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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL
The Oldest Song........................*Leo Kennedy*
The Lively Arts Myth................*Leo Edel*
The Will to Live........................*Philip Page*
The Wise Fool........................*Philip Page*
Sonnet...*F. R. S.*
The Office of Governor-General of Canada
.................................*R. de W. Mackay*
At Three Ages........................*Philip Page*
Afterthoughts on the Russian Ballet....*G.H.S.C.*
X X X ....*X*
The Moment and the Lamp........*A.J.M.Smith*
Of Bookmen...........................*Leo Kennedy*
Jazz Tea..................................*Greshamite*
BOOKS

EDITORIAL

A Labour Club within the walls of McGill University! This sounds incredible, but it seems to be true. At least the correspondence columns of the *McGill Daily* have given light to some very well indited suggestions for the formation of such a club. And we are very glad that the club itself has now been organized. It it becomes permanent, it will be a living answer to the persistent accusation that at McGill there is no diversity of thought among the students, that they are content to remain submerged in the dullness of bourgeois complacency.

As is pointed out, the idea of a Labour Club is not in the least original, nor should it be even startling. Labour Clubs are commonplaces at most English universities and in many American universities. The Labour Club at Oxford is particularly well known, and we have all heard of the League for Industrial Democracy, which is an organization embracing laborite groups in a large number of colleges in the United States. In bestowing our blessing on the young organization, may we express a wish that, under the soothing spell of cigarette smoke and French pastry, it will never lose the youthfulness and acrimony which it ought to possess. Even the great Ramsay MacDonald became unduly respectable.

* * * *

AT the corner of Sherbrooke and Union Avenue may be seen two magnificent specimens of what the sign-painter considers to be McGill's athletic manhood. With faces in which Arrow-collar features struggle to support the strength of a Hercules and the determination of a Hannibal, they have just attempted to convert a touch in the manner rendered obsolete by this year's foot-ball rules. One lies at a spendid full-length upon the scarce-trodden grass, his uniform unspotted, his hair neatly brushed. The other, his kick being finished, stands with one foot in the heavens as though beseeching the gods of football to grant him this last favour. The ball itself has disappeared into the sky, and the spell-bound observer, following the trajectory, finds himself gazing upon a large package of British Consols.

Some prudish souls take umbrage at this McGill-Macdonald bill-boarding. Their ingratitude astounds us. The smoke of our ancestors is the basis of our culture; each cigarette carelessly lighted made possible our higher mathematics, each pipe-full of their tobacco was a potential 20th century B.A. Are we to show ourselves ashamed of so airy, so ethereal a pedigree? No, a thousand times no. Rather would we suggest that our crest be placed upon each package of these wholesome aids to reflection, and that the space now devoted to golf or bridge scoring be adapted to the needs of the note-taking undergraduate.

* * * *

EARLY in this term a certain amount of criticism was heard of the excessive prices which had to be paid for various textbooks. Whether or not such criticism was well founded, it suggests a plan that might soon be realized at McGill, namely the formation of a University book-shop. We are quite large enough now to make such a venture certain of financial stability, and its value to the students would be unquestionable. The standard texts could be kept in stock; second-hand books could be dealt with in a special department; the higher forms of current literature and latest authoritative works on academic subjects might even be carried with profit. The shop would provide a stimulus to the formation of libraries amongst students; who knows what sums might not be deflected from such bottomless pits as the dance halls and the Pig? In time the accumulation of profits might be such as to warrant the formation of a University press. When that happy day dawns, when we start giving out as well as taking in, McGill will have added to her stature in very truth.

MANY students will learn with considerable satisfaction that the Red and White Revue of this year is to take the form of a musical comedy, the old form thus being tacitly recognized as not worthy of repetition. In last year's production the hand was McGill's hand, but the voice was too often the voice of Loew's. With a musical comedy as the aim it should be possible to eliminate all the cheapness and nastiness which seem to be thought necessary in the skits of a revue. The writers who will compose this year's libretto, however, will be, we suppose, very much the same as those who were responsible for the previous brand of humour and it will be interesting to see whether the change in the nature of the performance effects a corresponding change in its general tone. If no improvement results we shall be compelled to withdraw the statement once made in our columns to the effect that the Red and White Revue was not a true reflection of our University life.

We sincerely wish Messrs. Little and Legate, who are in charge of the production, every success in their efforts to offer the public of Montreal something better than last year.

