

THE LITERARY DIGEST

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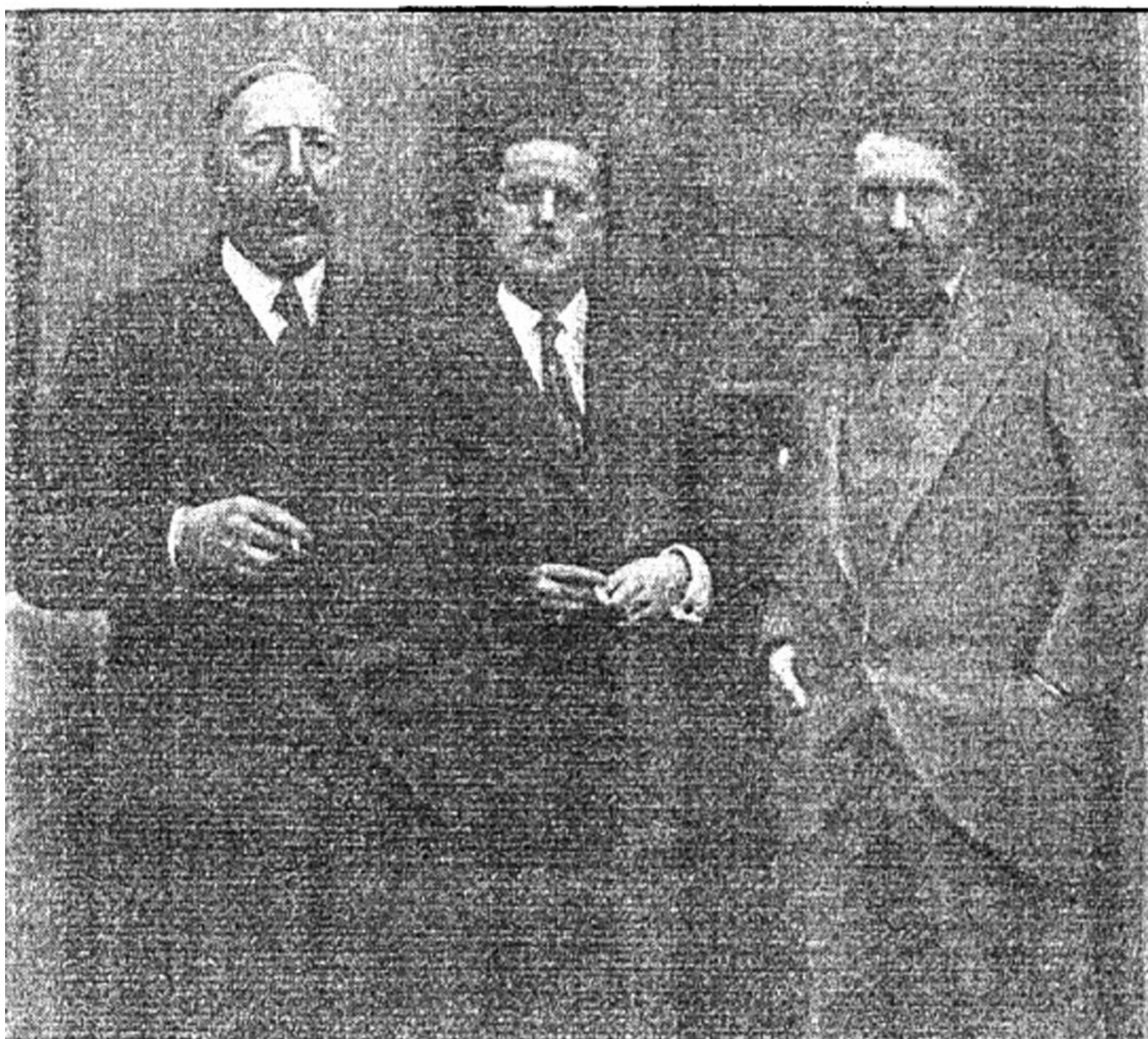
A WAR NOVEL FOR "INTELLECTUALS"

NOT SINCE "THREE SOLDIERS" has a novel of the war made such an impression on reviewers as Ford Madox Ford's "No More Parades." It has been universally praised in all the weekly superlatives of these writers of such obviously short memories. The review written by Mary M. Colum for *The Saturday Review of Literature* (New York) helps us to understand how a book having the war as a subject should have escaped the taboo which is supposed to have fallen on that theme. "'No More Parades,' she says, is probably the most highly praised novel of the year; in fact one discovers from the more intellectual reviewers that it is a very remarkable book." All our "intellectuals" are reading it, Mrs. Colum tells us, and she expects that "our young intellectual novelists will be heavily influenced by it or will attempt to imitate a whole-cloth imitation of it." She thereupon attempts to tell us why a book like "No More Parades" gets this amount of attention:

