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CONTENTS

	PAGE		PAGE
STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY CRITICISM. By T. S. Eliot	113	DAWNS. By Richard Aldington	121
THE WORK OF MISS REBECCA WEST. By D. M.	114	AN UNACADEMIC ACADEMICIAN. By Ernest A. Boyd	121
PASSING PARIS. By Madame Ciolkowska	119	NUMBERS. By May Sinclair	122
EARLY TRANSLATORS OF HOMER. III. By Ezra Pound	120	AT RIVIERE. By Herbert Read	123
		THE END OF THE STRIKE. By Leigh Henry	123

STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY CRITICISM

By T. S. ELIOT

I

THE work of the critic is almost wholly comprehended in the "complementary activities" of comparison and analysis. The one activity implies the other; and together they provide the only way of asserting standards and of isolating a writer's peculiar merits. In the dogmatic, or lazy, mind comparison is supplied by judgment, analysis replaced by appreciation. Judgment and appreciation are merely tolerable avocations, no part of the critic's serious business. If the critic has performed his laboratory work well, his understanding will be evidence of appreciation; but his work is by the intelligence not the emotions. The judgment also will take place in the reader's mind, not in the critic's explicit statement. When he judges or appreciates he simply (perhaps from a legitimate compulsion to spare time or thought) is missing out a link in the exposition.

Criticism, like creative art, is in various ways less developed than scientific research. For one thing, scientific progress, in Europe and America, would not have reached its present stage had it not been pretty thoroughly internationalized: if the results of any important experiment in one country were not immediately taken up, tested and proceeded upon in every other. A vast improvement in this respect had taken place, for instance, since Mendel's time. Of course, science, as well as literature, is dependent upon the occasional appearance of a man of genius who discovers a new method. But there is much useful work done in science by men who are only clever enough and well enough educated to apply a method; and in literature there ought to be a place for persons of equivalent capacity. Yet what we find are discoverers of methods whose methods remain unstudied;

and an illimitable number of honest toilers still seeking the literary counterpart of perpetual motion or the *lapis philosophicus*; fuddling with

putrefaction,
Solution, ablution, sublimation,
Cohobation, calcination, ceration, and
Fixation.

We are justified in reprobating such wasted energy. There ought to be honourable vacancies for men who like to write about literature without themselves having a "method" to deliver; without (in cruder terms) being "creative" writers. There might be a recognized set of tools which the critic could be taught to use, and a variety of standard patterns which he could be trained to turn out.

Mr. J. H. E. Crees* is one of the belated astrologers. He has industry and considerable native competence; he knows his author well, and is interested in his subject. But he does not know positively what he wants to do—and is therefore somewhat uncertain in his attempt to do it. He does not know just what are the questions about a poet or novelist which are worth an answer; he has not halted to contemplate his task before he began it. This lack of training often is responsible for the issue of general observations which for a critic are utterly a waste of time. I find in a chapter devoted to Meredith's "Art":

Style is the man. . . . Those who have any individuality at all, and who allow this individuality to develop, must . . . attain to something individual.

Mr. Crees is looking for Meredith's style on a very dark night, and without knowing what "style" will

* *George Meredith: A Study of his Works and Personality.* By J. H. E. Crees. B. H. Blackwell, Oxford. 6s. net.

be when he finds it. His misapprehension asserts itself as he proceeds to the question of originality. He who is endowed with a fine sense of style must often note the inadequacy of the hackneyed phrase and feel for other methods of expression. In the first place, a fine sense of style is more truly an acquirement than an endowment, but let that pass. His interpretation of the "hackneyed phrase" is illuminated by his next sentence :

Not to do so is rather spiritual indolence than love of the precise and unpretentious.

(Why *spiritual* indolence? But let it pass.) Mr. Crees says, in effect, that the "hackneyed phrase" is not invariably precise and unpretentious. Our remark upon this is that the hackneyed phrase is precisely the pretentious and *unprecise*, that this is part of its nature. It is not hackneyed because it is old, but because it is dead; and it is dead because it has lost its meaning. Mr. Crees goes on to produce numerous unconscious illustrations of dead language. Thus :

None ever thought more quickly or boasted a more teeming fancy (than Meredith's).

The first half of this sentence is alive enough; it is "precise and unpretentious." The second half is dead tissue. It is not precise, and it is pretentious. The writer has forgotten the literal meaning of both "boast" and "teeming." Aside from the fact that quickness of thought and teeming fancy are not closely enough related to be joined in one sentence.

The whole nature of the metaphor, both of such hackneyed phrases as those quoted above, and of those habitually practised by Meredith and by Mr. Crees elsewhere, is an unknown science to Mr. Crees. Had he studied the history of language in his critical education he might have perceived finally that all thought and all language is based ultimately upon a few simple physical movements.* Metaphor is not something applied externally for the adornment of style, it is the life of style, of language. If Mr. Crees had realized how completely we are dependent upon metaphor for even the abstractest thinking, he would admit both that his hackneyed phrase is vestigial and that the Carlyle-Meredith metaphor is excrescent.

The healthy metaphor adds to the strength of the language; it makes available some of that physical source of energy upon which the life of language depends.

. . . in her strong toil of grace

is a complicated metaphor which has this effect; and as in most good metaphor, you can hardly say where the metaphorical and the literal meet.

Mountain echo, carrying her youth like a flag . . .
a cathedral organ foully handled in the night by demons . . .
a pot on the fire with a loose lid . . .
Seraglio Point . . .

these are merely conceits. They are not metaphors, but disguised similes. To make constant use of such is not to strengthen, but merely to drug the language. And we may say this of both Carlyle and Meredith, that they contributed very little to make English a stronger, more subtle, more civilized instrument. They dosed it with sentimentalities.

And last—Mr. Crees affirms that Meredith's is a style which requires "vast powers of thought." It is true that Carlyle, a writer whose merits are positively of the surface, gained a reputation for profundity by a similar style. Mr. Crees speaks of Meredith's "profound philosophy." Of course it is the first duty of a philosopher to be clear and logical and simple, and he can then afford to let the profundity

* All this matter of the cliché and the metaphor has been much more ably put in Remy de Gourmont's *Problème du style*.

take care of itself; but the fact is that most of Meredith's profundity is profound platitude. His blood and brain and spirit trinity may be a profound analysis; he has left the clarity and precision to Plato, who had already conceived a somewhat similar anatomy. The style which runs to excessive metaphor is simply the style of a lazy mind: as any one who has tried to write well and has laboured with laziness can testify. It is a pity that bad example, rather than native indolence, should have led Mr. Crees into practising the habits which he extols.

THE WORK OF MISS REBECCA WEST

THE appearance of a second book by Rebecca West, bringing with it a strong suggestion that its author is working her way towards a new style, or at least making drastic changes in her old one, makes reminiscence regarding this writer's career more than ordinarily tempting: this, because the outstanding fact of her career has been the immediateness of the success obtained by the style possibly about to be discarded or overhauled. One remembers, for instance, how, a matter of some seven years or so ago, when the *Freewoman*, that journalistic grub-form of which THE EGOIST is the winged development, was in its very earliest days, a certain Regina Bloch submitted to it for publication a study claiming to be a critical valuation of the work of Mrs. Humphry Ward. (One trusts the name was Regina Bloch, though quite conceivably at this date memory may be a trifle at fault. Failing correction, however, let the name stand.) The author's identity veiled under this pseudonym was in no way a mystery. That of a girl still in her teens, she had been known to the editorial powers from those even earlier teens of which the insignia is the pigtail. Moreover, she had already submitted other matter, of which at least one specimen—after a certain amount of trimming—had been published over the initials of the name authentically conferred on her by her godparents in baptism. This sudden decision to change her identity seems, therefore, to have been more to cut herself clear of her brief literary past and signalize her first application of a unique mental power than to act as a screen under which to make a first entry into literature. There seems no doubt whatever that she herself realized fully, in her first attempt to employ her characteristic literary form, that it invested her with a totally new character and status: a fact which a revealing little incident made quite clear at the time. As it chanced, the consideration of the manuscript in question was held up, with the result that the author presented herself in person, and the baffled and incredulous air with which the lady retired after listening to some prevaricating fencing about one having glanced at it, and letting her know later, revealed fully the kind of estimation she herself had formed of its merits and her notion of what its reception ought to have been. How right she was immediate events amply proved. Within a few hours of her departure, the combined editorial and office staffs—two persons in all—were met together to consider whether, in view of the fact of there being no fund then available for the payment of contributors, an office collection would guarantee Miss Bloch's receiving, in addition to an offer to become a member of the staff, some modest stipend also. The result being affirmative, on that same day Miss Bloch's gracious consideration of the offer was invited. Thus it was that Miss Rebecca West made her entry into literature, for at some stage of this manuscript's progress from proof to final press, the author again changed her name, and it was Rebecca West in place of Regina Bloch who became responsible

for turning to exquisite drollery the solemnities of Mrs. Humphry Ward.

