

From the Study of a Meditative Havelock Ellis

By JOSEPH COLLINS.

THE name of Havelock Ellis has become very familiar to a large number of readers on this side of the Atlantic. He has been a prolific writer, and he has written on subjects that have a human, a prurient or a gossipy interest. In the earlier years of his activity it would seem that he was obsessed almost with the subject of genetic endowment and abnormal sex behavior. Then came a period of interest in the metamorphosis of women's status, social, political and intellectual. From that he wandered into the realm of the prophets, true and false, from St. Francis to Freud, from Nietzsche to Nevieov. Then the placid waters of retrospective romance attracted his sail, and he wrote *The Soul of Spain*.

The ebullition of his adult ardor having been calmed by increasing years, by thought and by contemplation of these stirring subjects, he glided into the World of Dreams, where one need not be specific of statement or concrete of proposition. Now that the sear and yellow leaves of life begin to throw cooling shadows on his pathway he invites his soul and brings forth *The Philosophy of Conflict*. There is no conflict in his mind, however, no indication of strife, no attempt to impose upon others convictions that are the result of struggle with himself or with society.

His statements, suggestions and conclusions are calm, reflective, fireside meditations based upon extensive reading on subjects that have particularly attracted him and upon sober reflection on topics which to-day so engross the whole world that even he who has never experienced constructive thought must give heed to them.

The New Aspect of the Sex Problem as revealed by the war, *The Unmarried Mother*, *The Mind of Women*, *The Drink Problem of the Future*, *Birth Control and Eugenics*, *The Philosophy of Conflict*, are some of these subjects. Between them are interpolated readable, easy-chair anecdotes of historic personages, Luther and Casanova, and of others likely to become historic, Joseph Conrad and Alie Fure.

II.

Havelock Ellis, who is just entering the final decade of the Psalmist's allotment to man, was born in England, spent his childhood largely in the Pacific seas and his mature youth in New South Wales, where he earned his bread as a school teacher. When he was 20 he returned to England, studied medicine and qualified as a practitioner. Soon the eternal question of sex absorbed him, and a long series of articles, books, so-called studies of Sexual Selection and Man, Erotic Symbolism, Sex and Society, Evolution of Modesty, &c., came from his pen. He is often called a sociologist, but the trained and professional sociologists look at him askance. He speaks of pathological subjects authoritatively; but the medical guild does not know him. He writes with the assurance and style of the disciplined literature, but he is a stranger in literary councils and quill clubs.

He is an earnest, honest soul. His writings have diverted countless readers; some of his divagations have amazed. His acquisitive faculties have been developed at the expense of his critical faculties. He is intellectually prehensile, and he has assimilated of the things that have been appetizing to him a large amount of pabulum which he ladles out generously to those who feel the need for this sort of sustenance. Although he is accepted by many as an authority in that ill-defined field spoken of as sociology he never writes as if he were laying down the law.

Now that the wines that flushed Lucullus are all spilled, and the strings that Nero fingered are all gone (with acknowledgments to Mr. E. A. Robinson) it is

interesting to hear him on the drink question. "We are approaching a new phase of the question. We are being freed from the dominions of extremists." I venture to think Mr. Ellis is in error. We are about to be interned permanently in the dominion of the extremists. The present status of the drink problem is due to the "growth of civilization, and to the progressive development of democracy."

In the chapter devoted to that subject civilization is defined as "the spiritual growth of mankind generally." If there ever was a generality, glittering or non-glittering, this is one. "The spirit of the prohibition movement in America bears witness to the fact that civilization in America is still new and crude." Few real Americans will disagree with Mr. Ellis.

He believes that arbitrary restrictions and prohibitions are "not in accordance with our English spirit. As permanent institutions they are opposed to our national English genius." Without for the moment attempting to fathom what he thinks their national English genius is I cannot agree with him when he says, "We are not so spiritless that we immediately consent to be treated like children." I would call to his attention the shrieks of the American eagle for the past 144 years concerning personal liberty, and then direct his attention to our present spiritlessness and meek consent in that condition.

III.

Mr. Ellis's essays eleven and twelve, *Eugenics in Relation to the War*, and *Birth Control and Eugenics* should be read by conservatives just before reading the novel of another great English sociologist, Mr. W. L. George, entitled *Blind Alley*. By liberals they would be more efficaciously read after Mr. George's fiction founded on fact. Chapter thirteen, *War and the Sex Problem*, is wholly unsatisfactory and inadequate, in truth it may be said unrevealing, unless read in conjunction with Mr. John Galsworthy's *Saint's Progress*.

It is consoling to be told by Mr. Ellis that "in moral matters America is rather conservative and Puritanic, and even the American facility of divorce is a sign of an effort to make marriage a real and exclusive union," but it is difficult to see how this accords with his statement of the result of an inquiry carried on among a large number of clergymen, lawyers, teachers, doctors, business men and working men as to their convictions about marriage; more than one-third of whom (half of these being ministers of religion) approved of marriage by mutual agreement without legal ties.

Mr. Ellis is sometimes amusing as well as instructive. But he is nowhere more amusing in this book than when he attempts to tell us the vocation of one Dr. Sigmund Freud of Vienna, who, having made a commendable contribution to psychology, which has been found useful in many spheres of human activity—pedagogy, biology, history, sociology, the art and science of therapeutics—began to be hailed by an extensive and various "fringe" of eccentrics as an intellectual messiah. His contributions have been examined, studied, assimilated, appropriated and utilized throughout the civilized world.

