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Entre Nous.

CERTAIN TOPICS.

Secular Altruism.

This is from Professor Percy Gardner's new book: 'A recently published book, Mr. Stewart Grahame's *Where Socialism Failed*, has given us a wonderful record of an attempt to construct in Paraguay a society on a basis of economic communism, but without religious sanctions. The founder, Mr. William Lane, was a man of great magnetic power, and wholly possessed by a spirit of secular altruism. The story of the disastrous failure of his project has been well told. But the interesting point in relation to the present subject is this: after the colony had degenerated into what the inhabitants themselves called a hell upon earth, Lane went out with a few devoted followers to make a new settlement. For a time the enthusiasm of the chosen few buoyed them up. But before long Mr. Lane found it necessary to introduce some kind of belief in a great overruling spiritual power, on whom he freely lectured, though the belief he taught seems to have been too vague to exercise much influence on the community, from which he presently withdrew. The residue of the colonists which he had left went from bad to worse, until they were saved from destruction by the teachings of a Christian schoolmaster, and by the abandonment of all their original notions. It is a marvellous story; and it is hard to see how those who are not utterly case-hardened against experience can refuse to learn from it.'[1]

Eloquence.

Demosthenes' high claims to eloquence, acknowledged by every competent critic, rest on certain qualities, of which the chief are naturalness and simplicity. This simplicity is, of course, the last word of art, not the simplicity of poverty or foolishness. When we read the Philippics and the Olynthiacs, and above all the Speech on the Crown, we are conscious that we are in the hands of a master of his craft. When he chooses, the orator knows how to state his case with absolute clarity; and when he indulges in a burst of rhetoric and gives us what we call a purple passage, he realizes the effect of contrast by a series of simple sentences, pellucid, straightforward, and without a trace of involution or emotional verbiage.[2]

[1] P. Gardner, *Evolution in Christian Ethics*, 55.

Jealousy.

We sometimes see the references to Jahweh's jealousy in the Old Testament used as a stick to beat the Christian with. But the jealousy of God is simply the assertion that He is the only living and true God. There is a jealousy of God which is reprehensible but it is neither Hebrew nor Christian. Aeschylus dealt with it in the *Agamemnon*. It was a popular pagan mistake, and Aeschylus sets his face against it.

'It was said by men of old time that God is jealous. He cannot brook the excessive prosperity of men, and if Polycrates of Samos is born under a lucky star, he must pay compensation for his good fortune, which, even so, may be rejected of Heaven. Is it true that greatness and prosperity inevitably call down wrath from an offended Godhead? Such a view involves a mistaken estimate of divine laws and utterly misconceives the true relation of punishment to wrong-doing. "I alone," says the leader of the Chorus, speaking no doubt the mind of Aeschylus, "I alone am of a different opinion." It is Sin which is punished, the godless act. The innocent have a fair lot. Observe that the poet tells us especially that his own view is singular, and is not shared by the multitude. But he is sure of his ground. It is not prosperity as such, it is the mental effect of prosperity—the arrogance bred in the prosperous and wealthy man—which ultimately brings down the wrath from God. The fatal heritage runs thus. Affluence breeds insolence (ὕβρις). Insolence leads to many evil things—impiety, hardihood, recklessness—and the evil man spurns with his foot the altar of justice. Then comes Nemesis, apportioning to each man the lot he deserves, and therefore overwhelming the confident sinner with ruin. And so it happens that wealthy halls in which defiance and pride and boundless conceit reign are not happy. Justice shines in poor men's homes and has no regard for wealth. Gold is wrongly stamped with praise. All this is, the

[2] W. L. Courtney, *Old Saws and Modern Instances*, 84.

poet thinks, borne out in the history of the Atreidae.

But Arrogance, in sin grown grey
Mid vile men, bears a child at length
Like her in name, in lusty strength,
Or soon or late, when dawns her day;

Yea, and a brother fiend, whom none
May cope with, impious Hardihood—
Black curses twain o'er homes that brood,
And like their dam each demon son.

In smoke-fouled huts doth Justice shine;
On virtuous lives she still hath smiled:
From gold-tricked halls and hands defiled,
She turns her with averted eyne.

