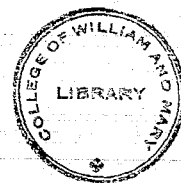


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## NEWS OF THE WEEK

THE persistent pressure exercised by Yugoslavia at Paris concerning the settlement of Trieste, the invitation to Albania to attend the Conference and the restriction of the rights of Greece had not succeeded in producing any major international tension. But the shooting down of American aircraft just inside Yugoslav territory has already led to a sharp protest by the United States and a threatened appeal to the Security Council of the United Nations. The existence of such an atmosphere can hardly fail to affect negotiations in Paris. To the four separate drafts on Trieste already considered by the Council of Foreign Ministers, Yugoslavia has proposed to add a fifth. Whether any of the Big Four are in the mood to consider further proposals that upset an agreement so hardly won is doubtful. Certainly the deplorable tactics employed by Yugoslavia to enforce her views will not encourage either America or Great Britain to make further concessions. Nor is the Soviet certain to be more accommodating. With Yugoslavia already firmly on her side her main interest now lies in strengthening her position in Italy and further support for Yugoslavian aspirations at the latter's expense would lose her the support even of the Italian Communists who are Italians first and communists afterwards. The present proposals for Trieste while pleasing none do satisfy the minimum demands of all—even Yugoslavia when she examines them in a more reasonable frame of mind. Economically the port is of more importance to Central Europe than to either Italy or Yugoslavia. What is at stake in Trieste is not so much the local ethnic or economic considerations—though these cannot be divorced from the main problem—but whether the Communist-Slav bloc shall have a footing in a great port in the Adriatic. Even the outrageous conduct of the Yugoslav authorities in shooting down American aircraft must be kept in its proper perspective. There is more in the Trieste question than the latest ebullition of a highly nationalistic small power.

### India's Path

It would be a mistake to allow the outbreak of violence in Calcutta to have undue influence on the crucial negotiations for the formation of an interim Government. Ghastly as are the results of four days of mob violence, in terms of dead and wounded, property destroyed, and supply and sanitary services reduced to chaos, they must not obscure the fact that what is at stake in the present conversations in Delhi between the Viceroy and Pandit Nehru, the Congress president, is the whole future of India. Even the facts that the rioting began with a *hartal*, which was part of the new

Muslim policy of direct action, that Bengal has a Muslim League Government, and that Mr. Jinnah, the Muslim League leader, has so far refused to co-operate in the effort to form an interim Government of India—even this must not lead to over-concentration on the apportionment of blame. Mr. Jinnah has strongly condemned the resort to violence in Calcutta, and the *hartal* produced nothing of the kind elsewhere in India. The paramount need now is for calm at the centre and the Muslim leaders must see that any suspicion that they favour violence, at a time when Congress is showing a most remarkable spirit of conciliation and responsibility, could count heavily against the Muslim cause. It is reported that Mr. Nehru has drawn up a Cabinet list including six Congress representatives, five non-League Muslims and three or four others representing minorities. If Mr. Jinnah can be convinced that acceptance of the five Muslim seats by League members will not put him at the mercy of Congress, a road will be opened which can lead through an effective interim Government and the making of a permanent constitution by Indians to complete self-government. It is a long road and a hard one but communal strife (which will always remain possible for many years to come) must not be allowed to bar it at the outset.

### Quandary in Turkey

The American reaction to the Russian Note on the future régime of the Straits was not unexpected. Neither America nor Britain can passively agree to terms which imply the establishment of Soviet bases on Turkish territory and the virtual surrender of Turkey's rights of sovereignty. It would be a mistake to imagine, however, that Russian pressure in this part of the world will quickly be relaxed or that she will readily agree to accepting an international régime for an area that she now obviously regards as lying exclusively within her sphere of influence. Nor should her desire to enforce, according to her lights, a settlement of this question be divorced from her interest in two other regions lying to east and west of Turkey—Trans-Caucasia and Greek Macedonia. With reference to the former, recent Soviet publicity for the "return" by Turkey of Kars and Ardahan was probably in the nature of flying a kite, for there is no valid justification for the claim. In the case of Macedonia, it is well at this stage to reserve judgement of the confused reports which reach this country of Communist-sponsored E.A.M. activities bent, apparently, on pro-

# BOOKS OF THE DAY

## Thackeray's Letters

The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray.  
Edited by Gordon N. Ray. (Oxford University Press. 4 vols. 6 gns.)

