

Vol. III · No. 14 THE LONDON MERCURY

38.334 II

THE LONDON  
MERCURY

Edited by J. C. SQUIRE



December 1920

Volume III · No. 14

*Registered for Transmission to Canada  
and Newfoundland at Magazine Post Rates.*

*Three Shillings Net*

# THE LONDON MERCURY

*Editor* - J. C. SQUIRE

*Assistant-Editor* - EDWARD SHANKS

---

---

Vol. III No. 14

December 1920

---

---

## EDITORIAL NOTES

COLONEL REPINGTON'S war diary was reviewed in our last number. It was followed almost immediately by the memoirs of Mrs. Asquith, and the two together have precipitated an enormous amount of talk, if very little coherent thought, about the conventions which should be observed by the "contemporary" memoir-writer. There has been a school which has vehemently maintained that these memoirs were unpardonable, and another which has replied with the contention that they were readable. The suggestion that Colonel Repington has committed gross breaches of manners has been answered by the assertion that his volumes would give posterity a valuable picture of the West End during the Great War; and protests against the alleged immodest candour of Mrs. Asquith have been deemed to be cancelled by the allegation that her candour was thoroughly honest, and that she could tell a story as vividly and directly as Saint-Simon. One party has been too angry to discuss her literary qualities, and the other too lost in admiration to pay much attention to her conception of propriety. We need not now (a large portion of her work having been already quoted and requoted in the Press) produce specimen passages from Mrs. Asquith's book; everybody remembers the most characteristic, and some are trying to forget them. But we may usefully for a moment consider the general principles involved.



THERE is one primary distinction to be made: we should have called it obvious had so many people not failed to notice it. It lies here: there are two kinds of things to which people have objected (often whilst confessedly enjoying them!) in various books of memoirs published during the last few years. There are the passages in which the author has revealed his or her own character and most intimate experiences with unusual freedom, and there are the passages in which the author

has at worst betrayed the particular private confidences, or, at best, unveiled the ordinary private conversation of living persons, who were unaware that "reporters were present." Now it seems to us that these two kinds of indiscretion are on totally different planes. If a man cares to say that he has been a miscreant, or a woman that she has been a flirt, if Rousseau cares to tell us that he stealthily left his child on the steps of the Foundling Hospital, or Marie Bashkirtseff likes to describe to us her most egotistic day-dreams, it is mainly the affair of the person who is making the revelation. We are glad to have Pepys's frank exhibition of himself, and Cellini's. We may detect a difference between a person who bequeaths such an exposure to posterity and one who publishes it in his own lifetime. We may feel that we ourselves would no more sell the story of our loves to a newspaper than we would declaim them from the steps of the Mansion House, or "walk down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily" in our hands. But, unless the spread of such practices might be supposed to be socially deteriorative, nothing more than taste is involved, and nobody except the diarist can be harmed. There are always individuals who are naturally more frank, or less modest, or less shamefaced, or more fond of attracting attention at all costs, or more anxious to purge their faults by confession, than the generality of mankind. If they care to be nine-days'-wonders, let them; if they have no liking for reticence that is their business, though they may sometimes embarrass their relatives. But the divulgence of the private words and deeds of other living people, without their consent, is in another category. It may be uncivilised and dishonourable; and if it be hard to define the line beyond which it is not permissible for a decent man to pass, we can all recognise, when we see it, a clear case on either side of the line.



**I**N condemning recent instances of this we are not principally thinking of Mrs. Asquith. Most of her conversations are old ones; the things to which her critics have taken exception have largely been self-revelations or pictures, considered false, of English social life; if she has embarrassed people it has been by describing their characters, usually in a very complimentary way, when they would rather (liking a certain measure of privacy) not have their abilities, manners, and morals discussed in print at all. But why should a man have his remarks published to the world merely because he had the misfortune to meet a military journalist at lunch, or to meet a disguised reporter in a train, or to discourse innocently to somebody whom he believed to be a man of letters or a political squire? There was a bad instance (we won't draw attention anew to the details) in a most entertaining book of memoirs, mostly historical, published last year. A member of the present Cabinet was, truly or falsely, reported as having described a colleague as a mediocre person. If that particular Minister made no such remark, it is certain that Cabinet Ministers very

freque  
with e  
and a  
the so  
by a r  
casual  
used i  
to sha

**L**ET  
our P  
lents  
confic  
it wou  
after  
We d  
to-da  
the  
as a  
books  
notes  
or res  
into  
priva  
for s  
explc  
the n  
conv  
eaves

**W**  
appe  
only  
her  
our  
we f  
That  
a for  
little  
have

frequently do make offensive remarks about each other in private, often with excellent reason. We have all said derogatory things about colleagues and acquaintances. But it is thoroughly caddish to publish anything of the sort which was not meant for publication. If a man is being interviewed by a reporter he should be told so. It would be intolerable if behind every casual conversation lurked the feeling that "anything you say may be used in evidence against you." We ought not to allow anti-social persons to shake the basis of our moral credit system.



