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Editor: HARRIET SHAW WEAVER.
Assistant Editor: RICHARD ALDINGTON.
Contributing Editor: DORA MARSDEN, B.A.

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"I AM."

By Dora Marsden.

THE beginning of the New Year will serve as a sufficient apology for stating afresh the ambitions of this journal and detailing what one considers to be its unique and supremely important task: one for the execution of which we can see no evidence of minds other than our own being forthcoming. There are, we very willingly admit, men of almost infinitely greater attainments in "scholarship," and for such a task as ours "scholars" must of necessity be the untiring hodmen: the willing and directed servants. But of minds possessing the cold courage which can go forward and advance up to and through those mirages of flame and rage as they appear on the hither side; but which prove but echoes of a weak thin sound when they are traversed: of such minds the appearance is rare. When they do appear they find their own work, and that work accomplished establishes a new era. After they are gone—these directing minds—minds of a different order—stuffed minds, scholarly minds, begin to disburse their heavy stores upon the lines they have laid down. The stored rubbish then becomes invaluably useful treasure: what was purposeless will become vibrant with purpose. So it will be, long after "THE EGOIST" has become a thing of the past. Meanwhile it has its unique work to do, ill-equipped in all accessories as it is, and armed only with the one thing essential. Let this, then, be the answer to those friends who have been good enough to say that "THE EGOISTS" activities are all derailed and are willing to pray that the journal might die, if by dying the "remarkable abilities" of the writer might have a chance of "coming into their own." "Their own": the only task which matches their powers in a Verbal Age like this is—to break the hypnotic spell, to blast the stupefactions of—The Word.

Our war is with words and in their every aspect: grammar, accidence, syntax: body, blood, and bone. Let none make a mistake: not because men use words to deceive; not even because words incline by capacity to deception and are the natural basis of Civilisation: the inoculators of men's powers with the debilitating serum of "Culture": not because they can be used, and are used, as readily for ends of diplomacy as of frankness; for hiding motives as much as for revealing them, for alluring and deceiving as much as for guiding and illuminating. One could not reasonably object to the surface-deceits of words which make possible those ends of deception rulers and masters require in their difficult task of governing a wayward animal. Words are good for those who use them when they subserve according to design: If the design is to deceive well and good: a good instrument is one which performs the operation—whatever it may be—to which it is set. And those who will the end will also the means: those who extol Civilisation and Culture may not decry in words their powers of deception. Nor will those who care nothing for either civilisation or culture. Since deception is the human way of the strong with the weak, the ways of culture and civilisation are the natural human way of the strong with the weak. And long it will continue to be. As long as there is interplay of intelligences of unequal degrees of power, the verbal deception, which in the bulk constitutes civilisation and culture, will continue. Only a dreamer: a dunce: could seriously expect it to be otherwise. To civilise, to break in a recalcitrant animal by words is an exceedingly clever ruse, the way of men having once been intelligent enough to master they will never lightly forego. The deceptive element in sound, which is the basis of civilisation and culture, was "there in the beginning": before the element of truth, in fact. The alluring and deceptive function of living sounds are more fundamental than their expository. Song is older than speech: cant is more venerable than truth, and only a dunce will expect the former to be abandoned because the latter has arrived. The two interact
together and side by side; and it is merely in the "set" of things that the former should have proved itself in the second, or be the slavery of the more intelligent, because the less intelligent are the less capable of comprehending the ideal of the latter. If this were all and the situation were covered by the categories of "deliberate deceivers" and "unwittingly deceived" there would be little to be said: for these we shall have as long as we have dunces and clever men. Not for any of these things is language regarded as a servant and under control it may be the servant of whomsoever can make it such: deceivers and masters and any. If words occupied the position of servants even in relation only to a few— to tyrants", the situation might be left with equanimity and satisfaction. It is because words have developed into a "Culture" and grown masters of all and servants of none that the daring and explorative tendency of intelligence overcomes defensive and insists on bringing down the dominating Verbal Architecture. Had not the Holy words become fascinating, domineering, insulting, invested with Authority, and claiming reverence as their creators, demanding worship from them as their supreme God and Good they could comfortably be accepted as "good" to deceive and "good" to expound. But they have changed from being instruments capable of benevolently enabling, assisting, investing with a potency above anything apparently in the possession of their "users." They have become the Great Unknown whose powers men fear. Their origins have been lost through the great multitude of their begetters: "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little," they have inherited a mountain of accretions so thickly pressed that not even the acutest mind makes headway towards the unravelling of their casual and humble genesis. Words without tallies other than "Sacred Mysteries" make the bulk of the subject-matter of the learned's disputations. By every virtue of their thematologies they have attached to the heights and prestige and command: left limitless by the bonds of sense which comprehension sets, they have floated away into the wide blue Empyrean where as "Absolutes" they dwell. Only by laughter—that gurgle on the habit of laughter as a means of defence and set the on the Ridiculous to dog the Sublime. Laughter, like most of the distinguishing human developments, clothes (in women), weapons (against stronger animals), is defensive. And so has speech become in its developed form of "Culture" in the hands of the governors. Thus far these all represent triumphs of intelligence. There is a sense, however, in which words do not represent intelligence at all: they represent limitation and failure of intelligence: they are mere mistakes and perpetuated errors. Speech which is the foundling child of instinct has attached to it an authority, a sanctity, a sanctity, which is a blasphemy to impugn; which deceives all and imposes on all; which acute minds debate for thousands of years and find no clue to, this is that creation of human stupidity, failure, and impotence which at its mature growth develops into a monster which creates its own problem: its victims. It becomes a magic mesh which neither screens nor lights up the mind, but only stupefies. The spectacle of the human intelligence with all that which it has otherwise attained lying helplessly puzzled and perplexed before its own creation is the one irony of human achievement.

No! The trying of issues with the forms of language is the masters of men. And this latter day creation: this waiting-maid of men, has become invested with Authority as Lord Master and Begetter with men's own acquiescence. In it has been unwarily placed the Word, and the Word was God," they will say. To blast the Word, to reduce it to its function of instrument is the entranchissement of the human kind: the imminent new assertion of its next reach in power.

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Words working by their "Mystery" through men's fears have acquired the power to deflect men from their strongest desires; to divorce them from their most vital instincts. The "coming to oneself," the "Why" in men's motives, is the meaning of the progress from "consciousness" to "self-consciousness," has been made impossible. Men have been enabled to know only as much of themselves as the maintenance of the sanctity of the Sacred Words rendered permissible; not much that is. What is called "self-consciousness" is an added affair: a bogus version of men's motives which imposes on themselves and which a genuine self-consciousness can replace only after the shattering of the adverse influence which works incessantly against it. Before self-consciousness accurately makes us realize the higher Verbal depths, the very sense of which the Word is unbridled, rampant, mysterious and so paramount must have felt the beginning of the end.

To dissect the language, to assess the amount of validity in its current forms does not necessarily imply its abolition or even to any overwhelming extent its substitution. It is enough if psychologypronounces a valuation of the existing forms: shows how this is elliptical, that redundant, that un­warranted or inverted. It will then be possible, upon being presented with a "problem" to show at what point in the grammatical form the leakage of sense is located. Philosophical "problems" will transmute automatically into grammatical leakages. In fact, gram­matical form reduced to manageable limits by psychology will entail as a first consequence the scrapping of the verbal conundrums which constitute existing philosophy. Philosophy is doomed to sterility as long as it is based upon unapprehended words and acknowledged enigmas which keep its activities widely divided from the currents of vital interests.

Out of befuzzing sound not even the finest brain can spin anything save folly: its energies turn to foolishness to match the stuff it works in. The human brain can work to fruitful purpose only when it is set to ply about images which have sprung into vivid form in the human consciousness: it is at home only in that aura of images which is thrown off from the living "I" and to which men have given the title of "The World." Set to tune with Heaven—that conceptual verbal kingdom—the brain petrifies into stupidity.

