

NEW BOOKS

MY WINDOWS ON THE STREET OF THE WORLD. By James Mavor, Emeritus Professor of Political Economy in the University of Toronto. Two Vols. Dent and Sons, London and Toronto. Dutton and Co., New York. 1923.

It is a common and perhaps a pardonable failing of most of the books of reminiscences that have appeared so plentifully in recent years that the sayings and doings, the feelings and experiences of the author himself are so prominent as somewhat to overshadow the other figures in the picture. From such egotism the work of Professor Mavor is entirely free. The title of his volumes is well chosen as indicating the objective and independent attitude of an interested but impartial spectator toward the persons and events with which in the course of his life he has become familiarly acquainted. The "Street" of which he gives us his impressions has been an extensive one, and the observer is an acute and intelligent witness. Professor Mavor has travelled through, and sojourned in, many countries; and in some instances he has had specially favourable opportunities for studying their economic, social and political problems. His account of Russia in 1899 makes interesting reading. The descriptions of Scottish life during Dr. Mavor's earlier years are detailed and fresh. Scotland naturally occupies a large place in his reminiscences, and he has much to say as to its economic development, its politics, and its contributions to art and literature. Among the distinguished men with whom the author has been on terms of intimacy may be mentioned Auguste Rodin, William Morris, William Sharp, Count Tolstoy and Prince Kropotkin,—his characterization of the last-named is most attractive. In the chapter on Disraeli a fresh ray of light is thrown on that enigmatic personality by the story told about his marriage and the important rôle played by his wife in furthering his political and social ambitions. A considerable part of the book is concerned with Canada, but perhaps there is not a great deal in it that is new to Canadians. His account, however, of the Doukhobor settlement in the North West—a movement in which Professor Mavor took a prominent and useful part—is probably the most accurate and informative history we have of that interesting experiment. His description of French Canadian countrylife is picturesque and sympathetic. Of two men who were noteworthy figures in Canada though neither of them Canadian-born—Sir William Van Horne and Goldwin Smith—he gives vivid portraits. The picture of the latter is a masterpiece; and while it must recall the personality of the distinguished Oxford professor to all those who in his lifetime came in contact with him, it may also make clear to those who never knew him personally why, with such a keen intelligence, wide knowledge and high character, he yet made so little impression upon the life and thought of the young and vigorous country in which his later years were spent.

E. R.

SELECT BRITISH DOCUMENTS OF THE CANADIAN WAR OF 1812.
 Edited, With an Introduction, by William Wood. In Three
 Volumes. Volume II. Toronto. The Champlain Society.
 1923.

Primary sources are for the specialist. The general reader is content to take his history ready-made; but the true historical student desires to make it for himself. He seeks the sources; he would drink of knowledge at the fountain-head. His reward is the peculiar joy of the explorer, discovering, learning, gathering knowledge at first hand.

It is for the student of Canadian history that the publications of the Champlain Society are designed. To have accessible the authentic documents on which the history of any period must be built is a boon to all workers in the field. The latest volume carries on the story of the War of 1812 through the year 1813. It means more to Ontario than to any other part of Canada, for that province bore the brunt of the American onset. The border is flecked with blood-stains. Queenston Heights, Stony Creek, Lundy's Lane, Chrystler's Farm, Chateaufort recall proud memories of the invader met and turned back. Small affairs as all these battles were by the scale of modern warfare, they stand for heroism. A man can do no more than lay down his life for his country.

These documents are well printed and clearly arranged. The introduction to the first volume is a brief history of the whole war; what follows is the array of proofs, "pièces justificatives." Even these dry bones of despatches, memoranda, official reports, are not so very dry. The human note sounds through the official language. To read the very words in which a brave man tells how he had to haul down his flag or surrender his command in the field is to feel, across the gulf of a century, the writer's shame and wounded pride. Two brief but precious documents are enshrined in this second volume, the plain statement of Laura Secord telling how she saved Fitzgibbon's command, and Fitzgibbon's confirmatory certificate. Canada does well to honour this farmer's wife "of slight and delicate frame," who went alone through the forest for twenty miles facing all perils, to save a British force from annihilation.

ARCHIBALD MACMECHAN

THE DREAM AND OTHER POEMS. By John Masefield. Illustrated
 by Judith Masefield. The Macmillan Company.

