

LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE ARTS

AN UNPUBLISHED STORY BY BALZAC

THE manuscript of a new story by Balzac, the bare existence of which has never been suspected, turned up a few weeks ago at an auction sale in an unpretentious second-hand shop in Paris, and has fallen into the hands of the French book-collector, Georges-Emmanuel Lang, who appears to have learned by a lucky chance of its existence before any of his fellow collectors got on the trail. The story — a *nouvelle* of the customary dimensions — is entitled *Les Fantaisies de la Gina*. The manuscript is so beautifully bound in hand-tooled leather that it seems curious its value was not suspected by the dealer; but — though M. Lang is discreetly reticent as to what he paid — the greatest Balzac 'find' of recent years was apparently picked up for a song, in the way every good collector dreams of, even though he usually acquires his treasures only by enriching some too-knowing dealer.

On the violet moroccan leather of the binding, tooled in gold, are the initials 'S. G.,' which are explained by an inscription in Balzac's hand on the manuscript itself, *Donné à Mlle. Sophie Grèvedon par son très humble serviteur: de Balzac*. The manuscript itself is badly blotted and in some places illegible, though only a few phrases here and there have permanently defied the endeavors of the decipherer. Balzac's biographers and the editors of his collected works seem alike to have missed the story, for it does not appear in any of the supposedly complete editions, and no reference to the story itself or to the circumstances of its composition are known.

Manuscript in hand, however, M.

Lang appealed to M. Marcel Bouteron, an enthusiastic devotee of Balzac, deeply learned in all that touches the life of the writer, his works, and his associations. M. Bouteron's reply was reassuring. No doubts exist in his mind as to the authenticity of the manuscript, and from his intimate knowledge of Balzac's travels in Italy and the friendships he made there, he has little difficulty in constructing a theory which accounts both for the inspiration of the story and the motives that led to its eventual suppression. And the owner, M. Lang, in his turn has devised a very plausible explanation for Balzac's making a present of his manuscript to Mlle. Grèvedon. The gift needs explanation because, as M. Lang observes, Balzac 'was n't very ready to make presents of his manuscripts.'

We may quote from M. Bouteron's letter to M. Lang: —

One thing is perfectly evident, my dear fellow. The manuscript of 'La Gina' is written by Balzac and is in Balzac's handwriting from one end to the other. . . .

The manuscript of 'La Gina,' as you say, bears no date. Is it possible to assign one? A definite date would be difficult, but I will venture on a probable approximation of it. Your story takes place in Milan, in the best society of the city, and there are details that Balzac could not have invented. He clearly noted them on the spot, after his usual custom. The idea of 'La Gina' came to him during a trip to Milan, just as *Illusions perdues* came after Angoulême, *Modeste Mignon* after Le Havre, *Eugénie Grandet* after Saumur, and so forth. You know as well as I do that Balzac always found inspiration in the actual, and oftenest in things that he had seen himself. 'La Gina' could only have been composed after a trip to Milan.

Let us glance through Balzac's biography. We find record, not of one, but of two trips; one during March and April, 1837, and the other in May and June, 1838, and on both occasions Balzac was fêted as a great man. In Milan they wore house-gowns 'à la Balzac.'

The story has the eternal triangle for its framework, and M. Boutelon points out several extremely close parallels between an unhappily married couple whose guest Balzac was while in Milan, and the husband and wife in the story. The correspondences seem too close to be accidental, and confirmation is lent by close similarities in phraseology between the last paragraph of the story and a letter written to Balzac by the French Consul General in Milan, describing the matrimonial difficulties of his late host.

If M. Boutelon is right — and there seems no reason for doubt — it is easy to understand Balzac's suppression of the manuscript. The parallels would have been too obvious. He did not care to print a story in which the originals of the fictitious characters would have been instantly identified and unpleasant consequences to the author might have resulted. He had already had unhappy experience of that sort.

But then why did he present his unused manuscript to Mlle. Sophie Grèvedon? On this point M. Lang is able to throw some light. Mlle. Sophie was the daughter of the historical painter and lithographer, Pierre-Louis Grèvedon, then famous for his portraits of Rachel, of Mlle. Mars, and of la Malibran. Mme. Grèvedon, moreover, was a well-known comic actress, well acquainted with Scribe; and her sister was the wife of Régnier, the celebrated associate of the Comédie Française. M. Lang hazards the guess that Balzac gave the manuscript — which he no longer had any idea of publishing — to the daughter of a family

whose position might some day be very useful to him, and with whom he wished to stand well. And now, when it can do no more harm, and when it is no longer likely to disturb the author's peace, the manuscript that Balzac was afraid to publish comes to light. But if it will not disquiet him, neither will it greatly enhance his reputation, for *Les Fantaisies de la Gina* is a slight thing for the author of *Eugénie Grandet* to have written.

