

at an action; that just the present can tell the story of the past and of the future too.

There is plenty of drama, even melodrama, in Mr. Robb's opening chapters. Mart Bannister, aged twenty-six, on board the wooden excursion steamer, the John Christian, the night it burned upon the river, simply left his party, left his "girl," and walked slowly away to what safety he might find. He was saved; so was she—by some one else. And yet he was the Lion Tamer, so recognized by some one of the watchers when he reached the shore.

The taming of the lion was an episode of ten years before, when Mart, aged sixteen had taken his "girl," the same girl—the two seemed to have an affinity for calamities—to the old Behrman & Rossback circus on the night when a lion roamed at large through the circus tent, and crawled finally into a narrow passageway where Mart had been wedged by the paneg.

Suddenly Mart threw himself blindly upon the lion, in an ecstasy of immense excitement; beside himself, ignorant of what he did, he beat with his bare fists upon the creature's cowering head, kicked at its sides, clutched his fingers in its harsh mane. Unconscious of his own words, he was crying out: "You great vulgar beast! You beast, you! What do you think you're doing? Get out of here! Get out! Get out!"

Curious, the validity that Mr. Robb's little method carries here. There is no analysis of fear, of courage, of the beast; just as there is no attempt in the first chapters to explain Mart's quiet departure from the burning boat. "These," he says in effect, "are two things that happened to Mart Bannister, and these, as we see, are his reactions to them." Naturally, one expects him to run away again, and to meet the beast again and fall desperately upon him. Both these things and several others happen within the next two or three crucial days, and they too, as full of the dark psychologic as what has preceded them, are treated just as starkly, and, all oddly, bear up as strongly under the treatment.

"The Lion Tamer" is a very nice little experiment in giving the sense and the feeling of psychological drama in the novel form, with the reader and the writer sitting, as it were, side by side, looking on. Only rarely—these are the slips—does the writer slip away for a little saunter behind the scenes, where the reader may not go. But more than in most novels the omniscient author and judge is conspicuous by his absence. By now the novel has reached the stage where it is in sore need of a few good strong rules to hold its sprawling body within decent bounds; and Mr. Robb seems filled with a real curiosity to test out a few on his own.

## Romain Rolland

ANNETTE AND SYLVIE, being Volume I of THE SOUL ENCHANTED. By ROMAIN ROLLAND, translated by BEN RAY REDMAN. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1925. \$2.00.

L'ÂME ENCHANTÉE, II, ÈTE. By ROMAIN ROLLAND. Paris: Allendorf.

Reviewed by JEAN CATEL

MONSIEUR ROMAIN ROLLAND, who has not been greatly applauded lately for his writings, goes back to the *genre* which won so many readers to him, the novel showing the progressive development of a character in well-chosen situations.

He remains the professor of truth that he has been. Only in the hope of exerting a broader influence over the minds of men he discards the direct bitter ways of satire and controversy. He comes out of his proud solitude with a new story. "The Soul Enchanted" is the title of the new serial which, according to his own words, "will not be so long as that of Jean Christophe." One grows wise with age. I quite understand Monsieur Rolland being tired of writing satire, impassioned sermons, and desolate appeals. "The Soul Enchanted", here is, at last, serenity, happiness. The first volume has just been translated into English, or rather American. The second volume will follow in the same language.

I feel greatly embarrassed. "Jean Christophe" I read (unto the last page) when I was young, an admirer of Wagner, indifferent to politics, and positive that war was a naughty unreal invention of the past. I liked the book. It was a sentimental, badly written story—just the sort of thing we needed in France to teach us energy, morals, and the contempt for the grace of Monsieur Arouet's prose. I really think I excuse the hero of the book for the mistake he committed in his evaluation of the mid-

dle class of France. He probably paid a very dear price for them. And so we have pardoned him.

But here we are again, confronted with a product of literature and this time it is the story of a woman. She is French, too. We may judge her without prejudice. The first volume purposes to introduce Annette, before she launches forth upon the stormy sea. She is an orphan. Little is said of her mother. She was "morosely virtuous—possessed of feelings that were strong but concentrated." Annette's father, on the contrary, is a personality: cynical, the true son of Voltaire, "he was a man of dual nature who knew how to adapt himself to society for the sake of exploiting it." He had a charming smile. He was a seducer. He seduced his daughter who admired and feared him. After his death Annette learns from letters that he left behind that he had an illegitimate child, a daughter, Sylvie.