* * * *

WE would again invite from our readers literary contributions on any topic and in any form that they may care to choose. Manuscripts should be sent to The Managing Editor, McGill Fortnightly Review, 282 St. Antoine Street, Montreal. Unused articles will be returned.

The Oldest Song

BECAUSE your maiden kiss stirred old desire
When banished memory fumbled at a door;
The woman heart that seemed a lesser thing
Called gravely on the wind from a far shore:

I have come home from my dim wanderings
With tattered sails upon an evening sea
Seeking the solemn wisdoms we had thought
Hovering beyond our hand, an hour away.
I had lost mind in cloudy wastes of thought
Finding philosophies old mockeries,
Bruising your freshness on a stony place........

And then the fluttering of small white hands........
A scented sigh recalls forgotten things,
Whispers: "Great dreams are but dreams after all
Your stars are far, and years creep on apace;
Grey dusts and silver moonlight cloud your eyes,
And Love stands laughing on a little hill
Plays once upon a reed and fleets away......"

So am I come again to your still feet
Finding rare wisdom in new happiness;
Lady, with wide eyes and an old song:
You do not know....but you are Lyonesse.

Leo Kennedy

The Lively Arts Myth

Leo Edel

He sang to them about their own importance—
The Music from Behind the Moon

TWO years have elapsed since Mr. Gilbert Seldes, dramatic critic of *The Dial*, wrote his provocative book *The Seven Lively Arts*. It is hardly likely that the work was a *jeu d'esprit* for Seldes appraised with Roman solemnity the arts which we had never treated seriously. This he did to follow consistently Pater's text which he set before him at the outset: "...But beside those great men there is a certain number of artists who have a distinct faculty of their own by which they convey to us a peculiar quality of pleasure which we cannot get elsewhere; and these too have their place in general culture."

And so Mr. Seldes assumed the task of bringing to Charlie Chaplin, Al Jolson, *Krazy Kat*, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin and George M. Cohan adequate name and authority. With the seriousness of a pedantic critic he dissected jazz and ragtime, vaudeville, burlesque, the circus, the comic strip and the moving pictures. His first premise, that the lively arts are a source of amusement, that they provide much fun and laughter, yes, and even sentimental tears, for millions, and are therefore useful, is almost granted matter. But Mr. Seldes' great mistake lay in presuming that they are worthy of the same standards of criticism as the fine arts and should receive serious treatment, because they are arts, though admittedly lively ones.

Out of *The Seven Lively Arts* has been born a myth—a legend which has competely enshrouded Mr. Seldes' original ideas. As soon as it became apparent to the lively artists that their efforts were being treated with academic gravity they began to take themselves and their work seriously. Seldes thus involved himself in a complete paradox from which he can only extricate himself with difficulty.

Mr. Paul Whiteman was, perhaps, the first to build upon Seldes' foundations. With keen foresight he gathered about him a group of clever musicians and with all the skill at his command he presented his famous concert in New York, to which he appended the pretentious title of *An Experiment in American Music*. The concert is now history and remains a substantial link in the myth of the lively arts. The audience listened to a pompous little man who spoke with much deliberation of a type of music they had never considered with any seriousness, and they heard typical jazz music, perhaps more scrupulously scored than usual for the percussion instruments. Mr. George Gershwin had assisted Mr. Whiteman and had written what must be regarded as an occasional work, the *Rhapsody in Blue*. Here jazz stepped from its customary position into the classical framework of the rhapsody. But the clothes mattered little. It was still jazz.

More recently Mr. Whiteman has published a book, *Jazz*, in which he re-iterates his belief that that type of music is a distinct American contribution to world culture. He follows Seldes' steps. But the situation has been altered somewhat. *Jazzmusik*

(the German word is so expressive!) which Seldes admitted to be "lowbrow" and delightful, has become to Whiteman a serious art. To him it stands on the pedestal of respectability. Therefore he treats it with respect. In the wake of this come the announcements of a concert to be given this winter in New York by George Gershwin. He is advertised as a great exponent of modern music. Stravinsky, Prokofieff, Milhaud are forgotten. Gershwin it will be remembered, pleased with his successful rhapsody later wrote a *Concerto in F* which again was jazz at its best behaviour.

I have dealt with the lively art of jazz in particular because the tendency which prompted the exaltation of this type of music has not been so noticeable in the case of the other lively arts, except perhaps in the moving pictures. Charlie Chaplin, the slapstick artist, the man who, though vulgar in many ways reveals flashes of a brilliant comic genius, has tried to bring his work to a higher level. He has yet to realize the danger of this, for an art that is admittedly "lowbrow" cannot be placed beside "highbrow" arts and satisfy its public.

