The Tale of the Armament of Igor by Leonard A. Magnus

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a matter of fact, however, he boldly raises the thorny question—only to weaken his work by the inadequacy of his treatment of it. The book contains 80 pages dealing with the epochs when the soliloquy was more or less frankly taken for granted and only 9 pages on ‘Recent Developments,’ i.e. the ‘modern German realistic drama’—which here means a very little Hauptmann and even less Sudermann. Yet all the same he feels justified in commencing his four-page ‘Conclusion’ as follows: ‘Has the recent drama gained in artistic effectiveness by its disuse of the soliloquy?’ and in concluding the whole book with the following sentence: ‘It is to be hoped that the dramatic authors of to-day and to-morrow will realize that the elimination of the soliloquy of thought and feeling is a loss to the drama and that their restoration will increase its artistic effectiveness.’ If the whole work had been a thorough and well-balanced elaboration of this theme, resting upon a comparison of the theory and practice of the realists with the actual achievements of their predecessors, the result might have been an extremely interesting work. As it stands, the author’s ‘conclusion’ would give a somewhat misleading impression of the scope of the work as a whole.

What value the book possesses lies in the painstaking investigations of its central part, and a more valuable and more apt ‘Conclusion’ would have been one in which the results of the studies there involved were summarised. The author does indeed attempt a differentiation between the various types of soliloquy. The psychology of the soliloquy is treated in a few pages of the Introduction, which consist however mainly of brief quotations from various authorities. The ‘aside’ is not formally included in the subject, but it pops in and out of the picture in somewhat arbitrary fashion, being at times mentioned along with the soliloquy, while at others the soliloquies of a play are alone examined. If the whole had been subordinated to some general design, or if the author had confined himself, in the case of fresh instances, to those which showed some original features or some forward movement, the work would have gained greatly in interest and concentration.

The presentation is on the whole clear and fresh. Here and there we find a very modern touch, as when we read, on p. 24, that in the Shrovetide Plays of the fifteenth century throngs of masked citizens entered ‘inns and bar-rooms’ and departed ‘after being wine and dined.’

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The Tale of the Armament of Igor. Edited by LEONARD A. MAGNUS. Oxford: University Press. 1915. 8vo. lxiii + 123 pp.

The publication of this book is in a sense inaugural of the serious study of the Russian language and literature in this country. It is a sign that we are emerging from the ‘method’ or ‘manual’ stage into the

region of scholarship. The endowment of Russian studies at our universities might well in the future bring valuable results to the nation, as it would go far to convince educated Russians that our friendship for their country was based on something more than the political convenience of the moment.

The *Slovo*, or song, which relates the foray of Igor son of Svyatoslav against the heathen Pólovtsy in the year 1185, is one of the most remarkable and the most beautiful in the literatures of the Slavonic races. In the early vernacular poetry of Western Europe there is nothing quite comparable with it, but curiously enough, as we read it we are reminded of MacPherson's *Ossian*, in its mystery, its invocations and especially its enlistment of the forms and powers of nature to heighten terror and pathos. The event celebrated in the *Slovo* had no great significance; it was just one of the numberless raids between the Russians and their nomad foes, but the manner of telling raises it to rare poetry. Mr Magnus calls the song 'almost a broadsheet, which was also a work of genius.' The poet strictly follows the contemporary Chronicle for his facts, but his setting for them is his own, and is unique. Mr Magnus thinks he must have been an eye-witness of the events he sings, but for this he gives no good reasons, nor do we agree with him that the poet may have been associated with the production of the Chronicles, if the only grounds for this probability are that he often repeats the expressions used in the Chronicles. Apart from the charm of its style the *Slovo* has a fascination for the scholar by reason of the numerous problems it presents, among others, the question of the personality of its author, its pagan tone and its allusions to mysterious personages of Slavonic mythology. Much has been written about these matters, but they remain very puzzling.

In his Introduction, after giving the history of the unique sixteenth century MS., which was brought to light in 1795, published in 1800 and destroyed in the fire of Moscow in 1812, Mr Magnus supplies a brief summary of early Russian political geography and history, and a translation in full of the Chronicle for the year 1185, 'to put the text into historical perspective.' There are sections on metre, grammar, style, authorship, pagan survivals and a few other matters. The treatment of metre is disappointingly brief and not very clear; the editor seems indeed to fight shy of it, judging by this naïve remark: 'To analyse the metre in full would betray me into a discussion, too long for this introduction; and I rather doubt whether it would be profitable, either to truth, or the advancement of the subject. The few hints given in this section are all derived from Korš (Korsh); for the rest the reader had far better trust his own ear, and the richness of this three-beat measure will ring out.' One statement by the editor is quite erroneous: 'The regularity of the alliteration approximates the metre to that of the old German poems.' As a matter of fact, alliteration is quite exceptional in the Russian poem, and is obviously unintentional. Very little space is allotted to the language of the poem, perhaps because it differs hardly at all from that of the contemporary Chronicles,

being Church Slavonic in process of change into, or rather replacement by Russian. We agree with Mr Magnus, as against Vyazemski and Petrushevitch, that there is no convincing evidence of Greek influence on the form of the poem, still less of any adaptation from classical models.

The text is based on the copy of the unique MS. made for Catherine II, variants from the printed edition being given in footnotes. The editor has himself in numerous cases emended the text, which is frequently corrupt, and some of his emendations, based on knowledge of the peculiarities of early Russian MSS., are ingenious if not convincing. A literal translation into English faces the Russian text, which, we may here mention, might well have been in larger type. The notes, in the preparation of which Mr Magnus acknowledges his debt to previous editors, discuss and attempt to clear up the many difficulties presented by the text and they show independence and soberness of judgment. At the same time we think the alphabetical order in which they are arranged is a mistake, as time is lost in hunting up details while going through the text. There is a small, somewhat useful map of early Russia, while the complete genealogies of early dynasties are of value for understanding the intricacies of its history. The chief faults we have to find with this useful edition are concerned with externals rather than with essentials. In the first place, there are far too many misprints which have been left uncorrected, and the punctuation is often faulty. Obscurity thus caused is increased by misuse of the English language; thus 'obsecrate' is used for 'execrate' (p. 11), 'founder' for 'plunge' (p. 11), 'cataclasmic' for 'cataclysmic' (p. viii), 'adjectional' for 'adjectival' (p. 58), 'suppositious' for 'supposititious' (p. ii), 'precessors' for 'predecessors' (p. ix), 'enclitic' for 'proclitic' (p. xxxix), 'appraised' for 'praised' (p. xxvi). Words such as 'virilize' (p. viii), 'factual' (p. xlviii), 'sploshy' (p. iv), and others seem to indicate unfamiliarity with ordinary literary English. On p. 8 'villein' is used wrongly for *parañ*, a king's retainer who holds land by military service. In the translation we have noticed but few errors, among which are 'extended' instead of 'bent,' 'concentrated' for *стягну* (l. 32); 'now' instead of 'lo, behold' for *ce*; 'declined' instead of 'are past' for *минула* (l. 210); 'early moon' instead of 'early dawn' for *зараня* (l. 250); 'swift-footed' ('hungry' is suggested in the notes!) instead of 'bare-footed,' i.e. pad-footed, unshod, stealthy, for *босымъ* (l. 685). We have no space to correct even a few of the misprints. We welcome Mr Magnus's book, and hope it may ere long require a second edition.

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