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CURRENT REVIEWS

EDITED BY

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INTRODUCTION

There is to-day in America an unexampled activity in the field of literary criticism. For it a variety of reasons may be discovered. Among them an important one is that there is in the air a greater diversity of opinion with regard to literary problems than we have ever before experienced. Moreover the conflict of theories that is now on is a conflict of ideas about life in its totality. The novel, superficially only a form of entertainment for the hour of leisure, has come to concern itself with questions of government, of philosophy, of science, and of art. Not long ago on the review page of a newspaper some star-gazing correspondent expressed the wish that books might be dealt with critically without regard to the author's point of view. That is very much like asking an audience at a concert to enjoy the performance of a virtuoso upon a Virgil clavier. In the one case the artist would play upon words, and not upon the meaning of life. In the other he would play upon keys, and not upon the emotional implications of sound.

Some years ago when I offered a course in current literary criticism, utilizing the reviews and the magazines of the month or the week, I made two discoveries. One was that the difficulty of getting scattered critical articles into the hands of students was at least a great inconvenience. The second was that the subject matter of the reviews opened up a wide range of interests with which upper classmen were genuinely concerned.

In directing the study of the criticism that presents itself in current periodicals I have asked students to formulate answers to the following questions. It will happen often enough that the review in hand at any particular time will not provide material from which answers to all of the questions can be either directly or conjecturally derived. In such cases the business of hunting for a critical needle in a discursive haystack is not one in which the student should be too much encouraged, but he must be invited to look for revelations of the author's mind somewhat below the surface of the written word.

1. How is the author's point of view romantic, realistic, classical, or naturalistic?
2. Discuss the critic's literary style as fitted to the particular criticism.
3. Is the critical approach judicial or appreciative?
4. What canons of literary judgment are implied in the criticism?
5. Does the critic stress the more substance or form?
6. Is the critic's human point of view patrician or plebeian?

Of these questions one and four are in some respects the more important. In approaching the first a little elucidation of terms will very probably be useful. That the classicist is never romantic, or that the romanticist is never realistic or naturalistic, is a thing not at all to be understood. The difference between one and another of these several art tendencies is often enough only a preponderance of the one over the other. It is important to distinguish between them, however, since they have come into being as vital movements of the human spirit.

In brief compass it is possible to glance only at out-

standing marks of these different phases of our reaction to life. Of classicism we may say only that it is an art creed emphasizing the universal as distinguished from the particular and transient, declaring itself for restraint and poise as against abandon and enthusiasm, insisting upon purity of form. For the present, literary factions are chiefly those of the romanticists, the realists, and the naturalists. It is therefore the easier to let our illumination of the spirit of classicism pass with this word.

In looking for the differentiating marks that separate the other three schools from one another, I have found a simple formula somewhat useful. It is more applicable to the literature of the present than to that of fifty years ago, but that limitation is one of its advantages. The romanticist in his literary treatment of life insists that there are positive human values. With that insistence goes the further faith that the artist cannot ignore them. If a rose is more beautiful than a puffball, he holds that it is foolish to write as if they were equally enchanting. If a particular form of conduct is capable of conveying a finer thrill of esthetic pleasure than another, it seems to him idle to act or speak as if they were equally engaging.

The realist does not deny the romanticist's doctrine of values. As a thinker he may be quite as sure as the romanticist that life has values, that some things are more charming and more beautiful than others, that some forms of conduct are more admirable than others. As an artist his contention is that those distinctions, perhaps especially distinctions of manners and morals, are none of his business. As an artist he does not presume to be also a thinker. He is an observer only. It is his affair to report what he sees and to do that without com-

ment. He conceives that it is his office to tell the truth about life. Then in practice he adds to that art doctrine the corollary that the truth with which he busies himself is the fact of the thing seen, not that fact interpreted.

The naturalist goes further than the realist in denying the romantic doctrine *in toto*. He asserts, with varying emphasis, of course, that there are no human values, that beauty is only a matter of differing human appreciations, that nature is essentially non-moral, and that life and conduct, whether considered as manners or as morals, must therefore also be non-moral. He contends that human desires and human estimates of what is good cannot rise above their source in the natural order, cannot transcend the laws of that order or superimpose upon them those of another order devised by man. Whether the natural order as it stands is good or bad is for him more or less a negligible question. It simply is, and for the artist to do more than say what is, including man within the compass of that natural order, is for him to attempt something beyond his legitimate art function.

It will be seen that these oppositions and antagonisms in art theory are vital and more or less irreconcilable. The statement of them upon which I have ventured, I fully realize, will be questioned by many. None the less I repeat summarizingly that the romanticist believes in the open recognition of values by the artist, that the realist insists on ignoring them, and that the naturalist denies their existence.

The fourth question is closely related to the first. The criteria by which a critic tests a literary work are implied rather than affirmed in his criticism, and in any given example of it they will even so be only in a slight degree revealed. It is an excellent exercise in clarity of

critical thinking, however, to formulate them as far as the material in hand warrants. Our acceptance of any critic's estimate of a work of art of any sort is very greatly conditioned upon our agreement with his original critical premises. It will happen now and then that a reviewer's appraisal of a book will uncover qualities such as may suggestively lead the reader to a readjustment of his own canons of judgment.

For the student who is finding himself and establishing his own critical premises in a period of conflicting dogmas the establishment of a body of esthetic criteria for romanticism as found in the writings of romantic critics—for realism, for classicism, for naturalism—is a very enlightening experience. He can hardly go through it without doing something substantial toward his orientation in his world. As a preparation for it he will find it somewhat to his advantage to have done some reading in philosophy. Further, he should have at least some consciousness of the drift of scientific thinking in our day. Life cannot be envisaged, and literature therefore also cannot be envisaged, apart from its grounding in the natural order of the universe as it is now understood. Whatever we may look upon as our proper human relations to that order, it cannot be ignored.

Question six may seem to be somewhat apart from the general critical drift, but a little watchfulness in our reading of literary criticism will make it very clear, I believe, that nineteenth-century democracy has given to the twentieth century a conflict between proletarian ideals and patrician ideals that goes very far beyond the political conflict of the eighteenth century in which it was born. Whether literature is to be conceived of as dealing with conduct or not, whether life may or may not be evaluated without regard to conduct, whether in

life and so in literature manners and morals do or do not matter, are questions to be answered differently as the critic is patrician or plebeian. The patrician will more or less say that conduct does matter, that life roots many of its values in conduct, and that in literature as in life, and because in life, manners and morals are inseparable from any rational appraisal. More or less the plebeian judgment will deny the validity of evaluations that take seriously into account the good or ill of human conduct.

In this connection I use the term conduct in the broad sense to signify a man's way of managing his affairs in view of all the circumstances and exigencies of existence, including those of the human society in which he is placed and those of the world of natural law in which he and that society are placed together. So considered it will include at least manners and morals and business sagacity. These are all elements of conduct by which men in varying degrees maintain themselves as constructive or efficient parts of the social whole.

Question three is concerned with the difference between two schools of critical method, concerning which see further Appendix A. The judicial critic applies to the work in hand those canons of appraisal which have won his approval. He is necessarily subjective in the determination of such fundamental premises, but in the employment of them he attempts to be objective. The critic of what I call the appreciative school, on the contrary, measures the worth of a work of art by his own reaction to it. He insists upon being subjective rather than objective. The degree of his appreciation of it is for him the degree also of its worth. Since he looks upon emotional excitation as the end of art, he must evaluate a poem or a drama by the amount of such excitation that it produces. So he is driven back upon

himself, since he cannot observe the emotional reactions of others as satisfactorily as he can his own.

The literary criticism that follows has been chosen out of that published over a period of some five years. It is arranged alphabetically in groups. There has been no effort to make the collection an assembling of the best literary criticism put into print during that time. Such an attempt would have defeated the purpose of the book. I have wished to include writings covering the critical attitudes of the several schools among whose followers critical opinion is divided. It has not been a matter of much thought whether a review prospectively to be included was signed by a distinguished name or not. It was more important that it should be a sincere expression of a critical opinion whose validating in the canons of one of the several schools now taking issue with one another was not too obscure. It has at least been my purpose not to admit to the volume any criticism seemingly dishonest or meanly controversial. There is nothing in the volume of which I could suspect that it had been written for the exploitation of the writer's cleverness or the satisfying of a petty malice. Conclusions with regard to the critical ideals and standards of our immediate present, as drawn from these reviews, should be fairly symptomatic. Instructors using the book with college classes will presumably supplement it with an occasional review from a current periodical.

While in the first instance these evaluations of books now going into print have been brought together as illustrations of current literary and critical tendencies, they should serve a further purpose. The writing of book reviews for newspapers and other periodicals is a thing for which young people in college should have some training. The preparation of such reviews for presentation before clubs and literary organizations of

various sorts is a somewhat extensive activity of the present day. Composition courses in that field should be practically more useful for most college students than courses, perhaps more popular, in the short story. The book supplies a variety of models for study by the young reviewer, written in various keys, addressed to various audiences of readers, and covering a wide range of material in the subject matter of the books reviewed. To me, at least, they are all interesting. Indeed, book reviews that are at all competent are both interesting and valuable in a high degree. No one can keep abreast of what the world is thinking in all fields of cultural advance, but the reading of book reviews affords an excellent approach to what the leaders of thought are doing. The writer of good reviews has his cultural reward also. He must freshly envisage the subject with which the book deals, he must reshape opinions and judgments about it, he must inform himself with regard to the current development of knowledge in its field, and he must consider how the author's approach to his theme is different from what it might have been a year earlier, or perhaps at the time when the last important book dealing with it was published. The writing of reviews may be hack work. Sometimes, no doubt, it is, but it has also been the exercise of many fine minds. This collection should make so much compellingly clear.

For permission to reprint the various critical articles which constitute the body of the book I am grateful to the editors of the journals to which credit is given in connection with the individual selections. Only the prompt generosity of editors and reviewers has made the book possible. Upon their ability, their literary skill, and their critical judgment whatever value it may have depends.

CURRENT REVIEWS

BIOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, AND LIKE REVIEWS

Interest in biography seems to be greater now than it has ever been before. Of late several biographers have attracted unusual attention, among them Lytton Strachey, Gamaliel Bradford, and M. R. Werner. There is apparent in the work of all three of them a livelier interest in the business of discovering the actual man, his motives and purposes, behind the mask of his public acts and performances. The biographer's research into the mainsprings of conduct may result in removing some blemishes from the records of "damaged souls." On the other hand it may dim somewhat the glory of the person whose life is canvassed, as in the case of Queen Victoria reported upon by Lytton Strachey.

As an explanation of the attention that we give to biography I quote from a recent interview with Mr. Gamaliel Bradford. "After all each one of us is more interested in people than he is in anything else in the world. That interest is the real basis for the art of the biographer as well as for that of the novelist. Character in the last essence is the supreme preoccupation of us all."

Naturally the effort to arrive at a more intimate acquaintance with a man who has influenced the life of his day raises an ethical question. How far is a biographer justified in making public all that he may learn about his subject? The psychologists have been doing something toward breaking down those walls of reserve

with which persons of good breeding instinctively hedge themselves about. They are doubtless in no small measure responsible for our increased curiosity with regard to the personal peculiarities of the more distinguished of our fellow mortals. How far the current drift toward a less guarded publicity for whatever we are and whatever we do is to be accepted remains, however, a question for which there will be widely differing answers. The attitudes of the reviewers represented in the following pages should be canvassed with relation to this problem. Other approaches to the attitude of the reviewer of biography are suggested in the appendix.

AMERICANS

By STUART P. SHERMAN

Reviewed by Henry A. Beers

New York Evening Post Literary Review, February 3, 1923

The professors are getting back at their tormentors. They have been stigmatized as dry-as-dusts and stick-in-the-muds; have been called conventional, academic, and even—last word in insult—Victorian; but now the worm has begun to execute its celebrated turning movement. Professor Sherman is a tease, and he has lots of fun with the young radicals and revolutionaries. One can fancy some contributor to the *Saturday Evening Post* slapping him on the back and shouting, "You're all right, professor! You ain't no slouch! You're a dead game sport!" He is gay, he is animated. He imagines a symposium between Paul Elmer More and Professor Trent, with the ghost of Dr. Johnson as a *tertium quid.* He draws a picture of a flapper, with aspirations for culture, speeding down to Brentano's for a limousine full of the most modern things, in obedience to the instructions of Mr. Mencken.

Professor Sherman wields a trenchant blade in defense of tradition. The present reviewer, who belongs exclusively to the nineteenth century, has not read the writings of Messrs. Lewisohn, Mencken, Cabell, Dreiser, Sandburg, *et al.,* and is therefore in no position to judge of the question at issue. There is a new reading public, a new set of novelists, poets, and critics in this country who strike no root in the native soil, who

are neither in the English nor in the older American tradition. They are not of colonial stock. They are Italians, Russians, Jews, Irish, Germans, Slavs, or descendants of such.

> These all in sweet confusion sought the shade
> And filled each pause the nightingale had made.

The Yankee nightingale, it must be owned, has made frequent pauses and long ones. But whether those pauses were not better filled by silence than by the notes of these foreign song birds? Whatever literary antecedents this group of writers have are of Europe and of the Continent of Europe. They have no feeling of the American national past: they want no past anyway, only a present, and are particularly scornful of the New England tradition, of Puritanism, pilgrim fathers, Emerson, Longfellow, and the like. All that is provincial, narrow, hypocritical—well, it is provincial, and that is where its strength lies. How can any but a New Englander—or, at least, an American *de la vielle roche*—fully savor such products of the soil as *The Biglow Papers, Snowbound, Walden, The Blithedale Romance?*

Professor Sherman, as has been said, is a vigorous assertor of traditions. By way of answer to these cavils he reviews again very competently and with fine appreciation a number of our great familiars, Franklin, Emerson, Hawthorne, and—to show that his sympathies are not narrowly academic—less orthodox fames, such as Walt Whitman and Joaquin Miller. (If there are any worse bores than the mass of Whitman's so-called poems, it is the interpretation of them by the Whitmanites.) It is well that these prize men of American literature should be presented afresh and from all possible angles,

even though nothing very new remains to be discovered about them, and though their mental baggage has been so thoroughly ransacked that few articles can be found there that have not already paid duty. To our mind, it is as an analyst of character rather than as a merely literary critic that Professor Sherman is most original and penetrating, as in the two masterly chapters in the present volume on Roosevelt and the Adams family.

A CENTURY OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

By CORNELIUS WEYGANDT

Reviewed by H. W. Boynton

The New York Sun, January 23, 1926

Most of the more recent books about the novel have been either technical or controversial. The author has taken occasion to market some short cut to "success" in the writing game, or to cast upon the waters some dry leaf of doctorial disquisition, or to mount some well labeled soap box, modern or reactionary. The author of *A Century of the English Novel* is neither quack nor special pleader; and he has long since left the Ph.D. manner behind him—if he ever had it. His criticism is in no sense formal or professorial; it is a pleasant outpouring of the impressions and opinions of an intelligent and thoughtful student of the novel who premises only that a novel shall be "a something beautiful made out of a man's experience or dream of life."

The author is Prof. Cornelius Weygandt of the University of Pennsylvania. The book is offered not as an academic product, but as "the outcome of the reading and talk of a lifetime. . . . I should like to believe that the book is a summing up of talk with many people." And such, indeed, is our impression of it. A lively conversational tone, a comfortable attitude of impressions offered and theories suggested, a flexible mind toward other people's impressions and theories, mark this good talk of a gentleman and a scholar at home with his books and his friends. We reflect once more that it is

the Menckens, not the abhorred professors, who are habitually intolerant and dogmatic and hidebound.

The discussion begins with a recognition of the growing dominance of the novel in modern literature. This dominance, says Mr. Weygandt, is due partly to the very bulk of the novel as distinguished from short story and novelette. A full length novel is something more than a bite in a hurry—it is a good square meal. The novel, again, gives not only much but many things for your money through "its very absorption into itself of nearly all literary forms. Poetry, essay, short story, drama—you will find them all in the novels of the great." Having made this generalization, a special pleader would ignore any data that showed against it. But as soon as this critic has said that most great novelists show lyrical power, he thinks of Fielding and Jane Austen and Thackeray as exceptions, and contents himself with the moderate conclusion that "poetry is not necessary to a great novel, but there are only a few novelists without poetry in them who are great."

So also the novel often has much in common with the play, especially in employing dialogue to advance the action; and short story and essay are frequently embedded in it. But Mr. Weygandt here takes firm ground against the use of the novel as tract, naming as awful examples *Pamela* and *Caleb Williams* and *The Way of All Flesh* and the novels of W. L. George and H. G. Wells: "If the qualities of the tract are put into poetry we see at a glance that they are out of place there. . . . Why should the novelist insist on putting his hobbies, or his prejudices, or his politics, or his schemes for the regeneration of mankind into his stories any more than the poet into his verses, or the essayist into his essays?" Because they deliberately neglect to tell a story, to in-

terpret life as it is, to "make a something beautiful out of experience or dream," narratives like Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* and Wells's *Marriage* are, Mr. Weygandt rightly says, "negligible as art."

It is as a work of art that we are concerned with the novel in this book. What, then, is the art of the novel, according to Weygandt? "The trouble is," he says, "there have never been any fixed standards as to what the novel should be." Hence, it is possible for a critic like George Moore to deny Fielding and Scott and Thackeray any high standing as novelists—they are unlike Balzac and Turgenieff, and that settles them, for him. And "so it is that W. L. George can couple Wells with Conrad and Hardy as holding without challenge the premier position among novelists." The most that can be counted on is "an approximate consensus of opinion that a novel is a long story in prose that depends for its value on portrayal or character as well as upon succession of incidents." How, then, shall we judge such a narrative, in kind and quality?

We are, says Mr. Weygandt, to consider how the story is told as to both means and effect; then what power of character portrayal it manifests; what the author's personal aura contributed to the total effect, and what his attitude or philosophy toward life. But the first and last question remains, "What of beauty and what kind of beauty has our author made in this novel out of his experience and dream of life?" The present examination of the English novel does not go behind Scott. The chapters on Scott and the Brontës, Thackeray and George Eliot and the lesser Victorians, contain some agreeable discourse on various aspects of those great writers.

The test of the critic's quality, for modern readers,

begins with his handling of the novelists of our own time. The paper on Conrad is very good. There are fine touches of detail, as in the remark that Conrad's aloofness and "avoidance of poignancy," his low-toned detachment, give us the curious impression of "listening to words spoken almost out of hearing." And there is his summing up of Conrad as "one of the 'beginnings' in English fiction like Fielding, like Scott, like Hardy. . . . He has introduced into it a quality that was not there before he wrote. . . . He has brought romance back into the novel of our day." There are good discursive chapters on *John Galsworthy, Gentleman, George Moore, Critic,* and *H. G. Wells, Journalist.*

But the modern reader, that impatient fellow of the younger generation at least, will hurry by this to see what this college professor has to say of the real moderns. There are only fifty pages out of nearly 500 given to *The Neo-Georgians.* But whatever the younger reader may feel of scantiness or inadequacy, he must generously admit that these pages do not contain the babblings of a querulous and reactionary member of the older generation. Nor can he feel that the critic is stretching a point here and there, struggling for an appearance of magnanimity and geniality in order not to get himself dismissed as an old fogy. There is much that he does not like and fails to respond to in the "new novel" to which Henry James paid tribute. But there is also much that he admires and warms to, and he is quick to salute what is excellent in a literature to which, it is true, he was not born or bred and in which he cannot feel quite at home.

The book as a whole suffers from a vagueness which results from the author's flinching from, or failure in, one clear preliminary point of definition. He rests his

definition of the novel on the "approximate concensus of opinion that it is a long story in prose that depends for its value on portrayal of character as well as upon succession of incidents." But an intelligent study of the novel must be based on recognition of the paramount importance of the story. "A novel," says Mr. Weygandt feebly on one occasion, "is always the better for plenty of story." As if the story were something that could be tacked on, or poured in. But a study of any great novel will show that the story, the action, is great first of all, and that all the rest—personal flavor, beauty of style and meaning, strength of characterization—is important because it is inextricably bound up with the story. Whether the action is outward or inward, physical or spiritual or both (and in the greatest fiction it is always both) is a question of secondary interest. Apply the touchstone of "a good story" to the novel, new or old, early Victorian or neo-Georgian, and you begin to see where you are with them.

JAMES BRANCH CABELL

By CARL VAN DOREN

Reviewed by Arthur W. Colton

The Saturday Review of Literature, August 22, 1925

In the last half of the 19th century the conspicuous *Battle of the Books* lay between romantic and realistic, or naturalistic, novels. Mr. Howells battled for realism, it was thought not without some success. In the eighties and nineties however the romantics had the best of it in popular favor. But "after 1902," says Mr. Van Doren, "the (romantic) style began to decline rapidly in energy and popularity. Only James Branch Cabell remained faithful, revising, strengthening, deepening his art with irony and beauty, until it became an art peculiar to himself." In 1884 the most popular novel was *Ben Hur,* and at the end of the century the "best sellers" were *Janice Meredith, Hugh Wynne, When Knighthood Was in Flower, Prisoners of Hope, Richard Carvel, Monsieur Beaucaire.* But for twenty years past the realists have held the field, and at present the one who most enjoys the flood of the market along with the esteem of the critics is probably Mr. Sinclair Lewis. The Middle Western realists lead both in power and popularity.

That romantic era of the eighties and nineties was also the era of the Southern sentimentalists (Page, Cable, Craddock, Hopkinson Smith) and humorists (Harris and Edwards). Undiluted sentiment from the

South such as Page's *Meh Lady,* was, to me at least, less attractive than the humor of Edwards. When the two were skillfully united as in Allen's *Kentucky Cardinal,* you got something very nice. Cable was of course more than a sentimentalist and Uncle Remus more than humor.

If the weakness of the Southern romantics was sentimentalism, the weakness of the Middle Western realists is dullness, too much plodding observation unillumined of a spark, too stolid a culling of "simples." With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glory of the stars.

Finally, now, there seems to be a tendency on the part of both schools to satire—to results more pungent and probably as truthful as any dry light photography, more pungent and with more vitamins in the blood than the old syrupy romance. Mr. Cabell is coming into his own and Mr. Lewis has arrived with a crash, both invigorated by their scorn. They shoot barbed arrows into the insensitive flesh of the body social. Welcome the era of the satirist! The more savagely he may get under the skin of society, the better. It is a sluggish beast which harbors unclean parasites and is appallingly self-satisfied. You cannot hope to irritate it seriously but to interest it temporarily is worth while. The author will profit even if society does not, and very likely society will.

The scorn of both Mr. Lewis and Mr. Cabell evidently has some biographical causes. Mr. Cabell was a young brother of the Southern romantics. His first novel appeared in 1902, the year which Mr. Van Doren notes as the beginning of the end of that school. Most of the successful romancers followed the market, or tried to do so, and turned realistic if not doctrinal. Mr.

Churchill became political and religious in Vermont. Mr. Tarkington returned to Indiana. But Mr. Cabell, coming only at the end of the era, yet stood by its colors as if knighthood were still in flower, faithful to the faith that the only true art is "to write perfectly about beautiful happenings." Has not his long and faithful journey through the desert of unappreciation had something to do with that "strengthening and deepening of his art with irony and beauty"? If he had been popular all these years, would he ever have achieved his irony? *Figures of Earth, Domnei, Jurgen,* and *The High Place* are something very different from the sentiment and romance of the eighties and nineties. Those innocuous confections have ripened under neglect and developed an alcoholic content. His romance is a romance with a "kick" in it. The sentiment has been salted. In place of mellow humor there is mordant wit and scholarship.

Mr. Cabell is no longer negligible. He is a significant phenomenon in several directions. His ambition to "write perfectly of beautiful happenings" has been achieved to the extent that he has mastered the art of writing. He has that "style" the lack of which Mr. Brownell lately pointed out as the thing most lacking in current American literature. "Beautiful happenings" is an idea so vague as to be hardly an idea at all, but the search for them has sent him ranging the ages, from mythical Manuel of Poictesme down to Manuel's latest Virginian descendant. The most beautiful of happenings is to fall in love, and hence the lovers of the ages are the main concern. He has built up during these twenty years not only a large imagined world, curiously symbolic, allusive, fantastic, with more folk lore and sorcery than history in its parti-colored com-

position—but also a philosophy of life and of literature, explicit in the volume called *Beyond Life*. Wit, humorist, satirist, scholar, novelist, philosopher, critic, with creative abundance, a flexible style adequate to any call, and a taste for erotic implications—he is the nearest analogue to Anatole France in this part of the world.

That philosophy of life would be more devastating if it were less decorative, and that theory of literature more persuasive if it were less partisan. *Vanitas Vanitatum* is the most musical of sighs, and distaste for things of the present and passing day is expression both of a temperament and an attitude. Hotspur's opinion of the gentleman who objected to unhandsome corpses borne "betwixt the wind and his nobility" was the opinion of an over-violent realist on a misplaced attitude. Mr. Brownell maintains that what we need for the cure of ignobility in life as well as in literature is style; Mr. Cabell that it is romance. I am half-way of the conviction that they are both right, and that Mr. Cabell has the most plausible theory and defense extant of romance. But this argument would be more effective if he seemed aware that there is a theory and defense of realism in life and literature, which is quite as plausible. Its advocates—who would benefit by an acquaintance with Mr. Cabell's theory of romance—used to complain that "common persons" only cared for the rubbish of romance; that the slavey and the shop girl wanted to read about haughty princesses and belted earls, the clerk about wild adventures in vast wild places. So complains Mr. Cabell that the "common person" likes best to read novels about lives like his own and people like himself. My own impression is that both complaints represent more chagrin than observation; that there is no "common person," no kind of

taste or imagination that is everybody's or generally most people's, but that of a million novel readers more of them naturally like some kind of romance than naturally like any real realism.

First class art never reproduces its own background —This is undisputable—What mankind has generally agreed to accept as first class art has never been a truthful reproduction of the artist's era.

If *Madame Bovary, Fathers and Sons, Brothers Karamasov,* are not first class art, what is? If the Iliad and the Divine Comedy do not truthfully reproduce the artists' era, then what is truth? If Mr. Cabell prefers *Henry Esmond* to *Vanity Fair,* there are critics on both sides of that "indisputable" question. To me, and probably to most people, *Madame Bovary* seems more like first class art than *Salammbo,* and on the other side, the *Scarlet Letter* more like it than the contemporaneous *Blithedale Romance.* It seems to depend not on principles but on peculiarities of talent and temperament. Charles Reade wrote many novels realistic and *tendenz,* but only one great one, which was historical. *Don Quixote* reproduces realistically its background, and is both the satire of chivalry and its requiem.

If one defines realism as the portrayal of things only as they are, and romance their portrayal as they ought to be, it is not difficult to conclude that realism is stagnation and all uplift romance. Man rises from the beast by reaching after ideals. He "plays the ape of his dreams." The capacity for seeing things other and better than they are is his whole secret, and that is romance. Romance is the divine in him, and realism the energy that keeps him down. Romance seems to be

a kind of heavenward fluttering leafage, and realism the sordid stationary roots. If the tree would only discard its roots and live on its leaves, it would be the ideal tree, uplifted, reaching after the divine.

But all this is far from the *Battle of the Books.* It is not the meaning of romance, nor the meaning which Mr. Cabell's romances exemplify. There is something of the demiurge in all creative art, in every powerful novel, realistic, or romantic, or happily unclassified. To "rationally accept his limitations" is the doctrine, not of realism, but of classicism, which would apply to Mr. Cabell's doctrine: "Yes, and no one can write perfectly of beautiful happenings who does not rationally accept his limitations." The difference between the romantic and the classic, said Goethe, is the difference between sickness and health. But it does not seem to me that any of these dicta are indisputable.

"It may, indeed, happen that the day will never dawn wherein honest persons may, without incurring the suspicion of illiteracy or posturing, admit the long-winded drivel of the *Life and Strange Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner* to be commensurate with the title; and point out that the erotic adventures of Tom Jones are, after all, too few and too inadequately detailed to prevent his biography from being tiresome." *En revanche* one might substitute the two dramatists, over whom Mr. Cabell wakes from the habit of distaste into eloquence of praise, thus: "It may be the day will never dawn when honest persons may without such suspicion admit the windy bellowings of Marlowe to be commensurate with that epithet; and point out that the wit of Wycherly is not, after all, enough to save his eternal rakishness from tedium, or transmit into gallantry its cold, withered and intolera-

ble entrails." And the two commentaries would seem to be perhaps about equally silly.

I agree with Mr. Van Doren—whose excellent little book is however not as penetrative as he could, I think, have made it—that the Poictesme novels (*Figures of Earth, Domnei, Jurgen, The High Place*) are the really fine things; and the latter-day "Virginian" (*The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck, The Cream of the Jest*) rather trivial. It is in the volumes of discussion and criticism (*Beyond Life, Straws and Prayer Books*) that one has most leisure, perhaps, from other interest to notice the grace and finish of Mr. Cabell's style. Mr. Van Doren ought to succeed in drawing the attention of lovers of choice things to a writer of unquestionable distinction.

WALTER DE LA MARE: A Biographical and Critical Study

By R. L. Mégroz

Reviewed by John Cournos

The New York Evening Post Literary Review, August 30, 1924

This is the first book to be devoted to an appreciation of Mr. de la Mare's life and writings, and, in the author's own words, his aim is "to show the poet of dream in a human light and in relation to the rest of society and also to contradict the too common belief that he is narrow in range of thought and interests and technique."

The poet is fortunate surely in his critic and biographer. Mr. Mégroz has enthusiasm, a persuasive style, an erudition which embraces an appreciation of the craftsmanship of poetry and of the legitimate values of psychoanalysis; and he is not without that reticence so necessary to a good critic, if he is to treat a living subject without exaggeration.

