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# FIVE NOVELS Woman of Mettle

Lady Charlotte Schreiber: Extracts from her Journal 1853-1891. Edited by the Earl of Bessborough. (Murray: 21s.) By RAYMOND MORTIMER

astonishment and curiosity.

Granville and of Evening Prayer, beside his bed." characterisation." Woman's Journal as a child have met Lady Bess- I suppose, by the family rumpus. borough, there was an abyss between them. Earnestness had

> she loved him and made an Europe for old china. courage, scholarship, conscientious-find work as an actress. ness and intensity of feeling.

Journals we find her newly benefit of connoisseurs.) widowed at the age of forty. She period of her life strikes me, howworks in Wales, as well as Canford, when her collecting began, a new This thesis is defended by referin Dorset: her eldest son is only Victorians. novel by Charlotte Yonge.

the best in English.) Now it is his pented sins coming thronging grandmother who has bowled me before him, exaggerated doubtless over. Oh, I am not in love with by his condition, and he seems Lady Charlotte, she is altogether almost to despair... yet perhaps too formidable — an imperious few young men have been so personage given to choosing her steady, and few have humanly consorts. The feeling she inspires speaking made such good ar in me is awful respect, mixed with noble use of their time. What could I say but comfort as well as A Lady Bessborough was all I could with Scripture words ... I glancing wit and gushing warmth: think he was more composed when she succumbed with the same en- I had done, and when I had venthusiasm to the charms of Lord tured on a short extempore prayer

Lady Charlotte had no leisure for Charlotte Yonge would never wit: she was learning Welsh or have penned the sequel. The tutor Euclid when she was not manag- is a vigorously handsome young ing her ten children, her ironworks, fellow, only twenty-six; and Lady her backward brother, or one of Charlotte's hair is grey. She dyes her husbands. Warmth she had: it; and her daughters are shocked. she was ardently religious, and- She announces her intention of like Lady Bessborough—she lost marrying Schreiber; and everyone her heart to an Adonis many years is shocked. Most annoyingly there younger than herself. But instead is no entry in her diary for the of parading her feelings she sought last three months before the to hide them. Though she might wedding: she was too perturbed,

replaced sensibility as the fashion- THIRTY years later she recalls greatest statesmen of In the book I am now reviewing Schreiber "he always held my he has the answer and declare Lord Bessborough, again with the hand in his dear hand during the his own faith in it. It is nothing help of Mr. Angus Davidson, edits Lessons and the sermon": the less than belief in the existence admirably a sequel to "The Diaries marriage had proved altogether of Lady Charlotte Guest." Born in happy. Lady Charlotte left Canshe defied the conventions of her age; Whig though she was, she very clear definition of what class (and escaped from a detested, allowed Schreiber to stand as a meant by natural law. In or stepfather) by marrying John Conservative; and then in the place Mr. Agar seems to accept th Guest, a mere ironmaster. He was 1860s she was seized with a new forty-eight, she was twenty-one; passion. She started to ransack justice = reason as understood it

exemplary partner. Boundlessly Every biography can be thought tain that it belongs to the sph energetic, high-minded, strong- of as a novel written by the Fates, of the absolute and not to that minded though given to self-pity, and they gave a delightful, unexshe negotiated with workmen about pected twist to the story when they wages, with foreign Governments turned this businesslike, philanabout the price of rails; she thropic, so serious woman into a government may dictate on may travelled; she recovered her social devotee of porcelain and fans and position by entertaining with pur- antique playing-cards. There was poseful magnificence; she trans- in her always an engagingly ated the "Mabinogion" from the incalculable strain. Though Welsh; and somehow found time to decided Protestant, she approved produce also five sons and five of the Continental Sunday, and daughters. Exceptional as she was adored appearing in private theaamong the women of the Victorian tricals. We find her in old age Age, Lady Charlotte might be an widowed again and sightless, incarnation of the Age itself. She trying to provide umbrellas for the there is an absolute sanct had all the qualities that made it cabmen in London, reciting long these "musts." prise, public spirit, curiosity, and helping her maid's sister to

here from the journals of her last controls the expanding Guest iron- ever, as significant. In the Sixties, of things. the huge house she has built spirit was coming over the ence to history. Heraclitus stresse

