

Douglas to Andrew Lang's fairies and Peter Pan, has for a generation or more been looked at in the light of the "Celtic Magic" of Renan and Matthew Arnold. The examination of the question by Mr. Smith may not result in giving Scotland any monopoly of fairyland, but it goes far to dispose of the theory that this particular manifestation of the human imagination is due either in Scottish or English literature to the influence of the Celts of Ireland or Wales or Scotland. On the positive side he is less cogent. He is aware, of course, that neither naturalism nor supernaturalism is the special property of the Scot, so that his attempt at finding specific national quality results in little more than this: that in Scottish literature we find persistently and pervasively these contradictory elements as warp and woof.

The chapters on Scottish influence are an excellent and restrained statement of the Northern contribution to the Romantic revival, much of it necessarily not new, but put with freshness and uncommon exactitude.

The style of the book is even more provocative than the matter. Mr. Smith writes with a constant fear of being obvious or banal, so that even simple things cannot be said simply. Allusive to an extreme, he cannot escape the charge of ostentation in the use of his wide reading; and he avoids flatness at the expense of occasional obscurity and affectation. But the book contains much good writing and independent thinking.

WILLIAM ALLAN NEILSON.

## Criticism by Antithesis

*Jane Austen.* By O. W. Firkins. Henry Holt and Company.

*Crichton.* Since we landed on the island, my lord, it seems to me that Mr. Ernest's epigrams have been particularly brilliant.

*Ernest (gratified).* Thank you, Crichton.

*Crichton.* But I find—I seem to find it growing wild, my lord, in the woods, that sayings which would be justly admired in England are not much use on an island. I would therefore respectfully propose that henceforth every time Mr. Ernest favors us with an epigram his head should be immersed in a bucket of cold spring water.

*(There is a terrible silence.)*

Antithetical juggling and epigrammatic sleight-of-hand may be admired in the process of carving up an imagist poet or a naturalistic playwright; perhaps they distract the reader's attention from the dullness of the subject; but they are not much use in criticizing Miss Austen. To change the figure, the cornea of Mr. Firkins's eye, as he might himself say, is prismatic; it breaks up the light of common day into brilliant and contrasted colors. He must see antithesis everywhere; he does see it almost everywhere in Jane Austen. The result is that he paints a sort of cubist portrait of her, which would pass unrecognized were it not labeled with her name. His method can best be illustrated in miniature by quoting a stanza of his poem To Jane Austen, which is printed at the beginning of the book.

O eye of eagle and of mole,  
Thou shrewd and penetrating soul,  
Yet off thy little English knoll  
So impotent and vain;  
Satiric—yet beneath thy glee  
An orgy of propriety,  
Thou riotest in decency,  
Invulnerable Jane!

This is at least as false as it is clever; and so is much of the book. One is inclined to apply to Mr. Firkins what he says of Arnold Bennett: "Some times he seems little more than a salver for his own pleasantries." Occasionally he seems to suspect that his method of portraying Miss Austen is not quite successful; thus he remarks "It sometimes seems as if the main business of life were to confute our expectations, to upset our theories, and to blunt our epigrams." In this respect, at least, Miss Austen's novels prove their lifelikeness.

The first and larger part of the book is devoted to a detailed analysis of the novels. This elaborate survey is marked by a truly curious infelicity, at its worst, perhaps, in the chapters on "Northanger Abbey" and "Persuasion," with each of which the critic finds a hundred faults. Even in the discussion of "Pride and Prejudice," which is Mr. Firkins's favorite, the reader is constantly irritated by captious and perverse judgments. The best chapter in the series is the one dealing with "Emma"; here, where Jane Austen comes nearest to the modern realists, Mr. Firkins is least unfair to her. Emma he regards as the only one of Miss Austen's major characters who is drawn with really accurate shading. An amusing trait of the book is his constant reproaching of Miss Austen for her "pyrotechnic quality" and "exaggeration." Must he have all the fireworks to himself? Part II discusses *The Realist*, and Part III *The Woman*. The author's main purpose, we are told at the beginning of Part II, is "the correction of certain common misapprehensions as to the nature and extent of [Miss Austen's] truth to life." The standard by which he judges truth to life appears to be the work of John Galsworthy. He finds that Miss Austen's accuracy, even in her narrow field, is "subject to two great deductions—a deduction on the score of decoration or convention and another on the score of extravagance or hyperbole." By the first he means that Miss Austen often makes her ladies and gentlemen speak with eighteenth-century literary formality; by the second, that she frequently uses the "humor" method of characterization. These points are obvious enough; we do not need a volume to prove that Miss Austen's dialogue is more formal than Mr. Galsworthy's, or that she liked salient characters better than he does. Like all great artists, Miss Austen used the literary conventions of her time; like most great writers of fiction and drama she allowed herself to present some characters from a single point of view, and to heighten their peculiarities somewhat. But Mr. Firkins, constantly accusing her of exaggeration, has enormously exaggerated these traits. Out of them he has succeeded in imagining a Miss Austen who is "one vile antithesis." In "creative criticism" does the critic create the author in his own image?

