Genius of Baudelaire Analyzed by Arthur Symons

Enigma of the Nineteenth Century

Sinister Genius of French Poet Analyzed With Penetrating Insight

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE: A STUDY. By Arthur Symons. Published by E. P. Dutton & Co.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE is one of the most enigmatical literary figures of the nineteenth century. He is eminently the product of an old civilization. He might well have lived in the decadent period of the Roman Empire. Having exhausted all the ordinary pleasures and emotions, he turns for stimulation to weird, grotesque and horrible images. His mind is like a labyrinth, with a thousand dark passages. Withal he possesses extraordinary æsthetic sensibility; he has written some of the best verse and the best criticism in the French language, and his translation of Poe's works is said to be better than the original.

Obviously such a strange, bizarre and distinguished genius as Baudelaire is not a subject for a mediocre critic. In Mr. Symons, however, he finds a worthy interpreter. Characterized by insight, erudition and intelligence, Charles Baudelaire: A Study stands out as a model of creative criticism. The essential qualities of Baudelaire's work are vividly and faithfully depicted in the following passage:

Baudelaire's Genius

"Baudelaire's genius is satanical; he has in a sense the vision of Satan. He sees in the past the lusts of the Borgias, the sins and vices of the Renaissance, the rare virtues that flourish like flowers and weeds in brothels and in garrets. He sees the vanity of the world with finer modern tastes than Solomon, for his imagination is abnormal, and divinely normal. In this age of infamous shames he has no shame. His flesh endures, his intellect is flawless. He chooses his own pleasures delicately, sensitively, as he gathers his exotic *Fleurs du Mal*, in itself a world, neither a *Divina Commedia* nor *Une Comedie Humaine*, but a world of his own fashioning.

"His vividly imaginative passion, with his instincts of inspiration, are ruled by a determined will, a self-reserve, an intensity of conception, an implacable insolence, an accurate sense of the exact value of every word. In the Biblical sense he might have said of his own verse: 'It is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.' The work, as the man, is subtle, strange, complex, morbid, enigmatical, refined, paradoxical, spiritual, animal. To him a scent means more than a sunset, a perfume more than a flower, the tempting demons more than the unseductive angels. He loves luxury as he loves wine; a picture of Manet's as a woman's kiss."

Baudelaire, like Keats and Rossetti, worked on every inch of his poetic canvas. His themes are never thinly spun out. There is always a mass of detail compressed within the smallest possible space. Mr. Symons points out other points of similarity between Keats and Baudelaire. Both reveal in descriptions of physical discomfort, of the strange mental and physiological pains which are associated with sleepless nights. Baudelaire, like Keats, was excessively nervous, and his nervousness brought on insomnia. Both also insist upon the bodily manifestations of love. In this respect they are closely related to the fiery Roman poet, Catullus.