Admirable in this restraint, the critic has written an honest and thoroughly craftsman-like essay which convinces us in all but an ultimate sense. We willingly concede that the poet may be seen in a human light and in relation to the rest of society, that he is not narrow in range of thought and interests and technique. Granted all this, one thing still remains to be considered: Why has a poet with such valid claims on

public esteem remained, relatively speaking, an esoteric quantity to the reading public, even to that portion of it known as *intelligentsia?*

We ask: Is it not because the poet, in spite of his materials available to all, has distilled his essences so finely that they satisfy the human appetite only in those exquisite, too rare moments when all other appetites have been gratified and only the longing for something unattainable and infinitely precious remains? And is it not also because the poet, in disembodying the spirit, has, in that very process, made the human something less than human, hedged himself in with an enchanted circle which only some one possessing the magic password may enter, be he child, dreamer or Ariel? This for the poet is either a tribute or a censure. That fabulous enchanter, Prospero, ruled over both Ariel and Caliban, who served him and acknowledged him. And thus that supreme poem, *The Tempest,* becomes the measure by which all dream poetry of less substance must inevitably suffer, whether *Kubla Khan* or the equally magnificent *Listeners.* The author of *The Tempest* has demonstrated once and for all that dream and substance can be one—terms eternal and interchangeable.

Perhaps it is unfair to submit any poet to the test of Shakespeare. Nevertheless the point of the argument must not be lost here. Mr. de la Mare has achieved a distinguished place as a poet by reducing language and thought to terms of dream music, but he has done this at the sacrifice of what we may broadly term the "humanities." Indeed, Mr. Mégroz is not altogether unaware of this, for he says of Mr. de la Mare: "It is his peculiar merit and perhaps peril that he must always remain a poet of dream." Certainly the poet is there,

and doubtless his growing number of admirers are thankful for it.

It is no mere happy coincidence that Mr. de la Mare should be "among the greatest poets of English dream poetry, as he is beyond doubt the greatest English poet of childhood." Childhood *is* dream unspoiled by sophistications and veneers which in our time make dullards of adults, since we neither grow up into savages, children without age, nor retain our play faculties in maturity like the ancient Greeks. But childhood itself has its roots in heredity, in ancestral memory of family and race. Hence the wealth of fancies and images which abound in these poems of childhood; hence, also, the rich, pristine primitiveness of sound, which are the life and soul of the poet's music. "Here," says Mr. Mégroz of that lovely poem, *The Tryst,* "the words become almost notes of music and the reader perceives that sound is not less important than image in the poet's style when inspiration is intense. . . . The magical effect is not due to onomatopœic words . . . but to some equally primitive quality more complex and stored with ancestral associations."

It is impossible within the short space of a review to follow the critic through all the ramifications of his provocative chapters on the technique of Mr. de la Mare's poetry, nor is it possible to linger over the charming biographical chapters; there are but two of these, and it is a pity that they are so brief. From these, however, we learn at least one fact which will surprise the poet's admirers as it has surprised us. It is that of his fifty-three years he has spent eighteen in the offices of an oil company in London and that when he left it in 1908 he was heavily entangled in the statistics department. This is reminiscent of Lamb and

other worthies of English poetry. The English may be a "nation of shopkeepers"; so where are their poets to come from if not from the shops? I think it was Mr. Chesterton who once made that observation.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF JOHN BURROUGHS

By CLARA BARRUS

Reviewed by Norman Foerster

The Saturday Review of Literature, January 30, 1926

"Dr. Barrus . . . a very keen, appreciative mind, of more ready service to me than any woman I ever met. Would like to write my life. I should like her to do it, if it is ever done—have named her my literary executor —the most companionable woman I have yet met in this world—reads and delights in the same books I do —a sort of feminine counterpart of myself." Thus reads an entry in the journal of John Burroughs about the time of their first meeting, in his sixty-fifth year. For the twenty years that followed they were closely associated. Dr. Barrus "typed" virtually all his magazine articles and the last fourteen of his books; making herself his Boswell, she noted his talk,—often when others were present, *verbatim;* and she collected letters, memoranda, and other biographical material until they "proved an embarrassment of riches, heavily taxing one's powers of selection." The result is a biography of 900 well-filled pages. "Knowing him well, revering him, and believing him worthy of immortal regard," she has prepared a meticulous record of her hero's thoughts and actions, including details as to his earnings as an author and the minutiæ of his housekeeping. The first volume, which carries the leisurely story to his sixty-fifth year, reads well enough; but it is to be feared that only those who believe Burroughs "worthy

of immortal regard" will survive the second volume, which begins with his sixty-fifth year and tends to oscillate monotonously between small events and large honors.

The main explanation of this glaring disproportion is doubtless the biographer's association with Burroughs during his old age alone. But the explanation is not an excuse, partly because Dr. Barrus had ample materials for his early life (if one may use the phrase for a span of sixty-four years), and partly because the best of Burroughs does not appear in his old age. In the years of the great war, for example, this inveterate rationalist quite fails to honor himself or mankind; responding in 100 per cent fashion to the wave of feeling that swept the country, he displayed a reaction to the war, its causes and issues, that cannot be termed rational, perhaps not even intelligent. His rationalism proved to be far weaker than his emotionalism, a fact which throws, I think, a significant light on his career as a whole.

Burroughs's career may be roughly divided at 1900, the year, as it happens, with which the second volume of this biography opens. That is the year of *The Light of Day* (of which a Methodist clergyman said that "it begins in twilight, and ends in darkness"). The book is a belated contribution to the evolution controversy that raged in the '70s and '80s; the light of day is reason, the scientific reason, which dominated Burroughs persistently, if not steadily, for the rest of his life. In most of the fifteen volumes that follow this book, he appears in the rôle of an unimportant scientist and scientific sage, widely read, to be sure, but essentially commonplace. His special capacity did not lie in this field, any more than it lay in literary criticism,

which he attempted occasionally throughout his career. His distinction was not intellectual, æsthetic, or religious: it was poetic. It was poetic sensibility to nature, harmonized with close observation of nature. It is this Burroughs who flourished in the three decades preceding the year 1900. It is "John o' Birds" who is the noteworthy John, and neither "St. John the Divine" nor "St. John the Human."

More important than anything Burroughs published after 1900 is his first nature book, *Wake Robin*, so named by his friend Walt Whitman despite the fact that it is a book of essays on birds.

Here is the really memorable Burroughs, who could carry his readers—even scientific readers like Coués—into the breathing life of the woods and fields and render the various language which Nature speaks so faithfully that (as Arnold said of Wordsworth) she herself seems to take the pen.

What influence was it that deflected Burroughs from the poetic vein that dominated this first nature book and gradually waned? The main influence was, I think, curiously enough, that of Walt Whitman, with whom he was associated, often intimately, from the autumn of 1863 to the death of Whitman in 1892. Writing to a friend in 1866, he said: "I think I have had my say about the birds for the present, at least. Sometime I may make a book of these, and other articles, but am in no hurry." He was indeed in no hurry; it was five years before *Wake Robin* appeared. And he was in no hurry, as Dr. Barrus rightly infers, "because of the great Whitman planet that had swum into his ken," though Dr. Barrus does not indicate the full influence of that planet. At the time when he said he had had his say about the birds, he was engaged on a

book about Walt Whitman (half of which was Whitman's own work), which appeared in 1867; and his last book in the nineteenth century was to be another book on Whitman, published in 1896. Through all these years (before Darwin and Bergson mastered him) he was an eager disciple of Whitman, who transformed him gradually into a sage and prophet. Whitman, giving him the "cosmos," made birds seem very small game. Instead of the unconscious poetry that suffused his early work, Burroughs offered, in increasing quantities, meditations on the perfection of the universe. Although these meditations in his later years were filled with the scientific and rationalistic mood of the age, they continued to be filled also with the special kind of optimism that permeates the work of Whitman. He sought to reconcile Whitman and Darwin; but time will adjudge him a better writer, I suspect, in the days of his enthusiasm for Audubon.

ANTON CHEKOV

By William Gerhardi

Reviewed by Henry James Forman

New York Times Book Review, January 6, 1924

It was Lytton, I think, who said that enlightened enthusiasm was the best of criticism.

If that be true, then Mr. Gerhardi, author of the fascinating novel, *Futility,* has produced one of the ablest critical studies of recent years. It is certainly the most delightful. Criticism implies cool judgment. But Mr. Gerhardi can no more be cool concerning Tchekhoff, or as he prefers to spell it, Chekov, than he can be dull. On every other page or so he seems resolved to be calm, detached and critical. Then, as if his ebullient devotion and admiration can no longer contain themselves, some new beauty in his subject sets him off into exuberant rhapsody, that catches the reader like a contagion. Mr. Gerhardi loves Chekov beyond any comparison. And where an author has substance enough and genius enough, notably a foreign author, perhaps that method is in reality the only one by which to approach him.

It happens, however, that Mr. Gerhardi is not alone in his love and admiration for Chekov. Those of us who read and who have read Chekov attentively, usually develop the same almost boundless admiration, the same curious attachment, to the works and the person of that author. It differs markedly from others of our Russian admirations. We admire Turgenev as a great modern

artist. We virtually reverence Tolstoi as a greater artist and a still greater human soul. We are spellbound by Dostoyevsky's studies of nerve-states and human suffering. Well, one may ask, is Chekov greater than all these?

Despite Mr. Gerhardi's enthusiasm one could not well answer that with an affirmative. But there is something in Chekov of all of these and yet saliently different from them all.

There is in the work of Chekov a certain breadth, a universality, a comprehension, to which almost nothing that we ourselves know seems to be alien. Indeed, in reading him we seem to know virtually everything! Theoretically every writer should possess those qualities. Being the mouthpiece of the race, nothing should to him be alien. Actually, however, we know how limited in subject matter, in general themes, in knowledge, are even the greatest of writers. Chekov seems to have overstepped and triumphed over those limitations.

When we read or hear of the great artists, of a Leonardo, or a Michael Angelo, we are thrilled by the sheer breadth and vastness of human genius. Such men could seemingly do anything. A Michael Angelo could paint great pictures, sculp magnificent statues, build cathedrals, fortifications—even write sonnets! Our human nature expands and thrills at our latent human capacities—which in these giants were not merely latent.

Something of the same thrill comes to the reader of Chekov. That astounding young man (he died at 44) appears to have known and understood everything. Most writers are in a manner specialists, staking out a small claim in the vast areas of life and working their ground. Chekov, upon the other hand, gives the im-

pression that there is nothing about life he does not know. All the areas seem to be his domain. His insight apparently never leaves him. The true ring is never absent from his work. That, of course, is bound to be an impression only, since no one writer can know everything. But both the genius and the method of Chekov are singularly conducive to that satisfying impression. And this is the secret of Mr. Gerhardi's love and admiration. He undertakes to proclaim the genius and to extol the method. And given these, as well as Mr. Gerhardi's own talent, it is not surprising that his book is delightful.

He sees in Chekov's work not only "that fluid undercurrent by which we recognize existence," the complex picture of existence without the rounding-off of corners so peculiar to more conventional fictions, but he actually finds in it the essence of things, the stuff of life itself, as we intuitively apprehend it. "To some extent," he says,

"literature like his may take the place of actual experience, without the physical exertion, sacrifices, inconvenience and pains that is inseparable from the business of living; and when they die (readers of Chekov) may congratulate themselves on having lived a hundred lives —but paid for one!"

There is very little more praise, if any, that can be bestowed upon a writer. Theoretically every good writer should deserve such praise. Actually, how many do? Yet Mr. Gerhardi again and again, in the most engaging manner, reiterates his conviction. Most writers, virtually all writers, excepting Chekov, he holds, produce either "romantic" fiction, expressing "the smooth, dreamy side of life divorced from most material re-

ality," or they produce so-called "realistic fiction" employing real material facts with the smooth directness only "possible in a romance"; or, lastly, "introspective" fiction. Chekov, maintains his critic, virtually combines these three elements:

And it is the balance of the three elements that gives his work a lifelike touch, removes him altogether from the musty flavor of tradition which attaches to the sedate profession of letters. When we read Chekov we somehow forget all literary associations. It is as if, forsaking our various professions, we stepped aside to get a better view of life.

The reader can now see why this review began by calling Mr. Gerhardi a rhapsodist. So infectious is his enthusiasm that one is almost persuaded to quote his entire book. One tends to forget that one is merely reviewing it.

What, then, is the truth of the matter as it appears to a reader of necessity less passionate, because compelled to be critical of the critic?

To begin with, and this despite the best will in the world, no writer, not Chekov, not even Shakespeare, can be a substitute for life. Arnold Bennett has somewhere said that no fiction can come within a hundred million miles of life. Chekov, however, by his peculiar method, has actually come an appreciable distance nearer to life. Or, what is almost the same thing, he is able to give the reader the illusion of having come appreciably nearer. Instead of making of fiction merely an escape, Chekov was actually able to give his readers the sense of expansion, of enlargement, of criticizing life as he reads—than which nothing is more subtle or stimulating. To stories like Chekov's one returns again and again as one

never returns to the ingenious fictions with elaborate plots, once those plots are known. These latter are like melodramas of mystery which you can never see again once you know the solution of the mystery. Chekov, briefly, is the pioneer of a new method in the short story. Thus far, with the exception of Katherine Mansfield, few writers have followed in his steps. But more and more are likely to follow as writers and reading publics mature.

Chekov's secret, were one to attempt it in a phrase, is a sort of studied casualness. Mr. Gerhardi, who handles this portion of his book with incomparable warmth and persuasiveness, tells us that once, when Gorki, as a young man, submitted a play for criticism, Chekov wrote him:

It is, as I expected, very good, written à la Gorki, original, very interesting; and, to begin by talking of the defects, I have noticed only one, a defect as incorrigible as red hair in a red-haired man—the conservatism of form. You make new and original people sing new songs to an accompaniment that looks second-hand.

Now Chekov's peculiar view of life was that it was not symmetrical. Even Turgenev and Tolstoi and Flaubert cling to the convention that it was. "But," says Mr. Gerhardi, "while the older realists were making the details of their stories characteristic of real life, they forgot to make the plot characteristic of real life." Chekov, however, not only does this, but he uses a totally different kind of plot, "the tissues of which, as in life, lie below the surface of events, and, unobtrusive, shape our destiny." To achieve this is already a tremendous advance, and readers of Chekov hardly need Mr. Gerhardi's numerous arguments and quotations to

realize that Chekov does actually achieve it. In that way the fluid quality of life comes to permeate his stories and plays; in that way form and context become indistinguishable. Those of us who saw *The Cherry Orchard* played discerned that: those who saw the *Three Sisters* perceived it in every act and scene. Indeed, in virtually every story of Chekov's, short or long, that same fluid quality, the merging of plot and context, is easily visible. The result is that no plot of Chekov's ever obtrudes itself. And we are conscious not of plots, but of life.

Many other elements of Chekov's style are acutely isolated by Mr. Gerhardi, as, for instance, his studied simplicity—that costly simplicity that we sometimes see in the houses of people of taste. In a sense all great writers possess this, and notably all great Russian writers. It is the Russian writers who have taken away some of that creaking sense of plot from modern fiction. As for Chekov, according to Mr. Gerhardi, he has, for once, succeeded in actually capturing that wild beast of the jungle—reality. Reality and simplicity are the keynotes of Chekov's style. To Gorki he once wrote:

The sea breathes . . . the sky gazes . . . nature whispers . . . such metaphors make your description somewhat monotonous, sometimes sweetish, sometimes not clear; beauty and expressiveness in nature are attained only by simplicity, by such simple phrases as "the sun set," "it was dark," "it began to rain," and so on. In portraying emotion he always practised and advised rigid restraint and economy. To a seeker after advice he wrote: "you may weep and moan over your stories, you may suffer together with your heroes, but I consider one must do this so that the reader does not notice this. . . . And if you drop a tear you will strip

the subject of its severity and of everything worth attention in it."

Chekov's "pessimism" is a frequent subject for discussion. Mr. Gerhardi denies that Chekov was a pessimist. He was neither the one nor the other. His attitude is one of standing still and seeing life as it passes. "The so-called 'failures' he presents to us are not altogether failures. They are half-successes." Personally, the present reviewer would go even further and declare that at bottom Chekov was what might be called an enlightened optimist. An enlightened optimist does not assume that all is rosy in the best of all possible worlds. He sees the defects, but has hopes of betterment.

Prince Kropotkin, in his fascinating volume on *Russian Literature,* observes that "it is the rottenness of a whole civilization of an epoch, which the author divulges to us." Yet Chekov held it as a favorite hope and dogma that our chief cross is ignorance, and that ultimately perhaps after tens of thousands of years, mankind would come to know the meaning of the true God. In such a play as the *Three Sisters* that note is struck again and again by Colonel Vershinin, by the sisters. Vershinin says: "In two or three hundred years' time life on this earth will be unimaginably beautiful and wonderful," and Irina cries:

A time will come when every one will know what all this is about; . . . there will be no more mysteries; but meanwhile we must live . . . work, only work.

Unless optimism means merely sugar or syrup, the man who held these views was no pessimist.

For such things as these one becomes warmly at-

tached to Chekov personally, and for his intense humanity. Indeed, Chekov's genius, much of it, lay in having the ordinary human qualities to a more intense degree than other human things. His widow once told the reviewer that the list of his friendships in all ranks, from courtiers to cabmen, was stupendous. And they were genuine friendships. So that Mr. Gerhardi laughs at Tolstoi for calling Chekov the Russian Maupassant. "One could understand," he says, "Maupassant being called the French Chekov in a mood of generous extravagance." The other way about the comparison becomes naïve. It must be confessed, however, with Mr. Gerhardi, that much of the appeal of Chekov is lost in translation. He is one of the least translatable of Russian authors. Some of his very graces of realism in the original appear, in another tongue, to one ignorant of customs and allusions, merely silly. Mr. Gerhardi has written in *Futility* an enchanting specimen of Chekov fiction in English. But not even he could translate Chekov perfectly. Yet one cannot but agree with him that "any writer—given the requisite talent—could practice it (Chekov's method) in any country, in any language, with results that would open the reading public's eyes."

It is true that Occidental, and notably American, life is far more rigid and inchoate than the Russian life that fitted so well into Mr. Chekov's picture, or even into Mr. Gerhardi's *Futility*. The fact remains, nevertheless, that most of our writers of fiction, and particularly of short stories, could benefit infinitely by a study of Chekov's work and of Mr. Gerhardi's book. For as it is, those writers seem for the most part to cling to infantile forms of sheer rigid ingenuity, to rattling and trivial "plots" contrived like mechanical toys, as though

our race, despite all its troubles and problems, were still in its earliest infancy. Every story seemingly has to be a fairy story. Upon reality, actual throbbing life, which they have, many of them, quite ample talent to discern and portray, they appear to turn their backs as children turn their backs upon something unsightly.

It may be that Mr. Gerhardi's admirable and delightful little book will come to writers and readers alike as a cheerful message and even something of a gospel.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN AMERICA

By George Philip Krapp

Reviewed by Henry B. Fuller

The New York Times Book Review, February 7, 1926

This work, detailing the adventures of an old language in a new country, abounds in the most positive negations. Professor Krapp, far from docilely squaring himself with our ordinary beliefs, opinions and preferences, sturdily sets his face against them. In Goethean phrase he is a "Geist der stets verneint." So far from being a complaisant yea-sayer, his Carlylese "Everlasting no" resounds through almost every chapter. He will not be content with reflecting "an impressionistic or polemic interest in the speech of the day." He will not allow his pages to degenerate into "a medley of chatty and amusing and doubtfully accurate remarks about words." And he contravenes many of our favorite notions about ourselves and our speech.

In the first place: Is there, has there been, can there ever be such a thing as an "American language"? One recalls that Noah Webster, nearly a century and a half ago, aspired to a "Federal English," with a new spelling and a partly new alphabet, by means of which Americans were to be "detached from an implicit adherence to the language and manners of the British nation." Jefferson sympathized, and Franklin's aid was invoked.

Since that day many new exigencies have developed, many new elements have been imported, and many new requirements have arisen. However,

The central nature of the English language not being determined by the real practice of any locality or group, it remains that it must be determined by an idea. It is, in fact a concept, a state of mind, and not an objective reality. When one thinks of the English language as a unity in this way one is prepared to take a reasonable view of those details of language commonly designated Americanisms and Briticisms.

Is, then, the notion of the English language in America so different from the central idea of the English language that one must give a special name to it and call it the American language? No, says Professor Krapp. "Negligible variation" is entitled to operate. Though American English and English English are not identical, yet both, to impartial observers, are "elements in the unity of the English language."

One form of English speech does not exist by sufferance of another form, but each form, by the fact of its existence, is an element helping to determine the nature of the whole.

It might be noted here that Webster's linguistic rebellion was paralleled in some measure in the history of eighteenth-century architecture and furniture. The Colonial magnates began very early to adapt European models to local conditions and each Colony evolved new styles from the old. However, we may observe, in our own day, that Hepplewhite and Sheraton do not permit Grand Rapids to go far astray. We will be "correct" in our drawing rooms, at least—and in our "literary" diction.

In the second place: Have we dialects—or, more specifically, "literary dialects"—by which our author

means popular dialects which have been employed as forms of literary expression? We think of Lowell and Harte and Riley and Joel Chandler Harris as we await the reply. Well, have we? No, again says Professor Krapp. To prove his contention, he analyzes at length and with minute care various writings in "dialect"—New England, Midwestern, Far Western and Southern—which the above names represent. The elements involved in these writings (in various combinations) are found to be the following: General colloquial, general low colloquial, local, Southern low colloquial and negro. With a certain uncanny skill, our investigator analyzes and tabulates these elements and he finds that a good half of their manifestations—or nearly two-thirds, in fact—can be assigned to the one department of the low colloquial. The general colloquial hardly counts for the purpose, and negro and Spanish words are not integral. Listen, as the eager say. Lowell's *The Courtin'* is shown to be, by more than half, mere general low colloquial; John Hay's *Little Breeches,* quite half; Bret Harte's *Penelope,* fully three-quarters, and Riley's *The Old Man and Jim,* nearly seven-eighths. The attempts of James Fenimore Cooper at negro and Indian talk are practically laughed out of court. Have we, then, after all our fussy claims, a body of American dialect? No, if Professor Krapp has his way about it, the whole matter seems simply to shade down to our own cheap talk.

Our indefatigable analyst performs his most heroic feat in dealing with the Gullah dialect of the sea-island negroes. This, too, he endeavors, by similar means, to explain away. Personally, I find this rather hard doctrine. Some years ago I was the sole passenger on a supply boat which plied from the South Carolina sea

islands to Charleston. Three negroes manned the boat, and though they talked incessantly through the half hour required by the passage, I could not understand a dozen words. I thought then, and have often thought since, that I was listening to dialect—but perhaps not. For a "patient phonetic analysis" of some of these Gullah goings-on reveals a "regular phonetic development of ordinary English words"—simplified, infantile English which masters, with repetition and vociferation, imposed on alien slaves. Poe's *Gold Bug* attempts the Gullah speech—and, in the author's opinion, none too successfully. Nor is he satisfied with Mrs. Stowe's *Aunt Chloe.*

In the third place: Has America its literary style? No, still answers our recalcitrant.

Certainly it is not possible to detach American writing with ease from the whole body of literature written in the English language and to say that by the possession of this and of that precise quality it has established itself in its specific character.

For "the feeling for the whole historical tradition of the English language is so immanent in the literary use of the English language in America that one may be as unconscious of its presence as one is of breathing in the living body."

Yet even here, with the aid of Professor Sherman, we may shade, discriminate. In English writing the thought and its expression may be considered as elaborated together into a compact and mutually dependent unity which gives a kind of organic architectural character—a debt due, doubtless, to the continuing study of the Greek and Latin classics. American style is more "a matter of points," of successive brilliant moments, of

verbal ingenuities and surprises. American style may be accepted as a manifestation of rapid, restless wit, whereas British style is a style of thought and constructive understanding. The Americanism of American literature has always been a matter of thought, of scene, and of action, not of a style "which would have made the American content intelligible only to those who were prepared to approach it on a limited American plane."

Thus for a "central" standard style: But Professor Krapp recognizes two popular literary styles—to condemn and dissipate both. One is the "exaggerated hyperbolical style," once so dear to the Fourth of July platforms and to the halls of Congress. Several examples, dating chiefly from different decades of the last century, are given—and they seem incredible enough. The other manner is the "reluctant simple" one. It is based on understatement and is favored by homespun philosophers. But—

Writings in exaggerated popular styles must necessarily be parasitic in their nature. An extremely violent style or an extremely simple style can only be extreme when contrasted with a normal and moderate central style. The extreme style can be endured only for a moment as a grotesque parody of the sane and normal literary experience to which one must always return as providing the test of values by which the worth of all eccentricities is measured. . . . The future of American literary style will doubtless be determined by respect for moderation, for tradition, for good workmanship, for a more dependable perfection in the difficult art of writing than can come from demonic seizures or from the rude simplicity that often accompanies vivid personal contacts.

If these words seem to deal with excesses past rather than present, other excesses, equally serious, have succeeded them. A "central" style awaits, apparently, on self-discipline as the chief desideratum.

To dwell further on Mr. Krapp's negations would be to give an erroneous idea of his book. As a matter of fact, it bristles with masses of the most positive details regarding our vocabulary, our spelling, our dictionaries and our pronunciations. And he comes out strong on proper names, with full recognition of biography, history and geography.

In this latter department a number of interesting considerations are displayed. What is the proportion of English place-names brought in by the early settlers, and how did these names fare when carried West? Why are Indian names less numerous in Massachusetts than in Oregon and Washington? Who was really responsible for inflicting a classical nomenclature—Rome, Ithaca, Utica, Troy—on Central New York? When did "middle" names come into fashion, and what proportion of these are second Christian names and what inserted surnames? Mr. Krapp meets this last query by saying that in due season the social world became more varied and more flamboyant: there arrived a new worldliness, a new pride of family.

As for the geographical phase of the matter, never before had there been offered such an "unparalleled opportunity for the exercise of imagination, ingenuity, sentiment, in providing a virgin territory with the human associations of a local and personal nomenclature." But the fact is regretfully recognized that the colonists scarcely thought of themselves as "selected for the utilization of an unusual imaginative opportunity." Hence the reign of Meadvilles and Jonesburgs.

But vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation are of broader interest. In these fields we find the ordered presentation of many years' industrious accumulation of facts. The words "settler," "planter," "rancher" and "homestead" are traced from their beginnings; the katydid and the quahaug are explicated; "spondulics," "mugwump," "woozy" and "scrumptious" have their day in court; while nine large, earnest pages are devoted to "darn" and "damn," showing that while the former is used as a mild substitute for the latter, there is really no etymological connection between them.

In the department of spelling, the familiar warhorses, fully caparisoned, are led forth. There are really but a few dozen of them, such as "shew," "centre," "storey," "traveller," and the like; but these orthographical microbes have helped keep up bad blood between England and America for several generations. May we not blame the English, those creatures of prejudice and habit? And of inconsistency, too. When we, on our side, unmindful of our Norman-French, write "honor" and "Savior," we are almost made to feel, in the first instance, that we have committed *lèse-majesté*, and, in the second, that we have been guilty of blasphemy. Yet if we do, on the other hand, keep our Norman-French in mind, writing "defense" and "offense" ("s" instead of "c"), we are made to feel that we are froward and uncouth provincials. It seems impossible to please the elder branch. How much longer shall we keep on trying?

The matter of pronunciation occupies most of the second volume. The typographical and diacritical system favored by the Modern Language Association is employed, and some previous study of it is needed for intelligent reading. Several new characters are intro-

duced, and odd combinations of old ones, right side up or wrong side up, rather puzzle at first. Here a rapid, searching eye is cast over England, New England, and our South and West, both for the present day and for days preceding. Italian "a" gets its attention; the three pronunciations of "launch" are recognized and figured "clark" and "chymist," "gyarden" and "cyarter" receive a glance; "girl" goes one way, and "bird" another; and so forth and so on. This second volume is a vast mine of detailed information and almost intimidates one from trying to pronounce at all.

Dr. Krapp's work is, in effect, a new kind of history, in a new field. There are histories of politics and government, histories of music and painting, even histories of literature; but here is the first history, if not the first study of the American language, a factor on which an American must really, in some measure, depend. As reading, it is both instructive and amusing. As a comprehensive example of the comparative method, it keeps us in countenance as to our present, and will aid us in our appropriation of the future.

O. HENRY BIOGRAPHY

By C. Alphonso Smith

Reviewed by C. Hartley Grattan

The New York Sun, February 13, 1926

The careers of Stephen Crane and Frank Norris furnished a glitter to the closing years of the last century. Those of Jack London and O. Henry strikingly opened the new century. All of these men were possessed of talents decidedly extraordinary, but not one achieved the stature of a complete artist. Of them all Crane was undoubtedly the greatest, and his work, now being beautifully printed, promises to endure longest in its entirety. Norris's work must be the subject of rigid scrutiny, and such a scrutiny seriously diminishes the extent of his acceptable work and perceptibly lowers his stature as an artist. Jack London suffers even more seriously; a few short stories and *The Call of the Wild* will probably represent him in the years to come.

But of them all O. Henry has faded most decidedly and most visibly. And none of them has suffered such virulent criticism. O. Henry has not only declined in critical estimation but he has also taken his place as a leading menace to a full blown American literature. He is one of the few authors popularly acclaimed who has been thrown overboard by the professors.

In O. Henry the American knack for and delight in an anecdote, a yarn, a "story" came to flower. At the beginning of each story some one inaudibly says, "Have you heard this one?" His superlative talent to tell a

yarn was allied with a surprising gift of words, humor and an acute power of superficial observation. His stature as an analyst of human beings has been absurdly overestimated. In spite of the fact that his wanderings gave him an unusual range of material, every world he portrays is decidedly like every other. The Fate he discovered moving the world always contrived to furnish a surprise with which to end the story. The aspirations of all the characters roughly reduce to a single equation. All men, he thought, are spiritually equal. This is a popular but superficial observation, and O. Henry was superficial.

