

tions of the last chapters and then to the accompanying text. What astonishing events! What unbelievable achievements! But, afterwards, this writer at least would go back to the early chapters to see how much of the story that is told here survived.

The chief purpose of the present revision has been to make the "Outline" simpler and easier to read.

## Tara Is Grass

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF JAMES STEPHENS. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1926. \$3 net.

Reviewed by JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

THE Irish literary movement has already passed through two phases, and seems destined to emerge into a third. The first phase started with the magnificent epic tales of Standish O'Grady—for the strange, tragic figure of Mangan belongs properly to the remote Middle Ages and recalls the bards who sang at the high feasts of dead and forgotten kings,—and it culminated in the plays and poems of Yeats, the dramas of Synge, the fantasies of Dunsany, the essays of A. E. The achievements of this phase of Irish literature are now a solid part of literary tradition wherever the English language is read and studied. Unfortunately, all these writers were infected to a certain extent with the attitude of mind of the nineties—an attitude that regarded literature as something remote from life, that was in a sense afraid of life's coarseness, its hardness, its vulgarity. Yet the movement these men represented had enough momentum to produce a second crop of writers, and in this crop the figure of Mr. Stephens stands high. His merited popularity as a prose writer has kept him from sharing the usual fate of the poet, and has enabled him to conquer a wider audience than might have been his had he been primarily and entirely a singer.



Mr. Stephens opens his collected poems with a preface in which he reveals the fact that he has taken his previous books of verse and has reprinted them, not in chronological order but grouped under subjects. As a matter of fact, by so doing he has, though perhaps unconsciously, contributed to the confusion of values and ideas concerning art that is so distressingly prevalent today. If we could read Mr. Stephens's work chronologically, we could see what his point of departure was, and what he really aimed at. To a true lover of poetry it is of the utmost importance that Milton began with "Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," and ended with "Samson Agonistes;" or that Keats began with "Endymion," and ended with "Hyperion." A poet's work should have a logical development and aim as the poet goes along the way of life. To believe in arrested development for the artist is as bad as to believe in arrested development for man, or for the world at large. The Parable of the Talents which we read in the New Testament is surely the wisest and truest word said on the subject. If Mr. Stephens has chosen to mingle his old poems with his new, we cannot avoid the awkward suspicion that he has at bottom written always the same sort of poem—a suspicion strengthened before we reach the end of these two hundred and fifty pages.

But, says Mr. Stephens in his Preface, what would you have? "Within the last thirty years the tempo of the whole world has enormously accelerated. We must evolve a new technique, or must continue to compose and paint and write in the only form that can deal with an interim situation or with speed—the lyrical form." An ingenious argument, but not just. It has yet to be proven that the tempo of any age has any effect upon the art-form the age evolves: that is a question rather of religious, sociological, economic, and other factors. To the Elizabethans, the age they lived in may have seemed even speedier than ours: there were new continents to discover, Armadas to fight, plagues and insurrections to put down; religion was crumbling, art had been shaken up by the Italians, morals were in a bad way, and so on.

The trouble with this age, on the contrary, is not its speed but its superficiality. We are all too busy to think twice on any subject. We accept too easily all that we are told. We have lost the habit of finding out things for ourselves, and have become like children living in the midst of great accumulations of confused information, and behaving as if all these facts about life were our toys to be played

with or broken. Even Mr. Stephens behaves like a child breaking his toy when he says that epic is now impossible, being the product of a matured age, and coming at the end of an epoch. As a matter of fact, the great epics of the world are all the products of new, warrior, feudal societies which had overcome the mature civilizations of the past—and which saw those civilizations as something remote and august and gigantic and awful. Epic is, therefore, the product, not of an old age, but of a vividly new one—lyric, satire, and drama are the stages towards maturity, while philosophy and fiction mark the decadence. Mr. Stephens would do well to study history more deeply.

