

and he continues the punishment. Still, the story is not entirely sordid, and far from entirely silly. With all its man-of-the-world pretentiousness, and frequent over-writing, it has real vigour and colour. *The Tattooed Countess* has a different kind of pretentiousness; it is Mr. Van Vechten's weakness to know everything, but he does know a lot; his new book is full of curious information about the 'nineties, and he gets an ingenious contrast by bringing his countess, who has been acquainted with all the great world of Europe, home to the acid provincialism of Maple Valley. The plot, which concerns the pathological passion of a middle-aged woman for a boy, is not raised from its native unpleasantness by any poignancy of treatment; it serves well enough, however, to hold together the manifestations of a curious and random cleverness.

Louis Couperus is a writer of great learning and considerable power. I cannot quite make out what he is aiming at in *The Comedians*. It is about a travelling troupe of players in the Rome of Domitian, and the conventions and terrors of the time are suggested with extraordinary skill, but with a somewhat cynical effect of detachment which prevents one from getting excited about what happens to any of the characters.

Let me come home from Iowa, Michigan, Canada, Rome, to praise an English book whose scene seems to lie further away than any of them—not much nearer, in fact, than fairyland. Mr. Bates is a young writer, who has not yet got control of his medium, but he shows remarkable promise. He has written a fantasy rather than a novel—and that not without the introduction of such painfully prosaic affairs as family squabbles and stuffy bedrooms! But he is not really at home with the prosaic. In tracing the relation of two sisters who both love the same man, he shows that he can convey a mysterious sense of passion and pity in the very rhythm of his prose.

P. C. KENNEDY.

"BARBEMADA TORQUEVILLY"

killed him, by falling on him without managing to throw him, and turning to pound his head beneath his hoofs—that head which, half crushed, came that evening to play whist at my father's, to the horror and admiration of all.

But he died ten days later; and then we see this last d'Aurevillesque touch in the recollection:

From his house, a good distance from the cemetery, a stream of blood marked his passage, flowing through the joins of his coffin. I was a child . . . and I remember the tragedy of my sensations in walking in that blood, fallen from the largest veins that ever throbbled.

There, ready to hand, was the sombre grandeur, the violence of horror, which was later to come to flower in the stories that make up *Les Diaboliques*, and in others less widely known, notably *L'Ensorcelée*. And hard on the heels of these experiences of boyhood came another contact which left its impress on Barbey d'Aureville's sensibility, when, coming to Caen as a young student, he lodged by chance in the very hostelry where Beau Brummell, penniless, sordid, and decayed, mouldered away in a living death, mumbling and receiving imaginary visitors by candlelight in his bedroom. The acuteness of his critique of *le dandyisme* et *Georges Brummell* was sharpened by a first-hand experience, however much it was elaborated by the conceits of style and sophistication. The bent of his peculiar genius was to a great extent decided by his heredity and his early surroundings.

The qualities of this genius, its successes and its limits, are well represented in *Les Diaboliques*. It is, indeed, the book by which he is best known, and Mr. Ernest Boyd is to be congratulated on a sound English rendering of the six tales of which it is made up—though it is hard to think why it should bear the hybrid title of *The Diaboliques*. Barbey d'Aureville's style inclines to be discursive, but it is never loosely knit; he wrote with an *ear*, and the heavily charged paragraphs of his prose have a sonority and rhythm which must in some degree be preserved in any translation that hopes to reproduce their