HOMER E. WOODBRIDGE.

## Blake and Gibran

*Twenty Drawings.* By Kahlil Gibran. Alfred A. Knopf.

THE drawings in this book are by a Syrian who the publishers tell us "has brought the mysticism of the Near East to America and has chosen to throw in his lot with the artists of the Occident in an endeavor to fuse new bonds of interest between the old world and the new." This theme of the publishers is further elaborated in an interpretative essay by Miss Alice Raphael which prefaces the volume. This essay plucks out the heart of Gibran's mystery with a professional flourish. It burns incense to Gibran's art mainly upon its symbolical side—where it is weakest! It finds all manner of remote and subtle implications in the artist's work which make rather persuasive reading until we carefully examine the drawings themselves. We will probably reject first of all the fantastic notion that Gibran's symbolism is a peculiar heritage of the Arabic race-mind which has been grafted upon the traditions of the West as a novel contribution to a present era weary of ante-bellum realism; for it is difficult to see how the most adept of those who distil sublimations can recognize in Gibran's art any essence which countless Occidental artists might not equally claim.

His drawings call up instantaneously to the memory the tinted pencil sketches of Rodin; they strive for the massiveness of Rodin but attain instead a feminine sweetness of touch and conception. They hint strongly too of the methods and mannerisms of Leonardo da Vinci. No strong individuality rises above this eclecticism to make the borrowings its own. This does not mean that Gibran's art, though derivative, does not possess a genuine merit of its own. His best drawings are conceived with sim-

plicity and executed with adequate draughtsmanship. His delicate, flexible handling of line is his most distinctive claim to artistic recognition. His group compositions are stiff and cumbersome, but his single figures often have undeniable beauty. The one called *Flight*, for instance, is gracious and charming in its flow of line, and there is no ambiguity about the illusion it conveys of movement through space. Another lovely conception of the female figure is entitled *The Burden*. The sensitive portrait called *The Blind* has more genuine symbolism than anything in the book. Although it seems reminiscent of Leonardo's *Saint Anne*, it is a beautiful drawing and deserves unstinted praise. There is something extraordinarily appealing in the wistful blind face with its troubled forehead—the pathos of its unutterable isolation of soul. *Gibran* unfortunately has included in this volume a number of drawings too tentative and experimental to stand beside his more authoritative work. They are timid in execution—mere empty generalizations muffling a confused symbolism. Doubtless they are interesting enough as play for the artist. His wrist gets a certain amount of exercise as he whips his pencil again and again over the outline as if trying by sheer strength alone to beat the drawing into something decisive and significant. There is little wisdom, however, in presenting such gymnastics to the public. The hierophants of Modernist æsthetic criticism pounce upon performances of this kind and exaggerate their importance with loud ecstatic shrieks. Into the most inconsequential of scrawlings they read mysterious attributes which they propound in a jargon as abstract as that of mediæval Scholasticism. Any crude sketch with a suggestion of primitive distortion or naïveté sets them to foaming like sibyls. A symbolical title enhances the titillation.