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We have already inveighed against the conceptual substantive: often doubtless to the bewilderment of our readers. This particular grammatical form was given pre-eminence in discredit because under its aegis, Verbal Authority had moved furthest towards absolute command. The substantival concepts representing the abstract vices and virtues have secured the main control and conduct of men's impulses: the expressions of Evil, and could clinch every argument to the favour of the Mysteries. But not merely this ancient foe for the conceptual substantive, but grammatical forms in their every variety: noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, interjection, preposition and conjunction: the entire scheme of accidence and syntax all alike require to be brought under the psychological scalpel before philo
sophy can make its first forward step. Only after having accomplished this first preliminary labour can it be rid of its childish problems and get on to its sole business—psychology. When it is done, however, the problems of "Space" and "Time," of "Cause" and the "Real" and the "True"; of the antithetical twins "Subjective" and "Objective," and all that, but it "stands in the dim glory the" Real," "Appearance and Thing-in-itself," will evaporate into their proper medium of thin sound. And merely preferential favour or disfavour for particular forms are to no purpose: all such are doomed to end in blind alleys. There exists for instance at the present moment a fairly wide-spread dissatisfaction with the grammatical structure of "I feel," and of which the particular image felt is correspond to "I am aware," which in turn corresponds positively distinctness. "Intelligence," for instance, is being accorded an amount of attention as a definite "faculty" of the mind in a modern philosophy which is extremely misleading. These and similar sterile labours of metaphysicians during nearly three thousand years have been spared it had been observed at the outset that in the grammatical forms of subject and predicate there existed a constant temptation to see in what was a mere redundant emphasis a distinctness implying separate "entities." The verb, for instance, does not describe an activity: it merely describes the subject as it produces one particular image. The verb's function is to use; to characterize the subject of the "I" under which for the moment it shows itself.

Consider the term "I," or equivalent forms which other languages give to it. It is the sign of the living unit—the organism—affirming the presence of its own life. It stands comprehensively for "I am conscious": for "I feel," "I live": "I am." The "I" includes the connotation of "am" and "exist" or "sense" to connote the "I" has already asserted by itself. They have no meaning which the "I" not: in fact, they have no meaning at all apart from the purport of the "I." To be," "to feel," "to sense," "to exist," are properly speaking totally devoid of connotation, but they take on a suggestion of meaning by loose association with the "I." Abstracted from the "I," as the infinitive is, it is divorced from the only source capable of investing it with meaning: pure abstraction. We allow "am," "feel," "exist," or "sense" to connote the "I" by. Nor, accurately speaking, have other forms of the verb other than the first person singular linked fast to its "subject." Always it is "I" which feels. You, they, he, she, it, merely "appear to me" to feel. Thus the "I" is the comprehensive expression of existence as viewed by the only unit competent to view it: the one who exists. It comprehends the whole gallery of images which it can throw out from itself: the "stream of life" and all the images which glow in the stream. The "I" includes the one looking out on a "World" and the entire "World" it looks out on—and this whether "I" be a tree, or a worm, or a reader of "World" it lives in. In the "I" there is a sense of the thing of it. As the "I" is, so the world is. If the "I" is to be called spirit then the world is spirit too. The myth of two worlds—a sensual and a spiritual—has grown up about the slipshod use—the misleading extension—of the verb "sense." We have no "senses" substantively: we merely "sense." A tree or worm is a sensation on being scientific: bent on looking at "things," and on "measuring things." But what is that but the pressing of more egoistic power into one particular effort of the scientist's "ego," by which he means he may hope to call out from himself and for himself a more clear and full image than he had as the result of the smaller effort: from his lesser
exercise of himself. Thus the progress of science is but the expanding of the "I": of the World of images which we call the scientist's soul. And all that which we call the objective world are but so many patterns and chords—auras—thrown out by the "I" itself. The difference between my "World" and this plant's "World" is a difference not in "a" "World common to us both: but between the one and the plant. Our worlds! We each grow our own!

So much for the world and spirit—if "I" am spirit. And so much for the Sensual and Spiritual. In proportion as "I" am, as "I" live, I likewise "sense" all and anything possible to me. The flow of images in the "I" is as full and rapid as it may be, as "I" can produce. That is, the more I am, the more sensual I am. Whether that means more spiritual too, must be left to those who have not yet decided whether or no they mean to make "spiritual" synonymous with "verbal." Should they do so, that would make a difference between Spiritual and Sensual which could forthwith be translated as Vital and Verbal respectively. And so the antithesis between "Appearance and the Thing-in-itself" between "Appearance and Reality."

When Kant was chasing that "x": that reality beneath experience—which he called "Thing-in-itself," he was like a cat trying to catch the shadow of its own tail. He was deluded by the shadows cast by the light of grammar shining strongly from behind him. His position in regard to it could be easily unravelled by following up the error which secured its chance of slipping in, on account of the redundant verb in "I am," an error which has grown, none the less grown to almost untamable proportions by the time it arrives at the inferential form of the third person: i.e., when "I am" has become "is." "I am" means "I—affected so and so." There could be no affection if the "I" were not there to be affected. But by the time the verb form progresses from "am" to "is," it has acquired an independence of its own: become complete without a subject: with an innocent-appearing "there" to fill in the gap. The conundrum of "Thing-in-itself" could be put thus: "What do we feel when we do say 'I am'?" "What is there when there isn't!" Kant replies "Something very deep and profound: something more real than the most real: the Thing-in-itself." The genuine verbal philosopher!

VIEWS AND COMMENTS.

There is a limit to all things. The limit of men's capacity for repeated impressions is very soon reached. Already the war, though as yet it has lasted only six months, has become an institution like the weather. As a dominating Christmas theme even with the Music-Halls it has fallen far short—as far as one has opportunity to judge, that is. Which is hard luck for those who had counted on seeing all the world in the light of a baleful reaction to the Kaiser. We are not all having our heads blown off, not all in trenches or bar- racks. We are snugly at home: just the same sort of individuals we were before the first of August: requiring to be amused and interested just the same. Hence, if anything could arouse one out of the semi-torpor induced by a bad cold, some other things, and the writing of this article, it is the threat to put us all on an intellectual diet of "Thought as thought by the Allies," with pure undiluted English thought as a staple. One might as well become an exile as be compelled to fare off the tepid stewed mush which passes current as thinking to-day in England. The Germans are virile and their virility comes out in their thinking. Inclusive, penetrating, there is the memory of an edge felt somewhere left even when they are dull. And when they are not dull! Stirner was a German, born and buried in Berlin. Of course the English can only gather there was a German Nietzsche: something a little more flashy and possessing considerably less "edge."

All which sounds cross. And a cross comfortable civilian may not now make himself heard! It must be the effect of Mr. Churchill's "Baby-killers of Scarborough" effort. What an effusion! As though this war was a game with rules to it—other than such rules as will win. Etc: a comfortable civilian will feel none too safe after a few more such fatuous utterances. And the "Times" draws the moral from this East-coast visitation, that the eligible young men who have not yet offered to enlist for service must do so now. Otherwise the responsibility for the devastation of the country, if it be devastated, will rest on them! Such cool impudence as they try on this long-suffering populace! The responsibility will rest and will promptly be attached where it belongs—on the "governors." If the safety of England demands more men, delay in meeting it is a blunder of such magnitude on their part that should it be com-mitted, Lord Kitchener and the rest would escape the wrath of the people scarcely with their lives.

That of course is prophecy, but it is very safe prophecy. Recruiting of the emotional sort requires so much cant that it will be in vain in a situation obviously serious, the use of the verbal is distressing. One becomes irritated, hearing the Government, who have made a war on their own responsibility, who have been given carte blanche by the nation, in order that unhampered, they may be able to prosecute the work successfully, trying to shift their responsibility on slender shoulders which have already much to bear as things are, but which will be ready to do their part if called upon seriously. If men are wanted let the Government demand them. This obviously is their task and concern and no others.

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There were one or two other references to "The Egoist" doctrine in the correspondence columns of the last issue, which may be dealt with here. In relation to the substance of the letter headed "Derivations," no comment need be offered save acknowledgments to the writer for an interesting quotation. But the subject of philosophic derivations itself is worth lingering on. There is for every idea which has already much to bear as things are, but which will be ready to do their part if called upon seriously. If men are wanted let the Government demand them. This obviously is their task and concern and no others.

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are home-grown like the rest of our “World.” They are primary; in spite of their extensive multiplications. They may be “good” and “bad” of their kind as one might see a painter’s colours and brushes were good and bad. It is a mistake to speak of them as being derivative at all. Single, detached “truths” bear no stronger evidence of having been derived” than the dabbing of a particular mixture of paint by a child’s hand would argue the influence of a consummate artist who in his work may make a carefully selective use of it. In short selections can one get genuine evidence of “derivation.”