The spontaneity and fervour of acknowledgment which her peculiar genius thus won for her before she was well born is typical of what Rebecca West has met throughout her entire subsequent career. Her literary contributions could scarcely have run to a dozen weeks before the American publisher—a beneficent entity who shares with Mr. H. G. Wells the hobby of encouraging British genius while still in the green—was hot on the trail. The writer would have, he opined, some larger work on hand. If this were so, the favour of its consideration . . . et cetera, et cetera. . . . And as with publishers so with editors. Way-weary advocates of dragging creeds, appreciating light and laughter much more acutely than they understood the nature of its base, swiftly concluded it to be a far far better thing to put their cause on the side which infallibly raised the laugh than to ally it with the angels even. They angled accordingly: in the end—not too happily for the steady development of Rebecca West's general powers—successfully. . . . And even as with publishers and editors, so later with the reviewers. When, about two years ago, Miss West published a modest volume on Mr. Henry James,* the most jaded and time-eaten of these gentlemen drew strength to take on the lyrical note and lustily sang its praises. She had a great reviewing. Now, cheered apparently by such a chorus she publishes a second work: this time a novel, and for the first time in her literary history a suggestion of hesitation and strain has crept into the adulation offered up so freely by these assessors of literary merit. The reason is that she has been niggardly with just those touches which are the specific mark of Rebecca West. She has used her gift extremely sparingly. Before speculating what this may mean, however, it is worth while to look closely into the nature of the gift which all the world has shown itself so willing to applaud.

If one were called upon to define it, one would say it was the power to sense a complex situation, and to take such an accurate and assured grip of the situation's essential attitude that the mental image of some sense-form embodying the precise attitude would spring into the mind by a simple act of mental association. The genius of the power lies then in this primary aliveness to the attitude or significance of a complex situation. The resulting mental image of an elementary sense-form which comes in its train, while it is the more arresting and interesting, is actually only secondary. Obviously this power of Rebecca West is that of the illustrator: the interpreter: the simplifier of what is complex by means of a concrete mental image. It is the power which illumines abstract relationships by the suggesting of apposite concrete forms. It is imagism in its widest sense. Though commonly regarded as the particular asset of the artist—and every artist of first rank possesses it in supreme degree—it is just as much a prime requisite of every person who carries on any traffic in ideas. The entire subject is an important one, occupying a whole position in psychology, and very valuable inquiries have been made into it since Galton inaugurated his illuminating researches. Galton's work rather gives the impression that the thinker tends to lose this faculty of imagining under the shape of sensory concrete forms. One would rather say that a wide range of power exists among thinkers, and that while all people who tend to think philosophically (that is, through a wide range of instances) on any subject will tend necessarily to disembarass themselves of vivid images of forms which are ordinary, no thinker will arrive at the rank of genius unless he possesses this power to reduce the

vast number of instances in which he deals to a single form expressible either as the verbally created picture of a concrete figure, or as a verbal formula indicating some definite concrete action. The explanation of this apparently is that the human mind finds the maintaining of multiple instances a repellent and confusing burden, and therefore gratefully acknowledges itself the debtor of all who resolve such burdensome conditions; first, by abstracting from them their characteristic attitude; and, secondly, by reissuing them under the primary mental figures of concrete forms. In illuminative labours of this kind all interpretative work, that of scientist as well as that of poet and philosopher, inasmuch as it "arrives," is one. A Shakespeare, a Berkeley, and a Darwin are alike in that they take into their powerful hands a veritable fog of multiple and confused instances, and reissue them impressed with some characteristic concrete form under which the ordinary mind henceforth is able to vision them. In such a way these interpreters lend out and make common property the light of their minds, and men actually see with this borrowed light and this vicarious vision. One might allow oneself to say that the smaller and more scattered points of light, which the poet commonly creates, make for the mind the illuminating effect—the variety of colour and form—of a firework display; while the simple formula into which a thinker will distil the close observations of a lifetime, shines with the steady guiding light of some fixed moon. Returning then to Miss West: her gift makes her one of this order of illuminators who can convert the burdensomeness of the multiple, abstract, and complex into the easy pictorial currency of the concrete; and though the scale of her images is not of any majestic order: that is, the amount of foggy mental stuff she can lift at one throw and convert in this way is not impressively great: yet within the limits of the power she has to her elbow her mechanism is perfect.

In addition, moreover, to this she has also the knack of a turn of her own, the recipe for which is not to be found in the power of every one who has a gift for saying recurrently *like . . . like . . . like . . . as . . . as . . . like*, with revealing effect. To say she is an imagist does not therefore explain her completely. It explains why she creates an effect of relief and light, but not why this light breaks up in eddies of laughter. What this process she infiltrates into her imagism is we can indicate by instancing the kind of effects sought after by those imagists who are in all things bent on seriousness. If we take, for instance, the lines of Keats occurring in his sonnet, "On First Reading Chapman's 'Homer'":

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

We see that the essential attitude "to look upon a rich and unexpected world for the first time" is given in terms of concrete experience, which entirely match in dignity and temper the conditions of soul they are intended to translate. Now the sprite-like ruse of Rebecca West which secures for us that shiver of delighted dismay which is her speciality consists in seizing the essential attitude, embodying it in a single word or phrase, running this last through the whole gamut of its possible applications, then selecting a particular application on this principle: If the condition to be illustrated is solemn, serious, or dignified, choose that application of the illustrating word which is the most trivial and flippant possible; but if it is gay and light, then reverse the process and choose the word in its application the most lofty

* *Henry James*. By Rebecca West. Nisbet and Co., London. 1s. net.

and impressive. To take an instance: She says: "(Somebody) took thirty-two bites to a moral decision, just as Mr. Gladstone took thirty-two bites to a mouthful." Here the characteristic action to be retranslated is obviously "to ruminate," a term which allows at one end of the scale the meaning "to ponder" and at the other that of "to chew." By introducing the latter into a connexion which requires the former she gets her effect of humour. Again she speaks of "Pansy, a little girl from whose character conventional training had removed every attribute save whiteness and sweetness, so that she lies under life like a fine cloth on a sunny bleaching-green." The word to be played upon here is of course "to whiten," the humorous effect being obtained by the substitution of its commonplace meaning "to bleach" in a place where it is its figurative meaning "to purify" which is relevant. It is quite obvious what it is with which we are dealing, it is the *pun*, which, with its endless possibilities for those unexpected turns of meaning out of which laughter is born, is the basis of the most polished wit as much as of the broadest farce. The examples of Rebecca West's humour above chosen were picked out at random on merely opening the pages of the volume on Henry James. As a matter of fact, almost every page of that book literally teems with them. One need seek no further to understand why the reviewers became rapturous over the work. They were tickled to death. Miss West on Mr. James was far better than any show on the boards one could think to name.

Such is the nature of the gift which has gone to the making of Rebecca West, and with which her audience is so very well content. If any discontent in regard to such an endowment is conceivable it can only exist for Rebecca herself. That it does exist, however, her new book, *The Return of the Soldier*,* seems adequate evidence. Apparently its author is tired of the rôle of droll and bright image-maker of the popular dinner-table size: the size which admits of its being worked off on one's neighbour with just the regulation degree of casualness: and considers that her powers in general give her the means of making good in a rôle less circumscribed. This frame of mind one infers, as has been said, from the book's sparing display of images: a sparingness too marked to be unintentional, especially when taken together with the fact that the book has obviously been carefully written, having a structure and phrasing far better braced and knit together than is always the case with Rebecca West. If this be so, then it is certainly a highly courageous and vital development, the importance of which is in no way minimized by the fact that it has led to the writing of a very indifferently good short story. Courageous, for certainly Rebecca West will find difficulties in her way beyond the ordinary: a fact of which the quality of her first novel furnishes some proof.

