BROOM

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SUBURBAN LANDSCAPE.

Pallid with heat, a taut metallic sky
Is looped above the siding, drably scarred
With rails that flank a sooty engine-yard,
Ash-heaps and sheds and roofing all awry.

Derelict mouse-grey trucks are mirrored by
The sepia of a mute canal, where charred
Gasometers squat sullenly on guard,
And barges drowse and boilers faintly sigh.

Tonight the arc-lamps, poised from slender stems,
Will bloom like silvery fruits. Signals will gleam
With shifting specks of jade and crimson gems.
Then music: hiss and gasp of throttled steam,
Staccato gamut of the shunted trains,
And murmurous diapason of the cranes.

P. SELVER.

JAN ZRZAVY.

Czecho-Slovak Painting.

A ROMAN NIGHT.

In the hotel garden, some cats were singing. A dog dispersed them with much barking; then came back hanging out his tongue, blue from having eaten blackberries or fountain pens. While we attacked our trunks, in chaotic disorder, the mother of Isabelle waited in the hall. She was a little woman, excessively preserved by milk of cucumbers and egotism; her wrinkles knotted behind her ears, her bosom sowed with a row of false pearls whose nautical originals she held in her hand in a little bag of crocodile skin.

When she saw me she cried out:

"I confide my daughter to you. Isabelle does not want to go back to France with me. She permits no constraint. She is like the air. Nothing matters to her. You, Monsieur, you are a scholar, a man of sense; watch over her. Where is she? She is here no longer. Gone God knows where, without a maid. She has carried off some bottles, a quilt, and a spade with which to kill lizards, saying that she hoped for nothing more from me and that my hypocrisy irritated her. This young lady drinks like a sink, and all liquors without distinction. Nothing which used to amuse us, the four step, Hungarian lace, the horse show, Venetian painting, interests her. Every thirty years the world sheds a skin and us with it. At your age, I tell her, I had five children. And she replies: 'That must have given you a pretty belly.' She is indifferent to clothes; she refuses to go out into society. My scruples and my prejudices enchant her. She endeavors to amuse herself with everything, but by ridicule. She knows nothing. No taste for art. That which she writes has no sense. Morally one would say that she has gone to pieces; she is everyone's prey; she congratulates herself on everything that happens or scoffs at it; she calls herself accursed but laughs about it. I shall miss my train. Truly a worm is in the fruit. Tell me what is this madness?"

"It is a generation sacrified, Madame; the men have become soldiers, the women, fools. Fate has again apportioned us a pretty lot of calamities."

She stopped the motor which prevented our hearing one another.

"Note that up to the age of fifteen there never was a better brought-up child," she said, entrusting me with the key of her room which she had omitted

to give back to the porter. (I myself forgot about this key until the heavy triangle of copper to which it was attached had made a hole in my pocket large enough for it to gain the street.)

Graphological Study By Professor Ovide.

Study No. 34. — ISABELLE.

Handwriting of a young woman of refined and sufficiently mobile physiognomy. Strong constitution. Although she lives in luxury, it is doubtful whether she belongs by birth to an aristocratic milieu. Intelligence superficial ; but quite adequate for pleasing ; ideas personal without always being logical. Disposition difficult.

More of a coquette than she would care to admit, she keeps to a fixed deportment and is antipathetic to that which is too licentious. More independent than proud ; even to a fault in this regard.

Expansive and amiable in society. Her sincerity is subservient to caution. Heart half dry, tender by fits. Need of authority and influence over persons loved. Sensuality, which exists, is not of a delicate character. Cunning on occasion.

I reread this graphological study of Isabelle which I had asked Professor Ovide, of St. Mans-les-Fossés, to prepare on one of our first days. I used it to know her better, long enough to discover that the diagnosis was false. Experience left nothing of it but some half-humurous trifles in the lingo of mind-readers, at which she was the first to laugh.

Isabelle had an impulsive temperament and a reserved character. I only had the leisure to find this out and to make her acquaintance in a general way after we had enjoyed together that pleasure which formerly was used to crown or to seal the affections. In truth, the night even of our first meeting, at the Teatro Valle, she told me that I looked like a sycamore, and we embraced each other in the carriage which brought us to her mother's. The rules of the game were found to be much simplified. Passion lost thereby its graduated interest, but the sway of sentimental, magnetic and chemical exchanges ruled more freely and gained in verity ; and we in lucidity.

Isabelle confessed to me afterwards that she neglected no occasion to proffer this spontaneous gift of her person ; she acted thus from an excess of modesty,

not hesitating to sacrifice her virtue ; she rejoiced in it as an aid to her intelligence and to her sensitiveness. In reality her intelligence was mediocre and I doubt if her sensibility had ever corrupted this heart " half dry, tender by fits " that Professor Ovide had defined for me.

At any rate here we found ourselves on the ground floor of a trusting intimacy which rarely is the privilege of people without prejudices. By a curious regression, which doubtless was the result of the manner in which we made each others' acquaintance — so true is it that one cannot invert the natural order of things without danger — I was not slow in experiencing for Isabelle all the customary phases of sentiment, but in reverse order. In the beginning, indifference and fatigue followed by that tenderness which results from the pleasure of winning love, and ending in curiosity and play.

We saw each other very often. Isabelle spent several long months in Rome, not that I was ever able to guess what held her in this unpicturesque and desolate town.

When I asked her, jokingly, if she expected to end her days there :

" Perhaps, " she said, " and before long. "

Her pension looked out upon the old fortifications in the vicinity of the Porta Pia. My life looked out on a court from the second floor of the Palazzo Farnese, for I was a pupil of the Ecole de Rome. I kept there a card index, a ladder to reach the books on the highest shelves in the library, and a muddy inkwell. When six o'clock rang, I would take leave of my dear master in the corner room. He read low African authors seated in an armchair of emerald velvet, surrounded by Angoras and other cats the color of pumice stone, such as one finds around the Trajan Column. I have not forgotten his eyeglasses poised on his forehead like two great icicles, his white hair rebellious as the character underneath, nor his head like an old peasant Erasmus which stood out in silhouette against a milky Janiculus. Then I reached the court through several corridors ravaged by draughts. The concierge, the same who discreetly sold antiquities in the depths of his den and retailed the feet of the Farnese Hercules, inclined to me a smile hung from his silver stripes.

On the shore of the Tiber, Isabelle waited for me. We returned on foot to the higher quarters. Her physique amazed in that country of women with long busts and short thighs. She had a minute head which she claimed was filled with water, to excuse her follies. She had never been capable of possessing a body. From her shoulders she instantaneously divided into two legs thin and pointed in the shape of a compass which moved her forward by pricking off the pavement. She wore on her left ankle a heavy slave bracelet of sculptured copper which made her limp.

Before a third party she quite willingly kept silent, but in tête-a-tête, let herself go saying everything she thought. She but little liked acquaintances, particularly those one meets in hotels and pensions, in which she was wrong — for anything is preferable to a friendship which endures and for the endurance of which one is obliged to espouse every form of a twofold hazard and become a hybrid monster, expensive, and greedy of sacrifices.

When I warned her against asceticism :

" The true ascetics are the amateurs of society. My mother, for example. Vices and virtues. For them, the social world takes the place of everything. "

Isabelle hated her mother, never missing an occasion of making her ridiculous and only praising her when she was absent. At table she seemed to lie in wait for a chance to pounce on her.

She smiled, puckering her narrow eyes, as if to introduce her interlocutor to a complete idea and to invite a response ; she ended her sentences by holding out her opened hands, the insides of which were painted a bright rose. Usually she was without wit, except, as with all women, in her letters. The fragments of her diary which she showed me seemed destitute of value. But she spit up blood, won money from me at poker by cheating, and had a lively taste for lies which contrasted with an extreme physical bravery. I have seen her, in the course of an accident, give first aid, forgetting to dress her own injuries. During thirty-six months of the war she drove a field ambulance at Noyon.

In her room Isabelle ordered a drink, pausing over the glass, half empty ; her eyes filled with tears, as if the draught had opened some mysterious and sensitive portal, then without lifting her face from the glass, she went on drinking. She seated herself tailor fashion on the carpet, crossing her legs underneath, not without dry arthritic crackings of her bony knees, and smoked without cessation with the air of a lazy cat. Thus she remained for hours, inactive, cynical and genital.

In the spring, Isabelle made some acquaintances. She had lived alone all winter.

" What do you think of Igor ? "

I reproached him for his beauty, his venomous eyes, and for the clamour of the colored placards in which Igor, the great movie star, stood forth in a dress suit on desolate shores, or as a poor student in an upholstered vestibule, his irritating profile silhouetted against dormer windows, his sallow skin punctuated with stars, his hands pallid with cream beside those of teamsters telling fortunes in dives.

" He looks like a maple tree, " said Isabelle.

Igor is Greco-Irish. His father is a general in Greece and his mother the wife of a general in Ireland. The first time I met him at Isabelle's, she weighed the two of us.

"Life is a tissue of contrasts," sighed she.

This was the phase when Isabelle took to kidney-vetch, surrounded herself with prismatic crystals, breakfasted on ginger bread, acquired a Florentine cupboard bed; received each day a magnolia from an unknown hand, and gave strange orders to the servants; it was impossible for her to touch suède without fainting. She shut herself off from life by specious reasonings; she received me reclining on panther skins and her words became elliptical.

One day she took me into her room. Above her bed were pinned an assortment of bills, letters, photographs of foot racers, and a placard on which I read: Do not forget to make love on Saturday with Igor. I felt I should not question her. But she looked at me:

"Your eyes are dull," she said. "The eyes of Igor are crystal. I don't like resigned heroes."

"As for me I like women who make their own hats, and who speak of the deceptions of existence."

"As you like. But beware of falling of the womb."

She placed her glass on the disc of the phonograph and watched it turn to the sound of "Naples! I want to die, 'neath your enchanted sky."

"You . . ."

"Don't talk," she interrupted. "I feel what you are going to say: 'My God! that a woman who does not love me can be such a hussy.' Or perhaps 'Stick to me, you will see, I will bring you luck.'"

Igor had a friend, Wanda. Isabelle introduced me to her: she was Polish and believed in ghosts. We made several nocturnal excursions to the site of Ostium. I sat on the bracket seat. Isabelle had Wanda on her right, Igor on her left, and held under her hands their similar fingers. Her sincerity disconcerted me. To keep from abuse, I joked:

"I would rather be the first in my village than the second in Rome, or the third . . ."

Under cover of my gracefulness and insolence I laid bare my lost and found sufferings. I would have wished to live near Isabelle and to love her as completely as when far away. But in the evening I found myself discovering in her that which I was obliged in the morning to detest, her imprudences and the promptitude and low character of her entertainments.

Through Wanda, Isabelle learned to know the odor of red hair, the explanation of her afternoon melancholy, the best addresses for silk jerseys, unpublished

Levantine solitaire on a horoscopic base, and to kill bees in order to suck their honey. This was the regime of lemons, of shaddocks, of jujubes and of tri-colored bonbons. Isabelle painted lozenges and spirals on her trunks, searched far and wide for devices, sent anonymous letters to statesmen, bought mosaic brooches, wore chasubles, disturbed her quarter by nocturnal uproars, extolled poverty, and discovered she was afflicted by aortic lesion.

During this period I was less unhappy. Isabelle summoned me to a meeting in the public gardens. On a bench she told me that she would commit suicide with gas, and that she did not wish to be carried into a drug-store.

Laughable and pale, she repeated :

" I am at a cross-roads . . . "

To console her I cited these verses of the good La Fontaine of Ravignan street :

Child Hercules found two roads on his route
One leading to vice the other to virtue
Continuing the first he would doubtless have found
Some bifurcations which would have confused him.

I met Wanda one morning. It was on the Piazza S. Isidoro. In building a branch of the Banca Commerciale, they had excavated by chance a temple of Jupiter. The illustrated papers were taking photographs. It was an occasion for a promenade. It was raining. All mauve and green, Wanda was domiciled in an unsinkable waterproof.

I upbraided her for her spirit of domination, her skillful fencing, her sweet and nasty habits, in a word, for the ambuscade into which Isabelle had fallen.

" Don't you know, " said she, " how I met Isabelle ? My hair is red, but it is she who is jealous. She waited until morning in front of Igor's door. It was I who came out. She spoke without knowing me. "

" I want a word with you, " she said.

" I led her away to my rooms. She remained there . . . We were more than a week without daring to confess to Igor. "

Enclosed by a screen of reed cane, the sub-basements of the bank were visible among which a two-faced Jupiter had just been brought to life, frigid and dominating, the first vice-president.

" My story doesn't please you ? "

" It hurts me to see how all you women of today are disorderly and unproductive. "

" Complain all you like . . . But believe me, all these vagrancies of Isabelle are only mortifying experiences destined to humiliate her pride. "

" You are but an amiable sophism, " I answered, and left her.

Wanda called after me :

" Do you really find that I look like a holly-oak tree ? "

Then Isabelle invented a mulatto. His name was Jock and his trousers hung from a nickel-plated belt. He inscribed on hardwood floors with the toe and heel of his polished shoes, magic characters which one wished to decipher. His nails like pink drops stopped at the ends of his fingers. Without apparent effort, either forward or backward, he could touch the ground with his woolly hair. He worshipped fetiches and adored ladies' purses. One saw them together at the Palatino and at the Excelsior bar.

Isabelle was about to sing his praises but I got in the first blow.

" Don't tell me that he looks like a wild rose tree. "

In a little while she developed a taste for denatured alcohol, plug tobacco, clog dancing, the noisiest ragtime, vermillion tablecloths, gooseberry colored satin knickerbockers, a cloak made of patches placed end to end.

" Jock loves me, " said Isabelle. " He has asked me for letters and photographs. His skin is crackled to imitate porcelain. He has prehensile feet and goes down trees like a cat, head foremost. He is enormous. . . How does Buffon put it in speaking of elephants, a monster of matter ? He also knows how to forge signatures and pick locks. When he comes to see me he says : ' I cannot leave you without carrying off something of yours. ' "

She added : " I love him also. We attracted each other at once like magnetized bars. His great black hand on my forehead, and headaches pass away ; must I lose your esteem for this ? And my mother claims I am unmanageable ! A change of love works on me as a change of air on others. It performs miracles. "

" What a queer couple ! And never divided by boredom ? "

" Never. But all this is dangerous and complicated. I will explain it to you some day. "

What was his hour at Isabelle's ? One never ran into him. But we received anonymous envelopes which contained monstrous photographs of our friend. Looking more closely, we noticed that the head had been cut out and glued on. I discovered in a pawnbroker's on the Trastevere a bracelet that I had given her.

Wanda told me.

" Yesterday morning, I was in my room ; I was dressing. Some one rang. Being alone, I did not open.

" Who is there ? "

Behind the door someone muttered :
" Let me in ; it's a friend. "
I did nothing.
Some one went down the stairs and that was all.

Meanwhile Isabelle disappeared, as I have told, at the very moment her mother was leaving Rome. I waited, knowing that she would not put off giving me a sign. Nothing happened. Her absence sometimes was agreeable, but more often distressing : we cease having a taste for mystery when our friends prove themselves amateurs of enigma. I accumulated fears. After a day without her, my room, in the evening would give but a cold reception ; I lived on exasperations, deploring the blemishes of life, hastening to mingle with the crowds on the streets, reacting to the headlines of the newspapers ; I was a scholar, I could not accustom myself to live, as is necessary these days, without documentation, without preliminary investigations, going to press madly every moment.

One evening I found Igor and Wanda on a terrace. They were taking a drink the colour of colchicum before the petrified furbelows of the church of Jesus.

Isabelle had given no indication of life to anyone.

" I only know from the masseuse, " said Wanda, " that she has rented a house outside of the walls. Pavillion 12, in a Boche villa which has a name like a café. Just beyond la Porta del Popolo, a hole between two hills, in which lies a garden damp and crushed by shade . . . "

Igor interrupted her.

" The proprietor springs from a German story with a black knitted bonnet and a beard full of bats ? He lives in the central chalet with some watchdogs who intone the death rattle under the doors ? It is the same one. I know the place, we acted a film there. "

" Let's take supper to her, unexpectedly, " I said. " Surprise Party. "

We put into the carriage champagne, a basket of fruit and five pounds of ice.

The horse had to stop half way up the hill.

We were weighed down with provisions, the gate was open. Igor and Wanda were puffing in the dark, imitating every kind of a stable noise, and on their hands the noise of kissing.