One of the reasons why John Masefield is a significant figure in English poetry now, after the multitude of books he has written, is that he is not averse to surprising his public. One recalls how weary the critics seemed to be becoming of his numberless sonnets to Beauty, and how they adjured him to write about Life again instead, as he had written of it in *Good Friday*, in *The Tragedy of Nan*, and in *Salt Water Poems and Ballads*. Then, in 1920, appeared *Raynard the*

Fox, that epic of the hunt, which no one could have expected of him, to be followed by *Right Royal*, the story of a steeplechase, and commendation, even enthusiasm, was unanimous—at least in regard to the former.

Now Mr. Masefield has come back to shorter and slighter pieces, but of a type different from those others to Beauty—perhaps not a better evocation of that quality, but more solid and lower in tone.

The Dream of Daniel, which is the principal piece in this slight volume, is a series of finely done tiny pictures, unified by the steady roll of the seven-verse stanza form:

Weary with many thoughts I went to bed,
And lay for hours staring at the night,
Thinking of all the millions of the dead
Who used man's flesh, as I, and loved the light,
Yet died, for all their power and delight,
For all their love, and never came again,
Never, for all our crying, all our pain.

While outside, "The night was as a spirit that did brood upon the dead, those multitudes of death that had such colour once and now are breath." Here reflects on all the vain beauty of the world, "the life that teems", and how little we can know them in the brevity and obtuseness of life, before "dust on good and bad, on foe and friend."

So, what with sorrow and the noise that seemed
Like voices speaking from the night's dark heart
To tell her secret in a tongue undreamed,
I fell into a dream, and walked apart
Into the night (I thought) into the swart,
Thin lightless air in which the planet rides;
I trod on dark air upward with swift strides.

The poet knows that as he goes he is passing "Far from this trouble to the peace of God where all things glow and beauty is made bare." Soon he comes "into a grassy place" where beauty of bright heart has quiet face. Here he finds a castle, "mighty and fair," from which music comes. Entering the mighty hall, wind-gusts stir the tapestried hangings,

So that the woven chivalry stood out
Wave-like and charging, putting all to rout
The evil things they fought with, men like beasts,
Wolf soldiers, tiger kings, hyena priests.

And he sees old portraits,

And always from their frames the eyes looked down
Of most intense souls painted in their joy,
Their great brows jewelled bright as by a crown
Of their own thoughts, that nothing can destroy.

Down dim passages, through old panelled doors he moves, and the vision shifts from scene to scene, beside a brook, back to the arras and the woven knights; then "pictures came of water in a great sheet like a flame":

Water in terror like a great snow falling,
 Like wool, like smoke, into a vast abysm,
 With thunder of gods fighting and death calling
 And gleaming sunbeams splitted by the prism,
 And cliffs that rose and eagles that took chrim
 Even in the very seethe, and then a cave
 Where at a fire I mocked me at the wave.

The cliffs seem to change to a wall of flowers, and then to change again:

For now the walls were as a toppling sea,
 Green, with white crest, on which a ship emerging
 Strained, with her topsails whining wrinklingly,
 Dark with the glittering sea fires of her surging,
 And, now with thundering horses and men urging,
 The walls were fields on which men rode with pride
 On horses that tossed firedust in their stride.

The other poems are singularly like this one in tone, but save for a free rendering from "The Song of Roland" they are not quite so good. And all show their author's customary liberties with rhyme—"wainscotting" and "junketting" for example—together with an analogous air of happening on some of his most felicitous phrases through the exigencies of the metre and rhyme. This may be pleasantly surprising or become annoying, according to mood.

Whether it were best to say that *The Dream* is valuable because of its author's greater work, or worthless because it is not up to that, one can't be sure. But it is well worth reading for itself.

RAYMOND KNISTER.

THE STORY OF A GREAT SCHOOLMASTER. By H. G. Wells. New York. The Macmillan Company. 1924.

This is a book about an English schoolmaster, F. W. Sanderson of Oundle School, who introduced various new methods into his professional work, and was apparently one of a very few devoted to the teaching craft in England who have had the good fortune to win Mr. Wells's unstinted approval. Mr. Sanderson died two years ago, and this is a tribute to a career of very notable success in perhaps the highest—though the least considered—of all professions.

One is not surprised to learn that his school was remarkable chiefly for the new and vivifying interest it instilled in science, for the breaches it made with old-fashioned ways, for its spirit of co-operative as contrasted with competitive effort in investigating Nature, and for the appeal it made to the active imagination rather than the passively assimilative powers of those who were taught. Mr. Sanderson was, we hear, the greatest man whom Mr. Wells ever knew with any degree of personal intimacy, and one notes that to a very striking extent he exhibited just those ideas about teaching that have been made familiar to us in such books as *Joan and Peter* or *The Undying Fire*. A fault in the book—one rather grave in a biography—is that it leaves us with

such a meagre notion of the man it professes to depict, though with such vivid ideas of the sort of teaching which commends itself to Mr. Wells. If the biographer knew Mr. Sanderson intimately, he does not make him intimately known to the reader, but rather presents him as a name or symbol of certain methods in education. All is indeed fish that comes to the net of this expert literary angler, and even a memorial brochure can be turned into a propagandist pamphlet.

