

THOMAS HARDY

(By Professor Coleman Phillipson.)

It is gratifying to learn from a recent cable that an effort is to be made in England to secure for Thomas Hardy the next Nobel Prize for literature. He ought to have received it years ago; he is far greater than some of the recipients, and in my opinion he is the greatest writer living. In this brief article I wish to indicate the spirit of his work.

The background of his writing reflects the transience of things, the coming hither and the going hence, the relation of human effort to the cosmic forces, and the struggle of man with time and circumstance. We see the earth's antiquity, the pageant and traditions of the past, the decline of the great and powerful, the persistence in the Wessex peasantry of a certain pagan spirit, their kinship with the earth, their dependence on it, their fear and veneration of it. We feel the dignity of labor in the field, we see the baneful effects of a fictitious or a spurious urban gentility, and of cant, hypocrisy, and pretence in social life.

Laying Bare the Souls

Hardy lays bare the very souls of a remarkable galaxy of men and women, whose fortitude and resignation are depicted in a style marked by classic restraint, balance, and fine scholarship.

The pathetic and tragic scenes, the poignant conflicts, and dire calamities are painted in a manner that reveals his dramatic sense, psychological insight, penetrative vision, plastic imagination, and a grasp of the relation between character and environment. Story, character, dialogue, and background are welded together so as to produce complete unity of effect, which is sometimes overwhelming in its intensity.

The dominating spirit in Hardy's work is that of Nature. Nature does not appear merely as scenic decoration; she is a pervading personality influencing the march of events and the lives of men. His knowledge of her moods and manifestations is intimate and profound; he is sensitive to her beauty and splendor, but often seems to regard her as a stepmotherly Titan. The Wessex countrymen are the progeny of the Great Mother, whose gifts and deprivations, moods and humors are reflected in their hope and faith, in their love and fear, in their sorrow and stoic endurance. Simple, loyal, patient, and generous peasants are contrasted with townsmen and men of the world who possess showy manners, superficial polish, and artificial politeness, shifty and faithless natures, swaying this way and that in their whims and caprices of spurious passion.

Shakespearean Breadth

The talk of the countrymen is the great events and matters of life; they jest about the gravest subjects, but are never coarse or vulgar, and their wonderful humor possesses a Shakespearean breadth, flavor, and significance. The humor, like Shakespeare's, is now gentle and playful, now charged with pathos, now deeply tragic.

No reader can ever forget such scenes as Tess' christening of her dying baby "Sorrow," the undesired; Joseph Poorgrass conveying Fanny Robin's dead body; the comments on the death of Mrs. Henchard; and Marty South's glorious farewell over Giles' grave.

Hardy sees his characters engaged in a losing fight, and he is moved to compassion. The spectacle makes him sad and melancholy, and a pessimistic mood prevails in his work, though he is no pessimist in the true sense of the word.

Pain Preponderates

It is true that in his novels marriage often is a catastrophe, and singleness is also a failure. Plans made for comfort and happiness are frustrated, good intentions are wrecked, hopes and expectations are thwarted. Thus pain preponderates, happiness being only a transitory episode in a drama of woe; and the gods are unfair and unjust.

Hardy, however, does not deny the existence of a Supreme Being or the value of religion; he impeaches not religion or the great ruins, but, rather, the false exponent and hypo-

critical practitioners. After all, one's view of life must necessarily be personal; and Hardy gives an artistic presentation of his experience and observation quite as conscientiously as, say, Stevenson does, who believes in a "crowded hour of glorious life." If we apply Goethe's principle—to see life steadily and see it whole—certainly Hardy does not satisfy it; it is only the few very greatest of the sons of men (like a Shakespeare) who do more or less satisfy such a counsel of perfection.

Part Played by Evil

Perhaps Hardy exaggerates the part played by pain and evil in the world; pain and evil are inevitable and necessary in the evolution and ascent of mankind, in the formation of character and the moulding of the will, in the fostering of humility and courage and charity. Nor can we truly say the Nature or the universe is hostile to man. Hostility may appear through human imperfection of knowledge, wisdom, vision, and adaptation to the cosmic forces.

Nevertheless, Hardy is not a Swift or a Diogenes. He does not hold up his characters to scorn; they are not crushed to degradation and taunted with cynical or sardonic gibes. He sees the difference between genuine feeling and ungentle sentimentality, between true belief and hypocrisy, between reality and pretence. His strictures and tragic developments are of the greatest value to us; they act as a purgation of the soul and a liberation of the spirit, and induce us to partake of his profound pity, large charity, and exquisite tenderness toward suffering mankind.