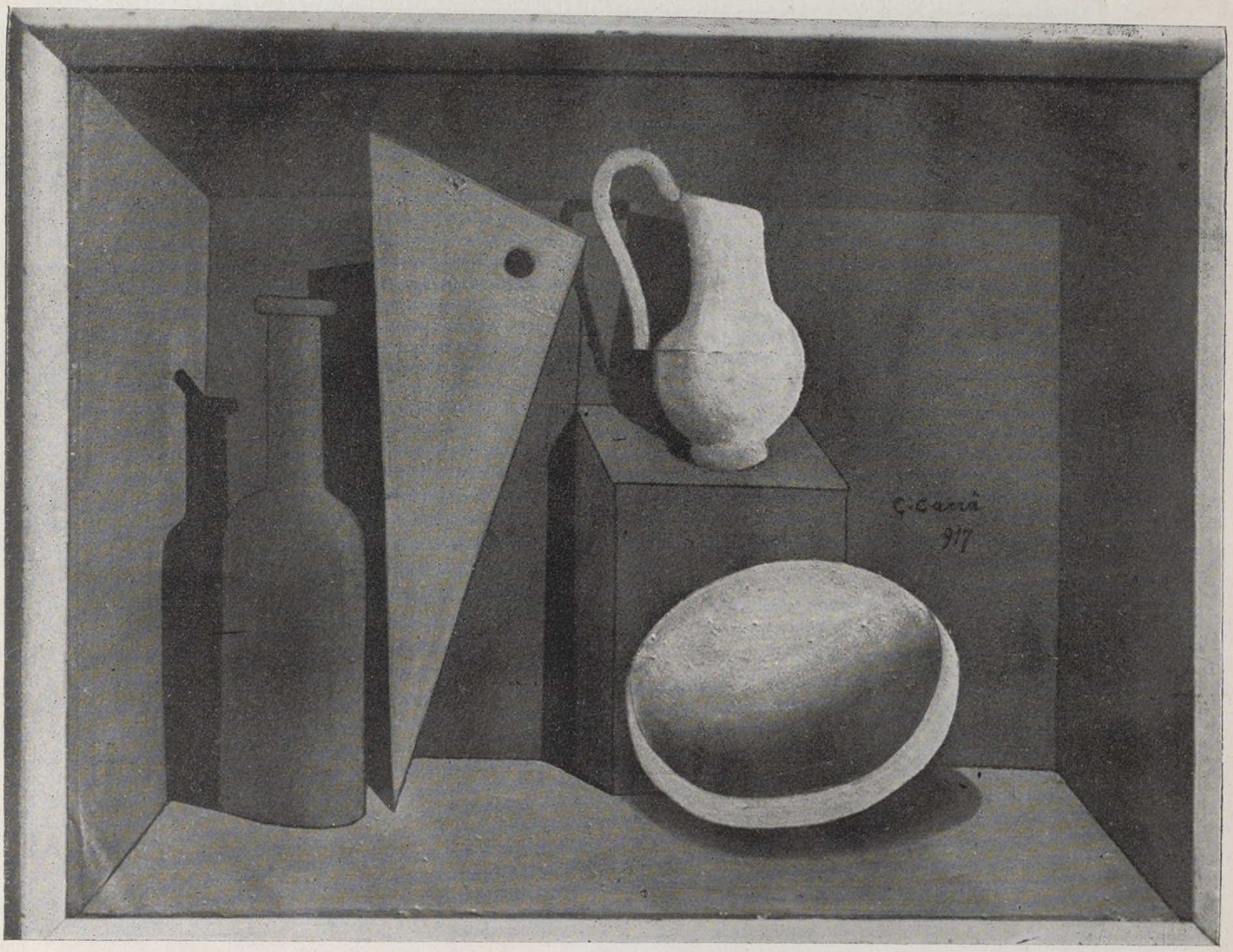
The howling of dogs shattered the night. We sought our way under the semi-circles of the fig trees. Then the path twisted and stopped before a curtain of bamboos, rubbing their leaves. It was even more like the jungle, as the roar of a lion resounded from the zoological garden of the villa Borghese nearly.

A white pavilion marked No. 12.

Wanda knocked, softly at first, then more strongly. We called. A field mouse scampered off. We paused, grouped, silent, dazed by the darkness, our arms loaded with bottles. The ice burned my fingers.

Igor suggested entering by going round the garden. We scaled the wall helped by a pine tree whose cones fell with a crash. Not a sound, not a light, inside. I struck a match. It revealed a stoop. The door was open. I turned the switch. A central lamp hanging from a chain burned us alive, flooding the salon with white daylight. We smelled the odor of musk ; Igor put the champagne on the ground and ran forward. In the bedroom, Isabelle lay on the floor, naked, notionless, with black marks around her neck.

From the French of
PAUL MORAND.



CARLO CARRÀ. Still life.

NEW YORK, A FAREWELL.

There is a Tintoretto or a Veronese — somewhere. A fresco, I believe. I do not now remember. It does not matter.

The only thing that stands out clearly from it in my memory is the bold figure of a woman sitting — her back against the monumental staircase of a church or temple — one arm hanging down loosely from the knee — the hand of the other shading a pair of keen old hawk's eyes gazing at something — intently

She is a wicked thing — she is a strong old witch — she might be exercising some black magic...

You are that Witch — New York! I've thought of you sitting thus — often. Leaning your broad and bony back, your strong hard frame, against a Continent — you gaze across intently, expectantly — shading your keen old hawk's eyes. You gaze across the waters.

There's magic in that gaze.

And so they keep coming and coming...

You are a fierce old Witch!

You are a trickster.

The first time I approached you I got tricked.

Our liner, on a misty night, crept toward Manhattan. (My memory contained no skyscrapers, those days).

They loomed up through the mist. Said I:

What are those strange old ruins?

RUINS?? — They laughed. — It's skyscrapers you see. Broadway — the Battery — dear old New York. Wake up, child! We have no ruins here.

No ruins here — dear old New York?

What else are you but ruins, Sorceress?

What else do you draw strength from, what else is it you squeeze between your claws, what else is it you feed on?

You — City of the Rootless and the Homeless.

You — Figure with your back on the Not-Yet and with your eyes on the No-Longer !

No ruins here ?

They've called you a terrible city, New York.

A city without equal for wickedness and cruelty, for chaos, magic, promise ...

O the things you keep whispering under your fierce hot breath, the things you keep mumbling between those hard old lips — as you sit there with your frame supported by a Continent, with your eyes gazing across ! The incantations and the magic formulas you whisper, stammer, mutter in a tongue that is no tongue . . .

No ruins here ?

Even your language — what else is it made of but ruins of languages ?

A cross between no-longer and not-yet ?

I've heard you of an evening — gibbering, gabbling rapidly (always rapidly) — whetting your teeth on the shards and fragments of a hundred languages — I've tried to understand your speech, Old Character. But who can understand a speech that is a hundred speeches of the Past — a thousand of the Present — a million of the Future, all in one ?

— I've tried to make you out — you Witch. To size you up. To get your measure. (It's you yourself have taught me those expressions). I've sat of an evening looking at you. At your strange little ways — at your abominable — well — characteristics . . .

There are Cities, you know, with beautiful gardens — velvety grassplots all bordered with flowers. Tremendous Cities even, careful of appearances, graceful and trim, made fair by artists' hands. Cities of race and lineage —

And You — Who are nobody — everybody — a monstrous thing of mixtures — an old mongrel —

You sneer at flowers, fairness, artists' hands. You sneer at race and lineage. Your hard eyes glitter at the word contemptuously. The flowers bordering your mangy grassplots are human beings . . . And printed papers are your butterflies . . .

Posies of papers sway in the night breeze — black and white butterfly papers frisk on your lawns, shine in the grasses. Your spring nights — they are redolent — of printer's ink.

You chuckle, Witch ?

You go on shading those keen eyes with the merciless hand — the claw-like hand — gazing for more to come and more — more human flowers to edge your mangy grassplots ?

More ruins to feed on — Old Insatiable ?

You're doing a brisk business, Hawk-Eyed One! Keeping that halfway-house (for transients only . . .). A halfway-house for wanderers from no-longer to not-yet . . .

You're doing a brisk trade — in ruins.

Ruins of styles and traditions, ruins of aims and desires, ruins of faiths and homes — of all the settled structures of the earth.

You carry on a trade — in withered roots.

You buy the no-longer. You sell — the not-yet. You are a sly one.

There is nothing about you of the maternal, Old Lady!

One does not rest his head on your old bosom — one does not, softly, sink into your lap. One haggles with you — one haggles — for a bit of soul to keep, or for a dream to rescue from the bargain — for some old precious curio to hide.

You are a fierce old Witch, New York!

You City of the Rootless and the Homeless — your strong hard frame against a Continent — your keen eyes gazing so intently — And your thin lips that always mutter:

No longer . . .

Always

Not yet . . .

You are a trickster.

There is another trick you've played on me. Your last one.

Was it black magic? Was it a wizard's potion — given while I slept?

For I had sworn to hate you (as others swear). To hate you fiercely — merciless fierce Thing!

Have I not called you names — gambler in rootless souls, buyer of ruins, shrewd innkeeper for all the tribes that wander — ?

Have I not seen you sitting thus — gibbering and gabbling in a hundred tongues — that broad and bony back leaning so carelessly — that hawk's beak? (a Tintoretto or a Veronese . . . ?).

You rose — one twilight — suddenly —

You rose — and passed me — lost in dreams — heeding me not.

You of the harsh staccato name, of the crude market gestures — could that be you — New York?

Your eyes — there was a wistfulness in them. . .

You whispered softly to yourself — you spoke in a new language — my ear caught song. —

I saw your stone flesh all diaphanous and radiant like molten amethyst — and the touch of your hands as I felt them in passing was like the touch of one entreating to have her innermost desire understood . . .

I saw you — smilingly shedding your flesh as a thing of no consequence (flesh of a strong old Witch exercising black magic). Smilingly shedding surface and reality.

I saw the flower soul in you as it bloomed in the twilight — naked and chaste — for the rapturous gaze of the Lover. . .

And I who swore to hate you,
Trickster !
Great City of the Fleeting Moment — between No Longer and Not Yet. . .

Emmy Veronica Sanders.

« Princesse Brambila » CONTE DE HOFFMAN
Kamernä Theatre ; Moscow 1920.
Decoration and costumes by JAKOULOFF.

A NOTE ON THE NEW RUSSIAN POETRY

Had your international affiliation or personal curiosity led you to the new Jerusalem of Communist Russia in the busy lecture season of 1918, a certain poster would have, doubtless, attracted your attention, for it announced to red Muscovy a discourse of the famous Bolshevik poet Vassily Kamensky. The title of the discourse was : The Career of a Son of a Bitch (Karyera Sukinavo Syna), and lest you misunderstood the drift and the purport thereof a parenthetic subtitle came obligingly to your aid : The Story of the Russian Intelligentzia (Istoria Russkoy Intelligentzii).

The piquant incident is significant. Communist Russia is recasting old standards in new moulds, and in the process, Intelligentzia comes in for a heavy drubbing. Well deserved, it must be admitted. The Intelligentzia dreamt the Revolution, gloried in it, deified it. From Hertzen to Plechanov, from Lavrov to Merezhkovsky the Revolution had been foreseen and foretold with prophetic exactness — its whole course can be narrated in extracts from their works. The Revolution came, and behold the Intelligentzia scatter precipitously to all corners of the globe squealing pitifully its disaffection. Well may the poet take it severely and mockingly to task :

> You trembled apprehensively
> Like children in some happy expectation
> . . . . . .
> You welcomed the ruin and tragedy
> And horror of a new deluge
> . . . . . .

And it came.

> We hear reverberating thunders
> Eternal foundations crash into the abyss.
> . . . . . .
> Why then do you not plunge into the storm of events

Intoxicated by the strangely terrible hurricane ?
Why do you still look sadly to the past
As to some land of promise ?

Is it not because the past has now taken place of the future ? Is it not because :

The dream was welcome only from afar
And originality pleased you
Only in books of poetic inspiration ?

(VALERY BRYUSSOV "*Invective*").

Apparently, for revolutionary ardor has evaporated at the first approach of rough reality, and past prejudices still hold the Intelligentzia in the grip.

And who is this ? Long haired
And speaking in a whisper :
' Traitors !
Russia is lost ! '
Must be a writer. . .

(ALEXANDR BLOK "*Twelve*").

And sticking out
From amidst the cannon roar
Is seen the round-shouldered back
Of a bespectacled, sickly
Intellectual.
A shaggy head
Is muttering
Indignant
Words
About the importance
Of Constantinople
And the Straits.

(ANDREY BYELY "*Christ Is Risen*").

The world is shattered to its foundation but the Intelligentzia still cherishes its old illusions. Perish the Revolution that the old prejudices might survive. This is how the renegades are regarded by those members of the

Ingelligentzia who stuck to the guns. But a further distinction must be drawn between the old and the young.

Bryussov, Byely, Blok, Ivanov, Sologub, men already in the 'fifties and the 'sixties came to the revolution with a baggage difficult to discard. Extreme modernists of some twenty years ago, they grew to maturity at a time when environment was so oppressive and life so banal that they might have exclaimed with the poet :

Un couchant des Cosmogonies !
Ah ! Que la Vie est quotidienne !

(J. LAFORGUE " *Complainte sur certains ennuis* ").

Disgusted with the stifling circumambient atmosphere, they retired within their ego whence they exuded, as it were, a protective covering, a subjective poetry that sought respite in Ancient Greece, in the far Orient, in the infinity of the Cosmos.

Too skeptic to accept official religion, they built up an ideologic logomachy of " God-seekers " (Bogoiskately) and " God-creators " (Bogostroïtely). Masters of ancient and modern languages and literatures, thoroughly versed in old and contemporary philosophy, esthetic theoreticians of a high order, prose writers of great power — it was in poetry that they reached their full stature. Never before had Russian poetry ascended such heights or sounded such depths ; never before had the Russian language exhibited such subtlety, richness, expressiveness. They brought Russian poetry to a state of excellence that will compare favourably with the modern poetry of any nation.

The revolution shook them from their torpor but was powerless to transform them completely. True, they turned from dream to reality, they forgot their individual selves to blend with the mass, but they were not sufficiently assertive. It is with their pre-revolutionary achievements that their fame rests.

But if these men, entrenched behind their deep rooted habits and convictions, behave with reticence and speak with reserve, the younger poets fling caution to the wind and bring their intemperate excesses into the market place. Shershenevitch, Mariyengoff, Kamensky, Polyetayev, Yesenin, Guerasimov, Kluyev, Mayakovsky throw a challenge to the whole world, exult in terror, blood, dynamite, blaspheme Christ and God, denounce Pushkin and Raphael, threaten destruction to the old order, call to universal revolution, celebrate the reign of labor. In a great outburst of revolutionary patriotism they glorify the Communist fatherland. The German Expressionist poet has well expressed their attitude :

. . . . .Oh Tag der Wonne
Tag der Freiheit heiliges Russland!
Nie hat Europa schöneren Tag, nie unsere Jugend herrlicheres Ziel!

(Carl Otten "*Für Martinet*").

They sing paeans to the new art and the new life. Art and life are for them indissolubly one.

Prikaz for the army of art.

The brigades of old men always trudge on slowly
The same straggling step
To the barricades comrades!
To the barricades of souls and hearts!
. . . . . .
Enough of jog-trotting
A leap into the future!
. . . . . .
Forward singing and whistling!
. . . . . .
Enough of penny worth truth
Sweep clean every old notion from your heart.
The streets are our brushes
The public squares our palettes
. . . . . .
Into the streets, Futurists,
Drum players and poets!

(Vladimir Mayakovsky).

Dekret about fence literature, decoration of streets, balconies with music, carnavals of art.

Come on fellows —
Poets, artists, musicians
Roll up your sleeves
Yesterday the Tolstoys and Kants had taught you
Today it is your own head that works.

Let us take all vacant fences
Roofs, façades, sidewalks;
Let us decorate them to the glory of Freedom
Like universal cathedrals.

Then follows an injunction for poets to paste their verse on posters all over the city, for painters to decorate it, for musicians to play and sing with and for the nation.

There are six working days in the week,
And I boldly propose
To stage carnivals and processions
Every day of rest,
In praise of the spirit of Revolution
In the world.

(Vassily Kamensky).

Technically little change has taken place in Russian poetry during the revolution. All schools of Europe are represented. The Soviet Government, master — nominally, at any rate — of the printing industry has shown itself extremely indulgent (often too indulgent, one is tempted to say) with the poetic effusions of all schools and tendencies. Studios have been opened for recitation, theoretic analysis, and esthetic discussion of poetry, anthologies have been issued, magazines have been published. When the shortage of paper is too great "oral almanachs" do duty for printed ones. Poetic production has increased to proportions never before attained in Russia.

At one end — on the right — are the Proletarian poets who seek simplicity and the Symbolists who seek subtlety; in the middle are the Imaginists (Imaginisty) who seek rich imagery and the Futurists who seek the hidden contact of dissociated ideas; at the other end — on the left — are the Suprematists who seek the "Zero point of art" and the Nothingists (Nitchevoki) who seem to have found it. Before the revolution Krutchenych thought this admirable:

Dir boor shtchill
oobyeshtchoor
skoom
vy so boo
rlez

And now Malyevitch thinks this superb :

Oole Ele Lel Lee One Kon See An
Onon Koree Ree Koazambe Moena Lezh
Sabno Oratr Tulozh Koaleebee Blestore
Teebo Orene Alazh

These quotations are as cryptic in the Russian original as in the literal English transcription. The theory of the extreme poetic Left absolves the poet from the use of comprehensible language. The great Russian poet Tyutchev said :

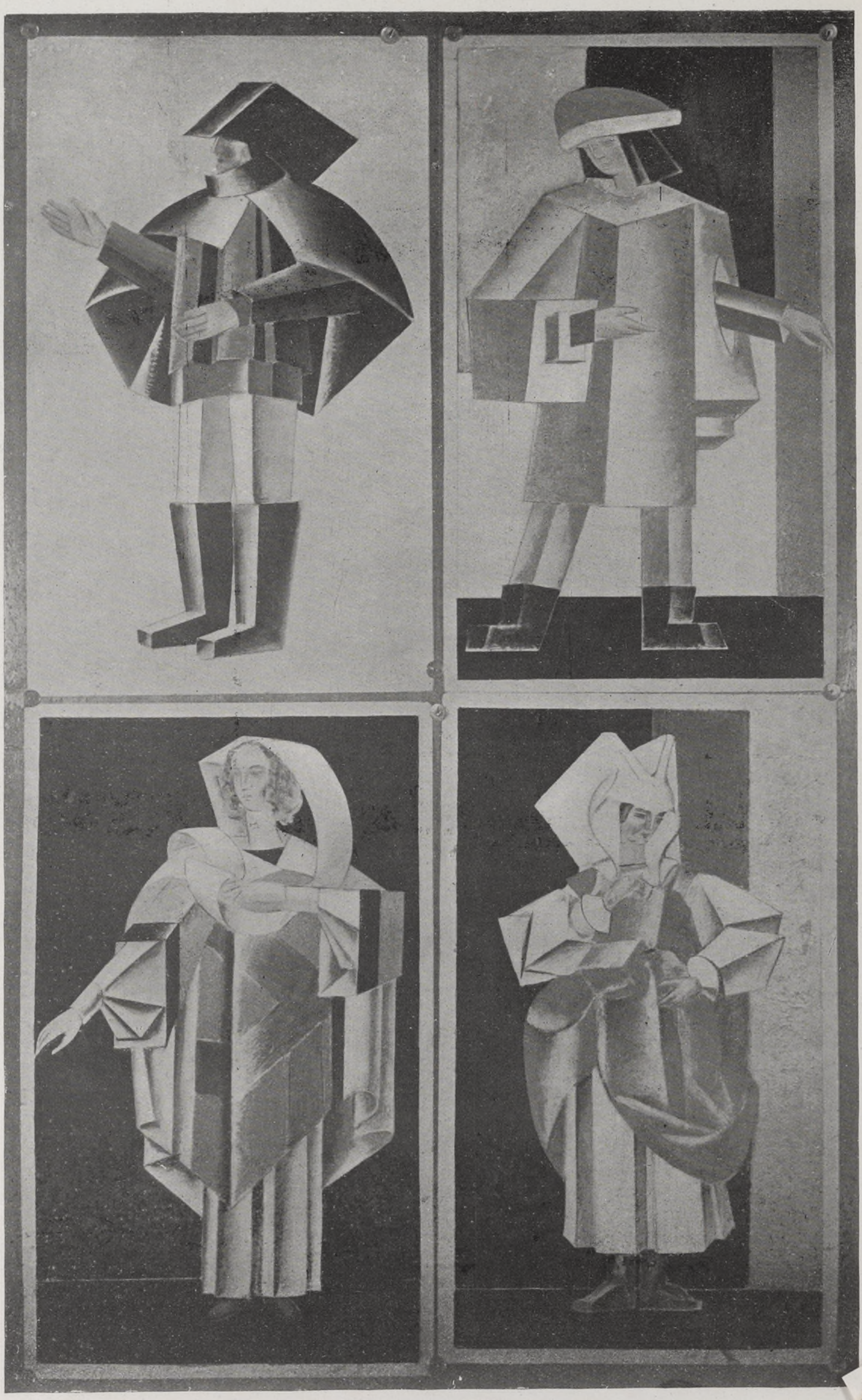
A thought once expressed
Becomes a lie.