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UNIVERSITY DRAMA IN ENGLAND

UNIVERSITY players have always had an honorable share in the dramatic art of England. Even before the days of Good Queen Bess (though if some modern historians are right, she was perhaps not quite so good as her subjects fancied) the schools and universities shared with the church and the guilds the duty of fostering the drama. *Roister Doister*, the first English comedy, is the work of a schoolmaster. One of the best known references to Shakespeare occurs in *The Return from Parnassus*, a university play. And the first flames of that blaze of glory which was the Elizabethan drama flashed out only when the 'university wits' — Peele, Green, Lyly, Lodge, and Marlowe, the greatest of all — brought to the crude vigor of the popular plays the literary finish and traditions of the universities.

It is good to see that the modern universities — marked though the change is in their size, the range of the subjects that they teach, and the cosmopolitanism of their student body — are still true to the great tradition. Oxford has only one dramatic society of any pretensions, but that one is the O.U.D.S., which is famous wherever the scholarly drama is still cherished. Other dramatic activities at Oxford are in the hands of the colleges and much smaller organizations.

Cambridge has three — the Foot-

lights, the A.D.C., and the Marlowe Dramatic Society. The Footlights are frivolous young men who produce topical musical comedies, which they usually present during the May-week festivities; and the A.D.C. usually devotes itself to modern comedies, though it sometimes breaks over into the field of the Footlights. The Marlowe — as befits a dramatic society named for a great dramatist in his own university — is an amateur pioneer in the field which has since been further worked by professional actors at the Old Vic, at the Lyric, Hammersmith, and by the faithful antiquarians of the Phoenix Society, who have just added to their laurels with a production of the *Jew of Malta*. To quote from one of the Marlowe's pamphlets: —

The society was at the time of its origin a pioneer in the field of staging classical English plays with more sympathetic regard for the author's intentions than was at the time considered necessary by London actor-managers. An inner and outer stage, draped with green curtains, comprised all the scenery of those first performances; but from this humble beginning the society has by experiment and experience developed a technique which, without necessitating cuts or interfering with continuous performance, becomes every year more interesting and original.

After all, plays were never intended for library consumption. Ingenious literary exercises in dramatic form are another matter, and therefore more's the pity that Shakespeare's less important plays and almost all of the Elizabethan drama so seldom reappear on the modern boards. It is astounding to reflect that Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* has never been played since the Restoration — unless we are pleased to call Dryden's version Shakespearean, and even Dryden's play has not been performed since 1733 — until the Marlowe revived it last March.

'THE BOOKWORM,' A CAUTIONARY TALE

THIS moral ditty is the result of a prize competition for 'cautionary tales' instituted by the *Westminster Gazette*, such moral effusions having become popular in England since Mr. Hiliare Belloc published his highly edifying *Cautionary Tales for Children*: —

THE BOOKWORM

Oh listen while I tell the tale
Of Horace William Merrivale.
Nearly always he was good
And did the things that children should.
One way he had that children should n't.
And give it up — he simply would n't!
I grieve to say whenever able,
This little boy would read at table.
He never knew how much he ate
But swallowed all that he could get.
At last one day he met his doom.
His nurse had left the pleasant room
And he sat there, still reading fast,
To eat the rest of his repast.
He did n't see, so thrilled was he,
A fact that would have worried me;
No meat, potato, greens or bread —
He ate his knife and fork instead.
Yes, that was how he met his fate!
When nurse came back it was too late;
Before he 'd reached the bitter end
A hideous death had claimed our friend.
This the lesson I would bring:
There 's a time for everything.
This the moral of my fable:
Never read when you 're at table.
Let us weep for Horace dear!
It 's sad to think he might be here
Had he learnt to separate
Mental food from what he ate!



GERHART HAUPTMANN'S EPIC
'EULENSPIEGEL'

HAS Gerhart Hauptmann written the long-awaited epic of the war? Will the comic Till Eulenspiegel of ancient folk-tradition become the satirist of Armageddon? Acclaimed both by the state and by the people as a national poet, and honored in every theatre in Germany, Gerhart Hauptmann is making a return to his fellow countrymen

in his epic, *Eulenspiegel*, which is just emerging from the press in Germany. Although the poet has read parts of his new work to friends, both its appearance and its form are something of a surprise to most Germans.