H. L. S.

CRITICAL VENTURES IN MODERN FRENCH LITERATURE. By Arnold Whitridge. Charles Scribner's Sons. New York. 1924.

It is refreshing and exhilarating to pick up a book such as this in which the author goes at literary criticism in his own way, and which he evidently enjoyed writing. Mr. Whitridge calls his book "Critical Ventures." He might rather have named it critical *adventures*. The author presents these adventures in a very readable form. There are nine essays, all well written, but particularly those which treat authors that are little known to the average English reader of French, such as Marie Leneru, Gerard de Nerval and Theodore de Banville. These are quite second-rate writers, yet it is interesting and well worth while to know something about them and their writings, though one never find the time to read much that they wrote.

On looking through the essays one is struck by the strangely-assorted company presented to the reader. With Stendhal and Sainte-Beuve we find Marie Leneru and Sacha Guitry! The book lacks a certain unity for this reason, but on the other hand the evident variety of subject of the essays makes them stimulating reading, the more so because they are so well written.

We could read another such book by Mr. Whitridge, with pleasure.

R. W. SCOTT.

ARIEL, OU LA VIE DE SHELLEY. par André Maurois. Bernard Grasset. Paris. 1923.

ARIEL. A Shelley Romance. By André Maurois. Translated by Ella D'Arcy. John Lane. London. 1924.

Probably few of our great English poets are so little known and read on the continent as Shelley. Of those speaking tongues other than his own, the Italians alone have shown some appreciation of his genius. Hence this clever and sympathetic sketch of his life by a French author is of special interest. It is a charming book, with a distinction of style and a delicate and slightly ironic humour such as we have learned to expect from the best French writers. The author says of his work that it is "oeuvre de romancier bien plutôt que d'historien ou de critique," but his narrative keeps remarkably close to the known facts of Shelley's life. And a fascinating story it makes, even for those perfectly familiar with the sources from which it is taken. To the present writer it seems that M. Maurois has hardly noticed the marked

development that took place in Shelley's character, as well as in his poetry, between the early stage of *Queen Mab* and the melancholy "Harriet" episode and the last years of that all too short life when *Hellas* and *Adonais* saw the light, and when the poet's conduct, though still that of a radical idealist, was by no means lacking in self-control and wisdom. Yet, in truth, "Ariel" he remained to the last—an illusive spirit, somewhat alien to a world of gross and material interests. This little book may send many readers back to those wonderful poems in which, more intimately than in any narrative of his external life, the true Shelley stands revealed.

E. R.

SHAKING THE DUST OFF SHAKESPEARE. An Authentic Renovation of *The Merchant of Venice*. By Harris Jay Griston, L. L. B. Cosmopolis Press. New York. 1924.

Of making books upon Shakespeare there is no end, and perhaps one might add that much study of them is a weariness to the flesh. The present volume begins with a somewhat portentous dedication, "To the Supreme Court of the United States, and through it to the many other Courts scattered throughout the country whose Justices faithfully recognize that all men are created equal, and whose decisions are firmly grounded upon the principle that all men are equal in the eyes of the Law." The main thesis of the author is that the action of the story of *The Merchant of Venice* must take place in the fourth century of our era, and probably in the decade preceding 320 A. D. when Constantine abolished the seizing of the body of the insolvent debtor. That Venice was non-existent at that epoch is not allowed to affect the theory. The country was the region in which the Veneti lived, and the city referred to in the play may have been Aquileia. The legal proceedings, it is urged, are based upon the Roman Civil Law as presented in the *Twelve Tables*, although in fact the extracts given therefrom do not seem precisely to cover the case. With the *Twelve Tables* Shakespeare must have been to some extent familiar, and he made use of this knowledge in the play. While a good deal of this attempted reconstruction of the drama is of rather doubtful value, the book is not wholly without interest. The criticism of the trial scene, in which the author holds a brief for Shylock, is really keen; the sophistry of Portia's judgment and the injustice of the sentence against the Jew are fairly exposed. The chapter on the sources used by Shakespeare is well written, and gives all available information in a brief form. That Shakespeare in writing the play desired to check the anti-Semitic feeling of his countrymen does not seem probable, though it may well be that the poet knew that the "Christians" of his story were little better than his Jew.

E. R.