The poets of the extreme Left are evidently determined to utter no lie for they express no thought. Poetry is to be sung in a language newly created by each poet, a language empty of logical content but full of emotional significance. It will not carry intelligibility but communicate emotion to all those whose souls are attuned to receive it, and whose mood and temper are congenial with the poet's own mood and temper. Whether these chosen spirits be ten or a million is of no consequence.

In the background of the rich poetic activity there is an abundance of speculation in the social theory of the new art (Lunatcharsky, Bogdanov, Fritche, Tchukovsky) Russian society — and all other — is passing from the Hell of Capitalism through the Purgatory of Proletarian Dictatorship to the Paradise of Communism. To each different stage corresponds a different form of art (Poetry we know is a whore — *poesia è una puttana* — which is not the least of her merits). Present Russian art is still wavering between capitalist reality and Communist visions. It would be therefore premature to draw a valedictory of Communist poetry before it found full expression. Daring experiments are tried and incompatible poetic elements often collide and burst into explosion. A school whose phylogenetic evolution, so to speak, took some five decades elsewhere is now ontogenetically recapitulated in five months. It is before all else a period of preparation, fermentation, incubation. It may be that some attempts are halting and some experiments crude ; it may be that poetic circles are cluttered. But if the great energy liberated by the tremendous upheaval has not yet crystallized into definite shape, high enthusiasm sustains every effort, and, according to the Communists, when revolution is in full swing, he who whines is an imbecile.

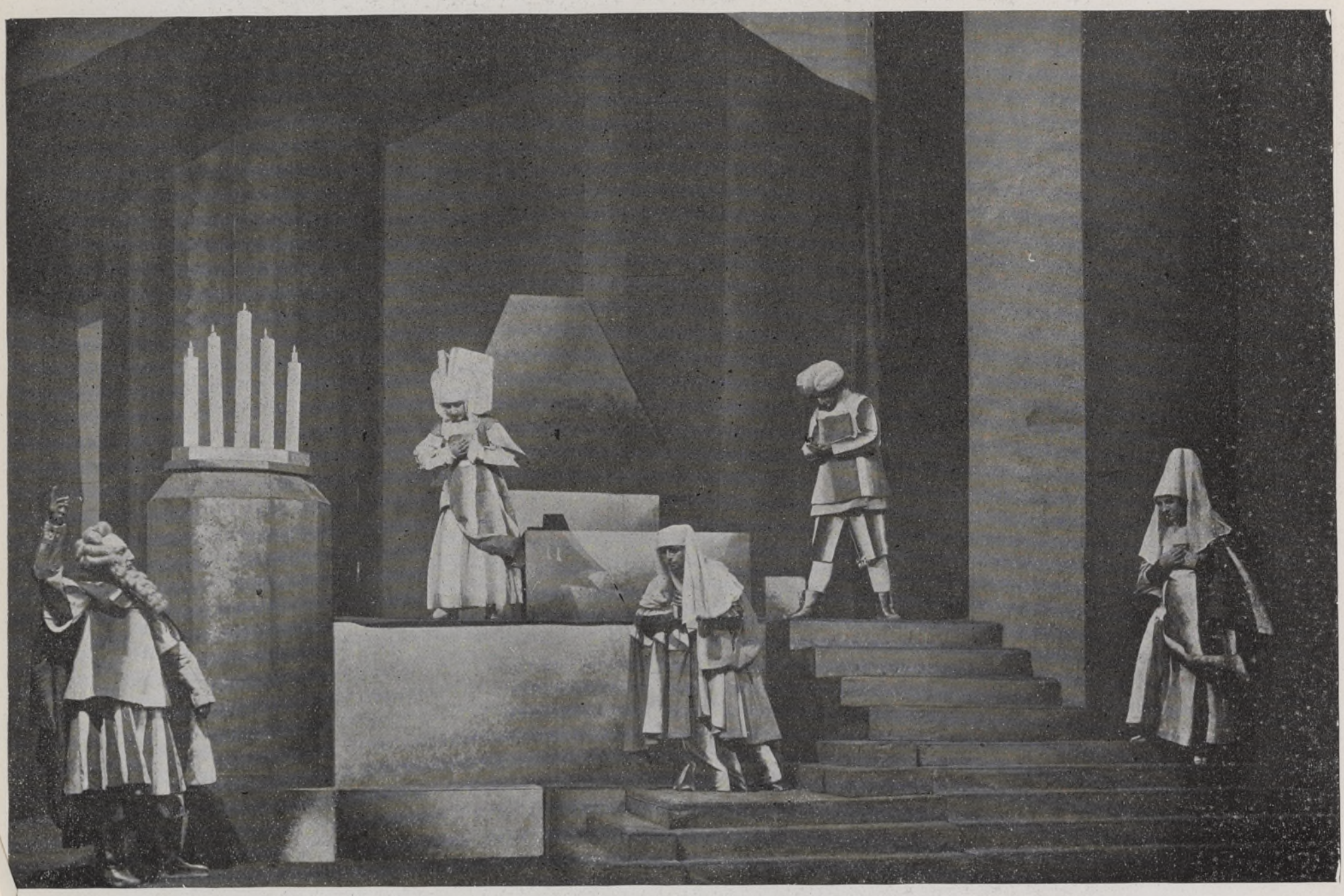
And perhaps they are right !

LOUIS LOZOWICK.



« L'Annonce faite à Marie ».

Costumes by VESNIN.



« *L'Annonce faite à Marie* ». — I. acte.

A NOTE ON THE NEW RUSSIAN THEATRE

The general tendency of the modern Russian theatre, as in all the other arts, is to drop the former aristocratic isolation of its appeal for one more generally human. The whole of existence is now being dramatized. Not that this trend leads to a paradise for dilettanti, or to a relaxation of the essential mastery over the subject matter. In the old folk fairs, held under an open sky, and in the old nature plays, this principle was more evident than in the theatre of our day. In spite of the different character and viewpoints of the various stage workers, they combine in endeavoring to condense the scenic demands. The theatre of the last period, the naturalistic, or rather the chaotic impressionistic, gave us a perfect example of what one might call " anti-theatricalism ". Therefore the present theatre does not develop from the theatre of yesterday, expressed by the Maeterlincks, Andreieffs, etc. but from the previous period, that of the old Spanish, the old Shakespearean comedies, and from the Russian " Höhlenhandlung ".

The present tendency is to ignore completely the intermediate period. It seeks full tones ; not dramas and comedies, but tragedies and burlesques. It draws material from the better class booths at the folk fairs, and from the circus. Finally, the theatre, which to the very last has sought to direct the cinema to a profounder psychological perception, must now learn the proper art of movement from its younger brother. But in still greater contradiction to the conventional stage formula stands the theatre of Meyerhold. He strives to draw the actors and the public closer. His motto is : Away with the audience box. The footlights are his worst enemies, and every theatre that persists in their use, he ranks as dead.

By presenting the " Mystère-Bouffes " of the futuristic writer, Vladimir Majakowski, an heroic and satirical picture of our time, Meyerhold changes the whole theatre into a stage not only placing it in the midst of the public, but persuading the latter to take part in the performance and this notwithstanding the general untheatrical nature of the Russian masses. He plans to abolish conventional memories, to exhibit only the faces and the masquerade and to ignore the script of the play. He demands that the play, from the beginning, must shape itself as it moves along. He regards the work of dramatists as mere problems with the power of automatically unfolding as the production proceeds. There is no doubt that Hamlet, under Meyerhold's direction, would surprise Shakespeare.

Another stream, from the same source, flowing in the same direction, expresses itself in the Moscow " Kammerspiel ". The director, Tiarov, endeavors, within the confines of the stage, to preserve only the absolute essence of the play. He stands in the same relation to the theatre as the cubists to the art of painting. Construction, the foundation of our time, permeates the Kammerspiel performances. He demonstrates that one can formulate movements as one builds houses or aeroplanes. Acting used to be a chaos of different movements, different actors moving from different impulses, through different experiences. The force of a unified conception pervades the Kammerspiel. [1] External action is rehabilitated. Actors are forced to learn movements from acrobats. The Kammerspiel turns away from the former scenic decorations subservient to the painter. A human actor of three dimensions demands a decoration in three dimensions. Instead of a painter, an architect is required to present the mathematical formula of our present day. The accompanying pictures exhibit the Kammerspiel decorative system.

In the « Princess Brambilla » by Hoffman the carnival is not a mere stylistic picture of any particular epoch. It is a representation of the eternal needs of mankind, irrespective of his social surroundings. The treatment as a whole is sternly organized. Yakulov, the decorator, expresses the atmosphere of a fairy story, at the same time avoiding conventional banalities. « L'annonce faite à Marie », by Claudel emerges from its narrow Catholic frame and becomes a mystery of self sacrifice in love. The architect Vesnin adapted the Gothic idea for the material of his conception, substituting fitting cubistic symbols of contemporary art. The stage effects are monumental and dynamic in character. The vertical building up of a scene allows great variety for the stage direction. The last play of the Kammerspiel, Romeo and Juliet, was treated like a sketch. The decorations for it were executed by Exter.

It is beyond the scope of this article to give a complete survey of the Russian theatre of today ; therefore I will not refer to the very interesting work of the Petrograd men such as Mardganov, Evreinov, Radlov, etc. Despite external difficulties, the formula of the new theatre in Russia is developing with the greatest decision and energy. Five years ago, the collapse of theatrical art was everywhere pronounced ; now the theatre strides ahead of all other arts in Russia. Perhaps the explanation is that the Revolution itself is a social drama causing the creative stream to flow into an organization of movements such as the theatre of today.

From the Russian.

ELIE EHRENBOURG.

[1] Kamerny Theatre.

PROTEUS

(*Concluded*)

A SATIRIC DRAMA IN TWO ACTS.

ACT II.

Same scene as in the preceding act. When the curtain rises MENELAUS *is discovered lying on the beach, asleep, and holding in his hand the hand of Helen, veiled and seated. At the left, against the proscenium, leaning upon a rubbertipped cane, stands the* SATYR-MAJOR, *listening to the orchestra. The orchestra plays.*

BACCHANALE NOCTURNE.

(*pianissimo*).

THE SATYR-MAJOR, *to the orchestra.*

Gently, quite softly. Lower! Lower! Lower!

If it was a question of making noise we should have no need of music. Our task is to make the silence audible. Shhh!

(*He beats time. The music, already faint, becomes almost imperceptible*).

That's better. Sss! Lower still! What the deuce! It is not for tinkers that you play.

But for demi-gods whose bestial ears terminate in a point as fine as a single hair

And you are going to awaken this brave man who has taken Troy, and thrown a seal to earth, and who is much fatigued.

And even Helen perhaps. Still lower.

(*The orchestra plays almost in dumb show, the violin bows just brushing the strings, cymbals not touching, brasses stopped*).

Very good. You have understood me! This is music as I like it.
The snoring of drums, the clacking of hands, the hail of the castanets,
Comes to us from the other side of the moon.
The torrent of wooden shoes and bare feet that follow Bacchus
Reaches the ear no more than the stir in the depths of the stream of crayfish in their cuirasses
And all these desperate cries
Are no more to us than the cold archery of Diana
And the trumpet itself when it sounds, is as faint as a whistle of glass.

(*Faint music*).

The night belongs to the gods.

(*The bass drum is beaten very softly*).

Indeed, it is too fair! 'Tis too lovely this midst of the year.!'
It is because of this that Bacchus has come
In order to deliver the fields and deserts and the enormous folds of the earth filled to the brim with forests
With this triumphal march, and with this irresistible tread, in the midst of cries of despair imposing delight and terror.
Woe to him who, reclined on the moistened leaves at midnight,
Shall see the white god mirrored, like a shining sun of milk.
Woe to that stag who, amid his restless hinds, rearing an arborescent head, watches the curious army as it crosses the mountain ford, among the rolling stones,
And already the god is there no more but precedes them, and one sees only a fat man drunk upon his ass!
One is no longer at this call entirely a man
For the man that he may leap assumes the loins of a goat,
And the goat, to gulp the sharp handful of the vine that one holds out to him,
Stands erect, and becomes a girl, her forehead decked with horns!
Silence!

(*The music gradually ceases*).

Hail, Menelaus!

(*Silence*).

He sleeps ! It is not in vain he has gazed in the eyes of the god of the Sea !

All is changed for him and I shall appear like the most adorable of the Nymphs.

Hail to you, liberator !

(MENELAUS *opens his eyes without wakening.* THE SATYR-MAJOR *makes horrible grimaces at him.* MENELAUS *gazes at him stupidly and imitates his grimaces. Then with a bound he rises and leaps to his bow, but gradually as if overcome with astonishment he allows it to unbend*).

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Hail, Menelaus !

MENELAUS.

Who is speaking to me ?

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

I am speaking to you, good sir.

MENELAUS.

Strange ! Was there not here just now
Another of those wretched Satyrs that put out its tongue at me ?

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

There is no one here but myself, quite at your service, good sir.

(MENELAUS *presses his hand to his forehead*).

What is the matter ? You seem disturbed and troubled.

MENELAUS.

Ah, I am weary of all these devilries !

THE SATYR-MAJOR, *simpering.*

At least it is surely not I that you find alarming ?

MENELAUS.

You suit me admirably. I like you very much. You are pretty. Ah, it does me good to see an attractive face.

THE SATYR-MAJOR, *with a reverence.*

Monseigneur !

MENELAUS.

How becoming a long blonde curl can be to the length of the delicious almond of a youthful face,

And what vivid color, as pure as a fresh begonia flower !

Who are you ?

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

The serving-maid of Lord Proteus.

MENELAUS.

You have a very bad master.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Naxos (most of the time)

Is an isle in the midst of the sea that lies between the three Continents.

And its shores receive all the derelicts of the currents and of the storms.

MENELAUS.

You are one of these derelicts yourself ?

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

I was set adrift on the sea in a little boat

And it was the old man Proteus took pity on my weakness and on my innocence.

MENELAUS.

How sweetly phrased that was !

Listen, you are adorable !

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

That's all very fine, my Lord !

But is'nt that your wife who is with you ?

MENELAUS.

That makes no difference. It's all the same to her. " I am Helen ! "

Say the word, and I take you away ! I will give you a place in the linen-room.

But tell me first how your master has recovered from the massage that I have administered to him.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Thanks, he is perfectly well and demands his spectacles.

MENELAUS.

All in good time ! Let him come and seek them.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

He does not dare to face you again.

MENELAUS.

I thought I was surely going to let him go,

The lion and all the rest didn't bother me at all. But the octopus was a rôle that I did not expect.

When I suddenly found myself in the midst of those floating tentacles

Face to face with that beak of a parroquet and that cylindrical head, like an enormous discoloured cucumber, full of a frightful wisdom,

And those eyes devoid of pupils where floats a light like that of a lamp behind a bowl of water

I thought to vent my soul with disgust! Fortunately the vision did not last.

And immediately I beheld between my hands the slimy tree that yielded pots of jam

Devoured through the midst by a rosy cancer, like the teat of a cow.

Faugh!

THE SATYR-MAJOR, *clasping his hands.*

You are a hero!

MENELAUS.

Ah well, what is it that he's demanding now, old collector that he is?

THE SATYR-MAYOR.

He demands his spectacles.

MENELAUS, *putting them on his nose.*

One cannot see anything with them.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Quite naturally. They were not made to see with.

MENELAUS.

Then?

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

It's the sign of his authority.

The seals when they see his spectacles are struck with respect and terror

It is thus he constrains them to hunt for him and to learn arithmetic.

MENELAUS.

Here is another invention! It is like those ribbons he showed me!

I wished to know a little of what is occurring at Argos for there are nasty rumours afloat about my relatives there.

Good! The first thing that I see is my sister-in-law, Clotilde, to whom an unknown young man paid his respects by pulling from her belly a great two-edged sword.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Heavens!

MENELAUS.

Ah well! She did not suffer at all from this familiarity. One saw her arise and go out backwards arranging her coiffure.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Prodigy !

MENELAUS.

Immediately there presented himself a man, his skull cloven in two, and Clotilde — Clytemnestra, I mean — who stood beside him, holding an axe in her hand.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Great gods ! You frighten me !

MENELAUS.

The skull reglued itself and my brother Agamemnon came out from his bath, quite unscathed and perfectly dry.

And so it went on till all ended confusedly in a frightful jumble where everything was confounded, the sacrifice of my niece and the grill that they made of my little cousins.

It has set my eyes to aching

If I could even be sure that I knew the people ! But everything trembles and undulates like the faces one sees above a fire ! And in the most thrilling places were great white holes. For these ribbons are not first hand.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

The oracles are always obscure.

MENELAUS.

In short, all these massacres that annul themselves form a symbol to my mind, and the sense is rather consoling.

I conclude therefrom that all things are adjusted

As my own history proves.

— Yet had I but a hundred fathoms of these ribbons, what rivalry for Delphi !

— Thereafter I was exhausted and fell asleep.

Holding firm in one hand the hand of that woman and in the other the spectacles.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Give them to me !

MENELAUS.

A moment ! Is my barque repaired ?