Nevertheless he is unsurpassed as an anecdotist. Probably he picked up this love of anecdote in his uncle's store at Greensboro, N. C., but his wanderings confirmed his taste and revealed to him that all men share it, and appreciate the skillful teller. What proportion of his work consisted of yarns passed on to him by word of mouth is impossible to say. In his early work the proportion is undoubtedly high. During his prison term, Dr. J. M. Thomas has written, he "liked the Western prisoners, those from Arizona, Texas and Indian Territory, and he got stories from them all and retold them in the office. Since reading his books I recognize many of the stories I heard there." Necessarily all of his work did not originate in this fashion, and most of the New York stories are compounded of careful observation and the yarn teller's twist.

There was no necessity upon him, therefore, to make his stories profound interpretations of life; and he didn't. They are not even accurate records of the environments with which they deal. O. Henry's mind was not one to produce significant stories. He was interested, like his friend, Harry Payton Steger, in "the

drolleries, sentimentalities and dramatic surprises of life. . . ." It should be added that he delighted in recording, as well, the pseudo-reality of wish-dreams, and the tendency of frustrated persons to play-acting. He was beyond all else an entertainer, and as an entertainer he succeeded best as a vaudevillian. O. Henry brought the two-a-day into literature.

His friends were very much surprised and excited when they discovered that "O. Henry" was really William Sydney Porter. Few of them expected that he would achieve fame in a literary way, although many rather expected that he would startle the newspaper world. Actually he fell between the two stools. Almost one half of his stories appeared in the New York *World*. Few of them are literature.

O. Henry's early environment was not encouraging to a writer other than a humorist. Frontier and pseudo-frontier environments in America have been prolific of humorists, ranging in quality up to Mark Twain. These men, of course, usually took on the protective mechanisms of horseplay, grotesque rusticity and misspelling. In this way they were able to have their say by an indirect method. The lowbrow American humorist has always been able to say more caustic things than the serious American highbrow and get away with it. Few American humorists, excepting Twain, have made literary pretensions. The strain of humor running through O. Henry, as well as the other traits to a limited extent, testify to his relation to this group. And like them his unliterary attitude worked to his detriment.

"Oh, I ain't no Guy de Mopassong," says a character in *The Sphinx Apple*. "I'm giving it to you in straight American." "Straight American," as O. Henry conceived it, not only had to do with a manner of telling,

but required a restrictive attitude toward the materials for his fiction and a deprecation of the artist as such, additionally. "I have been called the American de Maupassant," he said. "Well, I never wrote a filthy word in my life, and I don't like to be compared to a filthy writer."

His friends delight in applying that egregious word "clean" to his writing and speech. (See, especially, that choice bit of junk by Maximilian Foster introducing *Options.*) In his wide ranging in the world of men he must certainly have been aware of the phenomenon of sex in its protean manifestations, but he put none of it in his fiction. Similarly, he avoided another painful subject, his prison experience, as Al Jennings has particularly pointed out.

Jennings remonstrated with him, feeling, as he remarks, that "Porter's attitude lacked courage." The fact is, of course, that O. Henry's fear of public opinion was so great that he was unable to make use in his work of these most poignant experiences of his life. "Bill Porter," his friend ingenuously observes, apropos of the episode of Jimmy Valentine, "was not the grim artist to paint that harsh picture for the world. He loved a happy ending. He could not even give the exact details of the safe opening. It was too cruel for his light and winsome fancy. . . . In the story he gives the hero a costly set of tools wherewith to open the vault."

In fact, O. Henry shrank from anything not strictly polite. He fled from sex, from prison, from all that was grim, or sordid, or horrid. He did not even feel himself completely justified in being a writer. Miss Mabel Wagnalls reports: "He was sincere in his statement of belief that 'writing pieces for the printer isn't a man's work.'" And when another lady introduced

him at a non-literary gathering as a writer he said, "with a note of defense," "Well, I can do other things." No true artist feels under the necessity to defend himself; no writer feels that it "isn't a man's work." Nor does a genuine artist shrink from any exigency to which his craft may drive him, certainly not to the extent hinted in this passage, in which I detect O. Henry's voice:

"I see. . . . I see the game now. You can't write with ink, and you can't write with your own heart's blood, but you can write with the heart's blood of some one else. You have to be a cad before you can be an artist. Well, I am for old Alabam and the Major's store. . . . But you are reversing the decision of the world's greatest critics. . . . But—say—if the Major can use a fairly good salesman and bookkeeper down there in the store, let me know, will you?"

But *men* tell anecdotes, particularly when they are humorous. O. Henry did his best work in a species of literary vaudeville.

It is the vaudeville-ishness of his stories that irritates those who believe him a menace. They point out that an attitude of sentimental cynicism, a style two parts slang and one part genuine feeling for words, and the cultivation of the snap ending are all easily imitated. All of these qualities quickly become tricks, and while few old dogs learned them, far too many new dogs found them profitable. O. Henry, too, like his imitators, kept on the surface; he and they plumbed no depths; he and they provided entertainment merely. While it is justifiable to indict the imitators of O. Henry as debasers and degraders of the short story, it is rather excessive to dismiss O. Henry on that ground. He is not responsible for his imitators. No man is responsible for the debas-

ing of his philosophy by lesser hands. It is a sufficient demand upon him that he defend himself.

That O. Henry had any desire other than to entertain is doubtful. Once in a while, particularly when dealing with shop girls, he had a moral purpose. But he was rarely "making literature." For no writer can be considered important merely because his writings instituted reforms, and had O. Henry written hundreds of tales like *An Unfinished Story* his literary importance would still be small.

In fact it would be difficult to discover literary merit in many of O. Henry's stories. I can think of but one that I should care to champion: *The Furnished Room.* His merit, indeed, is not literary in the strict meaning of the term. It is only when he is considered as a vaudevillian that he is tolerable. Almost any story in his collected works might serve as a turn, but two books stand out as distinctly his best: *Cabbages and Kings* and *The Gentle Grafter.* With these two may be placed the related stories scattered in other books. I do not at all value *The Four Million.*

These two books seem to me best because the worlds created in them are absolutely unreal. One is under no necessity of making reference to the conventional reality. "The egregious merit of O. Henry," to apply T. S. Eliot's phrase in a different connection, "is that he has logic of his own." The South American country depicted in *Cabbages and Kings* is as fantastic and impossible as any land of the imagination, but for entertainment merely the account of it O. Henry gives is first-rate. Jeff Peters, the grafter extraordinary, had his adventures in a land not to be located on the map, though some reference is made to points in the United

States. But *The Gentle Grafter* is a vastly entertaining book nevertheless, and perhaps in consequence.

O. Henry himself was under no illusions about his stuff. Even though he did not have the ideas and attitudes of the great artist, and could not have attained to that plane of being, he had enough native wit to know that he had done little more than put on a good show. The letter he wrote to H. P. Steger clearly states this fact, and it also epitomizes his aspirations. He desired to write an honest biographical novel that would "teach no lesson, inculcate no moral, advance no theory," in a restrained style suitable to the serious intent. O. Henry knew that he had been a vaudevillian. Did he not call *Cabbages and Kings* "tropic vaudeville"? Why be preposterous and claim literary merits for him!

The "Biographical Edition" of O. Henry in eighteen volumes, sold separately at ninety cents, is an admirable piece of publishing. The volumes are neatly bound and well printed. Each volume contains a preface usually of value. The only worthless one is that by Mr. M. Foster referred to above. The volume *Waifs and Strays* collects typical favorable views of O. Henry. It would have added spice to the somewhat sweetish dish if a crushingly unfavorable view had been included. There are plenty of them!

THE MAN MENCKEN

By Isaac Goldberg

Reviewed by Henry Hazlitt

The New York Sun, December 5, 1925

If quantity of comment upon a writer is a trustworthy index to his literary prestige, then consider how the fame and authority of this Mencken, Henry Louis, have grown. In 1920 Burton Rascoe wrote a pamphlet upon him; a few months ago Ernest Boyd gave him the accolade of a slim book, and now, hot upon its heels, comes this vast and lofty opus by Isaac Goldberg.

Verily, if this Baltimore editor is not the Samuel Johnson of contemporary American letters, it is not through lack of bugle blowing on the part of his friends and admirers. And to carry the resemblance further, we have in Dr. Goldberg the perfect Boswell, with, if anything, even greater diligence in unearthing every fact, animal, vegetable and mineral, bearing on his hero.

Absolutely nothing is left out of these 388 pages. We follow the Mencken from his cradle—nay, we follow him, if not from his Cro-Magnon forbears, then at least from his Teutonic fathers in Oldenburg and Leipzig. In considering so colossal a figure, of course, we must have a special chapter on these ancestors, and we get it, with photographs of each; even the man who was lucky enough to be the great-great-great-great-great-great grandfather of H. L. M. gets his share of fame out of it by an aquatone and a brief biography.

Mr. Mencken seems to have taken an almost morbid

interest in these ancestors. One wonders whether this derives from his childlike faith in the importance of sound chromosomes or whether his belief in the chromosomes is the result of his distinguished ancestry. In either case it is rather surprising that only the paternal ancestors are traced into the dim past; on Mendelian grounds the maternal chromosomes are fully as important.

Besides the ancestors we have a picture of the Mencken coat-of-arms, Mencken at the age of six months, at 3 years, at 8 years, at 18; Mencken in maturity, as a managing editor, as a dramatic editor; Mencken entering a saloon with comrades; an X-ray of the Mencken skull; yea, a picture of "the subconscious Mencken." This cartoon, made by McKee Barclay in 1912, was used whenever Mencken's picture was printed in connection with his Free Lance column on the Baltimore *Sun*, and we are told by Mr. Goldberg that most Baltimoreans accepted it as an authentic portrait.

This can well be believed. Indeed, though the writer saw several photographs of Mencken years before his eyes ever fell on this cartoon, he is ready to throw them all out as hoaxes and impostures, and to take this Barclay drawing as the real man. Herewith is presented a picture purporting to be Mr. Mencken and the cartoon. Gaze on this innocent, tender and credulous face and imagine it capable of writing the Menckenean cynicism and cannonade. The mind refuses. Then gaze on this ferocious Dr. Caligari and the real author is unmasked.

Dr. Goldberg's volume, to return, is for the most part a fascinating tome, full of interesting and curious things. We follow the boy Mencken, his aspirations and interests; we see really remarkable pencil sketches made at the age of 11; his early poems, with the true

Kipling ring; a sample page from his musical compositions; essays on chemistry—surely a versatile youngster. At maturity we see him as a cigar roller, clerk, salesman; we see him enroll in the "Cosmopolitan University," one of the earliest correspondence schools in the country, for a course in short story writing (and he even confesses he got some good out of it!). We see this youth, later to become a hardened intellectual criminal, write such lines as:

> "I only see the starlight of your eyes;
> I only feel the sunlight of your hair."

We follow his meteoric rise as a newspaper man. And the rest is history.

But stay. Here is an assortment of odd facts and memorabilia:

He is "champion of the bachelors, though scarred by twenty-eight proposals of marriage, including eleven from widows of easy means." There is nothing more on this line. Here Dr. Goldberg is, for once, too niggardly. In what manner came these twenty-eight proposals? What constitutes a proposal? What did the gals say? What did Harry say to encourage them to such boldness? Did the proposals come in his youth as a tribute to his beauty, or in his later years, as a tribute to his fame? Or has he a way with him? Or did most of the proposals come by letter from moonstruck flappers or elderly ladies whom he had never met—who had, perhaps, read only his devilish *In Defense of Women?* Such speculations keep one awake nights. But perhaps Dr. Goldberg plans a separate book on these affairs or even a book for each affair.

To get on: The editor of the *American Mercury*

peruses a very limited number of fellow magazines, sedulously avoiding those which most nearly approach his own in scope and appeal. The books that claim his closest attention are not fiction or criticism, but theology, biology, economics and modern history. He refuses to own an automobile because it is a nuisance. He goes abroad and studies the tombs of his ancestors.

He detests cards and finds it difficult not to transfer the feeling to card players themselves. He is careful not to write love letters and never preserves them. He doesn't dance. He likes, as he elegantly expresses it, "people who do not stink!" The managing editor of the *New York Times,* C. V. Van Anda, once invited him to join the staff of that paper. During the height of the war with the Anti-Saloon League he was on the best of terms with its superintendent, William H. Anderson.

Of his first book, *Ventures into Verse,* only two copies were sold. In the Mencken letters printed by Dr. Goldberg are phrases of such unerring taste and quivering beauty as this: "Of Schubert I hesitate to speak. His merest belch was as lovely as the song of the sirens. He sweated beauty as naturally as a Christian sweats hate."

But enough of this. What of Dr. Goldberg as distinct from his subject? For all his hero worship he is by no means blind to Mencken's shortcomings, and some of his criticism is shrewd and sound. Though he places the Baltimore sage in the company of Poe, Whitman and Mark Twain, he is capable of saying that there is not only genius but fudge in him. Mencken has reached a point, he says further, "where a change must come, lest stagnation set in." Dr. Goldberg recognizes, too, that "a bias for brevity may at times betray one into super-

ficiality; a hostility toward involved discourse may slight matter because of manner; eagerness to catch the attention may sink to a level of concession that fails to distinguish between the berated mob and its berator. So, too, the eternal hunt of the journalist for new words and combinations, unless carefully controlled, becomes habitual exaggeration, distortion, caricature."

But this style of Mencken's, Dr. Goldberg remarks, is contagious. "Critics such as Sherman and Pattee," he points out, "coming to pray with him and remonstrate, are trapped into Menckenizing, or into the very jazziness of style that they berate." And he emphasizes the truth of this remark by sedulously aping his hero's mannerisms himself; from end to end his book reverberates with faint echoes of the master's thunder.

Not least interesting among the contents of this book are two letters, one from Harrison Hale Schaff of John W. Luce & Co., Mencken's first publishers, which contains a friendly but penetrating bit of criticism, and the other from Theodore Dreiser. This Dreiser letter alone is worth the price of admission. I cannot resist quoting the novelist's description of his first meeting with Mencken:

"There appeared in my office a taut, ruddy, blue-eyed, snub-nosed youth of twenty-eight or nine whose brisk gait and ingratiating smile proved to me at once enormously intriguing and amusing. I had, for some reason not connected with his basic mentality, you may be sure, the sense of a small town roisterer or a college sophomore of the crudest and yet most disturbing charm and impishness, who, for some reason, had strayed into the world of letters. More than anything else he reminded me of a spoiled and petted and possibly over-financed brewer's or wholesale grocer's son who was

out for a lark. With the sang-froid of a Cæsar or a Napoleon he made himself comfortable in a large and impressive chair which was designed primarily to reduce the over-confidence of the average beginner. And from that particular and unintended vantage point he beamed on me with the confidence of a smirking fox about to devour a chicken. So I was the editor of the Butterick Publications. He had been told about me. However, in spite of 'Sister Carrie,' I doubt if he had ever heard of me before this. After studying him in that almost arch-episcopal setting which the chair provided, I began to laugh. 'Well, well,' I said, 'if it isn't Anheuser's own brightest boy out to see the town.' "

In a letter to Dr. Goldberg, a copy of which is sent to reviewers by the publishers, Mr. Mencken writes: "Your facts, so far as I know them, are exactly accurate." The former managing editor cannot have read the book carefully. Mr. Boynton's initials are set down as P. W., Fabian Franklin is referred to as Franklin Fabian, and Mr. Mencken himself is accused of a "nonchalant atheism," though he has never set up as anything more terrible than an agnostic.

But all in all, a gay and colorful and lively book.

LETTERS OF SIR WALTER RALEIGH, 1879-1922

Edited by LADY RALEIGH

Reviewed by Evelyn F. Heywood

The Christian Science Monitor, March 20, 1926

The actual output from Sir Walter Raleigh's pen was small, compared to that of most men of letters, yet his reputation as scholar and critic stands as high as that of any of his contemporaries. There were over 2000 of these letters, written between 1879 and 1922, and they describe in a vivid, intimate, happy way the experiences of the least professional of professors, the most unpedagogic of scholars, who ever became an Oxford don. "All who deserve a First," he said, "read for fun and have their reward."

Like his friend and colleague, W. P. Ker, he had a horror of the mere learning which produces dryness and pedantry. Research he openly despised if it led no further than an accumulation of knowledge. "It was one of the few articles of his creed as a professor," writes Mr. Nichol Smith in an excellent, brief introduction to these volumes, "that too much system kills the study of literature." Through his letters, we follow him during the two years he was in India at Aligarh, lecturing on literature, in Glasgow, at Liverpool where he spent ten years, and later at Oxford, where he went in 1904, to be the first holder of the professorship of English literature, observing how light and yet how secure was his hand upon the reins, with what dash and skill he led his students away from the high road of facts

and conventionalism, into the byways of imagination and on to the hill-tops of romance.

"Literature," he once said, "is the record of man's adventure on the edge of things." From the first he made it clear in his lectures that if any one wanted to waste his time on learning facts, he could do that without assistance from him. Second-hand knowledge, accepted opinions, all the baggage of so-called educational efficiency he had no use for. "I have been thinking about education a good deal lately," he wrote to Lady Elcho. "All the stupid men we see—where do they come from? I have found out. They are the bright boys . . . they get the scholarships and the entrance to everywhere. . . . But they can't follow through." And nowhere perhaps is his own attitude toward the things that are of value better summed up than in a letter to Mr. A. J. Balfour, as he then was: "What confuses the issue is the 'success' of books, the crowd shouting after the chariot, with no part in the real campaign. If the only people reckoned were those to whom the book or picture were part of their vital history, the thing would be clear."

Dogma, authority, how Raleigh tilts at them, whether in Wordsworth, in Matthew Arnold, in Tolstoi or in more recent exponents. "He was really a very good fellow indeed," he wrote of Wordsworth, "and understood things thoroughly. But he talked in a way that prevented people who do not understand things from understanding that he understood things."

Sir Walter Raleigh summed up genius in one word, spontaneity. For himself, he had a superabundance of it, it was one with his enormous zest for living, his delight in whatever was courageous, sincere, his uncompromising condemnation of the glitter which is not gold.

Side by side with W. P. Ker, the scholarship of Raleigh was small; and since he affected to despise it, we may be surprised that it was as profound as it was. But wherever he wandered—among the Elizabethans whom he loved, combining as they did the courtier, the gentleman (and certainly last as far as he was concerned), the scholar; among the giants who possessed Dr. Johnson as their chief; among the greatest of his own time—he brought back with him something which makes us understand how truly he would have wasted both his own and his students' time, had he lectured to them on facts.

Surely nothing could give us a better notion of his lectures than these letters, for they are the man himself, and as we read them, full of quips and fancies, laughter, mock-anger, enthusiasm, brilliant flashes of insight, we can imagine those benches crowded with young men who were learning, some of them perhaps for the first time in their lives, that learning and solemnity, knowledge and boredom by no means necessarily go hand in hand. How many of the most brilliant and charming talkers have left no record of the joy they imparted to the privileged few, with such supreme naturalness. Raleigh indicated that he was fastidious when it came to such congenial give and take: "What a miracle of coincidences goes to a good talk! Enjoyment, sympathy, curiosity, courage, reverence, freedom. I wonder if it ever happens." Yet in his letters—2000 of them—we feel that he was talking thus, bringing all these qualities into action, with his friends.

How characteristic of the man that he, who had lived the life of a don as an "adventure on the edge of things," should seize with alacrity, after nearly forty years of professorship, the opportunity to fly over Egypt and Pal-

estine to Bagdad, declaring that as official historian of the War in the Air, it was part of his job. In this last joyous escapade, of which he has written so delightfully, we hardly know whether he was more entertained by his own experience, or in observing the attitude and methods of those who had chosen for the field of their adventures not literature but the clouds.

Again and again, as we read these letters, indeed as we read anything which Sir Walter Raleigh has written, we are reminded of his comment, on Matthew Arnold: "He was quite incurious about men." How vast the contrast between these two great Oxonians! With dignity and yet with indifference would Matthew Arnold have discussed his contemporaries, considering none except in connection with an intellectual altitude which must approximate his own; but the student of pre-war and immediate post-war years can hardly do better if he would understand the temper of England, and the men who were helping in one way or another to educate and influence her at that time, than to study these letters. Brief vignettes most of them, but revealing more of the times in a sentence than would be found in a page of weightier comments. After the letters of Walter Hines Page, we wonder whether there are any which, amidst so much that is gay and humorous, disclose more poignantly, despite a certain inherent reserve, the magnitude of the conflict and the greatness of the heroism of those five years, when from one end of the earth to the other the nations were at war.

THE TRUE STEVENSON

By George S. Hellman

Reviewed by Robert Morss Lovett

The New Republic, March 10, 1926

Mr. Hellman's Study in Clarification undertakes to remove the impurities which have been introduced into the biography and reputation of Stevenson, and to tell the truth about the following matters: 1. The looseness of his early life in Edinburgh. 2. His agnosticism. 3. His love for Mrs. Sitwell, and the shattering blow which he received when he learned of her preference for Mr. Sidney Colvin. 4. His relations with Mrs. Osbourne at Grez which made her summons to him to join her in California a matter of honor. 5. The character of Mrs. Osbourne, the nature of her power over Stevenson and the effect of her exactions on his life and art. 6. In particular her responsibility for the Stevenson myth, promoted by the destruction of the manuscript of his novel dealing with the life of a prostitute, the moralization of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the suppression of some of Stevenson's poems and of the original versions of others, alterations and excisions in his correspondence as published by Sir Sidney Colvin, the elision of the subtitle of the story *The Bottle Imp*, which reads *A Cue from a Melodrama*, and the withholding from publication of *The Waif Woman, A Cue from a Saga*, both stories symbolic of Stevenson's captivity to La Belle Dame sans Merci. 7. The cause of his quarrel with Henley, *i.e.*, the latter's outspoken condemnation

of Mrs. Stevenson's use in her own name of a story by Stevenson's cousin, Katharine de Mattos.

Some of these clarifications have been effected before. For example, the latest of Stevenson's biographers, Mr. J. A. Steuart, has told the story of the break with Henley and noted its depressing effect on Stevenson, one comparable to his loss of Fanny Sitwell. Other corners of the veil had been lifted by Mr. Osbourne in *An Intimate Portrait of R. L. S. in 1915.* In the same year Mr. Clayton Hamilton in *On the Trail of Stevenson* published to the world the fact that at Grez, where Stevenson and Mrs. Osbourne met, "their affinity was instant and their union was immediate and complete," but he thought better of the revelation, withdrew the first edition of his book, and attenuated his statement to "their affinity was immediate." All these doubtful and partial revelations fall into their due place in Mr. Hellman's story of an astonishing conspiracy of deception. The original conspirator was Mrs. Stevenson who, possibly out of idolatry, perhaps for prudential reasons, desired to present her husband to the world as a very perfect knight. She made a partial accomplice of her son, Lloyd Osbourne. She found a willing tool in Graham Balfour, who wrote the official life of Stevenson in perfectly official terms; and apparently a less willing one in Sir Sidney Colvin, who in his treatment of the letters was committed to a high standard of discretion by the fact that he had a modest stake in the jack-pot of silence—he had married Mrs. Sitwell. Among other doubtless unwilling accessories after the fact must be mentioned friends of Stevenson like Henry James, Edmund Gosse, William Archer, Andrew Lang, and others who must have known the truth. Henry James indeed dissociated himself formally from the

proceedings by declining to take upon himself the literary executorship to which Stevenson nominated him in the will which Mr. Graham Balfour failed to print; and he had already, by what Mr. Gosse notes as a blazing indiscretion, made the destroyed manuscript the theme of *The Author of Beltraffio*. Mr. Gosse had himself related this story to James, and one of the neatest of Mr. Hellman's inductions is that in which he compares James's masterpiece, Mr. Gosse's account in which no names are mentioned, and the facts known, to leave no doubt of the identity of the three versions.

But Mr. Hellman has evidence apart from his suspicions and guesses. The most important part of this consists of original documents, a mass of Stevenson's manuscripts containing first drafts of the poems in *Underwoods,* and others unpublished, having been gathered by him at the sales in New York after Mrs. Stevenson's death. The existence of these manuscripts had been concealed from Mr. Lloyd Osbourne by his mother, and they were offered for sale by his sister, Mrs. Salisbury Field, in a way to suggest the intention that they should be dispersed, not to be gathered up. Other testimony came to him from Mrs. Katherine Osbourne, Mr. Lloyd Osbourne's first wife, who joined the family at Vailima after Stevenson's death, and Mr. James Stewart McConathy, the nephew of Mrs. Stevenson's first husband. In addition Mr. Hellman has checked up somewhat on Sir Sidney Colvin's editing of Stevenson's letters, from the holographs and by comparing the original edition with that of 1923. As he says, "No one will ever know the full extent of the liberties taken by Sir Sidney Colvin with Stevenson's correspondence." Yet he has brought to view enough of Sir Sidney's discretions to justify the conclusion that "he committed

acts of omission so opposed to a vital delineation of Stevenson's life and character that it would be hard to find a parallel." On only a few points does Mr. Hellman leave us unsatisfied. We should be glad to know where Sir Sidney Colvin admits that he had authority from Mrs. Stevenson to make known the completeness of her relation to Stevenson at Grez; and particularly what influence was exerted to make Mr. Clayton Hamilton obliterate the footprints which he recorded in the first edition of his *On the Trail of Stevenson* to show that a man had passed that way.

The chief question raised by Mr. Hellman's book is that of the rights of biography. The immediate underlying cause of the conspiracy of whitewash was undoubtedly the desire to spare his family and friends the pain that would have come to them from being informed or reminded that Stevenson bummed extensively in Edinburgh and Paris in his youth, that he often and wittily took the name of the Lord in vain, that he did not always honor his father and his mother, that his relation with Mrs. Osbourne was in defiance of the seventh commandment, that his wife was not an ideal helpmeet for an artist, and that his family life was not a perfect concord of sweet sounds. But there are others to be considered. The Stevenson myth, as Mr. Hellman points out, leaves an inexplicable stigma of cruelty upon Stevenson's father, in his refusal to continue his son's means of support because he followed the lead of true love. His mother said afterwards: "We were wrong. Fanny was a good wife to him," but at the time it naturally seemed to them that he was surrendering all his prospects in this world, but also in the next. It leaves equally inexplicable the unforgiving bitterness of Henley. Particularly it leaves under a cloud a man

who seems to have been a quite understanding, tolerant and good-natured person, Mr. Samuel Osbourne. And even Stevenson's close friends must have felt an oppression of spirit in being obliged to speak of him always with tongue in cheek, and, under the stern glance of Sir Sidney Colvin, forbidden that relief of facial muscle not denied to the augurs when they met.

But far more important is the question of the injustice which the myth does to its subject, and to the public which is its objective. The relation of biography to the inheritance which a man leaves the world is reasonably clear. Through Boswell and Lockhart the English race has come into permanent possession of Johnson and Scott, without whom it would be by how much the poorer. The maladroit hand of Froude, chiefly by carelessness of the susceptibilities of a really vast number of contemporaries, did immediate and tremendous harm to the imposing reputation of Carlyle, but it is by no means certain that we shall not in the long run owe the possession of a personality greater than Johnson or Scott to Froude's realism. The public wearies of its latter-day saints. The manipulation of the stock of an author, alive or dead, while it may lead to an artificial bull market in which many people load up with the handsomely engraved share certificates, is sure to be followed by a distaste for the commodity, decline in earnings, and a selling campaign which leaves the holders of the securities weary and disgusted. This has happened in the case of Stevenson. During his later life and for many years after his death he was the subject of adroit bulling. His stock soared. Then came reaction. Now is the time for reorganization. Stevenson like Johnson is sold not only on his works but on his personality, and personality can be preserved

only by biography. There are figures in literature that do very well without biography—Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Tolstoi—but Stevenson is not one of them. And by virtue of the failure of his managers to realize the preservative value of realism, the true Stevenson was almost, as Henley thought quite, lost to the world. Of course it was the world's fault. It was the taste of the belated Victorians in England and the early Victorians in America which tempted the conspirators to make the insipid blend which they put on the market. Now the public taste is not only jaded; it has changed. The United States Immigration authorities will be excited to learn that when they permitted the Amateur Emigrant to land at Ellis Island they received to their bosom a man guilty of moral turpitude, but no one of common sense cares what Stevenson and Mrs. Osbourne did at Grez, except in so far as it makes real and credible the experience of a man and the behavior of his fellows, of which the accepted account reads like a legend of the saints.

And this experience and behavior form a subject scarcely less provocative to modern biography than the case of Shelley. Stevenson illustrates almost all the vicissitudes of the artist's life, in his relations with his parents, his friends, his critics, his public, his wife, in his temptations and his pleasures, in his illness and his poverty, in his artistic conscience and his popular success. Whether such a biography will yet be written is a question. Perhaps the ground has already been spoiled. Henry James, who would have been the ideal biographer for such a career, doubtless thought so.

Even the latest of Stevenson's biographers, Mr. J. A. Steuart, has worked under the spell, timidly and tamely. Especially in treating the relation of Stevenson and his

wife he follows the convention. From his narrative we gather the impression of a guardian and ministering angel miraculously sent to the wayward child of letters. Mr. Hellman is not satisfied. He gives us instead glimpses of a weary Tannhäuser moving his Venusberg from Davos to Hyères, to Bournemouth, to Saranac, to Samoa, there to be resolved into legend as the chocolate knight of literature.

