

Points of View

"The Constant Nymph"

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

May I put in a plea, before it is too late, for "The Constant Nymph"—that amazing novel by a young English woman, Margaret Kennedy. What I fear for it, perhaps absurdly, is the wrong kind of readers, and the wrong kind of praise. I fear, in short, that it may become the victim of its own extraordinary power of fascination. No one will escape the charm of this book, but may not this quality, however rare in itself, blind too many of its readers to a deeper quality that I can only call *Shakespearian*? In its serene understanding of and acceptance of the full gamut of humanity, it is a novel apart. It has in fullest measure that "bonité" which Margaret Kennedy grants to one of her characters. It is wise with a wisdom at once instinctive and profoundly cultured. There is in it not one sentimental and not one cynical line.

And finally, though it may easily become a "best seller," it will be able to survive that fate for it transcends its almost fatal attractions. Only, if I am right in believing it has the qualities that are permanent, I should like to see them recognized and emphasized by—ourselves. We leave that sort of thing too much to posterity.

LEE WILSON DODD.

To Each His Idiom

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

Seeing Mr. Morley in his recent "Mirror for Magistrates" play at loggats with the bones of the Complete Editor, one feels relieved. No more shall innocent youth be smothered with a featherbed of synecdoche and oxymoron. But soft, the Perfect Editor is not dead; he is indestructible as Riley's Grandfather Squeers. Having whetted his appetite on prolepsis and metonymy he has found a mow of buttered hay: quartos, sources, and influences.

My Urchiness (thirteen) coaxes for a family reading of "The Merchant of Venice." The play's the thing. She peoples Venice with pageantry; chortles, mocks, and pities by turn, and gets the meat out of the speeches without knowing the etymology of every word. Elisions trouble her not; she takes 'em flying. Equivoques, doubling of the subject, omission of the preposition in relative sentences—of these she is as blissfully unconscious as Shakespeare himself. Though frequently admonished by Polonius, she does not "see Abbott." She might, since Abbott happens to be on a shelf in my study. But the youth who brings our daily paper, and the boy who delivers pills for the druggist, and her other thirty-seven classmates cannot very well "see Abbott."

But Abbott is not her only elision. She has the temerity to enjoy the play without heeding some forty pages of introduction: "sources" ranging from Joannes Damascenus to "Il Pecorone"; and an infinite deal of "The Palladis Tamia" and "The Stationers' Register," together with the several internal tests for determining the date of composition. Worse, this young sinner wilfully ignores a very mare's nest of notes upon Q 1, Q 2, Q 3, Q 4, Qq, F 1 and four other F's, and countless etceteras from Rowe to Furness. What will become of her!

Her book is a standard high school text. But even were she in college, what a plague would she have to do with Theobald and Warburton? She would still, I hope, be hungry for Shakespeare rather than the processes by which scholars have provided a readable text. At best their industry and acumen have been admirable: why not present the results and efface the tedious parade of labor?

If she continues to love Shakespeare it will be due in part to her teacher's immunity to pedantry. Many teachers are immune. But when a college freshman who is blunt to the simplest sense of poetry and unable to recognize a line of Wordsworth or Keats, writes paragraphs of solemn twaddle about The Rise of Romanticism, I know that her teacher has "had a seminar." And when a senior has "credits" in The Source of the Arthurian Epic or The Development of Satire and betrays mere ignorance of every living English poem or essay, I conclude that she has munched baled hay of research. I noted once the surprise of a graduate student who, visiting a high school class, discovered the meaning of "prodigal" in "The Merchant of Venice." She was completing a seminar in Elizabethan Drama; for nine months she had

counted rhyme tags to provide fodder for her professor's next book.

The pedant only wears his rue with a difference; he still prefers the letter to the spirit. He and his brethren try to teach writing by analysis, by philology, by every means except the love of writing. Keen nosers-out of influences and sources, they cannot credit the miracle of creative genius, the curious hunger and zest of the artist. They distrust a simple enjoyment of beauty, and hoot like the sanhedrin at any avowal of the spiritual. Many of them suffer a secret disappointment: they wanted to write, but scholarship hath them in her seeling clutch. The unwritten (but not unproclaimed) law compels them to "edit something." No editing, no promotion—no appointment even. Sidney Lanier could hardly win permission to lecture today—not without the trademark. Wherefore, more useless editions of thrice-edited classics; more theses upon atomic jot and tittle. And these arbiters have the prospective teacher in their hands; then can make or break him as he acquiesces or rebels; they determine his fitness for teaching by everything but his power to communicate the love of books.