A guest she is of each pure soul:
She on the power of wealth looks down,
With all its base coin of renown:
She guideth all things to their goal.[1]

Realism.

Two books have appeared recently dealing with Realism in Art, one (Mr. Courtney's *Old Saws*) incidentally, the other (Mr. McDowall's *Realism*) systematically. There is much confusion of thought. What we call Realism is called by the French Naturalism. Our reluctance to the use of the word Naturalism for that Realism which paints nature *as it is*, of which Zola is 'the noisy and untiring exponent,' is due to the fact that we use the word Naturalism for a certain view of the Universe.

There are three possible ways of handling a subject, whether in poetry, painting, or preaching—the way of Idealism, the way of Naturalism, the way of Realism. This is Mr. Courtney's account of the three:

'A dramatist, we will suppose, is asking himself how he shall treat human characters, and he discovers that there are at least three possible ways. He can say, in the first place, "I will paint human beings as I think they *ought* to be." In other words, he is applying, however unconsciously, a sort of ethical test to the men and women whose actions he is about to describe. He believes that it is his duty (in order, we will say, to help ordinary suffering and erring humanity) to paint certain ideals of conduct and behaviour, good and bad alike—heroes that are ideal heroes, villains that are ideal villains, heroines that are virtuous and in distress, comic men who, despite a lamentable tendency to idiotic witticisms, have a heart of gold—and all the other heterogeneous items in a romantic conception of existence.

'We can imagine, however, a dramatist with a very different ideal before him. He says, "My business as an artist is to paint men as I think they really are," not very good, not very bad, average creatures, sometimes with good intentions, often with bad performance, meaning well and doing ill, struggling with various besetting temptations and struggling also perhaps with a heritage derived from earlier generations—above all, never heroes and never heroines, nor even thoroughgoing villains, not beautifully white nor preternaturally black, but (as one might phrase it) of a piebald variety. This species of dramatist works from a scientific point of view. His mode of procedure, and also such inspiration as he possesses, is mainly experimental, based on what he has discovered—or thinks he has discovered—about humanity and its place in the world. If the first class of dramatist I am trying to describe is radiantly optimistic, the second is generally preternaturally sad, inclined to despair, teaching us that this world is not altogether a comfortable place, and that human beings are not specially agreeable to live with.

'It is conceivable, however, that apart from these two classes of dramatists there yet is room for a third, a man who is neither a preacher nor a pessimist; not inspired with a moral idea nor yet inspired with a scientific idea, but a sheer artist, inspired by a purely artistic idea. He is aware that all art is an imaginative exercise, and that however he describes his *dramatis personæ* he can only do it from a personal point of view. He is not quite sure that, however scientific may be his procedure, he can ever paint men and women precisely as they are—he can only paint them as they appear to his æsthetic perceptions. He does not desire to draw any moral. He desires, it is true, to be guided by experience; but he does not give us the dry bones of scientific data. Being an artist he uses his selective capacity both as to his incidents and his characters. The latter he often makes typical rather than individual; but they will represent the inner verity of man, and not the mere external appearance. He has made the

[1] W. L. Courtney, *Old Saws and Modern Instances*, 14.

discovery, in other words, that you do not get rid of romance by calling yourself an Experimentalist or a Realist. He knows that men turn to art just because they do not want to live perpetually in a sombre, and actual, world. The world of art is something other than the world of reality, and as a dramatic artist he must make allowance for this fact.'

Mr. Courtney then shows that each type of dramatist is represented in the Great Greek Three, and in this order—Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles.

Now take three short paragraphs from Mr. McDowall.

'Realism in painting does not necessarily mean telling a story or depicting the obvious. Its first proceeding is to confer on painted objects, by tactile or other values, the quality of existence; not, as was explained, by way of that literal imitation which aims at pure illusion, but with enough choice and emotional insight to give us the feeling of enhanced vitality.'