eighteen. She engages as tutor for The Prince Consort died; the common to all mankind." Socrates him a Mr. Schreiber, who is taken Queen was replaced as the focus of taught absolute standards of righ ll. She visits the sick-bed at his social life by her pleasure-loving and wrong. Plato urged that t request, and in the evening she heir and his elegant Princess; will of the people must bow before confides to her diary a passage I Swinburne and Walter Pater pub- the eternal rules of justice must quote. It might come from a lished their first writings (so did | Aristotle drew a sharp distinction Ouida); William Morris started his between the particular and th "I felt a little prudery about it firm of interior decorators. The universal law. Sophocles in the at first—for it is difficult for me earnest Age was turning aesthetic. | Antigone showed how right it was who was comparatively a young Lady Charlotte continued, in fact, for his heroine to obey the natural woman last year, to feel and believe to be an embodiment of her times. \ law and bury her brother, although



4 SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY alfresco dance: an illustration from in dancing and deportment which appeared in 1623, and is now reprinted with a translation, introduction and notes by Joan

F. de Lauze's "Apologie de la Danse," a treatise of instruction (Muller. 45s.)

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Mr. Robert Frost, have been overday, in novels, Mr. Church has spoken with an individual voice, at the same time quiet and passionate, from the depth of an inner life the story are drawn with extreme a tapestry of human lives, pries' that can burst out into indignation clarity and stand out like figures lords, merchants, peasants, at the sight of cruelty or humbug on a frieze. The whole book labourers, and these are and then retire to its raptures is finely written, not with the described with charity, interest and

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forcing her to remain at a business court, at the turn of the eighteenth been mine. voice, wishes to become a singer, Goya, and the story is that of his 'Abercrombie, is an investigation and, though she is fond of Priscilla, middle age, his passionate love for into human relationships, cent's ambition and awakens her constantly interesting, often ex- is, throughout its length, abnor in love with the ruthless, have been few more intolerable not mind when Miss Abercrom! unawakened Priscilla. His "be-countries than Goya's Spain) and as is sometimes the case, is say trayal" of Millicent is symbolic; always pulsing with genuine, not genuinely difficult things; b it is at this moment that the factitious, life. Somehow, dazzled she continues in the same labyri "nightingale begins to sing," and by Dr. Feuchtwanger's immense thine late-James style when she the two sisters, freed from the ugly popular success, I had never saying quite obvious ones. Threetie that has held them, can fly free. realised what a good novelist he is. quarters of the book could be dis Alongside the symbolism of this To have brought this book off posed of without loss: but t novel there is a stream of life on needed a whole assembly of gifts, other quarter contains passages a realistic plane. The people of power of character-drawing, atmo- unusual subtlety.

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sphere, intellectual grasp, and deer emotion: and he succeeds trium -phantly. I think English readers will enjoy the book more if the

torical novel, "The Golden Hand," obvious virtues—a proper artisti ambition, zest for people and for fact. Its theme, which is the buil Abercrombie. (Derek ing of a cathedral in a sm English town in the fourteent - century, gives Miss Simon scope for fineness of effort and strain, but (so far as I can judge) accuracy In his new novel, "The Nightin- with a simple fineness of prose All in all, it is a book which gale," Mr. Church has made an which matches the classic subject, should have expected to enjoy me embroidery upon the classical I am not so easy with this book than I did: but, though I read theme of Philomela, sister of as I am with Mr. Church's with admiration, I was never qui Procne, who was ravished by naturalistic novels, "The Porch." engaged. It is possible that Miss Tereus and had her tongue cut out or "The Stronghold": but the Simon's manner, which is of to keep her silent: and who at last delayed effect of the book is re- elusive and oblique, does not de was turned into a nightingale, markable and the atmosphere justice to her sense of fact. It is Priscilla (Procne) and Millicent lingers in the memory. This more than possible that I had t (Philomela) are the daughters of notable novel is the expression of read the book too fast—and that others will derive from it the stiff-necked, self-righteous, bullying The scene of "This is the Hour" pleasure that, I have an uncom-

read up the facts of Goya's life About Miss Edith Simon's his

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tive, partly because of a kind of prevented him from becoming rvous shyness, in Mr. Lewis famous, The special part played by | rtists have too much in common, least of his time. was to make clearer than ever the sharp dualism between God and and with a word of praise for The main point is that, remote that is never felt by those who are

