

Sophisticated Art Modeled on Dynamo

Maturity and Adult Philosophy in Books Analysed by Sloss.

COMEDY DISPASSIONATE

"Although I am speaking of the Sophisticates today it is important to remember the general characteristics of modern literature which I pointed out before—the influence of Freud and the psychoanalysts, the Machine Age, and the war," said Mrs. Margaret Fleisher Sloss in the second of her talks on contemporary literature given in the Commons Room on Wednesday, March 19. The dictionary defines sophisticated as the state of being artificial or unnatural, and its meaning is clarified when artless, naive, simple are found to be antonyms—it represents maturity, and an adult philosophy of spirit. In the past Voltaire, Swift, Meredith, and France were sophisticates; in the present rebel generation the quality is represented by James Joyce, Aldous Huxley, and Rebecca West.

Sophisticated literature has certain definite characteristics. It deals with comedy, with exceptions, following the adage that "the world is a comedy to him who thinks, a tragedy to him who feels." Also it is almost entirely dispassionate. Then great keenness of observation is apparent, and comedy is gained by the indulgent manner in which man's weaknesses are pointed out. Finally preoccupation with form is one of the most distinguishing marks of the group: James Joyce's "Ulysses" is mechanical and carefully planned, with each chapter bearing a heading and following a theme from the "Odyssey"—the form is an art in itself.

The first of the modern sophisticates was Norman Douglas, whose "South Wind," the story of the visit of a bishop to an imaginary island, was written in 1918. It is a civilized comedy of manners, dealing with the vanities and idiosyncracies of a group of British expatriates, and is noteworthy for the leisureliness of its style and atmosphere. But James Branch Cabell in his newest book "The Way of Eben" has departed from his usual gentle, symbolic satire following Douglas' lead to point out that the quest outranks the goal, and achievement is not worth the getting. Ellen Glasgow's "They Stooped to Folly" is in the comedy of manners tradition, but the women are too goody-goody, and there is little gaiety. The lack of movement, development, and life show that she is using a worn-out medium. Thornton Wilder in "A Woman of Andros" has created lifeless, statuesque, and very academic characters which show again that to be creative, an author must use the idiom and express the trend of his own times.

The modern fashions in form are extremely interesting and equally applicable to furniture, painting, music, and literature. There is the concentration on the material itself which is evident in literature in the author's concern with words as a beautiful, decorative building material. There is a tendency to distortion as is found in Virginia Wolff's "Orlando" who changed from a man to a woman and lived over three hundred years. Conscious omission is a third characteristic: in "A Farewell to Arms," the previous history and circumstances of the characters is never learned. This is a rather snobbish way of inferring "Of course, you understand." There is a final element which can only be called shock-imperturbable, and includes that which shocks and that by which the public is supposed to be able to accept the concussion without a quiver. It is seen in the use of strong words, and unhackneyed phrases, exemplifying the creed that expression is better than repression. To these shocks, and sudden changes of mood the reader is supposed to react with the calm of a man of the world,—there is concern with good form as well as form. There is of course a great deal of second-rate literature showing no intelligence, but much reading is required to enjoy even the best of the type, and to gain the tonic intellectual treat it offers.

The Sophisticates have modelled their books on the mechanistic perfection of a dynamo, and by a crosscut

through the human emotions they go with speed and directness to an understanding of them. The sense of futility brought on by the war is also found in this group. There is a division within the group however between those who are sensitized and have less wit and gaiety, but more understanding than their sardonic, disillusioned fellow-Sophisticates. James Joyce for instance gives out the results of the age in a highly concentrated form which compares with the finished, filigreed sentences of Norman Douglas, as a cubistic composition which encompasses the content of the brain and reveals everything within consciousness. Gertrude Stein is a great influence on the authors of today in her play with words which are often nothing but a succession of sounds. The sophisticated writing of Douglas is a mellow, well-rounded art; that of James Joyce and Gertrude Stein is skyscraper writing, sharp and singular.

Contemporary humor is bitter and hopeless, as is found beneath the New Yorkese style of Samuel Hoffenstein's "Year In, You're Out." Comedy is mediocre and disillusionment is apparent even in fantasy, with the result that any liking for charm and whimsicality is hidden as a "guilty secret." "The Innocent Voyage" by Richard Hughes, the story of seven children captured by pirates in 1860, suggests in its title the charm of youthful adventure but is devoted to "debunking" the false and sentimental attitude toward children which has been accepted to the present. The book has power and beauty in spite of its faults, and is particularly successful in the use of backgrounds as powerful forces. Osbert Sitwell in "The Man Who Found Himself" writes Swinburnian prose with great suavity but at times the book is slightly rhetorical and over-written. He illustrates the fact that British writers are less touched by the urge for harsh precision than the Americans.