It is often said that a writer reveals himself more clearly in his letters than in his creative work, and that you can argue the merit of the work from the value of the letters. It has, for instance, been contended on these grounds that Stevenson is a greater writer than Meredith. It is an extremely dangerous argument, for it omits the very obvious likelihood that some people like delivering themselves in letters, and are able to do so. But just because Keats, say, and Tchekov and Fournier could write miraculously revealing letters about their art, it does not follow that every creative writer should be able to do so. If people hold by this dubious thesis, they may often suffer disillusion, as has happened with some who expected too much from the correspondence of Racine and Boileau. There is, moreover, the further possibility that art is a specialised function of the personality; that a man shows himself in his wholeness, in his real stature, only when warmed by the heat of creation. At other times something of him lies dormant, or at least inexpressive.

So much by way of preface to Thackeray's letters. He very seldom talks about his art, though he does about his work, as work; and thoughts which move him seem to attain ripeness only when he is in the full flush of creative activity. They are oddly unfulfilled even when he is talking to intimate friends. Mr. Ray offers us an admirable illustration of this, by way of a portion of a letter to Mrs. Brookfield, and a footnote giving us a parallel passage in *Esmond*. "I swear," he writes to Mrs. Brookfield, "the best thought I have is to remember that I shall have your love surviving me and with a constant tenderness blessing my memory. I can't all perish living in your heart." The passage does not read very convincingly, even when we get, a little further down, "Say that I die and live yet in the love of my survivors? Isn't that a warrant of immortality almost?" The whole argument leaves one unimpressed. But when the passage in *Esmond* is compared with this, the passage in "the 29th December" chapter ending, "But only true love lives after you—follows your memory with secret blessing—or precedes you and intercedes for you. *Non omnis moriar*—if dying, I yet live in a tender heart or two; nor am lost and hopeless living, if a sainted departed soul still loves and prays for me," then you are conscious of a real feeling which has grown to some kind of philosophy by which a man lives.

But if the letters—and still less the journals and travel diaries—do not reveal, as we may think, the whole Thackeray, we have to ask what manner of man they do give us. It is too easy to say that Thackeray was a cynic; but an honest acceptance of man's failure to live up to his pretensions is not cynicism. *Ne pas être dupe* (one wonders if Thackeray had ever heard of Stendhal) is not necessarily the mark of an evasive mind. It means keeping a sharp look-out on one's self. It was no cynic who wrote to his young daughters:

I met lots of acquaintances at Hombourg from whom I was glad

to get away. They are backbiting, slandering, envying and bullying in that little place, as well as in greater cities, and as I don't profess to be better than my neighbours, I can't help thinking that I am a very paltry contemptible rogue. Or if we haven't the vices of meanness, avarice and a narrow spirit, I suppose we have some others, that we deserve to be whipped for.

There is, in fact, nothing mean or backbiting about Thackeray. The man we find in reading these letters is indeed a man of the world, who liked its traffic, and the comfort, graces and manners to be met with among the socially distinguished; but a man who hated snobbery, was generous and open towards his enemies, indefatigable in helping his friends, and of profound family affections. The many charming letters to his mother, the solicitous care he showed for his children, are evidence enough for the last; and his wife's madness after only five years of marriage was the cruellest blow fate could have dealt a man of his temperament. He seems to have had little ease of life; gruelling hard work, equally gruelling social engagements—a life of stress hardly relieved by his devoted friendship for Mrs. Brookfield—made up a kind of stockade against contemplation. Not that he was at all a philosopher, as his letters on religion to Fitzgerald when he was young, and to his mother when he was mature, go to show. As to religion, he was the typical Victorian, as Matthew Arnold was at a different level, desiring Christianity, but unable to accept its dogma. In politics he seems to have been incredibly simple-minded. Where he really fulfilled himself was in his minute observation of life in detail, afterwards synthesised in creation. Again and again in his letters you find him picking up hints for future characters. It was in that sort of way, you feel, that he realised himself; there you will find the Thackeray that matters more than in the letters, where, however, you meet a lively, intelligent, open-hearted individual, proud in lesser matters, humble in the great ones, struggling good-humouredly enough to find a balance at once mundane and intellectual.