To turn from this preface to the poems themselves is to admit that in Mr. Stephens, the Irish school perhaps possesses its finest craftsman. Now that Mr. Yeats has practically given up writing there is no one to compete with him. Cunningly and adroitly does this poet ring the changes on a few well-chosen notes. There is the poem expressing sorrow for passing things; that of awe and terror at the presence of God; that of ecstasy at a bird's song (Mr. Stephens, like all Georgian poets, English or Irish, writes well about birds); that of liting mockery or pity. But rarely does Mr. Stephens strike a more poignant note, and never a harsher one. Even in the midst of his realistic portraits, which are that of a Masefield turned Irishman, and his delvings into mysticism, which are William Blake dashed with Brahminism, he is able to find again the authentic voice of Thomas Moore and to write a stanza like this:

I was there all alone in the night,  
With the moon; and we talked for awhile;  
And her face was a wonder of light  
And her smile was a beautiful smile!

This stanza is in its way a great achievement. It could only have been reached by excessive, and brooding care for each syllable. To achieve such felicity and ease, and to say nothing, is perhaps the supreme goal of the poet's technique. But technique and craftsmanship are not everything, and I find Mr. Stephens frequently blurring the fine edge of what might be a memorable poem by a trick other Irish writers have frequently employed, that of shying away from his idea, and writing the last stanza as a weak anti-climax to all that has gone before. Consider the following, chosen for its briefness:

I grow single and sure,  
And I will not endure  
That my mind should be seen  
By the sage or the boor.

I will keep, if I can,  
From each brotherly man  
The help of their hands  
Is no part of my plan.

I will rise, I will go,  
To the land of my foe:  
For his scowl is the sun  
That shall cause me to grow.

The last two lines here weaken the picture, tone it down, make it soft and pleasant. Mr. Stephens is either too adroit a performer or too careless a thinker to pursue his idea to its logical end. He is content after all to suggest rather than to state. This is the art of the minor poet. And, on the whole, he is to be preferred when, like the best of minor poets, he avoids realism and cultivates a Herrick-like lightness and daintiness.

## A Russian Idyll

MITYA'S LOVE. By IVAN BUNIN. Translated from the French by Madelaine Boyd. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1926. \$2.

BUNIN, although comparatively little known in this country, belongs to the generation of Gorki—he is fifty-six—and he already had a career behind him when the Revolution drove him from Russia in 1919. Of late he has been living in Paris, where he, with various other Russian refugee writers, have contributed to a little magazine, *Contemporary Writing*, published in Russian, in which, a year or two ago, "Mitya's Love" appeared.

One of the incidentally interesting things about this little novelette, which is more an expanded short story than a novel in the ordinary sense, is the absence of reference, direct or indirect, to the Revolution, and the completeness with which the artist—and Bunin is that—goes back to the atmosphere of his earlier days. He never took any interest in poli-

tics and avoided most of the ante-bellum literary discussions and rows, but some of his references to Russia since he left it have shown enough of the familiar "refugee psychology" to make all the more unusual this intense and purely lyrical study of young love.

There is only a wisp of plot on which to hang this story of the dreams and despair of a boy of seventeen, and but for a word here and there the essential Mitya might almost as well be Ludwig, Alphonso, Eduardo, or Jim. "Russian," in a sense, is the sensitiveness to nature—Bunin spent a large part of his time in Russia on a country estate—the way in which earthy sights and smells and sounds accompany and somehow interpret what is going on inside the boy who moves among them, and also the candor with which the physical as well as the idealistic manifestations of Mitya's tragedy are told. But the outstanding quality of the tale is its universality, a lyricism uncluttered with local reference and put in terms of rare beauty.

## An Irish Legend

ULICK AND SORACHA. By GEORGE MOORE. London: Nonesuch Press. 1926.

Reviewed by THEODORE PURDY, JR.

MR. MOORE'S new book is beautiful to see, with its vellum wrapper and its exquisitely chosen type, and there is no less beauty in its contents. It is so easy to read! The perfect flow and flexibility of this prose is more than welcome after the laborious mannerisms, miscalled "style," which impregnate so many otherwise admirable pieces of present-day writing. With serenity and candor the legend of Ulick de Burgo and his Princess Soracha is detailed, and a background of the greatest historical importance is lightly filled in. The atmosphere of fourteenth century Ireland is a new one for George Moore, but he has made it completely his. The early "Irish problem," the Norman and Scot invaders, the warrings and adventures are given the precise shade of emphasis necessary to throw the persons of the story into the limelight of actuality. Somehow the obscure archæological feeling that is only too apt to result from a detailed study of any period more than a hundred years ago has been avoided. The explanation is simple.

