

a book of the greatest scope: *The Road of Torture*, a novel which is now being published in the Russian review, *Contemporary Notebooks*. The action takes us from the beginning of the war to the beginning of the Revolution. Numerous persons, drawn from the most diverse social classes of Russia, move through the action, of which the declaration of war, the offensive in Galicia, the flight of the hero from an Austrian prison-camp, the murder of Rasputin, and the upheaval of 1917, are the principal incidents. The book is a monument erected to the martyred people, an effort to untangle the causes of the catastrophe; and it is also a novel of adventure, full of surprises and striking episodes.

The Road of Torture is not a first book, for the third Tolstoy has already published many a novel, captivating alike for the interest of a story well told and for the beauty of its style. His

heroes of everyday life, grotesque and ludicrous as they are, the last wearers of gentlemen's cast-off clothing, eccentrics indulging their manias, win for him a place apart among Russian novelists. It is even possible that *The Road of Torture*, once it is finished, may carry Tolstoy to the head of the literary movement of exiled Russia.

I trust that, in this very summary study, though striving to avoid fastidious classifications, I have asserted the essential facts, whose more extended analysis would serve to give a complete picture of the Russian literature of our day. I have abstained from all prophecy; but who can doubt the inexhaustible resources of the Russian genius? The day, no doubt, is near at hand when the soul of Russia will again burst into flower amid the rubbish; when Lazarus will break from the grave and rise to light and liberty.

MARK AKENSIDE, POET AND PHYSICIAN

BY EDMUND GOSSE

From the *Sunday Times*, November 13
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SOMETHING very subtle links the practice of literature to the profession of medicine. What it is I cannot tell, but the fact subsists that if you see a surgeon or a physician meditating alone, there are ten chances that he is busy composing a sonnet to one chance that an engineer or a bank manager or a brewer is doing the same. It is no new thing: from early times the doctors have been apt to be men of letters.

Their profession has two faces, as was said of Rabelais, one turned to time, one to eternity, and the author of *Pantagruel* was the type of the literary physician. He abounds in all countries, but with us in England he has been particularly frequent, from Lodge, whose *Rosalynde* inspired the *As You Like It* of Shakespeare, down to the present Poet Laureate, whom I remember forty years ago on the staff

of St. Bartholomew's. Keats is the most illustrious example, but there are many others.

It was, however, in the eighteenth century that the literary doctors flourished most freely. They began with Sir Samuel Garth and his famous poem of *The Dispensary*, and with Blackmore, who rhymed to the rumbling of his chariot-wheels. They included Mandeville, who wrote *The Fable of the Bees*, and Arbuthnot, everybody's physician and author of *Law is a Bottomless Pit*, and Armstrong, whose verses were excellent, but are said to have 'marred his practice as a physician.' The poet's frenzy is thought by patients to be incompatible with a good bedside manner. But of all the literary doctors who adorn the history of our country, the one in whom the gifts of literature and science were most nicely balanced was Mark Akenside, whose two hundredth birthday was celebrated, not, I am afraid, very enthusiastically, last Wednesday.

His real name was Akinside, and so it is printed on some of his earlier publications. But when he came up to London to practise he changed it to Akenside. The original form I suppose he felt to be a little embarrassing for a family practitioner. He was the son of a respectable butcher of the Presbyterian persuasion. When the poet was seven years old, his father's cleaver, with which, I am afraid, he was playing, fell on his foot, and cut it so severely that he was lame during the rest of his life. It is said that this misfortune constantly brought before his mind the lowness of his birth, about which he was always too sensitive.

Mark Akenside was born at Newcastle-on-Tyne on November 9, 1721. The principal forces of what we call the Age of Queen Anne were in full movement, though Addison was already dead, and Prior dying. A new

school was just beginning to be heard of in the hands of Young and Thomson. The butcher's son at Newcastle was exceedingly precocious, and before he was sixteen years of age gave signs of an originality which deserved attention, and should have developed along more favorable lines than it actually did. If the original edition of *The Virtuoso* did not exist with the date, April, 1737, printed upon it, it would be difficult to believe in its genuineness, since it is the earliest of all the pseudo-Spenserian imitations which were presently to become so common and to influence poetic taste so vividly. The astonishing butcher's boy employs the difficult stanza of *The Faerie Queene* with complete success; and this is a sign of that resistance to the all-absorbing heroic couplet which was to mark almost the whole career of Akenside.

