

The book is not academic, yet it is accurate. It is careful and scientific in approach. But it is also interesting, stimulating and entertaining. In this it is different from so much of the conventional, pedantic and lethargic stuff that is much too frequently thrown on the market. The secret of Dr. Rogers's success is not so much his knowledge and logical reasoning; for after all no thoughtful reader can accept all of the author's dicta. Dr. Rogers's effect lies rather in his ability to be flexible, to separate himself from the austerity of his subject, and to see the droll side even of so majestic an institution as the American Senate. No self-respecting pedant could ever have written the following:

A German professor of physiology is reported to have begun a lecture as follows: "We come now to the spleen. Nothing is known about the functions of the spleen. So much, gentlemen, for the spleen." A professor of politics could say the same of the American Cabinet, for it keeps no records, and apparently reaches no collective decisions.

We do not hesitate to recommend this book.

ADOLPH E. MEYER.

SELF-EXPRESSION IN THE NOVEL

BELLARION. By Rafael Sabatini. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

SUSAN SHANE. By Roger Burlingame. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

HEAVEN TREES. By Stark Young. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

THE WORLD OF WILLIAM CLISSOLD. Two vols. By H. G. Wells. New York: George H. Doran Company.

For the writer of fiction the cardinal difficulty, the point of greatest artistic importance, lies, not in plot or even in characterization, but rather in the point of view. It is at this point that artistry and personality blend to produce their magical joint effect. Delicacy, skill, in the management not only of one's words but of oneself, and of one's numerous dispositions to pose, is essential for success. How to be genuinely oneself and yet the *writer*, who cannot, after all, be just oneself—this is the problem which novelists unhelped by what is sometimes called

inspiration, find so difficult. It is something to be aware of the problem!

Artists almost unavoidably pose as a sort of magicians, and yet no class of persons has more need to be merely human—this is almost the whole difficulty in a nutshell. Happy the author who has, as it were, a “control” in the personality of his favorite character! These controls, like those of the spirit mediums, are, I am afraid, peculiarly liable to be garrulous. But almost anything is better than doubt as to the point of view. The constant obligation one feels under to try to distinguish fairly between H. G. Wells and Clissold is, for example, a nuisance. But I anticipate.

The way in which this difficulty thrusts itself into the technical construction of the story—making the choice of the story point of view, whether first-personal or third-personal, characterized or uncharacterized, so delicate a decision—is highly interesting. But it is not the story point of view with which I am at present concerned; it is rather the real point of view of the author.

At first blush it might seem as if this fundamental attitude of the author towards this situation, his characters, and the fragment of life which he is considering, were of less importance in the novel than in the drama, the short story, or the poem. On the contrary, I believe it is only more deeply buried and more fully implied. A novelist cannot successfully pretend to be a combined motion picture camera and dictaphone, or to be God. He must always be aware of his humanity. He needs to be reminded not that he is mortal, but that he is alive.

If the whole matter could be disposed of by saying that one's personality is sure to express itself, if there is anything in it worth expressing, and that one should take care merely not to suppress it, I should rejoice. But I am afraid the problem is not quite so simple as that. To write, it appears to me, is to find oneself uncomfortably face to face with one's own personality.

Of all forms of fiction, the historical novel seems perhaps the most impersonal. But this is an illusion. It is seen to be an illusion just as soon as one reflects upon the real difference between historical fiction and history. It is not the *historicity* of *War and*

Peace which holds that enormous fiction together; it is the steadiness of Tolstoi's point of view—the consistency of a way of thinking and feeling. And this would be there just the same even if Levin were not a sort of mouthpiece for the author. What gives vitality to the novels of Walter Scott is largely the author's passionate delight in things feudal. He has no doubts: he knows where he stands on these matters, and so does the reader.

Rafael Sabatini's real affection, I cannot help thinking, is rather for a good, well-complicated, romantic story than for things feudal, or things spiritual, or things present, or things to come. Of course, almost any period in the Middle Ages will supply a good background for a story of violent adventure, and there could be no better setting for a tale of guerrilla warfare and intrigue than Northern Italy in the middle of the Renaissance. Even so, Sabatini's characters are over-motivated and under-characterized. Of Bellarion himself, that too-too fortunate man, one is inclined to wonder whether even in an age of Machievellian ethics any one could so constantly and happily do evil that good might come. Bellarion, the warrior and diplomat, originated in a monastery and meant to be a scholar and recluse. But from the moment when he leaves the cloisters he becomes a man of the world. No, not quite from that moment: he first allows himself to be robbed by a brigand disguised as a Franciscan friar. But this one lesson in worldliness is enough for him. Thereafter he is the accomplished intrigant, murderer, politician—and how marvellously clean-minded. Not a trace of malice in him! Yet nearly all the persons in the story except our amazing Bellarion and his beloved Valeria are more or less noisomely wicked or vicious.