tension that is the parent of all our liberties. The absence of it is Communist system of production may (or may not) be admirable, but no true Westerner can accept Communism, because not production, but liberty, is his highest All this one can welcome with applause, not least the effort to distinguish between good and bad in Communism. The argument is a delight to read. Mr. Agar has the journalist's unerring eye for the telling phrase and borrows a quantity from other writers. He can also coin a supply of his own. "Communism is a modern refuge for disillusioned Christians" contains a volume in itself. He is passionately earnest, but only towards

he applies the intellectual hates the bourgeoisie in decay, and obe which he has used with such is proscribed by the Communists ect on Joyce, Eliot, Stein, Law- from reaching the proletariat; nor ace and Hemingway to Existen- are his views popular in English sm and the work of Sartre, translation. He will not be more an Existentialist. Yet this is The new treatment is less effec- Sartre's position, and it has not

ntemount to modesty; and also Camus Mr. Lewis considers a ecause he is aware that all but writer of greater austerity and ne of the writers he has chosen honesty, though more limited, and e of another country and genera- a far better Existentialist. Malraux on, and so elude the par- he regards as more sinister because lar relationship with their of his admiration for action and tic, as between Sherlock Holmes violence, his hero-cult, his love of nd Dr. Moriarty, in which his full revolutions, which Mr. Lewis lents used to be displayed. And, thinks are more disastrous to sides, he admires them. Only humanity even than war. Comhe writes of Orwell do we munists, on the other hand, he atch an echo of the familiar finds full of good sense and with Gertcher!" of his "Men without more genuine humanism than rt," and hear a few telling quota- Existentialists. One might say in tions snap the handcuffs on yet Sartre's favour, however, that a her literary giant. But these writer who is both put on the Index Christianity in this development two lonely, poor and truthful and branded in "Prayda" is at

distant duel of invisible warships, a struggle is being fought out in Paris which affects us all. Though "right"—or canons of beauty—

, but there is no church or ease and plausibility with which he y justifies his comment: ment which is going on between scene in London resembles speaking terms, or who have long Butlin camp in an off- abandoned the pen for the gun. It ous quarter taken over by small- inclined to bother with these argu-

The Root of Europe: Studies in the Diffusion of Greek Culture. Edited by Michael Huxley. (Chatto and Windus. 15s.)

By ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE

HIS book, with its illumi- environments, we are perhaps COLLECTION of rural sketches, "The Country of White Clover" is Mr. Bates. The white clover

country is Kent, his adopted county, and there are felicitous descriptions of the land of hops and cherries, where "orchard dips / Into cornland, cornland into hopcopse folds on grass, and grass into / into flax." The richness and fecundity of Kent are extolled note of bitterness mars the wever deeply the West and epiphany. the farmers, the old ladies, all are castigated, while the labourer is allowed one overworked Happier and less controversial are the chapters devoted to the appreciation of flowers and trees, in England, in Madeira, and in France, and here the author is at his best. He is a poet in his feeling for colour and beauty. No other writer gets so close to the heart of a flower, the tenderness of bluebells, the lacelike whiteness of cherry blossom. Readers who do not know

of the rock garden will be persuaded to grow them, by his l'arn's chapter on "Macedon and been leading separate lives. The second of these books, "The Birds Began to Sing," is poles apart, the East" and in Dr. Sutherland's yet the two are complementary to on "Greece in Rome"—is that the man's is a warm, friendly, of Alexander the Great anticipated has decorated H. E. Bates's book Gwenda Morgan has made fulltions for Mrs. Tiltman's pie of good the fortunes of the Greek culture ending to Shaw's "Candida." in a number of non-Greek social

nating illustrations, is the obtaining a pre-view of some of work of a distinguished chapters of our own history which, and of scholars, each of whom in our case, still lie in the future. as made a contribution of the This light on our own future lue and interest that one makes the Greek precedent partiore, these contributions blend Westerners and for our Russian, nto a whole, so that a reader of other non-Western contemporaries, The Root of Europe" will find who today are reacting to the tere, not a collection of discon- impact of the West in ways that a ected essays, but a book. The student of Hellenism will find riters see eye to eye in discerning familiar. The non-Western World a unity that is latent in the sub- of today, like Jewry in the time of written in the easy, graceful all the civilisations whose historical tion with its own weapons, as well style which we associate with relations with Hellenism are here as its. "Zealots," who see salvation in a rigid refusal to have anything One important fact that emerges to do with the accursed thing. Is m the comparative view given in there a third possibility? Can book is pointed out by the elements drawn from different or, Mr. Michael Huxley. The civilisations be blended into a new acy of Greek culture is no mono- harmony which may generate fresh of the Western World; as creative powers? . Something like sterners have been prone to this did spring from the encounter ie. We Westerners are between Hellenism and the coneirs of Hellenism with the temporary civilisations of Southamic World; with Eastern West Asia and India; for this was thodox Christendom, and even the social milieu in which both th Eastern Asia in our common Christianity and "the Great