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ELDER CONSERVATORIUM

PIANO AND VIOLONCELLO RECITAL.

There was a large audience at the Elder Hall on Monday night, when one of the principal events of the Elder Conservatorium year took place. This was a pianoforte and violoncello recital by two well-known members of the staff, Mr. William Silver and Mr. Harold Parsons. Both musicians are thoroughly genuine in their aims to uplift the musical life of the community and to see that any new compositions of note which should be made familiar in Australia are presented under the best conditions. Widely different schools were represented, including English, French, German, Russian, and Italian. To begin, Mr. Silver and Mr. Parsons played a "Sonata in D minor" by Ludwig Thuille, for violoncello and pianoforte. This composer has been eulogized for his operatic writings, and amongst his instrumental works this sonata ranks as a notable achievement. It contains thematic material of intense beauty worked out in a cultured and dignified style. The task of presentation appealed to both players, and it was realized in a classical and scholarly mood.

Mr. Silver had evidently searched for unusual pianoforte solos. His decisions had been wisely made and carefully contrasted. The Oriental fantasia, "Isabey," by Balakirev, is only possible to a pianist of such attainments as Mr. Silver possesses. It is always designated "fiercely difficult," and, both technically and musically, tests the equipment of a pianist. Mr. Silver fully demonstrated his ability in this wonderful score. Another powerful achievement was the "Carillon" by Japponow, a realistic blending of church chimes, solemn hymn tones, and bells in the distance. A Chopin group, played with poetical charm and perfection of phrasing, contained "Prelude in B flat, No. 21," "Etude in F minor," and the "Nocturne in E." Fragments of Scriabin were named "Prelude" and "Allegretto." The list concluded with a "Romance in E," by Tschikowsky, and a Debussy waltz, "La plus que lente." Mr. Silver was the recipient of extended applause and had to return many times to bow acknowledgment.

Mr. Parsons has brought his cello playing to a high pitch of excellence—a fact which made his principal number a continuous delight. It was the Elgar concerto which displayed the faultless intonation, rare insight in interpretation, and deep culture of the cellist's equipment. This work is one of the finest examples of modern British music, and was introduced here by Gerardy. Congratulations are due to Mr. Parsons for his splendid interpretation of this notable addition to his repertoire, for the warmth and beauty of tone, and the depth and reality of his conception. He surpassed all the fine work done here previously, both in quality and contrast of nuance. A second sonata was "A major, No. 6," by Boccherini-Platte, and contained an adagio of poignant beauty and an allegro of attractive rhythm. Mr. George Pearce was accompanist and attained some specially good results in the Elgar concerto.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ORCHESTRA.

One of the outstanding numbers to be performed at the concert by the South Australian Orchestra on Saturday evening will be Tschikowsky's concerto for piano and orchestra. This work is symphonic in character and is one of the most noble and stupendous compositions ever evolved by the human brain. Indeed, it has been described as almost godlike, and its composer as one who stood above the ruck and saw visions hidden



Mr. George Pearce.

from all others. To Mr. George Pearce has been entrusted the solo role of this magnificent work. Mr. Pearce is a South Australian pianist who has gone far in his art. As a boy he studied the piano under Mr. William Silver, on several occasions winning a scholarship offered annually by his master. Later he studied ensemble playing under Mr. Eugene Alderman, with whom he was associated as accompanist for many years. During the war Mr. Pearce was on active service with the 11th Field Ambulance, being gassed during the fierce fighting at Messines. Later he was attached to General Monash's headquarters, and as conductor of the 3rd Divisional Orchestra rendered very valuable service. After the armistice Mr. Pearce proceeded to London, where he again took up his musical studies. At the Royal Academy of Music, for his principal study—piano—he was placed under Oscar Beringer, then an energetic old man of 74, but since deceased. Since his return to Adelaide Mr. Pearce has occupied a position on the staff of the Elder Conservatorium, where his work as pianist and teacher is well known. Pan at Savery's.

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WIRELESS BROADCASTING.

ENCOURAGEMENT NECESSARY.