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

It is ready and awaits you.

MENELAUS.

Is the eye of the ship repainted ?

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

It is repainted. It only remains to place the pupil there.

You have one sail of linen and one of jute, fifteen oars of the upper tier and twenty eight of the lower.

And a good rudder that's almost new, originally designed for the Administration of Egyptian Funeral Pomps.

MENELAUS.

I'll restore the spectacles to him when I go.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Listen then! You can ask him for something else.

MENELAUS.

What?

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Do you not know that the famous Helen has lived for ten years in this isle.

MENELAUS, *taking his bow.*

Fly, or I'll kill you.

THE SATYR-MAJOR, *in flight.*

Look behind you!

(*Enter* WILLOWITHE, *veiled*).

WILLOWITHE.

Hail, O my husband, I find you again at last!

MENELAUS, *facing about.*

What?

WILLOWITHE.

Hail, O my husband, I find you again at last.

MENELAUS.

Who are you?

(WILLOWITHE *throws back her veil.* MENELAUS *looks at her in silence*).

MENELAUS.

Look, Helen!

HELEN, *unveiling indolently.*

Who are you, Madam?

WILLOWITHE.

Answer her, Menelaus. Tell her who I am. This voice, this face that turns itself towards yours, this woman before you who welcomes you, these, do you not recognize them?

MENELAUS, *in a low voice.*

Helen, it is Helen.

HELEN.

There is no other Helen here but I.

MENELAUS.

Ah, my heart beats strangely! There are two Helens with me, that of the past and the other that Paris restored to me.

If I did not hold your hand I would say that this other is the true one. It is the voice, the form, the face.

Only younger, purer perhaps.

Look yourself.

HELEN.

I do not need to look.

MENELAUS.

Look, I tell you.

HELEN, *slowly turning her eyes towards him.*

This woman resembles me as I resemble Andromache.

MENELAUS.

Be silent! You do not understand. I remember better than you!

HELEN.

There is no Helen here but Helen of Troy,

Who was carried away from Greece by Alexander, otherwise, Paris.

As is known throughout all the world from Gades up to Colchis.

And as testify those great piles of blackened bricks that one beholds opposite Tenedos.

WILLOWITHE.

I know nothing of all this. As for me, I am Helen of Sparta.

HELEN.

You are nothing of the sort.

WILLOWITHE.

Always faithful, always loving, the same.

And who have no other husband than my own.

MENELAUS.

How is it, Madam, that you are here in this present isle of Naxos?

WILLOWITHE.

I slept.

MENELAUS.

You slept?

WILLOWITHE.

Hermes,
Hermes had scourged my face
With that bough embrued in the tide of the Lethean stream.

MENELAUS.

You slept ! And I through all that time, casque on head and sword in hand,
I was beleaguering Troy, yonder where you were.

WILLOWITHE.

Not I.

MENELAUS.

Not you ?

WILLOWITHE.

This one, but not I !

MENELAUS.

You say well, for this one is Helen.

WILLOWITHE.

Then hail to you, Helen.

MENELAUS.

Don't you recognize her ?

WILLOWITHE.

Hail to you, Helen.

MENELAUS.

It's Helen I hold by the hand ?

WILLOWHITE.

Who else ?

Is it not my face ? Is it not my form ? Is it not my breast this indignant breath uplifts ?

What have you done while I slept, O image of myself ? And for what dreadful use have the gods employed my sleep ?

It is for me that Troy flamed heavenward while I slept, it is I who laid it flat, as if with scythes, while I was not disturbed by any dream !

Is my form so puissant then that its image alone suffices for the purpose of a god ?

Is my soul so puissant that it suffices to make two bodies live ?

HELEN.

These are words I find it hard to bear.

WILLOWITHE.

And now, sister Helen, O my image,

Now that your task is done,
Now that I am awake, and it is day,
It is time for you to yield me my husband and my place.
Have the goodness to vanish I beg of you.

MENELAUS.

Breathe upon her a little to see if she will vanish
Like the vapor of water that begins to boil.

WILLOWITHE.

But you, Menelaus, for what do you wait to open your arms to me after these ten years
And that heart which is wholly mine.

MENELAUS.

What proof have you got that you are really Helen ?

WILLOWITHE.

I have none, except the truth.

MENELAUS.

I feel I know not what doubt within me.

HELEN.

Menelaus, I have already borne many things from you. Through you I have suffered much. All the same do not push me to extremities.

And it is perfectly true that I am a woman and in your possession : not, however, so much as you think.

But I protest that if you are so unfortunate as to put me to this shame and once let go my hand
You shall not lead Helen captive a second time,
And neither in this life nor the next
Will you find again these fingers so long disjoined from yours

MENELAUS.

I am master of all the Helens extant in the world.

WILLOWITHE.

One alone suffices.

MENELAUS.

You say well ! There is only one Helen for me.

WILLOWITHE.

Only one, the same.

MENELAUS.

You say well, the same to me forever.

WILLOWITHE.

One Helen only, she who was given you long ago.

MENELAUS.

I remember.

WILLOWITHE.

The daughter of Leda and Jupiter. . .

MENELAUS.

. . . The wife of the king of Sparta.

WILLOWITHE.

. . . Jupiter who thunders in the mists. . .

When the clouds like great white mountains accumulated

Little by little increase in the pure blue vault of the sky

Above that small red temple well known to shepherds of which the pediment has three columns only.

MENELAUS.

You remember ?

WILLOWITHE.

There is a meadow shaded by poplars.

HELEN.

But there were no poplars !

MENELAUS.

Yes, there were ! Be silent !

WILLOWITHE.

There is a meadow shaded by poplars.

MENELAUS.

There were poplars, as she speaks it all comes back to me !

WILLOWITHE.

There where the rapid stream. . . Where was I ?

MENELAUS.

There where the rapid stream. . .

WILLOWITHE.

How clear those waters were !

MENELAUS.

How clear those waters were and what a mournful noise they made among the rolling stones !

WILLOWITHE.

Before they enter the immense conch of June.

MENELAUS.

Before through a thousand ditches and sluices they are distributed to all the rich herbage.

WILLOWITHE.

There are three oaks that were hallowed to my father.

HELEN.

Good! Now we have oaks it seems!

MENELAUS.

She is right. I remember. They are oaks.

WILLOWITHE.

That great tree whose leaf is slowest to unfold.

MENELAUS.

In that month of June when you tell me that you loved me, on those heights to which we had mounted

I scarcely think that they had sprouted yet.

WILLOWITHE.

Their colour is that of gold.

MENELAUS.

Not the gold of antiquity, but the young bough that begins
Before Jupiter has endowed them with
That puissant colour of green wherein his eyes delight.

WILLOWITHE.

Their colour is that of gold.

MENELAUS.

Not the colour of time that passes but of time about to begin.

WILLOWITHE.

Their colour is that of gold.

MENELAUS.

Not *their* colour, O well-beloved.

But the hue of that great fire I had lighted just below them whose floating radiance gilded them with light.

WILLOWITHE.

Is it not right that one purify oneself by silence and by fasting. . .

MENELAUS.

Yes, it is right.

WILLOWITHE.

. . . Is it not right that one purify oneself as for the Mysteries
When one is about to wed the daughter of a god?

MENELAUS.

When one holds in one's arms the child divine whose motionless eyes beneath their lashes

Regard you with indifference

And like Victory you were between my arms and like the harp for the blind.

And like that young block of marble ivory-pale at the threshhold of the fatherland which the exile piously grasps with both his hands!

WILLOWITHE.

Above us rose those long ribbons of walls one above the other and that citadel in the sky with its battlemented towers.

And those long forests of oaks, all flat on the terraces, like the moss that pushes its way between the stones.

And those cascades, all silent and motionless,

And this place, in advance upreared by the hand of Titans, on the mandate of my father.

To be his temple with us.

MENELAUS.

I remember.

WILLOWITHE.

And you were handsome then, Menelaus, the strongest of those of your age and far the most skillful at games.

MENELAUS.

You are still the same.

WILLOWITHE.

The same, it is you that says so, are you convinced of it?

MENELAUS.

Helen: there's no other woman in the world!

WILLOWITHE.

Tell me then, have I made you suffer much?

MENELAUS.

Not to the measure of my love!

WILLOWITHE.

Was it hard to be parted from me?

MENELAUS.

My desire has never left you.

WILLOWITHE.

Nor have I. I have not left you.

MENELAUS.

You have not left me ?

WILLOWITHE.

I slept in your arms.

MENELAUS.

Tell me one thing only, daughter of Zeus !

WILLOWITHE.

Yes, I wish to tell you all.

MENELAUS.

How did I who among the chieftains of Greece was neither the first nor the second

Find favor in your eyes ?

WILLOWITHE.

Had you nothing through which to deserve it ?

MENELAUS.

Nothing when I look at you and when I remember myself !

WILLOWITHE.

And who, then, would thus have held me in his arms, and would not have let me go,

These ten years, which were only a single hour of the night,

While I slept.

MENELAUS.

The night is ended.

WILLOWITHE.

It is ended and I am awake.

MENELAUS.

It is ended and I see those eyes, full of indifference, once more regarding me.

WILLOWITHE.

For what do you wait to clasp me in your arms ?

(*He makes as if to go towards her*).

HELEN.

Menelaus !

MENELAUS.

Helen !

HELEN.

What are you doing ? Do you intend to lose me a second time ?

WILLOWITHE.

Do not listen to what she says! Do not give ear to that shadow wrought in my image by envious gods which wishes again to deceive you!

HELEN.

To deceive you! Answer her! Is it in dream that you suffered?

Did you take Troy, then, in a dream, and is it in dream that you led me from the sombre Asiatic gynecium

That night when one saw clear though never a lamp was lit?

Is it then false, the face that you recognized in the flame of such a light?

WILLOWITHE.

All is a dream that is not those days of yore which have not ever ceased.

HELEN.

And say if it was also a dream, at that hour of noon, the enormous back of the sea, midway between Europe and Asia, that rose to take us like the spine of a bull

And which, overmastering me by a single blow, with the Ravisher, in a single day,

Left us on dry land there, beside a smoking beacon that quenched itself in the dawn.

WILLOWITHE.

All is a dream except this face, turned towards you once again, and these eyes, full of ignorance, turned towards yours like those of the animals.

HELEN.

All is a dream except this hand, now clasped once more in yours, and this body once more solid between your arms.

WILLOWITHE.

Ah, the streams of the earth in the month of June when the scattered flocks remount the difficult grass and the shepherd thrusts aside with his knee this torrent descending towards him, this flood of life, green, pink and all ashine, full of flowers and bees and butterflies!

Ah, the honey I was to your lips, and that head that all at once I dropped upon your shoulder!

HELEN.

You caress, and I have struck.

WILLOWITHE.

I have won your heart.

HELEN.

You have not pierced it.

WILLOWITHE.

Remember those nights of my youth when I slept by your side!

HELEN.

Remember those nights when you were alone, and I in the arms of the Ravisher.

WILLOWITHE.

I was faithful!

HELEN.

Sleeping fidelity.

WILLOWITHE.

Faithful nevertheless!

HELEN.

Jewel of little worth, which was not lost, and which has not been disputed!

WILLOWITHE.

Always the same!

HELEN.

And what of me, am I not always the same? And someone else besides.

WILLOWITHE.

Wife of one only!

HELEN.

And I, was I then not your wife in the arms of the Ravisher?
When from the height of the lofty tower of Troy
I saw on every side of that well-defended city,
To the North, to the South, to the East and to the West,
Your patience and your desire, each evening round about me,
Rekindle with the hundred thousand fires of your encamping army!

WILLOWITHE.

Be silent, illusion!

HELEN.

Be silent, imposture!

MENELAUS.

What to do?

WILLOWITHE.

Will you believe if this creation of a cunning god
Confesses her fraud and declares that I am Helen?

HELEN.

Certainly in such a case we both should be convinced!

WILLOWITHE.

Then leave me alone with her.

(MENELAUS *goes out. Silence*).

Naturally, it is true, I confess it. You are Helen.

HELEN.

Thank you.

WILLOWITHE.

Confess that I might be taken for you.

HELEN.

As to that I do not know. I have not looked at you.

WILLOWITHE.

Look at me then.

HELEN, *looking at her*.

Menelaus must be even more mad than I had supposed he was.

WILLOWITHE.

It is Proteus caused this enchantment.

(*Silence*).

It is the lord Proteus who caused this astounding enchantment.

(*Silence*).

It is he who has put illusion in the eyes of Menelaus.

Are you not curious to know who the lord Proteus is ?

HELEN.

No.

WILLOWITHE.

He is the curator of this sea, drunk and out of his mind, where her grandfather's limbs were scattered by Medea.

Of which the depths are torn by sulphurous sighs

And the surface incessantly flogged and churned to foam by the oars of fanatic expeditions,

Argo, Troy,

All those adventurers, with jutting nose and meagre brow, glabrous as actors, rowing with good courage !

And see, that ring of foam, is it a seal that respires ?

By no means, 'tis a cow.

It is Jupiter who swims under the form of a beast, his horns crowned with daisies, to amuse a little girl.

HELEN.

Am I to then understand

That you look upon it as a freak of madness

This honorable attempt, shared by the whole of Greece, to win me back again ?

WILLOWITHE

Exactly so, and quite worthy of Proteus.

HELEN.

You will pardon me for not sharing your opinion.

WILLOWITHE.

How beautiful you are, Helen, and how I adore those lustrous eyes emptied of all expression

That you turn slowly towards me.

HELEN.

Yes, it is I that am the beautiful Helen.

WILLOWITHE.

Ah, it was not merely the work of Proteus !

I swear that Menelaus is a dunce not to distinguish between us !

HELEN.

It is true.

WILLOWITHE.

A fool, a nincompoop.

HELEN.

It is true.

WILLOWITHE.

A brute, a villain !

Ah, I am sure of it. It isn't only once that he has caressed your spine with the handle of his bow !

HELEN.

All men are the same.

WILLOWITHE.

What, Paris also...

HELEN.

No. He was an agreable man who knew how to treat a woman.

WILLOWITHE.

But he is dead, is he not ?

HELEN.

It is not necessary to think of it.

WILLOWITHE.

Do not think of it then and thus escape that vertical crease of the forehead, which is the most difficult wrinkle to efface.

One should massage it each evening with the thumb.

HELEN.

With the thumb and a little purified mutton-fat.

WILLOWITHE.

Indeed one can teach you nothing.

Let me regard you again, not as mere men would do, having no knowledge of such matters, but with the eye of a woman.

Great gods! (*She sighs*)

Ah, gods, how beautiful you are. There is no fault nor blemish in you.

Even Ariadne, who has given this isle its fame,

Compared with you was only a fat Cretan.

HELEN.

You would say a certain freshness ?

WILLOWITHE.

Yes indeed. — But where did you find that dress ?

HELEN.

You do not like it ? — Yet in Troy it was the latest fashion.

WILLOWITHE.

Precisely.

And Troy has been cut off from the rest of the world — ten years.

HELEN, *with trembling voice.*

What can I do ? It's the fault of that horrid Menelaus.

WILLOWITHE.

Such a curious green... Ah, it's many a day since I beheld it last. My grandmother had a special weakness for it.

And those great, embroidered animals, how strange ! Those Phrygian shoes, that truly Cimmerian clasp...

HELEN.

It is not my fault !

(*She bursts into tears*).

WILLOWITHE.

What have I done, my dear ? Do not weep ! Do not ruin those lovely eyes !

Listen! Do you know what I think ? It is you that will soon be in the fashion and I behind the times.

This spoil that disperses itself in all directions...
Everything, this winter, will pattern itself on Troy.

HELEN, *tearfully.*

Ah, ah!

WILLOWITHE.

Are you not content?

HELEN.

Ah, you pierce me to the heart!

When that brute of a Menelaus came I bade him go at once to despoil my sisters-in-law.

There were fifty of them and I knew their wardrobes.

We had five great galleys filled with trunks when we sailed away from Troy.

All that has perished in the whirlwind!

WILLOWITHE.

Ah, that was a cruel blow!

(*She puts an arm around her*).

HELEN, *feeling of the cloth of her dress.*

My dear, what is this material of which your dress is made? I have never seen anything like it.

WILLOWITHE.

It is pongee from China made from the silk of the oak.

HELEN.

And it will wash?

WILLOWITHE.

The ship that brought it to us had been under the sea three weeks. It's the first consignment for Europe.

HELEN.

How fortunate you are!

WILLOWITHE.

And what would you say of that stuff more brilliant than silk and more fresh than linen

Which is prepared from the nettle?

HELEN.

You have much of it?

WILLOWITHE.

Forty bales well marked from the coast of Pharos. Ah, I lack for nothing here!

Not an equinoctial storm but brings us the latest novelties.

Not a house of Tyre or of Thebes Hecatomplyes
That is not well known to us.
And what purple we have!
As fresh as blood! Look, it is the latest thing from Tyre. They call it "The Trojan Woman." And this other is "The Helen."
You blush? Confess that you find it flattering.

HELEN.

Ah, how lucky you are to live in so frequented a place!

WILLOWITHE.

Yes, that is the merit of this little sea-port.

HELEN.

I myself am bound for Sparta.

WILLOWITHE.

It is a most honorable city and the customs there are good.

HELEN.

Simple, but good.

WILLOWITHE.

Once there, what orgies of fidelity you can indulge in with your Menelaus.

HELEN.

The form of the hats is prescribed by civic law under penalty of death.

WILLOWITHE.

But Nature is beautiful there.
How solemn is the noon of those long summer days
When amid the intermittent baying of cicadas in the light that makes all things vanish
One hears what might be the noise of a god putting an edge on his sword.
And how the Taygetus, in the evening after the storm, roasts, as it streams before the sun,
Like the spitted quarter of an ox before an enormous bonfire.

HELEN.

The best thing to do at Sparta is to sleep. I detest the country.

WILLOWITHE.

The women are beautiful there.

HELEN.

They make bread, tend the cows and dance like beasts.

WILLOWITHE.

The men are good companions.

HELEN.

They only permit me to converse with fathers of families, upwards of forty, and I am only summoned when the dessert is served.

Then we crack nuts together and train ourselves to speak laconically.

WILLOWITHE.

Poor Helen, ah, how you are going to suffer, you whose experiences have been so interesting!

HELEN.

I prefer not to think of that.

WILLOWITHE.

