Review

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more likely. Few men have ever crowded so much intensity of effort as he did into the years from 1792 to 1814. And it is small wonder that the strain, of which there is abundant evidence in Dorothy's Journal, should have broken him down at an age when many men have their best work not behind them but before. Something of the same kind may be traced in Shakespeare, with whom, however, it took a different form and ended in a far earlier death. And if this be the true explanation, it is clear that the talk of narrowness and fossilisation is largely out of place and that all blame, awarded on such grounds, is inconsiderate and unjust.

That Wordsworth was touched by reaction in political matters, it would be idle to deny. To one who had seen the Revolution with his own eyes and was, moreover, so deeply out of sympathy with the ideals proclaimed by the reformers of his own country, that was natural, though regrettable, enough. But there are things which go even deeper than politics. And, in this inner region who can believe that he ever broke with his own past? Is it conceivable that the man who wrote the *Lines above Tintern* could ever have forced his own thoughts about God within the four corners of a Church formulary, or that the poet of the *Cuckoo* and the *Daffodils* could ever have lost the vision which they brought him in his prime?

It is to be wished that Mr Harper had laid more weight upon these and kindred considerations. In default of this, his book—in many respects so valuable and so obviously a labour of love—seems to do scant justice to a great memory, and consequently to leave an impression which he himself can hardly have desired.

C. VAUGHAN.

LONDON.

Thomas Hardy. By HAROLD CHILD. (Writers of the Day.) London: T. Nisbet and Co. 1916. 8vo. ix + 120 pp.

'Unhappy the man' says the proverb 'whose fame is bigger than his means,' and many penny lanterns have been extinguished by the splutter of contemporary laudation. That Thomas Hardy is a true luminary is revealed, if in no other way, by the imperturbability of his flame. The Johnsons, Abercrombies, Hedgcocks, and Duffins, have been unable by their united effort to perturb the bright and increasing glow of his reputation, and he has found a real exponent—to our mind—in Harold Child, who has devoted 120 pages as an Introductory Chapter to the Novels in a series which has not, so far as we know, been so well served before, and in which we see that studies are all but due upon Galsworthy, Mrs Humphry Ward, and Edith Wharton.

If asked as to the subject of Hardy's novels, one would perhaps be inclined to say that Love and the Wessex Soil are the themes of which he is fondest. One of Hardy's special contributions to the spirit of the age is his exploration of the unnoticed, forgotten, myriads of dull

prosaic average humanity, where he has discovered—here and there—lives as mysteriously interesting and as spiritually adventurous as those of queens and emperors. It was his by instinct to perceive that here and there in the world-encircling ranks of apparently commonplace humanity, are men and women with souls like Gothic cathedrals: places of endless wonder, mystery, and beauty; finding ever new crypts and hidden chapels silencing and beckoning to prayer, and it is this type of dim unapprehended personality that Hardy has so often made his own, and he has made vocal—some regard it as the supreme gift in him—the commoner folk, the servants' hall, the grave-diggers, and furze-cutters, the odd fellows, and rustics of antique England. Mr Hedgecock and Mr Duffin, with the coxcombry of graduate youth, must eternally be pitting Hardy against Meredith, and Meredith against Hardy, as we used in earlier days to hear Disraeli redressed by Gladstone and Dickens by Thackeray. Why not go further afield and compare Hardy with European reputations, such as those of Ibsen, Maupassant, Tolstoy, and France: Hardy we think would come well out of the comparison, for one of the most striking things about this quiet undemonstrative Englishman is the variety of his range; philosophy, fiction, poetry, and drama, all slow to be recognised, but all sure of arriving, and who but he has written the finest poem of the War? Fortunately Mr Child is unattracted by these academic aridities, for he is out to show us that the service of Hardy is one of the most delightful in the whole of fiction, and one of the most purposeful. His view is certainly less exhilarating than that of Shakespeare, who treats of the tragedy of character and pre-eminently of weakness. Hardy makes a large concession to the tragedy of circumstance, and does his utmost to give a stern but true picture of the struggle of individual human wills against the power indifferent to human feeling that appears to rule the world. Nature, love, power, he seems to see the insufficiency of them all, he dare not dwell too insistently on happiness; the world is very old, the life of man very brief. Over Egdon the generations of men pass ceaselessly, and leave no trace; men and women are always snatching at happiness, and breaking themselves against a power that takes no heed of them. Earthiness enters considerably into the texture of Hardy's romance and Hardy's love; confession of such facts seems almost indescribable in English after the unmitigated benignity of the school of Dickens and Thackeray. But Hardy managed somehow, even to his own detriment, to tell the truth as nearly as he could conceive it. 'The insignificance of man, the briefness of his days, are always present in Hardy's mind; he never fails to see them from the point of view of the indifferent power, and the enormous past is always present with him as a moment of time. Man would not be worth writing about, were it not for one of Mr Hardy's distinctive gifts as novelist and dramatist—what might be called his double vision. It is a peculiar gift; there is no author in whom it is so highly developed. If he sees the littleness, he sees also the greatness. Watching from infinity, he shows human life as

futile and trivial. Down in the stress and the turmoil, looking out from the very heart of some farmer or milkmaid, he shows human life heroically grand. There is no trace in his work of contempt for human will, endurance, and passion.'