Overthrown in war and torn with dissension at home, Germany finds a pitiless mirror held up to her woes in Till's mirror. Hauptmann's Till Eulenspiegel is the same old mountebank, but not all his jests are merry as of yore. The mischief-maker has been through the war. He knows the suffering and horror of the trenches. He is a jester still, but a bitter jester. Laying aside his helmet, he dons cap and bells to tour the Fatherland as an itinerant showman. Still a practical joker, he is also a man whose eyes have been opened in a new way to the folly of mankind. He drifts; drifts hopelessly and ceaselessly like the men about him, like the Fatherland itself.

Standing outside his booth he boasts that he who will enter shall see the solving of the greatest riddle of the world: Who caused the Great War? The people throng to the show. They pay their fees. They enter — and in a mirror see their own faces! They turn in fury on the showman, who takes to flight. One incident in a whole epic, but very typical.

The poem is written in hexameters reminiscent of the idyll 'Anna' of last year.

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'THE BIG NOISE'

THE 'big noise,' produced under the auspices of the Dutch government in an effort to learn more about atmospheric conditions and the transmission of sound, has proved something of a disappointment. The noise was produced by the explosion of five tons of perchlorate of ammonia at Oldebroek, after experiments which shattered the

windows in a village four miles away indicated that the charge of ten tons, originally proposed, would be too large.

The British Air Ministry coöperated with the Dutch government, and the public were urged to be on the alert for the sound, and to send in reports stating the intensity and the exact time when it was heard. It was expected that fifteen minutes would be required for the vibrations to reach the coast of Great Britain.

However, the sound waves did not in every case reach the expectant English ears, and although sound-photographs were secured at Ripley, England, the scientific results do not seem to have come up to those anticipated. All the reports are not yet in, however, and as one of the main objects of the test was to determine the existence of silent zones between the source of sound and other zones where it is audible, the failure of many listeners to hear it may have distinct importance.

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HAMLET IN FRENCH

It is a tribute to the art of the Comédie Française that the French players of that famous company, now visiting London, were able to hold British listeners at all with scenes from *Hamlet* played in French. M. de Max, one of the most famous of modern French actors, presented a Hamlet that Englishmen found hard to understand — though no Hamlet can be said to be very easy to understand. The critic of the *Morning Post* admits the masterful quality of the acting, and yet is assailed with doubts that will not be hushed. 'The most was made of every point, yet somehow it was not Hamlet.'

The main difficulty seems to have been the translation. Other dramatists may endure it, but when Shakespeare loses his poetry he fares ill, great though he is.

BOOKS ABROAD

All the World's Aircraft, founded by Fred T. Jane, edited and compiled by C. G. Grey (editor of the 'Aeroplane'). London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co., Ltd.

[*Army Quarterly*]

THIS work, now in its thirteenth year, must compel admiration for the mass of information so attractively displayed. It presents for the same reason a most difficult task to the reviewer. Information on a scale adequate to check all that is here presented is unobtainable, but some sample tests of items chosen at random show evidence of the highest standard of accuracy.

Omar Khayyám and His Age, by Otto Rothfeld. Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., 1922.

[*Asiatic Review*]

THE book falls into two parts — an account of the history of the Central Asian Empire and of the influence of Persian thought, with its Greek and Indian currents of philosophy, on Mohammedan culture; and, secondly, an analysis of the spirit of Omar's poetry as exemplifying the results of those influences. Until now any student desirous of acquainting himself with the development of Islam under Persian guidance would have had to conduct laborious research through a dozen separate monographs on different aspects of the subject. Mr. Rothfeld has embodied the results of such research in one eminently readable volume.

Mr. Rothfeld's competence to deal with the subject is vouched for by his eminence as a Persian scholar, which led to his selection by the Government of India to edit the text of the *Waqdyā* of Naamat Khan-I-Ali, one of the most difficult books in the Persian language. *Omar Khayyám and His Age* will prove to be a book as attractive to the general reader by its style and construction as it will be valuable to the student by its scholarship.

Four Comedies by Carlo Goldoni, edited by Clifford Bax. London: Cecil Palmer, 1922. 25s.

[*English Review*]

WE have no room to criticize Goldoni's plays, admirably presented in this well-got-up tome by Mr. Clifford Bax. Their interest lies in technique and vivacity of handling, which make him highly readable; for, like all good things, they endure. Though his object was to give Italy a national drama, he is very French in treatment, and wrote in French; but surely few will agree with Mr.