" Where is that famous Helen? " they'll say.

She is at Sparta now embroidering saltpouches for the shepherds

It is she with her women who prepares those local biscuits of such renown

That one breaks with a bar of lead discovering inside black mummies of dried raisins.

HELEN.

With you, too, life must be extremely monotonous.

WILLOWITHE.

My dear, what a curious notion! everything passes here. It's the centre of three worlds.

Without speaking of that sky above which constitutes a fourth.

Not a day that one does not see a god descend. Ah, I know your father extremely well!

Not a hero who does not stop to pay us a visit.

Nothing falls into the sea of which I am not offered the best.

HELEN.

Ah well, you are fortunate!

WILLOWITHE.

No. I'm a woman of the hearth.

Tranquil, modest.

A simple life and all of a piece that is what I desire.

Ah, this would be a position for you!

HELEN.

Do not tempt me.

WILLOWITHE.

Helen of Naxos after Helen of Troy. Helen-of-the-midst-of-the-seas!

They would arm from all the ports of the world to come to look at you.

As they go to Delos towards the altar of Apollo and of Latona!

HELEN.

And if Menelaus comes to take me ?

WILLOWITHE.

Entrust yourself to me. Entrust yourself to lord Proteus.

HELEN.

Who is Proteus ?

WILLOWITHE.

The richest of all the demi-gods.

He has the contract for all the sea even as far as Tarentum. Speak to me of your Priam !

HELEN.

And as to his person ?

WILLOWITHE.

You will make of it what you wish.

He's an oddity who in place of the usual two legs prefers a great fish's tail.

He's as inoffensive as a legless cripple.

HELEN.

Truly, things are not a little dead at Naxos ?

WILLOWITHE.

Dead ? The sea is like a great journal where everything that happens is recorded.

And if Naxos bores you here

There is nothing to hinder your putting it somewhere else.

The rock is light and floats like a sponge cake and like the beaten white of egg

And if you wish to depart, you are free as air.

Come, your career is not over. There is more than one Troy in the world.

HELEN.

That bracelet on your left arm, of what is it made ?

WILLOWITHE.

Of a marvellous and priceless substance known as Celluloid.

HELEN.

One would say ivory but a hundred times more beautiful !

How have they given it that rosy hue ? It seems a ribbon of silk and one can see the buckle and the three holes for the tongue, all copied with marvellous art.

Ah, what exquisite taste !

WILLOWITHE.

I make you a present of it.

(*She gives it to her*).

HELEN.

And you say that there are still three pieces of that pongee ?

WILLOWITHE.

Three pieces. I plan to take them with me.

HELEN.

Helen-- pardon, my dear, I don't know what to call you... Leave them for me.

WILLOWITHE.

It will be a great sacrifice.

HELEN.

And how do you fasten your waist ?

WILLOWITHE.

Behind, naturally.

HELEN.

Behind ! By the Good Goddess ! A waist that fastens behind !

WILLOWITHE.

Do you see these buttons ? One has only to press upon them, and clac !

HELEN.

How ingenious ! Let me try myself. Clic I pull. Clac I press. Clic, clac, clic, clac !

WILLOWITHE.

Snaps they are called.

HELEN.

How lucky you are ! I blush for my Scythian clasps.

WILLOWITHE.

It was a traveller from Jerusalem, head downwards who brought them to us the other day, on his way to the bottom of the sea.

We have three boxes of them.

HELEN.

Helen, my little Helen !

WILLOWITHE.

Well, Helen ?

HELEN.

Let me have these buttons !

WILLOWITHE.

And you will stay at Naxos ?

HELEN.

I consent.

WILLOWITHE.

Thank you, Helen.

HELEN.

Helen, farewell.

WILLOWITHE.

Farewell.

(HELEN *goes out — Pause —* MENELAUS *re-enters*).

MENELAUS.

Helen, where is that other Helen who came to disquiet me ?

WILLOWITHE.

There is only one Helen, always faithful to you.

The other has melted away like a dream.

(*Music played by the orchestra expressing the solitude of the sea*).

MENELAUS.

I believe you. For me alone you will be the Helen I have loved. The same, always faithful.

WILLOWITHE.

The other has melted away like a dream.

MENELAUS.

But, great gods ! Don't let anyone else find out !

WILLOWITHE.

Don't let anyone else find out ?

MENELAUS.

We must see to it that everyone believes you to be that Helen whom the Ravisher bore away.

WILLOWITHE.

Why ?

MENELAUS.

My honour is concerned.

What glory would be mine ? What would be said by the mothers of all those brave young men who fell on the banks of the Scamander ?

(*The ship approaches. It is manned by Satyrs who push it with their oars. And for greater convenience it is mounted upon rollers*).

MENELAUS.

And who are these lovely nymphs with fair white arms guiding our ship?

WILLOWITHE.

The maids who slept with me.

It is from these our mariners shall be drawn.

The favorable Auster breathes and with day we shall behold the whitening shores of Greece.

(*They lower a plank for embarking*).

MENELAUS.

Mount, Helen.

WILLOWITHE.

But, tell me, did you not promise that Nymph

Willowithe and her Satyrs, too, that you would take them away with you?

MENELAUS.

It is true, I swore to do it, but the boat isn't large enough.

WILLOWITHE.

Oaths ought to be kept.

MENELAUS.

I swore by Zeus, my father-in-law, you know.

That is of no importance. When it's all in the family one does not scan too closely.

But there is one last rite I must accomplish.

(*They bring him a pot of paint and with the tip of the brush he paints the pupil in the centre of the ship's eye*).

Stay open, vigilant eye. Day and night, evening and dawn,

Towards the fires, towards the stars, towards the marks of the sea,

Guide us, great, patient eye of the laden ship that contains us,

Submerged to the shoulders in the sinewy breast of those seas that are furrowed by our prow.

(*Both mount om board. The plank is drawn up*)

CHORUS OF SATYRS *hoisting the sail.*

Hé - hho!

Hé - hhe - hé - hhé - hé hho!

Hé hho!

Hé hho!

Hé hho!

MENELAUS.

We do not stir.

THE SATYR-MAJOR, *at the tiller.*

We are grounded on the sand!

HELEN.

Menelaus, give Proteus his spectacles.

MENELAUS.

Never. What I have taken by force only force shall make me yield.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Dig a hollow with your oars.

(*They dig around the ship without effect*).

MENELAUS.

Help me, Jupiter!

(*Clap of thunder. Iris all bedecked with plaques of gold and little bells, in a costume that reminds one strongly of that worn by Siamese dancers, falls from heaven at the end of a cord. She attaches the hook from which she is suspended to the corresponding hook of the isle, and the whole, whirling precariously, mounts to heaven amid general admiration. The isle, in rising, reveals* PROTEUS *seated on a chair, a prey to profound dejection.*

The ship is left solitary in the midst of a vast expanse of linoleum).

WILLOWITHE.

Miracle!

MENELAUS.

Thanks, Jupiter!

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

The sea is free!

OTHER SATYRS.

Free! Free! Free! Free!

MENELAUS, *going to the prow.*

Bear to starboard, five points.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Bear to starboard, five points.

THE SATYRS.

We move! We move! We're off! We're off!

MENELAUS.

The breeze is not strong enough. All the oars in the sea !

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

All the oars in the sea ! (*whistle*).
Attention !
Pull !
One, two ! One, two !

THE SATYRS, *singing at the top of their voices.*

Marguerite, she is ill' alas,
She must have the doctor come
Marguerite, she is ill, ill, ill,
She must have, have, have, she must have, have, have,
She must have the doctor come.

MENELAUS.

O Nymphs, what celestial voices ! What delicious melody !

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Back water, my children !

THE SATYRS, *as before.*

The doctor who visits her
Forbids her any wine.
Doctor, go to the devil
If you forbid me wine.
I have drunk it all my life
And drink to the end shall I.
Let them lay me if I die
In the vault where they keep the wine.
My feet against the wall
And my mouth beneath the bung.
If by chance some drops should fall
My gullet they'll appease,
And if the cask should burst
I would drink it at my ease.

(MENELAUS *raises his hand*).

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Pull in the oars !
Where are we going, my children.

A SATYR.

To France.

ANOTHER.

To Bordeaux.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

To Burgundy! When once we have freed ourselves from yonder imbecile.

Hear the wind that snores in the sail. It is Bacchus himself that calls us and offers us a sign!

CHORUS OF SATYRS.

To Burgundy! To Burgundy! Hurray for the Burgundian wine!

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Come to plant the vine of Beaune!

MENELAUS.

Bear to starboard, two points!

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Bear to starboard, two points.

A SATYR.

I shall not stop before Châlons!

ANOTHER.

I have a thirst that would drain the sea!

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

My children, what is the finest wine?

THE CHORUS.

It is that of the coast that lies between Beaune and Dijon.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

My children, what is the finest soil, the blackest, the richest, the best manured.

MENELAUS.

The breeze is dropping.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

Whistle for the breeze.

(*They whistle*).

THE CHORUS.

A soil that is dry and clotted, like curdled milk, and full of little chalky pebbles,

Which retain the warmth like bricks,

That the heavy and dormant grape on two sides may be cooked.

THE SATYR-MAJOR.

What is the finest soil, my children?

THE CHORUS.

A meagre soil, with protruding bones,

Like the cows that are good milkers, whereof the bones of the haunch protrude

MENELAUS.

The wind slackens.

CHORUS OF SEALS, *surging about the prow.*

Flouc ! flouc !

The isle of Naxos has been upraised to heaven. That's a good thing for seals.

Flouc ! flouc !

One less ! The fewer isles there are the better fare the seals. Hurrah !

Flouc ! flouc !

Old Proteus has lost his spectacles, hurrah ! We shall have no more cube-roots to extract, hurrah !

Flouc ! flouc !

The sea is free ! The sea is free ! It is free and we are in it !

Do you feel it quake and tremble ? Do you feel this stroke of the loins that sends us hurtling eight feet into the air !

Hurrah ! Hurrah !

What a bound ! What a release !

It is free and we are in it ! It is infinite and we are in it ! There is more here to drink than a cup of wine ! Youp, youp, youp, hurrah ! Youp, youp, youp, hurrah !

(*The ship disappears followed by the seals*).

PROTEUS, *alone in the middle of the stage.*

And you find this reasonable ?

What madness in all of this ! What derision of serious things ! What a stupid farce !

Here is Jupiter has need of his Helen to change her to a star.

And it is true that there is a void in heaven that has a bad appearance between the stars of the Dioscurides.

Does he think of my sacred property rights for so much as a single moment ?

Does he even take the trouble to apprehend that wanton in the midst of my little garden where nevertheless she is plainly visible ?

Not at all. Like an inattentive maid, like a careless swallow who, for a fly sweeps away the whole of a spider's web,

Iris being at hand, he mentions Helen's name, and it is my whole estate that she carries up to heaven.

It is in heaven now, my sweet little isle of Naxos, with all of its collections and its six tobacco plants.

Go there to look for it!

It is in heaven and waves of azure sky whiten against its reefs.

As for me, here I am alone, ruined, deprived of my spectacles.

It is well. I depart. I quit the surface. They shall not see me more.

I plunge, *nunc est bibendum!*

I shall make my retreat in the story below, in a more tranquil world, I shall live in a splendid palace, all made of bubbles of air, in the midst of corals, sponges, and sea-anemones!

Goodbye, Menelaus, fair breeze, good voyage to you, navigator!

It is for this he has taken Troy!

To disembark on the Laconian shore this snub-nosed goat, this full cargo of horned beasts!

Where's the good sense in all this? I put it to you. Where's the justice? Where's the good order and the good temperament?

And to think that this will always be so as long as the world is governed by poets! Ah, it's not nearly ended yet.

What misfortune! What misfortune!

(*He dives*).

CURTAIN AND END.

PAUL CLAUDEL

(*Translated from the French by John Strong Newberry*).

HELIOGRAPHS

For Good and Evil the aspirant to wisdom substitutes Essential and Unessential. This is the first step; and the second is the realization that nothing is unessential.

He who looks to the future for anything thereby points to the inadequacy of his present; and therefore he would better look to his present in order that it may be repaired and fulfilled.

Few men are wise, for few are capable of becoming what they are.

He who has become wise finds himself stripped of all the virtues without wishing or being able to do an unvirtuous act.

The sage neither seeks nor rejects; he is content to hold himself so that things may accrue or slough off according to his and their present needs.

The chief effort of religions is to force men up to a moral code. The chief effort of wisdom is to take them beyond the need of moral codes.

Humanity constructs a personal God in order that it may praise itself without being conscious of conceit.

It is not the return to life that makes convalescence beautiful, but the touch of death's reality still lingering as we come back.

Love youth whole-heartedly and thus help it to unfold, or smite it most drastically and thus force it to battle. But do not steal its confidence in order to betray it with the teachings of expediency.

One of the chief reasons why boyhood is so often beautiful is that it has not yet learned to dissimulate the expression of the eyes.

BAYARD BOYESEN.

ISHIJIMA

Ishijima's poems were sung and recited by all the lovers in the Empire. He expressed in golden words the pain and the joy and the trickery of the great Passion. Everybody said, — " Many must be the poet's love affairs ! " Men said it with a pang of jealousy, women with a sudden yearning to be embraced by him. But Ishijima was very lonesome and he had never known love. Out of his dreams and his desires he fashioned his poems.

At last, however, Ishijima met the woman, who seemed to him more beautiful than his dreams, and he married her. And people said, — " Now he will write poems about his beautiful wife. " Men said it with a sigh of relief ; women with a pang of jealousy.

Ishijima loved his wife and was loved by her, and their love was greater and more beautiful than his dreams.

Ishijima could not write any more. His brush traced languidly meaningless characters upon the gorgeous silk. What was there to write ? He had neither dreams nor desires, save the lips of his wife, and the lips of his wife were more delightful than any words in any language. Therefore he did not write.

And people gossiped. — " Ishijima does not write any more. He does not love his wife. Therefore he does not write. " Men said it mockingly ; women with infinite compassion.

Ishijima thought : " Happiness is the death of poetry ". And he mourned the loss of his art, and yearned for his former illusions and pains.

In his despair, Ishijima pondered and ruminated : " The death of love is the resurrection of art, " — and he took the soft throat of his wife between his fingers, and pressed, until her little body, finer than a carven statuette, lay still and pathetic upon the soft couch, covered with glistening silk on which were embroidered the greatest poems of Ishijima.

But Ishijima could not write. The meaning of words had vanished like colored flames which are extinguished by an evil wind. He sat on his threshold, and drew long parallel lines with his dry brush.

The people talked. And some said, — " Because of a mere woman, the great poet will never write again. "

Others : " His hatred for her robbed him of his reason. "

Others : " Her cruel ghost has stolen his words. "

Others : " She was unfaithful, and her lips had become sour to him.Therefore he killed her. "

Others : " Without constant love poets cannot write. "

One thought, but never said aloud : " Love is the death of poetry. He loved her too much. Therefore he strangled her. He loves her still more now. How then, shall he think of words ? It is best he draws parallel lines with his dry brush, — for who knows what he would say if his brush were wet, and he remembered the meaning of words ? "

PAUL ELDRIDGE

THE OFFERING OF PLEBS

You have betrayed me, Weak and Cold One
Whom Plebs bestowed on me.
Hearing my cries in the night
You have brought me onion soups,
Art of frying, red and then soft,
Cabbages and energetic dishes.
And the bread of flowers become stale,
Yet the bread matured in the kneading trough.
" What ? the humble arts, the mud of floor,
The bread, the poor man's insipid walnut ? "

You have not seen that I am the poor man
And not the dealer who,
With buttocks breached with dead flesh,
Has a mind well arranged in order,
In the boxes of a chessboard at rest,
With the symmetry of a shop enjoying good custom.

You have not seen that I am the poor man,
And you have tried to ret me on the bank of the days
With tangible provisions.

I wished only for bread,
But, in him,
The companion of mornings,
Evenings and nights,
You did not care to recognize a man,
But a woman's husband,
A function of man.
I was in the night, Wise and Logical One,

Discharged companion, delegate of Plebs,
And you walked with me
As you loiter in broad day.
You have betrayed me without seeing me.

You have not known the prayer in the name of bread.

And then, at the end, Mortal One,
You have parted from me,
You have allowed me to raise my plaints of bitterness,
Like vices of prisons and ships.
You have taken my pink staff away from me.
You have not perceived the man's misery at all.
I am a poor man,
And you have poured out animal drugs for me.
You have anointed me with oils that benefit,
Dogs in the laps of women.

You have not known the prayer in the name of bread.

The poet, here,
Is the unknown master.
He rebuilds with his hands
The ruined houses.
He consecrates those which remain,
Then he defends himself as best he can.
And against him you have a single weapon,
One infallible law,
The smile, my wise and weak, indifferent friend,
The innocence which is not satisfaction,
The smile which is not altruism,
Nor ferocity, nor cowardice,
But the truce,
The door ajar,
God's part in the grey egg.

You have betrayed me,
Listening to my troubles,

JEAN DE BOSSCHÈRE. Von have not seen that I am the poor man.

JEAN DE BOSSCHÈRE. Institutrice esthète.

Of which you made a long synoptic table,
And then you brought to me
The lustral and medicinal jacket,
The Straps of ordinary commonsense,
The Clothes of "searches for Utopia",
The Roast beef for heavy buttocks,
The bouillabaisse of happiness,
The jacket which carries
The seal of the camp commander,
And that of pathology.

Now, your gown was too tight,
But still too large and too long.
When you had thrust him in this gown,
For the madman's friend finds everywhere
Accomplices with praises,
For the poet's friend possesses a straight jacket
Which is invisible and hard.
The friend finds assent from the fat,
From the poised, from the good, from the nagels even,
Whenever they stuffed him in this jacket,
They would lose him.
He was very tiny under the violent leather,
And no part of neither straps nor cloth, touched him at all.
Perhaps he was outside,
Or perhaps inside.
For my part, I know that I was resisted.
So sometimes a lean flesh
Passes through the meshes.

Before choosing another dear companion,
He summoned a minister, in consultation,
With a doctor and his syringes,
And with an aesthetic governess
These heroes made fumigations,
And then incantations of exorcism.
The poet coughs, sneezes, and runs away.
The wise man, the scientific comrade, cries:
"You see him, he lied,

He concealed himself in the lustral gown ! "
And the poet thinks :
" There were neither gown nor laws. "

You have not known the prayer in the name of bread.