*Gibran's* symbolism is hailed as the chief source of his power. Rodin is reported to have said of him: "I know of no one else in whom poetry and drawing are so linked as to make him a new Blake." This remark is hardly worth serious consideration. To the thoughtful student who knows his Blake, the conceptions of *Gibran* are tepid indeed by comparison. In Blake the atmosphere is charged with electricity—the symbols leap and swim in pools of sidereal fire. The brain of the beholder is shocked and terrified by their conflicts, their agonizings. In *Gibran's* art is no ruffled surface—the symbols are as lifeless as a cluster of dull bubbles on still water. In Blake the symbol and its objective embodiment are organic. In *Gibran* they fall apart. Beside the cosmic sweep of Blake, *Gibran* seems a self-conscious sentimentalist when he deals with symbols. His symbols strike us as titular—the tacked-on product of afterthought. *Gibran's* art is sometimes more interesting than Blake's, but not in its symbolical aspect. In one of *Gibran's* drawings labelled *The Greater Self*, a naked giant coddles a pigmy-like figure in his bosom. The giant seems to be tickling the soles of the unresponsive pigmy's feet. As we study the title we feel that the artist pondered a long time before he decided what the drawing might be construed to mean. The same is true of *The Innermost*, a fine drawing of a man's bowed figure in a familiar art-school pose; again the title seems adventitious. Another example is *The Great Aloneness*, in which a supine female sleeps while dim figures in tortuous embrace flee by in the wind. It might be Great Catherine of Russia watching the storm of carnal souls that swept Paolo and Francesca to the feet of Dante. No facetious speculation would dare attempt a transposition of Blake's terrifying symbols. The scoffer's brains might suddenly be burned to a cinder in his skull. *Gibran's* symbols, even if we admit that they occasionally cast pale lights through the fog, contract the soul's experiences to a pin-point of illumination. The chief discovery that can be squeezed out of *Gibran's* symbolical offerings is that the soul of man, if not yet free of the beast, is yearning upward toward hopeful release. *Gibran's* message is not one of arcane transcendencies, but one of graceful emotional exposition of form. There his work is valuable and secure.

GLEN MULLIN

## Class-Conscious

*Modes and Morals.* By Katharine Fullerton Gerould. Charles Scribner's Sons.

THE class-consciousness of the proletarian is a vice; that of the aristocrat, both a virtue and a duty! With this elementary distinction in mind, it will be obvious that no adverse criticism is implied in the statement that Mrs. Gerould's "*Modes and Morals*" is a class-conscious document. The traditions and standards of an aristocracy of culture determine the character of its social and literary comment. It is a culture with a Puritan strain: no person, warns Mrs. Gerould in an essay subtly delimiting the boundaries of truth—no person who likes to lie should ever be permitted to do so. Yet it is a culture more at home in a limited monarchy than in a republic. For where the only aristocracy is one of wealth, the cultured but shabbily-dressed descendant of half a dozen Signers is regarded as a social inferior by rich women whose fathers perhaps carried dinner-pails. Now, one of the "charming minor purposes of an hereditary aristocracy is the social countenancing of dowdiness." "A duchess may be as dowdy as she likes; and other women may with impunity be the less smart in a land where there are always duchesses being dowdy." The essays in this delightful vein were evidently written before the ever-lengthening shadow of the Russian Revolution darkened Mrs. Gerould's mind and alarmed her class-consciousness. And an alarmed class-consciousness inspires comment that is neither tolerant nor gracious nor truly discerning. Even before the advent of the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies, certain characteristics of contemporary fiction disturbed Mrs. Gerould. The Humanitarian Hero, for instance, with his wild democratic ideas, was a portent of change. The heroes of the younger English novelists insist upon taking us into the company of the unclassed; their excursions into the underworld are the modern equivalent of the grand tour. They are in constant protest against established conventions. Their actual sins are feeble and silly in comparison with the bold deeds of the Heathcliffs and Rochesters of the past. But these earlier rebels were at one with society in regarding themselves as sinners, and "you will not hurt society much while you accept its categories." The modern rebel refuses to regard himself as a sinner, he denies the jurisdiction of the court, and no attitude can be more subversive of established institutions than that.

The weapon of ridicule is used effectively against the novelists. Abuse is reserved for the more threatening challenge of Labor. Mrs. Gerould sees her class, the educated people in moderate circumstances with a decent tradition of culture back of them, who care for the life of the intellect and the spirit, threatened by the dominance of the "gorged and flattered workingman." What can "we of the minority" do to save our values from extinction? We must leave the motor-cars, the delicacies of the table, the jewels, and the joy-rides to Labor, and form an almost religious brotherhood for the practice of the austere life. Inevitable physical deprivations will be mitigated by the contemplation of great art, great ideas, and great poetry. A perfectly developed courtesy and the capacity for silence will atone for the lack of space and privacy. The coarser contacts will be eliminated by the use of impersonal machinery. The brotherhood may be short of coal, but not of logic, for it will cherish the logic that the wealthy miners and Mr. Arthur Henderson have discarded. If the logic displayed in this essay on "*The New Simplicity*" is representative of that to be cherished by the brotherhood, Mr. Henderson did well to discard it: a logic that recognizes the uneducative character of modern machine processes, yet blames the workman for his lack of mental grasp and breadth of view; that professes to be passionately concerned with humanity, yet sees no connection between the comforts of "impersonal" machinery and the soul-starving work