LET us make it clear that we hope that the most intimate memoirs are being written and the most ample diaries kept. We have inherited our Pepys, our Walpole, and our Greville : we should pass on their equivalents for the edification and amusement of posterity. There may be some confidences which—the recipient should be able to judge which they are—it would be unfair to record at all. There are, on the other hand, some which, after a certain lapse of years, may be printed during their makers' lifetime. We don't suppose any living politician would object to a diarist printing to-day what he said thirty-five years ago at a dinner-party on the subject of the Home Rule Bill ; common sense may be a guide again here. But, as a general rule, we may say that diarists who aim at making valuable books about their contemporaries should note all they can and put their notes aside until they can be safely published without causing just anger or resentment. And we may add that diarists whose object in penetrating into men's homes or listening to their conversations, under the guise of private friendship or public business, is to secure especially intimate details for sale should be pretty clearly shown what those whom they have exploited think of them. If things go much farther we shall be having in the morning papers full particulars of last night's dinner-parties, honest conversation will be impossible, and every listener will be regarded as an eavesdropper.



WE regret to say that the "unpublished" poems by Swinburne printed in our last number were not unpublished at all. One of them, which appeared in a weekly paper in 1896, we could not be expected to know : only by the merest chance could we have encountered it before or known where to look for it. But *A Reminiscence* was printed in the *Astrophel* volume. The source from which we received the poem was one in which we felt—and with every reason—that we could place complete reliance. That we did not, before publishing, attempt what we should have thought a formal verification of the poem's novelty was due to an accident. These little things will happen, but we are frankly sore that one of them should have happened to ourselves.

WE have always shown a somewhat unusual lack of reserve in talking to our readers about the position of the paper. Anybody who should suppose, merely because we are candidly interested in subscriptions and advertisements, that our interests were primarily commercial would be very simple. If we had no purchasers and no advertisers—this is an extreme example—the purest of enthusiasms would not keep us going; and the more support we get the better we shall be able to pursue our artistic aims. Our readers, we believe, and subscribers especially, will be interested to hear that the original subscribers have renewed their subscriptions almost to a man. To be precise, about 90 per cent. of them have renewed, and we start this year with about a thousand more postal subscribers than we had twelve months ago. We are naturally interested to get more. Every man and woman who buys THE LONDON MERCURY each month might as well send in a cheque for an annual subscription: not a penny will be lost by it, and we shall find it *pro tanto* easier to make nice estimates as to the number of copies to print. Our circulation, we may say, is rising. That our advertisements are also doing so goes without saying. On this point we have one remark. We cannot editorially recommend any or every article advertised in our columns. We do our best to keep them free from the solicitations of sharks, but it is clear (to take an example) that the books advertised in them must be good, bad, and indifferent, and that our advertisement pages must frequently contain announcements of compositions which in our editorial pages are either damned or ignored. But we think that we may without indecency suggest that when our readers do see fit to order things on account of having seen them mentioned in our advertisement pages they should state the fact when giving their orders. That will be of assistance to us.

**T**

long pas  
to "neut

**L**AST  
dec  
The pre  
Novemb  
in the cl  
short sp  
the scul  
felicitous  
not sum

**W**E  
operativ  
craftsme  
At first  
publishi  
they bel  
warrants  
to dispe  
and, afte  
without  
are youn  
and boo  
and arti  
ambition  
issued. ]  
should s  
19 Tavit

