

The Sun.

BOOKS AND THE BOOK WORLD

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1919.

SOME OBSERVATIONS BY "Q."

LADIES and Gentlemen: It is true that the distinguished educator about to address you has published a number of novels and shorter tales, and that these are of an imaginative order and some are exciting reading. It is even true that three or four are widely popular.

On the other hand, he was educated at Oxford, and he taught there a while, and he has edited two or three famous and conservative anthologies, and the style he writes is almost mannered in its old-fashioned refinement; and besides being a Fellow of Jesus College he is now King Edward VII Professor of English Literature in the University of Cambridge.

In view of all this, you will apprehend from him nothing unsettling concerning English literature, nothing disturbing to the views that were carefully dinged into your young mind in English A.

You won't!

Shudder! Shudder!

It is a redoubled pleasure to introduce Sir ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH:

"I think it is time to hint at least that the Modern and Medieval Languages Board [of Cambridge] intend to justify by practice what they meant when, in framing the separate English ripos, they so far ignored academic tradition and dared the rage of schoolmasters—which, like that of the sheep, is terrible—as to open the study of English down to our own times, declining to allow that any past date could be settled, even by university statute, as the one upon which English literature took to its bed and expired, and was beatified.

"I have possibly as much reason as any one in this room to know how faulty one's judgment may be about modern work, and specially about modern poetry. Still the task of appraising it has to be done, for the books of our time are the books of our time. They tell us in their various ways 'How It Strikes a Contemporary'; and we shall not intelligently prepare ourselves, here at Cambridge, by drawing an imaginary line somewhere between the past and the present and announcing, 'On this side are the certified dead, who are alive; on that, the living, who are non-existent.

"Now although our fathers—it must be confessed—tried harder than we to write prose; although to our age belongs that rampant substitute which I once denounced to you under the name of Jargon; nevertheless it were, as I hold, a folly to hedge off good writing of our day and bid you fasten your study upon remote masterpieces. Admire them, study them, by them improve your own style. But improve it also by studying how good writers to-day are adapting it to express what men and women think and do in our time. For we belong to it."

Ruthless? You Wait.

If so far you are surprised and delighted with Sir ARTHUR, see now the way he is capable, without strain and rancor, without the least smart-Alecking, rather with urbane good nature and playful ease, of pitching the Philosophical Systematizer out the window:

"I propose to say a few words upon two terms—'Classical' and 'Romantic'—with which your handbooks to English Literature have doubtless by this time made you familiar, though you will not find them frequently mentioned in the masterpieces of which those handbooks are supposed to treat

"I would I could persuade you to remember that you are English, and to go always for the thing, casting out of your vocabulary all such words as 'tendencies,' 'influences,' 'revivals,' 'revolts.' 'Tendencies' did not write *The Canterbury Tales*; GEOFFREY CHAUCER wrote them. 'Influences' did not make *The Ferie Queene*; EDMUND SPENSER made it; as a man called BEN JONSON wrote *The Alchemist*, a man called SHERIDAN wrote *The Rivals*, a man called MEREDITH wrote *The Egoist*.

"Now it is the weakness of Germans in criticism that, not having a literature of their own to rank with the great, but being endowed as a race with an unusual talent for philosophizing, they habitually think and talk of a literary masterpiece—which is a work of art achieved in the way of practice—as though it were a product, or at any rate a by-product, of philosophy, producible by the methods of philosophy. Literature being literature, and philosophy philosophy, you can never understand or account for literature—still less can you produce literature—by considering it in terms of philosophy; that is, by being wise about it in a category to which it does not happen to belong.

"So when a German, cultivating his own bent, becauses himself with a theory that WORDSWORTH

(we will say) wrote Naturalism, or that naturalism wrote WORDSWORTH, it matters which even less than it matters to us what the German thinks he means. For we know that what WORDSWORTH wrote was *Tintern Abbey*, while what naturalism wrote was nothing at all: for it never existed but as a concept in somebody's mind, an abstract notion. God made man in His image. Germans make generalizations in theirs. That is all, and that is just the difference.

"But they do confuse and nullify criticisms all over Europe, even among men of strong mind who happen to be critics only, and have never undergone the discipline of creative writing. For example—yesterday I took down a volume by that man of really powerful mind, Dr. GEORGE BRANDES. I opened it quite at random, and read:

"The strongest tendency even of works like BYRON'S *Don Juan* and SHELLEY'S *Cenci* . . . 'Do you know any works 'like' these, by the way?'"

" . . . is in reality Naturalism. In other words Naturalism is so powerful in England that it permeates COLERIDGE'S Romantic supernaturalism, WORDSWORTH'S Anglican orthodoxy, SHELLEY'S atheistic spiritualism, BYRON'S revolutionary liberalism . . . '—ism, —ism, —ism! 'Omm—jective and summ—jective!'"

The Inanity of Isms.

Sir ARTHUR proceeds to quote from Dr. BRANDES'S introduction, all about the "deep, pregnant current . . . which, sweeping away the classic forms and conventions, produces a Naturalism dominating the whole of literature, which from Naturalism leads to Radicalism, from revolt against traditional convention"—to something else. He remarks:

"Is not that fine? Everything ending in —ion permeating everything that ends in —ance or —ity or —ism, fighting it out like queer aquatic monsters in a tank . . . Gentlemen, tell yourselves that these foolish abstractions never did any of these foolish things. 'The great artist, History!' Call up your courage and say with BERTSEY PIG that you don't believe there is no such person. Cure yourselves, if you would be either artists or critics, of this trick of personifying inanities.

