'appauvrissent au contraire, en concentrant sur quelques partis de nous-mêmes, envahies au hasard par la destinée, l'effort d'attention qui serait plus uniformément reparté sur l'ensemble de notre conscience vitale. De ce point de vue une vie où il semblerait ne rien se passer que d'élémentaire et quotidien serait mieux remplie qu'une autre vie riche en apparence d'incidents et d'aventures. . . . Il y a peut-être un sentiment nouveau à créer, celui de l'amour de la vie pour la vie elle-même, abstraction faite des grandes joies qu'elle ne donne pas à tous, et qu'elle ne donne peut-être à personne. . . . Notre paradis, c'est la journée qui passe, la minute qui s'envole, le moment qui n'est déjà plus. Telle est la leçon de Saint Antoine.

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TWO AMERICAN POETS

I. WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS *

ONE writes about most American poets obviously more from a sense of duty than from a feeling of abiding pleasure in their productions. It is plain that most of the good poets in America are really trying to say something, and are not merely, as their English cousins, producing frigid and calculated essays in Elizabethan, Blakean, or Wordsworthian style, to take their place in the nine hundred and ninety-ninth supplement to the *Georgian Anthology*. But unfortunately most of the good poets in America stammer and stumble badly. They achieve beauty by accident.

Something of this sort might be said of Dr. William Carlos Williams, who lives in Rutherford, New Jersey, were it not for the fact that Dr. Williams is fairly sure of his method, so far as it goes—surer than many poets whose names are far more loudly trumpeted in the United States than his. One can read Dr. Williams with a sense of a certain consistency in his poetical weaving, with a sense of a certain fundamental brainwork that went to the making of the web. If he lapses into extravagance occasionally, he at least does not fall away into sentimental banality. Take, for instance, the following:

In a tissue-thin monotone of blue-grey birds
crowded erect with desire against the sky—
tense blue-grey twigs
slenderly anchoring them down, drawing them in—
two blue-grey birds chasing
a third struggle in circles, angles,
swift converging to a point that bursts instantly!

This, and the rest of the poem, is packed, concentrated observation. It conveys perfectly the dramatic tension of an American spring, so different from the gradual, hesitating release of spring in England. Unquestionably, Dr. Williams makes use of his mind when he sits down to write poetry. He sees, he experiences, and he gives us the clear result of what he has seen and experienced. Catullus and Villon did no more.

And yet—is it always possible for a poet to be either definite and pictorial, or indefinite and musical? Is it even possible for a poet to be always himself? Must he not, to some extent, share not only the feelings of many people in the past, but also the feelings of men and women of his day? Certain words of a great French critic and novelist of the present day, André Gide, come to my mind in this connexion:

A great man has only one care: to become as human as possible: let us say, rather, to become banal; and, admirable fact, it is thus that he becomes most individual.

In these words there is a lesson for Dr. Williams. He is overconscious of himself, like most people when they start to offer to the world something shaped in a different mould from the rubbed platitudes that are current with the multitude. If and when Dr. Williams is able to obtain a longer perspective he will give us more things like his "Dedication for a Plot of Ground," which, whether poetry or not, is the most poignant thing he has put in this volume.

II. CONRAD AITKEN †

Conrad Aitken is a poet with four volumes already to his credit. He is also a critic of independent judgment and redoubtable ferocity. My present concern is with Mr. Aitken's poetry, or rather, with

* *Al Que Quiere!* By William Carlos Williams. Boston, the Four Seas Company. \$1.00 net.

† *Nocturne of Remembered Spring, and Other Poems.* By Conrad Aitken. Boston, the Four Seas Company. \$1.25 net.

that part of it which is comprised within the covers of this, his latest volume. It is necessary, however, to go back to his beginnings as a poet in order to understand the later development.

Mr. Aitken began, in the days before the war, with a series of verse-narratives, entitled *Earth Triumphant*, which revealed a hand already skilled in the management of metre, and a manner of presentation akin to Masfield. I say "akin to Masfield" advisedly, for I have reason to believe that in some respects Mr. Aitken produced his work almost conjointly with, if he did not actually in point of time anticipate, the author of *The Everlasting Mercy* and *Dauber*. This much is at least important for us to know: that Mr. Aitken began and has continued with narrative poems, in which the story is always subordinate to the psychological interest of the situation as it affects the characters.