Mr. Gordon Ray has produced a magnificent edition (of which the first two volumes only are to hand) upon which the Oxford Press has lavished its best powers. Some of the letters are already known, though a large proportion of these have been published only in part; a very large number, and the most important, such as those to his mother and his future wife, are now made public for the first time. A few, some of the more curious ones written in tiny writing in odd shapes, are given in facsimile, and a great many are accompanied by the entertaining illustrations with which Thackeray loved to adorn his epistles. Mr. Ray gives us as many notes and letters from others as are necessary to explain certain incidents, such as the absurd tiff with Forster who had told Tom Taylor that Thackeray was "false as hell." The edition opens with a handy biographical table and an extremely useful account of Thackeray's chief correspondents; moreover, we are told on every occasion where the text comes from. It is a relief to find the notes not uncomfortably tucked away at the end of the volume, but where you want to have them, on the page containing the matter that gave occasion for them. We may grumble here and there about the placing of certain undated letters, and be for the moment irritated by being referred to appendixes which will appear in the later volumes; but there is no doubt that Mr. Ray has given us the definitive edition in worthy scholarly form, and has whetted our appetite not only for the volumes still to come, but for the biography which he promises to write.

BONAMY DOBRÉE.

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## New Poetry

Isles of Scilly. By Geoffrey Grigson. (Routledge. 5s.)

Talking Bronco. By Roy Campbell. (Faber and Faber. 7s. 6d.)

The Voyage and Other Poems. By Edwin Muir. (Faber and Faber. 6s.)

A Map of Verona. By Henry Reed. (Jonathan Cape. 3s. 6d.)

SHELLEY, in his preface to *The Revolt of Islam*, defined as one of the most essential attributes of poetry "the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom." It is an attribute often overlooked, this power to communicate not ideas or images but sensations, to reach at some moment the heart of the reader; it is not perhaps the most important, but it is an essential one.

Mr. Grigson's poetry is full of intellectual data. It is also full of images, but the images seldom add up to an atmosphere, though they often add up to a pattern; it is full of minute oscillations of feeling, but the oscillations rarely add up to a sensation—not at any rate to a communicated sensation strong enough to create in the reader anything suggesting a strong original impulse. The best poems in this book have the clarity and precision of a

poet's notebook; the scene is photographically observed and recorded:

The sun catches the flicked ears  
Of the lazy cattle,  
And it curves round the backs of the sheep,  
And the child in the pram  
Shakes a rattle,  
And on the chair the sun  
Warms the old woman asleep.

Sometimes observation is infused with imagination:

When the form of things is clear on the six o'clock light,  
And the failing flags lose their red in the first expectation of night

but not (in this reader's opinion) nearly often enough. The result is that the poet's reactions read like intellectual ones. Though the aspiration is usually some natural object, the general atmosphere is somehow indoor; the poet has a knack, sometimes deliberate perhaps, of urbanising with his "lunch-hour gale," "red-knee'd cycling couples," "the flattened, huge and butter-yellow moon." The rhythms are often indescribably flat, and yet there are poems like those on John Clare and David Hume which, springing from some deeper sympathy, give up their treasure to the reader. What is puzzling is the difference between the quality of such poems as, for instance, "The Mind Tied to the Body" and "The 'I.'" I find Mr. Grigson least palatable in his most Audenesque moods. Effective satire is dependent on rhythm, and it is in rhythm that Mr. Grigson is weak.

Mr. Campbell, on the contrary, is particularly strong in this very quality. Compare, for instance, Grigson's:

A councillor mutters his speech  
In a bilious, uneasy dream,  
And out on the enormous aerodrome  
Waves, at intervals, a warning beam.

with Campbell's:

—who knows but that you hear  
The fight-talk of some paunchy profiteer,  
Who broadcasts, dropping aitches for applause,  
And froths "We workers" from his working jaws. . . .