THE HISTORY AND PROSPECTS OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Edited by HARRY ELMER BARNES

Reviewed by William MacDonald

The New York Times Book Review, January 31, 1926

Professor Barnes is one of those who believe that the so-called social sciences, themselves a product of some two centuries of development, have reached a point where they can be successfully applied to the "adequate and intelligent control, direction and reorganization" of the existing social order, and that they ought to be so used. "The complex difficulties of the present scientific and industrial age," he declares, "can in no way be competently dealt with by excellent intentions, metaphysical idealism or religious zeal, important as all of these may be in their respective spheres." Professor Barnes has been saying much the same kind of thing, in one way or another, for a number of years in books and articles, without attracting particular notice outside the circle of professional sociologists. Since, however, more recently, he has taken to speaking his mind with some frankness about the study and writing of history, he has stirred up a hornets' nest. The controversy over the "new" history is not new, neither has it ended. It was old in Europe long before much attention was paid to it in this country, and neither here nor in Europe is the present generation likely to see or hear the last of it. Nor can it be said that Professor Barnes himself has made a distinctive personal contribution to the kind of

history whose champion he is. What has brought his name prominently before so much of the American public as reads serious writing is the vigorous ruthlessness of his attack upon the history that he dislikes, his spacious lack of reverence for the great or near-great, his breezy way of saying things and his insistence that something highly undesirable awaits the historians who do not henceforth watch their steps.

What Professor Barnes, as a sociologist or social scientist, objects to, and what he has apparently had in mind in editing this his latest book, is, in the first place, a narrow conception of what history is like. Granting that history is "a record of past human experiences and achievements," he objects to singling out such of those experiences and achievements as are concerned mainly with politics, constitutional development or the conventional phases of economics, and insisting that they are history while other things are not. If it be true that no one mind can perfectly grasp or coördinate the sum total of what mankind has been or undergone, Professor Barnes would nevertheless have the historian keep that sum total always in view, and recognize such subdivisions of the field as literary history, the history of philosophy or science, etc., as integral parts of the one story which it is the business of the historian to tell.

A second objection upon which he lays particular stress is the notion that the history of mankind, if properly understood, reveals something usually described as purpose, whether divine, nationalistic, cultural or what not. He is for gathering all the facts and explaining them, but he will have nothing of the kind of interpretation that warms the heart of the homilist or exhorter. For one thing, purpose is too simple: we live in a complex age, and what we do is conditioned by our environ-

ment. "There is not the slightest iota of choice allowed to any individual in any act or thought from birth to the grave." We are what we are because of what we have been, and we shall be what we shall be for the same reason. The only hope of "better or saner types of conduct" lies in "giving the individual a better set of experiences through heredity, education and association."

What the "new" history should be, or at least the range of subjects which it should include, is set out by Professor Barnes in the opening chapter of this composite volume. It will begin by recognizing the "cultural setting and background" afforded by natural science, evolutionary biology, anthropology, psychology and sociology, each of which has contributed something to an understanding of what men have been like and why they have behaved in that way. We shall have intellectual history, the history of technology, economic and social history (Professor Barnes notes that "there is at the present time but one chair of economic history in all of the history departments of the United States combined"), institutional political history, legal history, geography in its historical bearings, and finally world history, the general history of culture, and a kind of pragmatic application of history to "prove progress," demonstrate the impossibility of arguing from one generation to another, and releasing the "dead hand" from "those who to-day must plan a more efficient and happy future for the race."

What it all comes to, apparently, is that the "new" historian, if he undertakes what is expected of him, will try to restore the old "history of civilization" which the fathers studied, but which of late has fallen into

disrepute. If this is the case the practical difficulty will be found not so much in thinking of history as one of the social sciences, or in attempting to give an all-around view of whatever in human progress has been worth while, as in mastering new and diverse departments of knowledge sufficiently to avoid writing twaddle or nonsense about them. If the historian is the first to learn what evolutionary biology, psychology and historical jurisprudence have to teach, in addition to such old-fashioned subjects as constitutions, politics or diplomacy, before he may safely unlimber his typewriter and begin to write, there will be no flood of "new" history for some time.

Having set up the standard of history as the file leader of the social sciences, Professor Barnes invites his colleagues to tell the history and display the prospects of nine other departments of the prodigious social field. Any one who will read through the nearly five hundred pages that follow his introductory chapter will have a summary view of the achievements and problems of scholarship the like of which has rarely been presented in a single book. The historical reviews which each writer offers must be dismissed, from sheer lack of space, without further comment than that they appear to be both competent and fair, graced with generous recognition even when the writer himself disagrees. What is said, on the other hand, regarding the present state of the several sciences and the special problems that confront them may be briefly indicated.

Professor Jean Brunhes of the Collège de France, the only European contributor, who writes about human geography, performs the novel feat of describing and evaluating his own work as well as that of others, deferring in so doing to the insistence of the publisher

(does he, perhaps, mean the editor?) because of the significance of his work "in the definition and constitution of this new branch of geographic investigation." His conclusions are that human geography includes the geography of history, and the latter includes political geography. The "heierarchy, both positive and logical," as Professor Brunhes calls it, will, he hopes, "satisfy every one."

Professor Parshley of Smith College, who discusses biology, urges his readers to keep in mind "the ineradicable, underlying animalism of humanity," and himself adheres immovably to the principle in examining such social problems of biology as eugenics, individual differences, population and food supply, public health, racial theories ("there is not the slightest prospect that biology is about to join forces with the Ku Klux Klan"), the "pathetic nonsense" of glands and rejuvenation, and puritanism as a biologic force. Under this latter head Professor Parshley, while paying his respects in no uncertain manner to "the militant vice crusader, the censor of books and public entertainments, the acrobatic evangelist, the prohibitionist, the Ku Klux Klanner and the village gossip," and affirming that in matters of physical indulgence "the pagan philosophy of moderation accords better with scientific recommendations than does the puritan philosophy of repression," nevertheless finds grounds of hope in "the spirit of liberation which informs the art, the literature and the youth of to-day."

On the subject of social psychology Professor Kimball Young of the University of Oregon pays generous tribute to the work of Dewey, Thorndike, McDougall, Cooley and others, but prefers to approach the social side of the question by examining first the operations

of the individual mind. The primary questions here are how we think and of what we think, but to answer either we must study the social and institutional environment. Here comes in the study of "crowds, mobs, audiences, crazes, fads, crime, war, propaganda, public opinion," and all the great institutions of society, each of which needs more precise definition and more thorough analysis. With these tasks out of the way we shall know better than we do now whether the fact that "the one disgrace to-day for person or nation is not to be going somewhere" indicates a something that may become "a permanent part of our social personality," or whether as a society we ought to think of going anywhere at all.

Professor Hankins of Smith College disarms criticism in advance by conceding that sociology, the particular one of the social sciences, which he undertakes to evaluate, "has barely passed its formative stage" and is still more of a philosophy than a science. It is still beset with isms and schools, with pious efforts to make people more comfortable and crass confidence in panaceas and reforms. Any attempt at a synthetic treatment which shall take account of all aspects of social life opens a vast domain whose multitudinous parts distract the thinker and make it easy to champion any one of scores of explanations as the only or ultimate verity. The amazing lengths to which the parceling process has been carried is graphically exhibited in the sixteen-page classification which Professor Hankins gives to social theories and their advocates. Anthropogeographers, biological determinists, neo-Malthusians, eugenicists, racial determinists, proponents of reason or sympathy or instinct, orthogenetic evolutionists, libertarians and anarchists, guild socialists, trade unionists

and single taxers, all are here, from Spencer and Marx and Lester F. Ward to Samuel Gompers, Dean Inge and Frederic C. Howe.

Economics is also a social science, and one of the best chapters in the book is that in which Professor Bigelow of Harvard reviews its anything but dismal history. Thanks in part to the problems arising from the World War, the outlook for economics seems to Professor Bigelow exceptionally bright, although no general agreement regarding scope or method is to be anticipated. Political science, on the other hand, which Walter J. Shepard surveys, while more and more adopting the historical method, subdividing its field and subordinating theories of the State to facts, is still hampered by definitions and popular formulas more or less outgrown. The Government, by consent of which the Declaration of Independence speaks, like the separation of powers which the Constitution embodies, may still appear to have some meaning to the man in the street, but they are anathema to the political scientist. What Mr. Shepard asks of his science is that it shall look forward to a remodeling of representative institutions, to new conceptions of the origin and nature of law, and to a conduct of affairs in which the expert shall replace the amateur. We should prepare our minds for government by political scientists.

The last two chapters deal with jurisprudence and ethics. Dean Pound of the Harvard Law School sees recent legal science concerned with a study of law in action as well as in the books, the relation of law to morals, the development of preventive justice, and "team play" with the other social sciences. Its problems are the evaluation of social interests, the adjustment of law and administration, the limits of effective

legislation, how to inform jurists and legislators of social facts, and codification.

Ethics, on the other hand, which Professor Givler of Tufts defines as "neither a polite synonym for morality nor an impolite synonym for religion," but as "in the strictest sense of the term a philosophy of life," is being served to-day in "at least a half dozen ways," from that of empirically minded philosophers like Perry or Dewey to those of sociologists, psychiatrists, biologists and jurists. The reconstruction of ethical theory, as Professor Givler sees it, "will perhaps chiefly consist in allying and consolidating it with the rest of the natural sciences."

Such is the broad field in which the student of mankind is invited to orient himself. Instead of close-pent areas, each securely privileged and plainly marked, we are offered a vast common domain, still parceled for more convenient tillage, but administered as a whole by its intellectual cultivators, and with all the old trespass signs removed. The proper study of mankind is man, and to know from every angle what man has been, why he has been thus or so, and whither, if anywhere, a universe with neither gods nor God is carrying him along, is to be the scholar's aim.

DISRAELI; ALIEN PATRIOT

By E. T. RAYMOND

Reviewed by John Philip Morris

The Chicago Evening Post, January 29, 1926

It is a long time since I read a book as interesting and as absorbing as this. It is also a long time since I read a book which opened as many subjects for debate and which, therefore, gave so much scope for real thinking.

Mr. Raymond bases his thesis on two points and, to my mind, fully proves neither of them. These are that Disraeli was the one unquestionable genius of his age and the second (in his own words):

"The Jew may become, in relation to the land of his adoption, a true patriot, but he must always remain, for the multitude of purposes, an alien; and it is an injustice to his patriotism to gloss over his alienism. If we treat an honest Jew as one who has thrown in his lot with England or France, Spain or Germany, but cannot, by the nature of things, be English, French, Spanish or German, we know exactly where we are. We appreciate what seems to us admirable, we understand what seems to us less admirable, we are not perplexed by what may be in itself neither good nor bad, but simply foreign. But if we insist on regarding the Jew as an Englishman, a Frenchman, a Spaniard or a German in no way differing from other Englishmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards or Germans, we shall not only be wrong about him but in the wrong with him."

Let us take up the last point first. Of course Mr. Raymond must judge the Jew as a gentile. It may, therefore, be of interest and value to him, as to other gentiles, to see this matter from the Hebrew standpoint.

In the first place, Disraeli, like the writer, is not a Jew but simply a Hebrew or a Semite. Judaism is a religion with its own creed, mostly composed of negations, but nevertheless a creed, and Disraeli was a member of the Church of England by conviction as well as choice, for nothing in Mr. Raymond's own book convinces us that Disraeli's religious views and beliefs are not more Anglican than Jewish. That some of his appointments leaned toward what Raymond considers the wrong side was not a question of belief but of bias, and his remark that "In evolution he was on the side of the angels" shows him to have been much more of a fundamentalist than, say, Sir Harry Johnston or H. H. Nevison, who were both born and baptized in the Anglican church. No, Disraeli was not a member of the Jewish faith.

He was, however, a Hebrew, as people who have a majority of Jewish blood and whose facial lineaments are as Semitic in type as were Disraeli's naturally must be.

But if we will only keep on remembering that for over a thousand years Jew and gentile have lived side by side throughout all of Europe, and then turn to our histories and consider the amount of genuine intermarriage as well as the concubinage on both sides we will realize that there are few persons living to-day of pure blood of any kind.

This and other things that I have not space to mention should help to rid us of the idea that the Hebrew is a sort of biological curiosity.

Mr. Raymond also says (p. 157): "No Christian ever becomes a Jew." The best Jew I know to-day is a woman, born Christian, who has whole-heartedly embraced her Jewish husband's faith. And it is one of those queer paradoxes that not Solomon, not David, not Abraham was as good a Jew as Cromwell or any of those brave Jewish idealed folk who voyaged on the Mayflower.

But we digress. "Give me," cries Dr. John B. Watson, "twelve children to bring up from childhood, let me have complete charge of their development, and I will produce for you twelve Shelleys, twelve Dickenses or twelve Edisons." The good doctor, of course, stresses environment to the same nth degree on which the good Mr. Raymond insists on heredity as the character-forming power. From the Semitic standpoint I feel that Dr. Watson is the nearer right. For here is the very crux of the whole matter. It is a fact and not a theory that the Jew assimilated by Germany is more of a German than the descendant of any of the old Germanic tribes. The Jew born of the second generation of English Jews is a truer Briton than a Chesterfield or a Chesterton, who loves his England with but half his soul, keeping the rest for his religion, and a list of their deeds from 1775 until to-day will prove that American Jews are second to none in devotion and in service to the land that shelters them. No, Disraeli was no alien patriot. Rather say that the large proportion of Jewish blood in his veins made him a super-Englishman and a superpatriot.

At intervals throughout the book our author tells us what an outstanding figure and what a genius Disraeli was. Then he goes to work and shows us of his many mistakes and all the things he did which were wrong.

In fact he never shows us why he considers Disraeli to be the one unquestionable genius of his age. Rather he shows us a man fertile as Ulysses in expedients, a man gifted as Barnum in advertisement, and a man who by having no hampering principles except the will to succeed rose to success. He makes Disraeli a great charlatan, but not a great figure.

However, in spite of our author rather than because of him we realize that there must have been the fire of genius in this fellow. Or else why of all the many prime ministers that have ruled England is his birthday with its primroses still remembered and celebrated, and why did he stand before the great ones of the earth a greater one than any? Why, indeed, unless the gratitude of his Hebrew blood was giving its very essence in adoration of the country which had sheltered and which honored him. For that is a Jewish trait, that gratitude, a trait that was in Joseph and in Disraeli and in the Morrisses and many another Jew, proving that they were not aliens but just patriots.

LIFE OF WILLIAM CONGREVE

By EDMUND GOSSE

RESTORATION COMEDY: 1660-1720

By BONAMY DOBRÉE

Reviewed by Lloyd Morris

North American Review, March, 1925

The contemporary revival of interest in Restoration comedy can scarcely be surprising to people acutely aware of the intellectual temper of the period in which we are now living. Something other than either scholarly or esthetic appetite has been responsible for the belated revival, in the English theater and more recently in our own, of *The Way of the World,* and for the resuscitation as reading matter of some of the plays of Etheredge, Wycherly, Dryden, Vanbrugh and Farquhar. One suspects an affinity in temper, attitude and preoccupation between the two periods. Similarities between them are at least not lacking.

In his suggestive discussion of the conditions which influenced the character of Restoration comedy, Mr. Dobrée points out that the period was one in which polite society was engaged in deliberately and consciously living to the top of its bent. People, he remarks, were determined to enjoy their newly acquired luxury and security after a period of war; nobody could foretell what the morrow might bring. It was an age notable for its curiosity in all fields of human concern; moral, political, scientific, social and religious. It was

an age in which criticism flourished and investigation was pursued. It was an age which, in the field of social behavior, was remarkable for its willingness to experiment. It was an age intellectually convinced of the possibility of rationalizing human relationships and determined to attempt it in conduct. It was an age dominated by skepticism, the repudiation of tradition, and the desire to try new ways of living. In the best sense it was natural that this temper should find in comedy a subtle medium of expression, and that it should perfect comedy as an esthetic form to a degree of artistry previously unequaled in English literature.

Superficially, in its general intellectual temper, our own period reflects that which produced the Restoration comedies. Yet in one important and perhaps fundamental respect there is a difference in temper which outweighs and cancels all superficial similarities. The contemporary mind, as it finds expression in our significant contemporary literature, exhibits the same attitudes of intellectual curiosity, of willingness to experiment, of skepticism, disillusion and impatience of tradition. But—and here is the important difference—our dubieties perplex us; convinced as we may be that the only fixed absolute is pure relativity, we despise the conviction and would willingly exchange it for one small grain of faith. The Restoration mind, convinced of much the same thing, had the intelligence to make its dubiety a pure affirmation. For it there were no absolute certainties in life, and it courageously affirmed as its only certainty the impossibility of ever being certain. Again and again in the comedies of the Restoration we come upon this, and the expression is always affirmative. "Would anything but a madman complain of uncertainty?" asks Angelica in Congreve's *Love for*

Love. "Uncertainty and expectation are the joys of life. Security is an insipid thing, and the overtaking and possessing of a wish discovers the folly of the chase." But our own day takes its uncertainty tragically; such works as Joyce's *Ulysses* and Eliot's *Waste Land* are negations, not affirmations of, and negations which lament a loss of faith. For the Restoration writers, who were more profoundly rational than ours, doubt itself constituted a positive faith.

This capacity to evolve a positive philosophy by means of rationalizing its negations and its doubts explains why the best of Restoration comedy speaks to us to-day with a force, vigor and conviction that we rarely discover in the literature of our own time. Our writers turn with facility to the production of satire, perhaps forgetting that indictment is itself only an expression of inverted and excessive sentimentality; and the vaunted freedom of our literature to "face facts" turns out too often to be only a liberty to face them without making use of them. Possibly that is why the spirit of comedy has deserted our literature, since it is of the essence of comedy that the facts shall not only be faced honestly, but employed to some significant end. At its lowest level Restoration comedy sank into farce, and its central average probably lies in satire. But its highest achievements rose to pure comedy of a singularly crystalline perfection, and they retain for us to-day an intellectual meaning as well as an esthetic delight.

Mr. Dobrée, in a succinct conclusion to his volume, defines the achievement of Restoration comedy as a whole. It gave, he says, "a brilliant picture of its time rather than a new insight into man." That it did not rise to a more universal spirit he explains by pointing

out that the writers "never came to the condition of seeing life whole, though what they saw they perceived very clearly. They loved it with Etheredge, or, like Wycherly, snatched from it a fearful joy, or, like Congreve, tried in their dissatisfaction to distill from it something exquisite; they hardly ever related it, as Molière nearly always did, to a larger world; they did not try to construct something terrific out of it, as Jonson was able to do." Mr. Dobrée likewise remarks that their time forced these dramatists to be too critical and too moral, in the sense that they were forced to be too largely engaged with the immediate application of their ideas. Their moral vision was in no sense universal; the old moral vision had died, and the new skepticism was less a vision than an inquiry. "The dramatists of that day were almost necessarily forced to be content with morality as conceived by the *honnête homme.* Wycherly could never imagine, as did Goethe's Faust, that all experience whatsoever might be good: Congreve would never see that the art of graceful living might, by its very fineness, miss something fundamental in life, and destroy the directness he was eager to preserve."

These are serious limitations, and Mr. Dobrée acknowledges them to be so, but his keen critical insight enables him to see that such limitations carry with them compensatory advantages, and that the true artist is one who turns the limitations of his material or medium into positive resources. The potential advantage of the limitations to which the Restoration dramatists were subject lies in the fact that, lacking a comprehensive theory of life or a sustained emotional revolt from life, the creative impulse is "bent inwards upon things, it will not be satisfied until the object made has

complete validity within itself: it cannot afford to slip into life." And Mr. Dobrée points out that such lapses into realism as scarcely injured the structure of much Elizabethan comedy proved ruinous to that of Restoration comedy. The kind of perfection necessary to the Restoration writers required a conscious artistry and consummate craftsmanship, and it is remarkable, not that this perfection was so rarely achieved, but that it was achieved at all. As the two flawless and perfect masterpieces of the school, Mr. Dobrée chooses Wycherly's *The Country Wife* and Congreve's *The Way of the World.* Both of these plays take us, not into life, but into an esthetically consistent world detached from the actual, yet rising upon it. It is their peculiar virtue to offer us not nature, but nature carried over into art; not actual experience, but imaginative experience in which we are partly implicated, yet to which we also remain, in part, external. Only the finest art is capable of producing this effect of implication and detachment, and only the finest, therefore, succeeds in making available for us an experience at once more intense and more intelligible than any offered by life. It is the function of art to subject us, as life does, to experience. But the experience of art must make its significance more explicit to us even while we are subject to it, and this the experience of life cannot accomplish. If this is the basis for our distinction between art and life, we can attribute to the best of Restoration comedy, despite its artificiality, its strict convention of form, and its alienation from a vision of life in any sense universal, a valid and enduring esthetic truth.

Mr. Dobrée's volume provides a concise and exceptionally expert mediation between seven Restoration

writers of comedy and a contemporary audience. It is criticism in the finest sense, and criticism founded upon a French rather than an English tradition. His aim is interpretation of the actual work of art in terms of its intention and its effect. Unlike many critics who happen also to be scholars, he conceives scholarship as an instrument rather than as an end in itself. He makes scholarship serve his purposes, but those purposes are critical and esthetic. To turn from his delightful and lucid book to Sir Edmund Gosse's life of Congreve, now republished with additions and revisions after thirty-seven years, is to turn from art to scholarship. This biography is the one authoritative life of the dramatist in the English language. It remains useful as an accurate compilation of the known facts relating to Congreve's career—unfortunately far fewer in number than we should like to possess—but it offers no significant interpretation of Congreve's art, nor does it attempt to approach Congreve as an artist. But it makes evident the opportunity for a study of Congreve as a personality and as an artist, a study which might combine the erudition of Sir Edmund Gosse with the esthetic intelligence of Mr. Dobrée. For as man and as artist, Congreve is among the most interesting of English writers.

THE LIFE OF W. T. STEAD

By FREDERIC WHYTE

Reviewed by Henry W. Nevinson

New York Herald Tribune Books, January 31, 1926

Off and on I came across Stead pretty often in London and on the Continent, and I was always about equally attracted and repelled by the man's extraordinary personality. Attracted by his indomitable energy, his obvious sincerity and his passionate indignation at wrong; repelled by his blundering haste, his incapacity for estimating evidence, whoever reads Mr. Whyte's *Life* of him will at once recognize the reasons for the attraction and the repulsion.

Mr. Whyte has accomplished his task with amazing industry and care. It is no easy matter to write the life of so fertile and varied a journalist as Stead. It implies a prolonged search into the heavy volumes of files in the vast collection of the British Museum (so vast that the papers have had to be removed to the outlying suburb of Hendon, six miles away) or in the dusty records preserved in Fleet Street offices and in the heaped-up letters of friends and relations. Then the extracts have to be chosen and copied—a portentous labor in this case, for the extracts are unusually extensive; judgment on their significance has to be given; the history of the times thoroughly studied so that their significance may be understood; and from all this mass of material the character and mind of the man himself must be clearly revealed. My heartfelt sympathies are with Mr. Whyte, and so is my admiration; for I can

hardly imagine so difficult a task more admirably accomplished.

The writer's fairness is most remarkable. It is difficult for a biographer to avoid excessive praise, but if he attempts to balance between praise and blame he is likely to fall into the error of Froude, whose *Life of Carlyle,* fine though it is, gives a painful and exaggerated idea of the great man's weaknesses. Mr. Whyte certainly has not shirked his subject's weaknesses. Of course, he sympathizes with him and his objects as a whole, or he could not have undertaken and accomplished so toilsome an enterprise. But he has no hesitation in pointing out where the errors lay, or in quoting adverse opinions of distinguished writers, who had every opportunity of judging. To take an instance: Bernard Shaw was a young man like myself when Stead, as editor of *The Pall Mall Gazette,* stirred the country to passion with the series of articles called *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon.* Like myself and most other decent people, he eagerly defended Stead's action in exposing the horrors of child prostitution in London. Through thick and thin we defended him, and it was my first experience in fighting against the indifference and passive resistance of fashion and cynicism. But when we found that the case on which Stead seemed to depend most strongly for his evidence had in fact been vamped up by himself, just to show what abominations could possibly be done in "modern Babylon," our confidence began to shake, though, for my part, I tried to defend him still. But in 1922 Bernard Shaw wrote:

Stead was impossible as a colleague; he had to work single-handed because he was incapable of keeping faith

when excited; and as his hyperesthesia was chronic he generally *was* excited. Nobody ever trusted him after the discovery that the case of Eliza Armstrong in the *Maiden Tribute* was a put up job, and that he himself had put it up. We all felt that if ever a man deserved six months' imprisonment Stead deserved it for such a betrayal of our confidence in him. He meant well; all his indignations did him credit, but he was so stupendously ignorant that he never played the game.

Stead was indeed stupendously ignorant. It has been said with some truth that the test of real education is the power of judging evidence. Except a knowledge of the Bible as a literal history and sufficient guide, Stead in youth had no education, and he remained to the last utterly incapable of judging evidence. I found it so time after time, and, what was most remarkable, his incapacity in this respect increased with age, until latterly he was ready to believe whatever he wished to believe and almost whatever anybody told him, provided it was incredible. He meant well always. He was passionately sincere in all his social and political passions—in his rage at the abomination of child prostitution, in his defense of this or that woman who had suffered wrong, in his denunciation of Dilke and Parnell for breaches of the Seventh Commandment, in his expectation that Gordon would save the Soudan single-handed and in his belief that the Tsar was almost divine and Tsarist Russia the type of a holy power. His excellent intentions, his persuasive powers and his strong personality won many of us to his side, and then, as Shaw says, his stupendous ignorance would let us down and his incapacity for judging evidence would bring discredit upon the cause we had at heart.

Once, soon after the abortive revolution at which I was present in Russia twenty years ago, I wrote in my paper that I believed Mr. Stead had enjoyed the privilege of interviewing the Tsar in person. I admit I wrote in some irony, for my opinion of Tsarist Russia was very different from Stead's. But the otherwise innocent remark called for torrential letters of protest and abuse from Stead to my editor and myself. "All the world knew—every one in creation but an ignorant jackass knew—that he was quite intimate with the Tsar, had been received not once but twice by Nicholas II, and once by his father. What ignorance! What impudence! What calumny!" and so on. It was a peculiar instance of megalomania. He loved to live in the reflected glory of the rich and great. He was ready to adore any one who was big enough and who condescended to take notice of him. Cecil Rhodes, a Tsar, a King, a Queen—any whale was a fish for his net.

When he rose to intimacy with the spiritual world I could not follow him, for I never enjoyed similar association with the departed souls of either sex. I envied his intimate conversations with Miss Julia Ames, who, after she had been dead for some years, would sometimes accompany him on railway journeys to Brighton, giving him valuable information on the route. But when Stead published a long conversation with the ghost of Mr. Gladstone the peculiar similarity between that worthy statesman's ideas in another world and W. T. Stead's own ideas upon politics in this appeared to me a very remarkable coincidence.

Even more enviable to me was his confidence that a divine intuition or inspiration always guided him aright, so that at times he was tempted to identify his own will and knowledge with the Almighty's, and he

became even more familiar with God than with the Tsars. It is true that this reliance upon the highest possible guidance sometimes failed him, and his biographer tells us that Stead once observed, rather pathetically, to Mr. Balfour (now a lord): "Depend upon it, God Almighty has many tricks up His sleeve of which we know nothing. What we have got to do is to do the right."

Mr. Havelock Ellis, the greatest authority upon the subject, has said that "repressed sexuality was the motive force of many of Stead's actions," and indeed his ostentatious display of flirtatiousness when I was with him at the Hague Conference of 1907 seemed evidence of a strong feeling for sex, however much repressed. He himself defended this habit as "adding to the innocent gayety of the world," and certainly it added to my gayety. If I might for the moment adopt the Freudian jargon, I should say that Stead suffered from an "inferiority complex" which made him fall prostrate at the feet of the great who were good enough to speak to him, and from a "sex complex" which certainly supplied force to his nature, but sometimes perverted his judgment when combined with that "stupendous ignorance."

But you must not suppose that either I or his biographer can say nothing but evil of so remarkable a man. I always recognized his extraordinary power as a journalist—his dashing style of expression, his indefatigable industry, his rapid decision (often wrong but always unhesitating), his freedom from dreary old conventions, and above all his real sincerity in advocating the causes he took up. He was the creator of a New Journalism in London. He may have borrowed the idea from your country; I cannot say. Nor can I say

for certain whether the influence upon our journalism has been for good or evil up to now. But it has been immense. Alfred Harmsworth (Lord Northcliffe) developed it to its present extent. Nearly all our daily papers have been influenced by his example, but it was Stead who created the idea, and Harmsworth only borrowed it. Long before the Harmsworth Press was heard of, Matthew Arnold, finest of critics, with Stead in his mind, wrote of the *New Journalism*:

It is full of ability, novelty, variety, sensation, sympathy, generous instincts; its one fault is that it is feather-brained. It throws out assertions at a venture because it wishes them to be true; does not correct either them or itself if they are false; and to get at the state of things as they really are it seems to feel no concern whatever.

That appears to me to be the final verdict on Stead and his wide influence upon British journalism.

Yet we admired him, and what was more remarkable he retained the admiration and affection of men so chilly and reasonable in temper as John Morley (Lord Morley), Alfred Milner (Lord Milner) and E. T. Cook, all of whom worked either at his side or under him or, what was far more difficult, above him on the old *Pall Mall*.

MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES

By Arthur Conan Doyle

MARK TWAIN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Reviewed by Edmund Lester Pearson

The Outlook, October 15, 1924

The autobiographies of two world-famous authors have appeared within a week or two. The son of Irish parents, who was born in Scotland, and has been all his life a loyal son of the British Empire, is officially Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, but is affectionately known everywhere as Conan Doyle. He has written thirty or forty books of varying merit, but with this mark of distinction—that there is not a dull one in the lot. If he was made a knight for his pamphlet *The Cause and Conduct of the War in South Africa*, he should, as Mr. Arthur Maurice says, have been made a Duke for writing *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. He is in the prime of life, and will live, we all hope, to write another book as good as *Sir Nigel*. If Sherlock Holmes, as one humble reader told his creator, has not been quite the same man since he fell over that cliff (and, remembering some of the stories, I am not prepared to agree), there is no reason why Sir Arthur should not write another of his cracking good historical novels. And his autobiography is readable from the first word on the first page to the last word of all.