It will be seen that Mr. Aitken set himself at the outset a difficult task. We read most great novelists—even Flaubert and Stendhal—because of the plot. Dostoevsky is one of the few, if indeed he is not the sole example, of a novelist of the first order, whose plots are subordinate always to the inner clash of human psychology. And Dostoevsky is avowedly difficult reading for most people, especially in his latest and most abstract phase.

The same thing is true in reading narrative poetry as in reading novels. There have been few good narrative poets in English. There is only one we can read over and over again with the same interest—Chaucer. This is due to the fact that Chaucer's handling of incident and his plots are always good. We can also read Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" if we look upon it as a mere yarn and forget its sanctimonious conclusion. But with Spenser, Keats, Browning, we get the overloading of the story, decorative in the first two instances, philosophical and psychological in Browning's case. And it may be doubted whether what will live, after all, in Masfield, will not be, fifty years hence, more than a few passages of clear description in *Dauber*. Masfield will doubtless have a place on our shelves, but it is doubtful if any one will read him, any more than any one to-day reads Crabbe.

Mr. Aitken is at once more personal and more subtly psychological than Masfield. This, from the point of view of narrative, is a weakness, from the point of view of lyricism, a strength. His stories, as such, are but variations on one theme: the theme of sexual disillusionment. In his last volume he has almost thrown the entire apparatus of the story overboard. One gets merely a vague sense of two protagonists, a man and a woman, engaged in the brooding of endless variations upon the commonplace theme of their own satiety. Mr. Aitken's clearest and finest achievement comes out in his handling of metrical effect. What he can do with rhyme and metre, when attracted by a subject capable of poignance, may perhaps be shown by this brief excerpt from the poem "The Trenches":

We are tired, we have thought all this before,
We have seen it all, and thought it all.
We have tried to forget, we have tried to change,
We have struggled to climb an invisible wall,
But if we should climb it, could we ever return?
We have known it all, and felt it all
Till we can know no more. . . .
Let us climb out and end it, then,
Lest it become immortal.
Let us climb out and end it, then,
Just for the change. . . .
This is the same night, still, and you, and I,
Struggling to keep our feet in a chaos of sound.
And the same puff of smoke
Passes, to leave the same stars in the sky.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

PROFESSIONAL, OR . . .

IT is perhaps not too late to call attention to an article which appeared two months ago (January 31) in the Literary Supplement of *The Times*. The article was entitled "Professionalism in Art." Like most of the leading articles in *The Times Literary Supplement*, it is altogether on the high plane; its tone is so refined and agreeable, its author so evidently one of ourselves, that we hesitate to take exception. It is in fact so delightful that we ought not to expose it to further publicity. But its thesis is not only one which may reasonably be called wrong, but importantly wrong. The author is quite against what he calls the professional; and this attitude is so thoroughly British that if it is wrong it is certainly important, and if it is wrong in art may provide some clue as to why British Art is no better than it is. We cannot be absolutely sure, after reading the article several times, what is actually the definition of the professional; the professional is not contrasted with anything definite; and the writer engages our sympathy by charging the worst lines of Milton and Wordsworth to professionalism. Here are two of his statements:

Professionalism is a device for making things easy.

Decadence in art is always caused by professionalism.

An attitude which might find voice in words like these is behind all of British slackness for a hundred years and more: the dislike of the specialist. It is behind the British worship of inspiration, which in literature is merely an avoidance of comparison with foreign literatures, a dodging of standards. It goes to explain, for instance, why in English literature there are so few really well-written novels.

The opposite of the professional is not the dilettante, the elegant amateur, the dabbler who in fact only attests the existence of the specialist. The opposite of the professional, the enemy, is the man of mixed motives. Conspicuously the Victorian epoch is anti-professional; Carlyle as an historian, Ruskin as an economist; Thackeray who could write such good prose as the Steyne episode, and considered himself a kindly but penetrating satirist; George Eliot who could write *Amos Barton* and steadily degenerate. Decadence in art is caused by mixed motives. The art of the Victorians is spoiled by mixed motives, and Oscar Wilde finally added ingredients to the mixture which made it a ludicrous emetic.

