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College Books

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Vincent Hopper Foster, of the School of Commerce in New York University, has published a study entitled *Medieval Number Symbolism* (Columbia University Press) in which he presents the numerology of the Middle Ages, not as superstitious conjuring and hocus pocus, but as elementary science, metaphysics, and cosmic order. Why, he asks, was it awe-compelling and arresting for Dante to view Beatrice as a *nine*? Quoting Aristotle (after Pythagoras) to the effect that "even and odd" are the "principles of natural things, considering all things to be number," he makes of Beatrice the triple 3, proclaiming the nine orders of powers or angelic being below the supreme force of God, the tenth. The medieval view of the universe was a glorification of the beauty of design in it, of order, of unity and plan. Numbers that represented discord, variety, evil were combatted, occasionally, by the same numbers when the medieval mind could find favorable virtuous associations to counteract the unfavorable. Though the system has the invidious results that any final answer man has devised for himself to master the mystery of heaven or nature, it furthered speculative thought and contributed to a discipline that probably helped to forward such progress as the world has made.

In "The Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences" (Columbia University Press), by Lisle Cecil John, something refreshing has come out of a study slated for an anatomy of artifice and forced poetic talents. Some of the study is routine, such as the table of conceits at the end of the book, not without value, however, for it is a cross reference index to such conceits as debate of the heart with the eye, metaphors descriptive of sleep, the conventional preferences among Elizabethans for blond beauty in women. What is not routine is the discussion of ideals of love as symbolized in the Classic, Medieval, and Renaissance periods of European literature.

In the decadent period of Greek literature Love had degenerated from the lithe handsome young god, persuasive by power, to the mischievous child playing more to allurements (the child image of marriage union). In Latin literature, through Ovid, the task-master, youth, returned with his tyranny. But Provencal troubadours make the young god one of courtesy and sentiment, softer, more genteel, yet a law unto himself, a law that at the court of Marie of Champagne acknowledged no sovereignty of church or state. Dante, though, elevates his master Love to the Christian hierarchy in spirit if not in name, and the divine blessing of an unearthly beauty and truth suffuse the rule of the Ovidian master. Chaucer sees love in the universal forces of attraction, manifest in the order of the heavens, the discipline of kingdoms, the friendship of communities, and family ties. The Elizabethans, for whom Dr. John has explored some thirteen hundred sonnets, drew mainly from the Ovidian portrait, except as in Spenser, and some others, the Christian Platonism of Dante found sway. Most of the sonneteers of the time of Queen Bess, wander in a labyrinth under Love's yoke, carrying Love in their breasts while tortured by the beauty of their lady. As a record of this process in both the Elizabethans and their later critics, Mr. John's book is the best discussion yet.

The Relation of Molière to Restoration Comedy (Columbia University Press, 1938) by John Wilcox, and *The Doctor in French Drama, 1700-1775* (Columbia University Press) by Christine E. Petersen, are well organized and well documented studies of types and influences in what might loosely be called the time of Louis XIV. The study of Molière's impact upon England, though it reaches no new conclusions about the influence of the great Frenchman on the English comedy of manners, is thorough and sound so far as the collection of facts, the reasoning about the facts, and the working out and application of an elaborate set of abstract principles to determine just how much one author is affected by another. Historians of the plays of the English Restoration

know that a fairly complete account of the evolution of the comedy of manners can be taken from native sources. This is the conclusion of Mr. Wilcox, but the value of his book lies in his putting before the reader the comedies of the period and showing their exact connection or divergence from the manner and the spirit of Molière. What Mr. Wilcox seems to overlook is the fact that two elements in combination may give a product utterly unlike either of its component parts. And in the case of Restoration drama Molière's prestige and practice, which Mr. Wilcox admits is traceable in one out of every five comedies of the time, was undoubtedly a great incentive and resource to his English colleagues in the profession.

The French doctor from the time of Molière to the time of Lafayette and the American Revolution underwent a strange metamorphosis. Molière took the raw material of his doctors from the *Commedia dell' Arte* of the Italians. The original satirical characterization of the doctor consisted of a gloomy pedant, mounted upon a mule, whose chief need for diagnosis and for cure was to recall the precepts of Hippocrates and Galen in their original tongue. The best bedside manner of the time of Louis XIV was a parade of pedantry. For remedies, purgings and bleedings sufficed.

As the eighteenth century progressed in its enlightenment, the doctor of the earlier age and theatre gave way to a new and elegant practitioner. This new society doctor was "an amiable person with a gentle smile who talks wittily and of everything except his art. . . . When he feels a pulse, he does it with particular charm. He finds everybody in perfect health—and he never suspects any danger. At the bedside of a dying patient his face radiates hope."

Miss Petersen shows the relationship which formerly existed between the barber and the surgeon and the social superiority of the "physician" to both. She also brings to light many of the old jokes on medicine,

"An art upon whose successes the sun is proud to shine.
And whose blunders the earth makes haste to cover!"

Leo Pierre Courtines' *Bayle's Relations with England and the English* (Columbia University Press, 1938) presents overwhelming evidence to prove that Pierre Bayle was extremely alert to English life, politics, and letters and that, in turn, many Englishmen were indebted to Bayle. Bayle was, Mr. Courtines shows, early evidence of the high regard in which the French, Voltaire especially, during the eighteenth century held the English because the English respected tolerance, common sense, and freedom. The work perhaps suffers from the fact that Mr. Courtines did not ever decide whether he was to treat Bayle's influence in England or the influence of England upon Bayle. But since exhaustive external evidence of mutual cross-influences is given, it would be ungenerous to complain of the author's failure to concentrate upon one stream of influence as the other; or to complain that the author has frequently indicated only where influences are to be looked for, not what the influences actually were. The book will be an invaluable guide to further study.

Pierre Bayle (1647-1706) sought refuge in Rotterdam in 1681 from threatened persecution in France. His greatest contribution, according to Courtines, was his incessant plea for religious tolerance. With eager fairness, he exposed religious intolerance wherever it appeared, in Catholic France or Protestant England. No faction could claim him, with the result that he was at times unpopular with all factions, but always respected among enlightened men. From his retreat in Holland, Bayle constituted himself a kind of international clearing-house for political and literary news. His *Nouvelles de la république des lettres* (1684-87) was the mainstay of editors seeking news of philosophical, scientific, and literary events. That he was a brilliant forerunner of the men of the Age of Enlightenment is attested by his *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, Rotterdam, 1697 (corrected and enlarged, 1702), an improvement upon Moreri's compilation and a forecast of the work of the encyclopedists of the next century.

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Bayle was in contact with the Royal Society of London and the Royal Dublin Society. He was on intimate terms with John Locke, the Earl of Shaftesbury and other Liberals, and numerous important French refugees. Courtines does good service to the present-day cause of humanism in that he does not fail to emphasize the fact that Pierre Bayle, industrious journalist, inveterate correspondent, and eternally alert speculator in "matters of history, theology, philosophy, criticism, and literature," threw the problems of the seventeenth century open to the men of all lands for calm and dispassionate discussion.

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