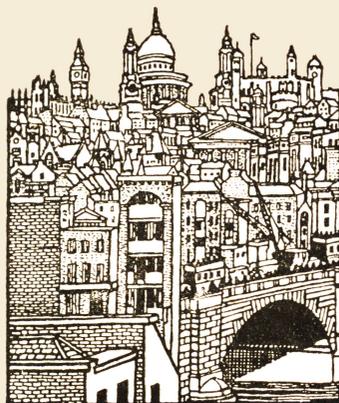


ART AND LETTERS

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JANUARY 1918
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ART & LETTERS

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RUBY GINNER

begs to announce that in

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DEFINITIONS TOWARDS A MODERN THEORY OF POETRY



HOUGH in all the other arts—painting, sculpture and music—the principles of creation and criticism have reached an intelligible definition, yet, in literature in general, and particularly in poetry and the novel, although some individual instances have reached a high attainment, we moderns as a whole grope blindly in our fog. The novel can dimly be seen assuming form in the work of Turgenev, D'Annunzio of the middle years and the supreme Henry James.

But where in the criticism of modern poetry, or even in the work of our more conscious poets, can we discern any inkling of an ideal of poetic form, or any recognition of æsthetic distinctions. The general confusion arises from a failure to comprehend the essential form of the poem. The following axioms are suggested as necessary dogmas :

- i. Form is determined by the emotion which requires expression.
Corollary: Form is not an unchanging mould into which any emotion can be poured.
- ii. The poem is an artistic whole demanding strict unity.
- iii. The criterion of the poem is the quality of the vision expressed, granted that the expression is adequate.

Corollary: Rhyme, metre, cadence, alliteration, are various decorative devices to be used as the vision demands, and are not formal quantities preordained.

Let us now define our terms:

Emotion or *ecstasy* is the response of the mind to form and colour of environment. Beauty is experienced by the senses—is the fulfilment of an æsthetic lust for colour and fragrance; which fulfilment *may* be a vision to be moulded by the intellect into formal beauty.

By *vision* we mean the recognition of emotions possessing an æsthetic value. We would emphasize “recognition”; this word is not used in its strictly psychological connotation. An emotion is “cognized” by any individual in the sense that it is experienced. A further process, that of the artist, is to relate this “cognition” to the æsthetic absolute, i.e. to “recognize” the emotion.

“*Sensual . . . æsthetic.*”—Vision, resulting from emotion, is obviously not an intellectual quantity. Nor, more obviously still, is it an ethical quantity. The only way in which intellect does enter into the visionary process is in a selective way, e.g., rejecting emotions that are of no æsthetic value, or the expression of which would be too imitative. Of course, we have long passed the day in which it is necessary to repudiate the doctrine that æsthetic creation demands an ethical sanction. Yet the artist who lacks a high philosophic basis is doomed to damnation, largely because he is precluded from that intellectual selection just mentioned which is so necessary to artistic perfection.

Value is determined by relation to the artist’s conception of absolute beauty, and determined by purely pragmatic judgment.

By *unity* we mean something akin to the classical dramatic unity, but modified to suit the vision instead of the drama. So, in place of the unities of time, place and action, we demand the unity of vision or idea. This unity has already been brought into practice by a considerable school of French poets, notably by the Unanimitists under the leadership of Jules Romain, and by Jean de Bosschère. It can be found, perhaps unconscious, in some modern English poets,—in Harold Monro’s “Trees,” and in some of the work of the Imagists.

Form is the completed architecture of the poem, possessing exact significance. It should always bear a conjunctive relation to the emotional quality of the vision, and cannot be predetermined without a sacrifice of unity or vitality.

This question only remains doubtful: Does significant expression end with the artist’s satisfaction, or should it necessarily recreate



C. R. W. Nevinson

Woodcut

the artist's vision in another mind? At any rate a relative question, for there is no equality of æsthetic perception, and the artist can always claim an aristocracy. And as the artist is essentially (psychologically) an egoist, his satisfaction is, in one sense, final.

Decoration. Much of the present confusion among poets and critics arises from an incapacity to distinguish decoration from the essential vision, even from an ability to see in decoration the essential element of the poem. This confusion is less explicable in that there is no difficulty, among artists and critics, to distinguish between decoration and vision in the other arts, music and painting. The theory of each art is, in the abstract, the same; only the material to be worked in differs. Decorations in poetry are rhyme, rhythm, metre, cadence, assonance and alliteration. Nothing so distinguishes and selects the poet as the appropriate use of decoration. The great majority of English and French poets use decorative devices without any sense of economy. For perfect command of decoration in the past we must seek among the poets of Greece and China and Japan. In our own day we may find it among the Imagists.

Rhythm and cadence are closely allied in nature. Rhythm is the modulated flow of stress within the phrase. The appropriate linking of rhythms within the poem makes the cadence of the poem.

Rhyme and metre are arbitrary decorations, and really belong to an age when the poem was indistinguishable from the ballad and written to be accompanied by music. In rhyme there also enters the rather childishly barbaric love of repetition and jingle—a musical rather than a poetic quantity.

Assonance and alliteration are obvious external decorations not needing any comment.

There is still another kind of decoration. By a process of association, words acquire a literary or historical significance which colours their exact meaning. Again, words are decorative in themselves by sound or a quality we may describe as *bizarrerie*. Unless they are complementary to the vision, these two types of decorative words are a blemish in the poem. Their decoration is too often redundant or superfluous, thus impairing the sincere expression of vision.

The over-use of decoration spoils the poem by sacrificing vitality, exactness and concentration—essential qualities of perfect expression. All these qualities are inter-related and are necessary to

prevent an indefinite, indecisive effect—such an effect not being so powerful in appeal to the æsthetic senses.

Reading these definitions into our axioms, we can now logically define the poem as follows :

The poem is the expression in words of the mind's vision, and expression, to be effective, must possess significant form, which significant form is achieved by unity, vitality, exactness, concentration and decoration.

Applying this definition to modern English poetry, very little of it will be found to conform to the logical principles then involved. Of the distinctive schools, only the Imagists approach any clarity of creative intention. But in one or two ways they, too, have gone astray. In their manifestoes they have renounced the decorative word, but their sea-violets and wild hyacinths tend to become as decorative as the beryls and jades of Oscar Wilde. And this criticism of very great importance can be made : They betray a pitiful lack of that æsthetic selection which is the artist's most peculiar duty. In his notes on the modern novel, Henry James has distinguished the "slice" of naturalism of the Arnold Bennett type, and damned it as inartistic. So these Imagists may be accused of expressing a "slice" of their emotions, and of not discriminating between the vision of purely æsthetic value and the vision of emotional value only.