Bax, who apparently rates him higher than Molière. In sheer wit he is much the inferior.

Goya as a Portrait-Painter, By A. de Beruete y Moret. Translated by Selwyn Brinton. London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1922.

[Sir Claude Phillips in the *Daily Telegraph*]

WHEN the Exhibition of Spanish Art, Ancient and Modern, was opened two years ago in the galleries of the Royal Academy, there were to be found, placed for the further instruction of the public on one of the sumptuous tables in the room specially assigned to Goya, three splendid volumes on the master, his life and works, written by Don Aureliano de Beruete y Moret, the then director of the Royal Prado Gallery in Madrid. This distinguished critic, who, alas! did not live to see the issue of this section of his great work in its English dress, was the son of Aureliano de Beruete, a critic of still higher fame, to whom, as all students of Spanish art are aware, the world owes the most authoritative and altogether the most helpful work in existence on the supreme art of Velazquez.

To his son, with whose work as a critic we are now dealing, we owe an interesting volume on the School of Madrid, with new and important facts as to Del Mazo, son-in-law of Velazquez, as well as to Carreño de Miranda, Rizi-Matteo Cerezo, Claudio Coello, and others of less fame. We may not say that he has done for Goya exactly what his illustrious father accomplished for Velazquez, since the task to be attempted in relation to the later master was not of so high an order, and the difficulties in the way were less. He did not find himself to the same extent called upon to solve difficult questions of attribution; for the ground in this respect was more or less prepared. What Aureliano de Beruete the younger does give — with a rare sympathy, a rare completeness — is a reasoned appreciation of the whole œuvre of Goya, and a living portrait-sketch of the artist, not amounting indeed to a formal biography, but allowing very clearly to be seen how throughout — even in subjects the most diverse — the work was a true and intimate expression of the man.

The Insurrection in Mesopotamia, by Lieut. General Sir Aylmer H. Haldane. London: Blackwood, 1922. 21s.

[*Morning Post*]

GENERAL Haldane's book is, then, timely. Unfortunately, however, without seeking in any way to disparage the literary skill and admirably

precise style of the writer, it is not a book which will appeal to the civilian reader, though its value to the military student and military historian cannot be exaggerated. General Haldane has the caution of his race, eschews politics, hints rather than expresses his private opinions about some persons and some policies, treats the general economic and political position and future of Irak very gingerly, and sticks resolutely to his last. No British soldier who is interested in the means by which a Commander-in-Chief, having at his disposal inadequate forces and acting in a country accessible on all sides to outside intrigue, and filled with a population whose mentality is a curious mixture of fanaticism and guile, successfully broke up the rebellion, can neglect this volume. It once again is evidence of a profound truth that a soldier, to be successful nowadays, must also be something of a statesman and a diplomatist.

A Little Anthology of Hitherto Uncollected Poems by modern writers, edited, printed by hand, and published by Stuart Guthrie. 8½ x 7½. Flansham, Bognor: Pear Tree Press. 12s. 6d.n.

[*Times Literary Supplement*]

THIS is another of the anthologies of which the aim is to collect the work of less-known authors of the day. There are only twelve poems included, and the print is of large size. The authors represented are V. Locke Ellis, Eleanor Farjeon, James and Stuart Guthrie, Reginald Hallward, M. M. Johnstone, and Lewis Townsend.

The Legend of Eulenspiegel, by Charles De Coster. Translated by F. N. Atkinson. London: Heinemann, 1922. 2 vols. 30s.

[Émile Cammaerts in the *Sunday Times*]

IT may seem strange that a complete English translation of this standard work in Belgian literature only appears fifty-four years after its publication in Brussels. This example will no doubt be added to the long list of important works written in English and in French which did not reach the French or English reading-public before half a century of literary criticism had established their importance beyond doubt. In spite of the development of higher education, the language barrier remains a formidable obstacle to intellectual intercourse; but in this particular case the delay is more or less justified, since it took nearly as many years to spread Charles De Coster's reputation in his own country as to spread it abroad.

The first edition of *The Legend and the Heroic, Glorious and Joyous Adventures of Eulenspiegel in the Land of Flanders and Elsewhere* appeared in 1868. The édition de luxe, illustrated with engravings by Félicien Rops, one of the author's few friends, was soon exhausted, and it was only after De Coster's death, in 1879, that a second and cheaper edition appeared.

