

THE FUTURIST "RAG"

London, not greatly moved, has heard the poet of Futurism declaiming one of his poems at the Cabaret Club. The poet also lectured recently at the club on "L'Art des Bruts." He spoke very rapidly, but with extraordinary distinctness in French. His reasoning is clear and logical, and as in the case of the Futurist painters the ideas were all sound and convincing. But when M. Marinetti gave examples of his poems one began to doubt the theories.

Violence, war, battles are the subjects of this school. This is the type of thing: "War . . . Bulgars . . . Turks . . . blood, mud . . . and then 'Tsoom-sa, Tsoom-sa, Tsoom-sa . . . Tatatat, tatatatat . . . ff-ff-ff-ff-ff boom boom, and so on."

There is no doubt that Marinetti possesses great powers of declamation. He gave evidence of this when, in answer to the objection that his poems depended on the manner in which they were declaimed, he said "All verse depends on declamation," and gave examples of Verlaine rattled off in a deadly commonplace and ultra-conversational manner, and the same verses recited in the half chant of the poet, "with the right accent and emphasis." By this means it is always possible to make poetry sound like nonsense and nonsense like poetry.

Czar Small-Minded
And Czarina a Shrew

Harsh Criticism in New Book on the Russian Royal Family.

"Behind the Veil at the Russian Court," By Paul Vassili Cassell.

The present volume, "is not historical, but merely anecdotal; yet sometimes anecdotes are history." "Sometimes" is the word for it. And it would have been still better to use the word "some" for "sometimes," because in this volume some anecdotes are history as well as historical, while others are neither the one nor the other. Count Paul Vassili may or may not have been the man he is represented to be in the preface. His non de plume is a little suspicious, seeing that Vassili (Basil) is not a surname, and that Russians have only one name. But he certainly knew a good deal of the gossip of St. Petersburg, either first-hand or through print, and as a collection of it, the volume will, no doubt, "amuse its readers," as the publishers boast in the preface.

It abounds in pretty tales such as this:

When Nicholas I. had decided to send his troops to Hungary, he announced his resolution in the town of Moscow, at the Kremlin Palace. His words were received with immense enthusiasm, and a "Hurrah!" was the reply to them. The Emperor looked round, and suddenly noticed that one of his personal friends, alone, kept silent and in the background. When all was over, the Emperor asked him, "Why did you not shout 'Hurrah!' with the rest?" "Because I was thinking of the day when Austria would astonish your Majesty with its irregular troops," was the unexpected reply, Nicholas sighed. "You may be right," he said, "but I have not sent my troops to help Austria; I have sent them to help a brother Sovereign."

The freedom with which the author has put the famous words of Count Bulow about Austria into the mouth of a Russian courtier in 1848, is a little unhistorical, but the story itself expresses admirably a characteristic of Nicholas I.

The Present Tsar. The author very minutely and, on the whole, quite correctly describes the Russian Court at the time of Alexander II. and his son, though when dealing with historical events or with the characters of the men and women of the periods on his own account he is generally wrong.

He becomes decidedly interesting, however, when he enters upon a description of the present reign. He has no love for the Tsar. "His mind is as small as his person; he sees the biggest events go by without being touched, or being aware of their great or tragic side." "Small-minded," "selfish," "vacillatory," "capricious," "rancorous"—no adjectives are too hard for the man who went on playing tennis after having heard of the disaster at Tsushima. Nor does the Tsarina fare better at the author's hands. "She has not the gift to make herself lovable; nor to inspire sympathy. She has developed a harsh, cruel temper, with fits of caprice worthy of a spoiled child." On the other hand, it seems surprising that he has nothing to narrate about the well-known adventures of the present Tsar in various fields while he was still heir to the throne. Instead he tells us that both the Tsar and his consort are surprisingly ignorant of French. The Tsarina, once granted an audience to an old dowager, and the latter,

seeing that all her efforts at small talk met with no success, asked the Empress whether she did not find the climate of St. Petersburg very trying. "Yes," replied the Sovereign, "but l'automne dernier j'ai pu me promener tous les jours dans le Crimee." The unfortunate creature (adds our author) had literally translated her phrase from the German in which the Crimee is called "Krim," but she had imagined what laughter such an utterance, repeated all round with alacrity, aroused.