And so Mr. Seldes' original thesis has become a myth and has been mutilated. It will be remembered that Seldes himself went to extremes. In his book we find that "80 per cent of the music heard at the Metropolitan is trivial in comparison with good jazz." Here lies the cream of the jest for Seldes, who so vehemently denounced the buncombe of the fine arts and pink teas, who protested against the rhapsodies of delight gurgled by plump matrons over tea cups amid the plashing of sugar lumps when they discuss art, has himself become the subject of their discussion.

> In the room the women come and go
> Talking of Michelangelo.

It is obvious that Michelangelo made no effort to reach this position. He wrought his works, and their exquisite beauty, together with the fact that he eventually came down to the masses, led to his sacrifice on the altar of the tea table. Not so with Mr. Seldes. He screamed his defence of the lively arts from the housetops and so is now a martyr on the very shrine he criticized.

The fallacy thus lies in the original and most dangerous step which Mr. Seldes took. He treated the lively arts with unmerited seriousness, and now lies entangled in a myth which has been spun thickly about him. And should he cut one thread the whole structure will come tumbling down about him.

The Will to Live

I'D like to take the cool clear road
A bullet tunnels through the brain
And throw aside a body's load
Of tiredness and pain,

But that the trifling circumstance
Would only give, I know by God,
Nice people one more splendid chance
To say: we always thought him odd.

Philip Page

The Wise Fool

I WOULD not be a noble knight and go on errantry,
Albeit of renown in all the world for gallantry,
For petticoats and pretty ways were never to my mind,
And how among those noble dames good comrades should I find.
Being a fool, I sit on a knoll afar from serious folk
Telling my soul to a jolly star, laughing at that great joke
God made when he filled the world so round with priest and sage and lover,
The joke that only the fool has found. though children might discover.

I would not pray like a holy man before the chapel door,
Or take me on the cowl to preach Christ's gospel to the poor,
And be hanged on a gallows tree like the crazy clerk John Ball,
With lean legs dangling through void space over the city wall.
I think the world's the madhouse of this universe of yours;
Thither folk crazed past curing come from the populous stars:
Some few there be who pass the gate with mind of saner vision,
But such few wear the habit of the fool and find derision.

Least would I leave the faery ways to cast aside my youth,
Seeking among the learned ones the Jack o'Lantern Truth,
Until with age the back is bent, until the eyes go blind,
And there is hunger in the heart and darkness in the mind.
So will I take my cap and bells in yellow cloth and green
Aloof among the flatterers before the king and queen:
Comrades there be for younger men, and hemp cord for the holy,
And spectacles for learned ones, but I will keep my folly.

Philip Page

Sonnet

(Written on a May morning)

I DO not know what I shall wear today,
For I have stood long hours before the glass
Snaring the little frisky thoughts that pass
Over my mind's hillsides, like hares at play,
And following, as each became my prey,
The tiny gleams of laughter and surprise
Reflected in my strange, familiar eyes. .
I do not know what I shall wear today.

Why not bare arms and legs that gleam in the sun,
A fillet of leaves in my hair, flowers in masses
Of startling hues on my body, grass on my feet?
By all the old gods of Christendom
I think this would be good for the upper classes
Whom one meets on Sunday morning on Sherbrooke Street.

F. R. S.

The Office of Governor-General of Canada

R. de W. Mackay

ONE of the most puzzling problems of present day politics in Canada is the determination of the exact position which the Governor-General holds in the Government of the Dominion. Owing, perhaps, to a curious oversight on the part of the "Fathers of Confederation," or perhaps to the circumstances at the time of Confederation, the Governor-General's position is not defined at all in the B.N.A. Act. He has been delegated a few powers and prerogatives; but who he is, or what his authority is, are questions left unanswered in our Constitution. Or perhaps the Fathers of Confederation implied or tacitly assumed that the then existing Governor-General of the two Canadas would continue to administer the Government of the newly created Canada. Or in other words they looked upon the whole confederation not as a union but rather as an annexation of the Maritimes, and subsequently the Western Provinces, to the Canada of that day. It may be, too, that, even now, this tacit assumption of the delegates at the Quebec conference may have some bearing on the problem of Maritime rights in the east, and on the claims of the Progressives in the west of Canada.