The writer in *The Times*, belittling technique, appears to identify technique with what may be learned from a manual of prosody. This is making technique easy. If mathematics consisted in learning the multiplication table up to 1,000,000 that would be making mathematics easy. Technique is more volatile; it can only be learned, the more difficult part of it, by absorption. Try to put into a sequence of simple quatrains the continuous syntactic variety of Gautier or Blake, or compare these two with A. E. Housman. Surely professionalism in art is hard work on style with singleness of purpose.

* * * *

In some writers non-professionalism is a radical vice; in others rather an imperfection. It is possible that Mr. Gilbert Cannan's belongs to the latter type, and that *The Stucco House* * might be rewritten into literature. If he would really write his novels, they might be literature; as it is, *The Stucco House* is merely a deposit. Mr. Cannan's material is interesting; he has put considerable thought into the book; and the book is a very interesting book. The writer really understands the kind of domestic warfare with which James and Catherine occupy their

lives. But it is seldom quite the understanding of a novelist; it is the understanding of a man who has assumed a cause; Mr. Cannan's hatred is even stronger than his understanding. He preaches, sometimes with almost the twang of the Baptist chapel. He admires Samuel Butler—

it is possible that he was responsible for his mother's desire for the stucco house, and that he desired to be born in it.

But he has not the mastery of biographic detail which makes Christina. His style is not commonplace like Butler's; it is sometimes bad.

From their different angles approaching the heart of this great mystery they were, through bitter pain, at last spiritually at one, linked with humanity, borne upward to a point at which personality and conduct vanished, and there was no need to think of right and wrong, but only to dwell in love, whose light was shed upon the dark places of tragic life.

This is not prose, it is oratory, the true manly snuffle, the abdominal throb. Nevertheless, the book is an interesting book, and it might be better.

* * * *

God took a rib from the side of Mr. Chesterton and made Mrs. Meynell. They are quite different, but as the female from the male. Both are non-professionals in criticism, as Mr. Cannan is non-professional in the novel; both use the form of criticism for non-critical ends. But while there is still hope for Comrade Cannan, there is none for these two; each has formed a kind of style fleshed and boned in irrelevance. One often agrees with Mr. Chesterton, one often agrees with Mrs. Meynell. In the present tidy small volume * she wins our hearts when she says that Tennyson is "more serious than the solemn Wordsworth," or when she denounces Swinburne. (Compare her analysis of Tennyson with that of Chesterton in his *Victorian Age*.) But on the whole she has not the single critical motive. She is an amateur of letters. Like Mr. Chesterton, she has not in the end criticized the author at all. When she writes of Tennyson:

Unaware of a separate angel of modern poetry is he who is insensible to the Tennyson note—the new note that we reaffirm even with the notes of Vaughan, Traherne, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, well in our ears—the Tennyson note of splendour, all-distinct. He showed the perpetually transfigured landscape in transfiguring words. He is the captain of our dreams. Others have lighted a candle in England, he lit a sun. . . .

it is what a University Extension audience would like; but it is not criticism. But in its peculiar anti-style, Mrs. Meynell's book, like all her books, is extremely well written, and she can incidentally pick out good bits from authors. If we can accept the attitude, we shall enjoy the book very much. And people who have a taste for that antiquated genre, that parlour-game, the Polite Essay—which consists in taking a tiny point and cutting figure eights around it, without ever uttering one's meaning in plain words—will find in Mrs. Meynell's last essay ("Charmian") an almost perfect example of a forgotten craft which indeed had its attractions.

* * * *

But we must learn to take literature seriously.

APTERYX

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VIBRATIONS

By LEIGH HENRY

THE END OF THE STRIKE

OVER the bridges
they are carrying the dead . . .

the sunlight scalds down on the tortured street—
—through the open windows echo the hollow moans
of the straining cart-wheels grating against the stones
and the dull, sullen dirge of heavy feet. . . .

The strife is over . . .
. . . faint with the pitiless heat
I watch your profile framed against the light . . .
. . . O how merciless and white
the cruel, motionless glow
of the sun-scorched house-fronts in the street below . . .

yes . . . it is over . . . I know
that all the barricades are broken down,
the last poor, frail defences overthrown . . .
and that the halted current of every day
resumes its normal flow . . .