Nor is Sabatini, in my opinion, a very shrewd manipulator of plot. It is absurd to compare him with Dumas in this respect. He is, indeed, a master of complication. But he has so arranged his story that the reader can scarcely help knowing what the next step will be, and this in a tale mostly of action and intrigue is a defect.

On the whole, what pleases me in *Bellarion* is its patient workmanship in the matter of details pertaining to its period and its wholesome gusto.

The point of view of almost complete identification with the *experiencing character* of the story is evidently a tempting one to many authors. When the experiencing character is a woman, however, and the author is a man, this expedient, to my thinking, seldom works. In stories which employ it, there is generally a note of special pleading. I perceive, for example, that Mr. Burlingame cares a great deal about his Susan Shane, and that he wants me, as the reader, to care. There is an aura about Susan that he wants me to feel. There is something mysteriously romantic in the fact that Susan is at once a tender, loving woman, and as hard as nails. All romantic predicaments are, of course, more or less mysterious. The older romancers held that it was highly unromantic for a woman to dismiss her lover because he was poor, but that it was highly romantic for a woman to dismiss her lover for no reason in particular. The inexplicable nature of the decision was just what made it a proper foundation for romance. Now, Susan is not a person who does things without reason—not she!—but she has a mystery—a mystery of contradiction. It is a contradiction—not a real struggle—because Mr. Burlingame does not permit one to be in doubt about what Susan will ultimately do.

They were walking close together on the narrow path, and David thought he felt her arm tighten at his word. He looked at her face, but it had not changed. . . .

She was getting hard. He spoke quickly.

“Gee, Sue, you’re getting hard.”

She stopped in the path.

“Hard?”

She looked up at him. For the first time she seemed moved. His words had done something to her where the war had failed. He said she was getting hard. She clenched her hands. “Hard,” she said. She said it gently, looking up at him. Then she tightened, she was rigid all over, anger surging up in her, hot and dizzying. “Hard? Why wouldn’t I be?” . . .

This is what the rhetoricians call “keeping an idea to the fore.”

Of course, I quite agree that a person who has had a hard lot in childhood, and who has learned that “money answereth all things”, may very naturally and excusably subordinate everything else in life to the acquisition of money. But I resent having so coldly acquisitive a person presented to me as, by implication,

a type of warm and glowing womanhood, a person of martyred affections. If determinedly acquisitive and deliberately selfish people suffer much through tenderness of heart, I have never observed the fact.

Yet I am not arguing, of course, for a simplicist view of character. The trouble is all in the underlying point of view. Mr. Burlingame might have made his story say any one of various true things. He might have made me interested in Susan from an analytical point of view and then have overwhelmed me with the realization that although I am gray-headed and past middle-age and, what is more, a man, I am of the same clay with Susan and obliged to share her trouble. Instead, he appears to me to reveal a steady intention of glorifying his heroine and making her desire for wealth and luxury appear great and poetic, like Macbeth's ambition. This I cannot accept.

Mr. Stark Young, however, knows exactly what his point of view should be. It is his own; it is unique; and he steadily adheres to it. No one has more fully mastered the art of expressing *himself*. If any adverse criticism applies to his writings, it must be directed to the fragility of their content. *Heaven Trees* is not a novel; it is not an essay; it is not a sketch. *Heaven Trees* defies classification and has its own peculiar consistency. Mr. Young loves to be occasionally vaporous and occasionally very, very solid—to involve figures in fold upon fold of atmosphere and then to make one of them rap out a good sound oath that smacks of every day. Description that bewilderingly suggests a very definite human reality is a continual element in the charm of his writings:

What she looked like, I cannot say. She was doubtless something like a stony landscape, different under different lights, changing with changing moods of time and place. What Miss Mary's features were, I do not know. I only know that she was very tall, with a big frame, that she had a crag-like forehead, and enjoyed the sight of only one eye, turning her head round in order to see the better; and that she wore a black silk dress or a black bombazine, a cloth whose name well agrees with her warlike qualities. . . .

The narrative is full of quaint, poetic burlesques, but woe to any reader who supposes that the persons thus described are not very much to be loved and respected. "My grandfather

McGhee" in these pages is outrageously adorable. The men drink prodigious quantities of whisky, do no work, and are noble and magnanimous.

