

THE BOOKERY

WALTER PATER AS A STYLIST *

"WORDS, words, words," quoth Hamlet wearily. His laconic literary critique expresses a common conception that is just a whit fallacious. While it is matter of dispute whether one can think without words, surely the affirmative will be taken by all those tortured souls that have ever groped frantically for just the articulate grunt or wheeze that will express some all-alluring thought. But it is a joke too seriously accepted, that a word can exist without an idea. In "Pippa Passes," it is true, *Sebald* counsels the murderous *Ottima* to repeat: "His blood—his blood—his blood," "till words cease to be more than words." But in any legitimate use of these blessed communicants of thought, a word, like a greenback, is worth just what stands back of it.

When, then, the impression an author gives is one of empty wordiness, the blame really belongs on his emptiness of ideas. Conversely, the writer who is known as a stylist ought to be accepted not as a word-twister, but as a graceful thinker. Style is not a mere jewelry of speech, but a mosaic of thoughts. The art of the stylist is the adornment of a given, or taken, theme, with a correlation of pleasing and suggestive fellow-ideas. On his facility in this manipulation depends his effect and his success.

Now, Walter Pater was—is, since he is only two years dead—contemporary proverb as a stylist. Pater took himself seriously as a stylist, had his very definite ideals, and was a complete exemplar of them. These ideals are made known, not only in the gossip of those that had personal acquaintance with him, and by the internal evidence of his own works, but in a carefully explained creed set down in his "Essay on Style." He certainly possessed the qualities he most dearly prized; unfortunately, he had their defects, too.

Pater idolizes restraint. Though he was the most earnest priest of the high worth of beauty, he was so stern as to be almost for-

bidding in his worship of it. In his essay on "Style" he over-emphasizes the, at best negative, virtue of restraint. He assails the "otiose" readers, the readers that do not screw themselves to a book and become very microscopists of attention. But such an audience, though eminently fit, is also, alas! eminently few; and the responsibility for holding its attention falls rather on the writer than on the readers. It is his business; their pleasure.

Pater himself worked too carefully, with too minute, too evident laboriousness. One might almost say, his work is too just, too accurate, to be true. The over-cautious man has his pitfalls as well as the over-hasty. Pater's ideal is Gustave Flaubert, whom he calls a "martyr" to literary style. He describes the Frenchman's mania for exactitude of expression, for "the unique word," that awaits every thought. He says, "All the good qualities, the beauties, of verse also, are such only as precise expression." As if hyperbole were not a time-honored rhetorical tool; and as if haste and carelessness and whimsicalities of all sort had not their proper places and their irresistible charms.

Pater, it is true, tries to stretch his meagre creed over this field of art also, but it is a most sophistical quibble surely when he says, "License again, the making free with rule, if it be indeed, as people fancy, a habit of genius, flinging aside or transforming all that opposes liberty of beautiful production, will be but faith to one's own meaning." And herein he runs counter to his beloved Flaubert, whom he calls a "guide," and whom he refers to as not believing in "styles," but in "Style, a certain absolute and unique manner of expressing a thing. For him the form was the work itself." In consequence Pater arrives at the conclusion that even "if the style be the man . . . it will be in a real sense 'impersonal.'" Surely now he has most learnedly gone astray, has scientifically contradicted himself and eclectically contradicted all experience.

Pater speaks patronizingly of William Blake as an example of the preponderance of soul over mind. He was himself a type of the reverse preponderance. He rebukes Sir Thomas Browne for the very unsystematic, whimsy qualities that give him one of his chief claims on immortality; and thinks him "not a type to which one would wish to reduce all men of letters." As if one could

* THE RENAISSANCE: Studies in Art and Poetry. Fifth Edition. Cloth, \$2.00.

APPRECIATIONS, with an Essay on Style. Fifth Thousand. Cloth, \$1.75.

MARIUS, THE EPICUREAN. His Sensations and Ideas. Cloth, \$2.25.

GASTON DE LATOUR. An Unfinished Romance. Prepared for the Press by Charles L. Shadwell.

All by Walter Pater, late Fellow of Brasenose College. Cloth, \$1.50. (Published by the Macmillan Co., New York.)

endure the reduction of all men of letters to any one type, ideal soever! Pater says in his essay on Joachim du Bellay: "No one can turn over the pages of Rabelais without feeling how much need there was of softening, of castigation." Sacrilège! Imagine Rabelais edited, pruned, fitted for the eternal Young Person. Even the exuberance of Charles Lamb he takes as "an excellent illustration of the value of reserve in literature," though while under Lamb's influence, in writing an essay on good Saint Charles, Pater himself grows quite out of his own reserve and writes in a very rhapsody of feeling.

