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THE supersession of Admiral Jellicoe as First Sea Lord came at an unexpected moment, but was not really unexpected. The fact that its announcement was deferred until Parliament was in recess, and until the harassed British citizen had eaten his Christmas dinner in peace, is not inconsistent with its having been decided in principle some time ago. The terms in which Sir Eric Geddes last August announced the advent of Sir Rosslyn Wemyss to Whitehall had already attracted attention. He was described not merely as Second Sea Lord, but as "Deputy First Sea Lord," a designation the more noticeable because as Chief of the Naval War Staff Admiral Jellicoe had a Deputy and an Assistant already. Sir Eric Geddes at the same time expressed the hope that the new appointment would enable certain features to be developed, which, on the face of it, the First Sea Lord would have been the natural person to develop.

* * *

It is absurd to suppose that such a change in the Naval Command is a personal matter betokening no change of policy. It is almost equally absurd to surmise, as many newspapers have done, that the change arose out of the two successive disasters to Scandinavian convoys. The results of the inquiries into these are not yet known; but it is worth remembering that the forces engaged formed part of the Grand Fleet, and the responsibility, if brought home to any of the highest authorities, would be Admiral Beatty's, not Admiral Jellicoe's. A more probable explanation is indicated by the speech of Sir E. Geddes to which we have referred. He specially emphasized the recent multiplication upon the Naval War Staff of captains and other younger officers who had had war experience afloat. Such a grouping of active minds with a common experience could not continue for long without developing a school of opinion. We need not suppose any sharp collision between Sir John Jellicoe and this school; but it seems probable that if he had been in active sympathy with it he would be First Sea Lord still.

* * *

Broadly the contrast is between a pre-war naval standpoint, which laid excessive, if not exclusive, stress on the conflict of main fleets, and consequently on the role of "capital ships" (*i.e.*, super-Dreadnoughts), and a standpoint based on war experience, which takes a wider interest in the development of all kinds of craft, cares more for the newer applications of science to warfare, and has a more aggressive conception of naval strategy. To the mistakes of emphasis of the older school we owed it that, at the outbreak of war, while well-off for Dreadnoughts, we had no submarine-proof bases on our eastern coasts, very few mines (and those of bad quality), and a shortage of destroyers which has not yet been made up, and is perhaps our worst naval handicap. These mistakes were promptly revealed, but not promptly amended. The Mines department at the Admiralty remained a scandal and a laughing-stock till little more than a year ago; the destroyer shortage still pinches us (though we still build super-

"THE LANGUAGE OF INITIALS"

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN.

SIR,—The writer of the interesting article on the above subject mentions that the word "automobile" has been replaced by "motorcar," and then by "the still simpler 'motor.'" Granted: nor do I doubt the greater simplicity of the later name. I may point out, however, that "motor" is not the correct name for a motor car. A motor is an entirely different thing from a motor car, and in some walks of life—insurance, for example—it is very confusing when people speak of "motor" instead of "motor car," and of "motor house" instead of "motorcar house" (*i.e.*, that much mispronounced word "garage").

Incidentally it may be remarked that about half the people in this country talk of "treacle" when they mean "syrup" (though it is only fair to concede that they are able to differentiate between roast beef and turkey), and about the same proportion use the expression "three *parts* full" when, presumably, they mean that a jug, bottle, &c., is three *quarters* full.—Yours, &c.,

RIFLEMAN W. M. ROBINSON.

No. 1 General Hospital, Casino 4, B.E.F.
December 14th.