Meantime the undergraduate has problems of his own. Even in a cynical generation, he sometimes reveals a shame-faced hunger. He may have the luck, with an unsophisticated teacher, to discover poems 54 to 56 of "In Memoriam." (Strange how well a despised Victorian can state one's own case.) He finds too that Whitman spoke out in meeting. Masfield sounds good. He would like more of that sort of thing. But if he wants "honors" in English, or a graduate scholarship, or a teacher's credentials, he will have to buckle under.

And all the while life goes on, untouched, unspoiled. I sat through a blessed April afternoon in a black-oak pub room in a fishing village on the Severn below Gloucester. Publican, a man with heart and bowels of understanding, mellow and wise. Bar porter, Bardolph with a dash of Pistol. They opened their hearts; brought in the Admiral of the Severn, an apple-cheeked, shrewd-wrinkled old salmon fisher. He was amenable to an influence never discoverable in thesis-mongering. Out came his classic yarn: his row with the new Oxford curate over some small parish policy—even to the climax when Old West Country shakes an impudent finger under the cultured nose and allows: "Thee bist a bloody lee-ar." Then, Severn weather continuing wet, he and Bardolph dive deeper than plummet line into chop-logic of Lylyism: whether the wriggly wormy elvers that swarm up Severn each spring do or do not return to the Sargasso sea and there, in unweaned adolescence, grow up to be eels; and whether peafowls do verily gender, or beget by astrological influence. Five lovely hours I watched Elizabethan England come out and play. And still tired little men write books to prove where Shakespeare got it!

I began with the hope that Polonius was dead. But I chance to open the volume through which some tens of thousands of high school youth are surveying the progress of English poetry. I find synecdoche, antonomasia, litotes, ephonestis, anacrusis—I could fill three lines more. I note that our paper carrier and the druggist's boy will be informed that a certain passage in Lycidas is "a close imitation of the first idyl of Theocritus and of the tenth eclogue of Virgil." The paper boy, I happen to know, is more concerned about whether Walter Johnson will succeed in buying the franchise for the Oakland team. I note that "bellies' sake" means material welfare; and "lean and flashy songs," insipid sermons. The druggist's boy will be asked to point out the metonymy in "mantling bliss"; and my Urchiness will be told by the editor to discuss whether in the line

Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

"glory" and "dream" refer to the same or to different things. Mr. Morley, did any true lover of poetry ever note or point out or discuss any of these things? Meantime Hollywood, the comic strips and *Shady Stories* appear to have attained a certain idiom of their own without much need of foot-notes and sources, synecdoche and Q 1. On Cabell.

E. O. JAMES.

Truth or Illusion

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

Mr. Dodd's review of "Straws and Prayerbooks" is the most satisfying dis-

cussion of Mr. Cabell I have seen. It alludes to his philosophy of life, and at least hints that all logical and sensitive persons need not come to such a conclusion. Further discussion of Mr. Cabell's "desert" and "rock" would be welcome. Who can answer Mr. Cabell? I doubt whether anyone living today could do so. But it is refreshing to find a critic suggesting that Mr. Cabell is, perhaps, not unanswerable!

It is satisfying, too, to find a critic of Cabell observing that "Beyond Life" hardly seems to express the profound pessimism of the later books. "It would need but a slight shift in emphasis," says Mr. Dodd, to make the passage (the most significant passage in "Beyond Life") a positive affirmation of the reality of our fairest and most audacious dreams. It matters very little whether our beliefs are "illusions" or not if they are "dynamic." "Beyond Life," it seems to me, is a declaration of faith, however qualified, however indirectly stated. In the characteristic manner of this generation it expresses a faith which was positively and vigorously declared in "Leaves of Grass" in a less sophisticated generation. What Whitman called truth, Cabell calls illusion; but Cabell values his illusions more than anything else in life.