. . . and you,—you too must go your destined
way . . .
. . . over the bridges
trail the crushed, rigid dead. . . .

FLORENCE, 1914.

MEETING

ON the din of the street,—
—crashing, screaming, chaotic rush—
—rasping, whirling, and rumble of wheels
of motor, cycle, wagon, and bus,
and clatter of feet,—
a sudden hush
swoops down— . . .

. . . the pulsing noise of the town
thrashes the void one frantic spasm—
—then falls,
paralysed,
in a shudderless swoon. . . .

White,
brutal and tense,
the silence grips the vibrant, glowing light—
—crushes the glittering shops and placarded walls
into a shapeless mass, pallid and grey. . . .

Malignant, immense,
the stillness crouches . . .
. . . and from it your pale face and insolent eyes
undisguised,
stare ravenous. . . .

. . . My brain reels
on the edge of a chasm,—
—and through dry, blistering lips
I whisper your name . . .

—at the word
the silence shrinks away
as from a blow,—
and from below,
writhing, the clamor slips,—
—leaps like a flame,—
poises—
and strikes!

a torrent of shapes and noises
rends through my senses, and your face is lost . . .

. . . but drifting from me, on the tumult tossed,
a scarlet feather flies . . .

. . . red heart's-blood on the broken wings of a dead
white bird. . . .

POTSDAMERPLATZ, BERLIN, 1914.

A FANTASY

OHO!—

so there you are? . . .

. . . Why, now, of course, I know
who you are, and where it was we last met . . .

. . . it was so long ago . . .
yet I cannot forget
the open grassy glades
where all is so clear,
and under the heavy leaves
where the sunlight cleaves,
spear upon shining spear,
the glowing horizon looms tangible and near. . . .

Yes, I remember you
with the delicate hoofs set
deep in the fern-fronds and the dew-hung grass-blades,
. . . and there, as now, you were scratching and
nosing
among the thick, tangled growth and the wild flowers
closing
for the coming night . . .
snatching and clutching the dancing forms
of the gaping shadows where the branches fret
the wide-splashed golden pools of evening light . . .

. . . O yes, it is all very well, . . .
you can play at silence and propriety, but I can tell
just who you are if I choose . . .

for, though you are wearing ugly garments, you
cannot lose
the bronze, fantastic horns curling upon your head,
and still you are poking and snuffling,
nosing and shuffling,
with crooked legs and eager shoulders bent,
a queer grotesque against the variegated shadows blent
with mingled tints on the white, sunlit wall. . . .

. . . O no, it will not do at all
to say you are only stuffing straw into your bed . . .!

RUHLBEN BARRACKS, October 1917.

THE ANGLO-FRENCH SOCIETY

THIS SOCIETY HAS ISSUED THE
FOLLOWING NOTICE

THE Society was inaugurated on October 15,
1917, as a mark of British admiration for
and sympathy with the French nation in its
hour of severe trial. It aims at maintaining and
extending the excellent relations which exist between
the peoples of the two nations by affording oppor-
tunities in this country for the study of the intellectual
and moral aspects of French life and thought, and by
encouraging in every manner possible a just apprecia-
tion of the debt which civilization owes to our noble
and chivalrous neighbour and to the great thinkers
and writers she has produced.

The following are some of the methods by which
the Society will gradually seek to accomplish these
aims:

1. By establishing a place of reunion where members may meet
and exchange views and opinions in an atmosphere as nearly
French as it is possible to create in a foreign country.

2. By providing lectures by recognized authorities on French
Literature, Science, History, Art and Music, as well as on Econo-
mic and Social Questions, thus affording British people an oppor-

tunity of becoming acquainted with the achievements of France in these subjects and of learning the French point of view, which is by no means always the same as the British. Some of these lectures will be open to the general public, thereby helping to extend the Society's influence. Concerts of French Music and Exhibitions of French Art will also be held from time to time.

3. By encouraging the study of the French language and affording members and others opportunities of hearing the language spoken by cultured French people, and by inducing the British members to read and speak the language themselves, through the formation of reading circles or causeries in which they would take a part.

4. By disseminating information on current events in France and helping members to understand the French standpoint in matters of world interest.