So vague and indefinite, indeed, is the position of the Governor-General, that it is difficult to discover when the term Governor-General was first applied to the governor of a colony. While the term Governor-General seems to have been in common use in British North America since 1763, the first time when this term could be correctly used in a truly official sense was after the Act of Union of the Two Canadas in 1840. In any case it is the office of Governor-General of Upper and Lower Canada created by this Act which still survives as the office of Governor-General of the larger Canada created by the B.N.A. Act, 1867.

Indeed the whole British Constitution is a strangely mystical sort of thing, so much so that a great statesman has been led to say "Elle n'existe pas." But Talleyrand was not right. Our Constitution does exist, partly written; partly unwritten: "it finds its beginnings in the lore of the past, it comes into being in the form of customs and traditions, it is founded upon common law; it is made up of precedents, of Magna Chartas, of petitions and bills of rights; it is to be found partly in statutes and partly in the usages and practices of Parliament itself." And though our Canadian Constitution has embodied many of these customs and conventions in statutory expression, it remains still so largely dependent upon conventions, is expressed so scantily in written form, that it is peculiarly susceptible to changes.

And so from the mists of the past has been handed down to us the indefinite term prerogative. In its primary sense prerogative meant all those rights and powers vested in the person of the ruling monarch, and which he exercised wholly at his own discretion, without being required to consult his chief advisers. This, for example, was the prerogative power as it existed under William the Norman. The whole of British constitutional history, however, since the time of William has been a development by which these powers have gradually been taken away from the ruling monarch, now by charter, now by statute, now by custom, and finally by concensus of opinion, until what was then an absolute monarchy has now become a limited monarchy and the prerogative has taken on an entirely new meaning and has become in the words of Blackstone, "the discretionary authority of the executive," that is, of the King-in-Council. Since too the King now absents himself from all Cabinet meetings, his absence deprives him of a voice in the determination of the policy pursued, his ministers are held responsible for every act of the Crown, and the command of the Crown is no excuse for mistakes. This is the real meaning of the maxim, "The King can do no wrong". In other words, it is the ministry and not the Crown itself that is responsible for the exercise of the prerogative. The King summons, prorogues and dissolves Parliament, but for each of these acts which he does in his official capacity some one is responsible. To such an extent is this theory now carried, that Lord Aberdeen has said that no doubt the Sovereign has the right to refuse a dissolution on her own responsibility, but he points out also that if her ministers asked for dissolution as an alternative to resignation, her refusal would be tantamount to a dismissal, and their successors in the ministry would be responsible and have to defend her actions in Parliament. Apparently this was the attitude of the Canadian people at the recent election, as they seem to have held Mr. Meighen largely responsible for the Governor-General having refused Mr. King a dissolution. Notwithstanding these limitations, however, the Crown is entitled to interest itself in all matters of public interest and ask for information on any subject, and the King's ministers, conversely, are also entitled to his fullest confidence and that he should not take advice from others, unknown to them, nor act without their advice, nor refuse them his support.

It may, however, at this point be of some interest to enquire more carefully and exactly into the nature of the office of Governor-General of Canada. The Governor-General is appointed by the Sovereign on the advice of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and after consultation with the Government of the Dominion. The office is constituted by letters patent under the Great Seal of the United Kingdom, and the appointment of the individual Governor-General is made by commission under the sign manual and signet, and is accompanied by Royal Instructions. It is obvious, then, that the Governor-General is by fiction of law the person of the King in Canada and can only perform those duties and prerogatives which the King himself would exercise if present in person, at Ottawa. He holds, therefore, in all respects the same position in Canada as the King does in Great Britain, and certainly could not exercise powers to which the King is not entitled. He has, in Canada, a ministry as capable of advising him as has the King in Great Britain, and is therefore bound by their advice. So, too, the Governor-General is entitled to take a close interest in political events and is entitled to the fullest confidence of his ministers, to be informed of any important decisions taken by his Cabinet and to discuss business with the utmost freedom. He can point out objections, give advice, deprecate measures, secure important alternatives, but always at the price of remaining

behind the scenes. Indeed, placed by his office above the strife of parties holding office by a tenure less precarious than the ministers who surround him—having no political interest to serve but that of the community, whose affairs he is appointed to administer—his opinion cannot fail, when all cause for suspicion and jealousy is removed, to have great weight, while he is at liberty to constitute himself in an especial manner the patron of those larger and higher interests—such interests, for example, as those of education, of moral and material progress in all its branches—which, unlike the contests of party, unite instead of divide the members of the body politic. Officially received into Canada by the booming of guns, the clamour of bells, brilliant decorations and the acclaim of a tremendous crowd, the social side of his régime cannot be other than popular, if carried out in a dignified and unostentatious manner. By his informal receptions and addresses he brings himself and his office in close contact with the people, at the same time acquiring a wide and deep knowledge of the country, and realising with sympathetic understanding the ideals and aspirations of the people he has come to rule.

