

HENRY JAMES AS A LITERARY ALCHEMIST—CAN THE DEAD SPEAK TO US?

A GLIMPSE INTO THE LABORATORY OF JAMES The Novelist Has Revealed the Processes Which He Invoked to Produce His Abstruse Tales

"I SEEM a little distraught to-night," I remarked to Owen and Doctor McFabre as they settled themselves comfortably before my fireplace and lighted their cigars. "It is because I have been attempting to follow the processes of an alchemist in a literary laboratory."

"I thought the alchemists were all dead," said Doctor McFabre. "So they are," I replied, "and my alchemist is dead along with the others. His name is Henry James."

"I never could read that man's books," Owen interjected. "It took too much labor to discover what he was trying to say."

writing as practiced by him was an easy task to be undertaken lightly, after he had read the notes, have a new respect for a serious-minded man of letters. Pages are given to consideration of the names to be given to his characters, names which must suggest the part which they have to play. He tells us that his dramatic principle consists in the exhibition of his characters in successive aspects, each treated from its own center. Thus he produces a cumulative effect preparatory to the denouement. The number of persons, however, who are interested in such revelations is small, but those who are interested care very much about them. James tells them in a way that he has attempted to do

fragment," said Dr. McFabre. "They have described it as one of the finest things he has ever done."

in "The Ivory Tower," one of the unfinished novels. He has always wanted to paint the picture of a nonproducer in the midst of a commercial world. This is what "The Ivory Tower" is about, and he gives us the beginnings of a story in which a young man with no business experience inherits the fortune of an uncle and loses it through the dishonesty of a man whom he trusts. But one does not feel that his characters are real people. They are abstractions trigged out in human garb and pulled by the strings which their creator has attached to them. The elaborate analysis of their emotions which constitutes the greater part of the story does not make them convincing. They are the product of a laboratory and nothing else."

HENRY JAMES



THE DEAD WHO HAVE NEVER DIED Persistent Efforts of Men to Change Hope of Immortality Into Certainty

The insatiable curiosity about what follows death will doubtless continue as long as the race persists. In spite of all that the agnostics and materialists may say there is a constant, nurtured and watered perhaps by hope, that death does not end all. We are taught by our religion that there is a future life. There is evidence of a belief in ghosts, that in the persistence of conscious life after death, in the history of the most primitive people and the most ancient religions. But man wants to be satisfied by indisputable proof. Systematic and organized attempts have been in progress for more than a quarter of a century to gather all the available evidence. Men of science with trained intellects have been accumulating data, arranging and classifying them, in the hope that they may establish as a fact that which from the scientific point of view is now only a hypothesis. In spite of that there is no present prospect that the investigators will succeed until after another hundred years at least have passed.

In the meantime those who wish to justify their faith by proof and thus change the evidence of things hoped for into the substance of things known, are ready to do anything. They can get hold of that promises to help them in their search. They will consequently welcome Sir William Barrett's latest book on the subject, "The Dead Who Have Never Died," done by a man as different from Mark Twain as King Arthur differs from President Wilson. Then when the hero discovers that a man must live with his contemporaries if he would be in sympathy with his human surroundings the widow from New York and turns up and we are allowed to assume that everything ends happily. It is an audacious allegory, carried out so far as it went with brilliant success. And the notes dictated after part of the story was written show us how it was to be finished. I admit that I am one of those who find it difficult to read James, but "The Sense of the Past" absorbed my attention and compelled my curiosity and my interest.

"If you are curious about James, doctor," I went on "you will find the story of his early London life, told in 'The Middle Years,' most entertaining. He gives reminiscences of Tennyson, George Eliot, Lowell and many others, and shows how a young American reacted when brought in contact with English life for the first time. He has drawn on his personal experience in describing the advent in London of the hero of 'The Sense of the Past,' and the ambassador who figures in it is confessedly suggested by Lowell."

GEORGE W. DOUGLASS. THE IVORY TOWER. An unfinished novel by Henry James. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. \$1.50. THE SENSE OF THE PAST. An unfinished novel by Henry James. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. \$1.50. THE MIDDLE YEARS. By Henry James. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. \$1.25.

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credulous. Sir William Barrett accepts certain of Esop's Palladium's demonstrations as supernatural or super-natural, in spite of the fact that it has been proved that she used fraudulent methods. He accepts also as supernatural the familiar "spirit rappings," although probably for a time the most mysterious and most inexplicable of them, produced at the seances of the famous Fox sisters, of Rochester, in the first half of the last century, were later admitted to have been produced by the tapping of the bones of the disinterred toes of one of the sisters. The fact that Mrs. French, Mrs. Randall's medium, lived in Rochester and must have been familiar with the history of the Fox sisters, will not escape the notice of the judicious. G. W. H.

