

## Foreign Literature

## A Retrospect

UNA HORA DE ESPAÑA. POR AZORIN.  
Madrid: Caro-Raggio. (Brentano's. \$1).

Reviewed by ERNESTO MONTENEGRO

IN José Martínez-Ruiz, as the *cedula vecinal* or identification card for Azorin must read, we have the perfect intellectual as conceived by the Spanish mind: discursive, delving in the past, shy to physical exertion of any kind. In his descriptive books, such as "Los Pueblos" and "La Ruta de Don Quijote," we find the typical Spanish town, where time is measured by the church's bells and where nothing happens except life. His favorite characters would make us believe that the writer himself is one of those country hidalgos of quiet demeanor whose sentimental life has been paralyzed under the stifling rules of religious duties and social routine.

In other books of Azorin, as the present instance shows, the commentary on things and writings of the classical period is the recurrent theme. "Una Hora de España" was an unusual piece of literature to be read as an inaugural address upon the reception of its author as member of the Royal Academy. Hardly touching on the personality of his predecessor in the chair, he passes on to conjure up "one hour of Spain" between 1560 and 1590 when the country had just crossed the peak of greatness and began the downward course, physically exhausted by the mighty effort of the Conquest as well as morally spoiled by the sudden rush of gold from the New World.

Azorin belongs to that much-talked-about generation of '98, which, on the day following the disaster of the war with the United States, ushered in a movement for the reawakening of the national consciousness and of its dormant energies. But the new missionaries found themselves in conflict with their purposes at the point where they pretended to conciliate tradition with the new spirit dominating Europe. Closing the cycle between Europe and the Orient, as much as Russia does on the other side, Spain through its Moorish inheritance is ever at grips with the contradictory spells of fatalism and contemplative life on one hand and the intellectual daring and progressive impulse of Europe on the other. "Artists and sentimentals, we felt the lure of the past; toilers of the brain, we felt rooted to the modern world."

So Azorin explains their spiritual conflict in a reference in his academic retrospect. Employing once more his characteristic evocative manner in a succession of brief literary sketches of a Cellini-like perfection of detail, he goes on to dig out of the past the life of the monk and cavalier, of the artisan and the peasant. His classical reading as well as his familiarity with the menial occupations of the Spanish people are exhibited here together with that almost excessive relish of his for quaintness and propriety of expression. The following seems to us as most representative of the author's style, at the same it will convey to the reader the spirit of the book under review:

To the humble sword-cuttler shop has come, as he did everyday, Don Rodrigo. The gentleman's sword has suffered some damage at the guard. The sword is a magnificent one. It was handsomely wrought in Italy. No wealth is ascribed to the gentleman; but this sword—acquired in better times—is well worth a fortune. There are not two like it in all the city. The sword has been with the gentleman since early manhood. With it he fought in Italy and in Flanders. The blade-smith knows it well; easily he will fix it. Don Rodrigo leaves it with him. Early next day a customer comes to the shop. He is a tall, genteel-looking young man, and over his chest sparkles a diamond-studded badge. The sword-cuttler had Don Rodrigo's blade in his hand at the moment. The young man examines it closely. A barter and trade conversation ensues. The cavalier is much taken with the magnificent sword.

The hour for the visit of the old gentleman has come. He can already be seen at the farther

end of the alley. Straight and calm walks the gentleman, carrying an old sword, and with his loyal attendant at his heels. Once inside the shop, the blade-smith has taken Don Rodrigo apart, and addresses him in a low tone. Don Rodrigo's face becomes pale and turns toward the beautiful sword which stands on the table nearby. Suddenly he leaves the sword-cuttler alone, seizes his sword, and silently, grave, more proud than ever, walks out of the shop without saying a word.

Azorin himself estimates that at that time, the closing years of the XVI century, "the power, the might and the enthusiasm (of Spain) had already left for the New World, beyond the seas." Denying the reality of the decadence with which Spain is charged today, he also stresses the point that it did not become politically bankrupt, but "like a bank that transfers its funds from one vault to another, she prospers now in the American continent." As a figure of speech, this assertion is very much in favor on both sides of the Atlantic among politicians and a few writers; but the fact seems to be that time, different political institutions, foreign influence, and many other causes tend to widen rather than to bridge the original gap between the old kingdom and the republics of Latin America.