"It gets attention for exactly the same reason that the work of T. S. Eliot gets attention, and, in a lesser degree, that the work of the new *Dial* prize-winner, E. E. Cummings, who that journal editorially informs us is a great poet. *The Dial* does not explain to us why it considers Mr. Cummings a great poet, nor does its reviewer tell us why he considers Mr. Ford a great novelist. But this is the reason: Mr. Ford, Mr. Cummings and several other writers of the newer order express, nimbly, and accurately, in carefully developed and individual style, certain attitudes of mind, certain sensations, certain emotions, and, above all, certain observations of this generation. Mr. Ford is, of course, a much more important writer than Mr. Cummings. They both, however, give expression to a certain rampant and disillusioned intellectualism which is the fashionable literary attitude of the moment.

"That readers should like a writer because he expresses them or something which interests them is understandable enough; this sort of judgment has indeed a certain relation to literary criticism, but it must be considered as relative to other merits. It is the sheerest nonsense to call a writer great because he expresses some facet or some neuroticism of his own generation. For example, I believe that T. S. Eliot expresses a part of me a great deal better than does John Keats or Robert Browning. But I am not for that reason under the delusion that Mr. Eliot is as great as Keats or Browning, or that he is a great poet at all—an excellent poet of sorts he is. An excellent novelist of sorts is Mr. Ford Madox Ford, but neither of them have the stamina, or the passion, or the hard grip on their material of the great writers; they have not added anything to the experience of the race that is going to make them live in the memory of the race, and, if we are to have any sort of genuine criticism, the indiscriminate calling of such writers great or immortal must be stopt.

"An immortal writer is a writer who expresses something immortal; a great writer is a writer who expresses something great—it may be something overwhelmingly great, or it may be simply a strong, fleeting intensity. The expression of fleeting intensities, or even fleeting whimsicalities, has often innate in them, if not an immortal flame, at least an immortal spark, and so they, too, live with the greater expressions in the mind of man. Having made my protest against the calling of such books 'great'—and such a protest is, perhaps, the most necessary act of criticism at the present time, let me state that 'No More Parades' is an excellent book and worth every intelligent man's or woman's reading once. It has the integrity and the probity



AN INTERNATIONAL RADICAL LITERARY TRIO

Ford Madox Ford, an Englishman, author of "No More Parades," James Joyce, an Irishman, author of "Ulysses," Ezra Pound, American poet and publicist; all of the extreme modern school who make Paris their home.

which *The Dial* reviewer credits it with; it has not, however, 'the single violence of passion'—it has not, in fact, passion at all; passion is exactly the quality lacking in such books. It has little emotion; it is life portrayed through thin emotions but distinguished intellect—a life where people observe rather than feel things. What intensity it has is nervous and intellectual intensity. It is an outstanding characteristic of such books that they are written out of the nerves and intellect."

Mrs. Colum fortunately does not leave us in the dark as to what it is all about:

"The two chief characters, *Sylvia* and *Christopher Tietjens*, similarly, are created out of the nerves and intellect, and so have the curious reality and unreality of such creations. The scene of the novel is a base-camp behind the lines in France during the war; naturally we do not get the emotional reactions of people to the war—we get their nervous reactions to minor phases of it. Readers of what are called very modern books will have noticed that in them great stress is laid on such facets of life as have, up to the present, been omitted altogether in literature or relegated to a minor position. This is due to the influence of the discoveries of psychoanalysis which show that more or less hidden, and sometimes superficial desires, play an unsuspected rôle in the nervous make-up of individuals. When such forces are brought out and made play the chief rôles the total effect is of patent unreality. In the older English novels such forces had no part to play. For instance, in 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles,' *Tess* is shown acting under powerfully moving influences, in powerfully significant situations, while in a book like 'No More Parades' *Sylvia Tietjens's* character is shown in insignificant circumstances under the sway of neurotic emotions. Her chief desire with regard to her husband is to torture him with infidelities and cruelties. As she sits in a hotel lobby with a man who has been her lover she sees in a mirror her husband enter and hand a card to the hotel servant; she watches his lips moving as he asks for her, sees him see her sitting there. The description of this scene is a triumph of nervous observation. We have all through the book triumphs of nervous observation, but we have no triumphs of emotional revelation; neither *Sylvia* nor her husband are strongly alive because their creator had not in himself a vital life to give them. He tries to make of *Christopher* an intellectual, a chivalrous gentleman following public school ethics and the Arnold of Rugby code of honor; what he actually turns out to be is a sort of Sissy without strong emotions, a man who tries to be unfaithful to his wife but can not succeed. We are told that he won't hit another man before his wife, *Sylvia*, but he permits his brother to write scurrilous letters about her."