The Governor-General who interests himself in Canadian affairs and wins the approval of the people can afford to interest himself also in politics. But his influence can only at best be that of suasion, sympathy or moderation. He has always some vestige of prerogative power. In no case is he absolutely a figure-head with only nominal power, since nothing is absolutely fixed in the British Constitution and new powers crop up to cope with each new circumstance. So under some special conditions the Governor-General may have a discretionary prerogative. As a general rule, the discretionary prerogative of the Governor-General as to dissolution of Parliament has been placed unreservedly at the disposal of the Government, but under special circumstances he may have the right to refuse dissolution. Whether the circumstances of the last election warranted the Governor-General's action is a question not of constitutionality but of fact, and though he may now be declared in the right he may tomorrow be *ex-post facto* declared to be wrong. Indeed this paradox seems to be inherent in every office under the British Constitution. The question of dissolution always, from the nature of the case, presents the Governor-General with a possibility of differing from his ministers with success, since one party holds the government but is pressed by the other to appeal to the people. The Governor-General has, therefore, a difficult task, not merely in deciding to accept ministerial advice but in declining to accept it. If he acts on their advice he may easily find himself quite as unpopular as if he had refused to do so, and indeed the Governor-General is expected to do what is best for the country, a course by no means normally at all simple or easy. Though Queen Victoria was not of the opinion that the prerogative of dissolution rested on ministerial advice, she issued a most powerful dictum condemning its frequent use. "The power of dissolving Parliament is," she declared, "a most valuable and powerful instrument in the hands of the Crown, but one which ought not to be used without advice except in extreme cases and with a certainty of success. To use this instrument and be defeated is a thing most lowering to the Crown and hurtful to the country." Now whether Lord Byng has either exceeded his powers or has used his legitimate powers "in an extreme case and with a certainty of success" is an alternative that can only be decided by the future, for though it would seem that the Governor-General who has just retired has been condemned for his actions by the recent elections yet he may in future time be declared to have acted in the best interests of Canada. And, in any case, his bilateral responsibilities must be recognised, and he must be given all due credit for his attempt to reconcile the faithful discharge of his responsibilities both to the Imperial Government and to the Dominion Government, a duty by no means easy at this critical stage in the evolution of the British Empire.

At Three Ages

1

WHEN I was six years old or so,
I can remember in the night
Dust on the moonbeams to and fro
And the floor shining white.

The floor was shining white and bare,
Tiptoe across the boards I strayed:
The eye of God was everywhere,
And I was terribly afraid.

I did not know that God was dead
And could not spoil the faery play:
So I crept frightened back to bed,
And shivered where I lay.

2

At twenty I was not afraid:
I thought it singularly odd
That men by women undismayed
Could still be terrified of God.

Now when I see a steeple
Under a Sunday sky,
I envy homely people
For the faith that they live by;

For buried in the heart beneath
The carrion of the years,
Are still the ancient sorceries,
Occult and savage fears.

3

Should I then grudge, now nearly forty,
Those who are not yet short of breath
The strange immense vitality
Which makes them unafraid of death?

I like their blasphemies; I like
Them best the ones who preach sedition,
Threaten to call a Cosmic Strike,
And go with Satan to perdition.

Callow it may be, but not drear,
Nor drab and desolate and dirty
At twenty, though it does seem queer
To one well over five and thirty.

Philip Page

Afterthoughts on the Russian Ballet

G. H. S. C.

East and West meet in the Russian Ballet. Display, brilliance, sensuousness, with unity and simplicity of design make it unique. It is the imagination of the East rendered intelligible to Western eyes.

It is this love of bright colours, its delight in the stuff of which the world is made, which give the ballet its appeal in an age where the means have been confused with the end and too much use made of things for them to be enjoyed.

The emasculation of our imaginations is painfully apparent in what has been described as our eye and ear entertainments. Ziegfeld discovering to the twentieth century the charm of perfect physique and seeking to interpret that single idea by mass production. Nor are our other producers in any better case. To see one revue is to see them all. And though entertainment we must have and these spectacles must be regarded as achieving a certain success their shortlived existences betray their banality. It is interesting to note that where there has been some return to first principles, as for example in Chu Chin Chow where colour and design were employed to make what was really a simplified Russian Ballet, there was an immediate and unprecedented success. This particular piece ran for five years.