Modern credulity is taxed to the utmost to compass the ingenious alignment of supernatural forces and impulses that the incomprehensible and blasphemous murder and completely baffles the detective talent of friend and foe in Wadsworth Camp's latest mystery story, "The Abandoned Room." The family tradition of death that relentlessly attacks whoever dares to sleep in a locked room in a wing of "The Cedars," a hidden staircase, a secret passage, the wind from the inclosing forest, and the vast fortune of old Silas Blackburn, grandfather of Bobby, who has been the destined of the young of the Blackburn line and his cousin, Katherine, Bobby's friend, Paredes, from Panama, excites the suspicion and hatred of all in turn, but he unravels the mystery of crime and saves Bobby from the electric chair. Detailed and drugged at a dinner in New York, Bobby is abandoned in an abandoned house near The Cedars, unable to account for his movements. His grandfather is murdered at that night in the abandoned room. How the detective who fixes the crime on Bobby, he murdered the next night when he attempts to solve the mystery by staying in that room.

Mr. Camp has given us a very remarkable example of his adroit handling of intricate mystery, which defies the keenest imagination to forecast its outcome. One's convictions are stretched in following the supernatural development, but they are relieved with some of the most interesting and cleverly held to the extreme conclusion.

THE ABANDONED ROOM. By Wadsworth Camp. Illustrated by Robert McCall. Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co. \$1.35.

Witter Bynner, Classifier

Witter Bynner has been classified for some time as one of the minor poets. There is nothing in his latest volume, "Grenstone Poems," which will justify the discriminating public in taking him out of that class. He writes smooth and neat, but verse inspired by a pretty sentiment, but little of it falls to impress one with its depth or sincerity. He uses the formula of the great emotions, but it is as if he were experimenting with them as the tools of his trade. This does not mean that there are not beautiful things in the volume, for Mr. Bynner has the lyrical gift and can write charming verse. It simply means that he seems unable to produce the impression in the reader that he has come to grips with life and has sweat blood, sweat and tears, as well as one of the sweetest and most touching things in the book is "An Old Elegy" on a little child, which runs in this way:

Earth, with flowers on his eyes,
He thou art sweet as he—
As he was light when he was
As he was light on the tree—

Mr. Bynner has a following and he has been acclaimed as a poet of distinction by a few of the critics. Those who like him like him very much. And those who do not like him are not disposed to question the taste of those who do. It takes all kinds of verbiages to make a national literature.

GREYSTONE POEMS. A Sequence. By Witter Bynner. New York: Frederick A. Stokes & Co. \$1.25.

Mystery That Mystifies

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Adventures in Spain

Lovers of adventure will find plenty to interest them in "The Wolf Cub" by Patrick and Terence Casey. It is a novel of modern Spain and from cover to cover it is filled with exciting situations. The hero is a highwayman and his feats of the high roads have made him famous throughout the country. The story of his adventures is picturesquely told and the other characters are well portrayed. There is plenty of dramatic action. Most of it centers around the rescue of the charming Spanish girl, Jacinto Quesada, the wolf cub, is an interesting study, brave, daring and chivalrous, and the manner in which he collects the reward for his supposed killing is delightfully told. The book is a bit crude and raw in spots but all in all it is pleasant reading.

THE WOLF CUB. By Patrick and Terence Casey. Illustrated by W. Wood. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. \$1.40 net.

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INCOME TAX QUERIES

STAGGER ED WYNN

Comedian Finally Decides to Swear to Whatever His Lawyer Says

Staggered Wynn, the comedian, decided to swear until he reached Washington, D. C., on the "Over the Top" company because he was making his income tax return. He had read in the newspapers that one could secure expert advice on the subject in the Capitol, and after the show had closed and he felt at leisure, he went to the Eighth and G streets, there to consult an expert. But the internal revenue department was crowded, so the comedian started to work the matter out himself at the Raleigh. The first few questions were asked in a friendly way, but when he asked on page 1, paragraph 11, under "personal exemption?"

Upon referring to page 1 he found the following clause: "A head of family is a person who, in accordance with the Federal or legal obligation, actually supports and maintains one or more individuals closely related to him (or her) by blood, marriage or adoption."

Wynn to his wife or husband? If not, he was on the safe side, Wynn answered the foregoing question as follows: "Yes and no."

Camille Zecwerk's Lecture Recital

The Philadelphia Music Club will present Camille Zecwerk, pianist and composer, in a lecture recital on "Describing the Music" next Wednesday evening at the Art Alliance, Nineteenth and Walnut streets.

Evening Public Ledger Photoplay Calendar

THIS PROGRAM IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Table with columns for days of the week (Monday to Saturday) and rows for various theaters (Alhambra, Apollo, Arcadia, Belmont, Bluebird, Broadway, Cedar, Coliseum, Colonial, Empress, Eureka, Family, Fairmount, Frankford, Great North, Imperial, Jefferson, Jumbo, Knickerbocker, Leader, Liberty, Locust, Market St., Model, Nixon, Palace, Park, Princess, Regent, Rialto, Ridge Ave., Rivoli, Ruby, Stanley, Grand, Victoria).