All this, and much more as wholesome, in *Studies in Literature*, by Sir ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH (G. P. Putnam's Sons, \$2.50). We shall quote from it, on this page shortly, Sir ARTHUR'S example of a model *Handbook of English Literature* based entirely on the —anities.

JACKETS.

WE care not who reads a nation's books as long as we can read the jackets. Nowadays, no jacket, no book. It is the gaudily dressed barker who stands outside of the thought-shop and howls his wares at you—stridently, in yellow; appealingly, in blue; luringly, in white; threateningly, in red.

We know a man who spends whole days in a big Fifth avenue book store reading the jackets on the books. He says if he went to the Public Library he'd have to read the book, as there they peel off all jackets. But in the big book store he has found the Seven-Leagued Boot of Knowledge. He knows all about all books by observing jackets. He confesses to have read the jackets on 7,402 war books. He knows all about THEODORE DREISER, JOSEPH HERGESHEIMER and AMY LOWELL by reading the press notices about their books on the back of the jackets of their latest works.

The jacket is still in its infancy, like the movie. Whoever first conceived the idea got hold of something of which he did not know the value and future importance. The jacket is becoming more and more literary, and WELLS and SHAW and HUNCKER, we understand, receive fabulous prices for writing jackets.

Jacket collecting will be the next craze. Private libraries will disappear and give place to jacket files. Men will pay enormous prices for jackets in years to come, as they collect rare art objects now. There may even, some day, be a Metropolitan Museum of Jackets, a Louvre whose walls will be hung with curious and artistic book coverings. As the handle of an umbrella or a cane is often worth more than the umbrella or cane itself, so we may have in time carved and jewelled jackets, illuminated jackets, jackets lettered in diamonds and pearls. Then will come the gambling and speculative era in jackets, and not to have at least one begemmed jacket in the house will immediately stamp one as a philistine, a bourgeois.

Pity the French! In their yellow-backs, which have circulated throughout the world by the millions, there is only literature. The French have no jackets on their books! One has really got to read these books to know what is in them! Ah! but wait! They are going to change all that. And we predict that you will live to see Bibles with a jacket, by BILLY SUNDAY, and VICTOR HUGO'S *The Legend of the Centuries*, with an external send-off, done by HARRY KEMP.

The Librarian's Corner

CONDUCTED BY

FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE.

BOOKS AS NEWS.

"IF you haven't anything on those subjects please send a book on the ancient history of Greece or Rome. Anything of that sort will be news to me." So wrote a soldier, an officer of the A. E. F., to the American Library Association's central library in Paris.

Nothing could more naively illustrate the theme of books as news; nothing more forcibly bring home to one the knowledge hunger of the ordinary American, once his imagination has been fired and his curiosity stimulated by adventure beyond the borders of his home town.

And even the million and a half young Americans whose life in khaki took them no further than cantonment or training camp have had a Great Adventure. They have travelled hundreds, perhaps thousands of miles, seen strange cities and perhaps a different clime, mingled with tens of thousands of others, of various races and tongues, various habits and points of view, formed new friendships and acquired new manners. The Spirit of Adventure has been implanted in their souls. Having seen so much they did not know existed they want to know more of what was before to them unknown.

It is from the ranks of these and the 2,000,000 others who went overseas that Adventure will recruit her legions of pioneers to explore and open up the fastnesses of Earth's remotest bounds. Many more, having once tasted the life of the crowd, will seek the big cities rather than their village homes; already New York is swarming with returned soldiers from the South and West who have cashed in their transportation home and are looking for jobs in the metropolis. But even those who go back to the humdrum routine of factory or farm will see life hereafter from a new viewpoint and will hardly be content to let it flow past them without at least such tastes of it at second hand, as it were, as they may get from books.

Truth Hunters.

Most of us, indeed, however bravely we may have set forth to conquer worlds in our youth, wind up like Lowell's lovers of truth, who

" . . . lavish'd life's best oil
Amid the dust of books to find her,
Content, at last, for guerdon of their toil,
With the cast mantle she hath left behind her."

Once having tasted, however, we cannot but continue to seek, and no small part of the work that the circumstance of war has charted for the public libraries of America is to facilitate the search of those who, having tasted of the Great Adventure of living, must now perforce content themselves with such news of it as may be found in books.

Recruits for Libraries.

Not all, of course, will at once or ever be active users of their home town libraries, though every man who served under the Stars and Stripes knows now, if he never knew before, what libraries are and what they have for him. Some, on the other hand, doubtless will recruit the ranks of those library habitués, usually bearded and often unkempt, upon whose patronage nice young lady library assistants frown, but who, to me, always seem like true adventurers, seeking vicariously to live again the lives they lived, or would have lived had not Fate decreed otherwise, in their youths.

But in between is the great mass—millions—whose eyes have been opened through travel and contacts to the knowledge that men live and deeds are done in lands and ways that once they knew not of, and who seek to add to that knowledge and turn it to advantage in their workaday lives. These are the new patrons the libraries must find ways to serve.

THE FIRST YEAR.

WITH this number *Books and the Book World* begins the second year of its existence. We believe that we shall make a much more interesting paper than we have made in the past twelve months. In our first year we have listed and tried to describe adequately for our readers perhaps 1,200 new books; of these possibly one-half have had more extended notice than is given in the space recording *Books Received*. All that is routine, of course; but if the routine performance has not been good nothing else is of any account soever. The prime thing is to tell interestingly the news of new books.

In a drawer of the desk on which this is written are some delightful letters from readers. We should like to print them, but the space is needed for book news and may not be yielded for what, after all, might be an exhibition of vanity, however harmless. We thank the writers, and promise to try to deserve their praise.