The story of the war with Japan and of the subsequent revolution is told rather inadequately, the author being unaware of the pecuniary interests which the Grand Dukes and the Tsar himself had in Korea. The general tone of this part of "Count Vassili's" narrative is shown by a report, which the author reproduces, that after the Bloody Sunday, when the troops had massacred a number of workmen before the Winter Palace, the Tsar's only question to the Grand Duke Vladimir was "Are you sure that you have killed enough?" The story is inaccurate.

A Reactionary Premier. The volume will tell the reader all about the Tsarevitch and his illness, and also about the late M. Stolypin and his successor, the present Premier, M. Kokovtsov. In connection with the Tsarevitch the author makes a mistake in speaking of the Grand Duke Dimitri Pavlovich as the next candidate to the throne. This young person has recently been dismissed from his regiment for scandal, and his matrimonial designs upon the Tsar's eldest daughter have fallen through. The author's treatment of the two Russian Premiers of the counter-revolution is highly inadequate; and when he says that "no one knows whether M. Kokovtsov's opinions are Liberal or Conservative" he is betraying his own lack of knowledge, since M. Kokovtsov openly proclaimed his political views in the Duma three years ago by the solemn exclamation:

The Significance of
Agitator James Larkin

[By A. G. Garden in London Daily News.]

As I left the Albert Hall, the great audience that filled the building was listening in deep silence to the strange, uncouth accents of a speaker who was telling how two girls in Dublin had worked for twelve days and at the end had received in payment—temperance. Outside the pavements were crowded with people, who unable to gain admission, were waiting for something to turn up. Round the building policemen, on horse and on foot, were ranked in a defensive formation, and along the road, with arms linked and slinging in chorus, there marched to and fro a host of young medical students. They had raided the building and been beaten back, and now they were taking their revenge in defiant songs. If they had been asked to explain their animus against James Larkin they would have found it difficult to do so, for it could not be because he is fighting for the recognition of his trade union; for these young men are going to be members of a trade union—the British Medical Association—which has just won a more complete and profitable victory than any on record. At the bottom they represented the vague fear of the audience that the speaker was an intruder from below. "Here's a stranger; let us leave half a brick at him," "Here's a rude laborer disturbing our comfortable society; let us teach him a lesson."

The Man. But we shall not get rid of that strange figure on the platform by heaving half a brick at him. Whether we like it or not, James Larkin is a man with whom we have to reckon. He drops his "h's," he uses violent language, he talks in a strange dialect, half Lancashire, half Irish and all his own, he is rude, unlettered, and a laborer in fact. But you cannot listen to him without being conscious of an unusual force. You forget the roughness of speech in the fierce energy that blazes through them. You seek to hear the murmur of the poor struggling to utterance. And if the utterance is defiant and challenging, it is not that of the mere tub-thumper. It has sudden flashes of high intellect, and unexpected transitions, a certain largeness of motive, at times a generosity of statement, that suggests something more than the fire-brand. He is not at the mercy of his audience, like the demagogue who follows the line of the readiest cheer. He is its master and snubs its shallower humor. When it shrieks at the mention of the Government, he has imprisoned him, he does not throw idle fuel on the flames. "Ah, but let us be fair," he says. "It has been loyal to home rule and I say, important as it is for us to win the Irish struggle, it is a thousand times more important that that measure should go through your Commons." And when the name of Mr. Masterman is received with cries of approval, he replies, "No, he is not a hypocrite. I believe he wished well to the poor. Who knows? Perhaps I should be a hypocrite in his circumstances. He is a strange speech, a strange man. We shall not dispose of him by the easy argument of the half brick or the jail."

