

A New Literary Broom

THESE can be no doubt of the potentialities of Broom, the international magazine of the arts whose first issue, dated November, has just reached this side of the Atlantic Ocean from its headquarters, 18 Trinitadel Monti, Rome, Italy. Its editors, Harold A. Loeb, formerly part owner of the Sunwise Turn Book Shop, and Alfred Kreymborg, the poet, have put together a table of contents that is tantalizing if not thoroughly satisfying. The object of Broom is briefly stated in a manifesto and before dipping into the material provided by the first number it may be wise to set this down so that the reader may determine just what Messrs. Loeb and Kreymborg, assisted by Giuseppe Prezzolini, intend to do.

Broom [they announce] is selecting from the continental literature of the present time the writings of exceptional quality most adaptable for translation into English. These will appear side by side with the contemporaneous effort in Great Britain and America. The painters and sculptors will be represented by the best available reproductions of their work. Throughout, the unknown, path-breaking artist will have, when his material merits it, at least an equal chance with the artist of acknowledged reputation. In brief, Broom is a sort of clearing house where the artists of the present time will be brought into closer contact.

It is hardly necessary to point out that this manifesto approximates the standards raised by other magazines. However, that is no reason to view Broom with less interest for it is by the steadily increasing number of such magazines that literature, both in this and in all English-speaking countries is enriched. Broom may do its part and a worthy part in so important a function. Both Messrs. Loeb and Kreymborg should be qualified, equally by inclination and ability, to steer Broom along the more or less perilous path that it proposes to travel but that, of course, is a problem that only future issues of the magazine may determine.

However, to the contents of this first issue of Broom. After one travels beyond the poem, "Lake," by Bayard Boyesen, which does not retard one by any subtle excellencies, a long stop will be made by James Stephens's grim short story, "Hunger." Within the limits of 11 pages the Irish writer has accomplished the same effect for which Knut Hamsun wrote an entire book. "Hunger" is merciless, consistent, and darkly tragic throughout. It tells merely of a Dublin family struggling to keep themselves just this side of starvation. No light touch relieves the tale which marches to its inevitable conclusion much as a bowed figure going to the scaffold. It may be a small matter to note that some years ago a neatly printed pamphlet was issued in Dublin in a series known as Candle Press booklets with the title "Hunger" and credited to a James Esse. The fact that Broom is reprinting in this particular instance matters not at all, for the booklet is practically unprocurable. And the story is well worth the wider audience which it undoubtedly will receive through its inclusion in this new magazine.

There also is the impression that Amy Lowell's "Lilacs," which occupies four pages of Broom, appeared some time ago in one of our periodicals. But it is not in the poetry that this first issue of Broom is to be congratulated. E. Powys Mathers's "Chinese Poems of J. Wing" marks the high point and the taste of Broom's editors can be no better shown than by quoting one of these pieces:

The breakers far to the left at night,
Foreign cannons splintering long ago
Bamboo Junks of the two-sword men,
Lines of black slaves
Running up the beach,
To fall exhausted forward,
They carry bar-silver against their
breasts;
It drags them down in this Spanish
sea all night.

The four pieces by Lois Ridge, grouped under the title "Hospital Nights," are interesting but hardly show the real capabilities of this woman. The other poems included are by Bayard Boyesen, Walter De La Mare, Lew Sarett, and a group of parodies by Louis Untermeyer.

But it is in prose that Broom has the most to offer. Inferior to Mr. Stephens's contribution but, at the same time, of authentic value, must be noted "The Soul of an Artist" by J. D. Beresford. Here is an admirably written sketch, giving a new twist on the artistic temperament. It carries conviction and presents two types of the writer with great spirit, albeit a conscious sense of dramatic values. One of the characters is a successful novelist and the other figure is a young genius. The novelist puts his young genius in a novel but cannot print the latter because the attending publicity of the book would ruin the love affair which, after all, means more to the genius than his art. It is good to find out that artists are not always of the John Strickland type. This sketch is one of the best things that Mr. Beresford has done, an effort that takes the reader back to the days of "The House in Demetrius Road."