The implications of the ballet go to the roots of our conception of Art and therefore of life. Music is usually regarded as the prototype of the Arts, as the Arts, as the only pure Art form both in content and manner. It expresses experience completely in its own terms—knows nothing of other modes—and derives its form from its own inner necessities.

Form and colour are to the eye what music is to the ear. The simplest expression of an art based on these would be an arrangement of colours depending on their relationship and interdependence for their effect. Two considerations render this conception insufficient. One is that our ideas of form are completely and inevitably associated with a visible everyday world. Form in the abstract though conceivable has little or no appeal. The Cubists have ultimately had to relate their abstract conceptions of mass and light to accepted representations. And this consideration applies equally to colour as colour alone.

The second point is that such a conception only permits of one unchanging combination. Music allows of a continuity of expression, of rhythm. To arrest the combination of colours mentioned and achieve a fixed form would be to eliminate this possibility.

The ballet is free of both these limitations; it employs recognisable and known forms and gives them that movement which is life.

From this it is but a step to the plastic expression of emotion—to the drama without words. And it is here that the reason for borrowing from music—another art form—becomes apparent. Music gives substance and intimacy to the emotions depicted, otherwise void of warmth.

Shortly the ballet is the dance. The oldest and most fundamental of human expressions—the relief through re-creation in movement of our sense of living. And the dance reflects in its form the synthesis implied by this sense.

The mixed nature of its artistic form relates the ballet to such forms of expression as the opera and the cinema.

The opera has long been in an impasse and is from its nature incapable of further advance. Its primary difficulty is to show the development of situation through such a highly conventional medium as singing. And this it has been unable to do. Only when a situation is known and appreciated can it be celebrated in a song. Opera has consequently become a series of climaxes joined by the simplest and most obvious of connections.

Neither the ballet nor the cinema are faced with this incompatibility in their elements. Both are fundamental in idea. In neither case have their possibilities been fully grasped. They are both arts of the future.

The development of colour photography and of the reproduction of natural sounds will place the cinema in an intermediate position between the drama and the novel. Borrowing from each, and tending with its superior power of representing everyday life to supplant the former. Analysis of situation and intellectual pleasure will still be left to the novel but almost everything now presented by the popular circulating library would be more enjoyably expressed by the moving pictures.

The appeal of the ballet is more purely aesthetic. But beauty is the more vital need today. And when interpretative dancing comes in to its own we may hope to regain something of the worth of the world—of its first rapture.

X X X

IS a tree kinder
Than a doormat
With frayed edges?
Kinder than the little worn corners
Trodden all to pieces?
Kinder than the black marks
Where the boots rubbed?

I have seen housemaids beating doormats,
Ugly old housemaids with red hands:
Housemaids do not beat trees.
Neither do dogs sleep in trees.
But I have seen dogs sleeping on doormats,
Big dogs, puppy dogs and warm black spaniels,
And when flies come
They snap at them.

Trees have only birds, and insects, and crawly things.
There is no vulgarity in these,
Only poetry, and evolution, and innumerable legs.
But in doormats there is much
Vulgarity
Humanity
Futility
Dust, bootmarks, and sunlight.

X.

The Moment and the Lamp

THERE is a beacon on a mountain top
That in a certain instant flings a flame
Across a public sky that might have been
But roof and walls of divers human hearts
Had not it been the lining of a brain.

You ask what signal in the changing star?
The meaning of the palpitating flame?
Ah, were there wizards in the gaping throng
Or dapper alchemists about the place
There might be comprehension in the sky.

But as it is, it is enough to know
That in the flicker of a candle flame
We could, were any skilled enough to read,
And having read, were bold enough to speak,
Fathom the dido of the universal flux,
Matching the moment and the momentary lamp.

A. J. M. Smith

Of Bookmen

Leo Kennedy

THERE is a saying once current in Babylon, that you may judge a Bookman by the back of his neck. For that matter you may judge all that walk in the world by their necks. Such an one hath a red bulging over white linen—he is a successful stock-broker or a commissionaire. Such an one hath a fair nape, smooth and scented—he is an invoice clerk or gentleman of the dance. But do you meet that worthy upon whose neck place a lawn mower might run to advantage—then is it a good hour to sing Golier, or Fal-la-la, or some psalm that you know, for you have come to the glad end of all reason, to that strange specimen the Bookman.