When one endeavours to analyse the source of these special difficulties, one realizes forcibly that a too rapid advance into public favour in one's youth is only a mixed blessing, and that Rebecca West has not been spared paying the price exacted from all prodigies. In a sense she is the victim of the perfection of her special gift, which in mere girlhood thrust her into a glaring publicity and robbed her of the necessary quiet and shelter under which her other high talents would have received a fair chance of maturing. As it is, all her exercises and trial turns have had to be put through under the public eye. There was no place for those highly educative failures whose perpetuation lies so comfortably and helpfully within the competence of obscurer powers. Speaking after the event, we might surmise that even this difficulty could have been countered, had Rebecca

West had the wisdom deliberately and consciously to screen herself behind her gift and erect it into defence, as, subconsciously and in part, she has been driven to do. One means to say that in the knowledge that her work inevitably tended to make her embarrassingly conspicuous, she might have maintained her work at its already high level and for the rest manoeuvred for shelter, resisting the efforts of obtuse persons who, without making any attempt to understand the range of her powers, envied the asset of her brilliance and sought to draw her into positions for which intellectually she was wholly unready. It is certain that had General Booth (let us say) on account of the brilliance of her wit, invited her to lead his East-Enders to the Lord, he would have shown no greater lack of discrimination than did those editors who, for the same reason, invited her to lead women to the light, labour to plenty and security, or to furnish balanced and comprehensive judgments on the subject of contemporary literature. Rebecca West produced her most characteristic work, and maintained it continuously at its highest level, when her commission took her no further than the making of herself into the most audacious writer in town, and her burden of responsibility was specifically no greater than the production of so many of her shining images to the column. And in the end, as far as the approbation of her public is concerned, these remain practically the limits of her achievement. Less almost than the common run of writers has Rebecca West managed to impregnate the connecting tissue of her writing with anything which can be called a character, so that were one to place a thumb so to speak over the bright sallies with which it is starred, the surrounding substance might be judged to have emanated from any writer whatsoever who was tolerably efficient. Although her gift has made her a public property, she has kept her personality almost entirely in reserve. She has apparently made no effort to present that unified and homogeneous blend of opinion on life and things which is what constitutes a mental character, and in the public eye Rebecca West's wit has continued to exhaust the conception of Rebecca West. For it she is just the highbrowed reviewer of books who removes the skin of her victims to the accompaniment of a happy laugh.

This is what the Americans really mean when they describe her as "the mysterious and amazing Englishwoman." The revelation of herself still remains to be made. Its lagging advent we hold to be due to the exaggerated publicity to which we have referred, which has served to retard the formation of a distinctive mind of her own. Now, however, that signs are forthcoming that she herself is dissatisfied with this state of things, and proposes to commit herself more wholly than she has as yet ever attempted, one becomes all the more alive to the steady play upon her mind of an influence which is antagonistic to what we imagine to be her deeper genius. It is an influence which, to waste no words over it, we will call intellectualist and clever. It is an influence propagated mainly by the satellites of the more prominent figures in our propagandist and, therefore, our most ephemeral forms of contemporary literature. It is the kind of influence enormously concerned with the events of the last quarter of an hour; above all things gossipy; if not smart, this is merely on account of lack of aptitude not of intention. Ordinarily its active agents are easy to recognize; if female, they wear djibbahs and live in the garden suburb or ought to; if male, they forgather at Mr. Miles's and remark wearily, "As I said to Shaw." Products of an age pestilent with causes, each follows a cause always just on the eve of reforming the world. To be really clever one should belong to a committee or a sub-sub-committee of a society responsible for a cause. It all sounds very antiquated and in-

* Nisbet and Co., London. 5s. net.

nocuous, but once bitten with it, it becomes very difficult to shed. At all events, it was an influence of this nature which Rebecca West had the bad fortune to meet in impressionable years, and the still greater bad fortune to acquire a heavy respect for. One always feels that it is under this influence that she has come by her standards of taste; one feels too that she not only values its approval but requires it; that it is the views on life and things acceptable to those who inspire it that she is prone to mirror; and one realizes that were she to require some new form in which to recast her forces this would be the direction in which she would turn for her new model.

This is in fact exactly what has happened. Mr. Shaw has assured Miss West "in a private letter," as her publishers' advertisement informs one, that *The Return of the Soldier* is "one of the best short stories in the language." However that may be, it can certainly be said that it is the exact form of short story which Mr. Shaw would have adopted had he set himself the task of writing one: which is not to say, however, that he would not have achieved far more striking results. Quite the contrary. Mr. Shaw's own genius is precisely that of the debater: the emphazier of points: raised to its highest degree of intensity. Hence when it is he who is making use of this self-same technique, i.e. that of using human figures to personalize the aspects of some propagandist theory, he is working on his strongest, his most characteristic, almost his sole literary line. If, for instance, he writes a play, while his characters are merely personalized points of view, he is yet so vastly interested in these points of view that, whether these stock types take on life or not, they at least move about the stage with such vigour and briskness, and come down with such smart emphasis on the right spots that the effect is entertaining and exhilarating in the extreme, surpassing in zest a really first-class debate. This literary device is naturally fitted to be the vehicle to carry anything he has to express, and had not Mr. Shaw discovered this form and remained faithful to it, the dreary drama of these damp islands would have been even drearier than in recent years it actually has been.

On the other hand, making points in a debate is not Rebecca West's strong rôle. She is not a debater; she is not a fighter; her spirits do not rise at the prospect of a scrap. Like all minds of the "subjective" cast, monologue is her best form. She is far too strongly exercised and baffled and fascinated with her own uncharted emotions—too deeply involved in their storms—to be able to receive any just and balanced impression of objects lying outside the zone of those storms. She has not the heart sufficiently at leisure to become possessed of that "objective" sort of appreciation which enables a Jane Austen, for instance, to enjoy and play off one against another life's little ironies and men's smaller foibles. In fact, although an unkind fate has made her one of them, Rebecca West does not possess the temperament of the "clever" person. On the contrary, she has a natural bent for taking life tragically. Just as one can contrast her with Jane Austen, one can equally affirm her kinship by temperament with the Brontës. Although the latter possess a sense of assuredness in regard to their work: a sense of their own sufficiency to be the ultimate judges of it: which gives to their mental gestures a something of regality which does not belong to Rebecca West, there still remains a strong element of kinship in a common endowment of a self-centred, self-consuming, lava-like emotionability; and though probably it is not possible to cite two works more widely separate in every way than *Wuthering Heights* and *The Return of the Soldier*, one would say that this likeness exists in relation to Emily Brontë in particular. Now, for the literary exploitation of a temperament of this kind one recognizes that Emily

Brontë in her solitariness, her deadness to the world and its opinion, and the complete absence of grounds for secondary motives in her choice of a literary form, was possessed of every favourable asset except indeed the power to keep her treacherous body alive. Rebecca West, on the other hand, living under exposed conditions in the "age of the grin," and just where the grin both as an offensive and defensive weapon counts for most, is handicapped in exact proportion to her sensitiveness to it. One can indeed imagine her calling to mind the picture which a Charlotte Brontë cut in the eyes of a Thackeray, and all her defensive instincts mounting in involuntary sympathy with the latter; and imagine her substituting Emily for Charlotte, and taking note of the effect, swiftly deciding that a merciful heaven must spare her from being classifiable among these beings of whom emotion, elemental and unabashed, is the crowning distinction. Whence, finding herself charged with a love-story whose literary expression had become an emotional necessity to her: a story of feeling of quite this crude elemental type: it is only in the irreproachable intellectualism of its form that she can see hope for salvation. If the form could bring with it associations sufficiently intellectualized it would be possible to run the emotion into it like metal into a mould, while the setting would sufficiently emphasize the complete alienness of the narrator to the emotions of the story to be told. Its intellectualism would indicate that her concern with her characters was that of the surgeon with his "case" only. Hence, when she adopts that device of dubious artistic morality of Mr. Shaw's, i.e. the use of the high emphasis of emotional elements to heighten the light and shade of purely scientific speculations, her motive is not the single-minded one that it is with Mr. Shaw. He is concerned to serve the theory; her concern is to make the theory serve her and her artistic ends. So we find her taking as established a certain pseudo-scientific 'guess relative to the nature of lapsed memory, and into its framework working four "type" characters. These can only be very briefly indicated. There is first the hero: a soldier of whom, apart from the fact that he is invalidated home suffering from lapsed memory, there is little to be said. Trying to summarize the impression of him, one's mind attaches itself to that couplet which one seems to remember as the sole surviving remains of an eighteenth-century narrative poem:

And like a star on her bosom lay
His shining golden head.

