

Mr. Huntington seems to illustrate his own shortcoming with respect to this moral element in his analysis of Chinese culture, to which he devotes four exceedingly interesting chapters. Thus he cites the sale of younger daughters in times of famine as evidence of the innate selfishness of the Chinese, whereas it seems to be but the direct outcome of Chinese morals. With us, in the face of present death the code of honor demands that we save the female members of a group first, beginning with the children; with the Chinese the demand is that all sacrifice themselves to the grandmother, and the grandfather and the mother follow next in order. It is the moral rule of filial piety, and it may call for every sacrifice, even to the son rendering his own flesh for the support of his parent's life. Probably this same difference in attitude explains many differences between Oriental and Occidental culture. Chinese conservatism is mainly pious preservation of the wisdom of the ancients; our progressivism goes hand in hand with a concerted skepticism concerning the benefits of tradition.

One should add that Mr. Huntington gives less than due credit to the Chinese race, and rather more than their due to the northerners, Mongols and Manchus, who have invaded China. The periods of Chinese history in which northern China has been ruled by foreigners have been regarded by Chinese historians themselves as the culturally "dark" ages, and in that very south where today Mr. Huntington finds a more lively intelligence native rulers frequently held sway while the north and west lapsed under foreign conquest. Certainly Chinese historians would take exception to the statement that "most of the Chinese dynasties have been either genuine foreigners or else of mingled Tartar-Chinese stock"; and it is worthy of note that the real organization of China, under the Manchu Chings, was owing to the ability of a Chinese, Hung Tsung-chu. Nor is it possible to share the author's admiration for the late Empress Dowager, who was a thorough reactionary, bringing the evils of the Boxer uprising upon her country and expending upon the Yee Ho Garden the ten million raised for national defense after the humiliation by Japan.

Finally, the method employed for gauging the relative intelligence of the provinces of China is certainly faulty; and since it is in essence the same method later employed for Europe and America it deserves some comment. From lists of officials and men of eminence born within given regions within a set period Mr. Huntington makes his general estimates of racial endowment. The results are interesting and valuable within restricted limits. For China he gives a map showing the percentage in 1910 of holders of high literary degrees among the native officials per ten million of inhabitants. The southern half of the empire, which is presumably the most purely Chinese, shows from double to five times the rate exhibited by the north. There are, however, two pronounced exceptions: Chihli, in which is the national capital, is a northern province and ranks second only to Chekiang and Kiangsu on the eastern coast; while Kiangsu, although southern, is barely above the provinces bordering on Tibet and Mongolia.

Mr. Huntington explains the high place of Chihli as due to the unusual gifts of the Manchus, as well as to the fact that the national capital naturally draws able families, and he gives emphasis to Manchu attainments in the old Chinese literary examinations which "required an unusual power of concentration, unusual determination, and many other high mental qualities. If the Manchus had not possessed those qualities in considerable measure we should scarcely find large numbers of them holding high Chinese literary degrees. Yet in 1910, at the end of the old regime, among 410 major officials who held such degrees, 50 are recorded as Manchus and 3 as members of the Imperial clan." On their face these figures seem conclusive, but their significance vanishes when we take into account the facts that the Manchus had their own special

schools, under Imperial favor; that they were not expected to compete with Chinese for the first three degrees; and that a certain percentage of official positions was accorded to them because of race, including educational as well as civil offices. As Williams says, Mongols and Manchus were favored at the expense of the Chinese; "the large proportion of men belonging to these races filling high offices indicated who were the rulers of the land."

On the other hand, the low position in official affairs of Kiangsi takes on another color when its high rank in internal commerce is considered. There is a Chinese saying, "No town without its Kiangsi," meaning that the merchant guilds of the men of this province are found everywhere throughout the interior; and it is in this strongly Chinese province, always the center of the finest pottery art in China, that the most notable Ching pottery was produced. Of course there is in all this no proof that the south is racially superior to the north. The south is the wealthier, while in the north floods and famine, as Mr. Huntington shows, are the great scourges. Perhaps the most that his map indicates is the value of coastline, though there still remains the interesting fact that the interior provinces of Kweichow and Hunan form an extraordinarily favored region, and that the latter province in particular, both in the classical Chinese literature and in recent political and social movements, has given birth to many and striking leaders.