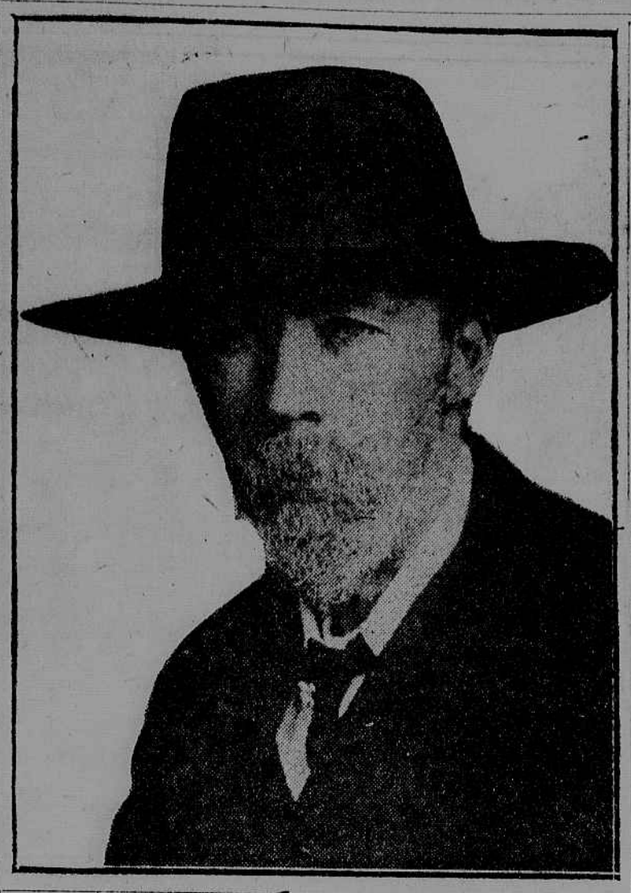
Criticism of Poe

The author does not adhere with absolute rigidity to his analysis of Baudelaire. He devotes a few pages of criticism to Poe, whom Baudelaire admired profoundly. Mr. Symons finds an "unholy magic" in Poe's writings—in their preoccupation with the terrible, the abnormal, the supernatural, in their insistence upon the working out of inevitable, evil fate amid surroundings of weird horror.

The author also discusses the work of Villiers de l'Isle Adam, the Breton aristocrat who has created tales of fantastic beauty and evolved a philosophy of life animated by spiritual pride and a deep contempt for the mediocre and the commonplace. But it is always to Baudelaire that the author returns. He shows the brilliant, wayward poet wandering like a ghost amid the cafés of Paris, observing the night life of the French capital without enjoying it, exiled to Brussels, finally dying after a painful illness in which he lost the power of speech.

Baudelaire is unmistakably a representative of modern French culture, mellowed and refined by centuries of exquisite literary craftsmanship. No one possesses a more delicate appreciation of beauty, no one appreciates more thoroughly the innumerable nuances and subtleties of the French language, no one is a more zealous and devoted champion of art for art's sake. At the same time one discovers medieval and exotic traits in him. There is a suggestion of the Middle Ages in his constant, neurotic, tormenting soul searching. Had he possessed the temperament of a believer he might readily have become a saint and an ascetic. And he felt very strongly the mystical charm of the Orient, with its scents, and drugs, and sacred jewels, and its old civilizations.

Many elements enter into his personality. And his personality is inevitably intertwined with his work. Mr. Symons does full justice to both in his little book, packed as it is with finely wrought and finely expressed criticism of life and literature.



ARTHUR SYMONS, whose study of Charles Baudelaire has been published by E. P. Dutton & Co.

Sculping Lenine and Trotzky

Clare Sheridan's Diary Records Vivid Impressions of Bolshevik Leaders

MAYFAIR TO MOSCOW. Clare Sheridan's Diary. Published by Boni & Liveright.

CLARE SHERIDAN'S romantic journey to Moscow to make busts of the Bolshevik leaders is vividly described in her diary, which sets forth her most interesting experiences from the first meeting with the Soviet representatives, Kamenev and Krassin, in London, to her recent arrival in New York. Mrs. Sheridan protests that she has no political bias. She is attracted by Lenine and Trotzky as personalities, not as champions of the social revolution. And the charm of her book lies chiefly in its intimate, clear-cut character sketches. Here is a typical impression of Krassin, whom she modeled in London:

Sketch of Krassin

"He is a delightful man, and I've never done a head I admired more. He seems to be strong morally, to a degree of adamant. He is calm, sincere, dignified, proud, with self-consciousness and without vanity. Scientific in his analysis of things and people. Eyes that are unflinching and bewilderingly direct, nostrils that dilate with sensitiveness, a mouth that looks hard until it smiles, and a chin full of determination."

It was Kamenev, Krassin's fellow envoy, who suggested to Mrs. Sheridan the project of going to Moscow and sculping Lenine and Trotzky. She eagerly took up the idea and left for Russia with Kamenev, disregarding the warnings of her conservative friends, and securing a passport after a certain amount of difficulty. Before entering Russia she showed her political and social impartiality by visiting the Crown Prince of Sweden, who presented her with two large tins of biscuits, which turned out to be a very useful gift.