This couplet will very conveniently express everything which tends to survive relative to this unhappily afflicted young man. The remaining characters are all female and all, without exception, consumed with love for the golden-haired man. There is his old love, a young woman of inferior station who appears before us in the rôle of support for the golden head, and whose reason for existence is to oblige the theory by serving as object of those repressed subconscious desires which, under the action of unusual tensions, have suddenly burst bonds and come into their own by a simple process of obliterating the conscious mental motions which for years have been blocking their insurgence. As a person she is very vague and not too appealing, having taken to herself drabbest penury in the train of a flabby spouse who potters about their suburban garden-patch, "not so much digging as exhibiting his incapacity to deal with a spade," but to whom nevertheless his wife—to prove to us the soundness of her heart, no doubt—speaks in an encouraging goo-goo talk as if he were a child. It is in connexion with this nebulous creation that one most has to regret that Miss West's tenure of the creative rôle in regard to this work precludes her from handling it in that of reviewer!

There is next the soldier's wife, pretty, elegant, and young, with really very nice manners, whom he has forgotten because subconsciously he has been dissatisfied with the network of feeling she has created in and around him, and who is now given the strong corrective discipline of seeing herself more than displaced by a person "repulsively furred with neglect and poverty." This elegant person is called upon to suffer (which she does with considerable dignity) a husband's looking at her in "that detached sort of way men, whose affections are engaged elsewhere, look at a pretty woman." An object for sympathy surely! But one only arrives at the real temper of the story when one considers the twists given to its chronicling by the cousin—youthful, pretty, and elegant too, one gathers, who for some unaccountable cause is domiciled with the young couple—who is made its narrator. It is this character who stands as it were as umpire on the subject of the merits and demerits the case involves. She stands in fact as proxy for the author, and it is from the manner in which she causes the emphasis of the story to fall that one realizes the impossible pass to which the author has been brought by her choice of setting. It reveals, for instance, that she is endeavouring to fill at one and the same time the dispassionate and impersonal rôle of the scientific investigator; that of moral castigator bent on scourging publicly the wickedness of the desire for fal-lals, of spending a young husband's money and causing the poor thing to work hours and hours of overtime; and finally, that of an artist bent only on chronicling justly a tale of hearts' desires. Part of the time it makes one feel that the entire subject is wholly an affair for the laboratory, and should have been left there; partly that its purpose should have been expounded in a socio-political pamphlet; partly that as a tale of human emotion it is altogether quite indecently unjust. One feels that instead of being presumed to possess some feeling of compassion for a poor small piece of elegance quite uniquely "badly hit by the war" one is being drawn into being a party to the gibes and sneers which are made to cut so savagely across a face already quivering in dismayed humiliation. One in no way feels that the tragic elements of the situation are being allowed to purge themselves of their tragicality—as they should—by a balanced expression, but rather that they are involving themselves the more. The story creates no sense of exhilaration. On the contrary, it produces an effect of very startling and disquieting misery. One feels as though one had just caught sound of a sharp cry of pain from some impenetrable stone-faced prison by way of an aperture swiftly opened and as swiftly closed again. It has an atmosphere of ominousness as though some tale instead of being told has after its first arresting cry been hastily smothered. It is in this way one must explain the otherwise totally inexplicable accents of aching misery in the voice of the pathetic and defeated thing who tells the story; the otherwise inexplicable resentful hostility to the story's most distress-burdened characters; and the introduction of so strange an element as the theory put forward to explain the scourge of infantile mortality which has swept through the two households.

Some one has suggested that to produce such an effect the author herself must be extraordinarily unhappy. It does not seem that this is so necessarily, or at least not to a more desperate degree than is involved in, and accounted for, by the darker and lighter patches of cussedness which constitute the day's march with most of us. The effect can be quite as well explained by recognizing that the "clever" framework selected to carry the story broke up and revolted under the impact of this kind of elemental thing, and like an artillery-piece too light and too uncertainly based for the strength of

its charge, in the recoil producing devastating effects not arranged for in the formal programme.

The fact is that the portrayal of subjective emotion of this kind makes quite unique demands upon its author in regard to the very intimate matter of *kinship*, and from the nature of the effects produced, an interdict issues against any attempt to pass it into currency in anything approaching the casual manner in which one passes the time of the day. Hence, whether the emotional conditions described are of the nature of a confession or not, in order that the form shall be able to support the strain of its material, the confessional is the only form which the narrative can successfully take. To be told with a courage and a responsibility which is absolute is the minimum demand the subjective narrative makes if it is to escape the most painful uneasiness and complete artistic disaster. It does not admit the oblique manner of recording. Nor is the reason any very remote one, since the identifying of the story with the teller imposes immediately a steadying discipline and a sense of responsibility which reduces to a minimum probability the appearance of submerging emotional crudities on the one hand, and injustice and waywardness of the story's action on the other, which pass without challenge easily when fixed in an oblique impersonal setting. In this way the entire structure arranges itself automatically in relation to its right and responsible base of reference. In short, the deeper the emotional record seeks to go, the more necessary it is that such record shall be responsibly owned and fathered. Only in the frankness of this relationship do the author and audience alike find a protection.

Moreover, courage brings to the narrator its own immediate reward in terms of the tale's vigour and exhilaratingness. For when one says that a writer is under the emotional necessity of expressing an experience, one can only mean that that experience has assumed a determining control enabling it to outbalance and command all that remains of the forces of the mind. The emotional part is driving the conscious whole. When, however, in submission to such driving force, the mind takes up its task with the adequate courage and strength, this overbalance in powers at once corrects itself. An uncompromising grip has inverted the situation, and the mastering emotional force finds a new position as of a specimen under a microscope, as an *object for the mind*. An overpowering subjective condition has been compelled in fact to shed its subjectivity and become an object: a true entity, capable of being expelled from the exclusiveness of the individual and made current as a universal possession. By making it so intimately personal it has indeed become impersonal. In fact, a subjective condition boldly and frankly portrayed becomes for every quality it professes a conquered condition; and if its qualities be those of misery and suffering these are brought into subjection equally. In this fact resides the quality of relief which inheres in all true confession. Whatever the condition be, by stating it justly the mind makes an escape from its absolute thrall. This is why no work of art, honestly and courageously done, can produce any more than a mere surface depression. It is too much a display of its author's power, and the spectator participates in the exhilaration of the expression of that power. Its bare existence is the evidence that the conditions portrayed have been conceived in their entirety, and bound down by the paramount force emanating from an entire mind. Hence it is that in art, the vigour in the initial conceptive grip is decisive. What cannot be so gripped cannot become art. Summarizing then these facts as far as they concern our author, one would say that while the power of grip which puts the artist in possession of his individual message and gives him what he has to say is conferred

on him in the set of his physical mechanism absolutely and unalterably and is, therefore, beyond the range of argument and advice, there nevertheless exists in relation to the perfecting of the executive power by which he provides himself with expression a wide scope for the play of certain acquirable moral qualities without which even a rich native endowment suffers a rot. It is certain that Rebecca West possesses brilliant gifts: the world has acknowledged them; and we think it probable she possesses others of an even more solid worth. There exists, therefore, every hope that when she emerges from the groping twilight of the process of finding herself and her true form, she will be able to combine indisputable high gifts with the high, but necessary, moral forces of courage, independence, and unashamed truth.

D. M.

NOTICE

THE next article of the series "Philosophy: The Science of Signs," by the contributing editor, will appear in the November issue of THE EGOIST.

PASSING PARIS

CONTRASTS IN FICTION

J. H. ROSNY AÎNÉ: . . . *et l'amour ensuite* (Flammarion); EUGÈNE MONTFORT: *La Belle Enfant, ou l'Amour a 40 ans* (Fayard); EDMOND JALOUX: *Fumées dans la Campagne* (La Renaissance du Livre).

NOT one of these three books touches upon the war. The first- and third-named authors make no apology for the circumstance; the second, in a foreword, excuses himself with the explanation that his narrative was composed in pre-war days and suggests that the reader's fancy convey the characters into the war "wherein each one could have his reasons for getting himself killed without ridiculous regrets."