I see Mr. Steven Byington has fallen foul of our argument anent the characterisation of possessors of an “Inner Voice.” And quite right too. One idly uses this kind of poetic symbolism, partly because it gives a good sound, and partly because it possesses a traditional standing. Actually and of which the use has misunderstanding as a natural consequence. However, some alert reader will fortunately be on the watch for such an evasiveness and will take up and have to embark on an explanation of what you meant as distinguished from what you said.

An illustration to hand of the tawdry sort of rubbish such poetics as “Inner Voice” really are is Mr. Byington’s list of men who he avows were all influenced by an “Inner Voice,” men as opposite in their attitude to what good repute expects of them, of what they call the moral as well as the spiritual. He has been enabled to draw up such a list without a qualm because of the ambiguous purport of the meaning of “Inner Voice.” Thus the Inner Voice may be the voice of God and Authority, i.e., a sense of scruple (fear, consideration of opinion, consideration of consequences); or it may be the prompting of an urgent inner desire which demands its own satisfaction no matter what scruples stand in the way. Such a discrimination between the possible meanings of an “Inner Voice” is essential: once made, it affords a useful line of division. One who desires fiercely (no matter what) finds all his scruples outweighed: he is an egoist, and obviously: before the eyes of his fellows. Whereas the one whose desires are tepid finds that his concern for opinion, other’s resentment, and for consequences generally more than outweighs his desire. He is of the material which produces the Man of Honour; while the Luthers, Cromwells, Napoléons, are men with passions strong enough to drown every voice of consequence and every concern for repute. That both sorts are found to possess a similar jargon of Holy Speech, which clings burr-like about them, means nothing at all. That Cromwell talks of God as he would a reverse, hard function is a matter without sound, and partly because it possesses a traditional standing. They are, are removed from the sphere of doubt. They are Men of Honour and Good Repute. The claims of Honour : Established Authority. A Bayard for instance. In such a circumstance a Cromwell is untouched by scruple even of the most threatening character. The only voice he hears is that urging him on to his own work: that voice only is the God he confers with. There are obviously two classes of distinguished person: there is he who excels in service and becomes distinguished by con­ferment: Honour from the Repository of Honour: Established Authority. A Bayard for instance. And there is he who tilts against Established Authority and establishes his own. The latter class, let them be kings or peasants, let the idols they tear down be Gods of constitutional precedents, are all of the Napoleonic order. They carve out a new orbit of their own by the sheer expression of their own energy and the scrupulous men—the men of the Inner Voice—are swept into their wake as “Followers”: chatt before the wind. The fact that they commune deeply with their God implies much: they are seeking its interests. Not of course the orthodox authoritarian God, but that intimate conception of their own Good which is their one God.

It is difficult to see how Mr. Harpur has come by the notion that we think Morality turns out as Egoism plus Humbug. We have been at pains to show that “morality” is simply the normal habits of the crowd: that it possesses a clear egoistic basis in its capacity to minister to the Moral Ones’ need for the approval of their fellows: to their need of Honour. But “egoism” comprises the moral as completely as it comprises the immoral, and as completely—to spoil this correspondent’s classification entirely—it includes Humbug. There may be erratic egoists whose special “kink” is to irritate wasps and worms: their preferences may lie that way: but ordinarily, men endeavour, for their own interests, to come to terms with them. Only when their particular bent lies across the path of wasps and worms do they count the cost of trying issues with either. In proportion as they then account it worthwhile to stir them up gives the index of the class to which they belong. The attitude they adopt towards the two kinds indicates the relative power which they possess and can exercise. Such as join issue with wasps, realising them for what they are, are removed from the sphere of doubt. They are born to conquer or be conquered, and if they conquer they will make short work of the disapproval of the worms. If, on the other hand, their power is such that the prospect of roused worms is not devoid of terrors; if the retention of precedents, are all of the Napoleonic order. They carve out a new orbit of their own by the sheer expression of their own energy and the scrupulous men—the men of the Inner Voice—are swept into their wake as “Followers”: chatt before the wind. The fact that they commune deeply with their God implies much: they are seeking its interests. Not of course the orthodox authoritarian God, but that intimate conception of their own Good which is their one God.

Notice to Readers.

During the remainder of the War, The Egoist will be issued on the first of the month only. Subscriptions already paid will hold good for a proportionately extended period.—Ed.
THE PLAYS OF JOHN SYNGE.
By Richard Aldington.

It is somewhat chilling to remember that during the
year or more in which I have been writing in this
paper, reviewing most often carefully selected
books, I have had occasion to notice none which
were not ephemeral and merely relatively excellent.
Of all the literary productions which have passed
through the human mind, the poet who wrote "Heaven"—
called "Heaven"—seems to me now to possess any of
the elements of great, of thrilling artistic pleasure.
It would be most convenient if, in order to keep the
scale properly adjusted, one could read reviews "First-
as Balzac did in his paper. It would save a great
degree of English reading to be a matter
and forestall some misapprehen-
sion as to one's views.

In accordance with that plan one could whole-
heartedly and sincerely label Synge's plays "First-rate
books." Synge was emphatically a man of whom we
may say: "He had genius." Among all the thousand
ephemeral talents, among the clever and the cultivated
and the refined who make what Whitman calls "the
soil of literature," who are forgotten before or as
soon as they are forgotten, he was a man who really created something new, who recorded
—perhaps locally—the life of a people he understood.
The Aran Islands and the book about Wicklow and
Connemara and his poems are all delightful enough,
and we should all probably have read them; but we
should not have thought a great deal of Synge or his
creative genius had it not been for his plays. He
would have been just one of the Irish group. As it is, he
is the Irish group—he so overshadows all the other Irish
writers of our own or any time that they will owe the
study of their works to him and not he to them. People
will be curious to know what the men of Ireland were
writing in Synge's time, and many otherwise forgotten
authors will receive a reflected glory, because they be-
lngaged to a movement, a type in literature of which
Synge is the great example.

It is interesting to compare Synge and the Irish move-
ment with Burns and Scott and the Scottish movement
of the last century. The discovery of a new dialect
literature is always delightful to the people of an over-
cultivated capital, where language is worn thin and
meagre by constant use, where the vulgarisation of
journals and of the common people has abolished the
primitive poetry of primitive people. And not only
that, for to the country the art of the capital seems all
important; to the capital the freshness and sweetness
of remote people is incredibly delightful—for a time.
In the London of 1820-1840 the romances of Scott, the
poems of Burns exercised a charm which is incredible
to us when we read Scott's ponderous sentences and
Burns' localised and provincial poetry. We smile when
we find the editor of the respectable "Edinburgh
Review" comparing Walter Scott with Shakespeare, or
when we find Burns' lyrics extolled as the greatest pro-
ductions in the English language. And yet such lan-
guage has been the educational stock-in-trade of the
Irish school, and yet I find myself urged to declare that Synge is the greatest

It would be a great relief to those people who are
over-stocked with English "culture" if they could be
brought to consider all our less than first-rate authors
as merely local. It would be so excellent if we allowed
a reasonable amount of English reading to be a matter
of geography. We added to that a wide knowledge of Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Spanish and
German literatures, and then were permitted to taste
our lesser writers locally. Nowadays every little jour-
nalist feels that he must at least pretend to have an
acquaintance with Pepys' and Evelyn's diaries, with
minor Elizabethan dramatists, with minor Victorian
novelists and the like, while he is profoundly ignorant
of the infinitely more important literatures of more
favoured countries. How admirable it would be if only
we read Scott when we went to Abbotsford, Beau-
mount and Fletcher at Rye, Drayton in Warwickshire,
and Lamb at the rare occasions when one visited Eld
monton and Islington! It would clear the ground so
admirably, it would set all these gentlemen in their
proper places, and it might actually prepare the English
mind for a re-assimilation of the literature it has
neglected since the Renaissance.

Yet though Synge is, in four of his plays at least,
respectively local, I do not feel inclined to call him a local
poet or dramatist. It may be because I am too near to him
but I cannot conceive of him in any fashion as an
extraordinarily great artist whose work is an essential
part of the life of every cultivated man—I do not mean
every literary expert or literary maniac—as the works
of Shakespeare, of Catullus, and of Theocritus.