After the years, after the vicissitudes of thirty books, two things, in fact, seem to have been preserved to George Moore,—his love for Ireland and his hard won style. The former explains the vivid success of "Ulick and Soracha" quite as much as the latter, especially if it is considered as a recreation of mediæval times. It is not, in itself, easy to see what transformation the man has undergone, for in the beginning he did not care for Ireland as he did for France, and he wrote badly,—how badly only George Moore has dared to say of late. It is not difficult to trace the sheer devotion and loving care that have made of him more than a good writer, but the growth of his imagination amidst the labyrinth of his subjects, until we come to such fine things as "Hail and Farewell" and this new book, is a greater problem. It is a change more strange and more pronounced than mere legitimate development.

From problem novels and imitations of Zola, from biblical drama, from Mayfair and Paris, from far lands and frail, all too frail, subjects he has come home again to Ireland, and few wanderers have been more welcome. For in doing so, he has not only written one of his best books. He has created his greatest character. A fine skill and a high power have been Mr. Moore's in writing of Tadhg, the servant and harper of Ulick de Burgo. Captured by the Bruce and exiled in Scotland, his adventures form the bulk of the book. One comes to know him amazingly well. A devout man, terrified of divine retribution, yet infinitely curious, faithful yet opinionated, he is as much an enduring type as the Sancho Panza whom he resembles. Through this man's talk, the author again gives us his views of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Tadhg's skirmishings and retreats on the subject of women, demonstrated in his marriage, are in Mr. Moore's well known manner. But he has never been more eloquent and persuasive, and his indiscretions, like everything else in this book, are carefully kept in their proper place. For the rest, how clearly he has seen these people and how clearly he has conveyed his vision! A great lesson, by contrast, is here for anyone who cares at all for writing as an art, rather than as a convenience. The lesson is called: How to write simply and well.

## History in Masquerade

REVELRY. By SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS. New York: Boni & Liveright. \$2.

Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS

"REVELRY" describes itself, perhaps for prudential reasons, as "a novel of the time just beyond our own day;" which is correct, if you look backward. It is the story of the golden prime of good old Warren Harding, of the oil scandals, the Veterans' Bureau thieveries, the Ohio gang. The publishers' jacket is having its little joke in suggesting that "twelve persons will be identified with each man and woman in the book;" the informed reader of the newspapers will have no trouble in identifying all of them (except one or two pure inventions added for the sake of the plot) although Mr. Adams has used the fiction writer's privilege of alteration and combination as his needs require.

He has taken no more liberties with the facts, and the rumors, than historical novelists are constantly taking in writing about periods a little more remote. Nobody would criticize the method if he were dealing with Charlemagne, or Louis XIV, or Napoleon III; but because the material is fresh a great many people will accuse him of bad taste, especially after Republican zealots have started the mob scene. It is not bad taste to steal everything loose around Washington, but it is bad taste (so one was copiously assured in 1924) to call attention to it. Mr. Adams, however, is an old *Sun* man, indoctrinated with the *Sun* tradition that whatever God permits to happen (even the *Sun* had to pretend to believe in God, in the days when this phrase was coined) is fit to print.

It is true that the incidents of the story include not only verified facts, but some matters which are still *sub judice*; and juries being what they are, their verdict may not accord with that of history. There is also a good deal that was Washington gossip, but never found its way into the record, for reasons which did not always reflect on its credibility. And there are some incidents which are pure invention for the sake of the plot—an action plot, including two murders, two or three love affairs, and a Presidential suicide.



There will be disagreement as to the propriety of such a commingling of fact, fiction, and more or less unverified hypothesis. But, as observed above, it is the traditional method of the historical novel. Men who make history should expect to see their doings, and the surmises to which their behavior gave rise, set down in print. Some of us are old-fashioned enough to hold that the men whose actions gave Mr. Adams his inspiration do not come into court with clean enough hands to complain about any small embellishments that may have been added by the fiction writer.