It is a sad fact that *The Virtuoso* promises a better poet than Akenside, with all his ambition, ever contrived to become. The subject of it is a satire, or skit, directed, with juvenile impertinence, against the growing interest in physical science, and this by itself is odd in the first work of a boy who was to become a distinguished man of science. He jeers at a savant who

could tellen if a mite were lean or fat,
And read a lecture o'er the entrails of a rat.

How many lectures was not Akenside himself doomed to deliver over entrails! What can have inspired him — since Pope's sneering description of the pedants who approached the Goddess of Dullness, each with 'a nest, a toad, a fungus, or a flower,' was not published until four years later? Akenside was now, we gather, preparing, somewhat against his will, to become a surgeon; for in another poem printed in 1737, a blank-verse rhapsody called *The Poet*, he describes himself as sur-

rounded with 'chests, stools, old razors, and fractured jars,' in a high state of juvenile indignation. He must have been looked upon as a prodigy, for the Dissenters of Newcastle-on-Tyne presently clubbed together and sent him to Edinburgh to study for their ministry. He had, however, no spiritual vocation, and about 1739 we find him entered as a medical student. Next year, being nineteen years of age, he was elected a member of the Edinburgh Medical Society, and proudly signed himself 'Surgeon.' He was now well started on his double career.

It was as a poet that he first earned distinction. The curious may examine, with stupefaction at the precocity they reveal, his successive publications. In October, 1739, his 'Odes' began to appear in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and we have to notice that this was at a date many years before either Gray or Collins reintroduced that form of lyrical expression. This, I think, is a feature of Akenside's work which has never been acknowledged; he was an innovator, an inaugurator, at this moment of crisis in the evolution of English poetry. He completed his medical studies in Edinburgh at the age of twenty, for such studies were early concluded in those days, and he returned to Newcastle to practise as a surgeon.

We may suppose that he found little professional occupation at first, for he seems to us absorbed in poetical writing. But already a kind of icy formality of speech, which was soon to paralyze his genius, was beginning to take hold of him. His *Ode For the Winter Solstice*, which was separately published in 1740, is an elegant production, but so flowery and artificial in diction that the mind slips over it and gets no grip of the thought, which, moreover, on close examination, is found to be too slight for such exuberance of language.

But the young surgeon persisted, and in 1744, when he was in his twenty-third year, he published anonymously a quarto which created a great sensation, and placed its author immediately among the recognized poets of our language. This was *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, which is still spoken of with respect, though read with increasing difficulty. The purpose of this elaborate didactic poem, which had occupied Akenside, it is said, for several years, was to lay down principles in the constitution of the human mind which account for every species of pleasurable emotion caused by natural scenery or by any of 'the elegant arts.' Philosophically, Akenside is a faint forerunner of Hegel, and his poem an attempt to define æsthetic beauty. He acknowledges what he owes to Aristotle, Virgil, and Horace, but is silent as to his far heavier debt to Shaftesbury, whose *Characteristics* he had evidently studied.

Dr. Johnson was very unkind to *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, where, he said — and not quite unjustly — 'the words are multiplied till the sense is hardly perceived.' That is, I have admitted, Akenside's weakness. But when Johnson talks of the young Newcastle doctor as 'laying his ill-fated hand upon his harp,' he is too picturesque, and we remember that Akenside became an extreme opponent of the critic's political convictions. Johnson hated a Whig, and shut the gates of mercy on a political apostate. Most readers in the eighteenth century did not share his view, and *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, which Akenside completely rewrote without improving, enjoyed an unbroken popularity for at least half a century.

In the same year, 1744, Akenside published his *Epistle to Curio*, a vigorous political satire on the theme of 'just for a handful of silver he left us';

and in the next a collection of *Odes on Several Subjects*, which were highly successful. In 1746 he wrote his *Hymn to the Naiads*, which has been compared to frozen Keats. It has considerable beauty and elevation, and is accomplished to the last degree. The peculiar dignity of eighteenth-century rhetoric never rose to a chillier altitude, and the vogue of this hymn had a great influence in stereotyping a certain species of 'poetic diction,' as it was called — a language violently and successfully attacked by the leaders of the Romantic Movement half a century later. In spite of those attacks, however, the prestige of Akenside survived the prefaces of Wordsworth, and is visible in no less a poem than the *Alastor* of Shelley. This is a sample of the *Hymn to the Naiads*: —

The immortal Muse
To your calm habitations, to the cave
Corycian, or the Delphic mount, will guide
His footsteps; and with your unsullied streams
His lips will bathe; whether the eternal lore
Of Themis, or the majesty of Jove
To mortals he reveal, or teach his lyre
The unenvied guerdon of the patriot's toil.