This has something to do with the relative influence of Spanish writers over Spanish-speaking America. Men like Ortega-Gasset and Unamuno have a large following among us, perhaps in the proportion that they let themselves be permeated with modern European thought. Azorin belongs in a different class; his ideas, as his sentences, have a narrower range. He is the village sage, a Montaigne without a world outlook, who has contented himself with recording "Las Confesiones de un Pequeño Filósofo" (the Confessions of a Petty Philosopher). As the men whose life he records here, he pursues his limited calling with a cheerful dedication, and he does it well.

## Foreign Notes

H. P. HANSEN, on whom the fortunes of war bestowed the unique experience of sitting in the German Reichstag in one year and as a member of the Danish Cabinet the next, recorded his observations in the Reichstag and in his own province of Slesvig in a series of diaries which have recently been published under the title, "Fra Krigsteden" (Copenhagen: Gyldendal). The entries deal with meetings, personalities, and cross-currents in German political circles during the war years, and are vivid and arresting portrayals of the time.

Musicians and lovers of music will find much to interest them in the volume recently issued by Edward Speyer, son of its subject, entitled "Wilhelm Speyer, der Liederkomponist (1790-1878): Sein Leben und Verkehr mit Seinen Zeitgenossen" (Munich: Drei-Masken-Verlag). Speyer was a musician who in his later years went into business, but who retained his interest in his original profession to the end of his life, and who enjoyed the friendship of musical people throughout Europe. His son's biography of him contains many interesting reminiscences of figures noted in the musical world with some entertaining bits of gossip.

Frederic Lefevre is a great interviewer, and might profitably be studied by journalists everywhere. He brings the reader and the person interviewed into close mental contact. The talks first appear, most of them, in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, of which M. Le Fevre is editor-in-chief, and are then brought out in successive volumes by the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. They are appropriately entitled "Une Heure Avec. . ." Among his latest subjects are Charles Maurras, Paul Morand, Georges Brandès, Valéry Larbaud, George Duhamel, etc.



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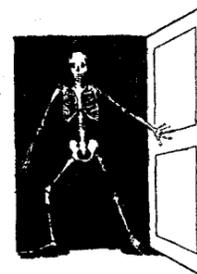
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# Book Notes From Paris

By LOUISE MORGAN SILL

Edouard Schneider's new book about "Eleonora Duse," (Grasset), is an inspiration to the reader. "To the holy memory of Eleonora Duse" the author dedicates it, and this gives the keynote of his and his wife's impressions, at close range, of this remarkable woman. Schneider met her in the best way, as the author of a play which she thoroughly admired, which fulfilled her ideals and which she was to have produced as soon as she earned enough money by her American season. The Schneiders spent intimate weeks with her at Italian hotels. They worked over his play, "L'Exaltation," together, and Duse's sensitive enthusiasm evinced the creative animating spirit which had once been at the service of Gabriel d'Annunzio. She came impulsively to the Schneiders' rooms, with her step like a girl's, her soft rap at the door, and that well-known voice "so tenderly modulated, that sang in our ears." She showered them with delicate gifts, she wrote them little notes, saying "It is good, SO GOOD, to know that you two are there." The author presents her as the consummate artist that she was, but above all as the great woman, large-souled, generous, intellectual, loving, and in the highest sense of the word religious. It is an impassioned biography.

Thierry Sandre, author of "Le Chèvre-feuille," which not long ago received the Prix Goncourt, has just published a new novel, "Mousseline" (Edgar Malfère), which is in some ways superior to the former book. It is the story of a young Parisian girl of the people, in love with a musician whom her parents, especially her father, do not wish her to marry. She runs away, is betrayed and abandoned, and returns to her home with a three months old child. This is the merest indication of the story which is very well told in a style strongly contrasting with that of other current novels here. M. Sandre writes with complete objectivity, without commentary of his own, presenting life as we see it.

This method is the opposite of the scientific psychology of Marcel Proust, who has developed the "interior monologue" to its extreme limits. A new edition of "Les Lauriers sont Coupés," by Edouard Du-jardin, has appeared lately and is interesting in itself and also because its author was a precursor of Proust, and admired by James Joyce. His book, in the interior monologue style then new to the public, passed without much recognition when first published.