In Moscow Mrs. Sheridan was lodged in a "guest house," formerly the residence of a millionaire, which she shared with H. G. Wells and W. B. Vanderlip. She sometimes went cold and hungry, and she found it rather difficult to arrange the material details of her work. On the other hand, she was strongly and favorably impressed by the personalities of most of the Bolshevik leaders with whom she came in contact. Here is her account of Djerzhinski, the head of the dreaded Extraordinary Commission:

"He sat for an hour and a half, quite still and very silent. His eyes certainly looked as if they were bathed in tears of eternal sorrow, but his mouth smiled an indulgent kindness. His face is narrow, high cheek boned and sunk in. Of all his features it is his nose which seems to have the most character. It is very refined, and the delicate bloodless nostrils suggest the sensitiveness of overbreeding. He is a Pole by origin."

She found Trotzky extremely fascinating, and his sittings were frequently enlivened with long conversations about politics, art and poetry. In modeling Lenine she caught him with his characteristic "screwed up" look. One of her few rebuffs was encountered at the hands of Tchitcherin, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, who absentmindedly refused to keep an appointment which he made with her. Tchitcherin works all night, sleeps during the day and never leaves the Foreign Office.

Mrs. Sheridan insists that she is not a Communist, but she found many things to admire in Soviet Russia. She speaks of the cultural enthusiasm of the masses, who crowd the picture galleries and the concert halls. On the eve of her departure for England she writes:

"My work is ended, but I am loath to go. I love this place. I love the people who pass by me in the street. I love the atmosphere laden with melancholy, with sacrifice, with tragedy. I am inspired by this nation purified by fire. I admire the dignity of their suffering and the courage of their belief.

"I would like to live among them forever, or else work for them outside; work and fight for the peace that will heal their wounds."

Mrs. Sheridan returned home to find many talking of her and her expedition. Some of her old friends deserted her, but she found many new ones. She became acquainted with George Dansbury, editor of The London Daily Herald, and commenced a bust of him, but this work was interrupted by her departure for America. She sailed on the Aquitania with Admiral Huse, Sir Philip Gibbs, Sir Ernest Shackleton and other distinguished passengers. The diary is brought up to date by several entries written after the author reached New York.

A Cousin of Winston Churchill

An element of piquancy is lent to Mrs. Sheridan's jaunt into Soviet Russia by the fact that she is a cousin of Winston Churchill, who is probably the most vigorous and outspoken enemy of Bolshevism among the British statesmen. The author pays her cousin a doubtful compliment when she observes:

"Winston is the only man I know in England who is made of the stuff that Bolsheviks are made of. He has fight, force and fanaticism."

Clare Sheridan's diary will certainly be widely read and enjoyed, even by those who do not sympathize with the author's favorable impressions of the Bolshevik leaders. For it is a fascinating story of a woman's adventures, told with wit, vivacity and intelligence.

A Novel as Biography

THE extent to which a novel is autobiographical always has been a strenuously debated literary question. There are those who maintain that a novelist cannot possibly write anything he has not experienced. The apostles of "detachment," objectivists, cite Flaubert and disdain the autobiographical. The example of a man like Wells has given an enormous impetus to the "autobiographical" school.

Sherwood Anderson, author of Poor White (Huebsch), furnishes an example of a man who does not, like Wells, deliberately set out to novelize his own life, but who necessarily puts huge chunks of his own experience into his books. One of the memorable figures in Poor White is the harnessmaker. Mr. Anderson, in an interview, speaks of his father as "a journeyman harnessmaker of the old days." Presumably he resented the incursion of machinery, just as the harnessmaker in Poor White does. A further paragraph in the Anderson interview makes understandable the novelist's sympathy for widely differentiated classes of human beings:

"What education I got was picked up in the barrooms, the stores, in the street, and by the grace of certain lovable characters in our place who took me in hand, loaned me books and talked to me through the evening about the old poets and story tellers.

"When I was sixteen years old I came to Chicago. For four years I worked as a common laborer, and got myself caught in that vicious circle of things where a man cannot swagger before his fellows, is too tired to think and too pitifully ashamed of his appearance to push out into the world."

