

THERE are two inexhaustible subjects for Parisian literary talk — one, the quarrels, the other, the prizes.

We are now supplied with a quarrel about Maurice Barrès and his last novel, "Le Jardin sur l'Oronte". The book was briefly commented upon in these notes. Curiously enough, the opposition came from what one should have expected to be the friendly side. Devout and sincere Catholics were shocked by the complacent, skilful, sometimes enchanting ways of Barrès in mixing the sacred and the profane. His heroine was both pagan and irresistible — and this provoked revolt. Whenever he portrays a hero that is both patriotic and faultless, the revolt bursts out on the other side of the political fence.

Already a dozen important articles have appeared on the subject, signed by such authorities as Robert Vallery, Radot, Henri Massis, José Vincent, Jean de Pierrefen, Jacques Rivière, Paul Sunday, etc., and Barrès himself who fired back in self-defense in the "Revue Hebdomadaire" of October 7. Those who inflict literary and ethical excommunication upon him, do so in the name of uncompromising orthodoxy. Religion and human desire, they say, should not be treated on a par, as they are in Barrès's "Jardin". To make sin so lovely, so unescapable, to dress it in all the attributes of terrestrial perfection, is to forsake the duty of true service to the church. Defenders of Barrès might object first that he has never pledged his services to the church, then that some very great artists, before him, have integrated human passion and its most "pagan" aspects into a solid Christian system based on Catholic faith. Verlaine was one. Francis Jammes is another.

As for prizes, a new one has made its appearance. It is the "Prix Balzac", of 15,000 francs, which has been divided between Jean Giraudoux for his book "Siegfried et le Limousin" and Emile Baumann for "Job le Prédestiné". The jury, which deliberated in the little old Balzac house on rue Raynouard, included such brilliant and heteroclitous names as those of Paul Bourget, chairman, Georges Duhamel, Léon Daudet, Edmond Jaloux. It certainly cannot be said that Giraudoux and Baumann were chosen by a narrow clique. . . .

"Le Secret Professionnel", a tiny book of reflections by Jean Cocteau, has been received with more attention, by the critics at large, than his previous works. "Le Prince Frivole" was

left behind, long ago, by the author of "Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance". "Parade" and "Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel" were considered as "stunts" in spite of Cocteau's serious intentions. The successful "Bœuf sur le Toit", with Darius Milhaud's music, two years ago, counted as a scherzo. "Le Secret Professionnel" finds readers outside of Cocteau's direct supporters and friends. The "Nouvelle Revue Française", which has always manifested a disagreeable disposition toward Cocteau, publishes a note which is quite considerate. Literary boundaries, like political ones, are being rearranged. . . .

Two novels by young men: "Silbermann" by Jacques de Lacretelle — the Jewish problem in the mind of an adolescent — and "Gérard et son Témoin" by Paul Brach. And a novel, "Carnaval", by a very young woman, Mireille Havet, published in "Les Œuvres Libres". And Colette (now Madame de Jouvenel, wife of the French delegate to the League's Assembly, a man who did excellent work at Geneva last month) has given us a new novel, "La Maison de Claudine", which is infinitely more serene, pure, and restful than such books as "La Vagabonde" or "Chéri". But it is not less full of talent. This author, first known through the "Claudine" series, which she wrote and which were signed by her first husband, "Willy", is one of France's greatest writers. Those who may not find interest in "L'Envers du Music-Hall", because of the special world, special setting, and special psychology it involves, cannot fail to respond to such exquisite accomplishments as her "Seven Animals' Dialogues" and its fellow book, "La Paix chez les Bêtes".

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