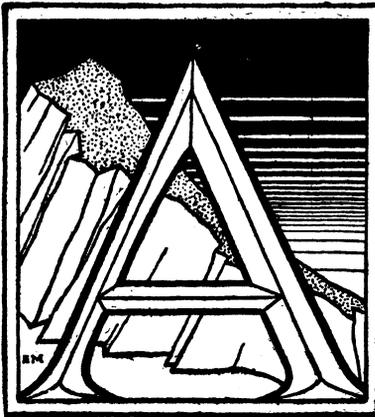
Finally, modern England may be "a nest of singing birds," but it is well for us to realise that the poem is still rather a primitive affair, and to make it otherwise there is a call for stern artistic devotion. We must shrink from the exotic and decadent, and from the sheltered garden of cultivated beauties. Beauty is a discipline, demanding all the intensity of a man's intelligence to present clear and undefiled the infinite quality in things. The artist's vision is the supreme value ; the expression of it is the supreme difficulty.

This, then, is the poet's duty and joy : To express the exquisite among his perceptions, achieving so a beauty as definite and indicative as the prints of Hokusai, or the cold grace of immaculate cameos.

HERBERT READ.

THE END OF THE CHAPTER

I.



As a man of the world, Norman Rae, at thirty-five, was well aware that all things which have a beginning must also have an end. His perception of this truth, however, had never yet impelled him to hurry towards a trouble he could dimly foresee. In previous affairs his experience had been that if some initiative were required for a commencement, the end could be safely left to come of its own volition. A man had no need to think about it, to prepare, or to arrange; he had only to wait for its arrival, maintaining the while a decent assumption of stoic fortitude. Life, he had remarked, seldom rose to the dramatic climax offered, as a matter of course, in works of fiction and on the stage. In the actual world a climax was a rarity; situations developed, they became more interesting and less so, sometimes they grew tiresome, but in the end they always petered out.

The awkwardness of his present predicament was that, almost for the first time in his life, Norman was in a hurry. On this occasion he could not afford to wait. Since first he met Nadine, hardly three months ago, matters had gone quickly, and instead of tidying up as he went along—his usual practice—he had simply gone ahead and left all the tidying up to be done afterwards. During the last few weeks he had become increasingly aware that among these arrears of tidying up were his relations with Gwenda. The note he had received that morning came not so much as a reminder of what was due to her—that had long been pressing on his consciousness—but rather as a stimulus to immediate action. As soon as he recognised her writing on the envelope Norman had begun to feel uncomfortable; and the friendliness of her words in no wise mollified his qualms. He knew the simplest and easiest of all the courses open to him would be to leave the letter

unanswered ; but to ignore it would be the act of a brute, and Norman was particularly anxious that his behaviour should wear no aspect of brutality. He was really very fond of Gwenda, and always would be, he thought, notwithstanding the intensity of his passion for Nadine. He certainly could not leave her remarkable little note unanswered.

"My dear Norrie," she had written, "Do you realise that it is more than a month since you have been to see me? And I am not aware of having done anything to offend you. A little bird whispers that you are carrying on a desperate flirtation with a Russian dancer. Is this the reason? Anyway, don't you think you owe me some sort of explanation? Bring it soon, and I won't be unkind. Your affectionate coz, Gwen."

The explanation was exceedingly simple, he reflected, and all he had to consider was how to offer it with civility. It was quite true that Nadine was a dancer, but it was not true that he had been flirting with her : he was in deadly earnest, and had given the ultimate proof of sincerity by asking Nadine to marry him. That was the explanation he had to offer, to be accompanied by the intimation that Nadine had accepted him. To himself, of course, it was highly satisfactory ; but it was not altogether hidden from him that it might appear less satisfactory to Gwenda.

Little as he cared in this matter for outside opinion, Norman was not unaware that his conduct might seem tantamount to an inversion of the social order. He had known plenty of cases where men, after "carrying on" with dancers, had settled down and married their cousins ; but he knew no precedent in his set for a man to "carry on" with a cousin and then settle down to marriage with a dancer.

The notion that he was departing from the customary was by no means displeasing to him. He rather plumed himself in secret on having, as it were, struck out a line for himself. The pity of it was that it did not make the explanations due to Gwenda any easier. And yet, in a way, he felt he had nothing to reproach himself with ; never, that he could remember, had he said a word to Gwen which implied that he would like to marry her. Whenever they discussed marriage it had been only to condemn it as a shackling and out-of-date institution. They were a thoroughly modern couple, excellent friends, willing to give and take on a fair basis, but claiming no proprietary rights in each other.



Drawing

S. J. Peplow

Norman flattered himself that he could analyse his state of mind to a nicety. He was not in the least afraid of anything Gwenda might do or say. His concern was not at all for himself, not even for Nadine—they were perfectly all right—it was purely for Gwenda. He was full of tender consideration for her; he was entirely a victim of altruistic sensibility, and that alone was the cause of his uneasiness. He certainly could not expect her to welcome his news, and this made it all the more necessary for him to convey the tidings with the least delay and with the utmost possible gentleness.

Though he had known Gwenda from his boyhood, their intimacy was of comparatively recent date. They had met infrequently as children, for her parents lived in the country, while he was a Londoner born and bred. But after she married Travers and settled in Kensington, he had seen a good deal of her and her husband. A not particularly pretty child had grown into an uncommonly attractive woman, winsome in appearance and witty in intellect—a rare combination—and Norman was disposed to make the most of their distant relationship.

Travers himself he had never regarded as a congenial spirit, and within a year or two of the marriage Norman had perceived that things were not absolutely all right between Gwenda and her husband. He was careful to avoid taking sides, however, and, scrupulously preserving a correct attitude, he succeeded in keeping in with both parties. But when the crash came he was under no obligation to conceal on which side his sympathy lay. Travers put himself out of court by openly running off with another girl, and vehemently announced his determination never to return to his wife. Norman had this from his own lips, when, as a conscientious friend of the family, he tracked the couple to their refuge on the South Coast and insisted on an interview with the runaway. That was two years ago, and since poor Gwen had neither father nor brother to look after her at this crisis, Norman had assumed the position of the nearest male relative, made himself her indispensable councillor and ally, and had done his best to unravel her domestic tangle.