I am led into these remarks by receiving from Messrs.
Maunsel a re-issue of Synge's plays, complete in one
volume.* As I turned over the leaves of those plays
that one ought to know by heart, I felt bound to add a
very slight note to Synge's memory, though these
totes are intended for "the latest thing" in literature and
not for reprints of established works. I am not going
to criticise Synge technically, because it would be
rather in the nature of an impertinence; I don't think
I shall try to analyse his methods and his command over
words and images. He has made us so much of his
extraordinary pathetic, beautiful nature into the people
of the Aran Islands that these people move us by the
cadence of their speech. "Deirdre of the Sorrows" may be one of the most beautiful things in
literature, as Mr. Yeats says it is. It is not for me to
say. But if I want a "great terrifying joy" in words and
emotions, it is to this that I turn:

"Peggeen. It's queer joys they have, and who knows
the things they'd do—if it'd make the green stones cry itself
to think of you swaying and swiggling at the butt of a
rope, and you with a fine, stout neck, God bless you!
the way you'd be a half an hour, in great anguish,
getting your death."

"Christy (getting his boots and putting them on). If
there's that terror of them, it'd be best, maybe, I went
on wandering, like Esau or Cain and Abel on the sides
of Neifin or the Erris plain.

"Peggen (beginning to play with him). It would, maybe,
for I've heard the Circuit Judges this place is

"Christy (bitterly). It's more than judges this place
is a heartless crew. (Looking up at her.) And isn't it a
poor thing to be starting again, and I a lonesome fellow
will be looking out on women and girls the way the needy
fallen spirits do be looking on the Lord ?

"Peggen. What call have you to be that lonesome when
the good poor girls walking Mayo in their thousands
now?

"Christy (grimly). It's well you know what call I have.
It's well you know it's a lonesome thing to be passing
small towns with the lights shining sideways when the
night is down, or going in strange places with a dog
noising before you and a dog noising behind, or drawn
to the cities where you'd hear a voice kissing and talk-
ing deep love in every shadow of the ditch, and you
passing on with an empty, hungry stomach failing from
your heart."

That may be local writing. But to me it seems some
of the most beautiful prose that has ever been written.
I cannot remember reading, anything more beautiful,
anything which possessed quite that wistful, quiet sort
of beauty remote from us, if you like, but remote as all
primitive poetry of primitive people. And more than
deep love, in every shadow of the ditch, and you
passing on with an empty, hungry stomach failing from
your heart."

* Dramatic Works of John M. Synge. Maunsel and Co., 7s. 6d.

THE EGOIST
January 1, 1915
A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST

By James Joyce

CHAPTER IV. (continued)

He could wait no longer.

From the door of Byron’s public-house to the gate of Clontarf Chapel, from the gate of Clontarf Chapel to the door of Byron’s public-house, and then back again to the chapel and then back again to the public-house, he paced slowly at first, planting his steps scrupulously in the spaces of the patchwork of the footpath, then timing their fall to the fall of verses. A full hour he had paced up and down, waiting; but he could wait no longer.

He set off abruptly for the Bull, walking rapidly lest his father’s shrill whistle might call him back; and in a few moments he had rounded the curve at the police barrack and was safe.

Yes, his mother was hostile to the idea, as he had read from her listless silence. Yet her mistrust pricked him more than ever than his father’s tone lay heavy on his heart: coldly how he had watched the faith which was fading down in his soul, ageing and strengthening in her eyes. A dim antagonism gathered force within him and darkened his mind as a cloud against her disloyalty: and when it passed, cloulike, leaving his mind serene and dutiful to the end of his days, it was as though the cloud had been whipped away.

The University! So he had passed beyond the challenge of the sentries who had stood as guardians of his boyhood and had sought to keep him among them that he might be subject to them and serve their ends. Pride after satisfaction uplifted him like long slow waves.

The end he had been born to serve yet did not see had passed, cloudlike, leaving his mind serene and dutiful to the end of his days. It seemed to him that he might be subject to them and serve their ends. Pride after satisfaction uplifted him like long slow waves.

A voice from beyond the world was calling.

—The phrase and the day and the scene harmonised in a chord. Words. Was it their colours? He allowed them to grow and fade, hue after hue: sunrise gold, the russet and green of apple orchards, azure of waves, the grey-fringed fleece of clouds. No, it was not their colours: it was the poise and balance of the period itself. Did he then love the rhythmical rise and fall of words better than their associations of legend and colour? Or was it that, being as weak of sight as he was shy of mind, he drew less pleasure from the reflection of the many-coloured and richly storied than from the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid, supple, periodic prose.

He passed from the trembling bridge on to firm land again. At that instant, as it seemed to him, the air was chilled; and looking askance towards the water he saw a flying squall darkening and crisp ing suddenly the tide. A faint chill at his heart, a faint throb in his throat told him once more of how his flesh dreaded the cold infra-human odour of the sea: yet he did not strike across the downs on his left, but held straight on along the spine of the earth, voyaging high over Ireland, westward bound. In the distance along the course of the slow-flowing Liffey slender masts flecked the sky and, more distant still, the dim fabric of the city lay prone in haze. Like a scene on some vague arras, as man of his weariness, the image of the seventh city of Christendom was visible to him across the timeless air, no older nor more weary nor less patient of subjection than in the days of the Thingmote.

Disheartened, he raised his eyes towards the slow-drifting clouds, dupped and sea-borne. They were voyaging across the deserts of the sky, a host of nomads on the march, voyaging high over Ireland, westward bound. The Europe they had come from lay out there beyond the Irish Sea, Europe of strange tongues and valleyed and wood-begirt and citadelled and of entrenched and marshalled races. He heard a confused music within him as of memories and names which he was almost in the manner of but could not capture even for an instant; then the music seemed to recede, to recede: and from each receding trail of nebulous music there fell always one long-drawn calling note, piercing like a star the dusk of silence. Again! Again! Again! A voice from beyond the world was calling.

—Hello! Dedalus!—

—Here comes Thaddeus!—

—Ao!... Eh, give it over, Dwyer, I’m telling you, or I’ll give you a stuff in the kisser for yourself.... Ao!—

—Good man, Tower! Duck him!—

—Come along, Dedalus! Bous Stephanoenemos! Bous Stephaneforeos!—

—Duck him! Guzzle him now, Tower!—

—Help! Help!... Ao!—
He recognised their speech collectively before he dis­
tinguished their faces. The mere sight of that mediocrity of
wet nakedness chilled him to the bone. Their bodies, corp­
oreously free from the burden of the clothes they had­
rawly tanned by the suns, gleamed with the wet of the sea.
Their diving-stone, poised on its rude supports and
rocking under their plunges, and the rough-hewn stones
of the sloping breakwater over which they scrambled in
their horseplay, gleamed with cold wet lustre. The
toils with which they snatched their bodies were heavy
with cold sea-water and drenched with cold brine were
their matted hair.
He stood still in deference to their calls and parried
their banter with easy words. How characterless they
looked; Shuley without his deep unbuttoned collar,
Ennis without his scarlet belt with the snaky clasp, and
Connolly without his Norfolk coat with the flapsless
side-pockets! Perhaps they had taken refuge in
number and noise from the secret dread in their souls.
But he, apart from them and in silence, remembered in
what dread he stood of the mystery of his own body.

—Stephanos Dedalos! Bous Stephanomenos! Bous
Stephanoforos!—

Their banter was not new to him, and now it flattered
his mild, proud sovereignty. Now, as never before, his
strange name seemed to him a prophecy. So timeless
seemed the grey, warm air, so fluid and impersonal his
own mood, that all ages were as one to him. A moment
before the ghost of the ancient Kingdom of the Danes
had looked through the vesture of the haze-wrapped
city. Now, at the name of the fabulous artificer, he
seemed to hear the noise of dim waves and to see a
winged form flying above the waves and slowly climbing
the air. What did it mean? Was it a quaint device
opening a page of some medieval book of prophecies and
symbols, a hawklike man flying sunward above the sea,
a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and
had been following through the mists of childhood and
boyhood, a symbol of the artist forging anew in his
workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a
new soaring, impalpable, imperishable being?