Annette searches Paris for her sister, finds her and likes her. Sylvie is an uneducated little imp—Annette experiences life at her contact, for the first time. From her she learns what love means, what laughter, what independence. But Annette is bound upon resisting life, under whatever aspects it may come.

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It comes under the usual aspects. But Monsieur Rolland (speaking for Annette, of course) could never like them and once more fights against their vulgarity. Vulgar, the young and handsome Italian whom Annette almost loved; vulgar, the fiancé whom she accepts and then refuses; vulgar, everything—Annette is a pure soul.

All this is very boring. But suddenly comes the real flash. And, though it is in the last pages of the book, it saves it and makes you wish to know further. Annette has decided to suffer. She renounces Roger not because she does not love him (that would be too good a reason, and no credit to her noble nature), but because she cannot admire him. He belongs to that middle-class, you know, of which the writer is a member himself, and so Annette bids him farewell. Where her noble nature comes in is the fact that before disappearing into her solitude she gives herself up to him. It is summer, and everything is ardent and joyous around. But of course Annette is "the soul enchanted." Who would doubt that she is better than her "morosely virtuous mother."

A child is given her. And here the book closes, leaving you with a pain and a sort of obscure exultation.

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The second volume tells of how Annette loses her fortune, her friends, even the spontaneous affection of Sylvie, even the love of a child whom she adores. It is systematic that Annette should go through life in the only enchantment of her soul. She has another love affair which only confirms her in solitude and pride. The book closes with the declaration of war. "War? Which War?" . . . "War? Well, all right! War, peace everything is life, everything is game. . . ." Is that the gist? Game, marriage and love? game, children? game, society? Is it Annette, the daughter of a middle-class Parisian, speaking; is it Romain Rolland himself? Let us wait for the next volume to answer. The pages where Annette is described to us, suffering and struggling like a *thing of flesh*, are finely ingrained with emotion. They are the only ones that have style.

And this brings us to a great question. Romain Rolland is one of the poorest writers of this time. I know he does not care. I know he despises "form" and "words" for words' and form's sake. Yet a man who writes sentences like these: "Pauvre Roger! Il était ce qu'il était. On ne lui en veut pas. Mais on ne se changera pas. Ni lui, ni moi. On ne peut pas vivre ensemble," is unfortunately a writer whose imperative need is to fill up volume after volume.

Romain Rolland is at his worst with metaphors and other ornaments. It is well to despise them. It is better to dispense with them. Who would write such things as: "Elles risquaient de la livrer à toutes les surprises de la violence, de la faiblesse, de la chair, de la pensée, aux hasards insidieux du destin embusqué au tournant d'une minute, sous les pierres du chemin." Who? When the translator wisely suppresses "au tournant d'une minute" he disowns the original. He has not done it often, to say the truth. Usually he keeps closely to the French, making it sound still more artificial, as any translation of a mediocre style is apt to do. His use of

enthusie to render "s'extasia" is unforgivable. His "concoct some new devilry" for "préparer une malice nouvelle" seems an unfair parody. And I do not see that devilry is here better suited than devilry. Can Mr. Mencken explain?

## The Later Huysmans

THE OBLATE. By J-K. HUYSMANS. Translated by EDWARD PERCEVAL. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1924. \$2.50.

Reviewed by PAUL ROSENFELD

CONVERSION stalked J-K. Huysmans behind the cover of new literary material. In the late 80's, naturalism as a doctrine tumbled under the blows of Bourget, Barrès, and Anatole France. Huysmans, once a member of the group of Médan, had been disgusted a long while by the crude materialism of Zola and Charcot; and turned toward diabolism, mediævalism, and the mysteries of the soul consciously as an escape. He seems at first to have been entirely ignorant of the truth that his interest in the black mass and the perversions of Gilles de Rais was not entirely professional and technical. There are on record letters of his asking for documentation on the contemporary state of the black arts, and making frank confession of a purely literary interest. But "La Bas" proved to be something of an elaborate, highly colored blasphemy, a kind of protective mechanism against a profound inevitable faith. The Church was drawing the author; and the bolt of blasphemy once shot, Huysmans found himself face to face with belief in a personal God, and the ordeal of conversion. Conversion did follow, and from it flowed two magnificent books, "En Route" and "La Cathédrale," and a number of minor ones.