Mr Child has written a primer of superlative merit, for he has rendered Hardy alluring to the outsider, while revealing much acceptable truth to those already habituated to the idiosyncrasies of the novelist. He has done it apparently by a single-minded adherence to the salient characteristics of Hardy's work, and a sedulous abstinence from what is secondary, second-hand, or irrelevant, and he has bodied forth a real portrait of a great writer. In the main line of his criticism he seems to us almost infallibly right, though there may be here and there points of annotation to which it is possible to take exception. At one point, implies Mr Child, Hardy eschews realism and falls short of sincerity. He turns the lime-light upon his rustic characters. The characters however—to our thinking—are not meant to be entirely realistic; like the Tales of his Youth from the mouth of Cobbett, another passionate lover of the soil of England, the rustic characters of Hardy are meant to be characteristic; they are a representative chorus of folk-criticism, and are used with artistic purpose similar to that of Shakespeare's Mechanicals and Grave Diggers, the Clowns of Meredith, the Peasants and Rustics of Burns and Scott. The talk of the leaders of these men, the ale-house orators of to-day, is often consummately humorous. Coggan is quite a Shakespeare character, and Hardy's conscientious objectors and milksops such as Joseph Poorgrass and Christian Cantle are entirely worthy of the maker of Slender, Shallow and Sir Andrew Ague-Cheek.

To a future generation, says the author, Hardy will be first and foremost, the author of *The Dynasts*. This is prophecy; we hope it will not come true, because if it does Hardy will be read less; epics do not last well in the reading. Nor do novels, you object. It is difficult to say at present. Hardy to our mind is an elegist among novelists and one of his prime qualities—like that of Gray—is a philosophic pathos, playing over a descriptive and humorous faculty of the finest order, and an insight into the mysteries of love upon which Mr Child utters some impressive comments, impossible for us to emulate.

The novels are grouped for us, and their transactions recapitulated with exceptional succinctness and power. It is hard to realise how difficult these *résumés* are until one has tried to make them, and even Mr Child is not infallible. For instance, in his account of *The Return of the Native* he speaks of a characteristically Hardian figure, Thomasin's brother Clym Yeobright, who is crushed by the scorn of his wife. But he wasn't crushed by the scorn of his wife, and he wasn't Thomasin's brother, as the following very characteristic passage may serve to remind our author:

'How pretty you look to-day, Thomasin!' said Clym. 'Is it because of the Maypole?'

'Not altogether.' And then she blushed and dropped her eyes, which he did

not specially observe, though her manner seemed to him to be rather peculiar, considering that she was only addressing himself. Could it be possible that she had put on her summer clothes to please him?

He recalled her conduct towards him throughout the last few weeks, when they had often been working together in the garden, just as they had formerly done when they were boy and girl under his mother's eye. What if her interest in him were not so entirely that of a relative as it had formerly been? To Yeobright any possibility of this sort was a serious matter; and he almost felt troubled at the thought of it. Every pulse of loverlike feeling which had not been stilled during Eustacia's lifetime had gone into the grave with her. His passion for her had occurred too far on in his manhood to leave fuel enough on hand for another fire of that sort, as may happen with more boyish loves. Even supposing him capable of loving again, that love would be a plant of slow and laboured growth, and in the end only small and sickly, like an autumn-hatched bird.

We are not quite sure if Mr Child does complete justice to the expressiveness of Hardy. With the exception of Mark Rutherford, it would be difficult to name among modern writers of fiction a single writer whose style is at the same time so appropriate to his material, and so extraordinarily individual as that of Thomas Hardy. Hardy's perceptiveness of mother earth, and out of the way knowledge reflected in many recondite illustrations, are notable on almost every page of his writing, but the subject of Hardy's style—though a most interesting one—is full of pitfalls, and demands almost an entire treatise to itself.

Let us end by acclaiming Mr Harold Child's primer as the shortest, though by far the completest work, that has yet appeared on the subject, one it need hardly be said of the most transcendent interest to all real lovers of *belles-lettres*.

THOMAS SECCOMBE.

CAMBERLEY.

The Cambridge Songs. A Goliard's Song Book of the Eleventh Century.
 Edited from the Unique Manuscript in the Univ. Library, by KARL
 BREUL. Cambridge: The University Press. 1915. Fol. 120 pp.

Prof. Breul's various contributions to the elucidation of the 'Cambridge Songs,' a collection of mediaeval Latin poems (narrative, erotic, laudatory and didactic), including the 'macaronic' or mixed Latin and German dialogue between monk and nun and *De Heinricho*, have appeared for the most part in German periodicals, but the major enterprise of a complete edition of this famous MS. has been made possible by the Syndics of the Cambridge Press, to whom much credit is due. From Jaffé's edition of all the songs (apart from the classical extracts) in 1867 to the present day a number of points have been raised, whose solution largely depends upon palaeographical evidence. We are here supplied with the entire part of the MS. containing the Songs in facsimile, photographed so admirably that in some cases it is even possible by the aid of a lens to decipher letters and words, which the editor was apparently unable to