Every one is familiar with the glamor of retrospect and with the enchantment of distance. But the device habitually employed by Mr. Young is something far more subtle than either of these. In what I am about to say, I do not wish to imply that Mr. Young deliberately does anything so crude as to make opportunities for description—though description, in the widest sense of the term is of course his forte. What he really appears to do is always to hold his objects at exactly the distance and exactly the angle that will make the best picture. Thus he achieves not only arrangement of the figures, but also precisely the degree of glamor, atmosphere, aerial perspective—abstraction, in short, from a too harsh reality—that he happens to desire. No other writer, I think, has made better use of this fictional unreality, this capacity of art for making everything interesting and agreeable.

If *facetious* had not been perverted from its old Latin meaning, it would be just the word to describe Mr. Young's work; except that in *Heaven Trees* there is characteristically American deepening of sentiment into emotion—a personal note of feeling, agreeable if not purely artistic.

Mr. Wells's two-volume novel is grandiose in scheme, and, for that reason, to me attractive. Mr. Wells says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter" at the beginning of his work and not, like the Preacher, at the end. To Mr. Wells the conclusion of the whole matter cannot be summed up in any convenient formula about the whole duty of man; it requires at least two volumes. I hope that the writing of many books will never come to be to Mr. Wells a weariness of the flesh, because he is one of the few writers who, for me, always succeeds in making ideas desperately exciting.

I shall not say much about the references—three or four in number—to living figures in British political life, whom Mr. Wells mentions by name. In this connection it is only fair to remark that the uncomplimentary characterizations come, not from Clissold himself, but from Clissold's brother—quite a different sort of chap—and that both the parties to the conversation are

suffering from influenza and have been drinking whisky. To take these utterances as the author's measured opinions would not, therefore, appear to be just. Whether they are in good taste or not, let every reader judge for himself.

The case illustrates, however, a somewhat vexatious difficulty one experiences in differentiating between Clissold and Wells. Of course it is inevitable, as Mr. Wells points out, that Clissold's views and Wells's views should largely coincide; but I do not yet see the advantage of point of view gained by introducing Clissold at all.

In Mr. Wells's other novels there has been no difficulty in appreciating the peculiar advantage of the chosen point of view; it has been too apparent for comment. The somewhat embittered Clissold, however, with his sorry childhood and (not too obvious) sense of "past lack", does not seem to me at present to be a help in appreciating the real significance of the story. His effect, in my own case, is to raise a doubt occasionally as to how much Mr. Wells means by what he writes. Is he chiefly drawing Clissold in this or that passage, or chiefly drawing life?

On the whole, this new novel is much less in the nature of "art work" than any of Mr. Wells's previous achievements in fiction. Still, though I agree that in order to know a man it is quite as necessary to know his ideas about religion and history and political economy (this is why Mr. Wells simply will not tell us who Clementina is!) as to know what woman he is in love with—while I heartily agree with this view and wish for more, not less of Clissold's opinions, nevertheless I think that a writing which in form combines the characteristics of *Tono Bungay* and the *Outline of History* cannot be a novel in the ordinary (art) sense.

My real criticism, or rather my real disappointment, however, is that I find Mr. Wells so often in these pages sometimes entertaining a genuinely retrospective and somewhat discouraged view. Usually he tears down only to build up. To find Wells even a little depressing is a new and not wholly pleasant experience. He may be as savage as he pleases—but I look to Wells for prospective thinking, not retrospective.

The second volume of this truly remarkable essay-novel is, as any reader of Wells would have anticipated, both more in-

tense and more *prospective* than the first. In it the somewhat too worldly and life-weary William Clissold of the first volume develops into the still violently prejudiced, still life-warped, but fully adult philosopher who anticipates the coming new order—anticipates it, I think, with a certain obvious fallibility, and with certain survivals of the old Adam, which strengthen the whole thesis on its emotional side as much as they weaken it on the logical side.

What is this *prospect* (it can scarcely be called a programme) which Mr. Wells reveals? In one aspect, it is “the Open Conspiracy”, the quiet organization of all really useful and forward-looking men and corporate agencies to eliminate moribund institutions, the posturing of politics, the futilities of traditional education, and to order all life in accordance with fundamental realities. A new type of man is developing among those who wield the greatest actual power—that is the suggestion. These men are just beginning to grow up, to take a really adult view of life; the modern world is giving opportunity and time for men to grow up, and when a sufficient number of them have reached full intellectual and moral maturity, they will alter the whole face of things.