Professor Chapman, of the University of Adelaide, on the subject of wireless broadcasting, writes:—

It is quite clear from the remarks of Professor Grant, which are only emphasised by the letter of Mr. Cusack, that it is high time the general public of Australia began to take some interest in the proposed regulations with regard to broadcasting. Wireless broadcasting offers such immense possibilities in regard to the education, entertainment, and information of the people in Australia, and especially to the settlers in our sparsely populated parts, that at present we can only dimly realise them, but unless we are very careful the use that we can make of this great scientific advance will be seriously handicapped for all time. The scientific principles upon which broadcasting depends have been freely given to the world by their discoverers. They have placed in our hands a wonderful instrument for the development, education, and relaxation of the people. How to use it best for that purpose should be our first consideration, but if we are not careful the first consideration will be how it can best be used to put profits into the coffers of the broadcasting companies. The recommendations of the Sydney conference speak for themselves. They actually proposed a minimum fine of £50 for any one found housing a receiving set without a license. In this enlightened country a man may get drunk, swagger down the street, and assault a policeman for a fine of about £5, judging by the police court records, but if his boy, under the dictates of a curiosity highly desirable and much to be encouraged, soldiers together a few bits of wire and makes a crystal receiving set, the fine is to be not less than £50.

America, the country in which broadcasting has made greater headway than any other, charges no license fees for receiving sets. Why should we not do the same? Why should we prevent the majority of people from having the advantage of this great discovery by charging a license fee of £2 5/2, as is proposed? In America much of the broadcasting is done by companies, who recoup themselves from the profits made out of the sale and manufacture of receiving sets. But in addition the existence of a great national audience, all provided with receiving sets, supplies a great opportunity for all sorts of people who wish to reach the ears of the nation. Many of the universities broadcast lectures, music, and information useful to agriculturists. Much has been made of the great costs of the broadcasting companies. But the University of Adelaide has recently made enquiries from the universities of America with regard to the cost of their broadcasting apparatus, and it was found that the most expensive equipment possessed by any university in America cost only £5,000. Several that cost only half or less than half of this were capable of distributing over the whole of the United States.

We are, I believe, too much in a hurry to develop the big broadcasting company in the hope that it will provide a programme sufficiently attractive to induce people to buy sets. But with the charges proposed the number of people with receivers will be decidedly limited. We are, I believe, trying to start at the wrong end. The use of this great scientific advance for the education and betterment of the people depends in the first place upon the existence of the great national audience. This can only be brought about by either no licensing fees at all or very small fees. The broadcasting will grow with the audience. We need have no fear about that, provided we allow it a free development, unfettered by harassing and unnecessary restrictions.

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UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE.

DEGREES CONFERRED.

At a special congregation of the University of Adelaide on Monday, the Chancellor (Sir George Murray) conferred several degrees.

Professor A. T. Strong recommended Irwin Topperwein, B.A. (in absentia) for the degree of Master of Arts, and Adelaide Letitia Miethko and Jonathan Kingsley Nicholls for the degree of Bachelor of Arts. Professor Harvey Johnson recommended Arthur Richard Alderman and Richard Grenfell Thomas for the degree of Bachelor of Science. Professor R. W. Chapman recommended Franz Darrat Jackman, Eric Lang Edgar, Lambert Stockbridge, Wilfred Robert Evans (in absentia), and Edward Allen Thrum (in absentia) for the degree of Bachelor of Engineering and the diploma of science. Mr. S. Russell Booth recommended for the diploma in commerce, Ernest Edward Bayly (in absentia) and Stanley Charles Francis (in absentia). The Chancellor conferred the degrees as recommended.

5 JUN 1924 Advertiser

FREE ORGAN RECITALS.

The first of the free mid-day organ recitals held weekly at the Elder Hall was given on Wednesday, when a number of music lovers were attracted by a well-chosen programme. The recitals, which were inaugurated by Dr. E. Harold Davies, Director of the Conservatorium, last year, proved exceedingly popular during the winter months, and their resumption has been eagerly awaited by many people who welcome the opportunity of hearing the majestic and mellow tones of the pipe organ. Mr. Harold Wyde, F.R.C.O., who acted as organist last year, is once more devoting himself to the task of providing music for those whose opportunities of hearing the great masters are limited. The programme on Wednesday was opened by Mr. Wyde's masterly playing of Mendelssohn's "Fourth Sonata." Much enthusiasm was shown by the audience at the conclusion of this fine number. "Requiem" (Saint-Saens) was played with rare delicacy, and the quaintness of Wolstenholme's "Fantastic Rustique" was fully appreciated by player and audience alike. The inclusion of a vocal number in the recital was a popular departure, and Miss Jean Sinclair rendered Handel's "Largo" with impressive effect, heightened by the rich beauty of the organ accompaniment. A Taylor-Colebridge bracket, the charming "Willow song," and a stirring military march were presented in delightful contrast by Mr. Wyde. These recitals will be continued throughout the winter. A popular programme has been arranged for next Wednesday.