ISABEL TAYLOR.

The Reader's Guide

(Continued from preceding page)

absorbing account of its history, its architecture, and the life of which Mont St. Michel has been the centre that has found its way into literature.

Speaking of European travel, as so many of the correspondents of this column have been doing lately, anyone interested in the subject should look up the "Picture Guides" published by the Medici Society, of which fourteen are published or in course of publication. They are translated from French or Italian texts by famous authors, printed in France and bound in this country, and the photographs, of which there are at least 200 to a book, are unusually clear. Also the price is not large. "The French Riviera" is a good one; so is Gabriel Faure's "The Italian Lakes." And the correspondent for whom I recently made a travel list for Sicily is informed that McBride has published an admirable new illustrated guide by Henry J. Forman, called "Grecian Italy." I might add, to save answering letters, that the address of the Medici Society is Boylston St., Boston, and by the way, the price of that pamphlet "An Outline of Biography," by Wilbur L. Cross (Holt) that I so strongly advised all lovers of this art to obtain, is twenty-five cents.

F. C. B., Spokane, Wash., asks me to "straighten out the Powyses" for her.

JOHN COWPER POWYS, author of "Suspended Judgments"; T. F. Powys, who wrote "The Left Leg," and Llewelyn Powys, "Thirteen Worthies," are three brothers in this order of seniority. Their father is a clergyman of the Church of England, of Welsh descent; their mother, a descendant of "Johnny of Norfolk," the cousin of the poet William Cowper who gave him shelter in his last tragic days. John Cowper Powys is even better known in this country as a lecturer, and Llewelyn, who was born in 1884, visited this country in 1908 and lectured here, but developed tuberculosis and after unsuccessful attempts at a cure in Switzerland, set sail for British East Africa, where for five years he was manager of one of the largest and wildest stock farms in that country. His real work as a writer dates from after 1920, when he left Africa for this country. He has written "Confessions of Two Brothers," but is best known by his "Black Daughter" and "Ebony and Ivory." Harcourt, Brace & Co. will soon bring out his new book, "Skin for Skin."

A. S. B., Honolulu, Hawaii, and W. H. S., Middletown, Conn., ask, almost in the same mail, for the names of reference grammar for the English language, not text books for the grades; one wishes also a book on the origin and development of formal grammar.

KITTREDGE AND FARLEY'S "Concise English Grammar" (Ginn) is a good one for reference: a more complete work is "An Advanced English Grammar" (Ginn) by the same authors. The same firm publishes Ball's "Constructive English," a reference work for business or literary use, including grammar and composition, and with an index that is a model of its kind. The "New English Grammar: Logi-

cal and Historical" is published in two volumes by the Oxford University Press. It is by Dr. Henry Sweet, the philological authority; the first volume includes the introduction, phonology and accent, the second syntax. The Oxford Press publishes also Dr. Sweet's "Short Historical English Grammar."

H. H. M., Chanute, Kansas, asks advice on books for study of Chaucer in a course of English poetry with a background of history and geography, and also asks about a concise history of England.

FOR the history, the one-volume "New History of Great Britain," by R. B. Mowat (Oxford University Press), which is arranged for text-book use but could be read aloud for entertainment. Even the pictures are unusually good. "Chaucer and his England," by G. C. Coulter (Dutton), appeared first in 1908, and has been thrice reprinted. It is a panorama of the time, full of sights and gestures; it quotes, not only the "Tales" but vivacious and uncomplimentary outbursts like the roundel lately sung at the concerts of "new music," "Since I from Love escaped am so fat." This very day as I write comes from the press a little book of essays named from the first one, "Chaucer's Nuns" (Appleton), a book whose special charm—and charm is the word for it—is that the author is herself a nun, Sister M. Madeleva, and therefrom enabled to point out matters that none but a religious would see so clearly. This is otherwise a remarkable book, full of fresh-air and joyous wisdom; Edna St. Vincent Millay had never more sympathetic treatment than from this erudite and light-hearted lady.