**A**T tl  
ou  
Everymc  
old line  
volumes  
books (a

## A LETTER FROM GERMANY

Salzburg, November, 1920

**H**ARDLY any German writer of our time has been more read than Ludwig Ganghofer, who has lately died. But no other has been so harshly spoken of. It is a German peculiarity that the writer whom the German reads he also despises, while the writers whom he honours and admires go unread. This is so much so that if a book does not bore him, even does not annoy him, he feels it must be worthless, and as soon as he hears the value of a book highly estimated he is careful not to read it. In the same way the German thinks the pictures which appeal to him to be contemptible for that very reason, and praises openly only such pictures as he secretly considers horrible. (It may be, however, that the same conditions obtain in other countries: I do not know.) The best example of this is Richard Strauss, who was hugely famous so long as his music was generally displeasing. But, in proportion as our ears grew accustomed to his music, so his fame fell away from him, and to-day our musical youth considers him a sort of Trompeter von Säkkingen. Now Ganghofer had the misfortune to please at the beginning. And he had the further misfortune to fall between two generations. The rulers of Literature in 1880, the old gentlemen, the "Bonzes," who were otherwise very unfriendly to insurgent youth, made an exception for Ganghofer and very graciously took him up. This aroused envy in the young, and when, ten years later, they gained their victory, the young Ganghofer was also overthrown together with his older companions. He owed, moreover, the favour of the elders, who were else so severe, less to his works than to the indescribable charm, to the captivating grace, to the shining magic of his personality. From him proceeded such a radiance and so much power and joy of life that no one who encountered the compelling glance of his bold eyes could withstand him. The secret of his appearance was that he looked exactly what a poet is expected to look—but what in reality poets hardly ever do look. Fair, slender, tall, with a proud, hard, audacious profile, with a rapid step, filled with impatience by the throbbing pressure of life, he appeared like a young Teutonic king; and in Munich, where he began his career, as later in Vienna, whence he returned again to his Bavarian home, the hearts of all women went out to him. He was a man of the open-air, a hunter, a mountain-climber, an oarsman, a boat-sailer, but also a genuine German drinker, with an artist's sense, rare in a German, for splendour and magnificence, insatiably eager for every kind of beauty, however it might manifest itself, for the beauty of women as for the beauty of forests, for decorated rooms as for showy verses—he was one of the first in Germany to announce the fame of the young d'Annunzio—a wonderful companion, an incomparable story-teller, the most lovable of hosts in his hospitable house, as passionate in hunting as in the organisation of riotous festivals, enjoying equally now the loneliness of the mountains, now the wildest of company—life had no cup of joy from which Ludovico il Magnifico, as his friends called him, had not drunk. What a prodigal of beauty, magnificence, and joy! What an artist in life! Indeed, in the end, there was not too much left over for art, for his own art. In this he was a belated survival of those older post-romantic artists, who must be incomprehensible, almost irritating, to their present-day successors, since these always keep all their strength for their work and ascetically give themselves up to it, while men like Ganghofer, turning everything much more directly into their own lives, prosecuted their art only with the remains of their strength, with, so to speak, the crumbs that fell from the rich tables of their lives. In this way, it is true, art was liable to suffer: to-day it is rather the man who suffers. Who can decide which is the more important, who can

answer  
life? Ga  
when tl  
perceive  
between  
it was j  
to seek  
artist ar  
too earl  
feeling  
expressi  
things.  
names t  
who car  
which t  
that on  
misfortu  
forgiver  
before  
unjust r  
average  
*Herrgot*  
humour  
genuine  
keep th  
which  
the high  
has bec  
return  
hour be  
as well  
laurelle  
the mo  
writer  
It has  
nation.  
The  
is his p  
himself  
capable  
The be  
literatu  
than ou  
whole  
poets I  
transla  
Goethe  
have p  
imper  
Dante.  
beginn  
expres  
He has

answer the question whether even the highest work of art can outweigh a full human life? Ganghofer's friends, the witnesses of his brilliant career, involuntarily remembered when they read his books the charm and splendour of his personality, and they perceived this personality in the books themselves; but, it must be confessed, only between the lines. His books and his plays were only a shadow of himself. Perhaps it was just because life itself, immediate life, gave him so much that he had no need to seek a compensation in art: one must have been rejected by life to become all an artist and nothing but an artist. Perhaps it was also because he came a couple of years too early, because his beginnings fell within the period of the Epigoni, in a time when feeling for style, for the shape and proportion of style, for style as a means of personal expression, was still lacking. That age contented itself with speaking of, and about, things. But the secret of extracting from language the magical power which not only names things but calls them up, evokes them—this secret we have re-discovered, we who came immediately after him, hardly ten years younger than he. The generation which treads immediately on one's heels is always the most severe, and it is with it that one comes least easily to an understanding. And then Ganghofer had the further misfortune to be admired and singled out by the German Emperor. This could not be forgiven him. Envy could not forgo the opportunity of masquerading as manly pride before the thrones of princes. The fact that his work overcame this and conquered unjust ridicule proves that it must, after all, contain something which deeply moves the average German. His *Geigenmacher von Mittenwald*, his *Prozesshansl*, and, above all, his *Herrgottschnitzer von Ammergau*, strong solid plays of peasant life, combining real humour with a certain "deutsches Gemüt" and a sentimentality which was not quite genuine, but was, therefore, all the more powerful in its effect, still after forty years keep their places on all the stages of Germany. And he wrote a novel, *Schloss Hubertus*, which can still be found to-day in every hunting-lodge and every hunter's hut from the high north of Germany to the last outliers of our southern mountains. This novel has become a breviary for all hunters. They all, masters and servants alike, when they return from the chase and are stretching their tired limbs in bed, read it for half an hour before going to sleep and never fail to be delighted by it. His Berchtesgau novels, as well, *Der Klosterjäger*, *Der Mann im Salz*, have so good a public that many a laurelled poet might envy it. But the more his works penetrated among the people the more surely were literary honours denied to him. It is the fate of the German writer in these days that he must choose between the intellectuals and the people. It has not been the fortune of any living writer to affect both, to affect the whole nation.