And what a magnificent store of material it is, the whole glittering, grotesque, sordid, and obscene spectacle of these states in the twenty-ninth presidential (no more than a spectacle, unhappily, for though it may turn the stomach of the earnest patriot the general public agreed to look on it as a good show and nothing more). It is enough to tempt any author—and yet there have been not more than three or four authors in history who could do it justice. Aristophanes, Petronius, Rabelais—who are unhappily defunct. Several young men have lately nominated themselves as the Petronii of our time, but none of them found a second for his motion; many called themselves but few were chosen. Even Mark Twain was only moderately successful in turning our previous Gilded Age into fiction. Only the very greatest satirists could deal adequately with the Harding administration—and Mr. Adams has had the rare modesty to realize that he is not a great satirist, and the rare judgment to refrain, accordingly, from trying to be a satirist at all.

He has done more than that. The publishers' jacket does him grave injustice in calling "Revelry" a big novel. America is short on satirists, great or small, but it simply crawls with writers of big, large, great, stupendous, vital, or significant novels. One can think of twenty American authors who, confronted with the Harding administration, would be unable to refrain from writing a great novel about it—an interpretative novel, which should correlate that outbreak of grand and petty larceny with the movement of history and the spirit of the time.

Well, there is undoubtedly a great novel in the material—a truly great novel, not a great novel as the phrase is understood today; but it would take a truly great novelist to get it out. The name does not come to mind at the moment. Mr. Adams has had the wisdom to perceive that in these times a non-great novel has a scarcity value, and has contented himself with using the material to make a good story.

To this reviewer he seems to deserve more praise for what he has refrained from doing than for what he has actually done; his material is too good, so good that there is little to be done with it. Much of the book seems an old story because one has already read it all in the newspapers. What was evidently the chief interest of the author will probably be the chief interest of the reader as well—the character study of President Willis Markham; "torpid, good-humored, complacent, friendly, indulgent to himself, obliging to others, as loyal as a Samurai, full of party piety, a hater of the word 'No,' faithful to his own code of private honor, reliable, and as standardized as a Ford car." There is a good deal of pathos in the picture of the struggle of a third-rate intelligence with the duties of the Presidency, grown too great for even a first-rate intelligence; in his sigh of relief when he can come back to the accustomed ease of the friendly poker game with the old gang; and in the occasional outbursts of rage when this slow-witted man who trusted his friends but was honest according to his dim lights discovered what his friends were really doing.

The picture of the President who was too small for his job is done with genuine sympathy, and even his grafting friends are treated with detachment; though the remark that a certain woman was "vain as only blondes fighting the approach of forty can be" sounds like a mean dig at somebody. If there is a villain in the story it is the great sap public. Mr. Adams agrees with Miss Millay; the audience will forget. It has forgotten already.

But leaving moral reprobation to the future (the present being obviously uninterested) there is a good story here, and if it fails of absorbing interest the reason is only that to newspaper readers it is already familiar. And at any rate Mr. Adams deserves the Pulitzer prize for Modesty; he is that rarest of feathered creatures, the angel who fears to tread.

## A Rip Van Winkle Town

THE FIDDLER IN BARLY. By ROBERT NATHAN. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co. 1926. \$2.

Reviewed by CHARLES E. NOYES

MOST of the contemporary American novelists are possessed of a consuming desire to be great. In their interesting and sometimes noteworthy failures, unfortunately, authors of more merit but lesser pretensions are apt to be buried. It is unfortunate, also, that the admirers of such an author, to make themselves heard, must cry superlatives which do not entirely become him, which tend to convey the impression that he is merely another of the innumerable superlatively praised literary lights.

Robert Nathan is not of his generation in any sense which makes comparison possible, although he is undoubtedly affected by the *zeitgeist*. He has received favorable notice because he writes well, from the standpoint of classical as well as of impressionistic criticism; and because he has enough both of personality and ability to make important the material which he uses. He is read by a few who care to appreciate delicacy and restraint which do not depend upon neurasthenically repressed passions for their effectiveness, but he has not yet been found by any large portion of his potential audience. In "The Fiddler in Barly," he offers a fourth novel charmingly equal with the others.