Mr. Campbell is a natural satirist. He has the advantage of being—*if* by blood a Scot—by upbringing a South African. He has vitality, energy, coarseness, relish and youth, and none of the trophying conventionality, the prudery, the self-consciousness, the timid sophistication of twentieth-century English satirists. The Campbells have always enjoyed making enemies, and Mr. Campbell practises his traditional ancestral sport with enthusiasm. He has a good literary tradition behind him, too—the Scottish Chaucerians, Pope, Byron, Kipling among them. He attacks his enemies where they are weakest. There is hard-hitting well below the belt, and the attacks are bitter, personal and as offensive as the author can make them. The victims need have no scruples about a counter-attack, and in this squeamish age of mutual encouragement the reader may hope for more fun. Mr. Campbell was himself attacked for taking Franco's side in the Spanish Civil War. He fought with his friends for the side he believed to be right. It was never the popular side in this country, and we have heard far too much of Franco and the Right in Spain ever to be convinced of the justice of their cause. But in this country—and it is about the

last country of which it is still true and of most it never has been—opinion is free. We do not even yet sufficiently realise how intolerable life is where armed men either legally or illegally can march their fellow-men off at the point of a gun for a mere expression of opinion. But Mr. Campbell's belief lies in Catholic Christianity rather than the political Right as such:

We all become the thing we fight  
Till differing solely in the palms  
And fists that semaphore (to Right  
Or Left) their imbecile salaams.

And his specific enemy is not the Left as such, but the bureaucrats of either party and, in particular, the Left-wing intellectuals, whom he satirises in the composite character of MacSpaunday. The attack he launches in the title poem of the book makes Pope's attack on Sporus positively kind! Mr. Campbell is a brilliant versifier, and he handles rhyme and rhythm with the greatest ease. His use of language is bold, unconventional and entirely successful. Though his favourite form is rhymed couplets, he uses many complicated stanza forms, as in "The Hoopoe" and in the translation of a poem of St. John of the Cross, which is one of the finest poems in the book. Not all the poems are satirical, though most have at least an element of satire in them. The one element in these poems one could do without is the reiterated self-justification. Mr. Campbell, at any rate, never has any difficulty in communicating his sensations.

The transition from Roy Campbell to Edwin Muir is a transition from raw spirit to junket—cool, soothing and digestible. The prevailing sensation is quiet almost to stagnation. The metres are equally quiet—even humdrum—and it is in dealing with mild, humdrum scenes that the poems are most successful, as in "Suburban Dream."

You wander through a cool elysium  
Of women, schoolgirls, children, garden talks,  
With a schoolboy here and there  
Conning his history book.

Where Mr. Muir employs a Blakian simplicity one looks for a Blakian profundity, but it is not there. Mild, scholarly and gentle, the poems will be read by many with real pleasure, and when, as happens occasionally, in a poem such as "The Rider Victory," imagination has played a part and sensation is communicated, the pleasure will be heightened to enjoyment.

Henry Reed's first book—*A Map of Verona*—provides (I can only say for me) a great deal of enjoyment. Here is a young poet. All sensation if you like; but sensation springing from imagination with the true poet's gift of making the real imaginary. It is highly romantic, young poetry, but written by someone with an ear and a self-indulgent appreciation of words and their musical and evocative power. At present the obvious influence is T. S. Eliot, but Mr. Reed has a strong enough original talent to assimilate in time even so seductive a master.

SHEILA SHANNON.

## More About Trollope

The Trollopes. The Chronicle of a Writing Family. By Lucy Poate Stebbins and Richard Poate Stebbins. (Secker and Warburg. 18s.)

THIS pleasant and well-documented book is sure of success. Trollope is in fashion; this chronicle is not only concerned with the Trollope family but informed by many of the Trollope qualities. It is long; it is convincing; it sustains the reader's interest without making undue demands on his emotions, intellect or imagination. "What next?" we say as we turn the pages; and occasionally "How true!" We believe in the Trollopes no less than in Archdeacon Grantley or Lizzie Eustace. We are pleased to know of the picnic near Paris when Tom Trollope and Thackeray raced their donkeys and Thackeray fell off, and of Anthony's walks in the Alban Hills with E. A. Freeman half a century later. We are sorry when the bailiffs take possession of the house at Harrow, sorer still when members of the family succumb to tuberculosis, glad when they marry and their children thrive, and ready to be indulgent if the narrators occasionally repeat themselves. An easy, readable book in short, with a fine family tree, an index, and a formidable list of sources into the bargain.

But there is one pitfall lying in wait for every lively biographer; and into it the Stebbinses duly fall. They yield to the temptation of ascribing to their characters thoughts and emotions appropriate to the occasion irrespective of the evidence. On what authority is Tom stated to have sat through a cathedral service at Bruges "thinking grave thoughts of time and change" and remembering Theodosia Garrow's "slim brown hands, her amazing gray eyes, the rippling masses of dark hair"? The chapter's bibliography gives no hint,

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