Has Japan Cause for War?

Columbia University Professor Offers Some Interesting Conclusions

MUST WE FIGHT JAPAN? By Walter B. Pitkin, Associate Professor Philosophy, Columbia University. Published by the Century Company.

IN THIS volume Professor Pitkin tries to answer the most vexatious query with which American foreign policy has to wrestle. Must we fight Japan? The author acquits American statesmen and the American public of any very serious understanding of the problem. He offers some confident and, as he admits, rather "dogmatic" conclusions of his own.

Friction in California over Japanese land ownership and Japanese competition with the American farmer in the great interior agricultural valley of that state has kept one phase of the issue sensationally to the front. But as A. M. Pooley, a neutral observer, shrewdly remarked in his book, Japan's Foreign Policies, published last year, disputes in regard to immigration and land ownership are wholly superficial manifestations of a far deeper antagonism. It is well for Americans who have their minds only on the California situation to consider Pooley's judgments—those of an Englishman who knows modern Japan thoroughly. These are: "The question whether or not the Japanese are assimilable [in America] is beside the point. Whether or not the Japanese are a Mongolian race and so unable to be naturalized in America is a side issue. The real problem is whether or not the Japanese are to become the masters of the Pacific and the dominators of Oriental politics."

Japan has hardly a leg to stand on in protesting against America's desire to keep out Japanese laborers or against California's legislation to restrict Japanese land ownership. She herself restricts alien immigration and doesn't allow foreigners to own land. The only material point in her complaints against American policy is that we make discriminations against her which we waive in the case of other nations. This is the weakness of the California land ownership laws. It is also the weakness, logically, of our attempt to hold the door open to aliens from all other quarters of the globe, while shutting it on China and Japan. But these defects could be easily remedied. Professor Pitkin, who is a rigid exclusionist, would placate Japan by shutting out all foreign laborers and, perhaps, have California pass a law forbidding any alien land ownership, as other states have done in the past and have a perfect right to do. An arrangement ought to be easy enough to make between two nations whose practices on these points are so close together. Moreover, even if the United States should fail to put Japan on an exactly equal basis with other nations with respect to immigration and land ownership, that would be no mortal offense. It is inconceivable that the Japanese would seek war on that score, if there weren't—as there are—other fundamental economic and political causes for war.

Professor Pitkin recognizes these causes. He draws a detailed parallel between Japan and Germany and finds the same impulses working powerfully on the island empire as incited Germany to seek a larger place in the sun. Japan is overpopulated and ambitious. Her rulers are seeking outlets for her surplus labor and products. She naturally aspires to hegemony in the Far East, and has marked Siberia, Manchuria and perhaps the Philippines for annexation, or for political and economic exploitation as dependencies. She hopes also to dominate China. She is even reaching out through colonization for Hawaii. In all these projects she finds the United States blocking her path. Here is a war in the making, due to an inevitable clashing of national interests.

Popular skepticism here justifies itself by asking the question: "Why should Japan, a much poorer country, with a smaller population and a weaker navy, risk war with the United States?" But the trouble is that Japan's navy is dangerously strong for the purposes of the only sort of war now possible between the two countries. Japan cannot come across the Pacific and invade California. Neither can we take an army across the ocean to invade Japan. Yet the seat of war—a naval war—would be in the Far East, where we should have to defend the Philippines and Guam and our interests in China. Fighting near home, with innumerable advantages, Japan's navy would be equal or superior to ours.

A war in the near future would be a long distance and ineffective one on our part. It would be a war on sea communications and commerce, with Japan in a far more favorable position strategically. She has more to gain than we have in entering such a struggle, and therein lies the real threat of war. Only if we could arouse China against her or form an alliance with the anti-Japanese British dominions would she run much risk of finishing as Germany did.

Professor Pitkin accepts the sound theory of a military deadlock in case of war with Japan within five or ten years. But he predicts that after two or three decades Japan will be economically strong enough and have a sufficient grip on China to assume the aggressive and to try to realize her dream of complete domination in the Far East.

