

VIRTUAL VOLUME.  
Reproduced from "The New Vision."

## The Art of the Machine

THE NEW VISION: From Materials to Architecture. By L. MOHOLY-NAGY. Translated by DAPHNE HOFFMAN. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1932. \$5.

Reviewed by CLAUDE BRAGDON.

**M**OHOLY-NAGY belongs to that group of European architects and craftsmen which numbers among its representatives such men as Le Corbusier, Gropius, Wijderveld, Taut. Their avowed aim is to re-form and reconstruct all the bases of our art and of our knowledge in accordance with the needs of a world into which a new factor has entered—the machine.

Unlike some others who fly this particular banner, Mr. Moholy-Nagy is concerned not alone with learning what the machine can teach, with carrying its precisions and economies into new fields—particularly the field of architecture—but with undoing some of the harm which a machine-civilization has wrought. He would do this by means of a new integration which shall restore to man something of the keenness of sense-perception, the resourcefulness, the creativeness, which were his before the gigantic shadow of the machine-age fell across his path.

Such a process, naturally, must begin with the child; therefore the author's first concern is with education. To this reviewer the first section of the book, "The Educational Side," is by far the most interesting and convincing—it ought to be published separately and circulated as a tract. He states the predicament of the modern industrialized man as follows:

The creative human being knows, and suffers from the realization, that the deep values of life are being destroyed under pressure from without (moneymaking, competition, trade mentality). He suffers from the purely material evaluation of his vitality, and from the flattening out of his instincts, from the impairing of his biological balance.

The author concludes that the injuries worked by a technical civilization should be combated by "the propulsive observation of the organic, biologically conditioned functions (science, education, politics), and by means of the constructive carrying forward of our over-scientific culture—since there is no turning backward."

In essence, the entire book is an exposition and commentary upon the ways and means whereby these purposes may be accomplished. However, in looking over the illustrations of things done (in painting, sculpture, stagecraft, architecture) one is conscious of a distinct drop, the theory seems so much better than the practice—though here and there are glimmers of a new and extraordinary beauty.

As is usual in books of this general class, wherein photography exceeds its function—which is truthful representation—there is a certain amount of tricked photography. Sometimes it would seem as though modern photography were performing the same function in regard to modern architecture and design as does pornography to modern literature—"selling" it but at the same time corrupting it. But these observations, though provoked by "The New

Vision," are not strictly germane to it. The book is really an able and important contribution to a most vital subject.

## More of the Grecian Urn

THE BRIDE OF QUIETNESS, AND OTHER PLAYS. By OSCAR W. FIRKINS. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press. 1932. \$2.

THE REVEALING MOMENT, AND OTHER PLAYS. The same.

Reviewed by ROBERT WARNOCK

**W**HAT tale did that sylvan historian tell, unravish'd through the ages of slow Time? What bold lover was denied his kiss by the cruel permanence of stone? Keats was content to ask with drowsy indifference to answers, but a modern playwright of more prying imagination has read the mysteries of the Grecian Urn and chronicled them with wit and poetry in a charming play.

She was the merest female, that ancient maiden forever fair, debating capriciously between two suitors, and when she scampered off with the mighty hunter for a front-row seat at the holiday sacrifice, Philotas, the disappointed sculptor, condemned her as his stone figure to centuries of tantalizing nearness to her lover's lips, a nearness never satisfied. But the playwright has been kinder to his fickle Chione. In a flexible blank verse that flows through lively dialogue and passages of lyric flight, he follows the Urn through five stages of its career to a miracle that completes the lover's embrace after weary centuries of waiting.

Mr. Firkins had an uncommon talent for the one-act play. Those who remember "Two Passengers for Chelsea" will welcome these posthumous collections, for there is here the same brilliant dialogue and subtle skill in recreating characters. He wrote for the seasoned reader, bringing to life vividly the great ones of letters in arresting situations.

The four playlets in "The Bride of Quietness" reflect wide range within a narrow field. "The King's Vigil" is a jolly farce about Samuel Pepys, while "Empurpled Moors" paints serious portraits of the whole strange Brontë family in a striking domestic scene. "Turnpikes in Arcady" is a sprightly dialogue between the lovelorn Brownings, newly escaped to Italian skies from the angry clouds of Wimpole Street. It is intellectual banter of a delightful sort, but sometimes so involved and prolonged that it threatens the action of the play and the reality of the characters.