Truth belongs to science. In art it is not the first quality necessary. In many places it is not necessary at all. The first quality of art is personality, a magnetic personality. Truth to that personality is a good thing; ordinarily an indispensable thing; but at best truth is in the arts only a quality of a quality. Pater in his philosophical search after the truth in the art of life confused it with creative arts, like letters—and paints. The very men that overstep his severe laws most impudently, hold the highest places among our prose writers.

But these are only details in a creed that has many things to commend it. The good thing is that Pater believed in prose, and practised what he preached. English prose and music are both young arts, and Pater finds them both especially typical of this our nineteenth century. So he aims to combine them. Though he cannot forget his enmity against what he dubs "an incorrect, incondite exuberance," and accepts for positive the negative virtues, saying even that "in truth all art does but consist in the removal of surplusage," he yet glorifies prose and grants it color, rhythm, "mere assonances even," and above all Form. Form to Pater is an essential. It is above being only a symbol. It was even the main thing with him. He finds the Venus of Melos "in no sense a symbol, a suggestion of anything beyond its own victorious fairness." The mind begins and ends with the finite image, yet loses no part of the spiritual motive. The Greek art is supreme because it is "this ideal art, in which the thought does not outstrip or lie beyond its sensible embodiment."

As Pater's prose was constructed with minute care, it invites similar analysis. It is now gorgeously poetical, now hopelessly prosaic. The fact that most of his work was philosophical should make one rather surprisedly grateful for any beauty whatsoever than impatient at its absence. But one cannot help regretting the occasional heaping up of a ponderous construction that out-Johnsons the Germans. Here is the shortest one I can find to quote:

"Sophist, professional enemy of Socrates—it became, chiefly through the influence of Plato, inheriting, expanding, the preferences and antipathies of his master, a bad name."—*Plato and Platonism*.

Even through his minute care such awkwardnesses as these would slip: "To Marius,

he counted for as it were an epitome;" "made some people angry, chiefly less well 'got-up' people;" "it was the lad's own election *which* had led—" "At best, poetry of the past could move one with no more directness than the beautiful faces of antiquity which are not here for us to see and unaffectedly love *them*." The cleft infinitive, an occasionally useful arrangement which pedants teach us to religiously avoid, Pater uses at least once in his essay on Sir Thomas Browne, saying that "Browne's works are of a kind to directly stimulate curiosity about himself."

A favorite construction is a heaping up of detached words, as this from "Gaston de Latour:" "The variableness, the complexity, the miraculous surprises of man, concurrent with the variety, the complexity, the surprises of nature, making all true knowledge of either wholly relative or provisional." This must serve as an example also of his technically poetic repetitions and experiments in verbiage generally. He is especially fond of referring back to some pat phrase by a repetition of it in a later paragraph, page, or chapter.

The various seemingly contradictory devices of a rhetorician he understands well. He catalogues some of them in his "Style": "How illustrative of monosyllabic effect, of sonorous Latin, of the phraseology of science, of metaphysic, of colloquialism even, are the writings of Tennyson; yet with what a fine, fastidious scholarship throughout!" Pater, for a philosophic writer, is singularly free from polysyllabic Latinity, and uses the great little Anglo-Saxon words with a poet's eye for their effect. He knows his Latin, however, and always wields it nicely, as when he speaks of "the latent poetic rights of the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent," or says: "Sorrow came along with beauty, a rival of its intricate omnipresence in life."

Colloquialism Pater uses now and then with almost garish uncongeniality. He is fond of an exclamatory "Well!" He likes the word "nerve" as we use it colloquially, and he once grew bold enough to say "as if love himself went in for a University degree." The word "so" is the crucial test of an amateur poet, but in prose Pater uses it with an intimate, though manneristic, effect. He is a poet in his frequent exclamatory tone and in his tireless hunt for unhackneyed epithets; and grows gorgeous to the point of ravishment when he forgets his ideal of "intellectual astringency." Particularly rich is "Gaston de Latour," an unfinished romance; and his Greek study of "Dionysus" is splendidly colored. I am fain to quote many more than is permissible of what he himself called "carved ivories of speech," like "In the heady afternoon," "that hotly colored world of Paris (like a shaken tapestry about him)," "the cheerful, unenclosed road, like a white scarf flung across the land," and "blindfold night."