But the poet's friend does not laugh.
There is a wrinkle on his forehead, erect, in altar smoke,
Which is the line between *have* and *due*.
The straight jacket is concealed in the cupboard.
He is the poet's guardian.
" This man bites, " he says " at his shadow.
He runs and leaps not like a man. "
He is the poet's guardian.
He will answer for him before the tribe.
He measures his thoughts and leaps,
But not his onion soup,
Nor the four nails of his reason.

He is stupid !
The poet does not know if weight has gripped his feet.
He carries a cane if it rains.
He refuses to warm himself.
He commits crime for crime's sake.
They know it. They have said so.
But he, the friend,
The angel of the house,
The lion tamer and bear-trainer,
He, who has charmed the serpent,
Understands all men.
He defends them against
This furious dog who bites and is ferocious.

I am alone, ferocious !
You have betrayed me.
You have not known the prayer in the name of bread.
You have not known that I am the poor man,
The baggage of whose wild days' journeys

Is not a knapsack with the fleas of reason,
Nor a branch of the tree of knowledge.
But who draws its last fragrance
From a smile ;
Whose pilgrim's viaticum
Is a smile
In the lasting shadow.

JEAN DE BOSSCHÈRE.

FOX-TROT. — "WHEN SOLOMON MET THE QUEEN OF SHEBA"

The Navy at Ezion-Geba,
Gazed across the water amazed.
When Solomon met the Queen of Sheba
The lions in the desert were dazed
With wonder at her striped pavilion
That blazed like a bright parhelion,
They roared their admiration
At this strange coruscation
Till the satyrs took their tawny children trampling through the sand,

To march with the procession, to march with the band.
The flaming phoenix flew with its feathers to fan
The Queen at the head of her caravan;

But the phoenix, though famously fabulous,
Was jealous, envious and emulous
    For the Queen of Sheba had a retinue
    Strictly in keeping with her revenue —
Six thousand camels and camelopards,
Ten thousand and ninety nigger bodyguards,
The camelopards, proud-necked and tall,
Would scarcely notice the Queen at all,
But holding their heads as high as cedars
Looked down upon a hundred dwarf, harnessed zebras,
Whose stripes were arranged with such success
That the Queen could play a game of Chess

When travelling. The camels kneel,
Offer their humps for the Queen to feel,
Nodding arched necks and plumes of ostrich feather
Dyed like her bright Abyssinian weather,
The ten thousand niggers beat on gourds and golden gongs,
Slashing the air with their piebald songs.

. . . . . .

Thus the Queen met the King in Jerusalem,
And he seemed wiser than Methusalem ;
With a great black beard, and a nose like a scythe,
He lived in the palace and subsisted on a tithe.
    He gave the Queen of Sheba a welcome
    Proportionate to her income.
But this amazing Amazon
Was loveable, generous and free.
She brought a gift to Solomon of cinnamon
With an almug and nutmeg tree.
    These he placed before his palace
    For the pleased admiration of the populace
Each sweet-smelling branch bore a budding bell of gold
(Oh ! the blood of the Israelites ran cold)
When evening-wind blurred the hills with blue
The swinging and the singing of the bells sang true.
These, by some magic stratagem,
Played the Sheban National Anthem.
And the thrill of each bell was like an Abyssinian bird,
Or the golden voice of the Queen. For each word
She spoke, trembled, sparkled in the air,
Then spread its wings, and flew from her.
    But the Queen of Sheba went with Solomon
    To his country-house at Lebanon,
Where she brought him gifts of hot-house grapes,
Of ivory, of ebony, of elephants and apes,
Of peacocks and pearls, and a hundred pigmy slaves,

Born orange-coloured with hair that waves;
And each of them wore a turban
Picked out with the plumes of a pelican.
But of all her gifts, by far the rarest,
Brought from the terrible central forest,
With a vein of gold in its ivory horn,
Was a love-lorn, milk-white unicorn.
    But the King, though sweet as honey,
    Had an eye for the value of money.
So he only gave her a heraldic lion
Embossed with the arms (and nose) of Zion.
    Though the Queen of Sheba loved Solomon
    She was not happy at Lebanon.
It was not the women of the Edomites,
The Zidonians, the Moabites, the Hittites or the Ammonites;
She even listened to his proverbs. She put up with very many wrongs,
But in secretly reading his note-book, she found Solomon's Song of Songs,
She knew it at once — it was poetry. And she left the palace that day.
But Solomon knew not where she went to, or why she had roamed away.
    But every evening in Jerusalem
    The almug and the nutmeg trees
    Flaunt the Sheban National Anthem
    Like a banner on the spice-laden breeze
(And oh! each golden bell seems a turtle-dove that cooed
Within the moonlit shadow of the Abyssinian wood).

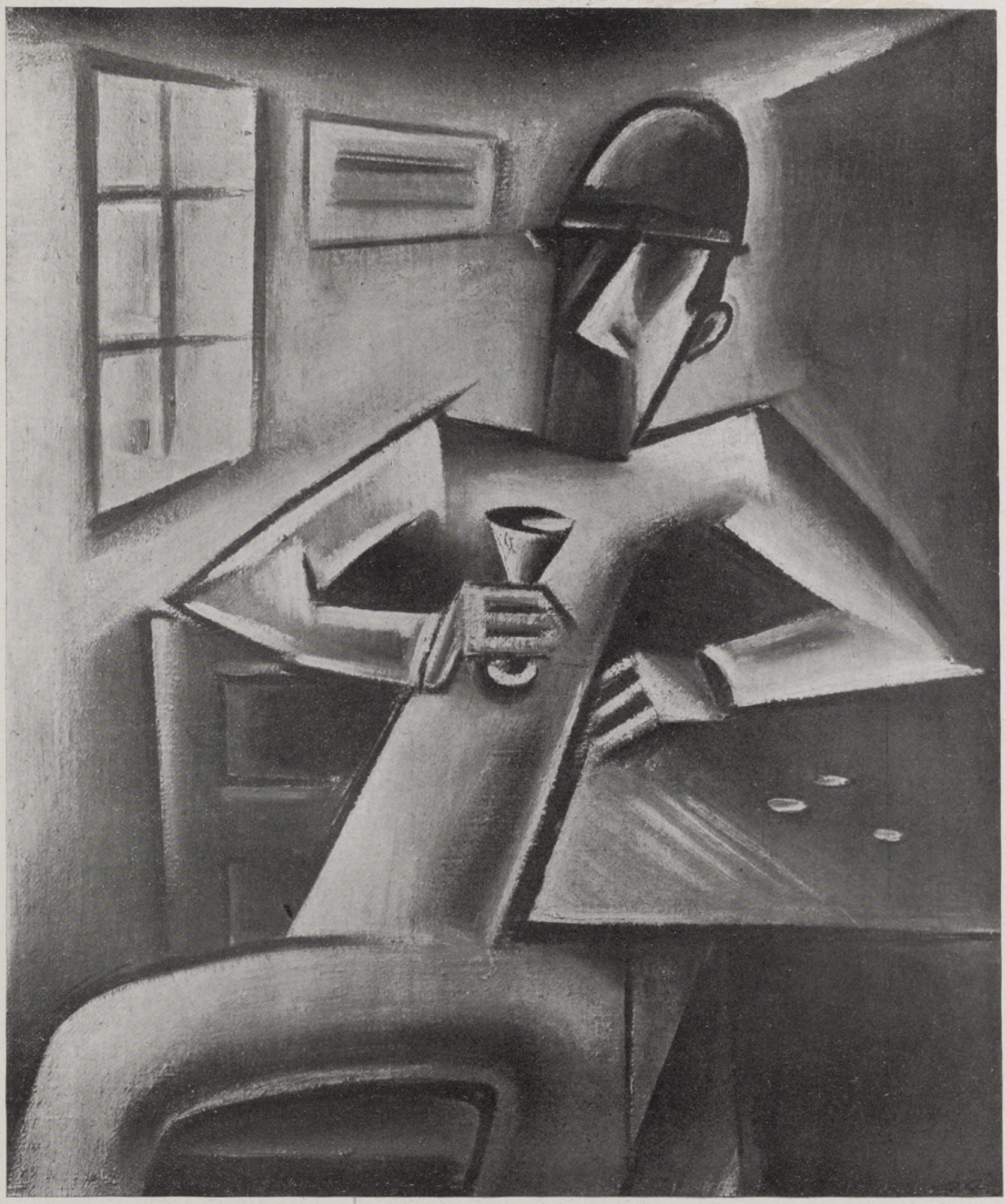
. . . . . .

But we wonder what she looked like, this fascinating phantasmagoria—
Atalanta, Gioconda, Semiramis — or the late Queen Victoria?

OSBERT SITWELL.

JOSEF ČAPEK.

The Man with a Wounded Hand.
Czecko–Slovak Painting.



JOSEF ČAPEK.

The Drinker.

Czecko–Slovak Painting.

THE COCKERELL.

Flaming Oriental sultan among fowl, strutting in truculent obliviousness of the monogamous restraint of our chaster breeds, there is no more singular defiance of the Occident than you. Migrator from the tropic east, not all the frozen winters of our northern climes have served to cool the burning ardour of your impetuous desire. Contemptuous of the customs of your adopted land, you claim the profligate excesses of a harem, outvying all the sultans in promiscuity and glory.

Ruling your clucking mistresses with a vain dignity that is not quite ridiculous until you feel the quickening urge to subdue an unwilling and protesting hen : then with foolish laughter-lifting, fluttering sidesteps and plunging rushes you race and ruffle up your feathers until you have conquered her through weariness, and as she rises from your taloned caresses, fluffing out her feathers, you strut away indifferent but dignified again, and make pretence of pecking grain.

And now, in all the shining wonder of your burnished breast and plumed tail, with crested head raised proudly as a king's upon his throne, you mount your favourite steaming dunghill to peal your challenge forth upon the glittering air, and listen with eye-cocked intentness for the answers from adjacent farms. . .

Solomon never sat astride a refuse heap, nor kingfisher perched upon a rotten fish, yet you. . .

You are a vulgarian in masquerade of kingliness, degrader of a loveliness you are too dull to cherish, treading hens and dung with equal gusto. You should tread daintily, and mount the rooftree for your crowing.

Perhaps the foul dung smells less offensively for your unconscious patronage ; maybe the sluttish ugliness that environs you is brightened by the sheen of your breast and the graceful curving beauty of your tail.

ALLARDYCE CROMARTIE.

DEDICATED TO THE ENEMY

(continued)

Drama deals with the passions.

In England dramatists and actors seem to be out to please a public — a certain public, not the People — who have a certain terror lest a scrap of real passion peep out at them.

Dramatists and actor succeed in pleasing and become mild in doing so... tame mildness is not serenity.

It is very difficult for them to get themselves mild enough — and that they succeed in substituting sentimentality for real sentiment, for passion — for nearly everything — shows what awfully clever men they are. It takes them about fifteen years apiece to rid themselves of the instinct to think about things like Shakespeare or Molière. It is a very great achievement indeed, and the operation they perform on themselves must be as painful as it is dangerous.

Shakespeare, whose plays are all passion, and who was once considered by us all to be a dramatist of some account, is nowadays held by this particular public to be either pompous, gross, dull, or vague. His grand Ghosts, Autocratic Kings, his splendid Aristocrats, and those very weak beings of his called the Heroes, are all considered a bore. And Romeo, the hero of all lovers, is only tolerable to-day if he can reassure the spectators by his drawl, by his inaccurate pronunciation of our English, and by a west-end bearing that his position in Piccadilly is all right, and that he is one of us... top hole...

In short, to-day the spectator in the Theatre dominates the work of art, making it what it is — (a thing we were long ago warned against,) — and the dramatist and the actor — all three shiver to say Bo to the Public and daren't.

Juliet or Ophelia to-day can just avoid our censure if she can cry well, lisping and panting the while as one who babbles on of love — flapper-like.

So the actor drops the Dramatic — Mr. Stoll opens one more Colosseum — runs it magnificently as usual, and makes it possible for the personality of Mr. Wilkie Bard to charm thousands. There must be always room for such as Mr. Bard — there always has been room.

But a place in the sun for Shakespeare too. . . would that be asking too much? . . . or cannot England run to it?. . .

Now someone in England who might honour Shakespeare for England's sake — not for sentimental reasons, for mighty serious ones — this someone doesn't. Who is the boss, as the workmen call the governor, the chief. . . who is he? Is it our Prime Minister, is it another, is it a third? — or do all these three plus a few more make up the total? I don't care who it is, but the boss is not playing the game. The dramatists and actors would like to, but unless they see the boss doing it they never will.

Now suppose (as I suppose 'tis true) that the two Houses — the Lords and Commons — stand for what is called the boss. I don't imply some bogey who struts and frets, but a fine old figure who spite of his tantrums and errors and all, does really stand as head of our family — the English Family. If it *be* the two Houses, then *it is within the power of the two Houses to unite without one dissenting voice in this little matter of the Theatre.*

This would be playing the game, and nothing else is.

To go into this matter is a proper thing to do in 1922. There is no reason why this one branch of Public Service should be allowed to go to ruin, because there is a little uncertainty as to who's who in the world of the English Theatre. Everyone is Who. Everyone of our Dramatists, Actors, and Stage-managers; everyone of the profession and of the trade.

BUT — (and here is where cheating begins as soon as the ball is started rolling) *every one in his right place,* not in some one else's place.

There are the Dramatists, Shaw, Pinero, Jones.

There are the Stage-managers, Poel, Barker, and Myself.

There are the Actors, Martin Harvey, Matheson Lang, Henry Ainley.

There are the Designers, Wilkinson, Fraser, Rutherston.

I select only four branches of the service and name only three men to each branch because one can't make interminable lists.

Now I have not put down any list of actor-managers — for to put things, and each man, in his right place one must not include those men who are everything and nothing.

For example, in my opinion (and I hope my old friend will not disagree), Martin Harvey is essentially an actor, and one of our very best: and it is a loss to England and to the English Theatre that he is unable to confine himself solely to the development of his considerable talent instead of stage-managing, producing, and designing, three branches of the stage-manager's craft and three branches which he does indifferently well.

The same thing applies to Ainley and to Matheson Lang.

In short, to put all in place once more in the English Theatre the first thing

to be done (I repeat what I have said in my other books and must do so till it is accomplished) is to find your stage-managers, for it is the stage-manager who is the boss in the theatre. One for each Theatre has to be found, and, when found, empowered.

And there is no better way of honouring an artist than by empowering him to do his work.

And in doing this the two Houses would be playing the game again so far as our Dramatic Art is concerned.

Till this is done all the fine reasons which can be found to excuse all action is but a begging of the question.

"But what can we do?" Up go the brows, and worry is once more at her silly work.

What you can do is this. . . Make it clear to the People that the Stage, Shakespeare, our modern Dramatists, Actors and all, are worthy of the support and friendship of England.

But how can we do this?

How *do* you do it when you wish to make it plain that Lord Northcliffe and his journals are worthy of England, etc.? How do you make it plain to the People that our British Navy is a National Institution worth honouring? Certainly not by cheapening Lord Nelson — yet you cheapen Shakespeare. — "When? — How?" — I leave it to you to remember when and how; . . . not so far back, either,. . . not long ago.

You honour the English Theatre, the British Theatre, by first honouring its most trusted Guides. — Not its actors,. . . the Public honours them every night. Not its tradesmen,. . . they get paid well, and will always prosper, we hope. Not its "Societies," "Leagues" and its little beginners down at Bard-on-Avon, good though all these may be IN their place: but look more carefully — more curiously — and select your men with greater care. Search for twenty stage-managers, and if you fail to find them call some of us to help you. Do not allow it to be said once more "*Search was made all over England for a Company which could be put in the field which should bear comparison with that of Professor Reinhardt and could not be found*". . . don't allow that to be stated by an authority as it was stated, for it's not playing the game — it is defrauding the English People — it is mightily worthy of mugs.

While this whole Book dedicates itself to the enemy, the Foreword I dedicate to my friends.

And if my critics are friends to the whole content of The Theatre, then my critics must be among my friends.

Yet even good friends possibly can sometimes misrepresent us. — And

it is to suggest that there might be a little less misrepresentation going on in England about members of what is known all over the world as the New Movement in the Theatre. . . that Movement which represents all that is best in the Theatre of today. . . that I write this.

I happen to be one of these members ; and in misrepresenting my aims — by stating that my sole thought is for Sceneries, you, my critics not only misrepresent me but the whole Theatrical Movement. Doing this you run the chance of doing a good deal of harm to the English Theatre and misleading the younger men who are so full of promise and whose work deserves better than that of you. To annoy good fellows who do good work and show loyalty to the best ideals of work, art and comradeship in work, is not the best way to serve the English Theatre, nor is it your conscious wish to act so. — If you ever do so you do so unconsciously I am sure.

You fancy — owing to the simple fact that you have not the time to study my work nor learn my reasons for not competing with the commercial theatres or the " artistic theatres, " — and because you have not the faintest notion of how much I have gladly sacrificed in the last fifteen years to set an example to my followers — you fancy that you ought not to study my work — ought not to learn why I act as I do . . and more than this you fancy that you ought not to study carefully what the great masters of the different crafts have done and written in the Past.

Now I suggest that unless you do this and unless you make yourselves understand what it is I have done and still continue to do, and what they have done and said, you will be acting in a manner unworthy of every fine tradition of journalism and every English tradition.

That it is not entirely your fault is obvious.

The life of the dramatic critic of to-day is no easy job. — To have to write about the stuff which the Commercial spirit of any Theatrical Manager puts before you must be nauseating ; to have to *awaken* an interest where none yet exists must be a little wearisome at times, more especially when it is obvious that a living interest in such things is as natural as eating and drinking. But your power is very great — and your trust a very fine one, and were I not a practitioner in the Art and I can imagine no greater happiness than to be solely a student of past present conditions. . . a rabid student for facts and dates. But I find that English critics do not reveal a knowledge of the facts and dates beyond knowing what has occurred in the *English* branch of the stage crafts.

In America it's as difficult and as unpleasing a job to-day as in England ; but I really don't think it is too difficult if only some one would begin.

In fact I know of only one critic in America who has real discernment and pluck, but then he has studied and knows more than the rest. He enjoys the old

rubbish of the Playhouse (I think we all do) just as he appreciates the old masterpieces — but he doesn't get muddled as to which is which, praising the rubbish and carping at the masters. He discerns — and is not that the first duty of the critic ?