Gwenda liked him from the first, and in her distress and bewilderment she instinctively turned to him for consolation. The part of consoler suited Norman very well, and he played it to perfection. He relieved her of all business worries, managed her affairs

with skill and address, was charming to her, and still more charming, if possible, to her baby daughter. Six months after the husband's desertion of his wife and child Gwenda was conscious that she would have viewed his repentant return with alarm and horror. She was also afraid that she more than liked Norman. It was about this time that they both found their cousinship a great convenience. They could go about together without causing much public comment; they were continually, but quite naturally, meeting each other in the houses of friends and relatives, and the assumption that they had business matters to discuss was a reasonable pretext for their spending an occasional evening in private conversation. These evenings at her house gradually became more frequent and regular till, without any definite arrangement, it was understood between them that Wednesdays were consecrated to this purpose. Norman usually arrived in time for dinner at seven-thirty, and after dinner his hostess was "not at home" to any chance caller.

This regular irregularity—if so discreet a meeting of cousins could be called irregular—had gone on with hardly a break till Norman met Nadine and fell madly in love with her. Losing all count of days in his infatuation, Norman awoke one morning to the fact that it was Thursday and that he had not been to Gwenda's the night before.

He had written her a little note of apology, alluding vaguely to a press of business and stating that he would try to call on her during the following week. But he had allowed that week and two others to slip by without making a move in Gwenda's direction. During that period he had become definitely engaged to Nadine, and elated by his betrothal he had found it easy to procrastinate in the matter of calling on Gwenda.

It was always there at the back of his mind that he really must see her and explain how things were with him, but he kept putting off the interview—which promised him an awkward quarter of an hour—and meanwhile he trusted that chance would help him out. Rumour already had done something, that much he could gather from the letter that lay before him, but he was not altogether sure that it had helped.

Turning it over in his mind, he remembered that the day was Tuesday and that he had an engagement that evening. If he called during the afternoon he was unlikely to find his cousin

alone. To write a letter was out of the question, for he could not conceive how to frame a nice one to meet the situation. He determined to send a wire and say he would call the next evening after dinner—he really could not face a dinner *tête-à-tête*. A telegram was the solution ; it was attentive, and it would not commit him to anything more than he was bound to do. The wording formed itself in his mind—“ Bringing explanation to-morrow after dinner 8.30 ”—and he went out almost gaily to inscribe it on a form at the post office.

II.

Punctually at half-past eight on the Wednesday night Norman presented himself at Mrs. Travers's house, and the trim parlour-maid at once showed him into the cosy morning-room where he had spent so many jolly evenings. The big chesterfield was pulled out opposite the fire, just where he liked it to be ; the brass kettle on its little stand was steaming in readiness for the preparation of his coffee ; and Gwenda, the most amazingly girlish matron in London, stood smiling to receive him.

“ Welcome, stranger,” she lightly opened, “ but why didn't you come to dinner ? ”

“ A self-denying ordinance,” replied Norman, gallantly kissing her hand. “ You see, I felt I deserved some punishment, and I thought I had better inflict it on myself rather than leave it to you.”

“ Oh, I should always let you off lightly,” she returned.

She went over to the side table and busied herself with the kettle and coffee-pot while Norman seated himself on the sofa. They were intimate enough to be happy in each other's company without perpetually chattering, and there was nothing strained in the silence that ensued. Norman was still gazing at the fire, wondering how he should begin, when Gwenda brought him his coffee. “ Well,” she remarked, “ you haven't congratulated me yet.”

“ Congratulated you,” he blankly repeated.

She laughed outright at the vacant stare of his bewilderment.

“ Yes, didn't you hear ? I've got my decree.”

The announcement brought home to him the disgraceful extent to which he had neglected her. He had known, of course, that the

case was coming on, but he had not realised that its hearing was so imminent. That he should have heard nothing till it was all over seemed to suggest that they had already drifted some distance apart. Norman pulled himself together and tendered tardy congratulations. "Really, I'm delighted to hear it. But when?"

"Ten days ago."

"And why on earth didn't you write and tell me?"

"Well, I thought I should be seeing you. Besides, you said you were busy."

"Did you have much bother with it?"

"No; it went through very quickly. You see, he didn't defend it—he couldn't. So now I've only got to behave myself for the next six months, and then I'll be a free woman once more."

"Oh, I'm sure you'll do that," said Norman gravely.

"I shouldn't like to be too sure," she laughed as she snuggled down beside him on the sofa. "I mustn't let you come here too often. I shall have to be very careful, you know. I thought perhaps that was why you haven't been to see me for so long."

"No, it wasn't that," said Norman slowly. "It was something else."

"Well, give me a cigarette and tell me all about it."

He pulled his case out and offered it to her, opened. "Russian!" she exclaimed, looking at its contents. "How long have you taken to smoking Russian cigarettes?"

"Oh, one must have a change sometimes."

"Yes, I know," she replied meaningly; "and not only of cigarettes. You men are all alike. I don't think I'll smoke, thank you. I've changed my mind."

"Try one, they're rather good," he insisted, still holding out the case.

"Does she like them?" asked Gwenda.

"She," he echoed.

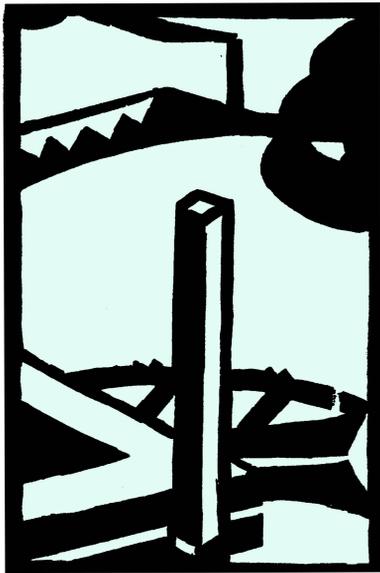
"Yes, your new friend, Miss What's-her-name, the dancer. You see, I've heard about your goings on."

"Ah, Gwen," he pleaded, "don't joke about it; it's serious, quite serious."

She straightened herself a little and looked at him searchingly, and now she was not smiling. "You mean you're in love with her?"