But the subject-matter placed by the new orientation at the disposal of Huysmans's style, his *sauce àpre de langue*, was not unlimited. The volume recently translated by Edward Perceval shows commencing failure. The history of Durtal's oblature among the Benedictines is tedious and flat beside the history of his retreat in La Trappe d'Igny and his stay in Chartres. Violence, exasperation, and cold sensuality are the very elements of this genius, and "The Oblate" reveals the author grown benign, charitable, even, and perhaps a little *ga-ga*. George Moore's young man, feeling a page of Huysmans, in his London lodging, as "a dose of opium, a glass of some exquisite and powerful liqueur," would have found a weak tea, only, in "The Oblate." There are a few good pages on the plain chant, the Burgundian school of painting, and the master of Fle-malle, in it. Huysmans could not fail to be interested by primitive art. We are also given the mediæval legend of Chosroes, King of Persia, who gave himself out to be God the Father, and the catalogue of the herbs and flowers in the garden of Walafrid Strabo. There are even a few pages of exasperated prose: the arrival of Mme. Bavoil on the railway platform at Dijon, and Durtal's last malicious address to Heaven on the expulsion of the congregations, bring momentarily again the fine violences of the earlier books. But pages in any way comparable to the scene of Bluebeard's trial in "La Bas," or the description of the singing of the De Profundis in "En Route," or of the stained glass of Chartres in "La Cathédrale," do not exist in it; and Huysmans without his precise, heavily enameled, and solidly architected pages is a conjurer who does no tricks.

## The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

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Published weekly by Time, Inc., Briton Hadden, President, Henry S. Canby, Vice-President; Henry R. Luce, Secretary-Treasurer, 236 East 39th Street, New York, N. Y. Subscription rate, per year, postpaid: In the U. S. and Mexico, \$3; in Canada, \$3.50; in Great Britain, 16 shillings; elsewhere, \$4. For advertising rates, address Noble A. Cathcart, Advertising Manager, 236 East 39th Street, New York. Circulation Manager, Roy E. Larsen, Entered as second-class matter July 29, 1924, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Vol. I. Number 37.

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## A National Institution

KING EDWARD VII: A BIOGRAPHY. By SIR SIDNEY LEE. Vol. I: From Birth to Accession. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925.

Reviewed by ROBERT LIVINGSTON SCHUYLER  
Columbia University

A BIOGRAPHY of the most popular of modern English kings by one of the most distinguished of living English biographers cannot fail to be widely read and commented upon. Sir Sidney Lee's interest in the fortunes of English royalty is not of recent growth. His "Life of Victoria," published more than twenty years ago, remains historically the most useful biography of the Queen, even if Mr. Strachey's sparkling literary masterpiece forbids our calling it the most brilliant, and there is little doubt that his latest work will long be cited as the most comprehensive account of the career of her successor. Ground was broken for it when Sir Sidney prepared for the "Dictionary of National Biography," of which he has long been editor, an article on Edward VII that was published in 1912. Since then, as he tells us, he has devoted years of labor and thought to the further study of his chosen subject. The present volume deals with the career of King Edward during the long period—just short of sixty years in duration—in which as Heir Apparent he stood on the steps of the throne; a second and concluding volume, which is promised for publication in the near future, will cover the years of his kingship.

The author was given exceptional facilities for research in unpublished sources by King George, at whose request this biography of his father was undertaken. In particular, he was permitted to examine the Royal Archives at Windsor and the papers of King Edward that are in Queen Alexandra's care at Marlborough House, London. Numerous collections of letters written by the King to friends and men prominent in public life were placed at his disposal, and he had the advantage of conversations with persons who had been on terms of intimacy with the King. The veil of secrecy that surrounds the records of the British Foreign Office for recent years was partially lifted for his benefit; and the privilege of access to the Archives of the Russian Embassy in London made it possible for him to throw some valuable light upon the equivocal diplomatic activities of the King's nephew, the Kaiser, during the Boer War.