Don't you think it would be delightful to have read Riccoboni's works, besides knowing his name and his worth ; to have heard of a man called Gali who lived in Bibiena and had eight remarkable theatrical sons and grandsons ; to have read d'Ancona, dipped into Sabbattini and Serlio, and know our friends Jacob, Olivier, Dorpfeld, Jullien, Chambers, Giorgi, Bartoli, Scherillo, Rigal, Bapst, Lecomte, Semper, nd Dumont, as well as our old friends whom we know well enough, Collier, Cibber, and the rest.

Conceive the happiness of the Editors who could count on scholarly critics, men never tired of indulging their taste for learning ; who could count on human critics, — men never too tired to have the ancient and best joy of helping young men on by being a little blind to their faults, while all the time encouraging them with information as to past failures and how success was won or snatched from such failures. The pride the younger men would have in you, the friendship they would hold for you would be surely something worth all the labour and the sacrifice... for I suppose it would entail some sacrifice.

It would also entail having no fear.

And after all there should be nothing so very alarming about an Editor. What can he do ? If I am a Dramatic Critic he can but give me the sack. If I get the sack once I try again: — if twice, I reconsider all things ; — if thrice, I publish what I want to say *as I want to say it* in a journal of my own . . . but I do not give in to ignorance, although its stomach may measure sixty-two inches and be the highest and mightiest tool in the land, the tool of ambitious vulgarities who must paddle their own canoes just because their husbands run their own steamboats.

Reading over some of the five or six thousand criticisms on my productions — I have made thirteen in all ; — of my books — four or five have appeared ; of my twenty-six exhibitions of designs and of other activities — I come upon the very last criticism of all dated July 4th 1920. It appeared in the " Observer, " it was not signed. I will not quote, it, but I give the date so that anyone curious to make a note of its contents may do so.

It is one of those typically hopeless pieces of criticism. I mean it shows that the writer had not taken the trouble of learning his business . . or had learnt it once and forgotten it.

It is the first business of a critic to know what an artist has done — to be *informed*. Then he runs no danger of misinforming others.

Now in our Theatre of Europe as it advances, critics must have a chance to advance with us.

Our English critics may be badly informed . . . and when we realize that this is seldom their own fault it seems a little too bad. It is bad for the Public, who get misinformed, bad for Journalism, wich becomes incorrect . . . bad for the Arts, bad for progress.

To sum up, it is just a little silly because quite easily put to rights.

In Politics, in Commerce, in all the other fields of endeavour I'm sure I know not at all *whether* to be exact is of value or valueless. It might do a lot of harm I (as an outsider) suppose for the true facts of a Political case to be recorded. I suppose it might be in some cases even more truthful to lie, . . . let me suppose.

In the Arts — in our Theatre Art — it is not so. About this I do not suppose — I know. Yet it seems to me that the critic journalist brings to his task all the doubts and fears as to what is *best* to tell the Public about our Arts as does his brother in the Political field.

I make a plea that in the matter of the Arts critics be left free — that the only order they receive from their Editors is, "*Be well informed — and exact.*"

No harm can be done — much good would come.

But something more would have to be done to aid the Dramatic Critic than to give him an order. He needs to be as versatile in his own way as a stage-manager — such a stage-manager as I have drawn in my book published by Heinemann. [1]

For example, since Drama and Theatre are a composite art he should know what it is that a Dramatist or a Stage-manager is about when he writes a play like "The Tempest," or produces one like "The Miracle," and whether in the History of the Theatre any such attempts were ever made before — or not.

He should be able to visit the Dowdeswell Galleries and speak with real understanding and illumination of the designs shown there by Bakst, Wilkinson, or Rutherston. He should be able to pass from there to the models by C. Lovat Fraser and understand what is in them. Then on to the South Kensington Museum and let us hear all abut the Bibienas there — and the architectural drawings for Theatres.

He should know something more than we hear about the modern inventions for stage machinery, and he should tell us what he has found out. He should know about all the ancient devices for lighting a stage and an auditorium. He should know, in short, what can be actually KNOWN, not guessed about — and he should pass it on to us all.

[1] "On the Art of the Theatre."

What we *hear* about is how Garrick played this scene and how Mrs. Siddons played that one : and the modern English theatrical critic of course retells us all about this hearsay. But if we should ask him how many permanent theatres existed in 1600 and where these theatres were built, and if he has seen designs of them, and whether any are still in existence, if he has visited them, what they are like, where we can see them or their plans, what it costs to go there or get these, I fancy he will be able to give us but a poor answer. It would be the same with questions we might put to him about nearly everything relating to the stage of the past and the stage of to-day — excluding England ; and even of this stage he is sometimes behind the times in his information.

As I said, this is not his fault. He is not allowed time to study, nor time and money to travel. And so he is apt to write as ignorantly as did the writer in the " Observer " on 4th July 1920.

Everyone nowadays is forming Committees or " Guilds, " or " Leagues, " or " Societies " to deal with Theatrical matters.

I would willingly act in any capacity on a first-class " Society, " which would have as its sole aim the betterment of English Dramatic and Theatrical Criticism, based upon a thorough knowledge of all that has been done and all that is being done in Europe and America to improve Theatrical and Dramatic Art.

I make this suggestion here in my book because I want it known — the idea may not be taken up for a while, but someone reading this even in a year from now may see how important it is that in a matter useful to all and harmful to none we should have exact information all the time, and it may occur to someone able to improve the lot of Dramatic Critics that the way to help best is to establish a substantial fund . . . a Chair, maybe, of Dramatic Criticism . . . Anyhow,to give a proper chance to half a dozen men eager to take it, of leading the Dramatic Criticism of Europe.

It may be that a genius for Criticism can go ahead without information. I believe otherwise. I am sure that we all need more and more reliable books on the Theatre written by Englishmen — such men should have the leisure to do this — and who but the Dramatic Critics are the men to whom this task belongs by right ?

Some younger men should be released from that regular drudgery of having to witness night after night dull " premières " which in the end kills all imagination and distorts all perspective. They should be released and given opportunities, and, allow me to emphasize it now and here, CASH . . . the means to travel and see what is being done, discover what has been done and come back and tell us.

I really hope that something will be started at once to bring this about. I believe the English Theatre would feel the benefit of the results in less than a year or two.

" Why, what should be the fear ? "...

When last I was in London in June of 1920 I stated that there were no actors in England who could act Shakespeare.

This gave some offence to a number of gentlemen and ladies of the Theatrical Profession — and it gave greater offence to a few whose affection I value, who began to tell me I had no right to make such a statement.

Of course I have no right to do so. There are twenty or thirty reasons why I have no right to. But there is one reason which out-weighs the thirty, even when we add thirty to them and so make sixty. — Make it ninety-nine.. and my reason still outweighs the lot.

My reason is this.

All the ninety-nine reasons which are advanced are advanced by men and women who do not and will not sacrifice an immediate success for a truth. Be it a successful engagement — or two — or three ; be it a sum of money — be it the approval of their fellows (and what is sweeter than this ?) — be it personal ambition or personal vanity... none of these will our good friends of the Theatrical Profession sacrifice when it comes to choosing between these personal advantages or standing firm for the truth about the English Theatre.

Now what *is* the truth about our Theatre ? It is something like this...

1st Truth : It possesses the best set of Plays in any language.

2nd Truth : It rarely exercises these. They are like a marvellous stud of blood horses cooped up in their stables, and the very devil to ride when anyone does venture to exercise them in the paddock.

3nd Truth : The best of riders, if they continue to ride hacks, court a fall when they mount thoroughbreds.

So that unless Shakespeare's plays are being continually acted by our actors — unless they can come to cope with the versatility of his genius... the *heroic* size of his thought and the stupendous force of his passion, our actors cannot produce a company which we can call representative of England.

4th Truth : Those of our actors and actresses who best perform the Shakespearean Drama (and they are quite a number [1]) will admit that if they understand and love the great Drama as it deserves, nothing they could do for it would be too much — no sacrifice they could make would be too great for the honour of Shakespeare — their Profession and England. — Well, they sacrifice nothing for it.

I put it to them that a sacrifice worthy of their calling and their ideals would

[1] As they all know, I have the liveliest appreciation of the qualities of our best Shakespearean actors: of Ainley, Norman Forbes, Matheson Lang, Martin Harvey, Fisher White, Quartermaine, Carter; of Miss Nielson Terry, Miss Sybil Thorndike, Miss Viola Tree, and of some others too.

be to raise the standard of playing and keep it flying ; to take no offence when such an old friend and an old worker as I am says that the standard is not high enough, but, first ridding themselves of their own personal feelings as I have rid myself of these, come nobly to me and give me a hand, a heart, and that which goes with it, a purpose and a promise to see things through. After that a council as to how best to do it.

The truth is that no such spirit existed when I made my statement last June — in 1920.

5th Truth : The English actors and actresses are very polite, very charming, etc., etc. , . . " I come to wake up Caesars, not to praise them. " . . . I am not particular to be " polite " to a few at the expense of the whole Nation — and the Art of the Theatre. I'll be as rude as is necessary, till it's acknowledged that I am right about this.

" The Polite " are often given to saying the rudest things behind one's back. The Rude are sometimes given to speaking better of us in private than one would imagine. In fact Truth is more often Rude than Polite. It shows a rude exterior to me and to you if we play hanky-panky with it. It treats you and me alike in this.

" And so, " says my friend the Actor to me, " You think that you — *you* — are the chosen one, the mouth from which Truth about the Theatre alone issues..." To which I reply : " When you will enjoy to give up a tenth of what I have enjoyed giving up to serve the cause of truth in respect to the European Theatre — and the English Theatre in particular — then everyone will recognize you also have a right to claim that what you say is the truth. "

Again, it is one of the most usual things for us all to express, and express very strongly, our opinion of a Gladstone, a Beaconsfield, or a Lloyd George. One we call the murderer of Gordon ; the other the Pantaloon of Politics ; the last, — I don't know what we don't call him. Honourable Members do not actually fire pistols at one another across the venerable floor of the House, but they go it pretty strongly. I like that ; — you like that ; — it's awfully English, you know.

Now, no one ever goes for me except in the " polite " rather mean manner. I seem to have to be on my feet all the time and doing all the cackling. When by chance a member of our House does get up it's one of my own side . . . can't fight my own side. The Government sits tight and mute — yes, mute and let us hope tight. For I am on the opposition benches as yet.

Don't let us play at Politics. . . the politics of the Theatre are futile. My word about Beaconsfield and Gladstone and the House of Commons was merely shot out to illustrate the truth that you can differ and be friends ; and to suggest that some talk from both sides does no harm and a mighty lot of good.

Personally I know no better talkers than the actors — good humoured beyond words — I'd like to exchange some of my pedantic humours for some of their geniality ; then why not — why must all the talk of their side be whispered and be confined to the question of " shop " ; or, if not that, dressing room or club room talk in which all the best they have to say is lost on those who are the opposite bench . . . all because they will whisper.

That isn't good for us and isn't good for them.

Speaking of us I may as well mention that in the Profession there really is an Opposition Party as well as a Government Party. (I continue the use of Political terms for a while because it expresses clearly to all how we are placed— and what the Theatre all over the world is made up of.) In England, then, " *the Theatrical Profession* " is the group which we may call the Government, and the Group which, known as the Opposition, is that smattering of independent men and women who are not in " Power " and yet are the inspiration of the others.

All the *artists* are in the Opposition all over the Earth.

You query that : you point to the great Sarah Bernhardt . . Why, once upon a time there never was a bigger figure on the Opposition benches than Sarah Bernhardt. She selected to go over to the other side, that's all. Now she is a member of the Government. That's very right and proper for people past sixty, . . . but it does seem a bit natural for younger folk . . . now doesn't it, Phyllis ? . . . to be in the Opposition.

The momentary lapse into Political figures of speech is not so out of place just here, for there's a tendency among a number of men and women in the Theatre who could . . . and don't . . . help to push things along, to sit on the fence — to attempt to be just — to take no sides.

That would be fine if it wasn't a bit futile.

For while actually there are no sides as there are in Politics — and thank Heaven for this — there *is* a standard, and it must be up or down ; — half-mast high — the golden mean — compromise, announces a death. And, as we should know by now, " the man who sees two sides to a question sees nothing at all. "

And although we have no " sides " in our work, there must be and there are many sides to our difficult *problems*, the main problem of which is for us " *How to bring our English Theatre to a condition which shall finally place it second to none in Europe.* " And I should say the answer is to use every man and every talent and every penny we have to back our best horse.

I think that to-day our best horse is called Shakespeare.

Someone tells me that I have written elsewhere that Shakespeare's Plays are not for acting. — Can I have contradicted myself ? Oh, what a sin ! Can

I have said that you can say "Yes" *and* "No" and yet reply correctly. If I have not said so you know quite well that this is true — tha *under some conditions* Yes is the only reply to make to a question to which No is the sole answer.

Let me ask you to be a little more cautions before asserting that I contradict myself — for here I happen not to. When I spoke of Shakespeare as being not actable, not for the Stage, I spoke, if you will remember, as one who was reviewing the whole question of the Theatre of the World — and the Theatre as a creative Art. Here I speak as one who reviews one section of the whole — the most backward section — that is, the English Theatre. And for the English Theatre it will do well — can do no better — to begin at Shakespeare. For in Shakespeare is all *Burbage,* remember ; in Shakespeare is a huge deposit of the *Commedia dell'Arte.* [1]

You who fail to understand how I can make two such apparently contradictory statements about the Shakespearean Plays would fail to understand that a paradox covers the whole truth. If you cannot understand that Shakespeare's Plays are unactable and yet are the best stuff on which to rebuild the English Theatre of 1921 — then you cannot understand a paradox.

Bother your head no longer about Paradoxes — be less clever till you are cleverer — remain in the dark rather than open eyes which cannot stand the glare of that torch which even Truth herself holds above her own head. There are plenty of hands waiting to take yours and help you along in the dark — if yon won't talk, argue, and attempt to reason when crossing on a narrow plank over an abyss 30,000 feet deep — and that is what life amounts to.

Truth is not one-sided, not three, not any number of sides. It is as round as it is square : as fluid as fixed : as strong as it is weak : as hot as cold.

It is not enough for us to say that while half the earth is awake the other half is asleep, for that is not at all true. The world, thank Heaven, is all the time having as much evening and morning as day and night. There is no moment but in some place men are falling off to sleep and waking up. There is no moment but in some place a bell is heard striking the hour of seven. Therefore for Mr. William Archer to assert, as he strolls over to the theatre some evening, that it is seven o'clock would be incorrect of Mr. Archer. It is merely seven o'clock to him. It is eight o'clock to Signor Danilo ; but Signor Danilo would never be rash enough to swear to the hour, for after all it is 10.30 in the morning to *Il Professore* in San Francisco.

[1] The *Commedia dell'Arte,* or Professional Comedy, was the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth, centuries' idea of genuine Theatricals unmixed with the literary, the philosophical and the metaphysical. It was the genuine expression of the actor.

" Home at last, " says Mr. Archer, looking at his watch which points to the hour of midnight. But Signor Danilo is at home and it is one o'clock, and the Professor is at home and it is 3.30.

Again Books, Boats, Houses, Horses, screws, meals, and a host of other things are not all made and handled alike, and so it is incorrect when the prim tell us we can't and we must'nt make or handle them in any but ONE way.

Books are not only printed forwards. In Japan they print 'em backwards.

There is not one rule of the road — if in England the horses are kept to the left they will be right only in England, for in Italy the opposite is the rule.

Screws of a carpenter's bench in Italy turn the other way to screws in an English bench.

And just as Mr. Archer and other good men get fixed ideas into their heads about what seems to them to be the certainty of the hour and place, and the unchangeability of other customs, so do the critics of this other world — this Theatre world — get just as *fixed idea* about the Theatre, or they would not be so ready to assert that the Theatrical Art is this or that, but cannot possibly be the other.

For it can be what it likes.

GORDON CRAIG.

(To be continued)

COMMENT

The December issue of our contemporary, Les Ecrits Nouveaux, contains an article on the Russian Theatre under the Soviets. A. André Julien, the author, so strikingly supplements and amplifies the Notes of M. Ehrenbourg in Broom that we paraphrase at length therefrom.

The present Russian Government has a secretary and department of "Education by means of Theatrical Productions". The present incumbent of this portfolio is Comrade Kel, whose duties, as he himself states them, chiefly consist in "ideology and organization," i. e., an examination and search for artistic trends in the theatres, and a dissemination of the best that is found. Kel expressed regret that little novelty had as yet emerged, but harboured the hope that new inspiration would spring from the proletariat.

The immediate program of this department is to bring into the closest possible contact the labouring classes and the theatres, by means, first of all, of the creation of as many theatres as possible. In 1914 Russia possessed 70 good theatres and 140 theatres of small account. The latter have been annihilated. Soviet Russia at present exults in 2197 subsidized theatres and 3452 active organizations in the smaller villages: altogether nearly 6000 stages compared with 210 under the old regime. Most of the smaller organizations have arisen from the private initiative of groups of communists unaided by official assistance. Of course the Bolsheviks do not neglect such an opportunity as the theatres provide for addressing the people.

Control of theatrical activity, since the inception of the Revolution, has been vested in a commission which enforced a strict censorship forbidding the staging of any production not chosen by themselves. This seriously limited initiative, and therefore the commission was suppressed last June.

A new inclusive organization has been established instead, made up of Meyerhold, Stanislavski, Sanine, Vacktangof and Kel. In other words the leading theatrical artists of Russia: artists not propagandists.

Meyerhold, the President, is the most daring, influential and original of those theatrical directors with communist sympathies. He created the first theatre of "The Socialist Federation of the Russian Soviets" notable for having produced the Aurora of Verhaeren and the Mystères Bouffes of Maiakovski. The author of Mystères Bouffes, has the same position among the writers, as Meyerhold

among the directors. He also fought in the war as a red soldier and assails the art of yersterday with the same violence. The Mystères Bouffes in its futuristic visions of class war and world struggle seeks to satisfy the eye and stimulate imagination rather than reason. It is criticised by the intellectuals ; Lunatcharski has judged it severely, and Stanislavski has declared : " It is a caricature that never unfolds its wings. " However, the crowd that nightly throngs the theater acclaims it with enthusiasm.