ritage from Greek visual art; and, Vehicle" of Buddhism made their ssia may feel themselves to be Amid all the sufferings and vided from one another today in anxieties of the present age, 'there | clook and in aims, it remains is thus a gleam of hope to be seen one the less true that we have in the history of the sequel to the nmon ground in our Greek as meeting between the Greek and ell as in our Christian past. This other civilisations of an older reditary common ground may generation; and, in the current Il count for much in our future meeting between the West and its ations with one another, because contemporaries, the recollection of is not so easy to repudiate one's a common heritage, bequeathed by it in fact as it is in words. Pro- the cultural consequences of ar sor Dvornik's chapters on earlier encounter of the same kind, vzantium and the North" and ought to help us to steer our course Byzantine Influences in Russia" elear of disaster, in spite of the also manifestly opened up by a sudden collision between societies Another point brought out by that have forgotten their common his book—particularly in Dr. root because, till recently, they have

each other. Marjorie Hessell Tilt- Greek culture in and after the time Laughter in Season happy book, with good gossip of one of the achievements of our THERE are those who would dis-Sussex folk and their neighbourly own civilisation during the last L miss A. A. Milne's humour as ways. It is written with sympathy 450 years. A hitherto obscure and "whimsical"; but if, as one and understanding of country unimportant society, marooned on gathers, the word has come to obstinacy and reserve, and all will the rim of the civilised world, mean arch and affected, nothing recognise the integrity of its suddenly overran a large part of could be more untrue. For Mr. characters. Information is cun- the habitable earth and radiated Milne's common sense and poise ningly imparted, from the making its culture from end to end of it. are as much in evidence as his of pancakes to the making of lace. Greek art, for example, spread as fancy and his comic invention; It is packed with flowers and gar- | far as Japan in one direction and | and to laugh with him is to shake dening, with birds, with recipes as Britain in the other; and, in one's thinking out of the ruts. the Old World, the diffusion of It is difficult, for instance, after Both books follow the calendar Greek culture was almost as wide reading the essays in "Year In. throughout the year. Broom Lynne as the diffusion of our own Western | Year Out" (Methuen, 15s.), to feel ulture in modern times. This quite the same about the Baconian with delicate drawings, and book surveys, region by region, Theory, the ways of astrologers, or what happened in the next chapter the conversation of rooks; impage pictures and small decora- of the story; and, in following here possible to forget Mr. Milne's new ERIC FORBES-BOYD

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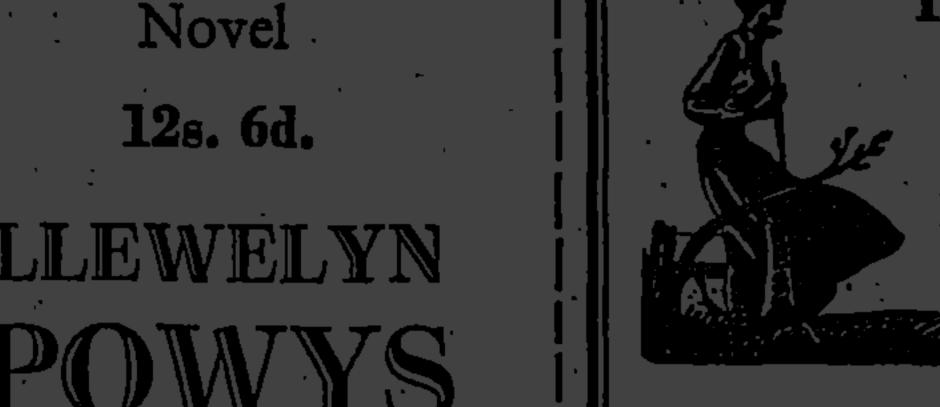
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