"Desperately."

She gazed on his serious countenance and seemed to find quaint-



Woodcut

E. McKnight Kauffer

ness in its earnestness, for it was with a smile, tender, compassionate, and not at all ironic, that she at last broke out, "Oh, you poor thing!"

Norman imagined he could follow her thoughts. She deemed him the victim of a hopeless infatuation; he was temporarily fascinated and bewitched, but by and by it would pass off and he would come back to her. Her commiseration was really too much for him; it was so hopelessly misplaced.

"Ah, don't pity *me*," he began; "pity her if you like, but not me." She sat up at this, and in her turn directed on him a look of blank inquiry. "You'll understand why," he went on, "when I've told you my news. Nadine has been so kind as to promise to become my wife."

"You are going to marry her?"

"Very shortly, I hope."

Norman wondered for a moment whether she was going to cry or to overwhelm him with reproaches. He hoped to goodness she wasn't going to make a scene. She had to be told, and now he had told her. He thought he had done it as delicately as possible, and now he was only anxious to get away. Meanwhile he could do nothing but watch Gwenda twisting and untwisting her handkerchief, and wait for her to speak.

"You were quite right," she said at last. "It is serious, very serious. You must be very far gone. I thought you didn't believe in marriage?"

"Oh, if we all acted on our beliefs——"

"Yes, Norrie, but marriage is always an experiment. I'm wondering how far yours is likely to be successful, whether you are really suited to each other. You've known her so short a time."

"Three months."

"It's not very long, is it? And I suppose she is a good deal younger than you are?"

"Nadine is twenty-two."

"Well, dear," she sighed, "I don't know what to say. I haven't met your Nadine, so I can't form any opinion about her, but you are certainly old enough to know your own mind. It sounds a wee bit hazardous to an outsider, but . . . I'm sure I hope you'll be very, very happy." Her voice trembled a little towards the close, but she pronounced the last word bravely, and her shining eyes left no doubt of her sincerity.

Norman felt crushed by the weight of her generosity, a generosity that could give, had given him everything and asked nothing in return. He was humbled by her forbearance, and could hardly trust himself to speak. "Thanks," he murmured huskily, "you are a good sort, Gwen, an awfully good sort. You know," he went on, "I've felt beastly mean in not telling you sooner, but if you knew the state I've been in the last few weeks you'd understand."

"That's all right, Norrie," she said softly, "I understand. When you're in love you can't help yourself, can you?" Norman looked at her with reverent awe. It seemed miraculous to him, but she really did understand.

"No, we can't help ourselves," he repeated. "We are all powerless in the grip of love. . . . You're a real pal, Gwen, the best that ever a man could have."

"Oh, I know," she said a trifle wearily, "I know, I've been through it."

"My dear," he protested with compunction. What exactly did she mean? Did she feel as if she were being deserted for the second time? He refused to dwell on the unpleasant thought and hurried into speech. "But you're all right now, aren't you? And, of course," he added, "we shall always be friends."

"Friends, yes, I hope so. But it will all be different now."

"Oh yes, in a sort of a way, I suppose."

"It's the end, Norrie, really, and you know it. Your wife won't want you to be running round here every week, and you oughtn't to want to when you're married."

"You must come to us instead," he replied with an attempt at cheerfulness. "I'm sure you'll like Nadine when you know her. It will be all right."

"I hope so, Norrie, for your sake. But it will never be the same again. The chapter's ended. . . . It's getting late, and I think you'd better say good-bye now."

"Not good-bye?"

"Yes, my dear, good-bye." They had both risen now, and she came close to him, placing her two hands in his.

"Gwenda!" he cried, drawing her to him.

"Oh go, Norrie, please go."

He looked down into her upturned face and was troubled by the tears glistening in her eyes. Bending his head he kissed her

gently and reverently on the lips. "Oh go, go now," she murmured.

"I'm going, dear," he whispered, "but I shall never, never forget."

While he groped for his hat and coat in the darkened hall he was still uncomfortably aware of his abasement, but as soon as he got out into the street the freshness of the night air gave him back some measure of self-respect. What was it Gwenda had said? "You couldn't help yourself when you were in love." That was it. He was sorry for Gwen, very sorry indeed, but he couldn't help being in love with Nadine. He had done what he could, and he had tried to be nice about it. Considering all the circumstances he thought he had behaved remarkably well, and so he had—for a man.

FRANK RUTTER.

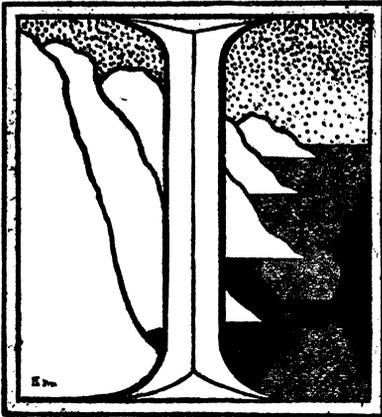
THE OLD LADIES

"WHAT are you doing, Old Ladies, down there by the shore,
By the grey sea shore?
Can your hearts be so light,
Can the sun shine so bright,
Are the pebbles so smooth as before
Your hair turned white?"

Yet there's something that made you smile down there by the shore,
By the green cragged shore . . .
Was it just the fine day?
Or that out from the bay
Came a whisper, that seemed to restore
Dreams half-faded away?"

GEOFFREY WHITWORTH.

THÉRÈSE LESSORE



OFTEN try to remember at what exact date, and by whose agency, the following theory of criticism began to be first put forth. "A critic," it was urged, "is not there to express on a work of art his own impression. He is there to find out what it is that the artist intended, and to criticise the work in the light of the artist's own intention." It is a comfortable theory for both the more lazy and innocent kind of critic, and for the artist to whom his trade is of more

importance than his development. The theory leads straight to the kind of writing that is not criticism, but an unavowed form of the interview, or of the cosy insinuations, pestilently peppered with patriotism, with which the agents-in-advance of our dry-goods and other stores are wont to "chat us," daily, "into a bronze."

The only point in my writing a criticism of the work of a younger colleague is precisely to elicit what impression that work—work of a certain date and a certain tendency—makes on a critic of my particular bias, of my particular origin, environment, etc.