New Issues for Old. And so while the young men are marching to and fro outside singing their songs, let us try to understand the significance of this swaying figure on the platform, this intruder from below, who has been so much in the news. He has cut across our policies and parties with the indifference of a lava stream; but we shall miss his meaning if we assume that we have to deal only with a personal force. It is true that if there had been no Larkin there would have been no Dublin strike; but the forces he has released and the ideas he has spread are the permanent of him. He is only the match that has fired the train. By the light of his conflagration we may see many things. We may see, for example, the realities behind the platform rule. The political platform echoes the sectarian issue, is Catholic Ireland to be for ever under the heel of the Protestant north? Is Ulster to be sacrificed to the Pope's power? Or so the Orange lodges are drilling here and the Ancient Order of Hibernians are organizing there, and all the old rusty weapons of the seventeenth century are being resurrected to keep alive a hateful feud.

And then comes this uncouth figure from the ranks with his "Plague on both your houses, and revenge!" that behind these personal controversies of the past there is a latent force in Ireland that will dominate the politics of the home rule Parliament and submerge the sectarian issue. That force will be the revolt of the poor against their conditions. The measure of our failure to govern Ireland used to be the flight of the people from the soil, the emigration to the United States. We have brought out the landlords and solved the agrarian problem. Labor in Ireland. But the cry of Ireland has passed from the country to the town. The conditions of the poor in Dublin and Belfast touch a level below the worst we know here. The revelations of Sir Ernest Hatch's committee on sweated labor in Belfast can be paralleled only in Dublin, with its third of the population living in one-room tenements. The truth is that the industrial idea has not developed in Ireland as in England. The trade union movement has made relatively little progress there, and the conception of the employer and the employed negotiating on equal terms is little understood. The employer has regarded himself as a benefactor, and the worker has regarded employment as a privilege granted to him. And so the labor market has drifted into a state of inconceivable wretchedness, the heritage of our destruction of the Irish industries.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Swank (at Zoo)—Aw I wonder what time they—aw, feed the animals here?

Youth—Why? Getting hungry?

Issues of the Irish politics into new and more vital channels. The old sectarian issues were pleasing alike to the employers and the church and the party machine on both sides. They do not want them to give place to a fierce revolt against social conditions. That is not the sort of ominous introduction they desire to the coming year. The new issues are the revolt with which it will be faced. To some extent the Ancient Order of Hibernians expresses that revolt; but it is Catholic, it has the spirit of the past, it is a relic of the old types of the old antagonisms from which labor has got to shake itself free if it is to win its victories. Labor must be free from clericalism and it is because the clerical divisions that it is so significant.

To Stampede the Unions. And if James Larkin finds himself outlawed by all the traditional parties in Ireland he is no less a problem for the English trade unionist. He has forced him on the horns of a curious dilemma. He can neither endorse his policy, nor can he ignore it. Larkin is the hope of the new type of that new and irresponsible school of thought which lives upon the dream of a general strike. If only they can starve into submission the employers that something splendid will happen. For one thing, the bottom will fall out of society and there will be a glorious, sane, quiet, peaceful, and happy country. The country are not numerous; they are certainly not numerous among the labor party, who happen to be on the whole rather sane men. Attempts have been made to stampede them in the past without any sort of success. On this occasion the attack is more serious. The attitude of the Dublin emigrants is an important one. The trade unionists to submit to, and the consequences of the lock-out are too terrible to be ignored. The English trade unions have generously come to the help of the Dublin strikers. They have sent them many thousands of pounds in money and many shiploads of food.

But Larkin aims at a more Napoleonic blow. He calls on the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress to sanction a sympathetic strike to force the Dublin employers to surrender. England is to be starved in order that Mr. Murphy may learn an elementary lesson in industrial negotiation. And wherever there is a Mr. Murphy the same Napoleonic hammer is to be brought to crack the nut. And so the way will, in the mind of the syndicalists, be paved to the general strike as an ordinary weapon of warfare. Any dispute in a Lancashire mill or a Midland forge may leave us without so much as a bus to the city in the morning and with the whole of the British Islands paralyzed. The parliamentary committee have deferred this proposal to a conference three weeks hence. James Larkin thinks it a long time; but he undertakes that the strike shall hold out till the leaders have made up their mind.