5. By providing a library of classical and contemporary French books, and a reading-room where current French newspapers and periodicals may be available.

6. By encouraging the formation of kindred Societies in the principal provincial towns where such of the activities of the Society as are applicable may be carried on.

7. By establishing a similar Society in Paris which will promote in France a knowledge of British life and thought and which will assist members of this Society to obtain congenial French correspondents and provide facilities which will render visits to France more agreeable than they would otherwise be.

The carrying out of the above programme will depend to a large extent upon the amount of financial support that can be obtained.

Forms of Application for Membership may be obtained from the Hon. Secretaries, Anglo-French Society, 8 St. Martin's Place, W.C. 2.

[We endorse most heartily all the aims and aspirations of the Anglo-French Society, and hope they will meet with due response and encouragement. Yet without wishing to contend with any of the octogenarian vice-presidents of this society, or in any way to ruffle their feelings, we cannot but observe that English literature (in the persons of Mrs. John Lane and Miss Winifred Stephens) is inadequately represented on "The Committee," of the Society, which is constituted as follows:

W. H. Helm, chairman (unknown to us), Cloudsley Brereton, Pierre Comert, E. Davies (?), J. de Marsillac, J. Gilmer. Mrs. John Lane (wife of the publisher), J. Lewis May (?), Prof. Paul Mantoux, de V. Payen-Payen, Miss Winifred Stephens.]

A NEW ANNUAL

MR. C. W. BEAUMONT of 78 Charing Cross Road is publishing in April an interesting collection of verse, prose and pictures by modern artists. The idea of the collection is to give a fairly clear epitome of modern work without the inevitable restriction and narrowness of publications by particular schools or cliques. One of the salient features of modern art is the kind of civil war waged by artists among themselves. This may be a healthy sign but is a confounded nuisance to the outsider who wants to know what is going on and who desires to avoid these feuds. Mr. Beaumont's collection, though obviously it could not be complete, will give an indication of the work that is being done by the more vital individuals or groups.

The book will contain fourteen woodcuts and twenty illustrations in line and half-tone. The sculptors, Brzeska, Mestrovic and Epstein, and the painters John, Sickert, Nevinson, Nash, Kramer, Nina Hamnett and Anne Estelle Rice will be represented. Among the authors are D. H. Lawrence, Flint, J. G. Fletcher, Nichols, Davies, De la Mare, Sadler, Squire, Munro, Rose Macaulay and many others.

In all there are some fifty contributors to this book, which will be published in quarto at 7s. 6d. net.

R. A.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE "MERCURE DE FRANCE" AND ENGLISH LITERATURE

To the Editor of THE EGOIST

MADAM,—As your paper is the only one in this country with anything in common with the original objects of the *Mercure de France*, will you allow me space to protest against the very short shrift which the latter journal has of late accorded to English literature?

M. Davray contributes the English rubric and has found time within the last few months (the *Mercure* appearing bi-monthly) to contribute two articles; one of them on Colvin's recent book on Keats—the other I have not by me.

As is well known, these rubrics are intended to keep the curious reader in touch with recent developments in literature, but one is forced to assume that similar treatment of their contributions by other correspondents would make them equally valueless reports. The rest of the *Mercure* is devoted to the war—as it has been since 1914—and that part is therefore unreadable.

M. Davray's articles are not ill-informed—on the contrary; but the lives of great men form merely the chaff of literature, when there is original work being done. One sympathizes with the reader who is keen about Keats' mother, sisters, aunts, and at what age he had mumps, and for those Sir Sidney Colvin is obviously of international importance, but surely M. Davray might have spared us that.

And besides, the article is rather bad. He says, "Wordsworth and Keats are two of the greatest poets of whom the human race can boast," and also, "Despite his incomplete promise, Keats has exercised a profound influence upon modern English poetry." This is absurd. Keats is the last of a school which began God knows when and included Collins and Gray—and all his so-called modern derivatives are more or less negligible.

May I suggest to M. Davray that THE EGOIST and the *Little Review*, with their attendant publications, will offer him a better index of what is significant in modern English than the lucubrations of Sir Sydney Colvin and Co. (publishers and critics inclusive)?—Yours, etc.,

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