The first picture that made me aware of Thérèse Lessore was what is, for these days, a rather extensive canvas "representing," if Mr. Clive Bell will overlook the expression, a vegetable market. It was hung in the Albert Hall, in the exhibition of the Allied Artists' Association, and, I think, opposite to Wyndham Lewis's magnificent "Kermesse."

It may be that I stumbled upon this fruit market at a crisis in my digestive history when the fruit that it had to offer was exactly what I needed. That was, it seemed to me, exactly the kind of residue that I had always desired, without success, to set free from the jumble called nature. It was impossible not to be profoundly elated at such a find. Subsequent experiences at the same hands did nothing but confirm and intensify the surprise and satisfaction of the first discovery, and have set me, not unnaturally, at the task of endeavouring to explain and justify my impression.



Study

Thérèse Lessore

A conversation that I had the other day with an able and intelligent student of mine will explain as well as anything one of the two elements that go to make the work of this young painter remarkable—the element of action in the figures represented, or presented, if you like. “I can’t see why you admire Thérèse Lessore so much. She can’t draw.” “That is just where you are mistaken. And your mistake is largely my fault. I have only been able to give you, up to now, a still-life education. I have been only able to teach what I know myself, and my treatment, and therefore yours, even of figure subjects, is only a still-life treatment. For this still-life treatment of living figures we have excellent warrant in the past, and of that warrant those that come after us will freely continue to avail themselves. But that still-life treatment does not in itself exhaust the possibilities of pictorial art. When you say that Thérèse Lessore cannot draw, you must ask yourself what it is that she is drawing. When you or I are drawing, we are trying, with more or less success, to give as complete an account of a street, with its windows, etc., or of a woman in repose, with all her fingers, and with all the folds in her gown. Thérèse Lessore is drawing, not the street or the woman, but—the impulse of bargain in a crowd, the concentration of a hearth which is, or is not, a home—the progression in suburban lanes of an elderly gentleman, uninterned maybe, of a reflective temperament—the fatigue and impatience of a man who has to wait for his change, leaning on his bicycle. Go home and try to draw me one or all these things, and then tell me whether you think Thérèse Lessore cannot draw. I need not say I shall not attempt them myself.”

But when I had said this I had only said a part of what there is to say. Thérèse Lessore is a designer of genius. (I have defined genius as the instinct of self-preservation in a talent.) And her genius leads her with security to seek the elements of her design in the infinite thick lexicon of nature. Those three very people may not have met around that very hearth, but the painter has seen feet tread a carpet that was somehow thus. It is thus they somehow should have met. These contrasts in their movement appear inevitable. An Italian word for dispute is only our word “contrast.” A gentle light has bathed some grey wall just so, in which that white mantelpiece is set. Just that and no other ornaments were on that mantelpiece, and I have dreamt that

odd insistent spray of jade, or flowers, from that odd, square pot. "What the girl said to the soldier" has been a subject of frequent speculation ever since I can remember. In this picture we have the girl and the soldier. How adipose and slouching and common and content she is in her blouse, and how gallant and absorbed is he, in their box at the "Parthenium"! And it is of this genius for design that springs the astonishing quality of the work as drawing and as painting. The co-ordination of each picture is complete before a touch is placed on canvas. Economy of means, perhaps the surest source of artistic enjoyment, is the result.

The instrument of oil-paint contains two distinct resources, the combination of which alone can display to the full the abundance of its wealth and the extent of a region in which no other medium can touch it. When Vasari spoke of oil-painting as *una gran commodità* he had uttered a half-truth. The two resources are: firstly, the tones selected and compared as opaque; and secondly, their effect as spread thinly, and playing thus a semi-transparent rôle, on the colour of a given preparation. This preparation, that serves as a diving-board, may be, as with Franz Hals and David and Constable, a mere coat of havana, or it may be, as with Renoir, the ex-painter-on-china, a coat of white. It may be a coat of grey as with Whistler, or it may be an under-painting in one of the innumerable cameos, from the cold-grey of Rubens and Hogarth, to the vermilion and prussian-blue of the "dead-colours" of the beginning of the nineteenth century. But it is on the interaction of such grounds with the painting proper that the complete master of the medium relies. To use the housepainter's expression, the ground "grins through." And the artist, in giving his final coat of colour, never quite lets go the hand of his preparation. And inasmuch as Thérèse Lessore has, from the first, suspected the marriage of these two resources, she must be counted to-day as one of the few complete painters of her generation.

WALTER SICKERT.



Paul Nash

Black Park Lake

TURGENEV

“WHEN I find players speaking with such skill and delicacy . . . and with remarkable subtlety and conviction of expression; and when I see these artists, simply because their wigs are not up to Mr. Clarkson’s English standard . . . denounced . . . by gentlemen who go into obedient raptures when M. Mounet Sully plasters his cheeks with white and his lips with

vermilion, and positively howls his lines at them for a whole evening with a meaningless and discordant violence . . . —Well, what then?” Well, these remarks, which are culled from Shaw’s quite glorious “Dramatic Opinions,” are simply the whole truth concerning Turgenev. Everything that one can say is simply an expoundment and expansion of these remarks—and in answer to their enigmatical “What then?” I would dolorously reply that Turgenev has been dead for more than thirty years; that interest in him is a needle in a bundle of hay; that the present is probably the prognosis of the future; and from a public which pursues the cult of the cinema, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, and other allied and abominable manifestations, there is naught better to expect. In about five hundred years, perhaps, it may appreciate a reincarnated Turgenev; in about five hundred years it may conceivably have compassed that terrific stride, or rather, that painful upward progression, since there are no artistic seven-leagued boots. I mention the possibility, but without emphasis—it is an improbable possibility. The wig of Turgenev is not up to Mr. Clarkson’s English standard, and thereby is he discountenanced.

