

The BOWLING GREEN

Human Being

XXXVI. WORSE THAN DEATH

JENNY'S vacation in the world of Worse Than Death (she says the phrase is an exaggeration) lasted only three days. She begged to be allowed to come back to work. "The guy's money has run out," she reported by telephone, "but he says he's got a hunk of it coming in soon. He likes me. But I'm fed up; fun's fun, but I don't enjoy this drinking with a purpose. My Mother says she'll put me on the street if I come home sozzled again. Not only that, you'll be losing a good switchboard lady. That man'll have me farmed out to a music show. Yesterday I had to put on rompers and line up with a crowd of janes doing chorus exercises for some director. I'm stiff as an old typewriter. On top of that he takes me to some joint to do tango. You know there's something amusing about that bird, otherwise I couldn't have stuck it."

"Did you get any dope?" insisted Minnie relentlessly.

"Not chapter and verse, but I think I got a slant. He's done R. R. dirt some time or other, no question about that. I kept saying I couldn't see how R. R. could be so heartless, to throw me out on my ear and cetera. 'Don't mind that poor simp,' he says, 'we'll even him up. He's just a boob. I put it across him once and I can do it again.' It was something that happened when they were in the theatre together."

"Well, come on back to the job," said Minnie. "I'll give the Great Lover a fine twist if he drops in and sees you there."

"He wants to see *you*," said Jenny. "Say, a swell time was had tearing *you* to pieces. He's great on the subject. But he thinks you've got a grand figure. I was quite jealous. How did he get to know about that mole?"

"By accident," said Minnie sharply. "See you tomorrow. Try to look a little pale and ruined if you can, because you're supposed to have been sick. And for the love of mike keep your trap shut."

They decided to consult Mr. Gall. Fortunately Richard was down town on a long conference that day; they were able to smuggle the accountant out of the office at lunch time without arousing comment. Mr. Gall's tiffin was usually limited to a sandwich and a pot of tea in the drugstore downstairs; he knew his weaknesses and did not trust himself in speak-easies. After his sandwich he would take a placid stroll round Madison Square, sometimes feeding the pigeons, sometimes chatting with idlers on the benches. It was really singular, he once remarked, how many Dublin men he had met there.

But this time he saw with apprehensive pleasure that he was being taken to what he called a dram-shop. "Now Mr. Gall," said Minnie when they were comfortably in a quiet corner, "take something with plenty of courage in it, because you're going to get some severe shocks."

He looked at them shyly, suspecting a joke. Minnie was demure and official in a trim tailored suit; Jenny had perhaps rather overdone the instruction of pallor. She had chosen that day to go fluffy; she was a picture of wistful innocence, her small bosom defended by a frill of lace, her eyes like moist velvet.

"What is the nature of the shock?" he asked. "Is it moral or fiscal?"

"Moral," said Jenny promptly.

"Possibly both," said Minnie.

"Straight gin, I think," he suggested.

They told him the story, abating nothing. Mr. Gall, like most elderly hermits, rather fancied himself as a referee of irregularity, but he was sincerely horrified. He sneezed nervously, fidgeted with his pipe, and called for more gin. He seemed disposed to linger unduly on

phases of the problem which the girls deemed irrelevant.

"Stop twittering," said Minnie. "Let's get on with the argument. 'The thing that matters now is to slip a banana peel under Shad's foot.'"

"You're quite right," he said. "Life's made a monkey out of me, I'd hate to see it happen to Richard."

"Do you know anyone who knows anything about the time they were in the show business together?"

Mr. Gall quit being flabbergasted philosopher and put his shrewd mind on the problem.

"Don't think so. That was a long while ago; I don't often hear him speak of it. Miss McCoy might suggest someone; or how about the old German lady—what's her name, Mrs. Geschwindt?"

"Good idea," said Minnie.

But Mr. Gall evidently had more on his mind. He coughed, mopped his forehead and looked very unhappy.

to be helpful," he mumbled. "I gave Mr. Roe my pledge of secrecy. The worst of it is, among those papers he gave me were some memoranda that I think he'd forgotten were there. I said nothing about them, he didn't even know I'd seen them."