B. S. B. L., Chicago, tells M. M., Tryon, N. C., of three biographies for her proposed list of indispensables.

IMPRESSIONS THAT REMAINED," by Dame Ethel Smyth, Mus. Doc. (Longmans, Green: 2 vols.) a most unusual autobiography, more thrilling than any novel; "Life of Samuel Butler" (Macmillan, 2 vols.), and "Life and Letters of George Tyrrell," by Maud Petre. "She will also," says B. S. B. L., "enjoy an article on 'The Pleasure of Reading Biographies,' by Arthur Clutton-Brock, in the *Living Age* of April 14, 1923, which delighted me by referring to these three which had been intimates of mine, and introduced me to the 'Life and Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikowsky,' by his brother Modeste Tchaikowsky (Dodd, Mead) which I am just now reading."

E. L. D., Parkersburg, W. Va., thinks that P. M. W., Lakeland, Fla., is on the wrong track in assigning to Mark Twain the saying that "all humor is based on nine original jokes and everything since has been but variations of the nine."

"I HEARD," says she, "Robert J. Burdette say in a lecture here a few years ago before his death that 'there were only seven original jokes and that every joke in existence was some variation of those seven.' He went on: 'so tell your joke: you can't be very original but you can make somebody laugh every time you tell your joke, probably, and every laugh is to the good.'" So it was only seven in the time of Robert J. Burdette? Well, since his passing we have introduced the Ford and the Amendment, which puts it back again to the tally of the muses.

The American Art Galleries announce the forthcoming sale of the fine private library of the late Francis R. Arnold of this city, on March 30, 31, and April 1. This well-known collection contains first editions and rare issues of the works of great English and American nineteenth century authors and illustrators. The illustrators include notable rarities of George Cruikshank, Thomas Rowlandson, Henry Alken, and others of the period. First editions in separate volumes and fine issues comprise notable collections of such authors as Charles Dickens, Rudyard Kipling, Charles Lamb, Percy B. Shelley, Robert Louis Stevenson, and William M. Thackeray.

What is one of the best and fullest accounts of German colonial policy and of Bismarck's relation to it, although unfortunately it was written before some of the documents bearing on the Prince's handling of diplomatic situations were available, has recently come from the pen of Maximilian von Hagen. "Bismarck's Kolonialpolitik" (Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Institut) displays exhaustive scholarship and wide research and is an important study.

The World of Rare Books

By FREDERICK M. HOPKINS

SALE OF PRINTING LIBRARY

THE typographical library of Oscar Aurelius Mogner of Brooklyn, comprising books on the origin of printing, bookbinding, paper manufacture, kindred arts, and bibliography, was sold at the Anderson Galleries March 4 and 5, 461 lots bringing \$6,019.75. The steadily growing interest in bibliography and books concerning printing and allied interests among collectors was shown in the firm prices throughout this sale. The rarest item was Joan Stradanus's "Nova Reperta," oblong 4to, boards, printed in the sixteenth century, of which only two or three perfect copies are known. This copy with the rare printing office plate sold for \$500 and went to Walter M. Hill of Chicago.

Other interesting items and the prices realized were the following:

Atkyns (Richard). "The Origin and Growth of Printing," small 4to, morocco by Matthews, London, 1664. With W. L. Andrews bookplate. \$250.

Bibliography. "The Kelmscott and Doves Presses in the Library of William Andrews Clark, Jr.," compiled by Robert E. Cowan, 4to, boards, San Francisco, 1921. Printed by John Henry Nash. \$35.

Bibliography. "Wilde and Wildeana in the Library of William Andrews Clark, Jr.," 3 vols., 4to, boards, cloth backs, San Francisco, 1922. Printed by John Henry Nash. \$55.

Bodini (G.). "Manuale Tipografico," 2 vols., folio, canvas, Parma, 1818. \$85.

Claudin (A.). "Histoire de l'Imprimerie en France au XVIe et XVIIe Siècle," 4 vols.,

royal 8vo, portfolios, Paris, 1900-14. Most important work on history of French printing. \$127.50.

Doves Press. Winship (George Parker). "William Caxton," small 4to, boards, Ham-mersmith, 1909. One of the rarest of the Doves Press publications. \$62.50.