I appreciate the public predicament, because it was once my own. I cherish the most salutary recollections of that period when, aged eighteen, I first read Turgenev; when my symptoms, I imagine, were precisely those of the man in the street. I *was* the man in

the street, and having weltered in that limbo, close beside him, I am able to command a sympathetic insight into his case. I read Turgenev, and I came out of that ordeal certainly not wiser, but most distinctly sadder. I was bound fast in a mild, impalpable, immovable bewilderment, which impeded me as a fog, which made me vaguely resentful—shall I say subconsciously inconvenienced?—because, in a numb, dumb, and die-rather-than-tell-it fashion, I had been made to feel small. My betters had apprised me that I ought to like Turgenev, and, having been richly dowered by Nature with the faculty of knowing what I like, I was unable to disguise from myself that Turgenev, upon the whole, tasted rather bad. Actually, there was an absence of taste about him, that was the disconcerting circumstance. I was confronted by a painful, a disturbing nullity: he was not spiced, he was not sweetened, he had no elaborated histrionic festoons of castles and cherubs and other irrelevancies in white and pink icing. The only clear fact about him was that he seemed, at eighteen, to be somewhat cold and rather quiet, to be hedged by a quite impassable reserve. He refused to shout, and, having been thoroughly deafened by the vociferations of more caper-cutting and superficial authors, my ear-drums were truly in no state to discriminate, to welcome the finer modulations. What there was in Turgenev—and there is everything—was too cultured, too subtilised to arouse my raw and undisciplined perception of the ideal in art.

Time passed, and I commenced to assimilate the principles of my betters. I added, inevitably, to my education, my experience, and the day came when I heard praise of Turgenev, and was not therefore the prey of fear and suspicion. I knew. I had received according to that which I was able, but I retained, nevertheless, the acutest recollection of that benighted epoch when I had been blind, bewildered; when my sole difference from the man in the street had been that I was bitterly ashamed, sincerely penitent, aware that I must begin forthwith to lead a better life.

He, poor dear, is unashamed, and, since literature is no concern of his, is no more to him than sanitary inspecting, or keeping house, or being a useful member of society is to me, I really do not see what can be done for him. Turgenev is a nightingale, high in the highest tree of a somewhat inaccessible thicket; indubitably a barrel-organ in Lower Marsh is easier to get at, and

more immediately compelling in regard to noise and grandiloquence. The man in the street is content ; and you can't reform a person who obstructs you by glorying in his state—not under five hundred years. I am darkly afraid that this glorying is really necessary, and that admiration of Turgenev is not consonant with a strait and desperate tussle with penury, nor yet a rapacious competition for "appearances," those inspiring alternatives which light the earthly pilgrimage of the lower and upper middle-class. There is a microscopic minority, the middle middle-class, and here art's votaries are segregated. Instead of the struggle for bread, they pursue the struggle for art, and their heart knoweth its own bitterness. It knows also that the modern artistic turpitude is immensely aggravated by modern economic conditions.

Art, of course, may mean almost anything, according to your allowance of fundamental decency. To Turgenev it was always the refining element, the something-beautiful-to-live-for. And beauty with him is so vivid and salient that its great light blinds him to that which he dismisses as comparatively unimportant phenomena. You have a fugitive vision of the horrible and the unpleasant in his novels, because what he wrote is veritably a mirror of the cosmos ; but usually these are the wild beasts which prowl and howl and mutter in the uncharted desert which commences just beyond the confines of his tale. As Conrad says in his preface to Mr. Garnett's book : " His creations . . . are human beings, not strange beasts in a menagerie, or damned souls knocking themselves about in the stuffy darkness of mystical contradictions."

The "Encyclopædia Britannica" is amusing anent Turgenev. It blandly observes that he "may be considered one of the great novelists, worthy to be ranked with Thackeray, Dickens and George Eliot." But he was so many leagues ahead of them ! His writing, which was contemporaneous with theirs, had a virtuosity, a brilliant technical excellence which their generation, in England, simply had not the conception of, and which our novelists required several decades of hard work, of Sandow-training, to catch up with. (The other day I read Galsworthy's early novel, "Villa Rubein." In it he has "caught up" so successfully that he has done a counterfeit presentment of a Turgenev. The lineaments are not as strong, but the feeling, the technique, the whole thing is an astonishing example of what

a disciple can manage if he give his mind to it.) English Victorian art, as we know, was absolutely an outward and visible sign of England's wax flowers and horsehair sofas; we also know that this ditch-water period was an extremely vigorous one in France and Russia. Therefore, why, oh, why again, does this assured and accredited organ compare Turgenev with Thackeray, Dickens, and George Eliot?

They all had excellent hearts, they all had the phrenological bump of language most inordinately, dreadfully developed—on the quantity side more than the quality—and they were all a perfect wilderness of gifts and graces. They were only stultified because, in adolescence, they hadn't studied gardening. Turgenev had the wit to prune his roses, and so made them bloom eternally. He also had a sense of fitness, and did not expect roses and dandelions and turnips to express their individualities side by side, as was the prodigal and slovenly custom of the big Victorians. The gods gave Turgenev a tremendous feeling for design; he had none of the sad, mad, bad old ways that were indulged in over here.

Pre-eminently, he had balance; that, together with the trifle that he is almost faultless, has founded his pedestal upon a rock. For balance is the rarest attribute, the last kiss of the Muse upon the forehead of the Called. It makes him the Chosen. Think!—and you will perceive that most great writers are over-developed in one or more directions, very much under-developed in others. The colossal Dickens fell by the toffeeified tendency of his pathos. George Eliot, as Stevenson said, was "a high and very dry lady," with a disposition to break out in sermons, without provocation (I am not yet such a supercilious fool as to deny her some things that inspire affection; there are points about "The Mill on the Floss.") But it is balance that we are discussing). Thackeray—the greatest of these—would have ascended far higher if he had not scamped his characterisation; often it is reprehensibly conventional. He never thought his women home, and though this was doubtless due to the fact that so few women had thought themselves home, Turgenev, who was an all-round prophet, had sensed the part that they would sustain, and foreshadowed it repeatedly in his novels. It is his women who have the courage of action, the men who vacillate, who let the golden moment pass.

His men are typical Russians, and typical human beings as well, but—and herein is rooted their uniqueness—they are also abstrac-



Drawing

Thérèse Lessore

tions. In every one of the six great novels there is a figure which typifies the hopes and failures, the virtues and vices of a prevalent Russian class ; they are Russia personified, and they evolve continually, as Russia evolved during Turgenev's career ; each novel, indeed, takes this dominant figure a stage farther upon the road.

Turgenev was deeply concerned with the gloom and turbulence of the social order into which he had been born ; his masterpieces were bred of it. His earliest work, "The Annals of a Sportsman," was as a consuming fire, before which serfdom withered ; it provoked the *ukaz* which enfranchised Russia, it occasioned the commencement of fame. From that time he never slackened, the fires of his indignation did not slumber, and truly, there was much to be indignant about ! His pen was as a sword in the hands of the strong, and it was wielded perpetually against error and injustice.