If one is an adept at that novel business the Black Bottom; if one can sing Gilbert and Sullivan to an accompaniment; if one can do things with hats and cards and rabbits, or render sounds upon a harpsichord most sentimental—it is good. And if one take these accomplishments to the doors of the rich, there will be smiles of grave pleasure and possibly champagne. But does one have store of bookishness in head and a furze upon the neck, then will the kings and lords of that place attend open-mouthed and take one's reprimand or nod of approval with grateful meekness.

This appeal is but to the lewd facet of the Bookman's character; his prowess as a king-chider is small beer to his delight in the work of his choice. The reading of some book is work to him, for he will weigh and measure and compare. He invariably writes a review of it in his head. Then he will go with his hat on anyway to another Bookman; they will get very hot and flustered and call each other fakir, swine, or poetaster because of this book. They are both very happy thus, and admire each, each very much.

So it was always, and the world was a good place. But latterly I have hear tell of some Bookmen with shaven napes. It is all very strange........

Jazz Tea

Greshamite

In the days when; for my sins, I studied Economic History I was informed by a now forgotten professor that bad money drives out good. Gresham's law always seemed rather silly to me; in my own experience nothing but debts come to replace the good money which evaporates so easily. But in other realms the law is unfortunately only too accurate, particularly in the realm of institutions. One by one the good ones go, one by one they alter for the worse, succumbing to the vulgarity, the 'mob-ness', the efficiency of our unlovely age. At McGill the smokers have become pep-rallies, the cheering crowds have become rooters, the rattle-shakers have become a band. The last students' meeting opened with the reverential singing of Hail Alma Mater and closed with the McGill yell. And now——the Jazz Tea has come to stay.

Friendly reader, ponder on this extract from the *Daily* of November 11th—Armistice Day, mind you.

> GEOFF SIMPSON
> TO ENTERTAIN
> AT JAZZ TEA
>
> This afternoon at 4.30 all the cake-eaters in McGill will have a chance to enjoy another jazz tea in the Union Cafeteria.
>
> Geoff Simpson, who has been entertaining at the Capitol during the week will provide entertainment.

So this is McGill!

Time was when tea at the Union provided the badgered student with just that form of intellectual recreation and rest which is the truest expression of a real University life. He met his friends, he sipped his tea, he called Shakespere a bore, he discussed McGill. No one bothered him, no one interrupted him. Nothing was poured into him (except food and drink). For a brief space in his stuffed existence he was allowed to be an individual, to think for himself, to express himself. Quite clever remarks were sometimes made in the Union between the hours of four and six of an afternoon.

Now...now...now...Dear reader, I cannot write coherently of what takes place in the Union now. Brrrrrr...run-ti-tum-ti.....*I wonna go home*..... rattle rattle rattle bangy bang....*Shesmybaby*.... Adda boy Geoff....tum-ti-tum-ti-tum. Masses of students. Every chair and table crowded. No conversation, no wit, only noise, noise, noise. More pumping in from the outside: musical lectures, without the bother of notes. Rum-ti-tum-ti.....Hurraaaaaay.... Rah Rah Rah.....No dancing even, no movement to relieve the bursting senses, no whirling girls about.. You sticks, you stones, you worse than senseless things....Masses of students, sitting still, staring at nothing, rum-ti-tum-ti-tum. The mills of God grind slowly, but its not for knowledge that we come to college......*Stepponit Geoff*. Noise. Crowds. Cake-eaters. McGill............

Thank you, gentle reader, I feel better now. But it gives one a bit of a shock, you know, when you've always been rather fond of a cup of tea and a pipe, a book on the table and a friend opposite you. And it makes you wonder whether the Union was given to McGill in order that students might be saved the expense of going to The Capitol.

Autre temps, autre moeurs.

LH3 M3 M345

BOOKS

THE CABALA

(*Thornton Niven Wilder, New York: Albert & Charles Boni*, 1926. $2.50.)

VAN Vechten's cats, his actual personalities, his musical references and his total neglect of quotation marks are all evident in Mr. Wilder's first important work. One finds, as in Mr. Van Vechten's works, that the book is built up on the description of the idiosyncrasies of a few individuals. These individuals form an almost intangible whole called the Cabala, a group living near Rome who "....find a pocket of archaic time in the middle of a world that has progressed beyond it" and are concerned with "one duchess' right to enter a door before another; the word order in a dogma of the Church; the divine right of kings, especially of Bourbons."