Now this is prophecy—not a programme. Like all prophecy, it is immensely exciting, but suggests to my mind rather a spiritual preparation than a line of action. Like most Americans, I suppose, I cannot help distrusting any conspiracy—whether open or not—of the *optimi*. I do not trust excessively in the wisdom of the people, but I have a notion that the *optimi* are always liable to prove worse than the crowd. I hope that they will not get too much power or too soon.

But there is a religious aspect to this new prospect. “The attainment of the World Republic and the attainment of the fully adult life are the general and particular aspects of one and the same reality.” Rejecting all anthropomorphic religious conceptions, Mr. Wells finds liberation for the full-grown human being, not in the thought of personal immortality but in the thought of the absorption of the individual life in the life of humanity. And this, as he makes it appear, is a psychological reality—which may become as certain and satisfying as the quenching of thirst by water. “The individual forgets the doomed and defined

personal story that possessed his immaturity, the story of mortality, and merges himself in the unending adventure of history and the deathless growth of the race." Here, for those who can accept it, is a great reconciliation of St. Paul with science; and it is really the growing *impersonality* of Clissold's thought (despite his more or less deliberately irresponsible divagations) that gives an epic motive to the drama, as it is an almost mystic faith in the near advent of a new type of humanity which makes plausible the conception of the Open Conspiracy.

There is also an intensely personal side to the story. I will not say that there is too much sex in Clissold's life. I quite agree that sex ought to be talked about in a serious novel, and that, if talked about at all, it ought to be talked about frankly. I wholly sympathize with Clissold's strictures on "the romantic travesty". But I must confess—doubtless it is a confession—that I cannot help finding something a little comic in the fact that the ethics of the developing superman should be in certain particulars so exactly like those of the mythical "man about town", or the Mormon of American tradition, or the Turk of boyish imaginations. And the solemnity—really the solemnity of egoism—with which Clissold relates his amorous adventures (though some of them have a genuinely human quality), and the way in which he insists upon his unrepentance, do not diminish for me this effect. Can it be that the arts of the philanderer are really so important to the forerunner of the man of the future?

On the whole the novel seems to me an imperfect synthesis, and its idea seems to me also an imperfect synthesis; for the doctrine of the Open Conspiracy does not strike me as a wholly necessary consequence of the advent of maturity. The Conspiracy has the air of a desperate suggestion, while the impersonal attitude is a genuine attitude, a reality. But, however imperfect, the story of Clissold with all its elaboration, its apparent irrelevancies, its clutter of details and opinions, it does appear to show the process by which a writer sometimes possessed by genius, succeeds in suggesting an immense, a thrilling possibility.

CLARENCE H. GAINES.

SOME BOOKS ON THE FAR EAST

ASIA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. By Sir Frederick Whyte, K.C.S.I., LL.D. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

INDIA. By Sir Valentine Chirol. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

A CHINESE MIRROR. By Florence Ayscough. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

These three books are studies of the rather fretful awakening of the Orient, from Egypt and Turkey, through Persia and India to the Far East. All are inspired by a sympathetic understanding of the immensely varied Eastern peoples, and by a sincere desire to aid in the solution of their problems. Sir Frederick Whyte surveys the whole field. Sir Valentine Chirol concentrates on modern India. The writer of the Chinese Mirror seeks to give us an insight into the intimate life and spirit of the enigmatic Middle Kingdom.

The clash between Europe and Asia, of which the present ferment is the most recent phase, makes up a great part of what we know as history and echoes through much of our greatest literature. It is too soon, perhaps, to include in this summary the invasion of Palæolithic Europe by the round-skulled newcomers from Asia who brought the dawn of Neolithic times; but our own history begins when the Greeks, crossing the Ægean to fight the Asiatic Trojans, brought back the *Iliad*, reverberating through the Athenian drama and Virgil, to Shakespeare and Tennyson. The Persians, bridging the Straits from East to West, carried the fiery inspiration of patriotism to Æschylus and Thucydides. The Asian foray of Philip's son made one of the fine romances of personal valor; and that conquest, bringing Greek to Palestine and Egypt, supplied the medium for the Greek Gospels and Paul's Epistles.

Passing over the ebb and flow of Roman and Parthian, we have, in the fifth century of our era, the furious inroads of the Asian Huns; and, in the eighth, the coming of the Magyars to Central Europe and the Arabian tide flowing across Northern Africa to Spain, and giving us, before it ebbed, the beauty of the Alhambra and the magnificent cycle of Charlemagne and Roland.

Genghiz Khan set the next tide flowing, when the Mongol waves submerged Russia and infused a lasting tone of sadness