Although he has invented one character whose very name has passed into the language, nay, into almost all the languages of the world, as hardly any character of

Dickens or Shakespeare has done, and although he has written two or three historical novels of the first rank, it is nevertheless improbable that he has written one book which will endure as long as either *Tom Sawyer* or *Huckleberry Finn*. It is not a mere narrow feeling of patriotism which makes Americans estimate these books as works of art which will be enjoyed when Sherlock Holmes is forgotten. Mark Twain, whose autobiography appears this week, was for many years a personality of world-wide interest. It slowly dawned upon many of his countrymen that he was not a mere "funny man," but a philosopher, and that his romance about that vagrant of the Mississippi with the absurd name was not a dubious yarn about a ragamuffin, but one of the chief glories of American literature. It is true that the supercilious critic has sometimes tried to win distinction by affecting to despise Mark Twain, and that a new type of critic has pitched upon the pessimism of his old age and tried to prove that this was the dominant characteristic of his life. And one of the unfortunate things about the *Autobiography* is that it will strengthen this error.

The creator of Huckleberry Finn and the creator of Sherlock Holmes have had in their careers many points of similarity. To both, their literary abilities came as somewhat of a surprise; the discovery was made in mature years that each was a born teller of tales. Both had a fair amount of adventure in early life, Twain as pilot, and afterward as miner in the far West; and Doyle as ship's surgeon on an Arctic whaler and on the African coast. Both were great travelers in later years. Neither led the life of the typical "literary man," detached from the world, living in an ivory tower, and talking perpetually about art. Each was, in some sense,

a citizen of the world, eagerly fighting at one time or another for various causes that seemed right to him; causes political, humanitarian, or religious. The books of both have had, and still have, enormous popularity and great sales, and this fact has caused their reputations to suffer in the eyes of critics who accept the fallacy that what every one enjoys is invariably bad, and that excellence in art vanishes as soon as it finds favor outside a small circle consisting of the critic and his friends.

Mark Twain's genius is a mystery, as genius is apt to be. By the way, why shouldn't the lack of hereditary influences and educational advantages to explain his work pave the way for the theory, two or three hundred years from now, that his books were really written, say, by William James or President Eliot? No Baconian (and Mark Twain, among other vagaries of his later life, inclined to this one) ought to find anything too difficult to swallow in this belief. For, of course it would be beneath the dignity of scholars like James and Eliot to acknowledge Twain's works, just as it was impossible for the learned Francis Bacon to admit the authorship of a vulgar play like *Hamlet.*

Conan Doyle was the descendant, however, of a family of artists. He was a pugnacious schoolboy; Mayne Reid was his favorite author and *The Scalp Hunters* his favorite book. Among the particularly interesting things which are revealed in *Memories and Adventures* is that Professor Rutherford, of Edinburgh, was the original for the enormously amusing Professor Challenger of *The Lost World,* one of the most spirited adventure stories ever written. The chapter of whaling adventure is excellent, and practically all new. The autobiographic nature of *The Stark Munro Letters* and

the fact that "Cullingworth" is a portrait are interesting revelations. The book is anything but the tepid memoirs of a literary man, but is a lively narrative of travel, of sport, of adventure in two wars, and of meetings with famous men and women in a dozen different countries.

I wish I could say as much for *Mark Twain's Autobiography.* Instead, it is a great and grievous disappointment, and his biographer, Mr. Paine, his daughter, and his publishers would have done well if they could have found it possible to prevent its publication. It comes out fourteen years after his death, and it opens with the solemn announcement, from Mark Twain himself, that "I am writing from the grave." Much more is said about the possibility of being frank under these circumstances. But the book consists of a great deal that was printed years ago in the *North American Review,* together with other pages which are superfluous after Mr. Paine's magnificent biography, Mark Twain's own letters and books, and the biographical material from Mr. Howells and many others. I found myself turning page after page of the two volumes, reading stories that are *so* old, *so old* (like the two meetings with General Grant), and wondering when something new, something startling and frank, was coming. Rarely did I find anything new; never anything which needed publication so badly as to justify these two large volumes with their preponderance of old yarns.

After about 1895, the date of the *Joan of Arc,* or possibly 1898 (*The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg*), Mark Twain's literary career was practically ended. There were flashes of the old style, as in *Eve's Diary,* but there was little more to be said. The author himself could not be expected to see this, but his literary

executors have done him poor service in bringing out these two volumes, wherein what is good is warmed over and what is new is trivial. A large part of one volume consists of comments, dictated in 1906, about news of the day. Pages and pages are devoted to reprinting newspaper accounts of the *Mrs. Minor Morris Incident* —a regrettable affair when a mentally afflicted lady had to be forcibly removed from the White House. Persons like Senator Tillman, of South Carolina, together with some of the newspapers, endeavored to magnify this into cause for an attack upon the President's secretary, and indirectly upon the President. It has not the remotest connection with Mark Twain, nor any interest to-day. And Mark Twain directed that all this rubbish should be reprinted in his Autobiography, and nobody has had the wisdom to stop it!

There are a very few pages in these two volumes that are worth reading. There are a few that appear to be new, although they are not important. But here is one reader of Mark Twain, one who "honors his memory, on this side idolatry as much as any," who regrets that the book has been published.

BARRETT WENDELL AND HIS LETTERS

By M. A. DeWolfe Howe

Reviewed by Stuart P. Sherman

New York Herald Tribune Books, December 7, 1924

The most fascinating aspect of American life to-day is the ascent into articulate self-consciousness of that element of our people which Emerson called "the Jacksonian rabble," and the relative decline toward artistic inexpressiveness of that element which Barrett Wendell called "the better sort." I have read this fall two superb biographies which, taken together, give one pretty nearly the whole personal significance and intimate human meaning of this phenomenon. The first records the rise of a mid-Western waif to success in business, and then his soul-shattering discovery that he is the typical American of our day, and that he is under a kind of divine obligation to become an artist and reveal his soul in art. I refer to Sherwood Anderson's *A Story Teller's Story*, a beautiful book, moving and significant. The second biography records the rise of a well-derived, well-bred Boston boy to be a professor of English at Harvard, and then his gradually strengthening conviction that he is the last of the New England gentlemen—a sobering and saddening thought mitigated by his expressed belief that a hundred years hence, if all goes well with the Republic, the typical American will be such a man as he has been. I refer to Mr. Howe's life of Barrett Wendell, which is likewise a beautiful book, moving and significant.

I am glad that writing this biography fell to Mr. Howe. He is at the same time the most modest editor and one of the finest masters of the biographic art now practicing in America. A New Englander and a Harvard man, full of Latin piety toward the men and *mores* and institutions which for three hundred years have had their center in his corner of Massachusetts, he has sat up there in Boston for decade after decade, like an infatuated and self-effacing recording angel, editing Beacon Biographies, *The Harvard Alumni Bulletin, The Harvard Graduate Magazine, The Atlantic Monthly,* the lives and letters of Phillips Brooks and Charles Eliot Norton, the monumental tomes of *The Memoirs of the Harvard Dead in the War Against Germany, Memories of a Hostess* and the like. In much of this work there has been for Mr. Howe great labor, a beautiful service of commemoration, and a minimum of personal glory. In performing it, however, Mr. Howe has perhaps become the mind of our times most fully and constantly aware of the meaning of Harvard College and New England as elements in the historic, intellectual, literary and social life of the nation. His latest biography proves, moreover, to any discerning eye, proves by all sorts of subtleties in the composition, that he himself has achieved a certain blessed detachment from the traditional Boston outlook—or should not one rather say, the traditional Boston inlook—thinking of that rapt and reverent contemplation of the umbilicus which conceivably some colonial Yankee skipper imported from the Orient.

At this point I wish to say a word, by way of sidelight, about my own feeling for Mr. Howe's subject. I love New England with all my heart, tenderly and sentimentally, and with that protective and jealous pas-

sion which resents a slurring word from one who has not so loved her. But since the current mode of contemplating one's grandmother has come in, since several years ago I heard James Harvey Robinson, in the picked diction of Columbia University, characterize all hitherto recorded history as "bunk," I have lain awake night after night foreseeing the devastation that is going to be wrought the moment that it occurs to some young man, bred in Professor Robinson's school, to deal with the "awful majestics" of New England's Great Age as Lytton Strachey and Ford Maddox Ford and Max Beerbohm have dealt with the Victorians and Pre-Raphaelites. If I, or any man who thought of Barrett Wendell merely as a Harvard Professor, had attempted to produce his "spitting image," what sort of caricature would our treacherous memories and our still more treacherous "realistic method" have produced? Well, I am afraid we should have seized upon some quite inadequate statement of his idiosyncrasy, trimmed it up in his abundant external eccentricities and thus have made a figure of considerable interest to his former students and perhaps to his colleagues, but of very mild concern to the public at large. To be more specific, it would be easy to make a brilliant caricature of this subject entitled "A Harvard Professor" or "The Last of the Brahmins"—attenuations of humanity neither of which could have stirred a deeper emotion in the vast democratic laity than amusement.

Mr. Howe saw both these opportunities. He proved his greatness as a biographer by dismissing them both in favor of a far more difficult task, namely, to show Barrett Wendell attempting to become an honest man, though a professor and a conservative! He has accomplished what he set out to perform. He has conse-

quently produced a far more complex character than most people suspected Barrett Wendell to be—a character far more complex, perhaps, than Barrett Wendell himself thought he was, and certainly far less simple, firm, homogeneous and robust than the impression of himself which in later years he tried to stamp upon his contemporaries. Mr. Howe's Wendell is no mere glorified schoolmaster but a man rich in humanity, full of temperamental impulses, of humor, of self-questioning, of self-distrust, and, what is most surprising, he abounds in that humility which is the infallible mark of a truly great spirit. I shall perhaps shock some of his friends by this comparison; but I insist upon it as a point of significance in my original juxtaposition of the two names: Barrett Wendell exhibits the same religious humility before his ideal of a good man that Sherwood Anderson exhibits before his ideal of a great artist. The first man's final conclusion is that a respect-worthy human character is the finest work of art. The second man's conclusion is that the finest works of art far transcend in value the most respect-worthy human character. The conflict between the old times and the new is there. By an adequate and essentially noble presentation of the whole case for the old times, Mr. Howe has made of its representative a figure of almost tragic interest, with an appeal to readers who may never have heard of his classroom, with an appeal to exactly the sense that Sherwood Anderson's narrative so deeply touches—the sense for a high adventure in very difficult circumstances.

In a brief review one cannot even attempt to imitate the delicate art, intricate, lucid, economical, by which Mr. Howe keeps the soft play of life on his subject from his childhood to his old age in a succession of pictures from all points of view, constantly changing

yet cohering in effect like those moving screens which exhibit the unfolding of a plant from seed to flower. The essence of his art is motion and the scrupulous avoidance of a stated thesis and a fixed portrait. I am enamored of the skill with which the thing has been done, but when I try to suggest what has been done I fall at once into violation of the principles which govern the art that I admire. I snatch a single picture from the moving series; to correct its incompleteness I snatch another, and juxtapose the two in a glaring contrast; and truth with her infinite gradations escapes me.

As a small boy Barrett Wendell appears to have been a little prig, encouraged at the age of nine, with the other boys in his private school, to write out for their masters "our different opinions about gentlemen, and how to distinguish them from other persons." Mr. Howe quietly connects this childish exercise with the question proposed in the famous "English Composition": "What does a man mean, for example, who asserts that another is or is not a gentleman?" The constant recurrence of that question to Wendell's mind might easily be seized upon by a thesis-writer as his complete and adequate "explanation." It might be said, for example, to explain his *Literary History of America,* with its tremendous emphasis upon the pure and blameless Harvard gentlemen who produced "the Renaissance of New England," and its dismissive gesture toward the rest of the country as a territory socially yet unborn and therefore possessing, for literature, no significance, or almost none. Even within the sacred pale he draws social distinctions like a lady, and anticipates Mrs. Gerould in finding Thoreau and Alcott underbred—with a kind of vulgar "self-assertiveness," alarming to people of "sagely conservative habit." He

asserts that it requires a hundred years to form a genuine American. He traces his own ancestry to the seventeenth century, revels in his family connections with the best families of Massachusetts, delights in adorning the walls of his study with pictures of ten generations of his line, and performs a pious pilgrimage to the grave of his Dutch ancestor. He publishes a tract against the usurpations of the workingman, and hotly resents the iniquity of his standing in a street car while a man with a dinner pail occupies two seats. The death of Queen Victoria occasions in him an "overwhelming sense of personal bereavement"; he regards her life as "surely the most noble in modern times." In the midst of a war "to make the world safe for democracy" he rises in Saunders Theater to deliver as his last message to the Phi Beta Kappa Society his repudiation of the ideal of democracy, his adherence to the ancient, "traditional," aristocratic republicanism. Meeting his colleague, Professor Merriam, he engages in this dialogue:

Barrett Wendell: In all the twenty-five years you have known me, have you ever heard me utter one liberal sentiment?

Professor Merriam: Not one, sir.

Barrett Wendell: Thank God!

The preceding paragraph suggests pretty well, I imagine, the sort of impression that Barrett Wendell consciously strove to produce—a fastidious, defiantly snobbish and very hard-shelled traditional New England gentleman. In quite innumerable ways Mr. Howe demonstrates that Wendell was a bigger and better man than that. I don't mean to be paradoxical when I find the most important token of Wendell's humanity not in his fortunate and effective and happy external career,

but in a series of his failures and in the record of impulses which bore little fruit. The tragedy of his life, and of this he was conscious, was that he became a product of his environment and lacked the initiative, the force and the courage significantly to alter it. In his early manhood it is clear, I believe, that he desired to be a man of his times. At college, perhaps still in a somewhat "cocky" and snobbish fashion, which prevented his achieving the social success achieved there by football captains, he was an iconoclast, an enemy of Philistinism, and, significantly, a founder of *The Harvard Lampoon*. Religiously "emancipated," he felt himself as a junior so much out of sympathy with his family that he thought he should "split" if he had to spend his summer vacations with them. What a young man in that state craves is self-expression and an independent career. His family headed him toward the law, and he humiliatingly failed at the bar examinations. He tried to be a novelist, and he failed. He tried to be a practical dramatist, and he failed. He accepted a Harvard instructorship, and remained in it, because he had been unable to break into the life of his times at any other point, not because he yearned to spend his lifetime teaching boys.

I suppose Harvard is as "free" a university as there is in the country, and only men who have worked there can know how unfree the freest university is, how oppressively it constrains all but the most potent spirits to conform to its type. Barrett Wendell, like William James, was, or became, a potent spirit, and both men were indulged rebels in Cambridge. It is the glory of Harvard that, though she laughs at her rebels and lets them understand that rebellion can never be taken seriously, she does indulge them. Wendell shows little

of the self-complacency attributed to the don; he is never proud because he is a professor; he is proud only of being himself, though a professor.

From the outset to the end he was quite out of sympathy with the Germanized scholarship regnant during his time at Cambridge. "God knows," he would say, perhaps with veiled reference to Professor Kittredge, "God knows I am no scholar." At Harvard he always had a feeling that he was "academically out of it"; and till he lectured with plaudits at the Sorbonne perhaps he never had the gratifying sense of being taken quite seriously by a competent audience as a man of letters. In 1880 he declared to his friend Stimson:

It is maddening to have to do one's work in an amateurish way, if not actually on the sly—at the risk of having fingers pointed at you if you are found out.

That was the penalty he paid for trying to be a man of letters in a university. In 1881, struggling over the academically unsanctified business of trying to write a novel, he composes as an epitaph for himself "He lacked the courage to do good or evil." Gradually he resigns himself to doing no evil. In 1893 he regrets his doubtful, reactionary temper: "Such moods as mine are not things that literature demands." A few weeks later he unbosoms himself to Mr. Robert Herrick:

Shut up here in New England, and getting less and less discontented with its daily repetition of things no one outside cares for, I find myself, as I read your letter again, wishing to goodness I had had the luck and the pluck to give and take in a world where something was a-doing.

Returning from lecturing in France, he develops skepticism about his life work, and an acute distaste for teaching: "Harvard stifles me more than I expected."

It was at about this time, between 1904 and 1906, that I heard him speak on French life, and attended, as a "listener," his course of lectures on the disintegration of the English national temper in the seventeenth century. Mr. Howe describes him as he appeared in those years:

Well proportioned of figure, of moderate height, shapely of head, tawny bearded, with quick blue eyes, alert and responsive in personal encounter, the man of the world rather than the professor in general appearance.

He entered the lecture room with a cane, in a cutaway coat and spats, with the air of an Anglicized Boston man of letters who had crossed the Charles to speak to boys about life. As he proceeded to his desk we noticed that his hair was parted down the back of his head to his collar. He plucked his glasses from their hook, somewhere about his waistcoat, and diddling them on the end of his forefinger, began to speak in his highly mannered voice, with frequent breaks into falsetto, something like this:

"You can't, you know, always tell the truth. It isn't polite or expedient. Three-fourths of the time I don't feel at all like coming over here. And God knows that three-fourths of the time you would probably rather be anywhere than here. But if we acted on those feelings you would be called before the dean, and I should be told that I could devote my energies to something else."

The formal dress, decorous aspect and little affectations of the man were in delicious contrast with the opening speech, and, indeed, with the entire point of view in the course. The man's mind was lucid, honest, virile, burly, and absolutely untrammeled; his speech likewise. "Literature," he said, "was the meaning of life"; and he was not afraid to face life's meaning or to express it in round terms—so long as he dealt with its meaning in the seventeenth century. "In 1642 the drama was so dead that it stank in the nostrils of London." "The Puritan thinking himself a sharer in the will of God believes himself required to force his will on others." Occasionally there was an excursus: "Vox populi, vox Dei means that if you can get a majority of trades unions on your side that's just what God wants." Speaking of the central figure in his course, he observes: "It is remarkable that Milton could approach so close to modern culture and still believe literally in the Scriptures. How can you take your Maker and dress him up in pretty verses? I recall, you know, hearing a discourse on Christ's feeling when he rode into Jerusalem on the ass. I have known a man in the Harvard pulpit who tried to enter into the mind of Christ rather, you know, than into that of the ass. . . . Heaven knows we could have spent three years on Milton. . . . Now, Hobbes, whatever else the fellow was, you know, was a big hot-blooded Elizabethan. When he gets on to God it's rather funny. You can't get the size of God's finger nails; it's no use trying. Abstract right was as purely a thing of the imagination as the finger nails of God. . . . Now, Baxter gives you, like all these Puritans, you know, an account of all his infernal maladies. They fancied, you know, that prayer and fasting could move

their bowels. Baxter tried it. In the morning he was saved. There was another case where God interfered. . . . The Puritans were capable of great junks of attention to godly matters; it was as natural to them as eight hours of sleep are to me. . . . God knows what positive truth is. God knows that the effort to make idealism prevail in this world came to grief."

There speaks Barrett Wendell of the later time, being quite himself in the classroom. That is the Wendell who said: "The dominant figure in any time is sure to be of it." That is the Wendell who recognized Tolstoy as the greatest realist of the age; Wagner as the greatest artist of modern times; Whitman as the man who could "make you feel for a moment how even the ferry-boats plying from New York to Brooklyn are fragments of God's eternity"; and *Huckleberry Finn* as "that amazing Odyssey of the Mississippi." That is the Wendell who found our New England literature pallid with our "national inexperience"; who was nauseated by the "fastidious virginity" of A. C. Benson's "Arthur Hamilton"; who found the self-analytic inaction of the nineteenth century "shocking"; who declared that a life of idealistic inaction, though noble, was "tragic"; who yearned for an "active struggle with the life we are born to, a full sense of all its temptations, of all its earthly significance as well as of its spiritual"; and who had to express his longing for adventure and reality by carrying on A. S. Hill's tradition of "clearness, force, and elegance," and by play-acting in *Raleigh in Guiana*. Do not doubt that he felt the huge irony of his pose as the preserver of the sacred traditions of the historical Puritans, he who expressed his aspiration for an immortal life in a letter to Judge Grant as follows: "If good on earth, I am now persuaded, I may

live again as a golden carp in some ever-flowing fountain of sound French vintage, not too dry."

I never met Barrett Wendell till 1918, when I sat next him at a Phi Beta Kappa dinner in Cambridge. He offered me his flask to tincture the ice water that had then come into vogue, and I, in revenge, rather than in exchange, offered him some compliments on the course to which I had listened in 1904. He flashed on me his quick blue eye and exclaimed, truly enough: "What, you were never any disciple of mine!" Since Mr. Howe's book has fully revealed to me the man's honest struggle for reality in an environment which almost stifled him, I am ready to revise my relationship to him and to declare myself a disciple of the Wendell who said: "God help me, I don't want to be a humbug!"

EDGAR ALLAN POE; A STUDY IN GENIUS

By Joseph Wood Krutch

Reviewed by M. R. Werner

The New York World, March 14, 1926

Every man is a "show-off" and is trying his best to get away with it, but the endeavors of Edgar Allan Poe in this fundamental direction are more obvious because of the desperate efforts he made to express himself by means of a large output of poetry, fiction, criticism and what he chose to term "ratiocination." These efforts, and the acts with which he tried to impress his contemporaries, proclaim the man. Joseph Wood Krutch has used them with admirable skill, candor and tolerance to develop something of what Edgar Allan Poe must have been like.

Mr. Krutch has written not only the best book on Edgar Allan Poe which has been written but also the only thoroughly intelligent one. Poe's biographers have been men who either worshiped him for what he was not or lectured him for being what he was. Mr. Krutch accepts Poe's obvious failings, and, with the aid of modern psychology, he develops the reasons for them as successfully as the available material permits; at the same time he neither overestimates nor underrates the equally obvious merits of Poe's talent.

The whole of Poe's life and work was a rather unsuccessful attempt to escape from that he dared not admit to be reality. His early years are filled with the conflicts brought about by the facts that he was a rich man's ward without any money and that he was an orphan. It

was his dead mother Poe longed for and found it so difficult to find, and it was she, as Mr. Krutch points out, whom he defended when in one of his critical reviews he became the champion of actresses against the prejudice of the times. It was upon the indistinct memory of her that Poe built the idealization of women which was so characteristic of his life and work.

Mr. Krutch does well to emphasize highly the sexual complications of Poe's life, for these, naturally, were the most important elements in it. It was Poe's fear of sex that made him marry Virginia Clemm.

Poe, it is true (writes Mr. Krutch), could not have known that Virginia would become a permanent invalid, but he certainly did know when he proposed to marry a girl just over twelve that the marriage must remain for some time at least unconsummated. . . . Her youth would serve as an excuse for leaving her untouched and the fact that he was already married would furnish him with a plausible reason why all his affairs with other women must remain, if not exactly Platonic, at least unconsummated.

Poe idealized women to the point of etherealization. "Never in the whole course of his life," writes Dr. Robertson, one of Poe's more recent biographers, "either in what he wrote or what he said, did he treat woman other than as the angel embodiment of man." In a review of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew,* Poe objected to the play on the ground that, "The heart of no woman could ever have been reached by brute violence." It was this same idealization, perhaps, that made him hail some of America's leading lady poetesses as true artists.

But Poe's attitude toward women is reflected most

significantly in his definition of a thing of beauty, so far as poetry was concerned, as not the life but the death of a beautiful woman. The flesh of Poe's women is always cold. Lady Madeleine, Berenice, Morella and Eleonora are beautiful in an unapproachable, untouchable way, and in his tales they become emaciated, rot from some mysterious, loathsome disease and die, but they do not always stay buried.

Mr. Krutch's keen conclusion is: "But one thing is fairly certain. Poe could not love in the normal fashion, and the reason lay, or at least seemed to him to lie, in the death of some woman upon whom his desire had irrevocably fixed itself."

Poe's other pressing problems were to make himself important in the eyes of his contemporaries and to earn his living. These were both extremely difficult to solve, for his contemporaries did not care enough about Poe's remarkable descriptions of horror to please him or to pay him much for them. It was therefore necessary, among other things, for him to pretend to an erudition which he did not possess.

Of the love of truth for its own sake (writes Mr. Krutch) as the scholar or the scientist knows it he knew nothing, and he made no systematic effort to learn anything except that which could be shown off; but he needed imperatively the fame which knowledge sometimes brings and the sense of superiority which those who do not have it imagine it bestows.

Another means Poe had of expressing his superiority was by solving riddles or cryptograms and inventing them, and it was this talent which led to his development of the detective story. Poe's detective is, like Maelzel's Chess Player—the riddle of which Poe solved—a being who operates his mind by means of wires,

cogs and wheels, and he exhibits none of those powers and frailties of emotion which people who exist are in the habit of constantly showing. This rationalizing phase of Poe's career was, as Mr. Krutch points out, part of his system of escape: "First reasoning," writes Mr. Krutch, "in order to escape feeling and then seizing upon the idea of reason as an explanation of the mystery of his own character, Poe invented the detective story in order that he might not go mad."

His home furnished another means of escape from himself and the world. Here his child-wife, Virginia, never bothered to question his genius by even thinking about it, and his mother-in-law, Mrs. Clemm, worshiped him, made him coffee and tried to borrow money for him. When his wife died and he no longer had this anchor for his self-assurance Poe fancied himself in love with four women, and made attempts which he dared not carry through to marry two of them.

In spite of his keen analysis of Poe's character and his work, Mr. Krutch does not underestimate his talent. No analysis can rob Poe of the vivid beauty evoked by some of the pictures in his stories. The dash of the horse carrying Metzengerstein up the stair of the burning palace and the dwarf Hop Frog burning his tormentors alive are unforgettable. "Poe," says Mr. Krutch, "is the real inventor of that *frisson nouveau* upon the discovery of which Hugo congratulated Baudelaire. One is bound to evaluate his work as one evaluates that discovery."

Exactly how Edgar Allan Poe met with the accident which caused his death is unknown. But perhaps Poe managed to get himself killed in Baltimore because he was supposed to be on his way to be married in New York.

GARRULITIES OF AN OCTOGENARIAN

By HENRY HOLT

REMEMBERED YESTERDAYS

By ROBERT UNDERWOOD JOHNSON

STEPHEN CRANE

By THOMAS BEER

Reviewed by Stanley T. Williams

The Yale Review, October, 1924

Here are two portly volumes in respectable dun and brown, each recording the experiences of a distinguished editor and patron of American letters during the last half-century and more. Both books overflow with history, anecdote, and those observations on life which the gods have always permitted to old men—particularly successful old men. Mr. Holt and Mr. Johnson knew the world in their time, and made a good deal of it; a rather jolly old literary world. Yes, with its distinguished men of letters, politicians; its supper-parties; its editorial adventures—the age satisfied these autobiographers; they give the impression that very little literary history is left out of their leisurely pages. Complacence is not wholly wanting in either of these urbane memoirs; satisfaction, that is, with what American publishers and American editors have done for American literature. Mr. Beer's little scarlet volume, therefore, on Stephen Crane has a protestant look. It has perched on my shelves like a tanager between two

owls. It is not at all satisfied with the later nineteenth century, the century which disregarded Stephen Crane. I select a few mild phrases from Mr. Beer's book: "The American '90s," he writes, "present a singular mingling of poltroonery and bravado"; "the lukewarm current of letters"; "there began to be a mild, most courteous analysis of the American scene." And of Richard Watson Gilder Mr. Beer adds: "The charming intelligence of the man was haunted by some barren theory of good form." I am afraid that Mr. Johnson and Mr. Holt would never agree with Mr. Beer about the age. It is probable that he does not think well enough of what one of them calls "that wondrous Victorian Age which our popinjays are now chattering against." Ought the bookmen to have been so content? Gilder recognized Jack London, but I fail to find, among the tributes to J. G. Holland and other worthies, awareness of Stephen Crane's existence.

Much of the reminiscence is concerned with American life before Crane's birth, or while he was playing shortstop on the baseball team of Syracuse University. Henry Holt entered Yale with the class of 1861; Robert Underwood Johnson's graduation from Earlham was ten years later. Both witnessed such characteristic American efforts as the International Copyright campaign and Prohibition; both knew Mark Twain, Roosevelt, Stedman, Howells, Thackeray, and a hundred others now dead: and each makes a bow to the other. As in Mr. Johnson's scheme for the history of the Civil War, these two leaders tell of the battles undergone. Not united nor opposed, they were merely in different parts of the field, and herein lies the interest of their stories. So might have talked the old men on the walls of Troy. We younger Trojans have new wars on our

hands, but we listen respectfully to these *præterita.*

Mr. Holt's book is far more personal and informal. The first word of his title is terrifying, but it does scant justice to his rambling talk. Surely no writer ever repeated, digressed, or hovered about a story for four hundred and forty pages so aimlessly (or cheerfully) as this publisher of orthodox books. No one would have it otherwise. This is fireside talk. His interest in a book, an idea, or a person absorbs him for the moment. If he has an *arrière pensée,* he is too genial to deny it to the reader. He adds it later. There is a chat on "Clubs"; then, "More about Clubs." He settles down in his chair and tells us about "Religion"; soon there is "More about Religion." That expert testimony, in the opening pages, on old age would have delighted Cicero. I have read it aloud to a family ranging in years from five to seventy-two, and it has braced them all: first, "A deep inspiration from the Venus of Milo"; then, in leisurely succession, the calisthenics in bed, the protection of the ankles from cold drafts, the glass of warm water, the cup of boiled milk! The point is, it is all such fun, if one is only old.