"The Revealing Moment" roams through Continental letters. Sometimes the theme is an intellectual problem, Mérimée's quest for reality or Chekhov's choice between love and careers. Sometimes it is a serious study of a turning-point, Euripides winning over the son of Sophocles, or Chateaubriand's departure for the army. But at its most delightful, it is merely racy talk, done with the lightest, gayest touch. Ibsen's quarrel with Björnsön and the comic scene in the Dumas household are excuse enough for owning the book.

Mr. Firkins had an almost dangerous

fondness for subtle turns of idea more suited to the library than the playhouse. But the charm of his plays is no less real for being delicate and easily lost. He is at his best with famous characters ready created for him, whom he knew with the affectionate insight of long association. He wrote of them humanly, with the imagination of a poet and the briskness of a skilful playwright.

## Sara Teasdale

1884-1933

By LOUIS UNTERMAYER

**T**HE death of Sara Teasdale, on January 28th, affects me so deeply, so privately, that it seems an indignity to write about her at all. Yet write I must, if only to dissipate the cloud which was flung over her during the last few years. The cloud I refer to was not her illness, for she had never been a robust person, nor was it her semi-isolation, for she never pretended to be a publicized author or even a public person. It was a cloud of prettiness which, not in the least native to her spirit, was put upon her.

When Sara Teasdale first came East from Saint Louis with a handful of clear and candid lyrics, none would have believed she would become the most popular woman poet of the decade. The early "Helen of Troy and Other Poems" (1911) revealed a self-sustaining lyricism and a blank verse that was as musical as her rhymes, but, though the volume was praised, no one predicted the fervor which would accompany her subsequent books. Her work was both traditional and anticipatory. Amy Lowell had not yet published a volume; Edna St. Vincent Millay, an eighteen year old girl on the sea-coast of Maine, was beginning to write "Renaissance," and her first book was not to be printed for another six years; Elinor Wylie was an unknown name. Within a few months, Sara Teasdale became the most loved poet of her generation; anticipating the "new era in American poetry," she became a part of it. Her "Rivers to the Sea," "Love Songs," "Flame and Shadow" were esteemed as highly by the critics as by the casual and uncritical readers. Her unaffected quatrains, sparing of metaphor and almost bare of imagery, attracted a great following. They were set to music a hundred times; they crowded the anthologies; lovers regarded the author of "I Shall Not Care" and "Spring Night" as their uncrowned laureate. A few noted her kinship to Lizette Woodworth Reese, but, almost always, she was compared with Christina Rossetti and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. One of her books ("Love Songs") vied in popularity with "The Rubaiyat" and received the two most coveted prizes awarded in America.

In the late nineteen twenties popular taste underwent another of its unpredictable and inevitable metamorphoses. The fashion turned to keener edges, subtler byplay, a more shadowy metaphysic. Sara Teasdale was considered over-sweet, over-emphatic if not over-emotional, suspiciously démodé. This was unfortunate and even ironic, for her later work is not only her most thoughtful but her best. "Dark of the Moon" (1926) is slower-paced than anything she ever wrote, more awedly autumnal. Yet even the outspoken clarity and the flexible cadences of "Flame and Shadow," which was the climax of her earlier work, are scarcely as compelling as the proud acceptance of change and the sombre reflections which add new dignity to the old lyricism.

This later poetry suggests, though it never quite reveals, that other aspect of Sara Teasdale which few, even among her intimates, ever came to know. It is a pity that those who know only the Colin-Strephon period of her work know little of the other self who learned French so she could read Proust, who admired Joyce and Jeffers, and who, at the time of her death, was at work on a dispassionate biography of Christina Rossetti and a selection of that poet's more resonant work. Those who charged her with being sentimental failed to realize that Sara Teasdale's quality was the translation of sentiment into sensibility,

not into sentimentality, which is only the exploiting and cheapening of sentiment—the "professional language of emotion" as Edith Sichel says, without the emotion to inspire it.

Of this emotion Sara Teasdale had a surplus, but it was emotion stiffened with austerity, even, at times, with scorn. I had often urged her to give freer expression to this stifled detachment—stifled, at least, in most of her work. A poem she subsequently sent me is her answer, as well as a quiet reproof, and since it so perfectly expresses her mature attitude, I quote it here:

My heart has grown rich with the passing of years,  
I have less need now than when I was young  
To share myself with every comer,  
Or shape my thoughts into words with my tongue.