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In view of the training to which he was subjected in childhood and youth it is surprising that King Edward did not become either a prig or a mere libertine. With the best of intentions—all of his intentions were good—Prince Albert, with the aid of his mentor, Baron Stockmar, set out upon the hopeless task of making a scholar out of a boy to whom systematic study and book learning were always repulsive. Early in the life of the Prince of Wales, Albert and Victoria, under Stockmar's well-meant but ill-advised promptings, conceived a nervous fear that the Prince would be ruined in youth by dissolute companions, after the manner of his disreputable great-uncle, George IV. In consequence, he was kept in a state of virtual isolation so far as the companionship of boys of his own age was concerned, although, as his biographer tells us, he "always hungered for the society of his fellows" and "was never happy without a congenial companion." On the rare occasions when carefully selected aristocratic youngsters were permitted to visit the Prince, his father was invariably present, with effects upon the spirits of the youthful company that can easily be imagined. Lord Melbourne, the Queen's first Prime Minister, gave her some worldly-wise advice upon the subject of her heir's up-bringing, and some years later, when the Prince was approaching adolescence, Lord Granville strongly recommended that he be "mixed up with others of his own age away from home." But such sage counsel, unfortunately, had little effect, and under a succession of "tutors" and "governors" the stern paternal code of education was applied to the unfortunate victim with unremitting diligence. Prince Albert was not content to provide for the education of a boy; he was seeking to direct the evolution of a political and social institution! "Upon the good education of Princes, and especially of

those who are destined to govern," he wrote, at a time when the revolutionary movements of '48 were making the occupants of all thrones uneasy, "the welfare of the world in these days greatly depends."

Even when the Prince of Wales was sent to Oxford, and later to Cambridge, he was not permitted to live in a college but was required to reside in a separate establishment under the control of a personal "governor"; while at Cambridge he was discreetly located four miles from the university! The blockade so rigidly maintained against youthful companionship no doubt insured the Prince's morals from contamination in his early life. In his eighteenth year he was sent, under strict surveillance, to Rome for a course in art, archæology, and instructive sight-seeing. Victor Emmanuel, wishing to entertain him, invited him to enter Italy by way of Turin, the Sardinian capital. But Victoria and Albert feared for their son's virtue under the hospitable roof of *il re galantuomo*, and it was arranged that the Prince should enter Italy by the morally safer route over the Brenner Pass. The irony of Cavour's remark that the Prince would not lose his innocence in Turin if he brought with him *cette qualité précieuse*, would not, if apprehended have been relished by the Queen and her husband.

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Even the death of his father, soon to be followed by the Prince's coming of age and his marriage, did not put an end to the parental policy of repression. A mistaken sense of loyalty to the memory of her consort told the Queen that she must carry out his every wish. She convinced herself that she owed her son, in Sir Sidney Lee's words, "that magisterial guidance in all relations which his father would have given him had he lived," and for years to come she continued to treat him as one "permanently incapable of adult responsibilities or confidences." Her widowed seclusion, long maintained, and the withdrawal of the Court from Society, had, inevitably, some liberating effect upon the Prince, and his long reign as *arbiter elegantiarum*, some phases of which were to cause the Queen distinct uneasiness, began soon after his father's death. Marlborough House, the Prince's London establishment, supplanted Buckingham Palace as the social center of England, and the Queen permitted her heir to represent her in the ceremonial reception of foreign sovereigns and in the patronage of enterprises of philanthropy and social welfare. But she resolutely excluded him from any participation in the political functions of the monarchy. She had small trust in his discretion and was unwilling to give him access to confidential intelligence. Not until his personal friend, Lord Rosebery, became Foreign Secretary in 1886 when the Prince was in his forty-fifth year, were the foreign despatches forwarded to him, and he had passed fifty before he was permitted to read the reports of cabinet meetings which the prime minister regularly transmitted to the sovereign.

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It was as leader of society, man of the world, sportsman, and patron of worthy causes that the Prince of Wales appeared to his contemporaries. In his "English Constitution," written when the Prince was in early manhood, Bagehot spoke of him as "an unemployed youth;" and at the time of his accession to the throne there were serious doubts as to his qualifications for occupying it. This biography reveals for the first time the full sweep of his interest in affairs of state. It shows conclusively that he was unemployed through no wish of his own. In 1872 he sketched a plan for his attachment to various governmental offices in order that he might learn at first hand the business of the different departments of state, but the Queen defeated all proposals for his employment "which involved sustained and continuous responsibility." On more than one occasion it was proposed by ministers that the office of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, shorn of its partisan character, should be conferred upon the Prince and that he should be given an official Irish residence, but the Queen's relentless veto was not to be overridden.