"The 42nd Parallel" by John dos Passos is a text in which to study all the modern tendencies: these are a weary, cynical stream of consciousness and a delight in coarseness. It is an experiment in form, introducing four characters who are almost unconnected with each other and tying the whole together by a "News Reel," the "Camera's Eye" which gives a personal slant on events, and a group of prose poems, biographies of famous Americans. Though irritating, the book is stimulating and challenging, particularly in its satire and cubistic pattern. "Cheri" by Colette, a French Sophisticate, shows a Gallic elegance of manners. "The Count's Ball" by a boy of 19, Radiguet, is a "novel of chaste love," salacious in its way, while the style is as careless as the author tried to make it. Rebecca West's "Harriet Hume" is a sophisticated novel graced with fresh and original language in the treatment of an old theme, woman's ability to face facts.

Mrs. Sloss read entertaining and illuminating passages from the books she was discussing to illustrate the amused, dispassionate evaluation of men and manners, the materialism, and the primitive, often anti-social ideas of the Sophisticates. "But a small group is arising," concluded Mrs. Sloss, "which is unwilling to accept this as the final word in tendencies."

An Honor System Questionnaire

A compilation of the results of a questionnaire on the honor system distributed among the students of St. Lawrence University shows that, of the two hundred and twenty-seven who returned ballots, one hundred and forty-four are dissatisfied with the present system and are in favor of changing it, while seventy-seven wish to keep it. Of the one hundred and forty-four who desire a change, eighty-four voted to abolish the system entirely, and sixty preferred to modify it. The vote was taken in the college of letters and science, and only about one-third of the student body voted.

The most prevalent suggestion for modification was the proctor system operated under faculty control. This was also given as the alternative for the present system in the majority of cases where the students voted for direct abolition. Among the other suggestions for modification were increasing the penalty, and providing a court composed of both students and faculty, members to try violators detected under the proctor system. A system of student monitors was suggested as well as a general tightening of the present rules.—St. Lawrence University—N. S. F. A. News Correspondent.

Economic Conference

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Reed Cary, Vice-President of Leeds, Northrup and Company, took the floor, and discussed the relationship between the corporation and the individual. The worst problem in unemployment, he said, lies in adjusting those men who have no ability, or who are in the wrong positions. The problem of consolidation is one that has not yet been satisfactorily worked out, for the less efficient loses out always. The new philosophy of industry is both moral and economic—to pay the highest possible wages. Unemployment, said Mr. Cary, is uneconomical as well as unjust. Many of the unemployed are men of trained brains; unemployment is hitting all classes, and may affect us. This is an evil analogous to the slavery evil. The discussion, led by Anne Burnett, Bryn Mawr, '32, centered around the effort of Leeds, Northrup and Company to meet the problems of unemployment and insurance.

At one o'clock the conference adjourned for lunch in the May Day Room, to convene again at two. Mr. Tom Tippet of the Brookwood Labor College gave a very impassioned speech from the point of view of labor. The engineers are tools of the capitalists, and so salvation will not come from them. There must be a power strong enough to make people see what is happening and do something about it. This power exists in the labor group. No business man wants government to come into business except to put up tariffs, so we must change our government. Independent political action may do it—if not, then—revolution.

The Labor movement is much more idealistic, more Christian than any other group. Sacrifice in the American Labor Movement is as great as it is to be found anywhere. Labor Unions have many faults, but they are not all stupid and crooked. Illegal and brutal opposition is the cause of some of this.

"This conference is an indictment of our colleges, because we should be talking of these things in our classes, and not need to call a conference." The college group is too intelligent; the idealism necessary to right the situation appeals to labor. Public schools do not teach this idealism. The need and the labor movement alone will educate people.

The discussion was led by Howard Westwood, of Swarthmore, and it continued long after Mr. Tippet's departure. Dr. Wilcox, of the University of Pennsylvania, Mr. Biemiller, and Mr. Krueger took active parts in this discussion.

After the announcement of the conference to be held at Johns Hopkins over the 29th of March, and after a brief summary of the day by V. Butterworth, Bryn Mawr, '32, the conference adjourned to tea, and finally ended at 5.30.