"You're the damnedest old woman," Minnie said angrily. "Our only idea is to help Roe, isn't it? This bad smell in the papers, was it creditable to him or not?"

"Oh most creditable, entirely creditable I should judge—to his heart anyway; maybe not to his judgment. Yes, if you were to see them it would ease your mind. It would be helpful."

"I'll see them, all right. I'll have a locksmith in there tonight and get that cupboard open—yes, even if I have to use Jenny as bait."

Mr. Gall was greatly disturbed. "Really—this is atrocious—I cannot make myself responsible for any more violations of ethics. If Mr. Roe sees that things have been tampered with he'll know I've broken my word. The only virtue of an accountant is his absolute discretion."

"You're not very tactful," said Jenny. "After what we've told you, to sit there and talk about virtue."

"Waiter, bring the check," said Minnie.

(To be continued)

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.



DUST STORM—FLATIRON BUILDING.

From a painting by John Sloan reproduced in "John Sloan," by Guy Pène du Bois (Whitney Museum of American Art).

"I didn't suppose I'd ever mention a thing of this sort," he said. "You know the cupboard in Mr. Roe's room, where he hangs his hat and coat. On the top shelf in there he has a big package of papers. One day he had a lot of them spread out on the table and I couldn't help seeing that there were box office statements, old programs and other theatrical papers. Of course I didn't make any comment, but he gave me a folder of auditors' figures and asked me to look over them. He said it was confidential, but he wanted my opinion. Theatrical book-keeping isn't my line, and some of the analysis was hard to follow, but I could tell from some of the entries that there had been trouble."

"What sort of trouble?" Minnie asked.

"I don't feel at liberty to say. This is very unprofessional anyway.—I asked Mr. Roe if he didn't think those papers should be put in the safe; he said no, they had nothing to do with the stationery business and ought to be kept separate."

"He always keeps that cupboard locked," said Minnie. "I used to wonder why he was so careful of his hat and coat, and then I supposed it was because he keeps a bottle of Scotch in there.—Well, you've got to say this much: was it the kind of trouble that would help the present situation, or hurt it, if I knew about it?"

Mr. Gall was reluctant to answer. "I've always got into hot water just by trying

Conqueror of a World

ALEXANDER THE GREAT. By ULRICH WILCKEN. Translated by G. C. RICHARDS. New York: The Dial Press. 1932. \$5.

Reviewed by C. A. ROBINSON, JR.
Brown University

ISLAMIC research has now been carried far enough so that one may say authoritatively, "without Alexander the Great no Islamic civilization." This sounds almost incredible, but anyone who reads the brilliant book under review, written by a great scholar for the general public, will be carried far toward an understanding of the one man produced by antiquity (with the exception of Jesus Christ) who did more to shape future ages than any other person.

The growth of an historical perspective by the American public is heartening, and the day is not far distant, I dare say, when the private library that boasts a biography of Napoleon will as a matter of course have one of Alexander as well. Our difficulty till now has been twofold. In the first place, we are only just beginning to realize the sweep of history and that our culture cannot repudiate its connection with the ancient world. Secondly, modern research is at once so recent and, thanks primarily to the archaeologists, so swamped with new material that specialists have difficulty in

finding time to acquaint the general public with new discoveries.

Alexander in particular has been misunderstood. Textbooks used to end with his death, and he was generally regarded as the executioner of Greek liberty. This conception is changing, because now in studying a man or a period we look for more than mere battles or narrow political institutions, interesting and important as they are. The significance of Alexander may be summed up in Wilcken's happy phrase, "he levelled the way for the development of Greek culture into a world-culture." At the time of Alexander's birth (356 B.C.) the political unit of the Greeks, theoretically at least, was the small city-state. The intellectual and artistic flowering of the Greeks, the most gifted people thus far produced by the Indo-European race, had, it is true, occurred under this city-state, but by Alexander's time wars and other troubles had so reduced the Greeks that their very existence was almost at stake. Because of his incomparable personality, his absolute confidence in himself, his mysticism, his undoubted military genius, the young Macedonian was able to overthrow the Persian empire and carry his arms into India. As always, the empire had first to be created. But Alexander had constantly in mind the administration of this empire (and he was aiming at real world conquest, as few have done). He saw, for one thing, the emptiness of Aristotle's teaching that Greeks were better than barbarians; if Alexander did not aim at a universal world fraternity, he planned at least the fusion of the dominant races in his empire, the Macedonian and the Iranian. Exploration and an opportunity to aid the sciences were ever in his mind. But above all, he intended to give the world one culture, Greek.