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Who would have expected a cloth manufacturer at Roubaix and Elbœuf, in Northern France, to write such a book as "Ariel, ou la Vie de Shelley," which has had such resounding success on both sides of the ocean? Nevertheless, M. André Maurois is the man. During the war he was interpreter with the British Army in France, and gathered material for his books "Les Silences du Colonel Bramble" and "Les Discours du Docteur O'Gravy," and "Ariel," and who knows what other volumes, for he is one of the most active of French writers. His latest book is "Dialogues Sur le Commandement" (Grasset), crisp conversations between a young officer in the African section of the French Army and his former professor of philosophy who had served as a poilu. Their subjects of discussion are military chiefs, authority, the part played by chance in war, and kindred ideas, with here and there a good anecdote. It is needless to say that the book is well done, and entertaining if the subject appeals to the reader. Maurois is at work on a Life of Disraeli, among other things.

Henri Barbusse's new novel, "Les Enchainements" (Flammarion), has just been published in two volumes. It is a book of wider scope than his "Le Feu" and "Le Clarté," and represents the maturity of its author's talent. It is predicted that even his enemies will admire it.

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Books about Anatole France continue to appear. Nicolas Ségur publishes "Conversations avec Anatole France, ou les Mélanges de l'Intelligence" (Bibliothèque Charpentier), talks so unctuously reported that the reader has the impression of taking part in them. Then there is Marcel Le Goff's "Anatole France à la Béchellerie," (1914-1924), (Léo Delteil), presenting the illustrious author in his home in Touraine. With these comes also a brochure by Henri de Noussanne, entitled "Anatole France, Philosophe Sceptique" (Collection Les Clochers de France); and "Anatole France, est-il un Grand Ecrivain?" (Plon), by René Johanne, and a cheaper edition of Lahy-Hollebecque's "Anatole France et la Fem-

me" (Edition Baudinières). The great literary activity centering at present around France is generally adverse to his reputation.

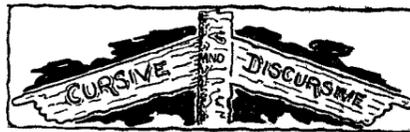
Lucien Romier, political editor of the *Figaro*, has just published a book lucid and helpful, with the title "Explication de Notre Temps" (Grasset). At a time when there is considerable mental confusion regarding the situation of France, M. Romier brings his knowledge of political economy, sociology, and historical learning to clarify thought. Naturally the book takes the French point of view. The author is a deputy in the opposition, and editor of *La Journée Industrielle*, to which he daily contributes a capital editorial. Before the war M. Romier was a professor, but during the conflict was called to a position requiring expert industrial research, to which he, thenceforth, devoted himself. His book is the result.

A volume which will prove to readers interested in the development of modern poetry in France is the newly published "Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poésie" (Kra), with selections ranging from Claudel to Apollinaire, Paul Valéry, Paul Claudel, André Gide, Francis Jammes, Mæterlinck, Maurias, de Montherlant, Péguy, Proust and many others. An admirable collection.

Julien Benda, author of "Belphégor," has just brought out his "Lettres à Mélisande" (Société d'édition Le Livre), in which he discourses upon philosophical topics to a young woman. The titles of his Letters indicate the character of this interesting, sometimes amusing book: "The Divisions of Philosophy: Mélisande's anger"; "Of a Method dear to Mélisande, or Intuition"; "Has Mélisande a Soul?"; "The War and the Responsibility of Mélisande," etc. One Letter defines love and passion and friendship, and translates from Socrates: "Comme le loup aime l'agneau, l'amant aime sa bien-aimée."

The first volume of Solomon Reinach's new work, "Monuments Nouveaux de l'Art Antique," with 250 illustrations (Kra), has just been published. The edition is limited to 1,200 copies, and the second and last volume will be issued some time this year. Reinach is the well-known author of "Apollo" and other authoritative works on art, and is a member of the French Institute.

A new method of criticism, subtle and clever, is that of Paul Reboux in his books entitled "A la Manière de . . ." (Grasset), of which a new volume is ready. In his imitations of the style of the writers whom he selects for subjects, he conveys their faults and virtues directly to the discerning reader.