Miscellany

THE HUMAN BAUDELAIRE

THERE clings to the personality of Baudelaire, even to-day, a reputation that remains rather inhuman. The humanity of his work has, indeed, been slowly, very slowly, affirmed. It is but a small body of work, and even within its narrow limits unequal, often falling into rhetoric or banality; it has had to make its way to us amid all sorts of impediments; prosecution at the outset, its own novelty, the scandal of all respectably conventional readers, the embarrassed and imperfect comprehension of admirers from Gautier onwards. Only within recent years has it become clear to all that here a new revelation of the mysteries of human emotion was expressed with a firm hand that possessed the sense of form, with a voice whose music could thrill the nerves and awaken the hidden impulses of the heart. Even in the midst of the agonies of war, we are told, in a little *cabinet de lecture* of the Latin Quarter with three copies of the *Fleurs du Mal*, they are never on the shelves and the reader must put down his name weeks in advance. Yet if the poet has taken his place not only in the ranks of great writers but among the classics of the heart, the man still remains homeless. For the most part we search in vain among the documents that are left—his fragmentary notes and letters, his recorded sayings and doings, the recollections of his friends—for a human person to love. We find a rather neurotic individual, slightly unsound in heredity, who was predestined to live an extravagant, abnormal, in the worldly sense unsuccessful life. On that basis we have the record of a perpetual reaction between extremes, of eccentricities that were merely childish, of a puerile delight in devices *pour épater le bourgeois* which the man of genius usually leaves to others. We seem to be in the presence of a mysterious and scarcely attractive figure, wearing a fantastic mask to which he himself likes to attract attention. "N'est-ce pas que je resemble à un évêque damné?"

It is just fifty years since Baudelaire died. Therewith his books pass out of copyright and the circle of his readers is indefinitely enlarged. It was a fitting moment for the publication of the long series of intimate letters, chiefly to his mother, and covering the years between the age of twelve and his death, thirty-four years later, which has been appearing in the *Revue de Paris* from August 15th to November 15th. They are the revelation of a personality which it had been left to sensitive readers to divine beneath that mask of "Wandering Jew" or "Guillotiné" or "Evêque damné" which Baudelaire loved to present to the world, and his dubious friends to point at. Here that personality is revealed clearly for all to see, even in pathetic nakedness, simple, human, pitiful.

It is, indeed, a pathetic, even a tragic figure, guided through an atmosphere of unrelieved gloom by an inevitable Fate, whose life-course we follow in these letters. In the first letter of the series, a schoolboy of twelve, he writes to his brother of his laziness, "a little mixed with *amour-propre*" (he could not write until receiving an answer to his former letter), a sprain of his foot, and his shame at having taken no prize. There we have, in effect, the four themes that were destined to be woven in and out of the whole drama: laziness, which was really a defect of physical energy, combined with fidelity to a high ideal, pride which he could not shake off in the most intimate and even the most humiliating relationships, a feeble constitution, a perpetual inability to command worldly success. Throughout Baudelaire faces the facts of himself without either disguise or emphasis, without either self-praise or self-palliation. At the most, he says, and that more than once: "I have suffered so much, I have been so punished, I think I may be forgiven much." His letters are written in a completely simple and unliterary manner; there is no style, nor always grammar. He is no longer the mischievous child hiding behind a mask, but still a child, indisciplined and awkward and helpless, with dreams in his head and tears in his eyes, afraid of everything. He cannot go to see his mother on one occasion because his clothes are so shabby and he is afraid of the servants, so asks her to meet him in the Salon Carré at the Louvre, "the place in Paris where one can talk best." He knows, indeed, who he is and what he stands for in the world, though with no touch of vanity. "I think that posterity concerns me," he remarks parenthetically. And still his irritable pride comes in; after telling his mother that until she had sent him money he had been two days without food, and obliged to take some brandy offered to him, much as he hated spirits, he adds: "May such confessions never be known to living soul or to posterity."

The chief figures of this drama, after the protagonist, are three: Maître Ancelle, the lawyer who was constituted his guardian, after he had dissipated the greater part of the little fortune inherited from his father, his mistress, Jeanne Duval, the *Vénus Noire* (she had a strain of negro blood), and his mother, to whom most of the letters are addressed, the being who always remained the nearest to him in all the world. There are other subsidiary figures, notably his stepfather, General Aupick, successively French Ambassador in Constantinople, London and Madrid, an honourable and good-hearted man who was prepared to be friendly and even helpful until he recognised that the young man's irritable pride made this impossible, and there is Poulet-Molassis, the admirable publisher and friend, whom we dimly see in the background. The guardian, the mistress, and the mother remain the three persons who had the deepest influence on Baudelaire's intimate personal life. Ancelle had the least, and there was no reason why he should have had any. He was only there because the poet had shown himself clearly unable to manage his own money affairs, and he seems to have been an excellent man whose conduct was irreproachable. But Baudelaire, though aware of this, could never forgive him for being there at all. The fact that he must be treated as a child in money matters is a perpetual corroding poison to one of Baudelaire's temperament, all the more so when there is no doubt about its necessity, and it recurs again and again in his letters to his mother, whom he begs repeatedly and with insistence to deal with him directly and not through Ancelle. He was never able to overcome the humiliation of this guardian.