Now the important thing is that in large measure he succeeded. It is not so very important for us that Alexander's life resulted in Greek art influencing Japanese painting and sculpture, extraordinary as that is. But it is due to Alexander that our own Western civilization is based solidly on the ancient. By making Greek the civilization of the Eastern world, Rome became Hellenized and thus it has been passed on to us. Fascinating, I think, are the great forces in history. What counts in the history of the world is the conquest of Rome by Hellenism, just as at different times the purpose of the Bactrian Kingdom and the Byzantine Empire was to prevent the barbarians from sweeping it away. The man who made this Greek civilization possible for world adoption was Alexander. His biography by Wilcken is a brilliant piece of work and the best in the field.

Across South America

SOUTH AMERICA. Lights and Shadows. Translated from the German of Kasimir Edschmid. By OAKLEY WILLIAMS. New York: The Viking Press. 1932. \$5.

THE "travel-book," slightly suspect in some quarters as a sort of mongrel genre between serious discussion and frank impressionism, has no terrors, evidently, for Herr Edschmid. Quite the contrary. He relishes the type, not to say "glorifies" it, by inventing a character named "Goehrs," who sees people and things, indulges in dialogues with all and sundry, and plays a constant stream of sprightly enough, if somewhat banal soliloquy, on the passing scene—all in the third person.

Goehrs starts in with Venezuela and Curaçao, and proceeds by way of the Canal and Peru down to Chile, then over to Buenos Aires and up the east coast again. Goehrs sees all the usual things, from the high Cordillera to opera in Buenos Aires, meets all sorts of "types," with whom he gossips and exchanges impressions, reacts to the usual stimuli as might be expected of a well-informed European.

The book is better written than most of its kind and "Goehrs" sees a lot, first and last, and reports it entertainingly. The fictional "hero" would doubtless go down more easily over a mug of beer in some European café than he does as close as this to South America, but his impressions and soliloquys are sound and informing enough.

China in Books

By C. K. BINKLEY

THIRTY-TWO years ago a Doctor of Laws of the University of Edinburgh in the course of a survey of ancient education focussed his mind in due order upon the "Uro-Altaic or Turanian" races. He observed at once that they have no innate capacity for progress in literature "beyond a certain fixed point"; then, a few pages later, narrowing his scrutiny to the Chinese, he announced that among them "art in the higher sense does not exist" and completed the observation in a footnote upon that form of art in which the essential qualities of a people are supposed to be embodied:

There are some men (who may be called Sinophils) who speak in laudatory terms of the lyrical literature, just as they exaggerate the intellectual power of the Chinese, but the specimens given, even allowing for the difficulty of translation, do not justify their admiration. They read like the Latin verses of English schoolboys.

I shall not quarrel with the author's conclusion; those old attempts to put the Chinese Pegasus between English thills do make melancholy reading. But that is not the point nor are the merits of Chinese poetry itself at issue. At least what seems significant to me is the picture of that British scholar just stepped from the topmost rung of the nineteenth century (a ladder, as everybody except a few chronic grumblers knew, that led straight

up to Truth) and there from the vantage ground of the West, from the exalted portion of it named Britain, and, one suspects, with advantage, too, from a certain abstract rarity of Scottish air, equating and evaluating by a sort of divine insight.