Pater is a loving, a poetic, arranger of words out of their common order into a more in-

fluent array, as here: "Yet out of them, sure of some response, human heart did break." Pater shows the poet's sympathy in the wonderful translations he made to adorn his writings with.

He is a rapt musician improvising on other people's themes with a wealth of color in chord and modulation about an "endless melody" like Wagner's—only he is without Wagner's feverish serial climaxes. The few occasions when Pater's better self broke through the too formal department of his rigid etiquette show that he really hurt himself and his fame by his too much pains. As it is, he never was, and never will be, one of those writers a person "must" read. An immortality among scholars in our literature he may hold, but he might have gained even a popular immortality had he followed his inspirations more meekly up steep of attainment like his rhapsodical interpretation of Giordano Bruno, and his glorious rapture on Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. This is one of the finest prose-poems in our language, for "She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants: and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. . . . Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea."

Pater took life as seriously as he took his art. Life was to him an art. Like art, its highest religion was beauty. For, while he

always speaks reverently of Christianity, it was to him only one among many reverend philosophies. His noble work, "Marius, the Epicurean," with only the faintest hint of narrative, deals with the cautious soul-building of a young Roman, of purest ambitions. It contains many occasional pictures of perfect beauty, and ends with a vague half-hope in the belief of the persecuted Christians among whom *Marius* dies. His "Imaginary Portraits" are absorbed in the same problem. With characters placed in other periods of history, they preach the glory of "the lust of eye," as the Preacher says. "The Child in the House," which is doubtless autobiographical, describes how an English child is informed with "Sensibility—the desire of physical beauty—a strange biblical awe." So *Gaston de Latour* studies life in personal touch with Ronsard, Montaigne, and Bruno. Pater's literary and art criticisms seek for a fundamental spirit of beauty and form. His "Platonism" ends with the Platonic *Æsthetics*. In his philosophical romances, the romance is all background; the action is nil, the sentiment all abstract, fundamental.

Pater was not, in a sense, a creator. He was a reviewer of other men's notions and ideals. "Submissiveness!" he says in one place, "It had the force of genius with Emerald Uthwart!" So it had with Pater. He was a preacher of beauty for all times, for everywhere, and his receptive, digestive attitude toward life cannot be too highly commended. Especially by us in America should his preachments be heeded, for we that are so like the Greeks in so many ways, seem to be almost altogether wanting in their principal trait, devotion to beauty for her own fair sake. In days of sensationalism and headlong impressionism, Pater's studious fidelity to his high creeds give to his fame a rare chastity.

CHELIFER.

BOOKS RECEIVED

THE FOLLY OF EUSTACE, AND OTHER STORIES. By Robert S. Hichens. Cloth, 75 cents. (D. Appleton & Co., New York.)

The hilariously satirical author of "The Green Carnation" shows himself in these three stories to be, in the first, a satirist with an excellent quality of mercy and pathos; and in the other two, a disciple of Poe. The first story describes the dismal life of a man committed to the pose of a fantastic, such a pose as that of a certain purple light that failed—by request. The third, is an unhackneyed treatment of the hackneyed morphia-habit theme. The second "The Returned Soul," is a masterpiece in the gruesome, and it concerns that pet of the Poe-ists, the cat. The hero has hated and terrified, and finally killed, a cat; in later life he marries a woman who proves to be inhabited by the soul of this cat. The gradual development of their love into mutual dread and hatred, and the final revenge of the returned soul is a superb, a subtle, and yet a dramatic psychology. The undercurrent of horror and the fearful ending, together with

a literary art that gets an irresistible effect of reality and earnestness—these make it what I should seriously call a great story.

CAPTAIN CHAP; or, *The Rolling Stones*. By Frank R. Stockton. Illustrated by Charles H. Stephens. Cloth, \$1.50. (J. B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia.)

A most engaging story for boys, written with the sole desire of interesting them. Three young fellows, accidentally blown out to sea, are picked up and taken south by a tramp steamer. There they find countless adventures before they find themselves at home. Right-minded boys will surely enjoy these lively times. The pictures are unusually good.