By the PHOENICIAN

A SMALL card has popped up on our desk. It turns out to be the Golden Rule "Revised and Refined by Joy Wheeler Dow." It runs, "Do unto others not as you would have others do unto you but as others would have you do unto them." We applaud the revision! Such practice would make a happier world. \* \* \* The trouble is with most of us that we treat other people in a manner we think is good for them, not in a manner that we think they will really enjoy. \* \* \* Perusing the *Republican Watchman* of Monticello, N. Y., another oddity to which we have somehow fallen heir, we note that the proprietor is Adelbert M. Scriber. His assistant must be sub-scriber; so evidently the *Republican Watchman* had a certain circulation even before it started! \* \* \* Arnold Bennett introduces a new work of fiction "The Little Karoo" by Pauline Smith. This name—not Pauline's—is given to a plain in Cape Colony, a vast tract of African veldt. The tales included deal with the English and the natives, with Boer and Kafir. Miss Smith's father, born in China, migrated to South Africa, and there Pauline spent the most impressionable years of childhood. \* \* \* This is Miss Smith's first book. In *The Adelphi*, it may be remembered, *Middleton Murry* published her story, "The Pain." Letters from various parts of the world praised it. Bennett believes Miss Smith to be a novelist. "She hasn't written any yet," he affirms, "but she will." \* \* \* It is a joy to find anyone having as much fun with a book as *Hendrik Willem van Loon* has evidently had with his most recent work, "Wilbur the Hat." The bright colors of his hilarious drawings, the quiddities of the text, the vagabondage of the imagination, all make a perfect primer of Dubiety. \* \* \* We like very much the title of Mr. *Gerald Bullett's* fantasy, "Mr. Godly Beside Himself." And having just dipped into it we feel that we shall enjoy this tale of a Babbitt in a sort of Fairyland as soon as we get the chance really to sit down to it. \* \* \* Four one-act plays of *Wilbur Daniel Steele's* have been collected in a volume under the title of one of them, "The Terrible Woman," and are now published with an introduction by *Frank Shay*. Steele is a native American writer who is a comparative master both of the short play and of the short story. He works slowly and with a deep sincerity. His "The Giants' Stair" (in this volume) was, says Shay, "one of the outstanding successes of the 1924 season at Provincetown. He has provided us with another comedy

for next season in the script of "The Terrible Woman." The Provincetown Players have since turned to the production of longer plays, which may lure Steel to attempt more sustained flight. Meanwhile, we would call attention to him as a still comparatively young American playwright with unusual possibilities. \* \* \* Native biography and autobiography have certainly flourished within the last six months. "The Story of *Irving Berlin*" by *Alexander Woolcott* is a new addition to the collection. From Nickel-Kicker to "The Music Box" or was *John Alden Carpenter* correct when he went on record as saying:

I am strongly inclined to believe that the musical historian of the year 2000 will find the birthday of American music and that of Irving Berlin to have been the same.

\* \* \* We don't know, but we're all for Irving! \* \* \* The translation by *Arthur Machen* of "Casanova's Escape from the Leads" has been added to the Borzoi Pocket Books. It is Number 28, and *Carl Van Vechten's* "The Blind Bow-Boy" is Number 29. \* \* \* In "Father Abraham" *Irving* (still another Irving) *Bachelor* has brought to a close his informal and fictional life of Lincoln, begun in "A Man for the Ages." \* \* \* Posthumous by *Isabel Ostrander*, but all detective and mystery story hounds know what that name means—"The Neglected Clue"! And we sat up until 1.15 in the morning reading advance galleys of *Mary Roberts Rinehart's* "The Red Lamp," now running in the *Hearst* magazines. So we beat you to that by several months. We haven't stowed away so satisfying a thriller for some time. Watch for it! \* \* \* We understand that *Sinclair Lewis* expects to visit the Near East before summer. Europe may provide some of the background for his next book. \* \* \* The Oregon Writers' League report a literary map of Oregon got out by *J. K. Gill's* of Portland, Oregon. It is an interesting chart, the writers dotted over it range from *Francis Parkman* to *Hazel Hall*. \* \* \* *Roland Young*, of "Beggars on Horseback" fame, has caricatured "Actors and Others" most wittily and ironically in a book being brought out in Chicago by *Pascal Covici*, *Norman Bel-Geddes*, *Eddie Cantor*, *Sam Harris*, *Morris Gest*, *Baby Peggy*, *Bob Sherwood*, *Louis Wolheim*, *Claire Eames* and countless others have fallen to his pencil. \* \* \* We are interested in "The Stagers," a new organization at the Fifty-Second Street Theatre, whose general director is *Edward Goodman*, founder and General Director of the Washington Square Players. *Ruth Hale*, *Lucy Huffaker*, *Edna Kenton*, *Don Marquis*, *Deems Taylor*, *Margaret Wycherly* and others are the Play-Reading Committee. It seems to us that this new group grasps most of the right ideas concerning good plays and good production. Farewell!

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