Ancelle filled the chief place in the ante-chamber to

Baudelaire's intimate life. Within, a more important figure, Jeanne, was associated with nearly the whole of his active years, from the age of twenty-one onwards. In one of his letters Baudelaire mentioned that he could not get on with his brother on account of the latter's "attitude of cynicism towards women." How little there was of the cynic in Baudelaire could not be better illustrated than by the long story of his devotion to Jeanne, for there could not well be a woman better fitted to stimulate the germs of cynicism than Jeanne. When what beauty she possessed faded, and she became a prematurely aged invalid, no charm was left; she was stupid, false, and spiteful: she took all the money he could gather together for her and trickily tried to get more: she treated him with insolent contempt and seemed to delight in humiliating him: she went to his publisher to try to sell books and drawings he had given her: she made him ridiculous by declaring that the money he had sent to pay for her in a nursing home had never been handed over: she showed neither regard nor admiration for him; she felt no interest in his work and would not trouble to acquire any. Baudelaire soon ceased to have any delusions about Jeanne; at first, as he admitted, he was guilty of outbursts of violence, but before long, while recognising good qualities we can no longer discern, he realised her character, with the same courageous insight with which he realised his own. And this, as he writes to his mother, was the woman on whom he had, like a gamester, placed all his chances; "this woman was my only distraction, my only pleasure, my only comrade." So she continued to be, such as she was, many years after. Undoubtedly he was upheld by the deep-rooted pride which he himself recognised as the chief element in his character. Nothing would induce him to abandon Jeanne to misery. For twenty years he worked for her, cared for her, nursed her, scarcely as a lover—though, on one occasion, when she threatened to leave him, he was ill for days—but rather with the unrewarded devotion of a sister of mercy.

Of Baudelaire's mother, Madame Aupick, no picture is presented to us. He analyses Jeanne's character, he analyses his own, but never his mother's. Yet we obtain many glimpses which enable us to form a fairly clear idea. She had been, we gather, a beautiful woman of distinguished appearance; she was also of neurotic tendency, subject to migraine and other nervous disturbances, so that her son shows a constant solicitude about her health. In this matter of temperament, as he himself remarks, he takes after her. But on the mental side there seems a total absence of likeness between the ambassador's wife and the Bohemian poet who spent his life wandering from one third-rate hotel to another in the Latin Quarter. She was conventional, she was devout, her literary tastes were of the most ordinary kind. She was indulgent, her son is able to write simply and frankly to her about Jeanne, and no doubt she felt some blind sort of maternal pride in his reputation. He is constantly sending her his articles or specially bound volumes of his works; but, though she is evidently interested in the Poe translations, to her son's genius she seems almost as insensitive as Jeanne. The devotion which subsisted to the end on both sides, notwithstanding the perpetual wounds which each was inevitably receiving from the other, is all the more wonderful and pitiful. The son's letters are throughout the letters of a child, who sometimes implores his mother ("avec des mains jointes," as he says) and sometimes attempts to domineer over her. He comes to her with all his troubles, quite humbly, throwing aside, if not without an effort, all his *amour-propre*. It is seldom that we miss a reference to his "eternal moneyworries." He is always wanting to borrow money, large sums or small sums, even at desperate moments a few francs. But we never feel that he is herein unworthily trying to exploit his mother, his attitude is too simple and childlike, his tone too poignantly heartfelt. He writes to her, as he says, "not only as my mother, but as the one being who loves me." He is often hopeful: all his literary affairs are going well, and he has just had an article accepted by an editor: but—needless to quote further, for anyone who has ever been acquainted with a young author is familiar with such situations. In a month, a fortnight perhaps, he will be rich, but with only thirty francs in his pocket how about the interval? Again and again he declares that "before New Year's Day I shall have settled some of my debts, and published my verses": but on one occasion, turning on himself with sarcasm, he adds: "I shall soon know that phrase by heart." For these anxieties—"unhappy, humiliated, sad as I am, overwhelmed every day by a crowd of wants"—were not favourable to productive activity, especially to one of Baudelaire's make, "a creature made of idleness and violence," whose cerebral activity so far outruns his nervous vitality. He realises this himself—no one was ever more clear-sighted—and writes to his mother that "the absolute idleness of my apparent life, contrasted with the perpetual activity of my ideas, throws me into rages." He feels that he has wasted twenty years of his life in dreaming. "Habit plays such a large part in virtue," he writes, and goes on to speak with humble respect of Balzac, who "*always* worked." And again, a few years later, he writes: "How many years of fatigue and punishment it takes to learn the simple truth that work, that disagreeable thing, is the only way of not suffering in life, or at all events of suffering less!"