M. Rosny calls his a "roman de mœurs." He might have called it a "roman d'époque" for it is a present-day type—preferred by him now to the paleolithic—who provides the central figure in this book: an "arrivist," as it happens, of the female gender, endowed with the necessary physical advantages to attract, and with the necessary mental capacities to derive every profit—with the minimum of outlay—from these advantages. M. Rosny does not bother about the purely relative, arbitrary, and ephemeral qualities of "charm" or "virtue" except where these have a practical and general import. Fifty years ago Jeanne would have started out on her career a governess; nowadays she is, of course, a typist; and she works her schemes with a kind of white dishonesty, justified, as M. Rosny hints, by the individual's weakness against the world.

M. Rosny's synthetic preoccupations are more interesting to me than the lady's strategies. He is true to the author of the prehistoric, as also of the social cycles when his *arrière-pensée* links together modern and primitive psychology, when he shows the most active, self-commanding wit subservient to forces, when he opposes the individual and the collective consciences, when he puts the case for the new code of morality, the essential code, as, for example:

En serrée dans les mailles de sa promesse, Jeanne entendait ne pas se dérober. Elle avait un sens profond des obligations que crée la promesse. Régulière, elle percevait que si les sociétés fortes et les êtres forts ont droit à la ruse comme au mensonge, ils ne doivent recourir au parjure qu'à la dernière extrémité.

This is outspoken and satisfactory, Again:

La petite Jeanne subissait ce grand drame de la destinée, qui est le choix.

That is Rosny all over.

Jeanne's conscience is simple and direct enough, but her subconsciousness possesses all the complexities brought to it by strata upon strata of subconsciousnesses.

Ignorance on particular subjects, if not a general innocence, will be characteristic of the modern girl, however socially emancipated. M. Rosny, very correctly, I think, feels this.

Jeanne ne se fait encore aucune idée de la manière dont se marient les êtres; le danger auquel elle vient d'échapper n'a pas de figure précise.

There will be, probably, more and more sexually inexperienced women in the world.

* * * *

M. Rosny is fond of explaining and systematizing phenomena. This is a preoccupation into which M. Montfort never drifts. M. Montfort is the most unpedantic, the most unpretentious, and the most unaffected of our novelists. *La Belle Enfant* follows a tendency to give predominancy to the descriptive element which would appear to coincide with the care directed in recent years on stage-settings, and of which the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, Max Reinhardt, Gordon Craig, M. Rouché, the Russian ballets, and so forth were some the cause and others the outcome. A straightforward style, with strong, full lights and as strong full shadows, which corresponds to the luminous, clean-cut effects of the scenes he is fond of depicting—Marseilles, Naples—distinguishes M. Montfort's work. The narrative or psychological part also presents abrupt oppositions like the Mediterranean climate. There are no gradations, no intervening transitions. The sentiments are violent, almost primitive, the deeds direct expressions of the thoughts or senses. The events are somewhat rushed on to the reader, like storms in southern climates; the *dénouements* desperate, seeming to be without alternative. These peculiarities are common to M. Montfort's novels. The frank, solid prose of Eugène Montfort translates the fierce colours and full life of Marseilles as faithfully and expressively as Rodenbach translated, in his fainter language, the half-tones and half-life of Bruges.

* * * *

Fumées dans la Campagne for some reason or other made me think of *David Copperfield*. Edmond Jaloux, Alain Fournier, and Marcel Proust have accomplished what very few French writers have attempted: they have occupied themselves with childhood. Nevertheless, it is not the child, who soon grows into a youth, who is the predominant feature in this work, in spite of some wonderful observations in this connexion. It is his mother: an outstanding achievement, subdued, logical, inward work. The discourse where the mother moralizes her son contains the passage:

"Je me souviens de mes angoisses, quand tu étais encore petit. Je m'agenouillais au pied de ton lit et je disais à Dieu: 'Vous voyez, Seigneur, combien il est faible et fragile. Par pitié laissez-le moi. C'est tout ce que j'ai au monde! C'est mon fils, ce sera mon soutien, ce sera mon ami.' Tu étais souvent malade, je te soignais, je te veillais, et chaque fois que tu toussais, mon cœur se serrait. Et je répétais: 'Seigneur, c'est mon fils bien-aimé, laissez-le moi. . . .' Et je disais à la Vierge: 'Vous avez perdu votre fils, vous comprenez mon épouvante. Laissez-le moi. . . .'"

Had this chapter been written by a woman it would be good; written by a man it is miraculous. Raymond's Racinian mother raises the book above the agreeable recreation for the fastidious provided by the loving descriptions of Aix-en-Provence, by the reminiscences about Cézanne, by the old servant (Peggotty), by the father-in-law of the loose mind, and by M. Jaloux's pet type of the androgynous, Shakespearean girl, the skater on thin ice, who breaks

through once, but who is not as true to the tradition as was "L'Incertaine" who never made a mistake. And Shakespeare's heroines made no mistakes, and charming as they were, dressed up in doublets and breeches, one cannot imagine them in "corset and petticoat." The only discordant touch—comparable with the only one in *Du Côté de chez Swann*—is a bit of harsh mischief unexpected from an author who generally uses such particularly circumspect discrimination.

* * * *

Translations from notable Scandinavian authors are about to be published by the Editions Ernest Leroux (28 rue Bonaparte). The cycle will open with the *Logic of Poetry* by Hans Larsson, prefaced by M. Emile Boutroux of the Académie. Applications for these works made before the end of the year will secure them at the price of four francs the volume.

MURIEL CIOLKOWSKA.

EARLY TRANSLATORS OF HOMER

By EZRA POUND

III

THE charm of Salel is continued in the following excerpts. They do not cry out for comment. I leave Ogilby's english and the lines of latin to serve as contrast or cross-light.

Illiade (Livre I). Hugues Salel (1545).*

THE IRE

"Je te supply Déesse gracieuse,
Vouloir chanter l'Ire pernicieuse,
Dont Achille fut tellement espris,
Que par icelle, ung grand nombre d'espritz
Des Princes Grecs, par dangereux encombres,
Feit lors descente aux infernales Umbres.
Et leurs beaulx Corps privéz de Sépulture
Furent aux chiens et aux oiseaulx pasture."

Illiad (Lib. III). John Ogilby (1660).

HELEN

"Who in this chamber, sumptuously adorn'd
Sits on your ivory bed, nor could you say,
By his rich habit, he had fought to-day :
A reveller or masker so comes drest,
From splendid sports returning to his rest.
Thus did loves Queen warmer desires prepare.
But when she saw her neck so heavenly faire,
Her lovely bosome and celestial eyes,
Amazed, to the Goddess, she replies :
Why wilt thou happless me once more betray,
And to another wealthy town convey,
Where some new favourite must, as now at Troy
With utter loss of honour me enjoy."

Illiade (Livre VI). Salel.

GLAUCUS RESPOND À DIOMÈDE

"Adone Glaucus, avec grace et audace,
Luy respondit : 'T'enquiers tu de ma race ?
Le genre humain est fragile et muable
Comme la feuille et aussi peu durable.
Car tout ainsi qu'on voit les branches uertes
Sur le printemps de feuilles bien couvertes
Qui par les uents d'automne et la froidure
Tombent de l'arbre et perdent leur uerdure
Puis de rechef la gelée passée,
Il en reuient à la place laissée :
Ne plus ne moins est du lignage humain :
Tel est huy uif qui sera mort demain.
S'il en meurt ung, ung autre reuint naistre.
Voilà comment se conserue leur estre.'"

* Later continued by l'Abbé de St. Chéron.

Illiados (Lib. VI). As in Virgil, Dante, and others.

"Quasim gente rogas ? Quibus et natalibus ortus ?
Persimile est foliis hominum genus omne caduciis
Quae nunc nata uides, pulchrisque, uirescere syleus
Automno ueniente cadunt, simul illa perurens
Incubuit Boreas : quaedam sub uerna renasci
Tempora, sic uice perpetua succrescere lapsis,
Semper item nova, sic alliis obeuntibus, ultro
Succedunt alii luuenes aetate grauatis.
Quod si forte iuvat te qua sit quisque suorum
Stirpe satus, si natales cognoscere quaeris
Forte meos, referam, quae sunt notissima multis."

Illiade (Livre IX). Salel.

