

Yours faithfully—K.L.G

ALLEN

TIME & TIDE

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ENLIGHTENED EDUCATION

WHILE anxiety and distress afflict so large a part of the present political scene it is a relief to turn to events at once important and constructive which are taking place at home. This week's two announcements from the Ministry of Education may well mark a period in the educational history of Great Britain. The scheme for grants to students to enable them to go to the Universities has attracted most attention; but it is a subsidiary aspect of this scheme, and the pronouncement on examinations in secondary schools, which are likely to be of the greatest practical and psychological importance in forming the citizens of the future.

The scheme, by which any student who wins an open or State scholarship will receive financial help to enable him to take it up, sweeps away the hampering and exhausting system by which the poorest students were often faced with the necessity of taking several examinations in order, piecemeal, to acquire the necessary number of grants to defray the expenses of their career. Examinations are not an infallible test, though they are the only one which can be devised, and they impose on the student, often at the most sensitive period of development, a strain on the nerves and on the memory—by no means the most important quality of the intellect—which may have very had consequences indeed for the general development of the

schools from studying and fulfilling the individual potentialities of their pupils. The School Certificate, too long the essential passport to many forms of employment, is to be virtually abolished and replaced by an internal examination which could clearly be worked out in much closer relation to the needs and aptitudes of the pupils. This turning away from the examination system is a really important educational change and may well have widespread effects in producing what we most need, a more widely cultured, that is, humanly developed, generation, and one which will be mentally and even physically healthier.

There is, however, still a heavy cloud on the horizon. The shortage of teachers and the drastic shortage of places at the Universities is an undermining factor in all new educational schemes. The post-war bottleneck at the Universities will presumably right itself with time, but the time may be years and meanwhile the bottleneck holds up the whole stream.

It is possible that constructive reforms, of which we have had two such impressive examples this week, may have a revivifying effect throughout a profession which is suffering perhaps more than most from the prolonged extra strain of war and which continues to under-recruit for the supply of its growing needs. The sad fact

CLAP YOUR HANDS

British Fairy Origins: Lewis Spence. *Watts*. 10s. 6d.

IT could have been safely assumed that when Mr Lewis Spence made up his mind to investigate the origin of the belief in fairies he would leave no book on the subject unopened. The problem has pixylated hundreds of eminent scholars, and there are opposing schools of thought whose questions Mr Spence exhaustively tackles in chapters with such headings as "Were Fairies a Reminiscence of Aboriginal Races?"; "Are Fairies Derived from Godlike Forms?"; "Fairies as Totemic Forms"; "Vestiges of Cult in Fairy Tradition". His conclusion is that the fairies of Britain (with whom he is almost exclusively concerned) are a traditional recollection of a very ancient belief that the spirits of the dead awaiting reincarnation in human form dwell in communities. British fairies are gregarious; they are as much human as spiritual; they reveal an association with that early doctrine of spirit which held that the spirit-body of man had a certain material and ponderable quality.

In his journey towards this conclusion Mr Spence's argument sometimes moves stiffly, slowed down by adhesions of erudition in the text and hampered by footnote references, but time can be taken off for consideration of the evidence not for the belief in fairies but for the very existence of fairies. There is the matter of their size. Bessie Dunlop, an Ayrshire woman tried for witchcraft in 1556, declared that the Fairy Queen who visited her was a stout woman who sat down and "asked a drink at her". Andro Man, tried at Aberdeen for sorcery in 1597, said he had been the husband of the Fairy Queen for many years and had had children by her. Whether or not these Fairy Queens were identical, it can be inferred that they were of human stature. And the Fairy King described in 1677 was man-size—like "ane large tall corporal Gardman, and ruddie." Against such disillusioning statements can be set the account of a fairy caught at Zennor—"not more than a foot long"—and the elf at Rothley—"about the size of a child's doll." Shakespeare's fairies are generally regarded as diminutive, yet the adults and children that disguised themselves as fairies to torment Falstaff in

The Merry Wives of Windsor took no reducing mixture.