CHECKERS. *A Hard Luck Story*. By Henry M. Blossom, Jr. Cloth, \$1.25. (H. S. Stone & Co., Chicago.)

The Lord High Purveyor of Slang to His Majesty Uncle Sam is "Checkers" vice "Chimmie Fadden," retired on a pension.

"Checkers" is a type. He represents the tout, the minor gambler, the assistant gambler of the race-track. The temporary ups and inevitable downs of this picturesque profession are delightfully journeyed by the very earthy, yet very lovable, hero of Mr. Blossom's story. The style might bear a little more polish, and the narrative grows plain when Checkers is out of sight, but he is very much in it most of the time, and his speech is irresistible. A few of his tropes must suffice: "Why, that old mare couldn't beat a carpet; her last two races she couldn't get out of her own way." "The next morning R. E. Morse is setting up on the edge of your bed giving you the horrible ha-ha." "I've had the hot end of it most of my life." "It wasn't that she was really so ugly, but there wasn't anything about her that you could tie to—and sort of forget the rest." "He lived somewhere way out in the suburbs, and he told me he had to get down so early that when he was coming home at night he used to meet himself starting down in the morning."

UNDERTONES. By Madison Cawein. Oaten Stop Series, III. Boards, 75 cents. (Cope-land & Day, Boston.)

Of the many poets that have rimed "bosom" with "blossom," Mr. Cawein is the only one I have had a chance to interrogate on this momentous point: Does he mentally say "bossum" or "bloozum"? By all the demons of false rime I charge him, Speak! Again (on page 35) he mates "of" and "love." Does he pronounce the accented preposition "uv," or does he murmur "lahv"?

In general, however, Mr. Cawein is an excellent lyricist. His metre is rarely imperfect, save for an occasional rough substitution like: "In hope, that faith within her parable writes." The name of his book is well taken. The poems are neither too wild nor too deep, but just vaguely regretful. They contain much botany, but mostly of a good sort. The best of the poems is, perhaps, "The Old Barn," which has a promise of long vitality. "At Last," too, is good, and "Interpreted," part of which goes like this:

What leaps in the book but a satyr?
What pipes on the wind but a faun?
Or laughs in the waters that scatter,
But limbs of a nymph who is gone,
When we walk in the lawn?

Behold how the world-heart is eager
To draw us and hold us and claim!
Through truths of the dreams that bequeager
Her soul she makes ours the same,
And death but a name.

GENIUS AND DEGENERATION. A Psychological Study. By Dr. William Hirsch. Translated from the second edition of the German work. Cloth, \$3.50. (D. Appleton & Co., New York.)

Max Nordau's "Degeneration" was picturesque and violent enough to be a nine days'

wonder. The incomplete and ill-digested mass of information which he distorted to fit his own wild theories of a universal rotting in the human mind, were never worthy of a serious and detailed refutation. But since the work did attract so much attention, and since the cry of "Fire!" always renders some people uneasy, it was well that Nordau's misrepresentations should be scientifically answered. Dr. Hirsch is eminently fitted for this office, and his book is deserving of close attention. He shows, in answering Lombroso, Nordau & Co.'s claim that genius and insanity are inseparably allied, how they have a very vague idea of both. As an example of Dr. Hirsch's suggestive reasoning, the following is typical:

"Of three so-called 'spiritualists,' let one be a simpleton who, without any logical conviction has been led, by sheer credulity or weak assent to energetic assertion, to admit the phenomena of mediumship. Let the second be a learned man who has been imposed upon by legerdemain, and who endeavors to explain what he thinks he has seen in a scientific way; and let the third be one with whom the belief is of the nature of an insane delusion. They all believe the same thing; so that it cannot be said that it is the nature of what is believed that constitutes the insanity. It is rather the mode in which the belief has come about, its relation to the other operations of the mind, its mode of expression, its relation to the interests of the believer, that must be relied upon to determine the alienist to diagnose a true delusion."

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This is a revised edition of the work that took the *New York Herald's* \$1,000 prize for an "epic." The poem is in no sense an epic, but rather a rhapsody, with much irregularity of stanza and theme. The author has done well to discard the word "epic" here. While the verse is constantly stilted and the articles are most amateurishly omitted, there are many single lines of much force and beauty. It is pleasant, at any rate, to see American poets finding subjects for their poetry in the history of their own country, which is surely fertile field enough.