As usual, he makes use of a style which is quiet, careful, precise. Not pervading, but like fluted columns holding it to a level of fine urbanity, are passages of subdued humor. This, for example, with the setting a small church:

But Mr. Shrub, the postmaster, saw something else: he saw the letters which came to them, now and then, from other places. A letter from far away did a queer thing to a man; it gave him a secret. Mr. Shrub saw the hills around Barly, and beyond that, other hills—hills, plains, rivers, all the way across the world. It made his heart beat to think of so many places where he'd be a stranger. Not wishing to think about such things in church, he bowed his head, and thought about heaven instead. He was more at home there; there was nothing strange about heaven.

The story concerns itself with the inhabitants of a Rip Van Winkle town, their individual affairs, the reactions between them and a pantheistic fiddler who becomes hired man for the town's widow. In this isolated setting, things of importance are a love affair between the minister's daughter and the organist, the disillusion of a child who worships the minister's daughter, the postmaster's baffled desire to travel. The fiddler himself is an actor who has played previously the parts of the schoolmaster in "Autumn," of "The Puppet Master," and of Naaman in "Jonah." He is again a different character in his new rôle, but he brings to it remembrance of the others. He is still a romantic poet who does not quite succeed at his self-imposed task of taking the world as it is, but he has now attained, after all, some joy of life. He has occasionally to talk philosophically to keep his courage up.

He carries very well the *leit-motif* of all of Mr. Nathan's novels. While he may overcapitalize the ideas of Youth and Age, of Love and Beauty, he is possessed of that rare compassion which has in it no contemptuous pity. The other characters have most actually youth or age, love and beauty, and in their presence he is superb.

This same *motif* is executed harmoniously, in a lesser key, by his dancing dog Musket, and the members of the barnyard society. Batholomew, the cock, has a magnificent climax which coincides with, and motivates, the climax of the book.

## The Press Boss Unveiled

SAVIOURS OF SOCIETY. By STEPHEN MCKENNA. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1926. \$2.50.

Reviewed by STEPHEN GRAHAM

THE long extracts from Browning's "Prince Hohenstich-Schwangau at the heads of the chapters of Stephen McKenna's new novel make the book look dull. For the later Browning was very tedious. But his "Saviours of Society" is better than Browning's poem and is in fact a very good novel.

Its subject is the Newspaper Chief, a variant of Arnold Bennett's "Lord Raingo." It is curious how much fiction of this kind London has produced this fall. Even Wells's "William Chissold with his brother's religion of publicity is concerned with the same type of pseudo-hero. McKenna has thought fit to portray the late Lord Northcliffe and call him Ambrose Sheridan. An unkind fate has forced a fastidious young writer who evidently loathed Northcliffe to duplicate the Napoleon of Carmelite street lovingly in the imagination.

It is a psychological study but it follows Lord Northcliffe's life closely, stopping short abruptly without going on to his madness and death. A vulgar, impulsive, full-blooded man not touched to fine issues, but possessed of body and nerve superior to that of most of his rivals, Sheridan romps to power in easy-going modern England. He is not a man of genius, but through the accident of modern commercial valuation his personality gets multiplied by his newspapers and by his wealth. In England a man who has a million is automatically considered greater than a man who has half a million. In fact it is easier for a business man to make a reputation of greatness over there than it is here. Selfridge is a genuinus, *vide* H. G. Wells; Lever on a pyramid of Sunlight-Soap used to be thought a super man. But in truth Selfridge is only equal to Wanamaker, and Lord Leverhulme being dead and already forgotten is considerably less than our Mr. Colgate.

Ambrose Sheridan, like Lord Northcliffe, found himself exalted above his station and still craved for power and thought of himself as a Napoleon. He had a very charming wife, though even Molly Northcliffe was hardly such an angel as Laura Sheridan. He was childless, wanted an heir, wanted to found a dynasty, and he had various affairs outside of matrimony.

The best of "Saviours of Society" is the portrayal of the women in it. There are two good women—the neglected wife, Laura, and the desired wife-to-be, Aureol. Aureol's mother is also cleverly indicated. McKenna shows himself less cynical than he is by reputation and allows his feminine characters to win one's heart in an old fashioned way. The love and self-sacrifice of Laura is unusual and appealing and when she offers to put herself in the wrong and be divorced as an unfaithful woman one cannot help