As for the disposition of fairies, it was by no means uniformly beneficent; even friendly fairies could be capricious; they could never be depended upon not to indulge in practical joking or kidnapping. The theory that they were Fallen Angels, "not good enough to be saved or bad enough to be lost," may explain their inconsistencies of conduct. Yeats could believe in

The land of faery,

Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,

Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,

Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue.

It is not of this world, which must be too full of weeping for fairies to understand. Anyhow, no belief nowadays is wide enough to wrap a fairy in.

DANIEL GEORGE

POETRY

A Map of Verona: Henry Reed. *Cape*. 3s. 6d.

The Isles of Scilly: Geoffrey Grigson. *Routledge*. 5s.

ULTIMATELY, THERE is only one way to review poetry—by quotation, for, as Mallarmé reminded Degas on the famous occasion, poetry is written not with ideas but with words. No matter what theories may be fashionable, the test of a poet is still how he uses words. This is how Mr Reed uses them:

Day breaks: the isle is silent, under the sun,

Which ponders it as though to interpret its silence.

I have changed my mind; or my mind is changed in me.

Unalterable of cliff and water,

The vast ravines are violet, revealing sea.

Here they are close together, the singing fragments

Which gods and men arrange, a chorus of birds and gardens.

The god departs, the men remain, day breaks,

And the bow is ready and burnished.

The arrows are newly fledged with the sun's first feathers.

It is the last still stillness of the morning

Before the first gull screams.

*I lie on the rock, the wound is quiet, its death
Is dead within me, and treachery is powerless here.*

*Under the caves, in the hollows of sheltered beaches
Slowly the sailors wake.*

The bushes twitch in the wind on the glowing cliff-sides;

*The ghosts dislimn and vanish; the god departs;
My life begins, and a man plants a tree at daybreak.*

These, the closing lines of his poem "Philoctetes", are, it seems to me, self-evidently the fruit of long study of metrics and the use of words and set the poet firmly in a main tradition of our poetry, that tradition which includes Milton, Tennyson and Eliot, the master-craftsmen.

Like them, he rarely speaks in his own person; there is no naked display of emotion; rather, he seeks always to express himself through what Mr Eliot has called the "objective correlatives" to his emotions, finding them in the characters of Tristram, Iseult, Blanchesmains, Mark and Iseult La Belle, in Chrysothemis, the sister of Orestes and Electra, and Philoctetes, and in the images of ocean voyages and exploration that make up the remarkable sequence "The Desert". The result is not an absence of feeling, but a much greater intensification of feeling, and a heightened utterance:

The sun has gone, and the hunted bird demands:

"Can the liar guard the truth, the deceiver seek it,

The murderer preserve, the harlot chasten, or the guilty

Shelter the innocent? And shall you protect?"

When Mr Reed does speak in his own person, he is generally light in tone, witty, wryly, ironically deprecating, as in the brilliant "Lessons of the War". So, at any rate, one thought when one first read these poems in magazines. Now one realizes that they are also poignant and most moving. Here, for example, is Mr Reed putting small arms drill into poetry:

Today we have naming of parts. Yesterday,

We had daily cleaning. And tomorrow morning,

We shall have what to do after firing. But today,

Today we have naming of parts. Japonica



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CONFESSION OF FAITH

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*Glistens like coral in all the neighbouring gardens,
And today we have naming of parts.*

*This is the lower sling swivel. And this
Is the upper sling swivel, whose use you will see,
When you are given your slings. And this is the piling
swivel,*

*Which in your case you have not got. The branches
Hold in the gardens their silent, eloquent gestures,
Which in our case we have not got. . . .*

*They call it easing the Spring: it is perfectly easy
If you have any strength in your thumb: like the bolt,
And the breech, and the cocking-piece, and the point
of balance,*

*Which in our case we have not got, and the almond
blossom*

*Silent in all the gardens and the bees going backwards
and forwards,
For today we have naming of parts.*

It is as though Jules Laforgue had suddenly appeared in a conscript army.

Limitations of space alone prevent one from indulging in the pleasure of writing about *A Map of Verona* at length. No better first book of poetry has appeared for many years and it would be foolish to expect another comparable for as long. It may be pointed out that the price puts it in the reach of everyone who has a regard for writing that combines profound imagination with beauty of expression.