Fry (Edmund). "Pantographia," royal 8vo, bound in pigskin by Stikeman, London, 1799. One of two large paper copies printed on vellum. \$57.50.

Grolier Club. "The Philobiblon of Richard De Bury," 3 vols., small 4to, levant by Stikeman, New York, 1889. \$65.

Incunabula. "Catalogue of Books mostly from the Presses of the First Printers," collected by Rush C. Hawkins and catalogued by Alfred W. Pollard, 4to, cloth, Oxford, 1910. \$51.

Kelmscott Press. "A Note by William Morris on his Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press," 8vo, boards, London, 1898. Last book printed at the Kelmscott Press. \$30.

Moxon (Joseph). "Mechanic Exercises," 2 vols. in one, small 4to, levant by Reviere, London, 1677-83. \$57.50.

Schaffers (Jacob Christian). "Versuche und Muster ohne alle Lumpen oder doch mit einem geringen Zusatze derselben Papier zu machen," 2 vols. in one, engraved frontispiece, 5 engraved plates and 34 specimens of paper; engraved frontispiece, 3 engraved plates, colored by hand, 33 specimens of paper, 2 vols. in one. Altogether 4 vols. in two, small 4to, full pigskin by Sikeman, Regensburg, 1765. Rarest of all books on paper-making. \$425.

Thomas (Isaiah). "The History of Printing in America," 2 vols., 8vo., levant by Canape, Worcester, 1810. With the Isaiah Thomas bookplate engraved by Paul Revere in the first volume. \$57.

"EDITIONS-DE-LUST."

UNDER the pseudonym of "Roxburghe" *The Bookman's Journal* prints an article on "Post-War Publishing and the Edition-de-lust," which is well worth the attention of collectors here in America. We reprint a paragraph:

"The collectors' edition—either large paper or de luxe; sometimes signed, sometimes merely numbered—has been with us for many generations. Such editions were usually in strict ratio to the numerical strength of libraries and collectors. But what happened after the war? Certain publishers, with quantitative minds, seemed to get a distorted idea as to the number of people who could afford de-luxe editions. Said they to themselves: if two hundred people will buy signed de-luxe editions at two or three guineas each, why not a thousand? And as if to ensure their ultimate disillusionment, they made the standard of production such that the books were little more than signed editions. The result is obvious: of limited editions produced in recent years only a proportion—i.e., those editions, really limited and finely produced, of esteemed authors—will be worth anything like as much as their original price to-morrow. Those who bought the other kind, hoping that their subscriptions were good investments, have a cruel awakening in store when the day comes for the adjusting of book values. Indeed, for some, the day has already come, for quite recently bundles of three or four books by the same author, issued in wholesale signed editions, have realized together less than the

price at which any one of them was issued. Not satisfied with signed editions of 500 or 750 copies of the slim original volumes, there were also signed editions, similarly large, of later volumes, in which the contents were collected and reprinted. 'First' or no 'first,' the signatures were the thing, and plenty of them. The craze reached its height of folly probably with the issue of an edition not only signed by the author but containing a couple of lines of verse inscribed in each volume in his autograph."

NOTE AND COMMENT

THE March number of *Antiques* contains an interesting article on William Hamlin under the title of "Rhode Island's First Engraver," contributed by Gladys R. Lane, assistant librarian of Shepley Library of Providence. In addition to a very carefully prepared biographical sketch, there is a check list of forty-five of Hamlin's engravings, all carefully described.

The ten British authors whose first editions were most in demand in England during the five weeks ending January 24, according to the analysis of desiderata of second hand booksellers published in *The Bookman's Journal* for February are as follows: John Galsworthy, Anthony Trollope, W. H. Hudson, Rudyard Kipling, George Bernard Shaw, Joseph Conrad, Thomas Hardy, Louise Imogen Guiney, George Gissing, and W. J. Locke.

Houghton Mifflin Company have just issued "Letters of the American Revolution, 1774-1776," edited by Margaret W. Willard, in a limited edition of 1,000 copies. This series of letters written by British officers in America to friends abroad makes a vivid picture of America in the 1770's as the protagonists saw it.

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