It is one to me that they come or go  
If I have myself and the drive of my will,  
And strength to climb on a summer night  
And watch stars swarm over the hill.

Let them think I love them more than I do;  
Let them think I care though I go alone;

If it lifts their pride, what is it to me,  
Who am self-complete as a flower or a stone.

It is such verse that has what one must recognize as authenticity. And authenticity, rather than originality, was the gift which will, I believe, preserve a score of her simple poems long after much more pretentious work has perished. The best of her lyrics are fresh without being freakish; they are not dependent on the



SARA TEASDALE.

technical innovations or the manner of the moment. She was no Sibyl; her muse was frankly communicative. Hers was not the spell of strangeness and surprise, but the more immediate and more abiding charm of recognition.

A fund of detailed information concerning the housing and general social conditions of two and a half million of London's population is contained in recently published volumes III and IV of the "New Survey of London Life and Labor," according to the *London Observer*. That paper says: "This monumental work is being undertaken by the London School of Economics, under the direction of Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, and is designed on similar lines to the seventeen-volume survey written by Charles Booth and published between 1889 and 1903. The new survey was started in 1928, and will be completed in 1934 with the publication of the eighth volume. Of the scope and significance of the volumes Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith said:

"In volume III we endeavor to present a comprehensive record of social and economical conditions in the eastern half of the London area, which includes a population of nearly two and a half millions. Volume IV consists of maps illustrating the local distribution of poverty and welfare, street by street, throughout the whole area. For the first time an overcrowding map has been produced."

# The BOWLING GREEN

## The Folder

I HAVE occasionally spoken here of the various so-called portraits of Shakespeare, and not long ago reproduced one which pleased me from a cigar-box. The gruesome Droeshout frontispiece in the First Folio has always been a grievance to Shakespeare students. I am glad to find that Mr. J. Dover Wilson, in his vigorous little book *The Essential Shakespeare* (Macmillan), smartly reproaches the Droeshout engraving, and the Stratford bust from which it was presumably sketched, for the damage they have done to our notion of the poet. "They stand between us and the true Shakespeare, and are so obviously false images of the greatest poet of all time that the world turns from them in disgust and thinks it is turning from Shakespeare himself." Mr. Wilson offers, in substitute, a portrait of an unknown young man, Shakespeare's exact contemporary, which was discovered in 1907 and now hangs in the Rylands Library at Manchester. There is nothing whatever, Dover Wilson is prompt to remark, to connect this "unknown youth of the wonderful eyes and the oval Shelley-like face" with Shakespeare, but he points out the pleasant coincidence that both the Droeshout face and this unknown portrait are identical in many proportional measurements.

It was probably Ben Jonson's rhyme about the Droeshout portrait that caused it to be taken so seriously; and yet my own notion has always been that Ben was joking. He himself, who had known the man, must have been struck by the inadequacy of that equine face, and he wrote:—

This Figure, that thou here seest put  
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;  
Wherein the Graver had a strife  
With Nature, to out-do the life.

Surely when Ben Jonson wrote *out-do* he was twitting the engraver? "Out-do" need not necessarily mean to surpass or to improve on; it might also mean to do *out*, to extinguish, to obliterate.—Those whose professional concerns sometimes bring them into controversy with engravers will not be surprised if Ben allowed himself a word of chaff.

"About any one so great as Shakespeare," said T. S. Eliot in one of the superbly witty essays in his recently collected volume, "it is probable that we can never be right; and if we can never be right, it is better that we should from time to time change our way of being wrong." It seems to me entirely in Shakespeare's character, and in the character of the vast myth-literature that has grown up about him, that he should be known to the world only in an effigy which probably doesn't look the least bit like him. He knew the value of low visibility, and he kept his secrets in the shrewdest way—by putting them in the mouths of others. The best-kept secrets are those that are never suspected as secrets because they're told to the whole world. As far as himself was concerned, Shakespeare admitted that he went here and there and made himself a motley to the view. By that he may have meant a clown, or he may have meant something rather more like a chameleon, or camouflage. Meanwhile, to get his number you have to watch his words (and those of his friends) much more carefully than some readers suspect. When Jonson and the others called him "gentle" they didn't mean anything soft or easy (compare Lamb's annoyance at being called the gentle Elia). They meant high in breeding and quality; quick, aware. You remember that Skelton spoke of Mistress Margaret as "gentle as falcon or hawk." And when his contemporaries spoke of Shakespeare's "sugared" sonnets perhaps they didn't mean saccharine. One sudden-

ly remembers that confectioners have always loved to spin sugar into all sorts of fantastic shapes and colors.