The example of China is taken with some detail because it illustrates the shortcomings of a method which is applied also to the more complex cultures of Europe and America. The reviewer's plea in this connection is for a healthy caution. It is too easy to surrender to plausible inferences, both as to the heights, let us say, of Icelandic intelligence and as to the dangers of sudden degeneration here in America. America, thinks Mr. Huntington, is already slipping; its danger is real and great, and it is only by concerted control of the population that we can insure a reversal of direction. For this, the "conscious control of natural selection may perhaps be nature's own next method." Here we are falling back into the pious jargon of the biosociologist, but the problem which the author has in mind is real enough, even after we have made allowances for the speciousness of statistics. Civilization is in peril; it is always in peril; and its perils constitute our moral problems.

H. B. ALEXANDER

## Fitzgerald on the March

*The Great Gatsby.* By F. Scott Fitzgerald. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$2.

WHAT will be the future of F. Scott Fitzgerald? This query has been futilely repeated whenever a new book from his pen has appeared, since the initial interrogation which greeted the publication of that sophomoric masterpiece, "This Side of Paradise." It will be asked more earnestly than before by prescient readers of "The Great Gatsby," who will recognize therein a quality which has only recently made its debut in the writings of this brilliant young author, the quality vaguely referred to as mysticism. Moreover this is a fine yarn, exhilaratingly spun.

Mr. Fitzgerald is a born story-teller; his words, phrases, and sentences carry the eye easily through to the end of his books. Further, his work is imbued with that rare and beneficent essence we hail as charm. He is by no means lacking in power, as several passages in the current opus abundantly testify, and he commands a quite uncanny gift for hitting off character or presenting a concept in a striking and memorable manner. The writer he most resembles, curiously enough, despite the dissimilarity in their choice of material and point of attack, is Booth Tarkington, but there exists at present in the work of Mr. Fitzgerald a potential brutality, a stark sense of

reality, set off in his case by an ironic polish, that suggests a comparison with the Frank Norris of "Vandover and the Brute," or "McTeague."

Up to date, Mr. Fitzgerald has occupied himself almost exclusively with the aspects and operations of the coeval flapper and cake-eater. No one else, perhaps, has delineated these mundane creatures quite as skilfully as he, and his achievement in this direction has been awarded authoritative recognition. He controls, moreover, the necessary magic to make his most vapid and rotterish characters interesting and even, on occasion, charming, in spite of (or possibly because of) the fact that they are almost invariably presented in advanced stages of intoxication. More cocktails and champagne are consumed in the novels of Scott Fitzgerald than a toper like Paul Verlaine could drink in a lifetime. "The Beautiful and Damned," indeed, is an epic of inebriation beside which "l'Assommoir" fades into Victorian insipidity.

In "The Great Gatsby" there are several of Mr. Fitzgerald's typical flappers who behave in the manner he has conceived as typical of contemporary flapperdom. There is again a gargantuan drinking-party, conceived in a rowdy, hilarious, and highly titillating spirit. There is also, in this novel, as I have indicated above, something else. There is the character of Jay Gatsby.

This character, and the theme of the book in general, would have appealed to Henry James. In fact, it did appeal to Henry James. In one way or another this motif is woven into the tapestry of a score or more of his stories. In Daisy Miller you may find it complete. It is the theme of a soiled or rather cheap personality transfigured and rendered pathetically appealing through the possession of a passionate idealism. Although the comparison may be still further stressed, owing to the fact that Mr. Fitzgerald has chosen, as James so frequently chose, to see his story through the eyes of a spectator, it will be readily apparent that what he has done he has done in his own way, and that seems to me, in this instance, to be a particularly good way. The figure of Jay Gatsby, who invented an entirely fictitious career for himself out of material derived from inferior romances, emerges life-sized and lifelike. His doglike fidelity not only to his ideal but to his fictions, his incredibly cheap and curiously imitative imagination, awaken for him not only our interest and suffrage, but also a certain liking, as they awaken it in the narrator, Nick Carraway.