Fellowship Awards

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The Mary Elizabeth Garrett European Fellowship has been awarded to Pauline S. Relyea; A. B. Smith College, 1924; M. A. to be conferred; Bryn Mawr College, 1930; teaching, 1924-25 and 1926-29; student, Columbia University Summer School, 1927, and Chicago Summer School, 1928; part-time graduate student, Bryn Mawr College, 1927-29; fellow in history, 1929-30. Miss Relyea has been nominated by the Department of History; her thesis will be on various aspects of Continental opinion in regard to the Boer War. She plans to study in Germany, France and England, attending lectures on modern European problems and working on general bibliography.

The Anna Ottendorfer Memorial Research Fellowship has been awarded to Margaret Jeffrey; A. B. Wellesley College, 1927; exchange student at the University of Frankfurt, 1927-28; graduate scholar in German at Bryn Mawr College, 1928-29; M. A. Bryn Mawr College, 1929; fellow in the department of German, 1929-30. Miss Jeffrey was nominated by the Department of German, and Miss Irene Maria Huber was recommended as alternate.

The Bryn Mawr European Fellowship has been awarded to Sarah Stanley Gordon, graduating Summa Cum Laude in the class of 1930; her honour points number three hundred and three, and she has the second highest number of honour points held by an individual since the

honour point system began—Frederica de Laguna has the highest record with three hundred and four honour points.

Marriage and College

Seeing the name of a married woman leading the list of individual high grades for fall term with ninety-five points—the perfect grade—brings forth arguments regarding the merits and drawbacks of attending college when married.

A well-known professor on the Oregon campus a year ago said in a lighter vein, "Every student should be married before he or she comes to college"—a startling assertion, but containing considerable good psychology.

What would happen to the moral problems of the big university if all students were married? Would not such a situation alter the economic problems? All mottoes to the contrary, two persons require two and one-half persons' salary to live on. Frivolity and courting then would be unknown—courting then would be unknown—college work would be undertaken with increased earnestness and the results from four years' study would be far greater.

The picture of a university where there were no single students is an intriguing one. No fraternities or sororities. Fewer dances. Less money spent on amusements, fewer pennies spent on "bites" in wayside inns. Life would be more serious.

Talk of dates and chit-chat on subjects airy and inconsequential as indulged in by women, and fireplace talk on weighty matters which characterizes fraternity men would metamorphose into talk of rent bills, clothes, and unromantic subjects like lawn-mowers.

Young married couples have in the past tried college life together. Girls who have a "Mrs." in front of their names will be found to look at studies and classes more seriously than their unattached sisters. The social life is paled before the steadfast work ambitions of young married men in school. Sometimes it is hard for them to understand the light manner in which the unwed look at a college education.

Smiles that were once on the brow are eclipsed by the doubled money worries. Single, a man sees the future as a more-or-less filmy castle in the distance. Married, the castle's outlines disappear and he is face to face with a blank, unwritten future. In his hand he has the pen with which to write. So he sets about to learn, perfecting the crude methods he picked up while he was joyously coasting through college.

College is the place some call the last stronghold of youth, the place for a last spree of fun and jollity. Life seems by turns distant or just around the curve. Alternately, youth is eager to try its wings or afraid of the leap which must come. Whether married life should intrude itself upon the life of the college student, as an oil on troubled waters, is debatable. Certain it is that the college student would get more out of his college education in a material way, but in gaining this he would lose the social broadening and fellowship of a wide circle of friends in both sexes, which circle he is able to create through freer contact which a college community provides.—Oregon Emerald.

To Other People

"George Arliss is so linked with his portrayal of Disraeli both on the stage and in talkies that some people have confused him with the English hero," said Maude T. Howell, '10, stage manager to the player, and campus visitor for the past week.

"An American girl who was traveling abroad saw the statue of Disraeli in Westminster Abbey and exclaimed happily, 'How very nice of the English to put a memorial to George Arliss here, even before he dies!'"

"Another instance I heard of was of a woman who went into a London bookstore and asked for the *Life of George Arliss* by some Frenchman, confusing it with Maurois' *Life of Disraeli*.—Stanford Daily.

Competitive Year Book Elections

Resulting indirectly from discussion at the N. S. F. A. convention at Stanford in January, the Student Council at Penn State has unanimously agreed to place elections for La Vie, the senior class annual, on a competitive basis. Formerly the editor was elected by undergraduate political parties, and other members of the staff were appointed as a reward for political support.

Under the new plan, all sophomores who wish may try out for the staff. During the first semester of their junior year, twelve of this group will be elected to the junior board. In May, the new editor, his assistants, and a new junior board will be named by the outgoing staff.—Penn State N. S. F. A. Correspondent.

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