Leader or Agitator? It is a bold attempt to stampede English trade unionism into an heroic wrecking policy. It will not succeed; but it is significant inasmuch that so extreme a proposal should have been discussed for two days and then committed to a special conference for a final decision. It is a triumph for that strange, loose-limbed figure on the platform, with the wild light in his eyes and his tales of the Dublin slums. And yet I doubt whether he is a complete convert to his own policy,

whether he is quite as irresponsible as one might assume at a first view. "Leader or Lunatic" was the placard that had met his eye in coming to the hall. It was Mr. Horatio Bottomley who offered the alternative. Larkin's reply showed that he knows how to fence. "I am not a leader, I have been flung up by this movement, and would rather be back at my own job with a shovel in my hands. I may be a lunatic. But I'll tell you one thing I'm not. I'm not a knave." It was a shrewd thrust. He is a fanatic. The most notable thing in his speech was not his words about the trade union, but his words about the trade union congress. His audience howled at the congress for their delay. He did not play up to this mood. On the contrary, he checked it by referring to the vast responsibility which rested on the congress. It is these things which suggest that he may be more than an agitator—that he can direct a movement as well as inspire it.

If he is not he will soon disappear. If he is, these young men who are marching and singing outside have shown a true instinct for a real foe.

SAVING THE WASTE. The fight grew hotter, and the spectators began to fear a fatal issue when in the sixth round, Breitmayr lunged and the point of his sword entered the Bulgarian's breast.

The fight was at once stopped, and, after a few minutes' observation, the doctors declared that Torkom's wound was such as to place him clearly at a disadvantage.

The Frenchman thereupon advanced towards his antagonist and said: "We have exchanged letters on account of the Bulgarian campaign, and these letters have brought us on the duelling ground. I am very honored to have crossed swords with you."

"All the honor is mine," replied the Bulgarian with equal gallantry. "Vive la France!"

The antagonists shook each other cordially by the hand, then Lieut. Torkom's wound was dressed, and shortly afterwards he drove to a neighboring station, whence, it is understood, he took the first train back to Switzerland.



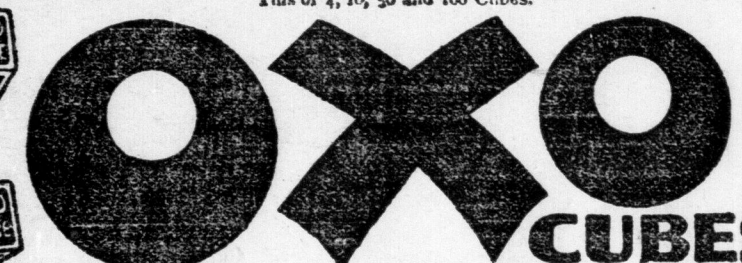
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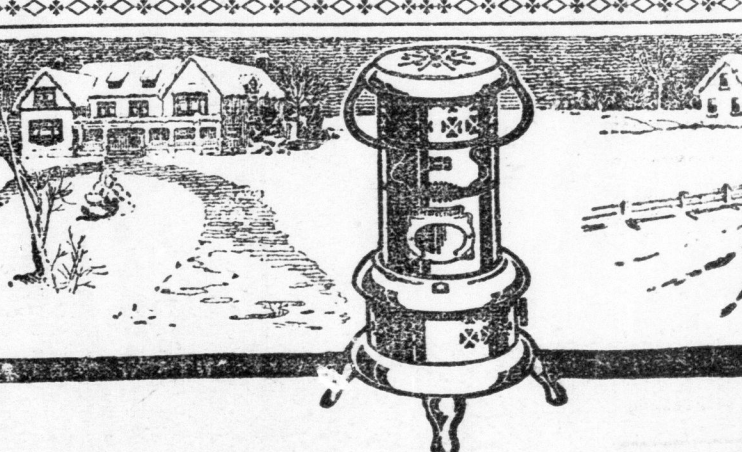
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