His heart trembled; his breath came faster and a wild
spirit passed over his limbs as though he were soaring
sunward. His heart trembled in an ecstasy of fear and
his soul was in flight. His soul was soaring in an air
beyond the world, and the body he knew was purified in
a breath and delivered of incertitude, and made radiant
beyond the world, and the body he knew was purified in
symbols, a hawk-like man flying sunward above the sea.
What did it mean? Was it a quaint device
opening a page of some medieval book of prophecies and
symbols, a hawk-like man flying sunward above the sea,
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his soul was in flight. His soul was soaring in an air
beyond the world, and the body he knew was purified in
a breath and delivered of incertitude, and made radiant
and commingled with the element of the spirit. An
ecstasy of flight made radiant his eyes; and wild his
breath and tremulous and wild and radiant his wind-
swung limbs.

—One! Two! . . . Look out!—
—O, Cripes, I'm drowned!—
—One! Two! Three and away!—
—The next! The next!—
—One! . . . Uk!—
—Stephanoforos!—

His throat ached with a desire to cry aloud, the cry
of a hawk or eagle on high, to cry piercingly of his
deliverance to the winds. This was the call of life to his
soul, not the dull, gross voice of the world of duties and
despair, not the inhuman voice that had called him to
the pale service of the altar. An instant of wild flight
had delivered him to the cry of triumph which his lips
witheld clung to his brain.

—Stephanoforos!—

What were they now but the cerements shaken from
her grave-clothes. Yes! Yes! Yes! He would
create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul,
as the great artificer whose name he bore, a living thing,
new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperish­
able.

He started up nervously from the stone-block, for he
could no longer quench the flame in his blood. He felt
his cheeks aflame and his throat throbbing with song.

—Jesus!—
—He turned away from her suddenly and set off across
the strand. His cheeks were aflame; his body was aglow;
his limbs were trembling. On and on and on and on he
strode, far out over the sands, singing wildly to the sea,
crying to greet the advent of the life that had cried to him.

There was a lust of wandering in his feet that burned to
set out for the ends of the earth. On! On! his heart
seemed to cry. Evening would deepen above the sea.
His footsteps fell on the plains, dawn glimmer before the
wanderer and show him strange fields and hills and faces.
Where?
He looked northward towards Howth. The sea had
fallen below the line of sea-rock on the shallow side of
the breakwater, and already the tide was running out
far along the foreshore. Already one long ogee bank of
sand lay wasted and dry amid the wakelet. Here and
there warm isles of sand gleamed above the shallow tide;
and about the isles and around the long bank and amid
the shallow currents of the beach were light-clad figures
wading and delving.

In a few moments he was barefoot, his stockings folded
in his pockets, and his canvas shoes dangling by their
knotted laces over his shoulders: and picking a pointed
salt-eaten stick out of the jetsam among the rocks, he
clambered down the slope of the breakwater.

There was a long rivulet in the strand: and, as he
waded slowly its course, he wondered at the endless
drift of seaweed. Emerald and black and grey and
olive, it moved beneath the current, swaying and turn­ing
the water of the rivulet was dark with endless
drift and mirrored the high-drifting clouds. The clouds
were drifting above him silently and silently the sea-
side was drifting gently below him. The wind, warm
air was still: and a new wild life was singing in his veins.

Where was his boyhood now? Where was the soul that
had hung back from her destiny, to brood alone upon
the shame of her wounds and in her house of squalor and
subterrage to queen it in faded ceremonies and in wreaths
that withered at the touch? Or, where was he?
He was alone. He was unheeded, happy, and near to
the wild heart of life. He was alone and young and
wilful and wild-hearted, alone amid a waste of wild air
and brackish waters and the sea-harvest of shells and
tangible and very grey sunlight, and clay-clad, light-clad
figures of children and girls and voices childish and
girlish in the air.

A girl stood before him in midstream: alone and still,
gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had
changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful sea-
harbour. Her long, slender, bare legs were delicate as a
crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed
had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh. Her
plate-blue skirts were kilded boldly about her waist and
dove-tailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird's, soft and
slippery, slight and soft as the breast of some dark,
plumaged dove. But her long, fair hair was girlish:
girlish and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty of
her face.

She was alone and still, gazing out to sea; and when
she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes her
eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze, with­
out shame or wantonness. Long, long she suffered his
gaze, and then quietly withdrew her eyes from his and
bent them towards the stream, gently stirring the water
with her foot lighter and thither. The first faint noise of
gently moving water broke the silence, low and faint
whispering, faint as the bells of sleep; lighter and thither
bitter and thither: and a faint flame trembled on her cheek.

—Heavenly God! cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst
of profane joy—

He turned away from her suddenly and set off across
the strand. His cheeks were aflame; his body was aglow;
his limbs were trembling. On and on and on and on he
strode, far out over the sands, singing wildly to the sea,
crying to greet the advent of the life that had cried to him.

Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no
word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her
eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call.
To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out
of life! A wild angel had appeared to him, the angel of
mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts
of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy
the gates of all the ways of error and glory. On and on
and on and on!
We conceive that a man, endowed with egoistic impulses, will value and preserve his life; also, perceiving his dependence on others, he will exhibit social impulses and occasionally to a certain degree, also, this man will be impelled towards the welfare of others; and in a special degree he may become so altruistic as to sacrifice the life which, primarily, he valued above all. In this way, one sees that, though the various impulses normally form a co-ordinate system, the later ones necessarily lead away from the extension of the primitive impulses, and occasionally to its complete abandonment. But consider another case. Allow the egoist impulses to carry one so far as to invade (practically) or deny (formally) the right to life in others; immediately, as I see it, social and altruistic impulses cannot proceed normally, as supposed. The individual becomes an ego-centric, who radiates from himself at the expense of the injury of others. The social order in which he lives cannot be integral like that which surrounds the person of more social sensitiveness.

In order to correct an impression that may possibly be made by this method of discussion, it is only necessary to say that societies comprise a very large number of people displaying impulses of infinite degree and combination from the most primitive egoism to the highest self-sacrifice. My aim has been to express the matter in its simple form.

(2.) PHILIPPIC BACKGROUND FOR YANG.

If the reader will now refer to my historical table on p. 440 of The Egoist (December 1, 1914) he will be able to form an idea of the existing philosophic background against which Yang-Chu appeared.

For thousands of years the primitive animism of the Chinese had held the field. Spirits good and bad (Shen and Keci) played with man according as his deeds deserved. Kung-fu-tse met this position with the strong ethical fervour of "Righteousness and Propriety." The former was man's respect and worship for his forefathers and spirits ("Heaven"), the latter was his duty to his superiors and elders on earth. I have shown how Mo-tse carried the ethics of Kung-fu-tse to extreme degrees of altruism with his doctrine of "Universal Love" and "Not making distinction between man and man." Menc-tse seriously declared that the doctrines of Mo-tse "fill the kingdom" while Chawag-tse wished to have him "gagged"; in following Kung-fu-tse, Mo had, during a hundred years, made "the transvaluation of existing egoist values" as complete and dramatic as possible.

So much as to ethics. As for metaphysics there was the venerable doctrine of the Tao, with its peculiar quietist tendency, leading already during Lao-tse's day towards a kind of asceticism. Starting away from the Taoist "Back to Nature" thought (as I have argued), Yang-chu turns upon Mo, Kung and Lao with a powerful attack. He challenges their transvaluations; he "revives" the egoist values of the "ancestors," and points to the egoist impulses upon which they are founded. For this reason I call him an Egoist Philosopher.

(3.) ETHICAL DOCTRINES TESTED.*

Yang wants to get rid of any "obstruction" to the natural processes. "To cherish life it suffices to give it its free course, neither checking nor obstructing it:" (viii). This seems innocent enough until we learn what it leads to.

I will ask the reader to notice the cases of The Happy Voluptuaries, the Joyous Tuan, and the villains Ch'ieh and Chow:

Kung-Sun-Chow had a thousand barrels of wine and yeast piled up in heaps; the liquor scented the air for a hundred paces "offering people food and drink." He was always tipsy and quite unconscious of the dangers he risked. (III, ix.)