On his mother's side, we seem to discern, with whatever lack of sympathy and constant reproaches, a patient and adorable affection which no disappointments could permanently crush. The ambassador's wife seems from time to time to make futile efforts to bring the child of genius into the ordinary paths of respectability. She realised that an excess of generosity was useless, but, though her funds were not unlimited, the advances she made evidently amounted altogether to a large sum. Baudelaire, soothed his pride over these transactions by a sanguine faith in the future and a quiet confidence in the ultimate recognition of his genius. He was never to see the realisation of that faith and that confidence. In March, 1866, he took Poulet-Molassis and Félicien Rops to see his favourite church at Namur, St. Leup, built in the finest baroque style of the Jesuits, with red marble pillars, solemnly fantastic in the dark and heavy atmosphere, the *Fleurs du Mal* transmuted into stone, a spot to which, for Baudelaire's sake, one went on pilgrimage in days before the war. Here he fell stricken by paralysis. By his mother's wish they conveyed him to the Paris he had abandoned three years earlier for the still less congenial Brussels. His memory grew faint and uncertain, the great master of language could command few words beyond "Nom, cré nom!" But he still loved to hear Wagner's music, he still delighted in the sight of tulips and dahlias, he still liked to appear neat and elegant. A few months after the first stroke he died in the arms of his mother, who cherished the belief that he recognised her to the end.

The rich genius of France has not been rich in poets. To the French critic, indeed, it has seemed that France has sometimes been a "nest of singing birds." But from the tangled forest of English literature where "that wild music burthens every bough" we are not much impressed by the French critic's nest. It even seems to us that those special qualities of the French genius which have produced magnificent results in so many fields—the daring logic, the cool, penetrative analysis, even the instinct for art—are with

difficulty compatible with what we understand as poetry, for in France the rhetorician, with eternal recurrence, takes the poet's place, and no man marks the difference. The clarity and order and sociality of the French Latin genius weave a close harmonious network against which the poet with his disorganising lyric passion can only beat himself to death. In the island where, as it has been said, "every Englishman is himself an island," the poet is as independent as the rest, and as free in his spare moments to earn his living more or less creditably, as custom house officer, clergyman, apothecary, or what not. In France, on the other hand, whose great poets may easily be counted off on the fingers of one hand, from Villon to Verlaine, the poet has been a tragic victim, an outcast even to those who recognised his genius. Ronsard, in the small group of great poets, is the exception, and when we wander from Tours down the left Bank of the Loire to that little priory farmstead, delightful even in its decay, which was Ronsard's home, we realise the secret of his serenity and tender joy, and how it was that he is, after all, the least of the great poets of France. For we understand nowhere better than in France that Nature made the heart in the form of a lyre and stretched across it cords of tendinous flesh. How significantly true it is in Baudelaire's case has now been made for ever clear by the revelation of these letters.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

THE THISTLE

On a patch of baked earth
  At the crumbled cliff-brink,
Where the parching of August
  Has cracked a long chink,

Against the blue void
  Of a still sea and sky
Stands single a thistle,
  All tarnished and dry.