My own idea is that it is best for the student to draw his own portrait of Shakespeare—basing it on the traditional likeness but developing the features as seems most pleasing. When I drew mine, I left the dome of his skull open at the top, to suggest room enough for his all-ranging fancy.

Dover Wilson's brisk little book is a happy addition to any shelf of the relatively few studies that have accepted Shakespeare as a human being. He helps to redress a badly tipped balance when he insists on Will's comic genius. It is too often forgotten, Wilson says, that:—

Shakespeare was once young. Indeed, he was never old; for he gave up writing at forty-eight and was only fifty-two when he died. Yet for most people he is a kind of Grand Old Man of literature. . . . The general trend of Shakespearean criticism since Coleridge has concentrated upon the tragedies and has left the comedies and histories in comparative neglect. Thus we have come to think of him as preëminently a tragic poet, facing the vastity of the universe. . . .

(I wish, in passing, that Mr. Wilson hadn't broken a fine passage with that word *vastity*.) . . . But he goes on to mention certain elements of both Keats and Dostoevsky in the Shakespeare temperament, and admirably reminds us that during at least half of Shakespeare's career he expressed himself "in comedies without a parallel in the world's literature for gaiety of heart . . . with all the verve and gusto of their gay indecorum, who that reads them can doubt that they have been cast up on the shores of time by the most impetuous tide of warm-blooded humanity that ever beat through the heart of men?"

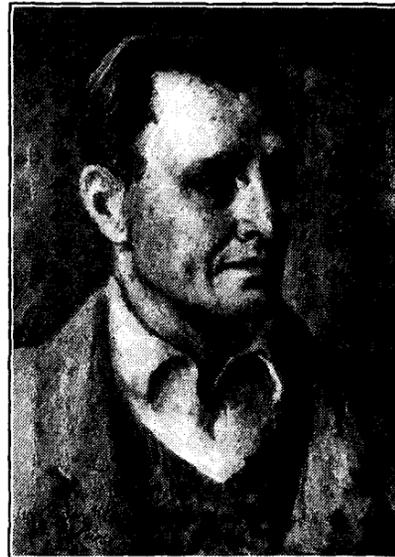
I have only just learned that Harrison & Smith, in Minneapolis, printed last year a private edition (500 copies) of the brilliant essay *Man: A Character Sketch*, by the late O. W. Firkins. Professor Firkins, one of the most highly valued contributors this *Review* ever had, read this remarkable paper—we might call it an essay in spiritual anthropology—at a club in Minneapolis just before his death in March 1932. I wish this fine thing might be made available to a wider public. I quote a few lines of Professor Firkins's sketch of the qualities and attributes of Homo:—

The truth is that few amusements hold him beyond those in which he actively participates. I except football; I except pugilism: but, in general, this restless and nimble being abhors passivity. His fun is action, because he wants to feel, not other people, but himself. He sleeps in church, he nods in the theatre. In a Six O'clock Club, where the members are mostly passive, the most popular item in the constitution is the by-law which closes the meeting at eight o'clock sharp. Reading is too passive. Enormous as the outgush of print is, man is not inherently a reading animal. Few men can read anything but newspapers; few women can read anything but novels. Man has indeed small comfort either in the page or pen; he is too active to read, and he is too lazy to write. The action that he craves must be voluntary. His play, if his soul forsakes it, becomes work; his work, if his soul passes into it, becomes a play.

I am of the opinion that we haven't heard enough about Harold Nicolson's novel *Public Faces*. It is intensely amusing, but also something more than that. It is perhaps handicapped by a jacket which gives very little inkling of what sort of book it is. Like Mr. Nicolson's memorable *Some People*, it is a scherzo at the expense of international diplomacy. It de-

scribes the great crisis of June 1939, which, entirely unpremeditated, brought the five greatest nations to the brink of war. How, also by the comedy of chance and the unauthorized intervention of underlings, this war was averted, is Mr. Nicolson's story.

"Great Britain," Mr. Nicolson quotes a French statesman, "is a phenomenon which could properly be comprehended only by extreme eccentrics." Perhaps a tinge of eccentricity is needed to relish all Mr. Nicolson's little japes, which require a fairly solid grounding in governmental ways, and in British social comedy. His American allusions, where he does not (or did not) know his local color, are less fortunate. Surely, Mr. Nicolson, it was not necessary to afflict President Hans P. Scholle (in 1939) with acne? But it's a novel of continuously subtle entertainment—and also of some bitterly valid satire. Certainly it should be a Best Seller in Washington.