A just estimate has been put upon his work. It is not likely that Mr. Ellis will be found to have had a shaping hand in this just estimate. Freud is an artist, Mr. Ellis thinks. He is an artist "because all his earlier supporters have successively left him." He is an artist who reveals his art "in the poetry of psychic processes which lie in the deepest and most mysterious recesses of the soul." The most beautiful instance of Freud's "art" is his essay on Leonardo da Vinci. (For me it is a most despicable and vulgar attempt to besmirch the reputation for decency of the most fecund mind of Leonardo's age.)

Nowhere does Mr. Ellis so display his lack of judicial capability as in the chapter on *Psychoanalysis in Relation to Sex*. The essay on Luther seems to have been called forth by Luther's 400th birthday. It does not advantage us particularly to have Luther's plebeian origin and boorish temperament contrasted with Erasmus; to know that he was constantly worried about his uric acid; that he was sometimes unsuccessful in his struggles with the flesh and the devil; that his capacity for working was better when he was very angry, or that he was a true German because of "his close combination of the abstract with the realistic, of the emotional with the material."

The essay on Herbert Spencer will dis-

appoint alike antagonist and protagonist of the English philosopher. The essay on Mr. Conrad's world is trivial.

IV.

In some of these studies Mr. Ellis comes back to former shrines, that of Casanova, for instance. Casanova left no doubt in the minds of those who read his memoirs what the motives were that pushed him along in his amatory excursions. It dents his armor a little to be told the truth about Justina Wynne, which an industrious German, Gugitz, told in one of the German literary periodicals three or four years before Germany started in to impose Kultur upon the world. Justina's adventures Mr. Ellis recounts in this chapter.

I could have wished that he had chosen a less drab subject than Cowley for his concluding essay. Perhaps Mr. Bernard Shaw would not have done, nor even Mr. George Moore, but he might have made an analysis of Fiona Macleod or synthesized the autoanalysis that Mr. H. G. Wells has been making for the past quarter of a century. None of the living being acceptable, we should have been grateful for an analysis of Petronius, whose suppressions, substitutions, constellations and possessions might be readily gathered from the *Satyricon*.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF CONFLICT. By HAVELOCK ELLIS. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

A Youthful Pre-Raphaelite

LAST year's was a noteworthy crop of precocious children. First, Daisy Ashford, then only the other day we read of a young English girl, still in her 'teens, whose symphonic tone-poem, *Lamia*, was compared not unfavorably by certain English critics with the work of Richard Strauss.

Now comes Pamela Bianco and her *Flora*, a *Book of Drawings*, with "illustrative poems" by Walter de la Mare. The drawings from which those reproduced in the book have been selected were exhibited at the Leicester Galleries in London during the spring of 1919. They are said to have "created a sensation."

And well they may have. Their extraordinary charm, their unearthly joyousness, may well have excited admirers. I rather imagine, though, that the "sensation" was caused by the artist's age. She is twelve. This is of course interesting, but it need in no way interfere with enjoyment of the pictures in and for themselves.

It is hard to characterize them. I might decant upon the influence of Fra Angelico, Gozzoli and Botticelli—this predominates—but what is more remarkable is that Pamela Bianco has not only undergone the influence of the early Italians; she seems to possess the very spirit which actuated them. There is no Pre-Raphaelite affectation in her decorations; she is simply a Pre-Raphaelite in spite of herself; she is a fifteenth century artist.

I am tempted simply to refer you to the book, without trying to describe the pictures. I can, however, tell you a little of the way in which the pictures affect me. Take *The Flowery Meadow*. Here sitting in a conventional green field, studied with flowers, is a nude child—an angel, one perceives, with violet wings. The angel gazes beatifically at nothing; she is content merely to be sitting in the meadow. Just beyond her rises a nondescript tree whose deep green leaves fill the top of the picture. A rabbit—the rabbit seems a favorite pet of the ar-

tist—springs up from the grass toward the angel.

The color effect can not be described; it affects one as does a fifteenth century Italian fresco or a French tapestry of the best period.

Fairy Spring is a little cruder in drawing, but perhaps better as pure decoration; the fairy's gown is a masterpiece.

The pictures must be seen. I cannot hope to convey an adequate impression of their charm. I might speak of Mr. de la Mare's verses, but even he must admit that the pictures are the thing. He has seized upon the primitive spirit of the drawings and written verses that harmonize with it. The most successful harmonization has been effected in *Forgiveness*. The picture is a simple black-and-white—two angels of Japanese design. The lines run:

O thy flamed cheek,
Those locks with weeping wet,
Eyes that, forlorn and meek,
On mine are set.

Poor hands, poor feeble wings,
Folded, a-droop, O sad!
See, 'tis my heart that sings
To make thee glad.

My mouth breathes love, thou dear!
All that I am and know
Is thine. My breast—draw near;
Be grieved not so!

B. H. C.

FLORA: A BOOK OF DRAWINGS. By PAMELA BIANCO. With illustrative poems by WALTER DE LA MARE. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.

THE Marshall Jones Company of Boston announces for January and February: *The Joke About Housing*, by Charles Harris Whitaker; *Lindy Loyd*, a story of the Kentucky mountaineers by Marie C. Hoffman; *Chuckles*, "limericks and humorous verse" (well, maybe the limericks are humorous too) by John Carver Alden; *Religion and the New Psychology*, by the Rev. W. S. Swisher; *The School of Sympathy*, reminiscent essays and verse by Julian Arnold.

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