'Realism does not mean seeing things worse than they are any more than it means seeing them better than they are; it means seeing them *as* they are. And "as they are" means as they would look to one whose vision has the special gift of sincerity. Not, of course, the kind of sincerity which is merely passiveness agape, but an outlook which is genuinely interested by the individuality of everything it sees.'

'What art can do with the even tenor of life is to show that it is good and pleasant after all, that nothing is commonplace except to the man whose perceptions have been dulled by habit. This is just what Guyau declared to be the function of realism—a stripping off of the veils with which, absorbed in cares or riches, we have covered the disinterested beauty of the world. Even this may have its difficulty for a people who regard the world mainly as a place to do things in; but it is congenial because it reassures us that the doing was worth while and the scene of our doings was very good. So we can go back with joy to Jane Austen and her small country-houses, or to George Eliot's solid exhibition of provincial character, feeling that whole regions of life have been reclaimed for us and we can now renew them in the same way. But there is a difference between the ways in which romanticism and realism unfold the riches of the world. The former says that what is fair and splendid must be real; the latter, that what is real may be fair and splendid.'

SOME RECENT POETRY.

M. Nightingale.

The Babe's Book of Verse (Blackwell; 2s. net), appropriately printed and as appropriately illustrated, is an addition to an extensive literature (see Ford's *Ballads of Bairnhood* for Scotland alone). It is an addition which will live. What could be more delicately handled than this, for example, on

GOOD-NIGHT.

Most things are really very nice,
But quite the nicest thing
Is when I've gone to bed at night
And mother comes to sing.

She sings 'The day is over,'
Then waits, because, you see,
The song I want quite most of all
She made herself for me.

That's only when I've been quite good
—She knows I know quite well—
And so she stands and waits in case
There's anything to tell.

And if there's not, she sings to me
'Hush baby,' very low,
And strokes my forehead softly
Till my eyes shut down, you know.

Poor Cæsar on the pillow,
I think, he must be sad,
'Cos *he* hasn't got a mummie,
And he does so wish he had.

So I snuggle him beside me,
And hold him very tight,
In case he might be lonely
When *my* mummie says 'Good-night.'

Ethna Carbery.

A new edition has been issued of *The Four Winds of Heaven*, by Anna Johnston MacManus ('Ethna Carbery'), with a memoir of the author written by Mr. Seumas MacManus (Gill; 3s. 6d. net). The new edition has some additional poems.

The memoir describes one who was loving, lovable, and intensely patriotic. Of the second attribute this is told: 'A poor old woman from a back street in Donegal town said to me, "Ach! sure it was the oddest thing under the sun, how many of us who never had the luck to split lips to her, loved her after only seeing her walk the street!"' Of the patriotism the whole book is evidence. Take the first two verses from

THE PASSING OF THE GAEL.

They are going, going, going from the valleys and the hills,
They are leaving far behind them heathery moor and mountain rills,
All the wealth of hawthorn hedges where the brown thrush sways and trills.

They are going, shy-eyed colleens and lads so straight and tall,
From the purple peaks of Kerry, from the crags of wild Imaal,
From the greening plains of Mayo and the glens of Donegal.

L. and R.

The title is *Wine and Gall* (Blackwell; 1s. 6d. net), and the gall predominates. This is by R.:

GAUDIUM IN COELO.

I dreamed that I was dead, and after
My soul had passed its mortal bars
I caught an echo of rolling laughter
Across the intervening stars.

And all my fear was changed to wonder,
I knew the rapture of the blest—
To hear the immortal sons of thunder
Applaud each day the immortal jest.

Is it too bitter? Then take this:

FATHER AND SON.

My father's god is a prohibitionist
Who threatens and bullies and smites;
All that he saves from red perdition is
The hero of a hundred fights.

I look to one whose law is lenient,
With more of ought than must,
Who brings the hearts of the disobedient
To the wisdom of the just.

Edith Sitwell.

In Edith Sitwell's new book, which she calls *Clowns' Houses* (Blackwell; 3s. net), there are two poems on Drink, poems of terror and truthfulness. When will the politicians feel as the poets? There is also this—damnatory and dangerous in another way—on dancing:

THE DANCERS.

(*During a great battle*, 1916.)