There is about the whole work the atmosphere of Edith Dale's Italian villa, and one reads with keen interest of Marcantonio's struggle against dissipation, of Princess Alix d'Espoli's unrequited love and of the old Cardinal who with one disgusted push throws from his table *The Golden Bough*, *Ulysses*, *Appearances and Reality*, Proust, Spengler, and Freud and thus dismisses the literature of the first quarter of our century.

THE OLD ADAM by Cicely Hamilton
THE TENDER PASSION by Hubert Griffith
THE BARBER AND THE COW by D.T. Davies
THE MARBLE GOD and other One-Act plays.

(*Basil Blackwell: Oxford.* 3s. 6d. *each*)

THE British Drama League Library is a splendid institution inasmuch that it places fine plays in the hands of the public at a trivial charge. Of four new volumes of plays, three are particularly worthy. *The Old Adam*, a fantasy of the delicate politics and subsequent war between two small "Kingdoms" with the inevitable love interest as relish, reaches a delightful climax when the employment of some mysterious ray renders useless the mechanical weapons of both countries, and the young men fare out to kill each other with steel, a mode not fashionable in these days. *The Tender Passion* is of the shopworn genus Problem Play; an unconvincing bundle of dialogue between a Lord and his Lady; painfully ineffective; one lady and gentleman, undersexed; and one lady and gentleman inclined the other way. O yes, there is a butler of the Jeeves variety, sans the intelligence. In *The Barber And The Cow* by D.T. Davies, a good comedy of local Welsh politics, the antics of two fractious choir conductors, an amorous barber and a bed-ridden cow, is carried with considerable cleverness through a natural sequence. The characters are very truly drawn, the play moves easily, and Mr. Davies is a rare craftsman.

The one-act plays collected under the title of *The Marble God* are well assorted. *The House with the Twisty Windows* is presented in a cell of the Communist prison at Petrograd during the 'Red Terror.' It involves a case of mistaken identity, a weaver of fairy tales arrested as an Anti-Revolutionist, the 'Irish Hans Anderson' soothing his fellow-prisoners with a tale of a Leprechaun, and the final Sidney Carton self-sacrifice—an old theme done differently.

A.J. Talbot has burlesqued the literary and dramatic critic of all time in a skit *Incorrigible*, that should make this gentleman smile at his own foibles. Aubrey Smythe falls in a clap of thunder and remembers some early re-incarnations. Oliver Smith abused Bunyan; Frobisher Smith tells Shakespere of his "Blow winds, and crack your cheeks!"....O, stop, stop! Can't you see how artificial all that is?..Tut-Tut-Smit calls Moses no writer and Moses breaks his head with the tablets. Recovering, Aubrey Smythe leaves the stage, no whit reformed. *The Marble God* is more fine comedy by Stephen Schofield. Mr. Schofield presents the situation of a mourned-as-dead husband who returns to a wife in love with another, to say he has married a second time.

POEMS WRITTEN IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY EDITED by KATHLEEN W. CAMPBELL

(*Oxford, Basil Blackwell*, 1926, *The Percy Reprints, IX*)

TO one who has not made a deep study of the eighteenth century this volume will be a revelation as well as a delight. We have here distilled the peculiar essence of the Age of Artifice, Ombre and Reason. Its beauty is at the opposite pole to the moving beauty of the romantics—the appeal is solely to the intellect—but it is as surely an apex. As we read the crisp precisions of Swift, Gay, Prior, Byrom, Green, Churchill and the rest, the scornful lines of Blake and Keats are seen to approach nearer the natural belittling of an immediately preceding epoch than the profound truth we have hitherto taken for granted. While the appeal of some of these poems is to the treasurer of trivia, there are many which are lifted to the rarest heights by their just and exquisite wit. It is the lingering sharpness of the tribe of Donne, declining, it is true towards urbanity and good humour. This is a fault, no doubt—but why carp at a swan for not being a peacock....especially when we had thought it a goose?

UPSTREAM

(*Ludwig Lewisohn. Modern Library* $1.00)

THIS autobiography first appeared in the spring of 1922 but is now made available in a cheap edition. The author writes with the utmost of frankness and sincerity of a spiritual experience which was "upstream" all the way to a sensitive, idealistic temperament.

There is considerable bitterness throughout the book, especially in his experience as university professor during the war, and he is keenly critical of American life and character, in which he sees "no stirring, no desire to penetrate beyond fixed names to living beings, no awakening from the spectral delusions amid which they pursue their aimless business and sapless pleasure."

The book has color, charm, grace, finish, eloquence. It is the work of a man who can write.

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