Yet there are no polemics in his work : this conviction, the consciousness of Russia's plight, is welded into them, it is of their marrow, they contain no propaganda, which is a vampire at the throat of art.

And I reiterate, in my red-hot and quenchless enthusiasm, that they are the fine flower of the artistic. Their extraordinary concentration and condensation is unapproached by any other writer. Whilst his English contemporaries were wearying you and making you an ungentle reader, Turgenev, occupying a mere fraction of their sprawling immensity, managed to say things more vivid, true, and memorable than they ever could. His novels were perhaps one-twelfth part as voluminous, and he knew of two cardinal and classic principles—that of centralising the interest, that of maintaining the tale in the same convention. His balance, his sense of design, before insisted on, would let him do no other.

He was, of course, a realist, but though he repudiated the effete scaffolding of the thorough-going romantics, he equally denied the literalism of the French realists. He divined their artificiality, their quite imperfect notion of the truth ; he was sated by their accretion of unselected details. He complained : "It seemed so confusedly, as though I had a heavy feeling over the epigastrium. . . . It cannot be said that they have not talent, but they do not follow the right way." And some part of Turgenev's perfection is inherent in his being so precisely the happy medium. He steered safely between the two terrible dangers—that of pre-

tending that all things terrestrial are rosy, cheaply heroic, and rhetorical, because you consider that it would be nice if they were; and that of reducing everything to a dead level, to a hard and frigid species of system, as inflexible as Euclid; because, such being the mode of the moment, you are enabled thereby to look dexterous; whilst in reality, you have attained the merest manual proficiency. Turgenev never invented a person, a scene, or a story that was not as true as your next-door neighbour; but a vital part of his realism was that admixture of Oriental sadness, fatalism, and fantasy which transmutes it, finally, satisfactorily, into poetic realism.

He was essentially simple, unaffected: it never occurred to him to simulate the quite discreditable absence of a heart, of those primal and universal moral qualities which animals often possess in a state of high cultivation. His morality, naturally, was not literal, any more than his observation, or his attitude to existence. His judgments have everywhere a breadth, a freedom, a fineness which has no affinity with any arbitrary standard; he was too great to have even a perception of cant, of Philistinism, of that hideous social hypocrisy which sheds the life-blood of so many susceptible artists. It was too small for him to see.

And, as his head and heart dwelt together in harmony (which is a novelistic feat), he was enabled to produce some of the most moving and wonderful pathetic situations that have been done. He infuses into them an imaginative intensity, a philosophic insight which is incomparable, which is genius itself, and which makes of you both a spectator and a participator. He is almost unique in that self-control, that sense of fitness which saves him invariably from ranting at the climax. By the time that he arrives there, technique and inspiration have together done their task; and the effect is won without snivelling, without heroics, without a brass band. He seems indeed to stand aside, but we know that whilst he was "getting there," Turgenev was administering the most powerful stimulant to the imagination of the reader; which, once at the climax, has thus become receptive, and in a position to ascertain things for itself.

His love-scenes have been vaunted by every critic. Certainly they are marvellous—but I do not think that he was really so clever to have written them. Why? Surely, if a writer live in the fable—as he must—and if he have the bump of language, they should prove the easiest part. The difficulty is in the long and arduous

preparation, the working of the personages into that condition of effervescence, that boiling-pitch when the love-scene is spontaneously generated. The working-up, the consistently making them say and do that which is artistically regenerate, is admittedly an intricate performance ; but Turgenev's love-passages are radiant because he neither tottered nor stumbled on the way, because his strong right arm upheld his people, his situations, his plot, exactly where he wanted them to be ; by the time, surely, that he had escorted them to the haven of the love-scene, they were borne safely upon the irresistible wave of his creative force, and were practically capable of conducting their confessions without his paternal promptings ! It occurs to me that Turgenev's love-scenes are inherent in that moral beauty which was himself. His facility in this direction is much respected by that segment which, being itself unemotional, has managed to confuse the issues, is so befogged that the harbouring of a heart appears something pyrotechnical and heaven-sent. (Some modern critics are quite peculiarly, suspiciously reverent over Turgenev's love-scenes.)

It will be said that I have neglected Mr. Garnett's book.* I have, purposely. For I have qualms : the affair of adjusting Mr. Garnett's shoe-latchet would seem to me an impertinence. His book is the last word. It explains the case finally, inimitably ; it is proficient, imaginative, and constructive criticism, and will probably remain the standard work upon this subject. Mr. Garnett adores Turgenev, because Turgenev is one of those personalities whom you either adore or are indifferent to ; he comprehends the worth and weight of his topic. But he is not thereby carried away : he gushes not, neither walks into any of those traps which most critics adopt for their permanent residence. He has knowledge. Conrad also, in this Foreword, says precisely the right things.

These reflections do not aspire to be more than promiscuous, for the subject and its ramifications are alarmingly infinite—*Art and Letters* is finite. Life also is but a breath, broken perpetually by alarums of air-raids and excursions into war-work, which make Turgenev about as vast a theme as Central Africa. One might as well attempt a descriptive survey of Central Africa—also, there is this deterrent circumstance ; Livingstone arrived there before anybody else. Garnett was the earliest pilgrim and pioneer in Turgenev ;

* TURGENEV. By EDWARD GARNETT. Collins. 6s. net.

and he appears to have made the just remark in every conceivable connection.

It is hard for Turgenev that he can only be received by the highly cultured; that to the average reader, who, after all, is for ever the bull's-eye that the man of genius aims at, he is still something esoteric, a Secret Doctrine. There are reasons. His extremely fastidious and sensitive temperament made him austere reserved and restrained: that is as unpopular in literature as in life. Furthermore, his passive attitude to the knock-out blows of Fate is un-English, and the English reader is repelled thereby: it is typically Russian, it is usually diagnosed as Oriental; yet, in its place, it is beautiful, and rather wise, and in our own time we have seen his certainties fulfil themselves. Out of chaos a new Russia will come, had to come. Turgenev was a prophet—and Mr. Garnett's book shines as a good deed in a naughty world.

VIVIEN FLANDERS.

SIC TRANSIT

WHILST I was at the wars you died
And left me all alone,
You stole so gently out of life
Is it to death you've gone?