Now, a generation later, he stands isolated, the ladder gone, the self-sufficiency of the West considerably reduced together with its prestige, for we have had some hard jolts. Departments of knowledge except those directly concerned with measurements of ability are no longer much interested in his judgments of superiority and inferiority; everywhere they are groping for solid ground, and one by one they are turning for help to their elder brother propers of the East. The length of publishers' lists reflects this newly aroused sense of the importance of Chinese culture. In their poetry, for instance, the field upon which our scholar deigned especially to glance, one could count a dozen books—translations of the past three or four years, or older ones that by the frequent mention of them, and by reprints, one knows to be alive.

For an attempt: Arthur Waley's "One Hundred and Seventy Poems," reprinted by Knopf in 1929, suggesting also Waley's "More Translations" and his "The Temple." Of the same year is Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu's "The Jade Mountain," Christy's "Images in Jade," the first volume of Florence Ayscough's autobiographical arrangement of the poems of Tu Fu, a consummate artist, counted by the Chinese greatest in the bewilderingly long line of their poets, a reprint of Shigeyosha Obata's translation from Li Po, their best loved, and of Giles's "Gems of Chinese Literature, Prose and Verse," a mine not yet exhausted. A year earlier was the fourth printing of W. J. B. Fletcher's "Gems of Chinese Verse," and of his "More Gems." To these one would add as surely alive the frequently mentioned "Fir Flower Tablets" of Amy Lowell and Florence Ayscough, and Cranmer-Byng's two volumes in "The Wisdom of the East" series—"A Feast of Lanterns" and "A Lute of Jade."

I have given the dozen with a baker's margin, and omitted what is perhaps the most significant of all, the translation by Dr. Lim Boon Keng, President of Amoy College, of the Li Sao, or Ode on Encountering Sorrows. Not to know this poem is not to know China; in it beats the heart of the brave early Confucianism. It is of the latter part of the fourth century B.C. when the Feudal States were being absorbed by the ruthless state of Ch'in, which like a great dragon reared its crest above the moral chaos, slinging everything with guile and crushing the divided states in its pitiless folds. Of the author we know little with certainty; the details of his life were wiped out by the victor. But we know that he stood against the new materialistic order and for the old humanities. Through his death, self-inflicted, to which the poem is a prelude, he became a remembrance, then an inchoate echo, like Linus or Adonis in the Greek Mysteries. It was his body his countrymen sought symbolically in the fantastic regattas of the annual Dragon Festival down to our own times. One can conceive the difficulty of translating anything except the shell of a thing so propelled into a reverberant greatness by imagery and sound as, say, Milton's "Lycidas." The Li Sao is nearer to our conception of a poem, greater in this manner than anything else in Chinese, but more compact of all senses than Milton's poem, and rooted in their traditions deeper than Lycidas in ours. It is Milton plus Keats and Shelley—though not in form, for it has some of the swing of the ballad. "When I first tried to read it, in 1872, the verses seemed to me like flashes of lightning, blinding me so that I could only catch the sense here and there." So the elder Giles, trenchant foe of obscurity—as many a translator and commentator during the past fifty years has learned feelingly—writes in a preface, one of several with which in the Chinese manner this book is equipped, the author modestly leaning on his friends. Mr. Giles ends his preface with a tribute, weighty because it comes from him, to the importance of the book, linking it with C. H. Brewitt-Taylor's translation of the San Kuo romance. "In these days," he writes, "when people assert that the primacy in Chinese studies has been snatched from the British Empire, two such works . . . go far to leave the British Empire exactly where it was." What Mr. Giles had in

mind, however, was not the translation itself—that has been done before—but the very complete equipment of aids to its study, as a critical history, a vocabulary, commentaries, a complete glossary of plants especially valuable for this poem, and the Chinese text.

The truth is that publishers on the other side of the Pacific are more helpful than our own to the student. Every book that I have mentioned in my letters as published in China is furnished with the Chinese texts (for translations) or, in the studies, with footnotes of Chinese ideographs to fix equivalents. That we in the West knew the value of these helps the great work of Legge sixty years ago showed. Perhaps we are now beginning to relearn it; an anthology of Tang and Sung poetry translated into German by Professor Alfred Forke, formerly of the University of California, now Director of the School for Chinese Language and Culture of Hamburg, has just come to my desk together with a volume of later print, as if by afterthought, of the Chinese texts of the poems. In our country, too, the University of Chicago has announced for early publication in the International Understanding Series "Chinese Poems in English Rhyme," by Admiral Tsai Ting-Kan, in which each poem will be accompanied by the Chinese text—a significant book, as the description by Berthold Lauffer, Nestor of American sinologists, shows.

