A Letter from France

By Abel Chevalley

Of the four prizes awarded every year to novelists and novelists, these (Giraudoux, for instance, for Renaudot) are bestowed in France. Among them, the four saw the light of life—mystery, romance, action! Doubleday, Doran

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The hidden life that appears in external signs is hidden no longer, has entered the realm of action! And it is the function of the artist to reveal the hidden life at its sources: to tell us more about Queen Victoria than we knew, and that produce a character that is not the Queen Victoria written by Sir Walter Scott.

And he spoke in support of his opinion as an interesting and sensitive French critic who spoke about a novel that has been written ("Système des Beaux Arts" (N. F. R.).

Great is "Alain" and Foretny his prophet. But, if the novelist's business is to produce characters unlike reality, then his function is becoming progressively usurped by biographers.

Three great "Shops" have been, for the last three or four years, turning out "Lives" at the rate of a score a year. Henri Murcet's "Vie Amoureuse" are, I am afraid, read for the sake of the "story" rather than the "novel." Even Henri Murcet, when advised by the lady-in-Waiting that Princess Victoria (not yet Queen) was producing her stiff-legged "Tales" in support of laissez-faire economy—seen Harriet Martineau is said to have expressed, in her own sweet way, the hope that the doctrine, not the romance, was being enjoyed. Princess Louis Murci, who has written for Flammarion the "Life of the Great Céline," might, with more satisfaction, give expression to the same pious hope, if only there were any doctrine at all that livell of all emperors lives. But, as Shaw showed, if you will excuse a miserable pun, a sane Frenchman's attention, for the Great Céline was the exalted champion of quite another sort of laissez-faire from Harriet Martineau's and I can recommend her "Life" by Princess Louis Murci only to those who are able to read it neither for "novel" nor "story" but with a purely archeological detachment. To such as them it will be a source of delight.

Phil's collection of buff-colored biographies is published under the title "Le Roman des Grands Existences." Among the best are "Bibliothèque" by Henri Bériat, "Bouclier," by François Porché, and "Prince de Ligne," by L. Dumont-Walos, and since it is often deplored that Europe remains divided, the Life of Charles Joseph de Ligne, who was the last of the great pre-Revolution European, should be read with interest. Not once, but two or three times since the Roman, was Europe "unified" under a common enthusiasm. As Charles Joseph de Ligne, at the same time Austrian and French, Protestant and Roman, personified and represented at the same time the whole of the eighteenth century. Every time the unification of intellectual Europe, achieved at the top, was broken from under, through the "will of the people." Prince de Ligne died in 1843, just before the Era of Nationalities. Alfred de Vigny was then a literature in Louis XVIII's army. His biography by Paul Halard is faithful and quietly arresting.

Galliard's light green "Vie des Hommes Illustres" are lighter, greener, that is perhaps more readable but less substantial, than Phil's "Grands Existences." Galliard's stories seem more skilful in the first-named 'shop.' In Maurice's "Dirait-il," otherwise clever and excellent, I conceive him of the window and miss the inside. "Monceau," by Jean Prévot, "saignant," by Lassonde, illustrate the two methods applied to the same subject. "Henri IV," by Pierre de Lannoy, and "Queen of Beggars," by R. L. Lefèvre, are quite satisfactory, as far as they go. To the best of my knowledge, Galliard Collection is, I think, Paul Hazard's "Stolnfeld." Somewhat more a good biography and has found an excellent biography. So excellent that Paul Halard's book, though written for a large public, bids fair to become a school classic.

It would be unfair not to mention here M. Magnin's works on Madame de Lafayette, Madame de Bovary, Voltaire, and "Queen of Clubs" (Emile-Paul), and other less known but not less interesting people of the seventeenth century. His biographies are strictly historical, severely unromanced. In every one of them he breaks fresh ground and unearths new facts. He reconciles me with the Art of Biography.

Thommas Hardy has been buried in West Coker, not far from Lyme Regis, that is to say, in the midst of the English countryside. It is said that Mrs. Hardy has consented with reluctance to be buried in Lyme Regis, and since buried in the Abbey terraces cemetery, of which he did not approve. His heart, however, is to be buried in his native place.

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