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College Books

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THE LATE Charles Sears Baldwin, professor of rhetoric and English composition at Columbia University, was one of the foremost scholars, in modern times, of medieval life and literature. To a long list of his publications in this field is added now *Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice*, a book left at the time of Professor Baldwin's death, in 1936, and prepared for the Columbia University Press by Donald Lemen Clark. This volume rounds out a study begun by the author in his *Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic* (1924) and *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic* (1928), both published by the Macmillan Company. The series traces the writing tradition of western Europe from the sound rhetorical principles in classic tradition to successive peak periods of achievement, such as the period of Chaucer or that of Shakespeare. Specifically, of the latest volume, it is a delight to a student of both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, to find Dr. Baldwin justifying the fourteenth century (which Matthew Arnold considered lacking in an accent possible for a later stage of England's growth) as freer in some respects in the practice of poetry than the later period. For one, applaud when Baldwin says that there was more life in medieval Latin than in the ornate and conscious practice of Latin by many of the sixteenth century humanists. Everyone familiar with English literary history will recall the dismal results achieved by Roger Ascham, and later by Gabriel Harvey, Philip Sidney, even Edmund Spenser, when they tried to revamp English poetry in the manner of the ancients. Medieval Latin had been corrupted because it was used in contact with the vernacular tongues in everyday experiences. Too many of the Renaissance scholars held a concordance to Cicero in their hands every time they uttered a Latin phrase.

The Renaissance scorned the Middle Ages. It had the assurance of a cocky young man matching his strength against a tottering older one. And yet when one looks at

the forces unleashed by the new enlightenment one almost longs for the old so-called darkness. One can easily be sentimental about the Middle Ages, and yet it is not disloyal to the Renaissance to suggest that the world outgrew its intellectual and spiritual garments faster than it could manufacture appropriate new ones.

Notable in the book is Professor Baldwin's analysis of the insight into philology held by a Benedictine monk named Périon, who as early as 1554 seemed to recognize relationships between Gallic and Greek, and to employ certain modern resources of comparative grammar.

That this posthumous publication from a great scholar is valuable goes without saying. None of Dr. Baldwin's books draws upon the virtue of style. In spite of the attention which he gave to rhetoric in theory, in actual practice his writing can claim little beyond the Horatian precept of clarity. In even this respect, there are some spotty passages in the last work from his pen which a final perusal by the author might have removed. There are half a dozen points at which Dr. Baldwin could have made his points of view emphatic, heightening the originality of his study and dramatizing the fruits of his exhaustive labor. That such was not his way will not rob him of any of the acclaim discerning readers will wish to give.

T. M. PEARCE

One of the most careful, most meticulous, and most complete works on the history of the stage in England is Professor George Odell's *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*. In that book American scholarship with its genius for facts and documentation came to the assistance of the mother country and for the first time made clear to Englishmen and to the world the vicissitudes of Shakespeare on the stage of his native land.

The theatre-going and play-reading public has for more than a decade enjoyed the possession of A. H. Quinn's *History of American Drama*. But the first complete picture

of the American stage will come in the completion of George Odell's colossal *Annals of the New York Stage*, the eleventh volume of which has just appeared. For the history of the theatre in America is primarily and overwhelmingly the story of the New York stage. New York not only inaugurates but magnifies and perfects all the trends and tendencies which are found elsewhere. And New York affords an intimacy and familiarity of treatment only possible in a great metropolis and theatrical capital where openings, innovations, activities, and closings are continuous. There the veteran play-goer and perennial lover of the theatre catches the first glimpse of the star or singer as she trips down the gangplank or emerges from the oblivion of the theatrical hinterland which Broadway politely dismisses as the provinces.

There is a coziness and subdued glamour about old New York, which comes from the proximity and richness of many things and many people in less crowded, though no less elegant, surroundings than our own. Events occur and men and women move, but the tempo is moderate, and in this more leisurely age of not so long ago the glare and fatigue of modern New York are far around the corner of the century.

The years 1879 to 1882, which the current volume covers, form an epoch which can best be described with reference to the state of the drama in Europe. In the very year that our chronicle begins, Ibsen produced his *A Doll's House*. Although he had already written a number of other plays, he had as yet no real existence for England or for America. In England the wrong Byron was having his inning, H. J. Byron, the author of *Our Boys*; and Byron's plays were exported to America, jammed though they were with theatricality, platitude, and pun. Like him in melodramatic effectiveness and emptiness of content was Dion Boucicault, actor, playwright, manager. After making his fortunes secure in England, Boucicault again exercised his three-fold theatrical ability in New York. He it was who gave us our

acting version of *Rip Van Winkle*. Boucicault was past master of the art of theatrical persuasion. By his sentimentality, humor, and excitement he charmed unthinking audiences on both sides of the Atlantic, but the sentimental unreality in his plays of Irish life so disgusted Dublin that, in protest, later to be perpetuated through the Abbey Theatre, there arose Lady Gregory and the other dramatists of the Irish renaissance. The *Annals* tells the story of Boucicault's leasing of Booth's Theatre and of his performance of *Louis XI*, wherein he spoke the French of the title rôle in his own rich, irrepressible Dublin brogue.

France was more adequately represented before the New York public by the divine Sarah Bernhardt, who came over in 1880 to play *Phèdre* and *Camille*. But the happiest European venture on Manhattan shores was the arrival of Sir William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan and the *Pirates of Penzance* in its world *première*. At that time, there was no international copyright law and the celebrated collaborators had never received a cent for the operettas previously published and performed in America. Hence they risked no chance of losing the American royalties on the *Pirates*, but were here to establish their copyright.

Not all the celebrities known to the present day arrived in the *Annals* by way of Europe. Edward H. Sothorn made his debut in these years. His first appearance hardly foreshadowed his future fame. Overcome with stage fright, "he forgot the one and only line of his part and spoiled his father's scene." Maurice Barrymore was prominent at this time. Walter Damrosch was an obscure organist in his father's famous orchestra. DeWolf Hopper was emerging, and among the ladies there were Lillian Russell and Adelina Patti, the singer.

There were excellent stock companies for high comedy and tragedy, performing in theatres where the orchestra played in a loft directly above the stage. There were German companies producing plays and operas. But even with notable Italian opera and worthy revivals of literary clas-

sics, the typical American offerings were *Tourists in a Pullman Palace Car*, *The Brook*, or a *Jolly Day at the Picnic*, *Hiawatha*, *Rip Van Winkle*, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Professor Odell includes Brooklyn and suburban New York in his survey. There are such events as strawberry festivals, adventures in atheism personally conducted by Robert Ingersoll, the appearance of Barnum's Tom Thumb, the music of Johann Strauss, the conducting of Theodore Thomas and the elder Damrosch, the performances of the Philharmonic and the Oratorio societies. All these are the diverse elements among the pastimes and pleasures of New York of the early eighties, and all these are harmonized and brought neatly within the covers of one volume, which is as pleasing to the average reader as it is valuable to the theatrical critic and scholar. The *Annals* is at once a work of reference and a romance.

DANE FARNSWORTH SMITH

For anyone who considers that philosophy is more than a speculation upon eternal truths, that it is indeed a vital index to the mental evolution of human cultures, any means of condensing and spreading the expression of current philosophical literature should be more than welcome. The advent of *Philosophic Abstracts* appears to fill a very definite need in this direction.

H. G. ALEXANDER