Mr. Holt's other confessions are as friendly: how he failed to finish *Tristram Shandy;* how in his eighty-third year he suffered a check in showing his children that he could do a pigeon wing; how he loved *Marco Bozzaris;* how he thrilled in college to *Sartor Resartus,* to Spencer, and the new science and philosophy. He is, besides, an excellent hater. He kindles years afterwards at Yale societies, bad education at the college, and the dismissal of Edward Rowland Sill because he could not "scan." This may not seem audacious, but the comments on taxation or marriage or the individual are like the rattle of musketry, incisive, definite. There are

hints, too, of Mr. Holt's hobbies: Stedman returns in the spirit, and writes the sketch of himself. Charles Dudley Warner was a canny man for copy; he beat even Bayard Taylor! The element of surprise in his thumb-nail sketches reappears in the longer studies, such as those on his "Four Great Teachers": Francis Amasa Walker, Edwin Lawrence Godkin, Herbert Spencer, and John Fiske. Obviously the charm of this book lies in its freedom of expression: Mr. Holt writes as boldly as he spells. For he would call his book an *autobiografy,* and would say that my praise of it was *biast.*

Remembered Yesterdays, however, is less a book of ideas than of information. Mr. Johnson is far from Mr. Holt's method of drifting on; he has sorted his material, and one looks in vain for an indiscretion. He is a publicist and a diplomat, and it takes more than a book of memoirs to relax the habits of a lifetime; he is formal. The power of *Remembered Yesterdays* is its simple, strong recital of great events by a protagonist. Some of the pen portraits, too, are very fine, such as the tribute to Mark Twain and the moving account of John Muir in the mountains. One leaves this book feeling that he has met once more a common phenomenon in American literature: the man of action using literature and regarding literature as part of a larger achievement. Take Mr. Johnson's admirable (and conventional) estimate of J. G. Holland. He celebrates all that is good and sound in Holland, and there was much. But never once is there a hint that this leader of American thought, as Mr. Johnson rightly calls him, represents the discouraging indifference of Americans to the original, the purely artistic in literature. If we remember rightly, Holland used to speak of *Maud Müller* with a catch in his voice.

It was this very absorption in the obviously orthodox which made Americans slow to recognize a spirit like Crane. It takes no imagination to realize what these arbiters would think of a young man who declared Tennyson's poetry "swill." Even at a military school this statement once cost Crane a fight and a front tooth. He was guilty of extremes of emotion that are not always charming even in Mr. Beer's sympathetic narrative, but our disregard of his genius until he was dead is damning. He would have done better in France, in England, anywhere than in the America of the 'nineties.

About this Mr. Beer is ironic, and, with little editorial comment, he lets us see Crane's plight plainly enough. We recall Poe. Americans have never understood the substitution of an artistic for a moral conscience. The biography unfolds itself satirically. We are invited to behold what Crane's lot was among the American Victorians. It is as if George Meredith's "wise youth," Adrian, told the story. Sometimes we feel that Mr. Beer's distaste for the obvious in biography forces him into a witty falsetto. We long for a change of mood, a more direct statement of facts, for they are not familiar facts. Why not tell them occasionally without an epigram? Yet after feeling the evenness of tone in this short biography, few would agree with this. Crane's own life was a bit of irony in a vast, indifferent America. Mr. Beer has adopted the mood best suited for this life, and has sustained it brilliantly. After all, this short book and this life of Crane's bid us reflect a little before we rise from these huge memoirs convinced that American literature was so triumphant, serene, and respectable—like a dinner at the Waldorf. The prevailing literature of the time

choked Crane like a thick velvet curtain. He hated its gilt. His *Maggie* and *The Red Badge of Courage,* dealing rather darkly with realities, trespassed on the decorum of the age: he was not, therefore, important. "That salvage," says Mr. Beer, "somewhat brutal, of the real from the sentimental obliquity was the right token of Crane's offense against the spirit of his day."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THE PRAIRIE YEARS

By CARL SANDBURG

Reviewed by Edith Wyatt
The New Republic, March 17, 1926

Near the beginning of the second volume of Carl Sandburg's biography of Lincoln, a strongly shaded wood-cut presents a Springfield street of the Fifties. In a place of elm-fringed sidewalks and dormered cottages, women passers-by gracefully shawled and bonneted pause and talk together; and men in high hats walk and confer, among these men one apparently in the likeness of Lincoln. Yet the hero of the cut is not Lincoln, but a little black steam engine pouring a fine trailer of smoke from a great stack, and rolling a train of freight cars through the very center of the piece.

This attractive picture, however heinous its implications in the eyes of Ruskinians, illustrates with discernment the economic landscape of Lincoln's lifetime. In his childhood the settlement of the country was following the courses of the waterways. In his manhood the settlement of the country was turned along the courses of the railways; and their manifold steam clouds waved the leading banner of union, hope and progress over the agricultural and industrial scene.

Raftsman, settler, a farm lawyer, a railroad lawyer, and what may be called a river lawyer, Lincoln grew up in the midst of these spacious and dramatic transitions. The story of the changing economic, agricultural and industrial forces of the nation in Lincoln's day and

the story of the effect of these changing forces on Lincoln form the great contribution of this biography. Not only as a biographical interpretation but as the economic history of an era the book has a striking original power.

When Lincoln was seven years old poverty drove his family from Kentucky to Indiana.

Poor white men were having a harder time to get along. . . . It seemed that as more slave black men were brought in, a poor white man didn't count for so much.

When he was twenty-one years old poverty drove his family from Indiana to Illinois. At twenty-eight he is riding into Springfield to prepare to be a lawyer; and cannot afford seventeen dollars for bedding.

In the early thirties was weaving the fabric of an empire, a pastoral and agricultural nation, with its foundations resting on three chief conditions: (1) the special fertility of a certain strip of land for cotton crops; (2) the raising of the cotton crop by Negro slave labor; (3) the sale of that crop to northern American and to English cotton mills that sold their finished products in a constantly widening world market.

In Lowell farmer's daughters worked in the mills from five in the morning till seven at night. In fifteen years the price of sheeting had dropped from forty cents a yard to eight and a half cents. Thousands of prisoners are in jail for debt in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland and New York; and in one city the total debt of forty prisoners is twenty-three dollars and forty cents.

In his fortieth year when Lincoln came back from his Congressional term in Washington, to Springfield:

He saw cow pastures his feet had worn paths on, filled with lumber frame cottages; fences hedged the old paths. He saw city lots where a log cabin had stood and the dishes inside were pewter; in their stead had come a brick house with a pantry and little fan-shaped dishes, ice-cream dishes tinted with gold and blue violets. . . . It was a clean, snug-looking place.

Here Lincoln continued to shovel snow and curry-comb his horse, cut his own firewood, and put "slicked axle-grease on his buggy wheels," even after he was earning the highest fees then paid in the region for legal service.

When Lincoln was forty-nine, forty thousand unemployed men paraded the New York streets carrying a banner with the words, "Hunger is a sharp thorn." "Ten thousand Negroes a year were being smuggled from Africa and sold in the United States." A distinguished Virginian was lecturing at Yale and throughout the country, offering a highly popular discourse urging a national extension of the principle of slavery without race distinction.

Make the man who owns a thousand dollars of capital the guardian . . . of one white pauper of average value. Give the man who is worth ten thousand dollars ten paupers, and a millionaire a thousand. This would be an act of simple justice and mercy.

The public lands divided among "responsible men." Paupers, the unemployed and non-landowners to be attached to the soil for life. Such were to be the acts of simple justice and mercy.

The argument has commenced. One set of ideas will govern and control after a while the civilized world. Slavery will everywhere be abolished or everywhere be re-instituted.

By this time there were four million wage-earners in the North. What had they to say in this argument? What had the new West to say, with its far-flung project of the western railroads?

The railroad and traffic problem of the country, the land question and free homestead development were woven in and tied through with the more open issue of slavery. The economic resources of the North were beginning to tower overwhelmingly over the South. It was happening again and again that an economic issue based on natural, healthy growth of the country was buried and covered over by the raging passions and prejudices of the supreme political, social and economic issue of slavery.

The story swings on through the excitement of the Chicago convention, the announcement of Lincoln's nomination, the election, the secession of states before March, the strain of the insistent office-seekers at Springfield, swings on through the prairie years to the moments of Lincoln's farewell to the Illinois neighborhood he was never to see again.

> You may bury me in the East,
> You may bury me in the West,
> But we'll all rise together in the morning.

A broad-flowing river of contemporary songs of Lincoln's day, hymn, ballad, serenade, pours a sympathetic music through the story.

The earth was from her center tossed
And mountains in the ocean lost
Torn piece-meal by the roaring tide.

Many swift and poetic characterizations of men and women people the pages. Lincoln's relations to women are treated in a fresh and profound manner, especially his relation to Mary Todd Lincoln. "A child who had strayed into the wrong room." She is most mercifully regarded. "Too mercifully" said a friend of mine. "Of course she was really a dreadful woman." But to me Mr. Sandburg's impression of her seems fair-minded and humane. She had a right to her own social ideals, those of more flowered china, more silk dresses, little prestiges, small, caste sophistications. The justice of the book in this respect gives an indication of its fine tone of scrupulous truth.

Without questioning the validity of this truth from the author's point of view one finds it sometimes not in accord with one's own readings of Lincoln's life. Nathaniel Stephenson has shown us, as I think, conclusively, that Lincoln was subject to unexplained periods of eclipse, of nullity. In these periods, more than once, his actions, his words appeared to lack grasp, focus, consistency.

It was such a lapse in my view that caused his confusing methods with the McClernand Democrats and the Kellogg Compromise. "The incident was a piece of Lincoln propaganda," Mr. Sandburg says. But propaganda however excellent its causes does not justify all means. The strongest admirer of Lincoln cannot I think justifiably admire this political incident. Neither can the strongest admirer justifiably admire—in my view—Lincoln's letters to his father.

Mr. Sandburg does not "prettify" these instances of Lincoln's relations to mankind. But he poetizes them. Or rather, he describes these relations with a poetry not quite penetrating enough in what Keats called "rich entanglements" to include certain uglinesses one believes to have existed in these instances.

This is the mere record of a differing opinion. A striking value of the book is its scrupulous adherence to the author's carefully ascertained conception of truth. In the air of recent letters an idea has been afloat that biographical truth doesn't matter. It is almost as though people thought that because too many biographies of indiscriminate adulation had been written, the balance might somehow be righted in the vast limbo of time, by writing too many biographies of indiscriminate disparagement. A dull and imitative world has mistakenly deduced this latter-day error from the original genius of Mr. Lytton Strachey. Many authors with no talent for irony and no interest in social observation are now writing biographies on the basis of a determined social irony and a fixed condescension towards the unfortunate great. Most can raise the flower now. All have got the seed. But the flower of *The Prairie Years* blossoms from seed grown in the ground of the author's own knowledge.

It is especially good to have a book not only incapable of routine praises or condescensions, but largely concerned with that peculiar glory of truth, with those individual qualities which made Lincoln different from any other man before or after him. Lincoln's fame houses a wide Pharisaism of admirers who would have disliked and disapproved of him as a contemporary and are out of sympathy with the peculiar glory of truth his life expressed for us—his great gentleness,

his clear-sighted courage against class standards, against the prestige of irrational dominations, above all, his profound sense of the mystery of our common mortal fate.

"The only Christian died upon the Cross." If the great spirit of Lincoln did not die with him, yet what seems to survive more characteristically in the leading American thought and power of our time is rather the spirit of Mrs. Lincoln—the taste for stupid little sophistications, the love of caste prestige, and "masterful" pretensions.

The argument has commenced. One set of ideas will govern and control after a while the civilized world. Slavery will everywhere be abolished or everywhere be reinstated.

If the economic history of *The Prairie Years* is its greatest prose contribution, its power in making Lincoln's thought a part of the world-thought of the future is its most moving poetic value. We have all found it easier to sorrow over Lincoln dead than to live in the faith of his life. *The Prairie Years* has planned and executed a more difficult task than that of the story of a personal tragedy in showing us a quietly revelative and convincing picture of Lincoln as

A storm-star, lighting the history of the world.

THE SAGA OF BILLY THE KID

By WALTER NOBLE BURNS

Reviewed by Eugene J. Young

The New York World, March 7, 1926

Out in the great open spaces where men were men, Billy the Kid was 100 per cent. he-man long before movie directors put on puttees or movie queens went out to be rescued by bad men with hearts of gold. He lived the scenario and had no doubles for the dangerous parts. He killed twenty-one men in twenty-one years of life and his great unfulfilled desire was the death of two others. Smiling in danger, gallant to women, a friend to friends and a deadly foe to enemies—have the movies improved on the reality?

Mr. Burns took pains to catch what he could of this colorful person of the 1870-1880 era in New Mexico before it was too late. He carefully extracted from surviving associates the chief known details of Billy's career and character and set them down in a crisp and striking narrative in which a constant effort was made not to become a hero-worshiper.

The author found not a little difficulty in pinning down the truth. Tradition has been busy making the most of Billy's good points. "A halo has been clapped on his scape-grace brow" by tellers of tales, men and women. "His crimes are forgotten or condoned, while his loyalty, his gay courage, his superman adventures are treasured in affectionate memory."

In reality Billy was "as poisonously dangerous as a

bull rattlesnake" and some of his killings were not the kind that hero-worshipers like to recall. Coveting rich furs in his early career he helped ambush and kill three Indians, making merry with the results. He killed a Mexican for robbery. He killed two prisoners who were helpless. He helped twelve others kill one lone man who had wandered among them. He made sure an antagonist's gun would not shoot, then killed him.

Yet behind some of the most noteworthy of his killings were motives of loyalty and even justice. The community was glad to be rid of some of his victims. And he had a way with him that charmed women and gained the confidence of men, so that for months he lived almost openly in a village with a price on his head.

"From the tales you hear of him everywhere" (in New Mexico), says Mr. Burns, "you might be tempted to fancy him the best beloved hero in the State's history. . . . Among his friends he was scrupulously honest. He was cheerful, hopeful, talkative, given to laughter. He was not addicted to swagger or braggadocio. He was quiet, unassuming, courteous. He was a great favorite with women, and in his attitude toward them he lived up to the best traditions of the frontier."

Miss Sally Chisum, of good Southern blood, was the chatelaine of her uncle's great mansion on the Pecos, and for many months she enjoyed the companionship of the killer. "Billy the Kid and I became great friends," she says. "He had many admirable qualities. I suppose it sounds absurd to speak of such a character as a gentleman, but in all his personal relations with me he was the pink of politeness and as courteous a little gentleman as I ever met."

Mr. Burns has not confined himself to the Kid in his

graphic drawing of character. Chisum, McSween, Pat Garrett—the Sheriff who killed Billy—and a lot of others stand out sharply. Any reader will long remember the play and character during Billy's imprisonment in the old fortress store, where two of his deadliest enemies were set to guard him until the day of hanging came.

Here was the Kid, shackled hand and foot, watched day and night by the men whose dear friends he had killed. Ollinger, also a killer with a none too good record, hated him with a saturnine hatred which was taken out in constant taunting.

"Good morning, Kid. One day less between you and the rope," was Ollinger's daily salutation. "Ever see a hangman's knot? Got seven turns to it. The rope slips through it smooth as silk. . . . The old trap'll swing down—bang! That's when you'll begin to dance. Plenty of good air for your dancing floor."

Ollinger would pat his shotgun and announce there were eighteen buckshot in it which would be planted between the Kid's shoulder blades if he tried to escape.

Through all this, week after week, the Kid smiled and joked. But Bell, the other guard, did not like it. Won by the courage and smiles of the Kid he forgot his hatred and became friendly. Warnings that he would pay dearly if he took chances with the crafty killer had no effect. They became intimate and often played cards.

The day came when the Sheriff went to arrange for the gallows (the Kid saying, "Hurry up with that gallows, Pat; Ollinger can't sleep good till it's up"). Ollinger went out to lunch leaving his shotgun in the hallway below. Bell took pity on the Kid and played cards with him. Came the moment when the Kid awkwardly

brushed a card on the floor and Bell kindly bent down to get it. Bell came up to look into the muzzle of his pistol, which the Kid had deftly lifted.

The Kid did not want to kill Bell, but circumstances forced his hand and he did so. And then Ollinger leisurely strolled back from lunch, passed under a window, heard "Oh, Bob!" called softly and looked up to see his own shotgun pointed at him. The eighteen buckshot he had so often promised the Kid came to rest in his own body.

After he got away the Kid had one ambition. If he could kill the Sheriff and a deputy before he was killed he would be satisfied. But he happened into a pitch-dark room where the Sheriff was sitting. For once he held his fire too long and the Sheriff shot him through the heart.

FICTION REVIEWS

Fiction has become our dominant literary form. In it more variously and, for the present at least, more vitally writers express their understanding of how one may live wisely or wearily, abundantly or meanly, happily or despairingly. Inasmuch as our tastes are the dominant factors in our decisions with regard to such matters, fictionists and the critics of fictionists disagree somewhat violently among themselves. Perhaps in no other reading can we find as much for our orientation with regard to life itself as in the reading of competent reviews of fiction. We shall not perhaps so discover what is the *summum bonum* of existence, but we shall come upon a number of approximations to it in the minds of writers who, while telling us what life is as they have seen it, make some assumptions with regard to what it might be or should be. The novelist, and consequently the critic of the novelist also, must be considered with a number of queries in the mind. Does he believe that life should be lived in a spirit of abandon or in one of poise and self-mastery? Does he believe that human happiness is the more fully achieved by devotion to objective or to subjective ends? How much does he believe that fiction should be a representation of what has been observed? of interpretation of what has been observed? of ideas illustrated by the imagined experiences of imaginary persons? Does he hold to the opinion that a piece of fiction should have form as a work of art, or should yield its structural order to the looser ordering of our affairs as in life it-

self? How much does he feel that the writer of fiction should maintain a literary style pleasing in itself? How successful is the reviewer in making his own style interesting?

Then, in another key, there are several practical questions with relation to the particular review in hand, as a possible model for a book review to be read before a club, to be printed in the college literary magazine, or to be submitted for the book page of a daily newspaper. There are further suggestions on this subject in the appendix.

THE RELIC

By Eca de Queiroz

LIFE BEGINS TO-MORROW

By Guido da Verona

Reviewed by Edwin Bjorkman

The New York Sun, September 12, 1925

Our ideas of Portugal are probably a little too crudely generalized . . . racial degeneracy, religious superstition, political corruption and so on. Of Portuguese literature since the days of poor Camoëns I for one had never heard a word until I picked up this astonishing novel by Eca de Queiroz. A score of pages sufficed to convince me that I had in my hands a masterpiece, combining ironic wit of the most delicious temper with keen psychological insight and deep religious feeling.

The author's name on the title page (pronounced something like Essa da Kyrosh) is merely the patronymic and should be preceded by the baptismal names of Jose Maria. He was born in 1845, studied law, traveled a good deal, joined his country's diplomatic service, wrote half a dozen novels of unusual merit, and died as Portuguese Consul at Paris in 1900. *The Relic* was first published in 1886. That same year a translation of an earlier novel, *Count Basil,* was brought out here and failed to make any impression whatever.

Eca de Queiroz is generally described as having intro-

duced naturalism into his native country, but if that be so it is the naturalism of Anatole France, and not of Zola. The creators of Dom Raposo and Abbe Coignard are twin brothers in form, in mood, in spirit, but their mutual relationship is that of Darwin and Wallace . . . independent discoverers of a new vein that has become solely credited to one of them. When *The Relic* was written the more characteristic works of Anatole France had not yet seen the light, and his Portuguese counterpart had just turned in disillusionment from the French ideals that had inspired him until then. Perhaps this latter fact may explain why there is in the novels of Eca de Queiroz so much more of positive orientation than the mischievously smiling master of the Villa Said would ever permit himself in his imaginative writings.

The Relic gives us, supposedly from his own pen, the pathetic story of a young Portuguese, Theodorico Raposo, who, to win the fortune of a highly sanctimonious aunt, assumes the airs and external gestures of a religious devotee, while in secret he is worshiping Venus and Bacchus at any shrine found available. As a final test he is sent to the Holy Land to get for his aunt an authentic relic. In the course of a remarkable pilgrimage, that is rendered more enticing to the reader as well as to Dom Raposo by the presence of a German pedant, Dr. Topsius, he acquires two brown paper parcels. One contains the relic, a branch from the Tree of Thorns, guaranteed by Dr. Topsius; the other one, the frivolously autographed night gown of a young lady from Alexandria. And, of course, the fate of the pilgrim is ultimately settled by those two fatally analogous packages.

But while still in Palestine Dom Raposo has a marvelous dream that takes him and the learned Topsius into the old Jerusalem of Herod, Pi' 'e and Caiaphas on the very day when the Passion reached its tragic climax. The heart of the book, its most striking feature, is the wonderfully vivid, beautiful and convincing description of that momentous event as it might have appeared to an eyewitness. All the time, however, the startled observer remains at heart the same Dom Raposo through whom Eca de Queiroz has revealed to us a people's temperament with such scorching, scourging sarcasm.

Apart from its intense artistic appeal, *The Relic* has in its composition three strands of serious thought. Eca de Queiroz hoped and worked for a Portuguese renascence like that which has occurred in the Scandinavian countries. Smilingly he flayed the old weak flesh to make way for new growth of a sterner, cleaner texture. At the same time his book is a fierce attack on the hypocritical and superstitious lip worship that passes for Christianity not only in Portugal, but nearer our own shores. In addition, however, he tries to show in a delicately discreet manner what genuine religious feeling and expression imply. In one way and another *The Relic* is a very big book, and if typical of its author's productions it should be followed as soon as possible by the rest of these. And Mr. Bell's translation is excellent.

Guido da Verona's *Life Begins To-morrow* is a work of vastly different character, but also one of considerable merit and importance. At first glance it appears merely a story of perfervid passion, but gradually it discloses another trenchant and daring plea for a re-

ligion more in keeping with the intellectual advances of our time. But not satisfied by excoriating spurious manifestations or maintaining that truth and honesty have more of worship in them than any amount of pious words and genuflections, this latter-day Italian hits right at the core of the Christian creed. Directly and indirectly he pleads for a God that lives daily and hourly in all existence, and not remotely and mythically beyond the blinding threshold of death.

The total impression of *Life Begins To-morrow* must largely depend on the mental predisposition of the individual reader. But the book is worth reading to any one who cares for truth and for independent thinking regardless of the consequences to which they may lead. Even as a love story only it carries a strong appeal, though one cannot help wishing at times that its author had a little of that subtly poignant humor which illumines every page of *The Relic*.

We may well assume that the present political movement in Italy colors the work of da Verona, and if that be true one understands why Fascism seems more endangered by a certain rigidity in its own spirit than by the righteous wrath of its opponents. In da Verona as well as in Mussolini may be discerned a tendency to let the end justify the means, and it is doubtful whether this all too human attitude can ever prove beneficial or successful in the long run.

This tendency, however, is tempered in the novelist by a psychological insight and passion for fairness that lends humanity to his intended superman and humility to his philosophic conclusions. Some of the scenes in his book are magnificent both in their analysis and their coloring, and it is a pity that as word pictures they suffer from a certain redundancy. That economy

of means which to me is the fundamental tenet and test of all great art, and which is so finely illustrated by *The Relic* has still to be mastered by the man who is said to be Italy's most representative living writer of fiction.

STASH OF THE MARSH COUNTRY

By HAROLD WALDO

THE BAND-WAGON

By FRANKLIN E. ELLSWORTH

ERIK DORN

By BEN HECHT

Reviewed by H. W. Boynton

The Weekly Review, September 17, 1921

Recent fiction reflects unmistakably a changed attitude towards the newest Americans. We native-born citizens find it less easy to dispose of our foreign-born fellow-citizens as frogs, as wops, or even as sheenies. It is dawning on us that America is not so much a melting pot as a mixing-bowl; that these strange peoples do not come here merely to be melted down and cast in a mold; but are new ingredients, or, at least, fresh flavors for the national porridge. If the Yankee type still serves as chief basis or "stock" in the culinary sense, the less said about it the better. Nobody loves the Puritan any more. . . . Certainly our midland novels of the past few years (which is to say our best novels of the period) have dealt more and more explicitly with emergent America, with the spectacle of alien types modifying the native type in the very process of "assimilation." Miss Cather's *My Antonia* is a high instance. And what she has done for the Bohemian character and color others have done for the Scandinavian, the Slav, and the Jew; as the author

of *Stash of the Marsh Country* now does it for the Pole. The publisher is justified in pronouncing this "a first novel of singular brilliance." Brilliance is its merit and its defect. The style, both elliptic and exuberant, allures and repels. We are not quite sure the performer isn't thinking about it as style. "With a soft shattering rustle the dark lake lapped the causeway, where his horse's hoofs ran drumming." The method is episodic and almost studiedly formless; there are nine "books" of four or five chapters each. The action is slight and complete as that of *My Antonia*. We get what the author meant to give us, an amazing intimacy with the Polish boy who becomes Stash, the American man, and (yes, this is romance) really first "finds himself" in the moment of devoting himself to an ideal. He is none the less material for a sturdy Americanism because Marika of his own people, not beautiful Rose Maddon, is his born mate. Not easily to be forgotten, either, is one intimate vision of Stash's people as a whole—so passionate, so high-flavored, so generous.

As a story of Minnesota politics, *The Band-Wagon* deals with a racial compound already pretty thoroughly established and to be taken for granted. Wheels within wheels continue to turn, as in Jake Torkelson's feeling of superiority, as a Gulbransdelener, "over the many who had come from Bergen and the Bergens-Fjord countries, over these intermixtures of Norsk and Svenske from Bergen and Smaaland—and especially the *Fiske-Strils.*" There is also the distinction between Jake's German-born and German-natured neighbors, with their reluctance to identify themselves with us, and Jake's own eager adoption of "every American ideal." But clearly this Minnesota "of the Band-Wagon" is a social and political America in little, in-

fused with American ideals and dominated by an American political mechanism of the most finished and corrupt type. The book, it seems, must be largely autobiographical. The author, Congressman Ellsworth, has lived through at least the political career of his hero, Treman Treadwill; and the dedication hints at an identification of the heroine with some one in real life.

This book has the crudity of an amateur performance. Its continued use of italics is fairly distressing. But often there is a compensating freshness about the fiction of an unprofessional writer, and we feel it here. A novel of politics by a politician has possibilities which a novel of politics by a story-teller does not share. Some of these are realized in this book. It is not a bad story, as a story. And it is an earnest plea for honesty and patriotism in politics. If in the end it appears to leave us nothing better than a choice of band-

Erik Dorn is a book of mockery and pessimism. It does not deign to protest after the "radical" fashion; it offers no propaganda or theory of living. What's the use? Who cares? Nothing means anything except sex —and that, after all, is only the tawdriest mockery of all. The foreign-named hero of the story is presented as the natural dweller in the great American city, a natural editor of an American newspaper, and a person without real allegiance to any land, faith, or race. These pages are full of brilliant and savage satire on the American scene and upon Human nature in general. It refrains from the fatal errors of belief, and love, and imagination. It is the voice of the sublimated sophomore who leads one wing of current letters in every age. Mr. H. L. Mencken hearkens to it with enthusiasm.

SATAN'S DIARY

By LEONID ANDREYEV

Reviewed by Dorothy Brewster

The Nation, January 12, 1921

The occasional minor disappointments suffered by Satan in his wanderings to and fro upon the earth have never hitherto dulled the zest with which he has continued to play the rôle of tempter and deceiver of mankind. But Andreyev, in the hour of his despair, will not permit even Satan to enjoy life. In the guise of a billionaire Chicago meat king, Satan sojourns among men for several months—not long enough, it must be noted parenthetically, to master the English idiom; for even in Chicago they do not say "it is the tenth day since I am living this life." Then Satan escapes to Hell, tricked and utterly humiliated. His frauds, hypocrisies, snares, and cruelties are all outmoded. Man defeats him easily at his own game. Deceived by a mask of divine purity and a mask of misanthropy, Satan bends his knees in prayer to a prostitute, and is stripped of his fortune by the first man upon whom he stumbles. "Did you come to play, to tempt, to laugh, to invent some new sort of evil game?" asks the inscrutable Mr. Magnus, the ruthlessly logical experimenter in dynamites. "You're too late. You should have come earlier, for the earth is grown now, and no longer needs your talents."

A theme, this, to tempt one of "the masters of free irony and laughter," a Voltaire, an Anatole France.

Its development in Andreyev's hands is disappointing. We have too great a respect for the Satan of Job and of Milton to believe that he could have been so easily gulled, and too great a regard for the talents of our fellow countrymen not to feel that they would have staged a game of more ingenious and varied deceptions, would have given Satan a livelier run for his money, in the year of grace 1914. But the source of disappointment in the handling of the theme lies deeper. Can a writer be at one and the same time the satirist of human greed and folly and the passionate questioner of life's mysteries. In this book, as in most of his other writings, Andreyev shrinks back appalled before the torturing riddle of human destiny. He hurls his vain questions against the blank wall. He stands on the brink of the abyss and flings into it words that fall without a sound, flings laughter, threats, and moans, and "still it remains silent and empty." He seeks Truth and Truth flees from him. He embraces it with his thoughts, and the embrace envelops only emptiness. "I imprisoned it," says Satan-Andreyev, "and fastened it to the wall with a heavy chain, but when I came to view it in the morning, I found nothing but a shackled skeleton. The rusty chain dangled loosely from its neck, while the skull was nodding to me in brazen laughter." Thus breaking in discordantly upon the satiric theme are Andreyev's characteristic notes of horror: the horror of a resounding silence that flows in icy waves through the brain; the horror of eyes that gaze into the mysterious Beyond with a dark and empty madness; the horror of infinite loneliness. Satan himself is lonely in Hell. One had always hopefully supposed that whatever else might be true of Hell, it would not be lonely.