The floors are slippery with blood:
The world gyrates too. God is good
That while His wind blows out the light
For those who hourly die for us—
We still can dance, each night.

The music has grown numb with death—
But we will suck their dying breath,
The whispered name they breathed to chance,
To swell our music, make it loud
That we may dance,—may dance.

We are the dull blind carrion-fly
That dance and batten. Though God die
Mad from the horror of the light—
The light is mad, too, flecked with blood,—
We dance, we dance, each night.

Fredegond Shove.

Mr. Shove is much perplexed on account of the mystery of all this unintelligible universe, and once he utters his perplexity in a daring poem called 'Man to his Creator':

Thou art a reaper and a gatherer
Of wild brown nuts. Thou furrowest the sea:
Thou shapest autumn, spring and death and me:
Thou knowest not Thy purpose, nor dost care:
And we make songs to please and ravish Thee,—
And sometimes, in the sunshine, Thou dost hear.

Thou makest meadows red with clover, white
With ox-eyed daisies, woods the sun turns brown;
Rivers all full of shells and stars new-blown;
Thou makest sleep and shadow and the night;
And Thou Thyself hast neither shape nor sight,
And canst not even call Thy soul Thine own.

Thou madest me an house of bone and gave
The seeds of utterance upon my tongue:
Thenceforth Thy praises I have always sung
To the waste clouds and waters where they rave,
And to the winds that are in heaven hung
Like sheets for death—white symbols of the grave.

Thou madest earth with many elms to sigh
Their sad desires; and Thou didst make the air;
And they with me their loneliness declare,
Praising Thee ever sad and wearily:
Thou madest all things mortal, foul or fair:
But who made Thee? O say before I die.

There is no effort at originality, you see, and there is no obscurity. The tone is reverent and the expression is always adequate. The title of the book is *Dreams and Journeys* (Blackwell; 2s. 6d. net).

Galleys Laden.

Galleys Laden (Blackwell; 2s. 6d. net) contains poems by four writers, poets every one of them, and quite distinguishable. Their names are Ernest Denny, Nora O'Sullivan, C. Doyle, and Gwen Upcott. There is an earnest encouragement to mothers by Nora O'Sullivan called

MATER INVIOLATA.

Walk straight and true my woman,
Straight and true;
Those little pattering feet
Depend on you;
Though you know the dark trees call you,
Though you see the hills a-dream,
Or the breath of fame befall you
Passing with a ghostly gleam.
Keep awhile to the open roads
Where storm and sunshine beat;
They will grow strong to follow you
Those little pattering feet.

Speak clear and kind my woman,
Clear and kind;
The music of your voice
Will rest behind.
When years have wearied the heart of you
And made your body old
The men and women born of you
Will tell the tales you told.
The love you taught will sweeten
The homes of their own choice,
Baby voices will echo still
The music of your voice.

Live calm and strong my woman,
Calm and strong,
The dawning of to-morrow
Will not be long.
The day of life is dark and broken,
Hold high the lamp of peace,
Children watching see the token,
Feel the fight will cease.
Guard your soul in glittering steel
To dull the edge of sorrow,
Stand fast until you see, my woman,
The dawning of to-morrow.

Of the work of Ernest Denny, of which there is most in the volume, strong and sympathetic is the poem in three sonnets entitled 'Lest I no more come back.' We might quote the last sonnet of the three:

So when, some day, the other men come back
To other homes, and I return no more,
Say not I linger on some desolate shore
Mid broken wreckage, cast up from the wrack
Of war's tempestuous sea. I have but gone
A little further on, and now I see
Somewhat of that so long denied to me,
The glory into which we have not won.

If I steal in, finding Heaven's doors aslant,
To stand aloof, with eyes grown strangely dim
Hearkening that majestic swelling chant
From multitudinous choirs of Cherubim,
Maybe that God, seeing my shame, shall grant
One worthless singer to make songs for Him.

Printed by MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED, Tanfield Works, and Published by T. & T. CLARK, 38 George Street, Edinburgh. It is requested that all literary communications be addressed to THE EDITOR, Kings Gate, Aberdeen, Scotland.