Manuel Komroff contributes an amusing sketch entitled "A Union of Beggars." It is a farcical study, but at the same time it gives the reader the sensation that the author knows whereof he speaks. Here we have a group of beggars not to discuss the hard times they have fallen upon, and the various ways in which they may improve their business. It is written in a serious vein that sets off all the better the intrinsic humor of the situation.

"He Laughs at the Gods," by James Oppenheim, is a story with its scene laid in a madhouse. There is a philosophic and esthetic significance in the tale, but the sensation persists that Mr. Oppenheim has been unsuccessful in dealing with it. The subject matter is difficult and subtle, and the principal character does not grip the reader as he should. It is the sort of thing that Andreyev could have done to perfection. Even Chekhov (memories of "Ward Number Six" coming to

mind) could have done much with it. The other prose pieces in Broom include "Marnia," by Wallace Gould, which may be taken either as a short story in a new form or a prose poem; "The Function of Criticism," a rather involved article by Conrad Aiken; "Fairy Tale," by Donald Corley, which is interesting but slight, and "Bambino's Beginning," by Haniel Long. A prose article not mentioned is "America Invades Europe," by Emmy Veronica Sanders. This article, which, by the way, rather overestimates the importance of Mari-ganne Moore, contains two paragraphs which deserve quotation and which

also deserve to be read by both Americans and Europeans. The first reads:

*** America—made of the Puritan, by the Puritan, for the Puritan, remade of the machine, by the machine, for the machine—is only passing through what is practically her first decade of a generation that deliberately, consciously, by means of concerted action and creation, strikes out upon paths of cultural life. And America can, therefore, not afford to attempt the turning of this new life into one narrow channel. The assumption on the part of some one or another small group of literary workers, for whom Paris is the centre of the globe, to possess the one and only, and nothing but the truth, in esthetic and intellectual values and appreciations—wrong under all skies—is disastrously wrong in a continent that is only just be-



Andre Devain—Portrait.

From Broom.

ginning to take some culturally recognizable shape:

One must agree violently with the thesis here, although Miss Sanders is, herself, aligning herself with a group when she intimates that America "is only just beginning to take some culturally recognizable shape." The group spirit that refuses to see anything of virtue outside of its little circle is a bad thing. Miss Sanders ought to get away from this attitude herself. Her other paragraph is particularly pertinent to European readers. It offers this:

It is to be hoped that Europe's contact with modern America of the last decade will not be limited to contact with extremist tendencies only; with the most sophisticated and outre modes of self-expression. Especially since Europe can get all it needs and wants in this direction from France, directly, and much better. Besides, in Europe these things represent the extreme tip of growths, the roots and trunks and heavier branches of which are in its own soil. In America such tips produce the effect of hanging in the air. There is no such hanging in the air with American minds of the type, say, of Randolph Bourne, Sherwood Anderson, Carl Sandburg, or the writer of a book like "Our America." From these the modern European world will get a better understanding of the new America's contact with herself, of her self-analysis, self-criticism, self-transformation, than from all the ultra-modern followers of France combined. Yet none of the four mentioned are of the "clever" type. They have "minds" that, without blague or badinage, without flashy brilliance, quietly touch the bottom of things; not ingeniously bizarre, but truly self-revealing.

This is sound criticism and a warning to Europe that should be heeded. One wonders how Ezra Pound will take it, though.

In this first number, Broom refuses to express any opinions of its own, rather letting "the personalities who pass across it" present their views.

The art features in this first number, which are divided between pictorial representation and sculpture, are decidedly "new." The best things are two sketches by William Cropper, a delightful drawing of Igor Stravinsky by Pablo Picasso, and a sculpture by Jacques Lipchitz. It is a peculiar fact that most magazines of the modern type will allow certain space in their pages for poetry and prose of modern, but not radical, tendencies, but that those same pages are absolutely closed against anything, but the most radical in art.

The future of Broom will be watched with interest. Its first number sharpens the appetite for more of the same kind. Its editors have much to learn, but, at the same time, it must be admitted that there is much that they have learned.

They make no announcements concerning the contents of future issues.