Thus in the new commission, Meyerhold personifies communism, with its daring departures and Stanislavski, culture, taste and the old artistic conscience. Even when his radical associates consider his conceptions passé, they continue to hold him in deep veneration. Stanislavski has never faltered in his task. He is still the man whom Copeau credited (Cahier du Vieux Colombier — novembre 1921) with the creation of " The only school of the modern theatre carried to perfection. " The same man of whom Gordon Craig writes in a recent letter to Broom : " Now the two (Stanislavski and his associate) made their theatre worlds famous — the first in Europe — How ? Their chief rule is this : 'We will show a production to the public not by any given date but only when it is ready' ".

Although this differentiation of ideal exists between Stanislavski and the communists directors " for whom the art theatre has no value beyond the personality of its director, Stanislavski, since it is only of mediocre interest from the point of view of social life, because it addresses itself to the intellectuals, " nevertheless he is allowed complete freedom. As Kel states it : " It is such an artist of truly exceptional talent that we should surround with the greatest consideration, for his cooperation is essential to us ". Stanislavski is more skeptical of his confrères than they are of him. Before the creation of the new committee of which he is a member, he is quoted by M. Julien as having said : " The revolutionists wait for something new, but art comes ahead of the revolution and goes farther. One cannot make propaganda of art. "

There is probably another reason for the division between Stanislavski and the new theatre, not mentioned by M. Julien. Stanislavski brought to perfection the realistic theatre ; he might be called an inspired Belasco ; no one has evei produced dramas of Ibsen and Tschekoff in a comparable manner. Every detail had to be true to life ; the actors were taught to lose themselves in their parts to such an extent that several have been reported to have gone insane. Not only in Russia is this emphasis antipathetic to the spirit of the new theatre. Expression by means of symbols, more abstract and less naturalistic, is the trend of creators in the western world ; and the Mystères Bouffes might be preferred by the younger groups outside of Russia, to the Cherry Orchard, even under the direction of Stanislavski.

M. Julien also describes Kachalof's presentations of Byron's Cain and of Gogol's Revisor : The three new schoools opened under Kachalof's direction and the continuation of the opera. He speaks of Vackatangof, the third member of the commission, and his performances of St. Anthony by Maeterlinck, of Sanine, formerly of the Imperial Theatre of Moscow, uniquely versed in " scenes de masse ".

Two secretaries have been appointed to assist the central committee in the selection of plays. Maxim Gorki and Beskine are at present in charge of this department of theatrical literature. The latter, an ex-laborer, also concerns himself with the problem of bringing the theatre to the workers and peasants, and vice-versa.

An interesting by-play of the main program is the regulation that each member of the committee must go in turn into the provinces and personally take part in the local productions. The idea being, according to Kel, that " The consequences of a stay in a village far from Moscow of personalities such as Stanislavski or Meyerhold, can achieve inestimable results in the future of the theatre. " — We would be pleased if it were also decreed that they visit Main Street. —

M. Julien goes on to describe the projects for bringing the audience into the performance — " To mix the people in the creation " — mentioned also by M. Ehrenbourg. Much importance is attached to this phase, as exemplified by organizations of pageants and street shows. The article concludes with the statement : " It is very likely that discoveries of greater power and importance will arise from the Russian revolutionary theatre than our old world is apt to develop. "

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The November issue of our contemporary, Les Ecrits Nouveaux, contains an article on America. M. Bernard Fay, the author, has a point of view and a French clarity of expression that so efficiently disperse the confused nimbi which shield that country from our understanding, that we quote at length therefrom.

M. Fay divides America into two major divisions : the American world of letters with small centres in New York, Boston and Chicago, and the rest of America. The former, which in spite of its three heads, is homogeneous, according to M. Fay, recognized three outstanding literary events last year . . . " " La Grande Rue, de Sinclair Lewis, qui est un beau roman réaliste et amer, la Reine Victoria, de L. Strachey, l'Empereur Jones, drame réaliste et douloureux d'Eugène O'Neill. "

" All these works are competent and well done, and do honor to the authors who created them and to the public who appreciate them. But, for a stranger, they are empty. They are books for discussion. They give no new direction to

the human soul. They will cause no more commotion than an ambassadorial toast at an international banquet or a controversy on the distribution of a prize. Then again, they are very English. Their style, their honesty, their literary machinery are those of Great Britain, and one thinks of Wells, Shaw, Chesterton, and Lord Bryce, who at the moment are the favorite authors of this public."

And a little further on —

"This literary public of the United States with its lectures, its newspapers of twenty pages, is the best informed in the entire world, has the best digestion of any nation and charming taste. But in its soul it loves to discuss only the most precise subjects and to see its young authors march in ordered steps towards the forms and traditions of literary England. In this direction it believes, lies the intellectual progress of the United States.

"There is no other literary public in America. But there are millions of living men whom I have known. I did not land at New York ;, I entered on foot living freely with those who came from all the States, North, South, West, and the Centre. Since I have known them, I have not been content to see only the world of cultivated America. These young men were to me the symbol of a mass which is not organized and has no consciousness, but which has taste, unbelievable liberty, vehemence of feelings and multiple and passionate desires. The United States is not a myth of the geographical maps. It exists as an enormous space, it lives as a huge emotional crowd."

Speaking of The Kid by Charlie Chaplin :

"This film has been the great artistic event of the winter. It is sad and full of reproaches, it criticises that which is most respected in the United States, women, social order, and the great thieves. Its triumph, in spite of prejudices, in spite of financial depression, is one of the most curious phenomena of last winter."

M. Fay also expresses a qualified admiration for American popular novels whose authors "dare not write literature".

"I do not find these popular American stories entirely bad. They bore me, but are less deceiving than the literary creations. They inspire hope. They are not, like the others, an end. I love the Saturday Evening Post, which is cut into sections like a sausage, pages of stories, — epic, lyric, comic, sentimental — intermixed with ads where one sees magnificent corsets and miraculous tooth powders. The same ladies who appear in the advertisements decorated in corsets, die as queens in the stories, assassinated by ignoble negroes."

"It makes a strange impression upon the traveller when he perceives that Americans have never regarded their civilization for its intrinsic value. They accept it, they praise it, they glorify it as moral and ideal. They live it with enthusiasm but seek neither to analyze nor to judge it.

Outside of some strangers and some Israelites, I have known no famous author who has seen the originality of this civilization. The literati consider American culture as a branch of English culture. In the great universities, there are four chairs of English literature to one of American. Those of their writers who do not appear typical are treated with distrust, as dissenters. The community of language which has given the Anglo-Saxon such a commercial advantage is on the way toward ruining American art."

"One accuses the American newspaper of adding to this confusion and of being stupid. I do not know what one should say of our own in this regard. Besides, it seems to me the American newspapers have done more and better than the literati. They have invented and established a new form which pleases the people and corresponds to them. In their enormity, in their variety, these papers are one of the most sincere products under the sun. They are amusing, hardy, tragic, mundane. They indefinitely renew the spectacle of existence. They are stupid, with less pretention than ours, and more informative. They have beautiful pictures, they pay more. They circulate more widely. Their scandals are greater than ours, their heroines more virtuous. They cannot help but develop imagination and taste for life." —

"The sight of the crowds which throng the museums, concerts, and public libraries has surprised me. The prestige which surrounds the better artists has persuaded me that the United States waits, longs for, and invokes with passion, the great man of letters of whom they have need. They will bear in triumph the first writer of genius who will appear."

M. Fay, like most Frenchmen, then admires American architecture, street planning, football stadiums, and concludes —

"A stranger always receives the impression that the Americans have not yet found their intellectual milieu. They lack either a revealer, or the time, or the occasion. They have produced and produce beautiful things which are neither entirely beautiful nor entirely their own. Their literature seems to free itself from commercial oppression only to become a kind of religion. Among the conservatives it is a dogmatic esthetic which seeks to moralize, among the radicals it is a rapturous mysticism, tainted by a Bergsonism more or less conscious, as in the work of Waldo Frank. Anarchists wish art to supress religion, traditionalists that it recreate religion and be a part of it. The necessary distinction between the religious life of the soul, and its pleasures, is either supressed or enfeebled. Art oscillates between social questions, moral problems, and revolution. Freudian doctrines have put in their appearance during the last two years, to add to the harm. They verify Freud in verse and utilize him in novels. One is forced to believe that American literature will not be worthy of itself until after it has changed its methods of associating ideas and sentiments.

We consider so many of M. Fay's reactions acrid and stimulating that we have quoted at length. But we disagree in this particular: Queen Victoria, one of the three major literary events specified, has primarily appealed to that literary America of charming taste, subservient to English literature. But Main Street has not. Nor is Main Street a vengeance of the East upon the West, as M. Fay states elsewhere. A study of the number of copies sold or even of their geographical distribution would rebut M. Fay's contention. Literary America read Main Street (it reads everything, even Hamsun), but in general sniffed —" his style does not flow, the English has no rhythm, no resonance —." Main Street somehow got over to the " mass which is not organized, has no consciousness " but which is rapidly acquiring one. And it got over not as a revenge of the East upon the West but as a revolt against the dead, dried up, hypocritical, stagnant remnant of a civilization, currently called Puritanism, derived in bygone centuries from that same England to which literary America kowtows. Main Street lives on Fifth Avenue, on Beacon Hill, just as truly as it bisects Moose Jaw.

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Russia and America are separated by many kilometres of land and miles of sea. Judging by the two articles from which we have quoted, they are as far apart spiritually as they are corporeally. And yet one finds them associated in the strangest conjunction by disillusioned Europeans of all nationalities, except the Irish. Sometimes it is an artistic renaissance, sometimes a spiritual revival, sometimes an economic panacea that is anticipated, but whatever it may be, they are quite sure it will come from Russia or America, or possibly from both.

A few palpable similarities are evident. Both have great size, untouched natural resources and undeveloped territory. But these are more than balanced, by the fact that one is materially the richest and the other the poorest of occidental nations. The American people possesses a naive trust in the value of universal education; the Russian government shares this confidence. The United States is mottled with little theatres and debating clubs usually made up of insurgents against the existing artistic or economic order. The Russian Government, and the small party it represents, attempt artificially to effect a similar activity despite the apathy of the populace. In unsuspected recesses of the American continent free thinking individuals, who desperately contend with the accepted philosophy, germinate spontaneously. In suspected quarters of the Russian population, plots are incubated to restore the antecedent status quo. The individualistic liberalism professed by the alternating political parties, who ostensibly rule the United States, derives from the theories of pre-revolutionary French

philosophers, whose decayed teeth had been efficaciously extracted by pre-eminent American dentists. On the other hand, the existent Russian Government autocratically enforces the latest radical doctrines, allowing no criticism except from within its own party. In general, the Russian authorities expend as much energy in disseminating these tenets among their recalcitrant masses as the American authorities exert in suppressing them.

But the vague faith of Europe in the two countries probably rests on other grounds. Europe has lost all illusions about herself, is resigned to a cynical spirit of acceptance. To her, human nature is unchangeable, greed and envy will continue to exist, and misery and wars to follow. In Russia and the United States credence abides that, given other conditions, the nature of man will change. Therefore Europe, unable to resign herself, replaces by this faith in two unfathomed nations, the discarded trust in a progressive evolution that the Neo-Darwinists substituted for religion.

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The December Dial prints an article on American Painting by Mr. Paul Rosenfeld, tracing its development from Albert Pinkham Ryder to Georgia O'Keeffe. Mr. Rosenfeld has given several noteworthy precedents for plain speaking when wielding a critical pen. We shall follow his excellent example.

The article under discussion is an offence to American criticism and a calumny on American art. At this moment when the general public, stimulated by the publicity given to the mysterious new art, which up till now it had taken as a joke, asks for enlightenment and assistance, it is indeed a misfortune that one of our most advanced journals should combine with a respected critic, to rain upon their expectant intelligences, such a melliflous pot-pourri.

" Disks of saddest silver burn coldly amid profound and undulent blacks ; rims of dreamy light glow palely as the greening skies of after sunset ; dullest gold of night-cloud edge is subtly and mystically harmonized with sable and with the aureate browns of embossed leather. The fanfares of romance breath through the tender mysterious tones, the sensitive foaming forms ".

Great stuff ! — Poe might have wished to incorporate it in his vision of Eldorado but as an aid to understanding modern art, it is about as useful as a Baudelaire sonnet to designer of turbines.

The French, admittedly pre-eminent in pictorial art, devote several magazines to art criticism. They are read by a public more familiar with and cognizant of aesthetics than the American. Yet they resemble the Scientific American and the Mechanical Age infinitely more closely than they do this sample of art criticism. We do not contend that the French should be slavishly imitated,

even though they excel in this instance, but we consider it food for reflection that the most distinguished art milieu prefers to study art scientifically, while the unformed and chaotic American field is fed with spumescent rhetoric and conscious fine writing.

But our aversion to the form of this criticism is not our primary quarrel. The article misinforms and is misleading.

" The stout woman in grey singing at the piano, opening her mouth in half intense and flaccid fashion, brings one the feeling of the monotony and second rate quality of existence, the languorous fashion in which nature takes and gives the lives of her creatures, pours it out carelessly, wastes it ; floods of energy poured forth, nothing very noble, very tragical, or very exciting happening withal ".

Since when is painting a medium for expounding philosophy ? Before written language was perfected painting recorded the dreams, the fears and the aspirations of the race, but the modern artist is supposedly concerned with what Clive Bell terms " significant form ", the pattern or arrangement of form and colour which has the power of evoking an " aesthetic emotion " in contrast to literary or poetic sentiment.

" The mustard browns, the dull rich greens, the fawns and tans and soft warm whites, call to mind the smell of hay, the breath of kine, the taste of warm squirted milk. One hears perforce the grunting of piglets, the lowing of oxen, the swishing of great slow tails. Butter and cheese and all dairy products have a sort of apotheosis here ". Shades of Mid-Victorianism ! A good enough description of an old time chromo or a dining room mural at which the polite guests exclaim, " Why those grapes look jus' good enough to eat." We doubt that Dove had hoped thus to compete with coloured photography or the cinematograph. At any rate the cow in the reproduction refused to swish for us.

Another inference of which we are persuaded, is that Mr. Rosenfeld is city bred and unfamiliar with natural functions. No other explanation can account for his predilection for " grossly animal processes ". We suggest that next summer he beg permission of some friendly farmer to be present when the bull is let in on the cow. It is really more interesting in life than are paintings of the " Organs that differentiate the sex. "

Not that we agree with the " puritan unwillingness to perceive man in his relation to the rest of creation " but that to a painter a phallus like a pistil is expressive only by its form. Perhaps the Egyptians habitually remarked " some crocodile " when they sauntered by the obelisk, but we doubt it.

Again it may be that Miss O' Keeffe's paintings " lead one further and further into the truth of a woman's life," her art may breathe "a prayer that the

indifferent and envious world may be kept from defiling and wrecking the white glowing place " but if so it has nothing to do with the question of whether her art is good or bad or as to what her painting means as painting.

Mr. Rosenfeld writes impressionistic criticism. He purports to transfer the emotion of contemporary pictorial art into a literary form ; to invoke by words the beauty of the paintings and thereby to assist others not so well equipped artistically as he, to get a reaction. A legitimate and worth while aspiration. But the first essential is the ability to look at a picture. Not a line in the lengthy discourse gives an indication that this is the case. While Mr. Rosenfeld was in Paris he had every opportunity to familiarise himself with current art theories. He could have read in many different forms : " A great painter conceives and executes a homogenous organism, a new body from which one cannot subtract or risk the destruction of the smallest particle. But the novelty resides in the arrangement of the elements and in their distribution. Their conventional meaning matters not at all. A combat of gladiators, a pastoral idyll, or a simple relationship of angles can satisfy us equally. It is not necessary to humanize geometric forms but to extricate from a work, its specifically plastic import." (Waldemar George — in l'Amour de l'Art). But Mr. Rosenfeld seem either to have escaped contact with all such theorizing or to have dismissed it as inapplicable, although it underlies the work of the artists whom he criticizes. Mr. Rosenfeld seems only to react to the literary content of the paintings, a tendency which has been the most destructive in the history of art and has caused one decadence after another. Modern art has but recently tried to struggle from under this incubus, and it is the sacred duty of critics to assist this endeavor. To judge American painters by discarded criteria, and criteria which their creations ignore, is considerably worse than useless. Mr. Stieglitz, whom he mentions, has devoted a life-time to the struggle, and the fight has only commenced. Most American painting still endeavors to outdo realistic photography, to be more lifelike than life.

We can understand why such criticism is written, Mr. Rosenfeld has supplied the key. — " For an act of imagination is the process of perceiving an objective verity, and no one born this side the Atlantic can stand looking long into the face of the truth. Why it is so, why the truth, hard to envisage in the old world, should be a sort of head of Medusa in the New, it is not easy to say. Perhaps it is for the reason that the verity concerning America itself, the prime truth for the American, is so painful that sluggish life prefers to maintain itself on a low plane by means of a moral blindness rather than struggle desperately and perhaps perish on a higher. Perhaps it is for the reason that no individual can see the realities unsustained by the will of the group. One knows it oneself whatever one be, the pain of gazing long at the truth concerning

oneself ; the glare of the fierce light, the constantly recurrent impulse to glance away immediately after the vision into some consoling rose-land, to cuddle oneself with the chocolate and the movies and newspaper patriotism of the eternal illusion. It's as if the breast were sore, and could'nt long bear the embrace of life, and relaxing the passionate clasp shrank away." (Dial, page 619, November) — but we cannot understand why it is printed by the paper which editorially asks. — " Is it possible that the common literature of our day is forsaking the direct simplicity which made it if nothing else intelligible, and, with an instinct for these things, is beginning to give us exactly the wrong thing in style and an initiation to bad poems in prose ? ". — (Dial, page 624, November).

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It is with feelings of deep regret that we have been forced to accept the resignation of Alfred Kreymborg from BROOM. Ill health and the demands of his own work have necessitated this separation, and he leaves us to go Northwards accompanied by every wish of BROOM for his future welfare and success.

Mr. Kreymborg's address for the next two months will be Hôtel Moderno, Rapallo, Italy.

H. A. L.

ERNESTO FRATONI, *Gerente responsabile.*

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MAXWELL BODENHEIM - THE DIAL.