The happiest gift of the German, the faculty in which he overtops all other nations, is his power so to enter into the ways and customs of other races that he can feel himself thinking their thoughts and sharing their inner rhythm, and seems at times capable of making a temporary intellectual removal from his own into another people. The best example of this is Goethe, to whom we owe our great conception of a world-literature. It is this mysterious joy in thinking the thoughts of other nations rather than our own and in letting our hearts beat faster when they rest on the heart of the whole world which makes us such good translators. The preference which our great poets have shown for using their best powers in the work of translation. There are translations by Wieland of the ancients and of Shakespeare, by Voss of Homer, by Goethe of Voltaire, Diderot, and Cellini, by Schiller of Racine. Schlegel and Tieck have produced a translation of Shakespeare in a classically great style, and with this imperishable performance stand also Eichendorff's Calderon and Stefan George's Dante. Into this illustrious circle enters now a young German poet, who is already beginning to be celebrated, and who is by reason of the intensity of his feeling and expression perhaps our greatest hope, Franz Werfel, the author of the *Weltfreund*. He has applied the force of his style to the rendering of a Czech poet, Otakar Brezina.

Brezina is reckoned in Bohemia the greatest poet of that country. I believe that he is more: I believe that at this moment he is the most powerful rhapsodic poet alive. He is no longer young, having been born in 1868; and he is still a schoolmaster in an obscure Moravian village. He is already known to French readers by the intermediation of Ernest Denis, who, with his ear for *le millénaire qui sommeille dans toute âme slave*, recognised at once the importance of Brezina, and by the lectures on modern Bohemian literature delivered at the Sorbonne in 1910 by H. Jelinek, which were afterwards published as a book by the *Mercure de France*. The first translation of Brezina into German was made by Emil Saudek in 1901. This translation sounded well enough, but it also sounded like a translation. Saudek himself may have felt this, for he joined forces with the powerful poet, Franz Werfel. Brezina's *Winde von Mittag nach Mitternacht*, translated by Emil Saudek and Franz Werfel have now appeared (Kurt Wolff, Munich). Thus once again a masterpiece of world-literature, of an elevation perhaps unequalled in our time, has been made a German possession. For Brezina's work has a spiritual breadth and power for which I can think of no parallel in our time. Here are really Walt Whitman and Dostoievski together; and a breath of American freedom hovers over the gloomy chaos, a gleam of the Baroque falls on the Gothic turbulence, a threatening Hussite note mixes itself with the psalms of the ancient Bohemian church, a cry from the future answers the primitive voices of the Bohemian soil, now a patriarch, now a futurist, speaks to us. This poet rises above himself, above his race, above his time, to a height where the masks of self, race and time disappear, and from them emerges a pure human spirit. Since Whitman's *Salut au monde* humanity has heard no such Beethoven chord.

HERMANN BAHR

**T**

philosophy  
literature  
Aristotle  
(c. 1840  
way of  
novels  
extraor-  
had ver-  
complie-  
was in a  
more p-  
h. rt,  
would l  
In fact,  
time). S  
the vas  
and tear  
evil, use

The j  
access t  
or at le-  
even Pu  
him as c  
Russian  
basis as  
sociolog  
by a st-  
compar

Conti  
is main  
beginni-  
ated in  
consum  
re. ns  
teacher  
poet; T  
traverse  
and in  
which i

\* For  
*Literatu*