OLIVER H. PERRY  
(1883-1933)

From a portrait by Waldo Peirce.

A client in Kansas City writes of the death of Professor Saintsbury:—

Last night, giving a second look to the *Sunday Star*, a brief paragraph came with a shock and a sense of personal loss. Suddenly the right-hand corner of the second bookshelf stood out with pain mixed with the pride and pleasure. The *Scrap Books I, II, and III*; the glorious *Notes on a Cellar Book*, the precious *Letter Book*, the *History of English Prose Rhythm*, the *Specimens of English Prose Style*. The first one of the *Scrap Books* opens of itself to page 185, and I send from it a coal to Newcastle. You might not have it exactly in your vest pocket, so here it is.

Years ago I wrote a letter to Professor Saintsbury, but I never sent it. Somehow I hadn't the courage, or impertinence. It was in my first grateful and enthusiastic acquaintance, and I remember copying William Rose Benét's poem "Night," hoping to show him that we, too, sometimes could boast a poem.

I note that another scholar, J. M. Robertson, died in London a few days ago. Him I knew from certain articles in the *Criterion*. My file of the *Criterion* is almost as valuable as anything on the shelves.

But there will be no more of the leisurely discursive feet-on-the-fender

good talk of the doughty and delicious old Tory Saintsbury. "Ripeness is all," one thinks and remembers.

MAUDE V. P. HAZELTON.

Mrs. Hazelton's enclosure was the medieval Latin poem:—

An amor dolor sit,  
An dolor amor sit,  
Utrumque nescio,  
Hoc unum sentio—  
Jocundus dolor est  
Si dolor amor est.

And Professor Saintsbury's accompanying footnote was, "I do not know in what other language to find such a combination of neatness and sweetness in phrase, of terseness and unmonotonous tautology in words, of simplicity and poignancy in music."

Our correspondent also encloses F. S. Flint's graceful version:—

Whether love be pain,  
Or pain love be,  
I have no leisure  
To inquire. To me  
The pain is pleasure  
If love pain be.

And if I love her  
And she be pain,  
Would I recover  
And love the pain  
And be no lover  
And whole again?

No, I must cherish  
Her, come what may,  
Although I perish  
From day to day:  
While the love I cherish  
The pain can stay.

### HORATIUS AT THE STAIRS

Woman continues her triumphant march; witness the following excerpts from a circular sent to members of the Oxford and Cambridge Club, London. But the good old varsities can be pushed just so far; they put up their last stand at the foot of the "grand staircase":—

The Committee find that there is increasing demand for the provision of accommodation for the entertainment of Ladies as the guests of members. A considerable number of members have announced their intention of resigning from the Club if this accommodation is not provided. . . . In view of these considerations, the Committee came to the conclusion that the provision of a ladies' annex is essential to the future prosperity of the Club. . . . If the scheme is adopted, ladies will not be admitted so far into the Club premises as is permitted at present, for whereas they are now admitted to the lobby at the foot of the grand staircase, in future they would not be allowed to ascend the staircase which leads up to the coffee room.

The Turnbull Memorial Lectures on Poetry at Johns Hopkins University were given this year by T. S. Eliot, who spoke on The "Metaphysical" Poets. Among Mr. Eliot's predecessors on this distinguished foundation have been Edmund Clarence Stedman, Richard Jebb, Charles Eliot Norton, Ferdinand Brunetière, George Woodberry, G. L. Kittredge, Sir Walter Raleigh, Walter de la Mare, and George W. Russell (Æ).

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

## The Saturday Review Recommends

### This Group of Current Books:

PAGEANT. By G. B. LANCASTER. *Century*.

A romantic tale playing in Tasmania which is a vivid historical chronicle as well as a stirring story.

THE QUEST FOR POLAR TREASURES. By JAN WELZL. *Macmillan*.

More yarns of the Arctic.

THE ESKIMOS. By EDWARD MOFFAT WYER, JR. *Yale University Press*.

The inhabitants of the Arctic treated from the scientific point of view.

### This Less Recent Book:

RIVERS TO THE SEA. By SARA TEASDALE. *Macmillan*.

A volume of lyric verse by the poet whose death last week was a sore loss to American poetry.