Whilst I was in the tumult's din
You rode the bosomed sea—
Oh dear, delightful, candid child,
Put in a plea for me.

H. AUSTIN PETCH.



Charles Ginner

ROOFS

ABOVE the vibrant town,
Above its dull clamour,
Roofs like ragged blades
Break into the moist golden glow,
With mosaic of lustreful tiles
And slates that gleam
Metallic.

Outward from me
Electric wires traverse and ray :
I sit like a spider in its web
And tranquilly survey
The slanting planes that round me swirl
In iridescent aureole.

The first pale stars will soon illumine
The dying scene till sole
Ethereal silhouettes pierce the gloom.

HERBERT READ.

NOTES ON BOOKS

GOD THE INVISIBLE KING. By H. G. WELLS. Cassell. 5s.

AN astonishing success in the difficult art of prophecy appears to have tempted Mr. Wells into the adventure of explaining God. Frankly, what Mr. Wells has to say about the Deity interests me very little. His creed is partly a restatement of the doctrine of Immanence, partly a half-hearted acceptance of the system of Dualism, and largely—on the negative side—a passionate impatience with the dogma of the Trinity. All this has been argued before. When Mr. Wells informs us that “it was not Christianity that took possession of the Roman Empire, but an imperial adventurer who took possession of an all too complacent Christianity,” he merely repeats a truth which Gibbon, in his more polished manner, long ago established. When he attacks the Church, “with its sacraments and its sacerdotalism,” as “the disease of Christianity,” he is poaching on preserves in which Samuel Butler sniped with greater glee and more deadly effect. However, as there are a great many people to-day who read Wells though they do not—and more fools they—read Gibbon and Samuel Butler, there can be no harm in a popular author abstracting and reissuing some fragment of the wisdom of the ages. Besides, to be fair, Mr. Wells does not profess to be making any new contribution to theological thought. He merely claims to be defining a faith vaguely held by the intelligentsia of many lands, a faith that would appear to be a sort of half-way house between orthodoxy and disbelief. How widely these rather foggy convictions are held is a matter for debate, because an ever-accumulating body of evidence tends to prove that the more intelligent minds of our day adhere either to a sturdy rationalism or to some tentative spiritualist theory.

Nevertheless there is ample justification for reading this book. Mr. Wells may not always be right, but he rarely fails to be entertaining. Many of the things said by the way are worth treasuring, and a very plausible explanation of the unsatisfactoriness of orthodoxy is contained in his discovery that “the entire history of the growth of the Christian doctrine in those disordered early centuries is a history of theology by Committee.” Evidently Mr. Wells—possibly, like so many of us, by painful experience—has found out the Committee system. He gets justifiably and righteously angry

about it. "God deals only with the individual for the individual's surrender. He takes no cognisance of committees." Here Mr. Wells begins talking, as we might say; but why drag in God? The matter could be dealt with quite effectively on the ethical plane, and there is no book of which this country is in greater need at the present moment than a really thoughtful work on the Cause, Prevention and Cure of Committees. There is only one successful Committee known to history, and the Committee of Public Safety only worked well while each member had his own job and stuck to it. So soon as it began trying to act in concert, the members very naturally became unendurable to each other, and, not being Englishmen and therefore susceptible to weak compromises, the Committee came to an ideal end by the successive decapitation of its members. I may be setting Mr. Wells too grave and onerous a task, but the world would certainly be his debtor if he would throw off even a little monograph on "Committees: Their Folly and Futility." The material now at his disposal is simply enormous.

FRANK RUTTER.

THE TALES OF ANTON TCHEHOV: translated from the Russian by CONSTANCE GARNETT. Vols. I-IV. Chatto and Windus.

A COMPLETE review of the art of Tchegov will be possible when the eight volumes of this series are complete and the plays are considered at the same time. This will be done on some future occasion. Meanwhile, we would draw attention, not merely to the skill of Mrs. Garnett and the enterprise of the publishers, but more so to the art of Tchegov himself. He is probably the most permanent of the later Russians, and is so because, although a realist with the worst of them, he is nevertheless conscious to a considerable extent of æsthetic values. Superficially he is of the "slice of life" school: examine him more carefully and you will find some purposive selection in his "slice"—purpose to an artistic end. Tolstoy praised "The Darling," but naturally for wrong reasons. Tchegov had no ethical purpose in this particularly fine creation; he wished to give, and has given, us a "figure" of some artistic significance. But apart from this purposive selection, Tchegov shows such a tender appreciation of natural beauties that, at his best, he can

equal Turgenev, to whose genius he would, no doubt, admit a debt. He limits himself in a naturalistic way, and even is addicted to rather a sexual view of life ; but his limitations may be the making of his distinctive art. Usually the reader drops casually into the inner life of some provincial ménage and follows the ordinary, if not very serene, course of events for a while, and then as casually makes his exit, taking with him only a sense of having experienced something of human value, or of having seen some hidden beauty.

H. E. R.

MARCHING ON TANGA. By CAPTAIN F. BRETT YOUNG.
Collins. 6s. net.

THE romance of modern war is found not in its essential character, but rather in the approaches to it—in marches, bivouacs and patrols. The inner heart of it remains always a horror. And when you get to the fringes of this war, where artillery and aerial reconnaissance are reduced to negligible quantities, fighting tends to be more completely a matter of marches, bivouacs and patrols, and to possess highly romantic potentialities. It is these potentialities that Captain Young has delved from his experiences with the East African campaign, and made into a book as thrilling as any full-spirited soul could wish for. And not merely thrilling, but even delicately beautiful. Captain Young has a sensitive appreciation of the emotional value of an unexplored land, and the fellowship of a body of men achieving nobility in its inhuman solitude :

“ . . . I thought of the strangeness with which our immense consciousness, of ten thousand men, had been flashed across the vast and sombre vacuity of these tracts of rolling bush and plain over which the shadow of a man's spirit had never moved before ; of how that consciousness had traversed it, as a dream wanders through a man's mind in sleep. But, though we do not always know it, the submerged memory of the dream lingers. And, in the same way, it seemed to me that though the forest tangles of the Pangani close above the tracks we made, and the blown sand fill our trenches and drift above the graves of those whom we left sleeping there, that ancient, brooding country can never be the same again, nor wholly desert, now that so many men have lived intensely for a little while in its recesses.”

H. E. R.

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