After Mr Reed it must be admitted that *The Isles of Scilly* seems pretty thin. There are two Mr Grigsons, the Mr Grigson with the acutely observant eye and economy of expression, deriving from the Imagists, and the Mr Grigson who is on Christian-name terms with Gerard Manley Hopkins. The first Mr Grigson is seen at his best in lines like the following:

*Green leaves: and in the cold entry of the cave
Green light which turns to a darkness:
Green water from the bellowing dark, here still;
Yet forward flows to turn no green-wheeled mill.
It sinks under its antique pebble-studded bed,
And carves rock shingly and cleanly into curves:
Gives back no eyes but mine, no shiver of sun, or stars,
Floats down no seedling from the gamboge-throated
flowers.*

Writing such as this has its own virtues and its own magic. That of the other Mr Grigson has little of either:

*Turgenev, who saw the stars through mist,
Balzac, who knew greed's intricate and iron growth,
Leskov, who knew that all men must be loved,
Hölderlin, serene, who heard the jackal howling in
the stones,
Palmer who wildly flew
And soared, and reached the doors of bliss,
Coleridge, who knew green calm among the blackest
clouds—
I give you this. . . .*

I call it big of Mr Grigson. And what of: "And healthy Lewis, seeing, capturing, and destroying, in an absolute phrase"? "Monk", Sinclair, C.S., Alun, P. Wyndham, D. B. Wyndham, C. Day? Not, by any chance, "Kid" Lewis? WALTER ALLEN

CRITIC'S COMMENTARY

Mexican Empire—the history of Maximilian and Carlota of Mexico: H. Montgomery Hyde. *Macmillan*. 18s. Handsomely got up, abundantly illustrated and conscientiously researched, this account of the unhappy business of Maximilian of Mexico is a serious addition to the literature on a painful, fascinating subject.

While he has drawn careful portraits of the two principal characters Lt.-Col. Hyde has not allowed the dreadful and the melodramatic aspects of their story to obscure the political narrative, which is sound and clear if a little uninspired. This is an honest attempt to assess the situation and the characters fairly, and certainly the baffled, well-intentioned Archduke emerges with a kind of muddled decency against the confused Mexican and European scene. The Empire was an anachronism as was Maximilian himself; the tragedy of his story is in reality built up in the opening chapters describing the background of the Hapsburg family and imperial Austria. The whole Mexican disaster is a monument to that special kind of futility which is the outcome of applying the political ideas of one century to the political problems of another. C. V. W.

COMPETITIONS

SET BY RIGOLETTO

THIS WEEK'S COMPETITION

(Closing date June 4th)

IN THE old days if I remember rightly the B.B.C. used as its motto "And Nation shall speak peace unto Nation". Perhaps they don't any more. But I know a provincial gas company which has the neck to incorporate the words *O Lux Beatissima* in the ornamental scroll which tops their quarterly accounts. Other tradesmen might follow suit. We offer the usual prizes of Two Guineas and a Half-Guinea Book Token for suitable quotations, proverbs or tags (not necessarily Latin) for use by a Cobbler, a Hairdresser, a Bookie, the Telephone Service, a Voluntary Hospital and a "Bucket-shop".

SPECIAL HOME AND OVERSEAS COMPETITION

(Closing date July 23rd)

For a week you are put in charge of a cinema, or a theatre, or a concert hall. Damning the consequences, you scrap the advertised programmes, and excluding the public, sit like Ludwig of Bavaria, in solitary enjoyment of six nights of command performances. We offer a prize of Five Guineas for suggestions for these six nights.

NOTICE TO COMPETITORS

The name and address (or pseudonym) of a competitor, either Home or Overseas, must be written on his MS. (henceforth no coupon is required for any Competition). In all Special Home and Overseas Competition entries the word SPECIAL should be printed in the top left-hand corner of the entry. Where a word limit is set every 50 words should be marked off in red ink. Address: Competition, TIME AND TIDE, 32 Bloomsbury Street, W.C.1. Results will be published in our issues of June 15th and August 3rd. Under no circumstances will manuscripts be returned.

REPORT ON COMPETITION SET MAY 4TH

Subject: A song, such as might be found in anthologies,

Competition continued on page 500

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