* In the following criticism the reader is referred to THE EGOIST of December 1st ; the large Roman numerals refer to the section of the article, the small to the chapter quoted from Yang.
2. Kung-Sun-Mu had a harem of thirty or forty houses filled with women. He seldom came out “and yet he did not feel contented”; every attractive girl he would try to entice to his place. Taken together, what alone they feared was, that the day might come when their bodies would no longer respond to their desires. They declare their aesthetic experience, and upon it proceed, Yang wise, to base an ethic—“our method of regulating internals”—which is simply to continue to follow impulse to the end. It is of course no logical ethic at all, expressed in question of and answer to the question: “What, then, is a hair?”

3. Tuan-mu-Shu was left rich and “followed his own inclinations” over mountain and valley to find what he wanted at all costs; this he squandered, and dying, left his offspring so destitute that they had to be supported by his one time companions. This was “in accord with right doctrine” says Yang (III., x).

4. Ch'ieh inherited the wealth of many generations; he restrained his subjects and shook the land with his power; he followed his impulses to the end—“most reckless and dissipated.” (III., xiii.)

5. Chow also was rich, and everything yielded to his will; “Of all mortals the most licentious and extravagant,” he admitted no duty to Heaven or his fellow men. (III., xiii.)

These five heroes of Yang's philosophy are ego-manics; they are aware of their own existence and they make their own systems. The drunken Chow must have a hundred attendants to keep him in liquor, while other People's noses are offended. Similarly, the amorous Mu also has a houseful of slaves serving his inclinations, but not their own. Tuan, Ch'ieh and Chow set the whole of their lives for others without reckoning the cost. In their own case, they do not feel contented; every attractive girl they would try to entice to his place. Their system is one of universal failure; the ego-impulses are the ruling vice! He falls back on a quasi-logical sophism used to justify conduct that on Yang's hypothesis, being natural, needs no justification.

Someone wishing to defend Yang may accuse me of making too much of his "villains," of taking them too seriously. It is not because I am shocked by them; I treat them according to the philosophical significance with which Yang and others have loaded them. The dilemma is an elaboration of his answer to his own question: "What, then, is the object of human life? What makes it pleasant; comfort and elegance, music and beauty?"

But let me not forget the old farmer of Sung, of a nature softer, who thought he belonged to the net of Yang and all his villanous brethren (VI., xviii.). He, too, sought for pleasure like the others, in his own simple way. He loved to feel the warm sun on the back as he worked in the fields at spring time! But is he not just a little bit too naive—and too rare? One such rustic among five influential "villains" can scarcely save the system of Yang from ridicule or restore the equilibrium to a social order that contains too many Chows and Ch'iehs.

(4.) Yang's Critique of Altruism.

Having examined Yang's exposition of his fundamental principle I now turn to his critique of altruism. He is perfectly clear as to what the principle is; he realises that it is at the root of the systems of Kung and Mo, systems which are in categorical opposition to his own. Altruism is, to him, the ruling vice! He falls back on Po-cheng, who would not part with a single hair of his body for the benefit of others (IV., xii.). A hair is a small thing, by arbitrary idea of consistency, which of all things is least inward, and most artificial; whereas the most inward thing, next to self-love—and sometimes deeper—is compassion or feeling for another's pain. If the altruists of Yang's time had been more profound in their psychological analysis, instead of being ideological smugmaniacs and the Mohists may be classed together in one group in the sense that they desire their own welfare; they talk of "the herd," "the mob," as of an entity, and upon it proceed, Yang wise, to base an ethic—"our method of regulating internals," which proves that he understands that kings and governments arise because of the struggle for the things that are in categorical opposition to his own. Thus he restrained his subjects and shook the land with his power; he followed his impulses to the end—"most reckless and dissipated." (III., xiii.)

But I will not let go Propriety. Though I cannot see what, in the system of Yang's, it is that they minister to their needs; they talk of "the herd," "the mob," as of an order to which they have no regard. (3) Some men are ego-manics; they press their impulses to the very periphery of life; they invade a host of others, and cause suffering by the exercise of this dominating Will-to-Power. Kings and governments, in this ideal case, (and their rare "better moments") can only justify their existence in so far as they put down the eg-manics, restrain the ego-centricists and give free scope to the gratification of the normal egoists. In this way all men might become alter-egoists. What more could be desired?

But the record of kings and governments, with a few bright exceptions, is one of universal failure; the ego-centricists become kings, or the governments become egomanics. Now this has been perceived by the wise and good-will ing at all times and in all lands. Something higher than them the restraint of the kingly hand has sought for and found in "Righteousness and Propriety." But where? Keeping close to Chinese thought, I will remind your readers that the immemorial conception of this dual instrument was that it produced "Equilibrium and Harmony." And Harmony made Heaven like Heaven. Heaven was the abode, primarily, of all the departed spirits of ancestors, of the great controlling spirits of Nature, of Shang-ti the Supreme. It was the source of all inspiration and wisdom above the merely worldly. Towards it therefore there must be a duty from man here below, of which there resides the "Righteousness was that duty."

But when Yang asserts, "According to the law of Nature there is no such thing as immortality," he cuts away the ground from Righteousness. If, therefore, I do not refute him now I, too, must let go Righteousness. But I will not let go Propriety. Though I cannot see the Gods, men I know, and their relative claims upon each other. I know and feel these in myself; and upon that knowledge Propriety rests.
While Yang is right in believing that Righteousness and Propriety are a curtailment of ego-maniac and ego-centric expression, he is wrong in identifying them with mere “Reputation.” He is wrong in teaching that they deprive men of the enrichment of their lives.

William L. Hare.

POEMS.

By Clara Shanafelt

FANTASTIC.

I am a little weary of the moon
And all the stars.
I would have newer gems
To weave in beloved hair.
Leaning down from this hill I will gather up
Lights of cities that throb far away in the night.
Pale elin dancers leaping
Over the heads of the sick and sleeping,
Over passionate lovers, withering women,
The dead—
I will give you the mad lights of cities
To crown you.
Needy poets may have the moon if they like—
Cast off, and the tarnished stars—
We are a little too old for these trinkets.

TREES.

Tall and splendid women.
Inclined voluptuously,
Veiled in their marvellous hair.
The poplars are goddesses, green dancers,
Young virgins with delicate nerves:
They tremble constantly
From excessive sensibility.
The apples stretch out matronly arms—
They are kind and calm.

But at night all the trees are different—
I am a little afraid,
Not of them but of what they say,
The stars listen—one cannot tell
What they may do about it.
The trees are whispering so very strangely
I half expect to see them
Start up and walk toward me,—1—
I shiver like a young virgin
Taken by her own fantasy.

EGO.

I have written stately, echoing others,
But all this is not myself,
This imitative, pleasing chatter
Of a débutante in a drawing-room
Aware of her mother’s ear.
This is no more me than an awkward dress,
But it mars, it binds me
And the voices pent within clamour to be born.
Somewhere are those who if they could see
Would desire me—
I feel them not far away,
Coming and going with the wind
Like fragrance in the night of flowers hidden:
Shall I call out softly—
Sit near a candle, my earrings swaying!
Surely I shall be desired if I can be seen.
It no longer amuses me
To go about the world secretly like a ghost,
Intelligent, unavailing:
I will embody myself—
O Mother, let me be born!

WEBSTER FORD.

By Ezra Pound

At LAST! At last America has discovered a poet. Do not mistake me, America that great land of hypothetical futures has had various poets born within her borders, but since Whitman they have invariably had to come abroad for their recognition. “Walt” seems to have set the fashion. Of course America has literary traditions. Crawfordsville, Indiana, has a literary tradition: Lew Wallace died there. American magazines go on “discovering” society curates, castrated hobby-horses, writers of epos in comparison with whom the later maunderings of Tennison and of Alfred Austin sound like the surge and thunder of the Odyssey, etc. And a castrated government of school teachers goes on making ‘em into Ambassadors, whenever the stock of ex-publishers’ clerks and secretaries of the local Y.M.C.A.’s run out:—

O patria mia, vedo le mura e gli archi
E le colonne... et cetera.

America has also proclaimed to the “world” a race of red bloods, i.e., young men hiding their incapacity or their psychopathia sexualis with the grand bravura, with a hurricane of adjectives and with talk of “the male.” Also America has printed optimists who express all, or nearly all the ideas contained in McClure’s magazine for the month before last. And they have also another breed, diluted fabians. O patria mia, etc.