Akenside was now only five-and-twenty, and he had already composed almost the whole of his existing poetry. His inspiration flagged, and after writing some further odes, which were quite unworthy of him, he was silent as a poet until close upon the end of his life, when, as I shall presently point out, a new fervor possessed him. But a curious event occurred, the exact history of which is lost. The poet left the North and came up to Hampstead, where he started a medical practice. He had already become acquainted with the Chief Clerk of the House of Commons, whose name was Dyson.

The practice at Hampstead was a failure, and Dyson, whose admiration for Akenside was unbounded, brought him to Bloomsbury, gave him an allowance of several hundred pounds a

year, with a chariot, on the understanding, it would appear, that he should, for the future, give his undivided attention to science. He did not quite abandon the Muses until they, with their habitual freakishness, had abandoned him; but he became a serious and industrious man of science. His *Gulstonian Lectures on the 'Origin and Use of the Lymphatic Vessels'* were read in the Theatre of the College of Physicians in 1755, and they advanced 'a new theory,' which few will have the leisure to investigate to-day.

He was appointed Croonian Lecturer, and held the office for several years, but gave up the task 'in disgust' because some of the students complained that there was too much about the history of the revival of learning in his lectures, and not, as I conjecture, enough about the lymphatic vessels.

He continued, however, to advance in medical reputation. The man who was appointed principal physician to St. Thomas's Hospital, and, a little later, physician to the Queen, must have secured the suffrages of his profession. I regret that the account of the poet's behavior in the former of these capacities is not all that could be wished. He was accused of being 'supercilious and unfeeling,' and of having 'evinced a particular disgust to females,' an unhappy trait in hospital practice. It is alleged that on his visiting days he would be preceded by ushers with brooms, whose duty it was to sweep the more evil-smelling of the patients out of Dr. Akenside's path. These stories are doubtless much exaggerated, and the poet was a man capable of fine and generous actions. That his failings were haughtiness and irritability cannot, I fear, be disputed; he was apt to be either 'peevish' or 'oracular' with strangers. There is a story of a prodigious quarrel between

him and another very pompous medical big-wig, Dr. Hardinge, on the subject of a bilious colic, which would make a cat laugh. These high priests of the medical profession took themselves very seriously indeed in the eighteenth century.

The year before his death Akenside woke to poetry once more. It is probable that few of those who nowadays turn over his pages reach the fragment of a fourth book of *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, which he started in 1770. If they did, they would find such passages as this: —

Would I again were with you, O ye dales
Of Tyne, and ye most ancient woodlands, where
Oft the giant flood obliquely strides
And his banks open, and his lawns extend,
Stops short the pleased traveler to view,
Presiding o'er the scene, some rustic tower
Founded by Norman or by Saxon hands:
O ye Northumbrian shades, which overlook
The rocky pavement and the mossy falls
Of solitary Wensbeck's limpid stream,
How gladly I recall your well-known seats,
Beloved of old, and that delightful time
When all alone, for many a summer's day,
I wandered through your calm recesses, led
In silence by some powerful hand unseen.

These lines were written in the year when Wordsworth was born.

THE PROBLEMS OF THE FAR EASTERN REPUBLIC

BY A. B.

From *L'Europe Nouvelle*, November 12
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THOUGH the Far Eastern Republic is in existence at the present time, it seems highly doubtful whether this state, desirable as a buffer between Japan and Russia, yet hardly serving the purpose, will have a very long career. Indeed, Eastern Siberia seems fated by its geographical situation to be, for a long time in the future, territory for colonization.

Since it forms a natural outlet to the Pacific, it cannot hold aloof from the vast hinterland further west, from which the Russian flood flows irresistibly toward the open sea. On the south it touches the territory of the new China, which seems far less disposed to pursue a policy of resignation than was the old imperial China — as the convention of Kiakhta, of June 1915,

which guaranteed the reestablishment of Chinese sovereignty in Mongolia, is witness. Last of all, Japan has poured upon the continent the surplus of her population, and Korea shuts her off from the rich region of Possiet and Vladivostok, where the colonists from the Island Empire have won a considerable economic importance. And so Eastern Siberia, with Russia pressing against her on the west, China on the south, and Japan on the east, has breathing-room only on the north.

But the north is barren, and the petroleum deposits and the veins of oil which are located there are now, or soon will be, in the hands of Americans who are coming closer and closer by way of Alaska. One cannot forget the transactions of the Vanderlip Syndi-