CALYDON

"En Calydon règnoit
Oenés, ung bon Roy qui donnoit
De ses beaulx Fruictz chacun an les Primices
Aux Immortelz, leur faisant Sacrifices.
Or il aduint (ou bien par son uouloir,
Ou par oubly) qu'il meit à nonchalloit
Diane chaste, et ne luy feit offrande,
Dont elle print Indignation grande
Encontre luy, et pour bien le punir
Feit ung Sanglier dedans ses Champs uenir
Horrible et fier qui luy feit grand dommage
Tuant les Gens et gastant le Fruitage.
Maintz beaulx Pomiers, maintz Arbres reuestuz
De Fleur et Fruict, en furent abattuz,
Et de la Dent aguisée et pointue,
Le Bléd gasté et la Vigne tortue.
Méléager, le Filz de ce bon Roy,
Voyant ainsi le piteux Désarroy
De son Pays et de sa Gent troublée
Proposa lors de faire une Assemblée
De bons Veneurs et Leutiers pour chasser
L'horrible Beste et sa Mort pourchasser.
Ce qui fut faict. Maintes Gens l'y trouvèrent
Qui contre luy ses Forces éprouvèrent ;
Mais à la fin le Sanglier inhumain
Receut la Mort de sa Royale Main.
Estant occis, deux grandes Nations
Pour la Dépouille eurent Contentions
Les Curetois disoient la mériter,
Ceulx d'Étolie en uouloient hériter."

Illiade (Livre X). Salel.

THE BATHERS

"Quand Ulysses fut en la riche tente
Du compaignon, alors il diligente
De bien lier ses cheualx et les loge
Soigneusement dedans la même loge
Et au rang même ou la belle monture
Du fort Gregeois mangeoit pain et pasture
Quand aux habitz de Dolon, il les pose
Dedans la nef, sur la poupe et propose
En faire ung jour à Pallas sacrifice,
Et luy offrir à jamais son seruice
Bien tost après, ces deux Grecs de ualeur
Se cognoissant oppresséz de chaleur,
Et de sueur, dedans la mer entrèrent
Pour se lauer, et très bien se frotèrent
Le col, le dos, les jambes et les cuisses,
Ostant du corps toutes les immondices,
Estans ainsi refreichiz et bien netz,
Dedans des baingz souefs bien ordonnéz,
S'en sont entréz, et quand leurs corps
Ont esté oinctz d'huyle par le dehors.
Puis sont allez manger prians Minerue
Qu'en tous leurs faictz les dirige et conserue
En respandant du uin à pleine tasse,
(pour sacrifice) au milieu de la place."

In the early latin prose *Odyssey* we find the opening lines of certain books done into metre :

Odyssea (Liber primus) (1573).

“Die mihi musa uirum captae post tempora Troiae.
Qui mores hominum multorum uidit et urbes
Multa quoque et ponto passus dum naufragus errat
Ut sibi tum sociis uitam seruaret in alto
Non tamen hos cupens fato deprompsit acerbo
Ob scelus admissum extinctos ausumque malignum
Qui fame compulsu solis rapuere iuencos
Stulti ex quo reditum ad patrias deus apstulit oras.
Horum itaque exitium memora mihi musa canenti.”

Odyssea (Lib. sec.) (1573).

“Cum primum effulsit roseis aurora quadrigis
Continuo e stratis proles consurgit Ulyxis
Induit et uestes humerosque adcomodat ensem
Molia dein pedibus formosis uincola nectit
Parque deo egrediens thalamo praeconibus omnis
Concilio cognant extemplo mandat Achaeos
Ipse quoque ingentem properabat ad aedibus hastam
Corripiens: gemenique canes comitantor euntem
Quumque illi mirum Pallas veneranda decorem
Preberer populus venientem suspicit omnis
Inque throno patrio ueteres cessere sedenti.”

DAWNS

I AM haunted by the memory of my dawns. Not those earlier dawns when one saw for the first time the bell-towers of Florence in the lucid air, or the hills of Ravello violet and mist-wreathed against the gold sky; not those dawns when one rose from some exquisite and beloved body, the brain still feverish with desire, lips and eyes heavy with many kisses, to watch the cool waves of light gliding over the silvery roofs of London while the first sparrows twittered in the heavy plane-trees. Not those dawns, but others, tragic and pitiful.

I remember those harsh wakenings of winter-time in old French barns through whose broken tiles at night one saw the morose glitter of the stars and at dawn the sterile glitter of snow, dawns when one's breath was frozen to the blanket, and the contact of the air was anguish.

I am haunted by sombre or ironically lovely dawns seen from some bleak parade-ground, by misty spring dawns in the trenches, when the vague shapes of the wire seemed to be the forms of crouching enemies, by summer dawns when the fresh immeasurably deep blue was a blasphemy, an insult to human misery.

Yet one among them all is poignant, unforgettable. As the shapes of things grew out slowly from the darkness, and the gentle grey suffusion of light made outlines visible, little groups of men carrying stretchers on their shoulders came slowly, stumbling and hesitating, along the ruined street. For a moment each group was silhouetted against the whitening east: the steel helmets (like those of mediæval men-at-arms), the slung rifles, the strained postures of carrying, the useless vacillating corpse under its sepulchral blanket—all sharply etched in black on that smooth sky. And as the groups passed they shouted the names of the things they were carrying—things which yesterday were living men.

And I forwarded my report through the usual channels.

RICHARD ALDINGTON

AN UNACADEMIC ACADEMICIAN

FRANÇOIS DE CUREL

I

THE election of François de Curel as a member of the French Academy is not the least of the distinctions of a writer whose literary career has been as peculiar as it is unfamiliar. A solitary and recluse personality, unknown both to popular fame and to that special *milieu* from which

the Immortals invariably select their colleagues, he was the least typical and the most unexpected of candidates. The much-derided Forty have so long abandoned the pretence of sharing their academic honours with pure literature that the election of the greatest French dramatist since Henri Becque becomes, so to speak, an aberration of genius. The more so as the wartime activities of the Academy have been a constant subject of amazement in France, wherever the dignity of letters has not been altogether submerged in political patriotism. Once that assembly had decided to make its claims the reward of patriotic, as distinct from literary, virtue, there seemed to be no reason why any man of letters should be invited to take his place beside the rare members of the species who have from time to time slipped in amongst the almost anonymous horde of generals, ecclesiastics, and politicians. The cynical may assert that as a son of Lorraine, de Curel had advantages outweighing the possible claims of his contribution to French literature. But the truth is that in neither respect has he imposed himself too insistently. Unlike the *Auvergnat*, M. Barrès, he has never been a professional Lorraine patriot, and his ten plays, with the two forgotten novels of his youth, have been the discreetest of bids for fame. The latest, *La Danse devant le Miroir*, was produced in 1914, after a silence of eight years, and was a rewriting of one of his earliest efforts. The others, with one exception, belong to the years 1892 to 1897.

In the year 1891, when the Théâtre Libre was the focus of modern French drama, François de Curel sent, under different pseudonyms, three plays for Antoine's consideration. These were *L'Amour brode*, *L'Envers d'une Sainte*, and *La Figurante*, all of which were accepted, and the first produced, in conjunction with Brieux' *Blanchette*, on February 2, 1892. Thus, by a coincidence, the two chief exponents of the French "drama of ideas" were both introduced to the public on the same night. De Curel, however, was not quite unknown. As a novelist he was beginning to acquire a certain reputation, which had led the well-known critic, Charles Maurras, to prophesy success if he would turn his steps toward the theatre. But the comic spirit manifest in the early novel, *Le Sauvetage du Grand Duc*, was something entirely different from the sombre irony of *L'Amour brode*.

L'Envers d'une Sainte dealt with an interesting psychological problem, to which the author was afterwards to return in *L'Invitée*. Julie Renaudin, having failed in her attempt to murder the wife of the man she loves, retires to a convent to expiate her crime. On hearing of his death she returns to his widow and child. The problem lies in the attitude she will take up toward her former rival. What has been the effect of some twenty years' absence upon Julie's love for the dead man? In *L'Invitée* the author studies similarly the effect of a prolonged separation upon the maternal love of Anna de Grécourt. In neither play does de Curel adopt the traditional sentimental point of view. Julie cannot experience any feeling of jealousy, and is unable to revenge herself upon her former rival, in spite of the dictates of theatrical romanticism. Anna de Grécourt, similarly, fails to experience any of the tender emotions which the sight of her long-lost daughter should—theoretically—have awakened in her. The study of the two girls is equally disconcerting from the sentimental standpoint. They do not guess instinctively that the stranger is their mother; their only reason for wishing to go away with her is that the presence of their father's mistress is socially prejudicial to their matrimonial prospects. At the instigation of their father the girls simulate the piteous appeal of children who have yearned in vain for a mother's love. Anna discovers the deception, but decides from purely human motives to take them

with her, although she is quite unmoved by this attempt to exploit the famous "maternal instinct." The play is a study of egoisms: Grécourt, who will not sacrifice his mistress to the welfare of his children; the latter, who are only concerned with the material advantages attaching to the presence of a mother; and finally Anna, who cannot give up her freedom as an individual for the sake of her husband and family.