Frayed leaves, spotted brown,
  Head hoary and torn—
Was ever a weed
  Upon earth more forlorn,

So solemnly gazed on
  By the sun in his sheen,
Printing clear in long shadow
  Its raggedness lean?

From the sky comes no laughter,
  From earth not a moan;
Erect stands the thistle,
  Its seeds abroad blown.

LAURENCE BINYON.

Drama

THE PIONEER PLAYERS

MR. TORAHIKO KHORI came through the curtains and made a little speech to the darkened theatre. He said that we "beautiful ladies and clever gentlemen" were about to see a performance which might strike us as strange. His play had been written for puppets and for an audience in an island where ideas and customs were strange. He himself knew how it felt to find himself in a strange island. The strings of his puppets were pulled; they were agitated; they suffered; then it was all over. He hoped they would dance for a little in our hearts, and that afterwards we would remember they had suffered. His speech was not at all like an English one—no genial, favour-currying familiarity about it. It was very polite and not without the esoteric humility of the poet presenting his work to the public. He spoke to us as to people who understood well that life's agitations were shadows upon running water. Of course, we did not understand any such thing; still, we were pleased. We clapped and settled down to what was to follow.

I expect the audience was disappointed; I know I was. For of all the Pioneer Performances I have seen, this was the worst. There was a great deal to be made out of it, and the actors made so little. The scene (charming to look at) represented a shrine at the top of a forest-mountain. It was night and there was a storm. Thither for the past twenty nights a woman has come, a demented witch-woman, to curse her husband and his mistress. Already the curse has nearly worked its end. The doomed man, who has staggered up to ask the Oracle if there is not hope for him, is the first to appear. The Oracle tells him there is no hope; such evil spells are too strong; but once resigned he may find in the Oracle the comfort of a friend. He enters the shrine and the woman, whom one absorbing evil passion has turned into a witch, comes on. It was a great opportunity for an actress, but Miss Lowther, who entered with guttering candles on her head—well, I think "the beautiful ladies" at least in the audience were more moved by the thought of how the grease-droppings were to be combed or ironed out of her tresses afterwards than by the passion she intended to express. I was helped by the memory of another actress who (granted human beings and not puppets interpreted) would have done justice to the author's intention. In imagination I saw Sada Yacco rush in as though blown by the wind, with her great, black bearskin of hair, a tiny but terrible figure; her beautiful eyes set in a glaring squint, her white face masked, her body twisted, in an agony of hate. And when I pictured to myself the crazy fury of the hammer-blows with which she would have driven the nail into the face of the effigy of her rival, I felt I might then have assented to belief in the baleful power of a creature emptied of humanity; and, thanks to that thrill, have apprehended the eternal stillness behind all human passions which it was also the purpose of the poet to suggest. But as it was it was hard to feel anything of the kind. The Oracle delivered his lines with the pathetic solemnity of a tired clergyman reading the burial service for the tenth time in a single afternoon (when I looked away the fall of his voice suggested a decorously stifled yawn), and Mr. Henry Oscar, as the doomed man, made the common mistake of thinking that the approach of death is suggested by a series of attitudes in which it is impossible to maintain the body's equilibrium for a minute without stiddering and staggering.

Then the curtain went up on Mr. Casey's play, *Insurrection*. The subject was the Irish rebellion and the scene was laid in the drawing-room of a Dublin house. The action begins two weeks before the outbreak, and closes at the end of the insurrection. The situation of the family is as cruel a one as can well be conceived. Of the two sons, the elder is home wounded from the front, the younger is a Sein Feiner—the sort of ardent, poetic young patriot whom England thought it "proper" (I can think of no adjective which expresses this country's attitude of mind better) to shoot last April year. The elder has married an English girl; the younger is engaged to an Irish girl, who shares his hopes and fears for Ireland. Her part was taken by Miss Una O'Connor, who acted it admirably. I think she felt and understood every word she had to speak. Philip Blake is in that lover's mood when he feels inclined to cry: "I did not know human