Still, it comes to me as no surprise that a poet can be born in America; several rather good American poets have drifted into my room from time to time, to go East, going to “jaded Europe” in search of publishers and good company. And what they have said about their fatherland makes my occasional constructive criticism seem like watered optimism. They consider me a purblind enthusiast. O patria degna di trionfal fame.

At last the American West has produced a poet strong enough to weather the climate, capable of dealing with life directly, without circumspection, without resonant meaningless phrases. Ready to say what he has to say, and to shut up when he has said it. Able to treat Spoon River as Villon treated Paris of 1460. The essence of this treatment consists in looking at things unaffectedly. Villon did not pretend that fifteenth-century Paris was Rome of the first century B.C. Webster Ford does not pretend that Spoon River of 1914 is Paris of 1460. The quality of this treatment is that it can treat actual details without being interested in them, without depending upon them. The bore, the demnition bore of pseudo-modernity, is that the avowed modernist thinks he can make a poem out of a steam shovel more easily and more effectively than out of the traditional saw’s ear. The accidents and detail are made to stand for the core.

Good poetry is always the same; the changes are superficial. We have the real poem in nature. The real poet thinking the real poem absorbs the decor almost unconsciously. In the fourth century B.C. he writes:—

“quivers ornamented with fish-skin”;

in the twentieth of our era, he writes:—

“khaki, with a leather strap for his map-case.”

But the real poem is the same. Of course there are very few poems. You have to go back to Rihoku to find a man telling the truth about warfare:—

“Lice swarm like ants over our accoutrements,
Our mind is on getting forward the feather-silk banners.
Hard fighting gets no reward.
Loyalty is hard to explain.
Who will be sorry for General Rishogu, the swift-moving.
Whose white head is lost for this province!”

That’s the eighth century A.D. and China. I have before me an early book by Webster Ford, printed...
1912, and much more old-fashioned than Rihoku. Nineteen-twelve was a bad year, we all ran about like puppies with ten tin cans tied to our tails. The tin cans of Swinburnian rhyming, of Browningisms, even, in Mr. Ford's case, of Kiplingisms, a resonant pendant, magniloquent, Miltonic, sonorous.

The fine thing about Mr. Ford’s “Songs and sonnets, second series” is that in spite of the trappings one gets the conviction of a real author, determined to speak the truth despite the sectionised state of his medium. And despite cliches of phrase and of rhythm one receives emotions, of various strength, some tragic and violent. There is moral reflection, etc., but what is the use discussing faults which a man has already discarded.

In the Spoon River Anthology we find the straight writing, language unaffected. No longer the murmurous derivative, but:

“My wife hated me, my son went to the dogs.”

That is to say the speech of a man in process of getting something said, not merely in quest of polysyllabic decoration.

It is a great and significant thing that America should contain an editor (of the St. Louis Mirror) with sense enough to print such straight writing, and a critic sane enough to find such work in a “common newspaper” and quote it in an American review (i.e. “Poetry”).

The editor will tell you that: “It isn’t poetry.” The decrepit will tell you it isn’t poetry. There are even loathsome atavisms, creatures of my own generation who are so steeped in the abysmal ignorance of generations, now, thank heaven, fading from the world, who will tell you: “It isn’t poetry.” By which they mean: “It isn’t ornament. It is an integral part of an emotion. It is a statement, a bare statement of something which is part of the mood, something which contributes to the mood, not merely a bit of chiffon attached.”

I give here two poems in Mr. Ford’s later manner, though they do not, perhaps, convey as much of the personality as some of his earlier work.

**DOC HILL.**

I went up and down the streets
Here and there by day and night,
Through all hours of the night caring for the poor who were sick.

Do you know why?
My wife hated me, my son went to the dogs.
And I turned to the people and poured out my love to them.

Sweet it was to see the crowds about the lawns on the day of my funeral,
And hear them murmur their love and sorrow.

To hold to the railing of the new life,
When I saw Em Stanton behind the oak tree
At the grave,
Hiding herself, and her grief!

**THE HILL.**

Where are Elmer, Herman, Bert, Tom and Charley,
The weak of will, the strong of arm, the clown, the boozer, the fighter?

All, all, are sleeping on the hill.

One died in shameful child-birth.
One of a thwarted love.

One at the hands of a brute in a brothel,
One of a broken pride, in the search for heart’s desire,
One, after life in far away London and Paris,
Was brought to her little space by Ella and Kate and Mag—

All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill.

Where are Uncle Isaac and Aunt Emily,
And old Towny Kincaid and Sevigne Houghton,
And Major Walker who had talked
With venerable men of the revolution?

All, all are sleeping on the hill.

They brought them dead sons from the war,
And daughters whom life had crushed,
And their children fatherless, crying.

All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill.

Where is Old Fiddler Jones
Who played with life all his ninety years,
Braving the sleet with bare chest,
Drinking, rioting, thinking neither of wife nor kin.

Nor gold, nor love, nor heaven?

Lo! he babbles of the fish-frys of long ago.

Of the horse-races of long ago at Clary’s Grove,
Of what Abe Lincoln said
One time at Springfield.

I have read a reasonable amount of bad American magazine verse, pseudo-Masefieldian false pastoral and so on. Not one of the writers had had the sense, which Mr. Ford shows here, in calling up the reality of the Middle West by the very simple device of names, in this case the names Sevigne and Kincaid, which remind one of the mixed origins of the old Louisiana country and the early French settlement.

**THE SONGS OF MALDOROR.**

By The Comte De Lautreamont. L.—(continued.)

He who cannot weep (for he has always hidden his sufferings within himself) perceived that he was in Norway. In the Faroe Islands he helped to look for the nests of sea-birds, in steep ravines, and was amazed to see that the 300 yards long rope, which holds the egg-seeker in mid-air, was so solid. He saw in this a striking example of human goodness, and he could not believe his eyes. If he had prepared this rope, he would have frayed it in several places so that it would break and cast the hunter into the sea! One night he went to a graveyard, and the ghouls who prey upon the dead might have heard the following conversation:

“O grave-digger, do you not want to talk to me? A whale rises little by little from the bottom of the sea, and shows its head above the waters, to see the ship passing on its solitary way. Curiosity was born with the universe.”

“My friend, it is impossible for me to exchange ideas with you. For a long time the gentle rays of the moon have glittered on these marble tombs. This is the silent hour when more than one human being dreams that he sees chained women, trailing their shrouds, which are covered with spots of blood, like a black sky spotted with stars. The sleeper moans, like a man condemned to death, until he wakes and finds the reality worse than his dream. I must finish digging this grave; it must be ready by to-morrow morning. You cannot do two things at once when you have important work to finish.”

“He thinks that digging a grave is important work! Do you really think that the digging of a grave is important?”

“When the wild pelican determines to give her own breast for food to her young—having as witness only Him who could create such a love, so as to shame men—
although the sacrifice is great, it is comprehensible. When a young man sees the woman he loves in the arms of his friend, he lights a cigar; he stays indoors and contracts an indissoluble friendship with grief: this is comprehensible. When a boy at a boarding-school is harassed from morning till night for years, which seem centuries, by a pariah of civilization whose eyes are constantly upon him, he feels the tumultuous waves of fierce hatred rising like thick smoke to his almost bursting brain.

From the moment he was cast into this prison till the moment he leaves, an intense fever yellows his face, contracts his brows and hollows his eyes. At night his name is written in blood behind his sleepless bed. In the daytime his thoughts continually pass beyond the walls of this house of bruteness, until the day when he escapes, or is cast out like a leper, from this eternal prison; this is comprehensible. To dig a grave often exceeds the powers of nature. How can this pick turn up the earth which first feeds us and then gives us a comfortable bed to shelter us from the furious wind of these cold lands, when he whose trembling hands holds the pick—after having handled all day the cheeks of the dead—sees before him at night, written in letters of flame on every wooden cross the enunciation of the terrible immortality or the immortality of the soul. I have always kept my love for the creator of the universe: but if we do not too badly off in the camp at which he was quartered, but cards were his only occupation.

He has, in consequence, hired a room—but what of those cards? He has returned from imprisonment in Germany. He has not too badly off in the camp at which he was quartered, but cards were his only occupation.

Mr. C. writes he was expected to sleep on straw or arriving at the depot and suffers keenly from the cold. He has, in consequence, hired a room—but what of those who have not the means?