L'Amour brode, the only play of de Curel originally produced at the Comédie Française, is his only failure. It is neither comedy nor drama, but hesitates between the two, with the result that critics and public alike were unable to realize the author's intention. A writer in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* compared Gabrielle de Guimont to Hedda Gabler, in a desperate attempt to make something of a play which he described as unintelligible. *L'Amour brode* is an elaborate satire, in the Shavian manner, of romantic idealism. Gabrielle is completely enslaved to the romantic conception of love; like Raina, in *Arms and the Man*, she must love a "hero." Unfortunately Charles Méran has none of the qualities necessary for the part, but he calls upon her to impose upon him some great sacrifice which will provide him with the requisite halo of glory. She invents a test which he can only fulfil by deciding to end his life afterwards. Gabrielle imagines that this talk of suicide is merely part of the mantle of picturesque heroism which has fallen upon him, and continues her melodramatic device of hero-making. Finally, he gazes into her eyes in the last scene, and seeing himself reflected there in all his heroic glory, he shoots himself before the inevitable disillusionment obliterates the recollection that once, at least, he appeared to her a hero. In his last play, *La Danse devant le Miroir*, de Curel returns, after a lapse of twenty years, to the same theme. This time, however, its reception was more favourable, not because the author had improved upon his original conception, but because he had apparently been caught in the trap of his own satire. So far from satirizing the heroics of melodrama, as in 1893, de Curel in 1914 actually employs them in all seriousness. Deprived of its ironic note *L'Amour brode* aroused the enthusiasm of all, and the critics saluted *La Danse devant le Miroir* as a real play at last.

La Figurante, the last of de Curel's psychological plays, revolted the critics. After the melodramatics of Dumas fils and the playful adulteries of the Capus school, they were not prepared for the cynicism of M. de Monneville, who calmly accepts the presence of his wife's lover, consoling himself with palæontology and an occasional epigram at the expense of the man who has supplanted him. The action of the play centres round the struggle of Madame de Monneville to retain the love of Henri de Renneval after the latter's marriage with her niece Françoise. The situation is by no means unusual on the French stage, but de Curel was accused of brutality because of the open manner in which the struggle is portrayed. Françoise refuses to accept the position of a figure-head, and ultimately defeats the plans of her aunt by winning the affections of her husband. *La Figurante* was condemned as immodest; this conception of adultery being too unromantic to be widely successful in its appeal.

The author's nearest approach to a popular success was *Les Fossiles*. The "fossils" he studies are the families of the old French nobility, buried away in the provinces, out of touch with modern ideas, cut off from all active participation in the life around them, and existing solely for the preservation of the family name. Robert de Chantemelle is unmarried and in the last stages of consumption; it seems, therefore, as if the name must die with him. The old duke, however, discovers that Robert's mistress, Héléne Vautrin, has had a child who is a de Chantemelle, and he determines that his son shall marry her, so that

the child may bear his father's name. Claire de Chantemelle is horrified at the proposal, for she knows of the relations which at one time existed between Héléne and her father, but her scruples vanish when she sees father and son both prepared to sacrifice morality and pride to the preservation of the family name. The effect of the marriage is to undermine Robert's caste prejudices, so that he learns to appreciate the change of modern conditions. The tragedy comes when he one day learns of the relations formerly existing between Héléne and his father, and prefers death to the sacrifice imposed by pride of race. In a fine closing scene Claire reads her brother's will, in which he sums the evils of the inertia to which his family and their class have condemned themselves. As an indictment of caste, the play is not without interest, but is disfigured by an element of melodrama, which no doubt explains its comparative popularity.

ERNEST A. BOYD

(To be continued)

NUMBERS

UNITS—tens—hundreds—
Mamma was teaching him the Multiplication Table. The fascination of letters was nothing to the fascination of numbers. He lay awake at night watching their endless, intricate procession.

Units—tens—hundreds—thousands—

He saw it as a pattern of ten colours unrolling itself for ever and ever, repeating itself for ever and ever, doubling, multiplying itself, winding in and out of itself, and growing richer and richer for ever and ever; only the bands of the tens kept firm the structure of the pattern. (The pulpy, shapeless six no longer slipped through his fingers. He could take hold of it now, wedged firmly between five and seven.)

Or he piled the units one on the top of the other like the bricks of a tower, higher and higher (long ago he could count up to a hundred), up through the roof of his head till they toppled and fell and he had to begin all over again.

These things only happened when he was alone with them. He had to learn the Multiplication Table out of a book. And he had stuck fast at the very beginning.

"What does it mean," he said, "once one is one?"

"It means that you start with one. You multiply it once," said Mamma.

"But if you want to start with it you must leave it alone. You mustn't multiply it."

"You *must*. This," said Mamma, "is the Multiplication Table. Now then—quick, Once one—"

Arnold put his hands to his ears and cried out in his excitement, "No—no. If you multiply it even once it'll go, and you'll never get it again. It'll make itself two."

"No, Arnold. That's what you learnt last week— one and one are two. That's addition. You're learning multiplication now. Multiplication is one thing and addition is another."

"No," said Arnold, "there's no difference, *weally*. It says three times two is six and three times three is nine. If you *add* two and two three times, that's six; and if you *add* three and three three times, that's nine."

"Now, Arnold, you're trying to argue, just to get out of saying your Multiplication Table, and it won't do. Say after me, 'Once time one is one.'"

"We can pwetend it is, Mamma, if you like."

And by saying it after her, by trying not to think of One, by putting One behind him and refusing to look at it he struggled through the Multiplication Table as far as twelve times. He stuck in bad places like eight times seven and nine times six (he

never *could* remember which of them was fifty-six and which was fifty-four, for in this bewildering, everlasting pattern also only the tens stood firm), but he found that you could get out by adding the number to itself the required number of times, while Mamma tapped her little foot and asked him what he was thinking about *now*? Not for worlds would he have told her that he was adding.

He would lie awake doing it till he passed the bounds of twelve and saw the procession of the times going on, it also, for ever and ever; and the tower piled higher and higher, packed with numbers till it, too, toppled and crashed down.

Yet, if one thing seemed more certain than another it was that, though there was no round, comfortable number in which this business ended, it began very definitely with One. Then even this assurance was taken from him.

Richard had come to dinner boasting that he was "in Fractions" (which, Papa said, was what he ought to be in for slamming the front door behind him like a young blackguard); and when Arnold heard Mamma boasting that Richard was in Fractions he inquired whether he couldn't go into Fractions too? And Mamma said, No, certainly not; he was much too young.

Her pretty face had become suddenly very red, and she looked frightened.

"What *are* Fractions?" He concluded from his mother's manner that they must be some kind of trousers. And as Mamma stooped low over his plate to cut his mutton up for him she whispered, "Something that a little boy can't understand."

"A little boy?" said Papa in the voice he had when his eyes rolled and his eyebrows flew up towards his hair. "Ask your mother what one and a half plus three and two-thirds, multiplied by nine and three-quarters and divided by five is."

Mamma made a piteous little face at him as if she implored him not to do it before the children.

"Or," said Papa, with an increasing grimness, "ask your brother."

Though Arnold couldn't understand a word of what his father said, he could see that he was laying a cruel trap for Mamma and Richard, and that they were both frightened. (Poor innocents, they fell into Papa's traps every time!) So he replied politely, "No, thank you, Wichard; I am not interwested any more," and waited till he and his brother were alone in the basement room.

Richard was in a benign mood, and he told him all about it. "You take the unit—that's one, see?—and divide it—"

"Oh no," said Arnold. He had a foreshadowing of what was going to happen. "You *can't*."

"Can't you just!" With a piece of paper and with scissors Richard showed him how it could be done.

The next time Mamma asked him what once one was, he answered with an awful gravity, "There isn't any one."