There is a certain fascination in watching Satan grow into Andreyev—for, of course, he never grows into the Chicago billionaire. But it is not the fascination proper to the satiric purpose. Satan comes to earth to play, to take part in a puppet-show that appeared to him from the Beyond to be a great and merry game of immortal fragments. And he finds it not a play at all; the scrap heap on which the broken puppets are hurled is terrible, and the broken fragments reek with blood. The Andreyev who was tortured by the monstrous paradox of divine goodness and hideous evil in man—Christ and Judas—speaks through the passage in which Satan resolves to accept without reservation all that is implied in being a man: to be both rabbit and wolf, the timid, lying coward and the bloodthirsty beast of prey. But what a crucifixion of the soul of man is this union! "It is well for a wolf to be a wolf. It is well for a rabbit to be a rabbit. But you, man, contain both God and Satan, and how terrible is the imprisonment of both in that narrow and dark cell of yours. Can God be a wolf, tearing throats and drinking blood? Can Satan be a rabbit, hiding his ears behind his humped back? . . . That fills life with eternal confusion and pain, and the sorrow of the soul becomes boundless."

The book is as desolate as Andreyev's own death, in penniless and broken-hearted exile; a death that dramatizes the tragedy of the Russian intellectuals, who dreamed of the revolution and worked for it in blood and tears, and when it came fled from it in dismay. Not once in this last book does Andreyev stand on the "highest mountain of meditation" and catch the vision that he granted to one of the Seven who were hanged. For Werner the walls fell at last. From the lofty

ridge on which he seemed to be walking, narrow like a knife blade, he saw on one side Life and on the other Death, "like two sparkling, deep, beautiful seas, blending in one boundless broad surface at the horizon. . . . And life appeared to him in a new light. . . . Soaring over time, he saw clearly how young mankind was; that but yesterday it had been howling like a beast in the forests; and that which had seemed to him terrible in human beings, unpardonable and repulsive, suddenly became very dear to him—like the inability of a child to walk as grown people do, like a child's unconnected lisping—flashing with sparks of genius." Had Andreyev himself been able to share that vision with its rare and beautiful sanity, he might, like Gorki, have faced the crimes and miseries of the Revolution without utter despair.

ARROWSMITH

By SINCLAIR LEWIS

Reviewed by Henry Seidel Canby

The Saturday Review of Literature, March 7, 1925

With *Arrowsmith* Sinclair Lewis justifies and achieves his ambition to become a national novelist. Manifest destiny has been the watchword of this nation, and Success the chief objective of its inhabitants. In two remarkable stories, *Main Street* and *Babbitt*, Mr. Lewis has satirically pursued in the characters of his heroes common ideals of American success and proved them failure. *Main Street*, as Lewis sees it, is failure, and so is Carol Kennicott; Zenith is failure—spiritually and emotionally failure—and so is the rather pathetic Babbitt. And now Lewis drives home his moral by choosing for protagonist a very human scientist congenitally opposed to success as America sees success, a scientist meshed and intermeshed in a social organization made to achieve success, fighting it, fought by it, triumphing by seizing in the midst of an American success his ideal, which the community calls failure.

Arrowsmith is by no means the moral document which this outline suggests. It is a "hard-boiled" story of a "hard-boiled" youth, whose tough idealism is a thousand miles and a century away from the transcendental philosophy of Emerson's "Good-by, proud world, I'm going home." Arrowsmith is rough, and rather unmoral, and almost illiterate except in his own science,

and excessively bad-mannered, and entirely unsympathetic, so that the reader shares the surprise of her friends when a sophisticated and very rich widow marries him toward the end of the story. He differs from the other rough-necks in the medical school and the slovenly "docs" of the country towns where he practises only in this, that an old German scientist, Gottlieb, as cranky as Arrowsmith, has ignited in him the spark of research, and kindled a pilot flame which burns irrepressibly and flares up again and again when the "bunk" of easy money, of charlatan medical politics, of publicity, seems to have overlaid the essential Arrowsmith. He wants to find what things are, to get at the truth about "phages," epidemics, immunizations; even the sacrifice of "controls" on his experiment in order to save the population of a West Indian island from bubonic plague seems a sin against his destiny. The human race interests him only mildly; the truth is more important than their immediate welfare, more important perhaps than the race.

I give an impression of a philosophical book, which is not my intention, for in truth there are few depths of philosophy in a Lewis novel. *Arrowsmith* is a Simon-pure example of the realistic, biographical novel, crowded with portraits, brilliantly photographed, of types fresh in American fiction. It is, furthermore, satire, and biting satire of the medical profession, the better satire because there is evident mastery of what modern medicine has accomplished and may do. As with *Main Street,* which this book resembles much more closely than it does *Babbitt,* a state of mind is the center of the storm area. In *Main Street,* it was the miasma of the small town; in *Arrowsmith* it is the stifling of science and all search for truth everywhere in a

country mad for success. Another man might have worked out the theme of this story with religion as its heart and Christ returned as the protagonist.

The realism of *Arrowsmith* is a return to the realism of *Main Street.* In the character of Babbitt, Sinclair Lewis, as it is now clear in perspective, transcended his own limitations and created one of the great type figures of modern literature, a man as human as any fellow mortal and yet significant for American social history. There is no such figure in *Arrowsmith* but instead a gallery of studies of the period, touched with caricature, almost brutal in their naturalism: "Clif," the loud-mouthed salesman, Dr. Gottlieb, the single-minded scholar, Pickenbaugh, who makes politics out of public health, Sondelius, the romanticist of science, Capitola, who founds research laboratories for the same reason that she buys pearl necklaces, Holabird, the Social scientist. It is a remarkable selection from the American scene, and need not be sniffed at by the esthetic because of its Hogarthian exaggeration, and literal reality of detail. This may not be great art, but it is an invaluable contribution to our knowledge of ourselves and our times; and whatever may be the future of *Arrowsmith* in *belles-lettres,* its place in quotation and reference in all histories of our epoch is clearly secure. Furthermore, among these etched caricatures done with such clear and final lines, is one portrait that is much more than satiric caricature. Leora, the first wife of Martin Arrowsmith, who trots along with him like a wise little dog, tactful and plucky and adaptable and humorous even over her own failure ever to be smart or brilliant, Leora is the realist's version of what the American sentimentalist means by "a good pal." Unlike every other person in the crowded story,

she lifts above its satire as not being in it for any necessary satiric reason except that she exists so vividly in the imagination of the novelist that he must give her life and place. She is possessive without being predatory, she convinces absolutely like one of Jane Austen's characters without any apparent effort on the part of the novelist to make her convincing. If *Arrowsmith* were not armored and munitioned and speeded for a battleship of satire she would seem more important than all the rest of the crew. Leora, and Babbitt in his later chapters, indicate that when Mr. Lewis grows weary of exposing the world he may, if he will, turn from brilliant social science imaginatively portrayed to pure fiction.

It makes very little difference to me as a reader whether he does or not, and most of the criticisms of Lewis's untempered realism seem to me irrelevant. He is doing a good job where he is. *Arrowsmith* is a better book than *Main Street,* better written and much better conducted. If it is not so good a novel as *Babbitt,* its satire is at least as important and perhaps better documented. Browning was perhaps rash in asserting that all service ranks the same with God, but it is certainly true that Lewis as a social satirist is eminently serviceable, and that we can well afford to let the future take care of his permanent literary values.

His defects are not literary defects so much as qualities of his particular service. It is true that "nice" people (and there are "nice" people who are neither smug nor stupid nor obscurantist) do not get into his stories. He does not register "nice" people; they do not interest him; and if he were mirroring society instead of satirizing it this would be a prime error. It prevents him obviously from being a Shakespeare, or

even a Thackeray, but why should he be either? Stendhal, also, was insensitive to "nice" people. Swift was not, which made him a *rara avis* among satirists. It is time to stop prating of the limitations of Lewis, and on the basis of three of the most remarkable books of our generation give him credit for what with all his faults of narrow vision, insensitiveness to much but not all beauty, obsession with detail, lack of spirituality, and negative philosophy, he undoubtedly is, one of the most brilliant and most serviceable students of society in our times. Wells is his master, but as a social novelist he has left Wells behind him, and if posterity forgets him it will not be for any lack of excellence in his work but because of the impermanence of the category in which he has chosen to labor. The best text books die when their service is rendered. Leora in *Arrowsmith* belongs to a more enduring form of literature than the gallery of illustrations of our times that accompany her.

Arrowsmith is an intensely American novel. The hero is scarcely conscious of another continent except as he touches its spirit in pure science. In spite of his lifelong fight against success, he remains as objective as a guinea pig and as strenuous as a subway. From the first page to the very last, when Martin has tasted of complete worldly success and thrown it all over for happiness in work, there is never any question except as to what he shall *do*. Action is the key to every chapter, every incident. "What shall I *do?*" is written in letters of fire on his brain. What he is, what life is, what he should think, what feel—these are all irrelevant to the story because in his hustling existence there is never any time for them. A Quaker of the seventeenth century or an aristocrat of the eighteenth would marvel at this book, and the society it depicts. Even Gottlieb

wonders whether humanity is worth his science. In truth, the philosophy of America as *Arrowsmith* gives it is perhaps more deeply ironical than the author intended. There is essentially no greater clarity of mind in those who like Martin and Gottlieb despise success than in the "Holy Wren" and the cynical Angus who yearn for it. The idealists have no plan except to be always working at their passion. They are just as strenuous, just as irresponsible, just as disregardful of any end except their own pleasure. The difference is solely that Lewis's heroes work at something greater than themselves, while his villains serve their baser instincts. To a saint, or an ascetic, or even to a civilized European all might seem to be mad though with a difference in the morale of their madness.

I suppose that Lewis has been unfair to the medical profession, although he has certainly made its heroes stand out with a dignity which no one in *Babbitt* or *Main Street* achieved. I fancy that we who read the book will be for a while unduly suspicious of our physicians. All satires exaggerate—they have to in order to accomplish a satiric effect. Mr. Lewis has called in a scientific man as collaborator so as to direct his pen in unfamiliar ways and insure against too much injustice. But the injustice, if it exists, is not important. Was Dickens just? Was Main Street just? And yet Main Street existed in every small town even if it was never the whole of it. And Babbitt had a thousand prototypes, even if they were more than Babbitt. Main Street was purged and Babbitt lanced by those pungent volumes, though neither was cured, and we can accept their plea of injustice with equanimity, since more good was done than harm. So it will be with *Arrowsmith*.

A harsh book, a hard book, in spite of Leora, an illuminating book in a good sense, since it touches upon a universal theme while airing a particular malady, a well written and intensely interesting book in spite of its medical jargon; not a great novel, I suppose, because Lewis knows little of the subtler springs of human nature, and cares less, preferring to grasp the type and let the individual go; and yet a shrewder and more comprehensive satire of American society in the prosperous phase of its materialistic era than any one else now practising in English is capable of—this much can be said without exaggeration of *Arrowsmith.*

LOLLY WILLOWES; or, The Loving Huntsman

By SYLVIA TOWNSEND

Reviewed by Edwin Clark

The New York Times Book Review, February 7, 1926

It is on rare and infrequent occasions that such perfected and deftly fascinating fiction as *Lolly Willowes* swims within the reviewer's ken. David Garnett, who is remembered as something of a master of wit and shrewd observation, has remarked that this is one of the year's witty books. However, this novel needs no such introduction. It is the cameo-like realization of the life of a quaint and subtly attractive maiden lady. It recalls the two exquisite novels of Elinor Wylie. *Lolly Willowes,* though, is closer to the present.

Behind the story of Lolly, but at least once removed, is the inevitable theme of the old order changing. The effect upon her life is less pronounced than usual because of her passive temperament. The Willowes are an old family of landed gentry. Lolly is heir to much accumulated tradition. Her father is a brewer. Her mother is a semi-invalid. She is the youngest of the three children. Hence, she grows up in a family where the males of the house were always expected to look after her. In turn, she compared all other men in terms of her father and brothers. With complacency she looked out upon the world from their country seat, Lady Place, in Somerset. It was satisfying to her.

Then her mother died. Henry married Caroline and went to live in London. Lolly became mistress of Lady

Place. James married Sibyl and remained at home. Her father died; James no longer wanted to stay at Lady Place, and it was leased. Lolly went to live with Henry and Caroline and became Aunt Lolly. For the next twenty years she was "the same old Aunt Lolly, so useful and obliging and negligible." True, effort was made to find her a husband; but she had an abrupt, if gentle, way of disconcerting such prospects.

The sly and almost subdued comedy of this novel has a strong suggestion of the quality of Jane Austen. The handling of sentiment, family life and much feminine observation has the adroit finesse of the divine Jane. In the handling of the narrative, however, a different method is employed. The straightforward method of the comedy of manners could not capture the inner life of Lolly, and fill so minutely the picture of this involved family life, for all its surface commonplaceness. Beginning in the later Victorian age of gentility, the story is woven into the present restless age, without neglecting or overemphasizing the war. The technical skill and compression is of high order.

At forty-seven Lolly realizes that she has had almost no life of her own. Rebellion stirs in her. To the horror of her brothers, to the surprise of their children—now grown up—she insists upon escaping from them. This whim of hers to leave them and live in the village of Great Mop—population 227 and twelve miles from anywhere—is embarassing because Henry has invested her money in an enterprise that just at the moment is in a decline. Lolly accepts a loss and departs.

Once at Great Mop she begins to recapture the serenity that had made her inner life bright at Lady Place. A Mrs. Leak took her to board. From this tower she looked out on the world:

Dark and compact, the beechwoods lay upon the hills. Alighting as noiselessly as an owl, a white cat sprang up on to the garden fence. It glanced from side to side, ran for a yard or two along the top of the fence and jumped off again, going secretly on its way. Laura (Aunt Lolly) sighed for happiness. She had no thoughts; her mind was swept as clean and empty as the heavens. For a long time she continued to lean out of the window, forgetting where she was and how she had come there, so unearthly was her contentment.

The family hope for her return. They visit her. She has horror at the thought of returning to Apsley Terrace, London. The idea preys upon her mind and finds outlet in fantasy. Thus, James's son, now graduated from Oxford, comes to stay with her at Great Mop. Though she thought herself very fond of him, he greatly distresses her. She starts a spritely flirtation with the Prince of Darkness, in an effort to find that fellowship that her life has lacked. Finally, she is free of her relatives. She could at last do what she liked.

Lovely to be with people who prefer their thoughts to yours, lovely to live at your own sweet will, lovely to sleep out all night! She had quite decided, now, to do so. It was an adventure, she had never done such a thing before, and yet it seemed most natural. . . .

In the limitations of its genre, *Lolly Willowes* is an exquisite fantasy of wit. Also, in its mixture of comedy of manners and dark romanticism, there is a viable essence that is enchanting. Lolly, indeed, going her kind, lonely way, is a character that ingratiatingly sets herself in memory. Doubtless, the Willowes, with their traditions and sane conservativeness, will not be

forgotten. But, in the last analysis, it is Lolly—who might be another Emily Dickinson, had she only had the medium of expression—who captivates our fancy. Her secret life is ours in the artless words of her historian.

THE PLASTIC AGE

By PERCY MARKS

THE EDUCATION OF PETER

By JOHN WILEY

NONE SO BLIND

By ALBERT PARKER FITCH

Reviewed by George B. Dutton

The Independent, June 7, 1924

A rake's progress through college or university, with a rainbowed close as a concession to sentimental readers, has for several years been a standard pattern for novels of adolescence. The younger generation are put through their jerkily mechanical paces with wearisome iteration, to the accompaniment of clinking pocket-flasks and moaning saxophones and shrill, drunken laughter, until even the omnivorous American reader finds his appetite dulled and his credulity strained. Three recently published novels of college life give promise of a change in mode. One of them is of the older sort; but its deliberately cultivated naughtinesses seem strained and ineffectual. The other two explore fresher possibilities.

The Plastic Age, be it stated immediately, is of its kind excellent. The surfaces of the chosen materials are rendered with exactness and vividness. In its details the account meets the requirements of the most realistic undergraduates. They see themselves and their

fellows mirrored in the "good eggs" and "poor fish" and "smooth guys" that slouch through Mr. Marks's book, clad in "baa-baa coats" and bell-shaped trousers. They delightedly recognize the glint and flash of their ephemeral slang. They catch the very accents of their high-pitched fraternity quarrels, their futile, interminable discussions of sex and God and the faculty, their frantic cramming sessions before examinations. The prayers and imprecations over a championship football battle, the smoke and profanity of an all-night poker game, the din of jazz at dances, are reproduced with astonishing exactness.

And yet, to one who knows, the total effect is seen to be fantastically misleading. The telescoping of the long levels of experience, the elaboration of the crises, are as distorting as convex mirrors at country fairs. The simple-minded youth who, forming his expectations on narratives like this, regards a college career as a plunge into four years of boiling excitement will perish with boredom. Student life is not the endless fever here described. There are moments of high temperature, to be sure, but also lengthy intervals of cool, relaxed existence. Nor do the periods of intensity present themselves so largely in terms of poker and illicit gin and casual gabble about "life." Even for the young people of to-day there are adventures other than those of flamboyant nights and sodden days. In short, the facts adduced in this type of fiction may be accurate, but the evidence is incomplete, and the resulting picture is as romantic as fishermen's stories or tales of far travelers.

The two remaining novels, in spite of their relative tepidity—or possibly, in part, because of it—do something to furnish a corrective. Their flaws are as obvi-

ous as the merits of *The Plastic Age*. Peter Carey, whose education is the theme of Mr. Wiley's book, never quite emerges from the shadows; and those about him are even more tenuous. The author wavers in his intentions, seemingly cannot forego the adventitious aid of devices made popular by Mr. Scott Fitzgerald, and then, half-heartedly turning his back upon that sort of thing, fails to realize fully his better purpose. Yet this very uncertainty may be regarded as a symptom of a change in taste. The trite, wistful shopgirl, the inevitable hard-mouthed society girl, all appear; but they are not, however, the only or even the primary focal points of the narrative, and they are at times presented in a mood of faint irony, as though the showman's lips were curling at the spectacle. More significant still is the emergence of other interests—athletic, artistic, even, strangely enough in college fiction, intellectual. Peter and his friends like exercise and the out-of-doors. They take a shy delight in things that are beautiful, a delight now ministered to by grotesqueries of candle-lit rooms and pre-Raphaelite properties, now by a glimpse of a tawny beach or a pinnacled tower. They are not inhospitable to ideas, though often inarticulate in their presence. Were this diversity endowed with greater vitality, the intrinsic worth of the book would be considerable. As things are, the modifications in tempo and theme are hopeful signs.

The artistry and craftsmanship of *None So Blind*, like those of *The Education of Peter*, are open to serious objection. The central figure in this story of Harvard, Dick Blaisdell, is, except in certain passages, a waxen symbol of an abstraction rather than an unpredictable human being. That the abstract conception, the worth of the under dog, is charitable and often true,

is of no help in the author's struggle to embody its exponent in flesh and blood. Some of the more important characters around Blaisdell, especially the very real and subtly discriminated members of the Morland family with their traditions of old Cambridge, are more fortunate. The hero himself attains convincing humanity during his final interview with Felicia Morland in the moonlit garden. Yet lesser merits never quite compensate for the prevalent inadequacy in the presentation of the leading actor in this drama of self-realization.

The same unevenness is discernible in Dr. Fitch's management of conversation. Some of these men and women talk with a naturalness that partakes of inevitability. Mrs. Morland's remarks are suited to her precise good breeding and reveal the fiber of her personality. Her daughter in her cultured indecision, her son in his decadent estheticism, the two members of the faculty so different and yet so alike in their participation in a common intellectual heritage, reflect themselves in what they say. But the diction, the very rhythm of utterance, ascribed to Blaisdell and his fellows are so far from the fragmentary, halting speech of normal youth as to cast a spell of artificiality over the accompanying experiences. They talk like prigs even when they act like men.

The result is regrettable, for it serves to blind readers to the underlying truthfulness of the book. Refusing to conform to accepted notions, the writer has attempted to record those phases of college experience that in recent years have been too generally neglected; and in so doing, despite deficiencies in method, he has given to the public a better proportioned picture than his competitors have furnished. For undergraduates to-day

are not all romantic rebels oscillating between spindling effeminacy and scarlet depravity. There are those who, less theatrical than their prototypes in popular fiction, are more engaging and infinitely more interesting. They are ready to respond to the lure of adventures among past centuries. They can be aroused to the zest of exploration in social and religious problems. They are willing to spend themselves in probing ideals and examples of social behavior. They can be kindled to enthusiasm in the study of human nature and human relationships. And these types of experience, these pursuits, must receive full recognition before one can form a just conception of the college man's life. Other factors undeniably are important, but not to the exclusion of these. *None So Blind,* for all its faults, is, by reason of its emphasis, a better guide than most to the occupations and concerns of the present generation of students.

The situation, in truth, is not very different from that which exists in other phases of life and letters. For several feverish years jazz fiction has attempted to persuade us that we are most of us riotous profligates. The effects wearing off with repetition, excess has been piled upon excess to the point of nausea and the submergence of normal values. Our novelists have been like the clergyman who cried, "Jazz, jazz, everywhere jazz! In its barbaric sensuousness it is the symbol of our times. One finds it wherever one goes, until like the Psalmist I am ready to cry, 'Though I make my bed in hell, thou art there.'" They have deliberately made their beds in hell in order to shock us with their discoveries. But one need not lapse into facile optimism to deny that the region to which they have so successfully confined them-

selves is wholly representative of our American scene. Viewed in the light of common day, their novels look like Freudian dreams. There are indications that popular taste is veering. Are *The Education of Peter* and *None So Blind* straws that reveal changing winds?

THE ROVER

By JOSEPH CONRAD

Reviewed by Edwin Francis Edgett

The Boston Transcript, December 8, 1923

When an orchestra of reviewers is playing a symphony of harmonious sounds with the greatness of Joseph Conrad as its theme, it may seem injudicious to destroy its concord by the addition of one inharmonious instrument. As novel after novel by him has appeared, the music has grown louder and louder in the ears of the public and sweeter and sweeter in the ears of the novelist. It may be venturesome to voice even a single discordant note, but what is to be done when at last one whose duty it is to read and write about each successive story of his feels that he cannot either play the shrill piccolo or boom the double bass of rapt appreciation and adulation.

For a quarter of a century the genius of Joseph Conrad has been extolled in ever increasing measure. Tribute has been paid to him as it has been paid to no other English writer of fiction. His romances have come, and they have remained with us. Early editions are in great demand, and his manuscripts are sold at fabulous prices. Numerous appreciations of the man and his work appear in the pages of magazines and in books, and they are still appearing while the writer is at the height of his energies and his reputation. The man himself has had the glamour of romance thrown over him, for he is unique as a writer of foreign birth to whom English is an acquired tongue, and who is in

many ways undeniably a master of it. But there is no reason why the extent of his imagination and his command of its adequate expression should delude us into extolling him as the one supreme novelist.

It is impossible that Conrad can be everything that has been said of him by his admirers. The resources of the English language have been almost exhausted in the proclamation of his greatness as revealed from *Almayer's Folly* to *The Rover*. Wizardry, magic and power among nouns, and superb, incomparable, magnificent, wondrous and perfect among adjectives, are but a few of the words wrested from the dictionary in the efforts of his admirers to describe his work. Not even Kipling has been so acclaimed, and yet Conrad is a very human writer who reveals the failings and inconsistencies of his tribe as often as he reveals his skill.

And in *The Rover* we have exactly what any one who knows Conrad of old would expect from him. It is a good story very badly told, and that seems to us to be worse than a bad story well told. It discloses again the fact that its author, after a quarter of a century of writing fiction, has not yet learned the rudiments of his art. Its time sequence is utterly inexplicable. Its action shifts backwards and forwards, lags and halts, so frequently that the reader again and again is unable at first thought, and sometimes not at all, to discover whether any one event comes before or after its predecessor in the course of the narrative. Conrad seems to have no sense of coherence or of the dramatic value of a logical succession of incidents. He befuddles the reader so often that the reader is compelled to think that the story-teller is himself in a constant state of bewilderment over an entangled plot from which he is unable to extricate himself.

To read such a story as *The Rover* is exasperating, no matter what the reputation of its author, the extent of the claims made for him, or the value of his much be-praised style. Novel-readers cannot live on style alone, and neither can novel-writers. Since in *The Rover* no Marlow clogs the action, the story opens more straightforwardly than is Conrad's wont, and for a time it seems as if the reader was to be set in the midst of a logical and enthralling chronicle of events. Back from the uttermost parts of the earth comes Master-Gunner Peyrol to his boyhood home in southern France, laden with the spoil of years of buccaneering, of what his creator calls "nearly fifty years of lawful and lawless sea life." The time is the period of the French Revolution, and echoes of its bloody deeds are sounded now and then during the course of the story. He revisits first of all the immediate scene of his childhood, recalling the memory of "a tall, lean brown woman in rags, who was his mother." Of his father he has no recollection whatever. Thence he goes, for no reason that the novelist condescends to explain, to a house near the shore whose master, a sans-culotte, a blood-drinker, has done mighty deeds of violence in the days just past. There he lives, in company with an old and a young woman and a French naval officer, and thence he goes afoot and afloat in his efforts to beguile the English whose warships are hovering about the coast. Perhaps some readers are able to follow the course of this story and perhaps they can tell what it is all about, but one reader at least is willing to confess that he cannot understand it, and that its shiftings of time and place are utterly beyond his mental vision. There is a story in it, of course, but the novelist appears to have done his best to make it incomprehensible.

It is said of some people that they cannot see the wood for the trees. In other words, their eyes are so filled with details that they cannot see the thing as a whole. That seems to be the state of mind of the Conrad idolators. Here, for instance, is a detail in which Conrad excels—the concise portrait of a man and analysis of his emotions. "The affectation common to seamen of never being surprised at anything that sea or land can produce had become in Peyrol a second nature," he writes. "Having learned in childhood to suppress every sign of wonder before all extraordinary sights and events, all strange people, all strange customs, and the most alarming phenomena of nature (as manifested, for instance, in the violence of volcanoes, or the fury of human beings), he had really become indifferent—or perhaps utterly inexpressive. He had seen so much that was bizarre or atrocious, and had heard so many astounding tales, that his usual mental reaction before a new experience was generally formulated in the words 'J'en ai vu bien d'autres.' The last thing that had touched him with the panic of the supernatural had been the death under a heap of rags of that gaunt, fierce woman, his mother; and the last thing that had nearly overwhelmed him at the age of twelve with another kind of terror was the riot of sound and the multitude of mankind on the quays of Marseilles, something perfectly inconceivable from which he had instantly taken refuge behind a stack of wheat sacks after having been chased ashore by the tartane. . . . By the time he had heard of a Revolution in France and of certain Immortal Principles causing the death of many people, from the mouths of seamen and travelers and year-old gazettes coming out of Europe, he was ready to appreciate contemporary history in his

own peculiar way. Mutiny and throwing officers overboard. He had seen that twice, and he was on a different side each time. As to this upset, he took no side. It was far too big—too big—also not distinct enough. But he acquired the revolutionary jargon quickly enough and used it on occasions, with secret contempt."

The novel of course contains many passages like this, but they do not necessarily give vitality to a story. They are, furthermore, not unexceptionable. What perfect stylist would write, for instance, such a sentence as, "As to this upset, he took no side"? But of course to the true Conradians, their god can do no wrong, and *The Rover* will doubtless be hailed by them as a masterpiece.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA'S FATHER

By H. G. Wells

Reviewed by John Farrar

The New York Sun, October 17, 1925

A new novel by H. G. Wells is inevitably compared by reviewers to earlier novels, of which there are many. *Christina Alberta's Father* has been criticized in this manner. It has been called not so good as this or better than that; but it stands as a matter of fact quite by itself. It is excellent. To be sure, it is very like an up-to-date Ann Veronica. To be sure, it reminds one of Mr. Polly and of Kipps. To be sure, the exploits of Sargon at times lead us to believe that we are wandering through the tempestuous mazes of one of those astounding fantastic romances such as *Men Like Gods.* The most important thing about Christina Alberta and her father, however, is that in this book Mr. Wells, with superb detachment, with constant humor and with a touch of irony, gives us the new woman, and, although I am not quite sure that he means to do so, the new man.

It is strange that in plot and intent *Christina Alberta's Father* should be so like two excellent American books of the season, Wilbur Daniel Steele's *Taboo,* a fine study of a father and daughter, written without a sense of humor, and Floyd Dell's *Runaway,* another fine study of a father and daughter, replete with humor. As good as these two books are, there is no comparing them with Mr. Wells. It is constantly amazing

how Mr. Wells not only understands the ways of humankind in general but can catch the mood of the moment, and make it as clear as crystal. As in *Mr. Britling Sees It Through,* he expressed thoughts that millions were thinking, so in this new novel I feel that he presents perplexities that are puzzling many brains. In this new story he offers no solution to the problem, to the main problem, that is, for on every page he presents ideas, and plays with them brilliantly, if occasionally chaotically.

Mr. Preemby, laundryman, run by his wife, adoring his very independent daughter, at his wife's death turns to the lighter side of life and believes that he is Sargon, Ruler of the Earth. This, with many twists and turns, is the thread of the book. It is Christina Alberta who gives the novel its power. She is an amazing young person, a short of Wellsian Janet March. She is traced from an ambitious and somewhat disordered youth to forced maturity, in which she proves herself capable of facing and solving problems, in which she is shown as a skeptic, a vivid and whole-hearted lover.

But the crux of the matter is that she refuses marriage. She must be herself. She doesn't want to have babies. Bobby, the kindly and puttering young man whom she loves, must therefore content himself with a love affair; but the trouble is, you see, that the one thing in the world Bobby wants is parenthood. He must have something to care for, whether it is a bird, a stray father, or an unworthy landlady. Yet Bobby is necessary to Christina Alberta, as she is to him. What I want to know, Mr. Wells, is what is going to happen to Bobby's parent instinct? Probably this is beside the point, since it is sure that Mr. Wells has

given us the best picture of the extremely modern young woman extant.