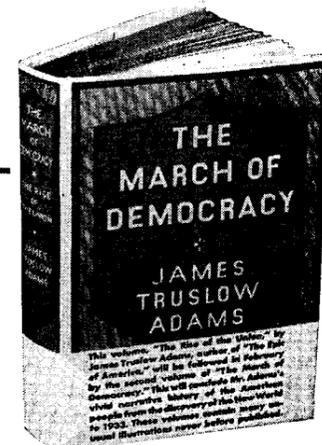
As to the translation itself of the "Li Sao," to return to that poem, if one expects from Dr. Lim's rather literal blank verse an artistic satisfaction such as one gets from the Book of Ruth, the Odyssey of Pope or Palmer, or the Greek laments, he will be disappointed. But there in its pages is the material in good, readable English for whoever can to make what he will of it. The "Li Sao" to a Chinese steeped in his own past is not so much a succession of ideographs as a sort of exaltation. Really to transfer it will be impossible until we also are steeped in the Chinese reader's traditions.

Thus far the Chinese poetry that has been translated into English supremely well has come in bits like crystals. Exceptions thus far have come to their success adventitiously, or, as in Helen Waddell's limpid "Chinese Lyrics" selected and rhymed from Legge's pioneering prose translation of the Shi King, they have been chosen from the earlier naive Chinese verse, in that way fitting our own poetic immaturity. For the main body of Chinese poetry is old beyond ours and rich with the second naiveté of wisdom, which the earlier translators shockingly violated by dilution for rhythm and for the tagging on of rhymes. The Imagists of our own times simulated a maturity that drew them toward the Chinese, but not to them, and so the translations of the 1920's still fall happily on the ear of the 1930's, if not of the ages. Perhaps all the later translations have slipped in adventitiously under the attraction of this movement, but I have in mind collections like "The Jade Mountain," an anthology of Tang poems arranged in Chinese in the late seventeenth century. That book does have for me some magic of finality, not so much as mere gems strung together as because in it the great Tang times pass before my eyes more really than in any history, and yet somehow mellowed and reduced as in a picture because seen through the lens of the ripe classic age of Khanghsi. Mrs. Ayscough's Tu Fu gets some of this value in another way.

More personal is the success achieved in "The Lost Flute," a translation by Gertrude Joerissen, of Franz Toussaint's translation into French of complete poems and fragments from a wide range of Chinese. I can imagine the delight of some novice in Chinese, a lover of beauty, who should discover this book. The succession of subjects and moods, poetically, not logically conceived; the delicate rhythms of its prose, a medium not quite so amenable to fashion as verse; its very titles, still in the French and by that softened into a strangeness impossible in the stark romanization of Wade; these and the mechanical composition of the book all blend into a thing of sheer beauty, but not, I warn, for the mere sinologist.

Not adventitious but a weaving of the background itself into the poem is the procedure of Maude Meagher in "White Jade," the story of Yang Kuei-Fei and Ming Huang her royal lover in the splendor of the Tang and its fall, a story as glowing and as intensely tragic as our own Paolo and Francesca. In Miss Meagher's pages the story is unfolded delicately and surely.

But if one begins to compute merits, how shall he avoid being himself left as a landmark on a hillock of 1932?



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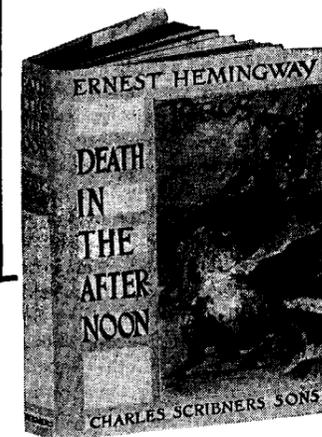
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