There wasn't and there never had been. The thing in which the whole process seemed to have begun, the thing he was always trying to hold on to, had crumbled away. It had split up into fragments that split up for ever and ever. He started with his one; and in an instant it turned into a lot of ones. On his right hand there was the growing, toppling pile of the numbers—the ones and the tens and the hundreds and the thousands; and on his left there was the growing volume of the fractions. *That* never toppled, never crashed; it swelled; it got more and more enormous till he felt that the walls on his left hand must burst.

One night it struck him that since there was at least a right and a left in it, he might try starting with Himself. He tried it; and the horrible idea occurred to him that at this rate there couldn't be

any Himself either. He was only *one of the ones*. It was all very well so long as he stuck to his right hand where he piled himself up; but there was the left where he had to split himself—

Luckily when the splitting began he always fell asleep.

But these things only happened at night when he lay awake in his cot. In the daytime, when he did sums with a pencil on a slate, under Mamma's direction, all the horror of the numbers went. So did all the interest and the excitement too.

Somewhere inside the cover of his copy-book six strokes in a row stood for the years that he had lived.

MAY SINCLAIR

AT RIVIERE

THE dark steep roofs chisel
The infinity of the sky:

Though the white moonlit gables
Resemble
Still hands at prayer.

HERBERT READ

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 everyday
resumes its normal flow . . .
and you,—you too must go your destined way . . .

over the bridges
trail the crushed, rigid dead. . . .

FLORENCE, 1914

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TARR

By P. WYNDHAM LEWIS

EXTRACTS FROM PRESS NOTICES

NATION: A beautiful and serious work of art that reminds one of Dostoevsky only because it too is inquisitive about the soul, and because it contains one figure of vast moral significance which is worthy to stand beside Stavrogin. . . . The real achievement of the book which gives it both its momentary and its permanent value, is Kreisler, the German artist. . . . Tarr . . . is a character of great charm. . . . Bertha is the complete expression of the kind of German culture one sees in Hauptmann and Sudermann. . . . Kreisler is the complementary type. . . . We watch him turning life into a blood-stained *charivari* exactly as we have watched Germany during the war, until, having smirched every phenomenon within reach, he has to turn upon himself and pervert his own life into death. . . . A work of art of power and distinction.

TIMES: Mr. Lewis pursues the method of Dostoevsky; he relates, not a story made by external events, but the, seemingly causeless, events of the mind—events often rather unconscious than conscious. Like Dostoevsky, and like Chinese poets, he does not try to rationalize those events. . . . The result is a very interesting document. . . . Mr. Lewis can describe whatever he wishes to describe. . . . Kreisler, if he were contrasted with any opposite, would be a work of art. No one, we think, has expressed the common German state of mind so clearly in an individual, or reduced it so finally to an absurdity.

MORNING POST: Those who interest themselves in new developments of fiction ought to turn to two recent novels, Mr. P. Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr* and Mr. Laurence Houseman's *The Sheepfold*. . . . *Tarr*—a book of various excellences of observation and description, despite an "all-wrongness" which prevents us from recommending it to every reader. . . . Its characters are all deliberately unprincipled. . . . *Tarr* is no more than the extreme of claims already staked out for our newest fiction. We must not miss noting the illumination of the German achieved in the figure of Otto Kreisler.

MANCHESTER GUARDIAN: An eccentric and formidable work, to the reading of which . . . one must bring a fine persistence and an insatiable appetite for both æsthetic theory and squalor. . . . It is a blow struck for seriousness in art and life.

GLASGOW HERALD: In theme and the treatment of it this work is advancedly modern. . . . The author has a definite grasp of his rather frail thesis and he suggests his strange characters with a minute understanding of the subtle emotions roused by human conduct.

SCOTSMAN: No reader can question the ability displayed in this book . . . a study in temperament. . . . Tarr, with all his eccentricities of thought and gusty attempts at self-explanation, is a vital, if rather elusive, person. . . . Anastasya, complex of many nationalities, is, after Tarr, the most original character in the book; and the two of them make it a story of exceptional, if rather uneven, accomplishment.

ENGLISH REVIEW: One turns to a novel by so subtle a cubist as Mr. Wyndham Lewis with considerable interest, for he has a reputation, too, as a writer . . . rather a baffling book. . . . Clever, distinguished even, extremely personal, the book is really a criticism. . . . This curious amalgam of chatty, agonizing matter. . . . With all its cussedness and rugosities of manner, *Tarr* amuses and fascinates.

NEW WITNESS: This admirable novel . . . the prose style is original. . . . A book of great importance . . . because it will become a date in literature . . . because here we have the forerunner of the prose and probably of the manner that is to come, a prose bare and precise, a manner hardly ever general, never diffuse, usually concentrated and penetrating. Here the new writer takes definite and lasting leave of the romantic movement. . . . We are at last spared the illogical impertinence of a set plot in a world where nothing happens according to set plot but by the natural development of character.

FUTURE: A serious work. . . . The author is trying to get at the truth. . . . He has the gift of phrase, vivid, biting, pregnant, full of suggestion. . . . The book's interest is not due to "style" in so far as "style" is generally taken to mean "smoothness of finish." . . . It is due to the fact that we have here a highly energized mind performing a huge act of scavenging; cleaning up a great lot of rubbish, cultural, Bohemian, arty, societish, gutterish. . . . He hustles his reader, jolts him, snarls at him, in contradistinction to Dostoevsky.

OUTLOOK: *Tarr* is just *Trilby*—but it is *Trilby* written, elaborated, done, and worth reading. . . . One of the most enlightened renderings of the German and his characteristics. . . . *Tarr* is a comfort, for it shows we have a writer "coming on" who has some of the gestures and the attitudes of an artist of grand allure . . . a fine, a discerning eye; a fine, a proper impatience; a reassuring robustness and some of the qualities of a poet.

EVERYMAN: Certainly not inspired by any feeble desire to please. . . . The success of the book is Kreisler . . . he is, very nearly, a creation. Kreisler has the coarse, hard texture and the clumsy outlines of some powerful beast. . . . In spite of its perversity, nastiness, and bad temper, *Tarr* bears the marks of a strong, though unbalanced, intellect. It contains some interesting reflections on art, life, and sex.

SOUTHPORT GUARDIAN: A twentieth-century echo of Rabelais . . . original, almost alarming in its challenge to the conventions. . . . The story is relieved by its frankness, its sense of curiosity, and its challenging indictment of things which most writers gloss over.

EASTERN MORNING NEWS: A daring piece of frankness and realism. . . . The story is a painful commentary on modern morals among such people as are portrayed, but it has a powerful fascination. . . . Valuable as showing the German tendencies in pre-war days. In design and execution immensely clever.

WESTMINSTER GAZETTE: The grimace of Tarr is not even a grin which might amuse the fastidious mind; it is a scowl, the strabismic concentration of which is fixed on Otto Kreisler, a German painter.

WEEKLY DISPATCH: *Tarr* is a thunderbolt. The veils of our cherished convictions and conventionalities are torn aside ruthlessly, brutally. There is no construction, no consecutiveness, no sympathy, yet an effect is achieved with a suddenness that leaves one breathless. . . . He operates cruelly on *La vie de Bohème*.

OBSERVER: Mr. Lewis's novel is very like his pictures: it is odd, it is ugly, it is competent. . . . Undeniably Mr. Lewis has a power of producing clever etchings of displeasing types.

BIRMINGHAM POST: Mr. Lewis overloads *Tarr* with psychology and drama. . . . His commentary upon art is stimulating.

ABERDEEN JOURNAL: Diverse variants and twists of human nature are exaggerated in unhealthy introspective or purely animal types, which, if they offer a lesson at all, reveal the Latin Quarter in its darkest abysses, and give one of the most enlightened renderings of the German and his characteristics.

CAMBRIDGE MAGAZINE: Considered as a piece of propaganda his story is open to the criticism that the minds whose interior it lays bare have not sufficient content to engage our sympathy. . . . Considered, on the other hand, as a faithful picture in the modern style of the Latin Quarter in 1901, *Tarr* must be admitted to share the merits of *Blast*; there is nothing quite like it.

ATHENEUM: Off the trodden paths of fiction. Against a Bohemian background in Paris are character-studies of some unattractive individuals.

SKETCH: *Tarr* deals with free-life as lived in Paris before the war and contains many striking portraits of "Huns" and "Hunesses."

DAILY NEWS: Not a good novel, for Mr. Wyndham Lewis has not enough respect for human nature to be interested in more than a few of its qualities.

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