When I read Absolution in the *American Mercury* I realized that there were many potential qualities inherent in Scott Fitzgerald which hitherto had not been too apparent. "The Great Gatsby" confirms this earlier impression. What Mr. Fitzgerald may do in the future, therefore, I am convinced, depends to an embarrassing extent on the nature of his own ambitions.

CARL VAN VECHTEN

## Master Misery

*Viennese Medley.* By Edith O'Shaughnessy. B. W. Huebsch, Inc. \$2.

THE tragic life of hungry post-war Vienna, condensed into the story of Aunt Ilde and her nieces and nephews, is the theme of this book. It is the muffled outcry of a frail old lady, a sweet product of pre-war Vienna's balmy atmosphere, whom a Walpurgis storm, sweeping over this town of music, caught in its eddy, wrested from her comfortable home, and threw on the hard sofa of a miserable alcove room. Aunt Ilde, whose career had been devoted to loving the children of three other women, looks at life's capricious freaks in breathless amazement. Misery and the quicker pulse necessitated by a more intensive struggle for existence have transformed all those around her into beings who are different from their former selves. She cannot comprehend them, and yet she loves them.

Appropriately to the theme and to the genius of the place where this low-toned tragedy is enacted the chapters are headed, in the manner of Romain Rolland, by musical terms descriptive in

each case of the ensuing mood. The chapter which bears the inscription "Adagio assai" is particularly rich in suggested melody. One can hear in it the clash of arms between two eras bounded by a bloody war—the first being that of Schubert and Johann Strauss and the second being that which now dances to the tune of Master Misery's whistle. It was thus that the reality of the new era dawned upon Aunt Ilde: "One morning in that terrible little hour before the dawn when anxiety had done its worst, she got up and counted and recounted the thin packet of crowns left in her purse . . . The result had sent her shivering back to bed, where, frightened by a fear beyond any she had ever known . . . she had pulled the bedclothes up over her head. She was afraid, afraid. . . ."

EMIL LENGYEL

## Children of the Century

*The Spring Flight.* By Lee J. Smits. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.50.

NO type of the contemporary novel is so assiduously cultivated in America as that of which Floyd Dell's "Moon-Calf" is the best-known example. Literally dozens of young men have written the autobiography of their youth with but little attempt to disguise the source of their material, and though they have not in most cases shown any evidence of that large imaginative grasp which makes the genuine novelist by giving him the power to participate in the lives of others, they have, in a surprising number of cases, written what they had to write extremely well. They have had but one adventure, the effort to adjust themselves to the life of their country, and when this adventure has been told they have had nothing more to say; but they have been keenly self-conscious, and they have spoken with energy and fire.

To discuss them too seriously as creative artists is to forget the nature of the artist's gift, which includes a far greater power of projection and which keeps alive in the artist a passionate interest in life long after he has made his primary adjustments. These young men, once they have passed through the fundamental experiences, once they have broken from parental influence, found their first regular employment, and oriented themselves in the world of amorous experience, cease to be more keenly alive than the average man. They have, if you wish to put it so, been but temporarily stimulated into art by the emotional tension attendant upon growing up, and they cannot, like the artist born, sustain their passion by any generalized or impersonal participation in the continuous drama of life. Thus they are not in the most important sense novelists at all. Yet their work has a very real significance of its own.

The first or the second of these novels which one reads strikes one with a new sort of truth. The fifth, the sixth, or the seventh may perhaps seem merely a little repetitious. But finally, if one perseveres, they take on a new impressiveness, by virtue not so much of their individual strength as of their bulk and the unanimity of the testimony which they bear. They are not, obviously, copies of one another—the feeling of each is too genuine to be imitation—and yet so similar are they in outline and attitude as to constitute nothing less than the biography of a generation singularly homogeneous in itself and yet obviously different from the generation which preceded it. These young men copied one another's lives no more than they copied one another's books, yet somehow they found themselves stirred by the same disgusts and moved by the same vague impulses. All over America youths whose discontent could not be traced to any reading or instruction awoke to a realization that the ways of life accepted by their communities held no interest for them. For no immediate observable cause they had ceased to believe in the standards of value or the code of morals which seemed to their parents self-evident, and in one way or another they broke away. Some thought they felt the call of artistic pursuits; others, more confused, drifted into temporary vagabondage of one sort or another and, half con-

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