DECEMBER 18.—Paris is almost as animated as it ever has been. There are only a few exceptions. The train leaving the ground line as congested as at the worst (or best!) of times. The hawkers crying, "Ask for the only complete list of our prisoners of war in Germany," is the only reminder of tragic events. Still no direction is given to fashions—that all-engrossing topic in the average Frenchwoman's life. Each woman is, for the first time for years, willy-nilly, left to the resources of her own imagination. A new form of head-dress, imitating the French soldier's forage cap, has obtained wide popularity both among Parisiennes and street boys. Among the former, of course, those whom it becomes least wear it best. Paris is the army; the armistice does not interrupt the ill with women and their dress as with art and literature. But the absolute suppression of whatever may be reminiscent of national feeling and national duty is another matter. Thus, deputies who may be acting in military capacities are requested not to attend the coming session in uniform, which extraordinary order means that the rest of the Chamber wishes to avoid attention being drawn to that particular body without whom the nation would simply not exist to-day. The occasion is ill-chosen for the expression of such pettiness.

FIGHTING PARIS.
men already at our service could be usefully seconded by
the beasts, there is no sentimental reason why these
should not also be called to our assistance.
If humanitarians and other well-meaning
they are right.

'THE NEW FREE WOMAN" can be obtained
-on English soldiers by the Germans I may quote from a
letter from a French prisoner of my acquaintance: "We
are not so badly off, but I cannot say as much for the
are harmful without reason, therefore
unjustifiable—briefly, cruel. But there is no cruelty in
calling together all our forces—whatever they be—in
defence of ourselves. And it is absurd to pity the con-
queror as long as he is the conqueror. When he has been
overcome, when he in his turn is in an inferior position,
then humanitarian principles may be applied.

December 18.—In reference to the cruelties inflicted
on English soldiers by the Germans I may quote from a
letter from a French prisoner of my acquaintance: "We
are not so badly off, but I cannot say as much for the English and Russians." This, strangely enough, passed
the censorship. Does it not eloquently corroborate the
reports in the newspapers! What right have the Scan-
dinavians to throw the native troops into our teeth!
The parents of a young soldier friend advertise daily
for us beyond showing us that very early landmark of organic
for the war with more enthusiasm than he.
I dress materials are giving out. One has to take what
one can find. The stocks have not been renewed since
the spring.
The men now leaving to be trained will be very badly
off, as the denizens are crowded. The youths of the 1915
class, aged about 19, will have to sleep in tents. Others
suffer from inactivity, having been for weeks—in many
cases since the beginning of the war—more or less un-
occupied in lonely villages, at their depots, or guarding
railway lines and bridges. For men of middle-age, used
to activity and brainwork, the task is hard to bear. Is
not life truly "a tale told by an idiot!"

December 20.—Frozen feet is the latest ill brought from
the front.
Little flags in the Belgian colours are being sold to-day
in the streets for the benefit of Belgian refugees.

ON SIRTHES.
Your last distempered works are such
As you, too, shall deprecate.
I'd not despire you quite so much
If you would write no more.

Richard Aldington.

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from the publishing office: Oakley House, Blooms-
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NOTE TO CORRESPONDENTS.—While quite willing to publish letters
under nom de plume, we make it a condition of publication that the name and address of each correspondent should be supplied to the Editor.—Ed.

STILLBORN PROGRESS.
To the Editor, THE EGOIST.
MADAM,
First let me say, in answer to Miss Florence Bradford's pertinent question, that I dislike the term "progress." Its present-day application is misleading if not meaningless, unless meaning in a particular way is imposed. Of course, we have never been before, with the exception of a philiological debate with anyone, and will continue to use the term—under protest. According to the scientific conception of human life, human beings are the only organisms whose organic evolution is a law of progress said to proceed on three lines, each a generalisation higher than the other. The three lines are physical or economic, biological or vital, and nature or the miscellaneous spiritual. To express progress in these three ways is possible, if common sense tells us that there is only one way of progress (i.e., advance), namely, natural perpetuation. As a natural level is a precipitate. As soon as we change the quality of the precipi-
tate it tends to rise to the surface where it merges in the spiritual flow. However, looking at the problem from the standpoint of man's question of economic progress is soon disposed of. If we examine the history of the attempt of men to govern themselves by economic laws, we find that it is one long story of man evolving (used in the sense of maintaining) the economic man at the expense of the vital and spiritual man. And as the economic man has no real existence, but is an abstraction of the moment of the present, it means that the sum total of economic progress is a fragment all. That man has done, economically speaking, is to transfer his idea of value from gold to himself again. In order to advance he must re-
transfer his idea of value from himself to gold. In the sense of maintaining) the economic man at the expense of the vital and spiritual man.

Biological progress is also a myth. Biologically considered, progress is simply the natural process of in-breeding, or the selection of favourable inheritable variations. This is the whole principle of biological evolution. It is supported by Darwin, Dr. Archdall Reid and many others. The objection to this view was the theory of Lamarck that acquired characters are inheritable. To Lamarck the long neck of the giraffe and the wheeled vehicle were due to the action of the same kind of forces. Spencer believed in Lamarckism. To him, conscience evolved through the continuing incultation of morality through-
out generations. But there is reason to believe that Spencer was
wrong. It may be that the kind of progress the human race has
made or is likely to make, is that expressed in Dr. Archdall Reid's theory of evolution. The parents of a young soldier friend advertise daily
for us beyond showing us that very early landmark of organic

Muriel Cołkowska.
To the Editor, The Egoist.

Madam,

I have made a note of Mr. Huntly Carter's "small helping of truth" intended for me, and I must say that it is a very small helping, indeed.

Mr. Carter confesses to being "somewhere aloft," which is a rather original way of putting it. Now, in America when a man is worsted in an argument and is unduly wroth about it, he is spoken of as being "up in the air," or having one's head up in a balloon.

His own admission that I am at least on solid ground—not standing merely, but "sprawling" at full length, of my own will—pleases me in a way that would disgrace Mr. Carter if he knew. Looking at "that gear box" I am asking not only "What is it?" but also "Why did it blow him up?"

Mr. Carter says in his my argument bores him. I find his extremely entertaining.

He complains that I have neglected to answer his questions. This is sheer perversion. I was the questioner.

He takes me to task for attributing sympathy to the Russians. I said nothing of the sort. If Mr. Carter will look at my letter again, he will see that "pity" is the word I used. Now sympathy and pity are two different things. The distinction becomes quite clear when I say that I have no sympathy whatsover for Mr. Carter, but that I pity him from the bottom of my heart.

It is very generous of Mr. Carter to offer to send me three bulky volumes of press cuttings and his 56,000-word Russian "triller." I am thrilled, but I must decline, for I have my own growing collection on the bountiful German Kultur occupying more space than I wish. The Russian "thriller" "I shall expect by the next post. What other literary treasures has the omniscient Mr. Carter in store for me? We have already heard him on Educationalism, on Sexism, on Anthropism, on the Illusions of War, on the Coups, and the Rhythms, etc. He may have other treatises on the Hottentots, on the Huns, on the Hunegrots, on Heaven, on Bell, and on what not? How shall we add no little light to the original discussion on the art of Gordon Craig.

Mr. Carter will have none of my "pale-faced nonsense." Let us have the Carter brand—red-checked, robust and bursting with health.

John Cowens.

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WHY ARE WE HONEST?

To the Editor, The Egoist.

Madam,

The typist was unkind to put suddenly and expense into the letter on Honour and Freedom instead of easily and extensively.

Can your readers be so good as to read it again with these corrections.

Philosophical moralists are hardly likely to agree with Miss Marsden on the causes of sin and conduct. Honesty, for instance, when exhaustively analysed resolves itself into self-control of such a character as to tolerate the appropriation of private property by other animals of the human species.

This and other branches of the ethics are only valid in so far as it is useful to the species. Human beings are distinguished from other animals by powers of reason which produce by the next post. What other literary treasures has the omniscient Mr. Carter in store for me? We have already heard him on Educationalism, on Sexism, on Anthropism, on the Illusions of War, on the Coups, and the Rhythms, etc. He may have other treatises on the Hottentots, on the Huns, on the Hunegrots, on Heaven, on Bell, and on what not? How shall we add no little light to the original discussion on the art of Gordon Craig.

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