The author of 'Eulenspiegel' came to his own only about 1890, but still remained little known outside Belgium. It was only after the war had drawn attention to Belgian letters that people began to inquire about the origin of the movement which had produced Maeterlinck, Verhaeren, and many other writers of great distinction.

In and Around Yunnan Fou, by Gabrielle M. Vassal. London: Heinemann, 1922. 10s. 6d.

[*Bookman*]

WE here in England hardly know the name of Yunnan, and yet it is an important southerly province in China. In fact, Mrs. Vassal, author of this book, and wife of a French officer who was stationed at Haifong, believes that when with the help of Indo-China Yunnan is no longer commercially isolated, but united to the rest of the world by her railways, she may become the most significant portion of China. In the meantime we receive an impression of rugged and mountainous country, inhabited by bareheaded men and women with wonderful hair ornaments. 'Women make up enormously, and I never grew accustomed to the pink and white cheeks, reddened lips, and darkened eyebrows of the Chinese.'

Mrs. Vassal found the houses small, dark, and filthy, the children fat and rosy-cheeked, the mothers strong, contented, and broad. A curious point is that cats in this part of the country are supposed to act as charms to merchants, and are often found chained up, mewing determinedly and piteously in the shops. This is a book that will interest many people; and Mrs. Vassal writes with much animation.

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BOOKS MENTIONED

- AUBERON, REGINALD. *The Nineteen Hundreds*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1922. 12s. 6d.
 DE GUICHEN, VICOMTE E. *La Crise d'Orient de 1839 à 1841 et l'Europe*. Paris: Emile Paul Frères, 1922.
 DUNRAVEN, LORD. *Past Times and Pastimes*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1922. 2 vols. 42s. net.

THIS WEEK

An air-journey across Bolshevik Russia, with a narrow escape from death, is the substance of an experience that Georg Popoff relates in this issue of the LIVING AGE. The aeroplane was bound from Königsberg to Moscow and carried a package for Lenin, sealed with seven seals. Polish bullets and a crash to earth failed to prevent its arrival.

★ ★ ★

Reports of actual conditions in Central Asia are as rare as they are important. Colin Ross was lucky to emerge alive from that part of the world, and we are equally fortunate in being able to hear about his adventures and impressions of the trip. Bolshevik boy-scouts drilling under the shadow of Mount Ararat, side by side with British and American units is one of the more picturesque scenes.

★ ★ ★

From Dublin to Kerry is a less sensational but a no less interesting journey. The hopeless disorder of the country and the tragedy, lying so close behind the mask of unconcern, are vividly brought out by an Irish woman who has just been there herself.

★ ★ ★

The possibility of a capital tax in England has been increased by the large Labor vote in the recent elections. The subject is competently discussed, *pro* and *con*, by the *New Statesman* and the *Spectator*.

★ ★ ★

Business men have fought a little shy of South America, by reason of the frequent and devastating revolutions that take place there. Manuel Ugarte, one of the leading writers in that continent, believes in a great Latin American Union. He is thoroughly conversant with his subject and his opinions are sound as well as encouraging.

★ ★ ★

Bulgaria has set about her reconstruction work with admirable energy. Conscripting labor, rather than soldiers, is an example which has proved itself worthy of serious attention, and Communists may regard it as a triumph for their doctrine of working for the State.

★ ★ ★

The Marseillaise is generally considered the finest of all national anthems. The history of its author, which includes an account of how he composed the song, forms a vital part of the great tradition of French patriotism.

★ ★ ★

Readers of the LIVING AGE are already acquainted with Hillaire Belloc, who is at his best in an amusing description of a merger, in the city of the Caliphs. And Thomas Hardy needs even less introduction. His poem, on the Page of Verse, would be read if only because it is written by the greatest living figure in English letters.

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The times have changed, but many of us have not changed with them. Neither have we lost our ap-

preciation or our longing for those bygone days when Longfellow and Lowell and Holmes and the others were a part of Boston life, and when among its frequent distinguished visitors were Mark Twain and Edwin Booth and Joseph Jefferson. These are only a few of the names that throng the pages of Mrs. Fields's diaries as she records the comings and goings of their possessors through the hospitable doors of the Fields house.

Dickens, Hawthorne, Charles Sumner, Bret Harte, Ellen Terry, Christine Nilsson, the Henry Jameses, father and son, and a host of others cross Mrs. Fields's canvas. Many of the pen portraits are succinct and picturesque. Altogether it is a notable book of reminiscent literary biography.

— *Boston Transcript.*

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