It was in the days when English public life was dominated by the personality of Lord Palmerston that the Prince's interest in politics was first aroused, and to the fundamentals of the Palmerstonian creed in foreign and domestic policy he remained faith-

ful throughout his life. Politics as a game seems to have a strong appeal to his sporting instinct; his habit of frequenting the Peers' Gallery in the House of Commons was formed when Disraeli, as leader of a House in which his party was in a minority, was exhibiting all of the dexterity and nerve of a tight-rope walker in his efforts to avoid a fall. The making and breaking of ministries engaged the Prince's eager attention, and his absorbing interest in the competition among aspirants to office seems to have been akin to his well-known zest for the turf. Nor, despite maternal *caveats*, was he content to view the political scene as a mere spectator. His incursions into politics, though unknown to the contemporary public, are described in this biography in plentiful detail. He was assiduous in recommending appointments to office and bestowals of honors, and his intervention, though not always successful, was frequently influential and seems occasionally to have been decisive. His appeal to the Queen to send for Gladstone, following the fall of the Beaconsfield ministry in 1880, undoubtedly played a part in persuading her to accept as her prime minister a statesman whom she cordially disliked.

The changes and chances of international politics possessed a permanent fascination for the Prince. He watched every move on the chess-board of European diplomacy with a concern that grew more alert as the years passed by. Though long denied official documentary information regarding the foreign relations of his country, he was on intimate terms with his mother's prime ministers and foreign secretaries and with many British and foreign diplomats, and he never hesitated to engage in conversation and correspondence with them on questions of foreign policy. Disraeli once spoke of him as "one who has seen everything and knows everybody," and from a host of friends and acquaintances at home and abroad he learned much. His numerous relatives on or near foreign thrones supplied him with the talk and gossip of the courtly circles of Europe, and some of it was important.

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The student of international affairs, especially he who seeks to uncover the roots of the World War, will find much new matter in this volume, and no doubt also in the one that is to follow, to arrest his attention. He will be enabled to trace the growth of that affection for France which the Prince formed early in life and which, though at times subjected to severe strain, was to find its consummation, after he had come to the throne, in the *entente cordiale*. He will see under what influences the Prince's Russophobia came to be so modified that he could consider seriously the possibilities of an Anglo-Russian agreement. Above all, he will be able to follow the growth of that mutual suspicion and estrangement between the Prince and his nephew, the Kaiser, which was to yield its harvest of evil. The responsibility for this momentous family feud the Prince's biographer seeks to place squarely on the Kaiser's shoulders, but from the facts as presented the open-minded reader will see faults of temper and temperament on both sides. The family relations of European royalty had little chance to develop in a natural and healthy spirit when the whole atmosphere of international and interdynastic relations was poisoned by courtly intrigue and diplomatic chicane, and in this, the evidence goes to show, the Prince was not wholly unversed. Consider, for example, the following account of what Sir Sidney Lee calls a "friendly talk" between the Prince and Alexander III of Russia in 1887:

The Tsar and the Prince had not met of late, but the sympathetic atmosphere encouraged friendly intercourse in spite of current political dissension. The thorny phases of Anglo-Russian relations were avoided. But the Tsar and the Prince found in the dubious character and aims of Prince William of Prussia, who was nearing his accession to the German throne, a theme on which they found themselves in agreement. The Prussian Prince had already courted the Tsar's favour by slandering his uncle and by pandering to the Tsar's political suspicions and dislike of England. The Prince had no difficulty in dispelling the equivocal impressions which Prince William had sought to leave on the Tsar's mind, by pointing to the dangers lurking in his nephew's wild militarist ambitions. Those ambitions might, the Prince suggested, in spite of all Prince William's fair words to the Russian ruler, find a vent in an attack on Russia as readily as on England or France.

If this shows that the Kaiser was trying to make trouble between Russia and England, it shows, equally, that the Prince of Wales was trying to