The author thinks the United States should avoid war by withdrawing from the Philippines, dropping what he calls the policy of "economic imperialism," agreeing to mutual disarmament and aiding Japan to colonizing parts of Siberia, Mexico and South America, while excluding Japanese immigrants and all other immigrants from the United States. This solution, however it may strike others, appeals to him particularly, because it fits in neatly with his ideas about the future economic development of the United States. He is an ardent Malthusian and birth restrictionist and foresees starvation for the world unless the growth of population is checked. He wants to have American standards of living raised by reducing the number of mouths to be fed and by putting large "no trespass" signs around our borders. These interesting views, having only an indirect relation to the question, "Must we fight Japan?" are fully set forth in the latter half of the book and in some of the appendices.

The author speaks rather contemptuously of the inaccuracy and shallowness of newspaper and popular discussion of national and international questions. But he doesn't altogether avoid looseness and extravagance himself. To note only one instance of this sort, he writes, discussing the British failure at Gallipoli:

"Down in the Mediterranean we saw the magnificent British navy, backed by the finest green troops ever assembled, struggle desperately around Gallipoli (?), month in, month out, against a relatively small and ridiculously under-equipped Turkish force that was near its base of supplies." (Page 127.)

General Ian Hamilton raged inwardly at the artillery equipment of the Turks, lavish compared with his own. And the reason that he never had anything like an adequate supply of guns and munitions was not because he wasn't near his base (he had convenient bases), but because the British government either couldn't or wouldn't meet his demands. Again:

"And we saw four hundred thousand of those handsome and dashing Anzacs die on those hot, bare slopes while the dreadnoughts slunk away baffled." (Page 127.)

There were only three Anzac divisions at Gallipoli, with some minor detachments—hardly more than 50,000 men in all. The entire land losses of the British in killed and missing were 39,454. Australia's losses in killed and missing for the entire war were less than 60,000. Yet the author repeats, on Page 142, his most extraordinary statement: "Great Britain sent her finest ships to force the Dardanelles. She lost 400,000 of the finest Anglo-Saxon troops in the vain attempt."

Most of the ships sent to the Straits were obsolete types whose loss could easily be risked.

Professor Pitkin has written an uneven book, but one strongly idiosyncratic and likely to challenge attention both on that account and on account of its underlying merit.

Love in Louisiana

Adventures Enrich Story of the South

TWISTED TRAILS. By Henry Oyen. Published by George H. Doran Company, New York.

HERE is a book with a whiff of novelty, a story of thrills and surprises, with the Mississippi River and the tangled forests of Louisiana as backgrounds. Stephen Warren, a New Englander with a jaw that suggests granite, appears in the first chapter paddling his canoe on a bayou. Suddenly a rifle cracks and a bullet sings near his head. This is his introduction to a maze of danger and to the "Snake," an elusive and highly picturesque plotter for the heart of a girl and the cash she can command through inheritance.

There are at least three struggles in this good story, and each is handled with the skill of a student of combat: the hand-to-hand fist fight between Stephen and the bruising ex-pugilist, Bomb Carkey; the great race—and it is great—between the splendid horses Nailer and Hammer, and the running swamp fight between Stephen and the "Snake" in the waterways of a lower Mississippi region. Any one of them, and all three lead to the eventual happy culmination of the love of Stephen and the girl Estella, would make the success of an average modern novel. To get them all in one piece of fiction of about 300 pages, with no little amelioration of severity in the accompaniment of delicate pictures of Louisiana life and customs, is almost more than one can expect in these days of hastily and usually wretchedly written novels. Not a star story, but yet a definitely good one.

Indorsed by Judge Gary

Judge E. H. Gary, head of the United States Steel Corporation, has recently read R. C. Feld's Humanizing Industry, published last year by E. P. Dutton & Co., and was so interested in the possibilities of industrial development and the proof that industrial reform is already in successful progress in this country which it presents that he ordered a number of copies for distribution among his friends.

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