THE CENTURY BOOK OF FAMOUS AMERICANS. By Elbridge S. Brooks. With portraits and many other illustrations. Cloth, \$1.50. (The Century Co., New York.)

This describes an imaginary pilgrimage of a number of boys and girls who, under the guidance of an uncle, visit the historic homes of America. The book is suggestive of the real resources the country presents to the tourist. It has an especial educational value for the young. And it is lavishly illustrated.

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FASHION, FACT, AND FANCY

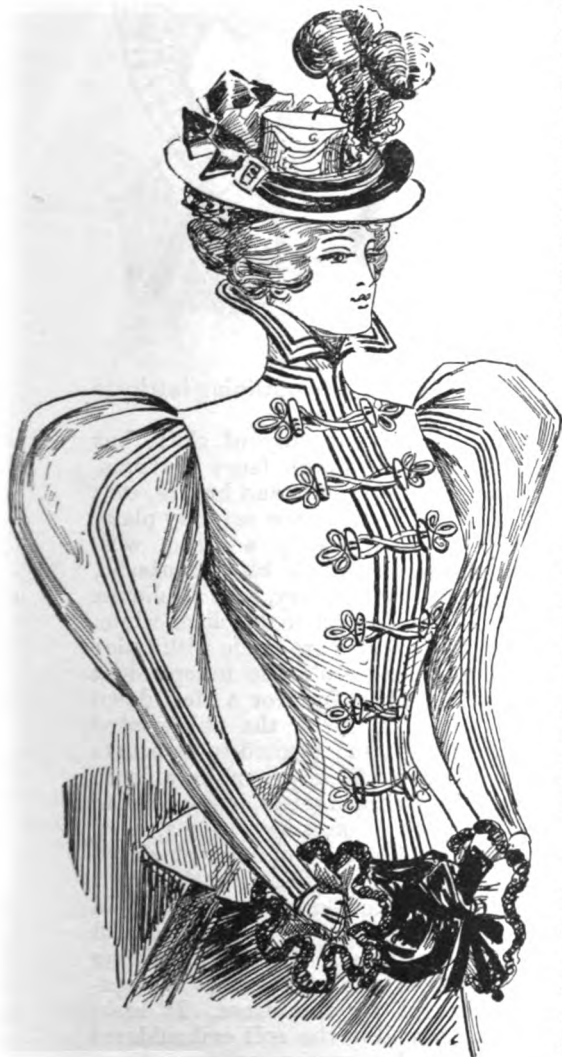
CONDUCTED BY THE COUNTESS ANNIE DE MONTAIGU

BY this time the anxiety as to what to wear has been allayed, as the fashions are no longer experimental but have been decided by the *coterie* of Parisian creators of la mode. A word to the wise: Do not choose the unsuitable and unbecoming; there is such vast latitude in style that women,

tall and short, broad and thin, may all find something that will enhance rather than detract from their charms. Let not the thin ones attempt to don the severely made sleeve; she can have recourse to the wrinkled *mosquetaire*, the puffed de Medici, or any of the styles which conceal rather than reveal the angularity of the arm. The fashions this season are decidedly favorable to the woman without *embonpoint*, as the bolero, the baggy waist, and the wide collars all give her breadth and added grace; the stout person is not so fortunate, although she may pursue the even tenor of her way clad in becoming tailor-made modes, severe-looking sleeves, and not too full skirts. In fact, the designers have been sufficiently considerate to create styles to suit everybody. Nowadays if a woman is badly dressed it is her own fault, and she can ascribe it to no one else.

The variety in fancy fronts, pelerines, Gretchen yokes, and boleros make it possible for a woman who possesses one good-fitting black waist, even though a little worn, to appear as if she owned a number. A blouse front of velvet, chiffon, or taffeta has attached to it deep ruffles of lace which fall from the shoulder and are held by knots of ribbon. Another style shows a full front with a bolero of Russian lace and a full neck ruching of pleated chiffon. Square yokes of tucked chiffon are edged with filmy velvet-trimmed frills, and a fluffy arrangement about the neck. These elaborate little affairs are easily pinned on to a plain waist.

The men's furnishing houses are still making shirt waists, not of course those of percale, but of wool, velvet, silk, and corduroy; to be correct, these must be built on exactly the same model as the cotton ones, no ornamentation being permissible; the velvet and corduroy ones are, however, pleated instead of gathered, on account of the cumbersome material.



No. 1.