

textbook, the ABC book, the coat-of-arms at the inn, yes, even a bottle-neck turned upside down and corked underneath, which serves as a seedbox in a bird-cage in the dormer window — these, along with Ice Maidens and Snow Queens, along with angels and kobolds, are the heroes of Andersen's tales.

Andersen's is a cadence unspeakably innocent and wise — the cadence of a benevolent old voice, speaking perhaps in old age, but certainly in youthful spirits; a voice which is only a voice

and of which the form and the head we have never once seen, which was with us in the nursery and spoke to us in the days of our childhood, and now continues to speak in our adult life. It is a cadence through which shines a light, a very white light, like the light of dawn and of the hours of childhood. Yes, over Andersen's fairy tales lies that light of childish hours as if the brightness of the morning of the first Christmas Day lay over all the days of childhood.

BEAUTY AND DEATH

BY HUBERT WOLFE

[*Saturday Review*]

It is a common lie — who would believe it? —
 That, as men lose their beauty, the slow earth
 Does in her tranquil motherhood reweave it
 Into a bird — into a flower-birth.
 It is not true. The earth has no such power.
 But spring to spring is hostile; summer saith
 'Was there another summer?' Bird and flower
 Have nothing half so lovely as their death.
 And if men say no drop in rapture's cup
 But is some beauty known, and had, and scattered
 Now, as hereafter, for the millionth time,
 Remember lost Atlantis silted up
 And crawling seas between be beauties shattered
 Of gods face downwards in the ocean slime.

LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE ARTS

A GREAT READER AT EIGHTY

If a vote were taken among people entitled to participate, on the question, Who is the greatest living reader in the English-speaking world? there can be no doubt that the decision would go almost unanimously to George Saintsbury. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine who could compete with him, except perhaps Sir Edmund Gosse — and even Sir Edmund has not read, certainly, the novels of G. W. M. Reynolds or the *Roman de la Rose*. For other readers, even when they are as catholic as the author of *Father and Son*, have their blind spots of taste, their incapacities for appreciating heroic drama, say, or problem novels: but Mr. Saintsbury has none. The dullest romance of the fourteenth century, the most long-winded novel of the nineteenth, can arouse his interest at least to the point of bringing him to read them through — and to emerge from the fog with a spirited and intelligent judgment.

Professor Saintsbury has just recently attained his eightieth birthday, and the news comes with something of a jolt; so far from seeming an advanced age, eighty years seem positively boyish for a man who has packed into them the scholarly and journalistic work that he has done. Your mere average capacious reader would, require a good two hundred years, we should estimate, to get over the ground necessary to the composition of books such as *A Short History of English Literature*, *A History of Criticism*, *A History of English Prosody*, *English Prose Rhythm*, and the *History of French Literature*.

Yet after all, if eighty years seem youthful from one point of view, they seem venerable indeed from another — from the point of view of Professor Saintsbury's unflagging gusto in accepting life, in judging wines (witness his very recent *Notes for a Cellar-Book*), and in reading books. The secret of this literary youthfulness of his is suggested in an article by Mr. R. Ellis Roberts in the *Bookman*: —

He is never a mere bookworm. He is never a man wholly of the study or the library. He has intense interests in life, and intense convictions about life. He has, we can guess, enjoyed life — but we may doubt whether he has enjoyed anything in life so much as his books. If we think of Charles Lamb, or of Hazlitt, we immediately feel that their interest in books was subordinate to an interest in, or curiosity about, people, events, the happenings in the street or in the world. Now Mr. Saintsbury is not uninterested in these things; but he approaches them most naturally through the medium of literature. I am of course only giving the impression which I get from his books — and I believe I have read nearly everything he has written — when I say that I cannot imagine him deserting a good description of a dog-fight to go to the window to look at one, while I cannot imagine Lamb keeping to his book if there was a dog-fight in the street outside. I am not even sure whether the keeping of his cellar-book, and the writing sound praise of sound wine, has not given Mr. Saintsbury more pleasure than he ever had from the consumption of his wine; whereas Lamb, one knows, would have sacrificed any number of notes on vintages for the sake of comfortable access to a bottle of