So far I have totally neglected the father in the case, or one of them—there are, vicariously two. Mr. Preemby is a duck. He is at once pitiful, droll and magnificent. There is a great deal of Mr. Wells himself in Mr. Preemby. Poor Mr. Preemby, who set out to reform the world and its people who were his subjects, and who ended his crusade in an insane asylum. Before Mrs. Preemby's death he was just a fumbling, fuddling little person, who "never saw illuminations and fireworks because Mrs. Preemby liked to have him at home when the day's work was over. He enjoyed the great war of 1914-18 gravely and profoundly. Once he passed a man he thought afterward was most certainly a German spy. The thought thrilled him for days."

This quiet and constantly eager child-man is thrust by his daughter into Bohemian days and ways. The account of his first glimpse of a party in such circles is exceedingly funny. Unfortunately, I cannot refrain from recalling the first time I met Mr. Wells, bewildered, helpless, amiable but puzzled, at a party very much like the one he describes. Yet Mr. Wells is never puzzled. How he does tear through a scene or a philosophical discussion! How delicately he handles sentiment! How he rejoices in downright vulgarity, and how superbly he recovers from it just in time to know restraint! Could a description be nearer right than this? The scene is an Italian table d'hôte. Harold is eating macaroni, and he does not believe in cutting it. "His rampant face riding over a squirming mouthful of macaroni was like St. George and the Dragon on an English sovereign. He whistled as he ate. Long snakes of macaroni hung thoughtful for a moment and

then, drawn by some incomprehensible fascination, fled into him."

There is a section dealing with "The Petunia Boarding House" which is superb. It is realism with wit laughing from it. Mr. Wells never permits himself a moment of burlesque. Yet there are many spots in this novel where overstepping must have been a great temptation. The dialogue, even at its most highly philosophical moments, always seems natural. Sometimes it is natural to a point of delightful absurdity. Here is the boarding house table:

"'Now is this the same fish we had yesterday?' asked the wife.

"'It is a very similar fish,' said the gentleman with the whiskers.

"'The menu simply says "Fish,"' said the stepdaughter.

"'H'rrmp,' said Mr. Preemby."

It is impossible to describe in a review the richness of this novel. Characters float on and off the scene, characterized in a sentence, yet memorable. There are scenes of beauty and terror. There are scenes of poignance and tragedy. It is interesting to study Mr. Wells's way of achieving beauty. He does not do it by the use of soft colors or rhythms. His is a vigorous, almost journalistic style as of old, illuminated by startling and sometimes almost gruff similes and unusual and often harsh words. His beauty is a beauty of clear thinking and of deft presentation; that and beauty of character.

Bobby is one of the most wistful of recent fiction creations, and you know all about what a charming thing it is to be wistful if you have read the columns of Hey-

wood Broun. Like all wistful people, he is highly sentimental.

In making us fond of Bobby, Wells has done a remarkably clever technical feat; for, although he lets Bobby be as sentimental as you please, he himself as writer is never let in for sentimentality. Yet you feel that he likes Bobby, and thinks he has just as much right to his sentiment as Christina Alberta has to her hardness.

There is a whole novel in Bobby; in fact, the most interesting part of this tale is from the final page on. What is to become of Christina Alberta and her lover? Most of Bobby is apparent from the following paragraph in which his friend chides him for sentimentalizing over the lost Mr. Preemby's "poor empty little bed." "I protest," said Billy, putting his drawing board aside. "Bobby, you are a case of morbid overgrowth of the sympathies. You are a new disease. You are the type case of Bobbyism. It's bad enough that you should sympathize openly with that little devil Susan when I've spanked her. . . . But when it comes to your being sorry for a poor little empty lodging house bed, I draw the line."

Of course, one feels a trifle sorry for Bobby; but then, it's probably his own fault that he cannot face the modern young woman and come out quite the Victorian idea of the victorious male. The maddening part of Mr. Wells's thesis is that, although you may not want to like Christina, you must. He so ably presents the tempest that goes on in her own mind that you follow whether you will or no, and find yourself agreeing.

Perhaps the closing pages of the book will annoy some readers. They are largely concerned with the

girl's philosophies, with religious speculation, and, of course, Mr. Wells's latest ideas put into mouths of his characters. This makes lively reading if you like that sort of thing, and there are many who do.

No one will think of calling this an immoral book. On the other hand, it does not raise a standard of fenced or pillowed behavior. The expert and persuasive craftsman can make the unusual in ethical matters seem usual.

Mr. Wells once wrote a book called *Marriage,* and it was not a text book. Neither is *Christina Alberta's Father* a text book. Yet I feel that if every young man were to read it preparatory to adventures in love or matrimony, or both together, we should be much safer with respect to the divorce courts. Perhaps I have been singularly obtuse, but it seems to me that most of the very modern young ladies of recent fiction have been alarming creatures. They appeared to me to be the last sort of creature in the world one could possibly think of marrying. Now, however, I am beginning to understand. Amber Shenstone, in Floyd Dell's *Runaway,* is one help and Christina Alberta is another. I should like to know what the young ladies think of these fictional counterparts of themselves. Do they believe in, and with, the engaging but violently minded heroine of this latest and thoroughly absorbing story from the gentleman who writes equally well of the past, the dim future and the present?

A PASSAGE TO INDIA

By E. M. FORSTER

ARNOLD WATERLOW

By MAY SINCLAIR

THE NEEDLE'S EYE

By ARTHUR TRAIN

CHRIS GASCOYNE

By A. C. BENSON

THE RED RIDERS

By THOMAS NELSON PAGE

Reviewed by Clarence H. Gaines

The North American Review, December, 1924

My profound conviction is that every writer of fiction who is worth his salt must be in his way, humble or great, a bit of a philosopher, and this justifies me, I think, in grouping under my title (*Some Philosophers in Fiction*) a number of writers who resemble one another only in their prestige. Personally I am not so insistent on the nature of the philosophy as on the need of its presence. It may very well be a no-philosophy, like Joseph Conrad's, or a worse-than-no-philosophy, like Thomas Hardy's. These are consistent with the glory of literary illumination, and with the power of

literature. Pseudo-philosophy, spiritual melodramatics, and the realist's too common affectation of having no point of view, of being as impartial as God and as unassuming as a bit of clay—these are not.

All the writers about to be considered have added something to the sum of feeling; they have imparted a point of view; they have written humanly of human beings, without any idle pretense of not being themselves a part of the endless stream of life. And so they are all philosophers, giving, or trying to give us, something to think by and live by.

It is a curious fact that Mr. Forster could scarcely have written so effectively (and so impartially) about the futility of attempts at social *rapprochement* between English people and natives of India, if he had not had as the background of his thought the possible futility of all life. Perhaps no other writer since Montaigne has so acutely realized the "imbecility" of human intellect. But for this he must have written some sort of propaganda. But he has avoided the too sharp issues of the controversialist because he realizes that we all live after all in a kind of stupor: we pretend that we are wide awake all the time, acutely aware, though really we have been half asleep. So all but the most fortunate blunder through life.

In India these things are emphasized. "Mrs. Moore . . . had come to that state where the horrors of the universe and its smallness are both visible at the same time—the twilight of the double vision in which so many elderly people are involved . . . a spiritual muddledom for which no high-sounding words can be found: we can neither act nor refrain from acting, we can neither ignore nor respect Infinity." As for our ennobling dreams, our mystic insights: "Visions are

supposed to entail profundity, but—wait till you get one, dear reader!"

One thing is perfectly clear: a man who writes in this strain cannot write as a partisan.

Yet Mr. Forster is anything but depressing. He is the tonic satirist, the philosopher possessed with the comic spirit. Though he sometimes makes the ground gape under our feet or cleaves right to the center of our consciousness with a phrase, his is not the manner of the tragedian. He does not really seek to terrify. Instead of making his satire unendurable, his philosophy makes it kindly—for are not all of us too human? So we are amused—amused by the ineptitudes of the well-intentioned Abdul Aziz, amused by the frustration of the honest-minded, flat-breasted Miss Quested, amused by the officialdom of the "Burtons and Turtons"—amused and made sympathetic. We enjoy it all like gods, and yet we are not required to strain our minds above the common pitch of nobility.

Unsparing but never cruel, and admirably free from the vice of preaching the "spirit" of a land as if it were a kind of black gospel (as if one must be a materialist because life is gross in mid-Africa, or a mystic because the desert appears to the observer to be limitless!), Mr. Forster is at once a philosopher, a humanist, and a wit—and hence that complex creature, a novelist!

His wit is unconscionable, but never unkind or atrocious. What other English writer would have dared to make one of his characters think, as Mr. Forster does,—it was the thought of Miss Quested on the eve of the trial in which she is to testify against Aziz,—"God, who saves the King, will surely support the police"? What militant skeptic has said a more shock-

ing think than Mr. Forster's (quite accidental) remark about "poor talkative Christianity"? Yet this does not offend; it is all in the picture—a picture irresistibly true. None would wish it incomplete in the least touch.

From his skeptical point of view—with kindness, with impartiality, without solemnity or derision—Mr. Forster gives us a lively, critical view of one portion of British India. The romantic view, as well as the critical view, has its place no doubt, and surely it is a waste of breath at this time to inveigh against romance. But if Kipling has shown us India as a pageant, full of picturesque figures, human enough, yet incomplete, after the fashion of romance, Forster has convinced us, and has proved that the destruction of illusions may be neither a base nor an uninteresting business. Like Chekov, best of realists, he sees not only people's motives, but the very wrinkles in their consciences. Yet, unlike Chekov, he is always the artist, never the diagnostician. He scarcely approaches the borders of pathology, physical or spiritual. Always he keeps within our range—well within the range of conceivable human interests and passions. And when he is subtlest, he is clearest.

The baffling misunderstandings that enter into all human relations, and especially those between members of alien races! No sermon can be preached about them. No clear lesson can be drawn from them. They are too complex, too subtle, and too true! Before the pluralism of life, we are very likely to stand amazed. Aziz says that the only cure is "kindness, kindness, and then more kindness"—or, well, let us say, the millennium! Does Mr. Forster agree with Aziz? One does not know, but one cannot doubt that he has written an exceptional novel—a novel in which all is clear as daylight, and

nothing, absolutely nothing, is said as any one else would say it or from the point of view of any common observer. This novel is one of the great literary victories over the inherent commonplaceness of words—a triumphant escape from the stereotyped.

Mr. Forster (besides knowing India) is certainly a master of our astringent modern comedy—a comedy that excludes alike the savagery of the satirist and the wistfulness of the half-repentant skeptic. To be so terrible a philosopher, yet never to boast of it or parade it, or half withdraw it, but to use one's comic spirit zestfully in the criticism of life, is no small thing.

As has been said, one does not suspect Mr. Forster of being a partisan or even of having a "message." One does begin to suspect Miss Sinclair of having a message, but, alas! what is it? I for one cannot surely say, except that it is all about sex and God!

In two novels—*Arnold Waterlow,* recently published, and the earlier *Mary Olivier*—Miss Sinclair has told us essentially the same things. She has told us how a child grew up, and she has told us of the passionate love affairs of the grown-up child, and she has told us of the finding of God through a certain mystical process. First there is a sympathetic (and somewhat Freudian) account of childhood, then there is consuming passion, and finally, at the magic age of forty or thereabout, there is mysticism and victory.

We begin with Arnold Waterlow's childhood—distinctly described in Miss Sinclair's fashion—and yet is not here another instance of the cult of the child? For a time the Christian child was the accepted type, the abused child has scarcely lost his vogue; Barrie gave an undeserved popularity to the child who refuses to grow up, and now we have the Freudian child as

father to the man. One begins to ask, Is not the importance of childhood perhaps a little overdrawn? And has not the new psychology given the writers another occasion for somewhat one-sidedly viewing it?

But to pass on, Arnold—he has a hard, humdrum, unideal sort of life, of course—falls in love with a little musician; and here we have a personality drawn with more than Miss Sinclair's customary charm, a personality pure, spiritual, devoted to art, warm with passion. Sex is realized at its best for a chapter or two. But after marriage the artist wife runs away with a musician protégé—really couldn't help it, is the inference—and Arnold forms a connection with Effie, the affectionate and comprehending. The union is of the mutually congenial, physically satisfying type, which after all may not be made in heaven any more than the average mating. I suspect that Miss Sinclair cares less for Effie than she seems to care. At all events she arranges her early death. Arnold welcomes back his wife whom her lover has deserted. About this time he learns that by closing his eyes and inviting the darkness to come on, wave on wave, he may identify his will with the will of God. Thus, after the quieting of his passions, he attains completion.

It may be granted that Arnold Waterlow, despite his moral unconventionality, may take rank, on the whole, as a Christian gentleman. His righteousness is somewhat greater than that of the Scribes and Pharisees. But this hardly appears to be the point. When one is told that Arnold, apparently because he restrained, for a few minutes, his desire for the gratification of his senses, had a vision such as lifelong ascetics have prayed for in vain, we gasp. This may be true psychology, but what about its ethical implications?

The tone of this critique ought not to be hostile; for really I have always been an admirer of Miss Sinclair. I appreciate, or think that I appreciate, her artistic exquisiteness, her intellectual purity, her spiritual fervor, and her commendable desire to show that man is soul and flesh in one. Above all I would do justice to her sincerity. But it appears to me that of late she halts emotionally between the primitive notion of religion as magic, and the equally primitive notion of religion as worshipful submission. The result, I believe, is ethical confusion, which becomes artistic confusion. The truth is, according to my somewhat conventional view, that "sublimation" forms too weak a link between the teachings of Freud and the teachings of Christianity. The old antithesis between God and the Flesh has doubtless been overstressed, but "sublimation" will not charm away the essential dualism of the soul.

Yet without her philosophy, her passionate love of truth, Miss Sinclair could not have become the distinguished writer she deservedly is.

Miss Sinclair seeks to penetrate beneath the surface of life and sometimes succeeds. But there is also a philosophy of the surface. Psychology, it is predicted, will some day solve our criminal problem and our labor problems. But it has not yet done so. Therefore we seek to grasp these things in the older way—posing issues, and applying to them ideas of common ense, sympathy, and fairness. Our philosophy in these matters is the philosophy of healthy-mindedness, and we owe to it our most successful expedient, mediation.

To get rid of hysteria and bias, to see the workingman as he really is without illusions rosy or otherwise, to see the wrongs on both sides and the difficulties—this

is a point of view sensible, but not at first seeming to lend itself to artistic expression.

Yet we have to thank Mr. Train not only for robust thinking and vigorous writing, but for a spirited piece of fiction—in *The Needle's Eye*—thoroughly alive in its viewpoint and its (possibly inadequate) philosophy.

In this story of the rich young man who inherits with the responsibilities of wealth an unsuspected load of responsibilities for human beings, there is obviousness of theme (as the title implies); there is a certain lack of subtlety (the persons of the story strike one as about half stereotyped, a little less than fifty per cent. conventional); there is a certain crassness of contrast between the grossly rich and the nobly rich; but there is a degree of originality, and now and then there is a passage that very nearly—if not quite—carries us off our feet. The remarkable chapter entitled "On to Pango," describing in a kind of free verse the march of the striking coal-miners, employs an art like that of Vachel Lindsay and is undeniably effective. Some touches of very modern truth relieve a tale that is on the whole a bit too objective and commonplace in its telling. Just how long such a story as this will remain the characteristic American novel it is hard to say. Whatever else our novelists do, they can hardly fail, if they are truthful, to mirror a certain crudity and confusion of mind along with vigor and aspiration. If we must have something typically American, Mr. Train's coal strike seems preferable on grounds of genuineness and representative quality to Mr. Lewis's *Main Street*. But already such a novel begins to appear a trifle old-fashioned.

If the philosophy of A. C. Benson's *Chris Gascoyne* were only a little more robust, it would not matter much

that this story also seems to be a little less than modern in its thought. In fact it is just the serenity of a mellowed understanding of life which gives the tale its undeniable charm. It is very pleasant reading and it makes the reader continuously feel that he is on the verge of making spiritual discoveries. Yet the fable is weak, and the philosophy fits the fable so nicely that it almost seems made for it.

Perhaps Chris Gascoyne took a momentous step when, against the protests of his unconsciously selfish and, for the most part, ill-natured friends, he gave up his busy artificial London life and went to live in a little house in the country. Perhaps nothing is important! But as a writer Mr. Benson appears to lack the special grace and talent that would convince us concretely of the truth of this *perhaps*. Be this as it may, there can be no doubt that Chris was greatly missed—and rightly so, for he was one of the very few genuine and instructive peace-makers—yes, Mr. Benson persuades us of this. Almost without awareness of his own function, but not without effort, Chris was always adjusting differences and making the best of people—a sort of very polite, very gentlemanly, extremely unassuming, quite sophisticated Lodger in the Third Floor Back. Without him, his circle rapidly degenerated, fell to quarreling, backbiting, and all unkindness.

But Chris could not be tempted back; he was absorbed in his own great adventure of living. I do not quite know whether his suppressed personality now asserted itself and obtained release from old censorships, or whether his conscious mind simply couldn't feel happy in getting rid of so troublesome a lot of people, or whether his conscience now told him that he was free to do more good than he had ever done before; or

whether, as is most probable, his state was a resultant of all the causes I have suggested. But he was happy—really happy—and good. And the spectacle of a man being really happy and good is of course rare and fascinating. Exactly what Chris found out through his venturings into the lives of a new set of people, it is hard to know, but it is easy to believe that there was spiritual power in him.

But while the story leaves one with the pleasant impression of having been in the society of some very clever people and of at least one remarkably good person; leaves one serious, and a little ashamed, and with a sense of having been better entertained than perhaps one deserved to be; it does not tell us whether life is a tragedy or a farce or an affair of honor to be decently discharged, or anything of the sort. The narrator seems to feel that a sort of mild and benevolent bewilderment is the only really civilized and high-minded attitude to take toward the harsher and less controllable facts of life. Chris, too, often appears bewildered. The reader is bewildered. In this tale gentlemanly scruples take rank as issues; social obligations, the ordinary requirements of tact and courtesy, seem to be inextricably interwoven with life and death and personal religion.

To live well, however, may be a fine art, Mr. Benson seems to say, and this art needs the support of the spiritual self. Without a word about religion or a definite declaration about morals, Mr. Benson has written a book pervaded by a really religious feeling and filled with the sentiment of goodness; and he forces us to reflect that there is perhaps more in life than meets the eye. He is never priggish or didactic, but perhaps he takes excessive pains to avoid appearing so. The mystery of the good and evil in personality, and of the aura

that seems to emanate from some of the modest good, has been more forcibly presented.

Really what Chris was after, as I make him out, was not the adventure of meeting new spiritual issues, or the discovery of new truths in his retirement; but rather the rediscovery in his own soul of his hereditary and traditional instincts and values, obscured by the triviality of his London associates. These ideas and feelings are of the Victorian stamp and color.

Yet while new times stress different qualities of mind and heart, there is always value in the remembrance of what was best and finest in feelings now no longer relevant, and in ways of viewing the world that have ceased to be possible.

With the passing of the old régime in the South went something of beauty and stateliness. This, many writers have attempted to tell us, some haltingly, others eloquently, but all with a sincerity that has convinced the world. So now, if there is a "legend" of the South before the war, we know that there is much truth in that legend.

There is a philosophy of retrospection which joins the old to the new, which, looking backward, says, "These things were to be loved," but knows that men must meet the conditions of a new age, carrying over into it in changed form the virtues of the older time. Such is the philosophy of Thomas Nelson Page's *The Red Riders*. A novel of the Reconstruction period—could anything be harder to write? That time of lowered morale and of moral confusion is not the pleasantest to consider! It lends itself ill to romance; and, remember, the writer who loves the South can hardly think of it without resentment, while his literary opportunities are confined to the presentation of a fading scene not yet illuminated

by the light of memory. To write of the South as it once was, and to write of it in dissolution, are two very different things. The old plantation invaded by ruffians in the wake of the Union Armies has not the glamor of the old plantation as fondly remembered in its flourishing prime. So Thomas Nelson Page chose anything but the easiest way when he fixed upon this theme.

But the story is sweet in spirit—not lacking in humor, just and sincere, with no undue attachment to the old order. If we miss the unity and the emotional unction of such stories as *Marse Chan*, we need not feel surprise. Hardly does the theme admit them. But there is a veracious and attractive picture of the plantation life as it was after Lee's surrender; there is the summoning of courage to deal with the new order of things, and there is the gradual dawning of a new conception. The author sends his boy hero in cheerful mood to face the new world and to hold his own in it, not without struggle, but without bitterness. In such young men as Sinker Ashley obviously lay the hope of the New South.

Young Ashley actually applied for an appointment to the United States Military Academy. He went to Washington, and had a personal interview with Lincoln, who granted his wish, overruling the objections of Stanton. Sinker was standing near Ford's Theater on the night when Lincoln was shot. Much happens in this tale, the like of which could have occurred in no other period, and all is tolerantly and truly described, with many a genuine touch of personal character and domestic manners. As for the dramatic interest of the novel, the promise of which is somewhat over-emphasized by the title, we must often take the will for the deed; for, as it appears to me, the author, with

every intention of writing a stirring narrative, never quite succeeds in doing so. But the thing is noble-spirited, and it has a true relish of the past.

What would a scholar living in the remote future make of our minds and of our civilization if he had only these books to judge by—books almost eccentric in the marked difference with which they reflect upon life and criticize it? I think he would be forced to conclude that we were a nervous, courageous breed of men, restless, inquiring, fond of sensation even in our soberest moments, and almost unduly interested in our own characters and our own souls.

HOME TALENT

By Louise Closser Hale

Reviewed by Dorothy Foster Gilman

Boston Evening Transcript, March 17, 1926

Mrs. Hale is a well known American actress and a woman who puts brains and vitality into the characters she acts. It is not remarkable therefore that the same qualities appear in her books. We only marvel that she has so much energy left over from one art to give to another. This new novel is a sincere and at moments a brilliant study of stage life. Its author has not devoted herself to an intensive analysis of a few characters, but she has drawn a group with skill and understanding, making each one in turn pass before her readers in a kind of literary revue. Inasmuch as the chief preoccupation of every human being in this story is with some problem connected with the theater, Mrs. Hale's readers will gain an unusual and sincere picture of men and women of talent who face each night new audiences, who receive the 'script of a new play with ardor, high hopes and courage. They know well that often through no fault of the actors a production is doomed to failure. A first night in Bridgeport does not always mean a season in New York. But artists all share with painters and writers that devotion to their chosen profession which will always remain incomprehensible to lovers of country club bridge tournaments and meetings of the grange.

Sharlie Flagg, living in the town of High Platte, has red hair and talent for acting. To take the leading rôle in the local dramatic production does not satisfy her. She is coached by Emmeline Herter, who, thirty years before, made her own exit from High Platte in search of a dramatic career, and has now returned for a short visit with her old mother from New York. Miss Herter knows stage life with all the intimacy of one who has worked, planned and waited, achieving at least a measure of fame. She sees talent in Sharlie Flagg; but she knows that without the capacity for drudgery, a certain amount of enterprise and versatility, the girl will fail. The great question in Miss Herter's mind is, can Sharlie endure what she will have to endure if she starts off for New York? Of course this red-headed young woman has a devoted young man named Ben Dorsey. Ben is a lawyer. His senior partner tells him that no girl can resist a loving young man who crushes her in his arms. Ben tries it. He learns one lesson and Sharlie another, as the result of that embrace.

The scene of the novel shifts then from High Platte to New York City. Mrs. Hale has a rare gift for the kind of human interest writing that is extremely effective in a book of this type. She uses as a novelist her native talent as a dramatic artist to picture for her readers all the familiar details of stage-door life. She writes of them with a certain tenderness. There is no glamor in this story; but on the other hand it is never sordid. The heroine has intelligence as well as red hair. So she soon learns, after securing a part, that Alexis, a leading man of the play in which she is to act, is an artist on the stage and a scoundrel off. How she comports herself under a variety of difficult situations is told by the author with wit, sympathy and

ironic power. It might well seem to the average reader that Ben Dorsey does not offer great happiness to a woman of Sharlie's type. Yet after all what is "Home Talent"? The fact that the girl ultimately decided that she wished to marry him proves that American home life is not as extinct as social workers would allow us to believe.

This novel by Mrs. Hale deserves a great success. It is sincere, it gives a normal picture of a fascinating life, rather than a melodramatic picture. The dialogue is invariably excellent, the analysis subtle. Those of us who rarely are invited to enter the theater by the stage door will enjoy it immensely; but members of the profession will probably understand it with a more discerning appreciation. One cannot fail in reading this book to feel the sophistication of the author, who has few illusions about human nature, but a very deep comprehension of it.

THE BRIGHT SHAWL

By JOSEPH HERGESHEIMER

Reviewed by H. L. Mencken

The Smart Set,* December, 1922

Both the admirers and the dispraisers of Joseph Hergesheimer will discover stuff to their liking in his last book, *The Bright Shawl* (Knopf), a long short story rather than a novel. The former will find it almost as lush and satisfying as *Cytherea* or *Java Head*—a glittering, polychromatic fabric of gaudy images and apt, lascivious phrases. The latter will be caressed and delighted by the naïve tautology of *"the El* Louvre." Hergesheimer emits this startling cigar-box-label Spanish at least eight times in his book. He seems determined to rub the thing in—to let no enemy of his style, however lethargic, go unaware of his howler. It is a chance that the apostles of a pure, cut-glass esthetic will not fail to seize. I myself, though I can tolerate the baroque (and even the Norddeutscher-Lloyd, 1890) manner in English, am tempted to discharge at least a "Pfui!" But hard by one of those pathological the-els I encounter "the silvery aloofness of his ideal." And a page or two farther on, being bidden to stand in the dim Havana cathedral and look out, I find "a segment of the day, like a white explosion of powder." Here, I make bold to say, is juicy stuff; here are some very nice phrases. The fellow, indeed, knows how to write, however badly he may occasionally do it. Would it offend

* By special permission of Mr. H. L. Mencken.

the proprieties if I described *The Bright Shawl* as an elaborate and ornate mosaic, rich especially in all the deeper, more mysterious tones of red, violet and gold —with here and there a wad of chewing gum stuck upon it?

The story itself is slight enough—the melancholy reminiscences of a middle-aged American who went to Cuba in the electric days of Spanish rule, and there sought to help the revolutionists achieve *Cuba libre.* The picture, I suspect, is not inaccurate: Hergesheimer, whatever his failings in philology, is a painstaking archeologist. One steps into a tense society of sallow, whispering, impracticable youths—all ready to die gloriously for the cause, but none suffering from any appreciable excess of common sense. Outside, the frizzling, raucous sunshine, or the velvet shadows of the night! A scene already obviously operatic before a word is uttered. What goes on is chiefly tragic farce: the poor boys snared by gorgeous harlots, and then unromantically butchered by the matter-of-fact Spaniards. All of Howard Gage's bright particular friends succumb. Some are so easy that their removal is almost a routine matter; others resist everything save the full force of the particular seraglio. Needless to say, Hergesheimer presents brilliant portraits of the officiating ladies. One of them is a Spanish dancer who gets half converted to the patriot cause—an accident familiar enough in the higher politics. Another is partly Chinese: it is she who finishes the little group and forces Gage himself to leave Cuba between days. Upon this poisonous Oriental Hergesheimer lavishes all the colors on his palette. She is a figure from Sèvres, a vase of cloisonné, a museum piece. Nevertheless, she moves. Where Hergesheimer found her, God knows. She exists somewhere, I sup-

pose, in porcelain and amber, as Cytherea exists in bisque and silk. I forget her name.

I doubt that the *Privat Dozenten* of 1975 will put *The Bright Shawl* in the main canon of Hergesheimer's works. It lacks the spaciousness of *Java Head,* the tight organization of *The Three Black Pennies,* the ironical force of *The Lay Anthony,* the unceasing brilliance of *Cytherea.* But for all that it is thoroughly Hergesheimerean. No other American novelist could have imagined the story; none other could have lifted it, in the telling, out of sentimentality and worse. Here, precisely, lies the achievement of the man: he has rehabilitated romance by translating it into visual images. No need to say that he began life as a painter. I suppose it was defective draftsmanship that made him give up the brush; his drawing, even in his books, is often defective. But what gorgeous color he gets into them! How beautifully he plays with light! This is a talent that the American novel cried for. For years past it has tended to become more and more flat, drab and photographic. Now comes Hergesheimer with skyrockets. To science he adds a civilized sensuousness. His world is a world of rich brocades, soft silks, shimmering glass, noble patinas. It is something to have revealed this world to a moral republic.

ALL THE SAD YOUNG MEN

By F. Scott Fitzgerald

THREE KINGDOMS

By Storm Jameson

Reviewed by Harry Hansen

The Chicago News, January 22, 1926

Six years ago F. Scott Fitzgerald blazed across the literary horizon with *This Side of Paradise,* and captured the startled attention of all the sad young men and all the glad young women. His seniors immediately predicted his quick demise. For several years F. Scott hovered between brisk fun, irony and tragedy, and then came *The Great Gatsby,* which proved him a competent painter of the American scene. And now he presents *All the Sad Young Men,* a collection of short stories published within the last year in various colored magazines, green, blue, red and yellow, and giving excellent proof of his ability to write well in half a dozen manners. It is a joy to read these tales. They lack sameness; they are ironical, and sad, and jolly good fun by turns; they scintillate. Moreover, they show F. Scott Fitzgerald keeping step with his generation. He is of our own time and we are glad that he is.

His most ambitious effort is *Absolution,* a tale of a little boy and a priest, which shows a close study of human motives. The confusion in little Rudolph's mind was nothing to the confusion in the mind of the

priest, and both were victims of a repression of the life forces. To expect the bewildered priest to guide the bewildered boy meant tragedy. But my favorite story is *The Rich Boy,* which is a whole biography in small compass. Young Anson Hunter is one of these young men that Fitzgerald understands so well and that he loves to portray—reminding you of Anthony in *The Beautiful and Damned.* Life is largely a matter of sensual satisfactions to Anson and things come so easy to him that he loses the ability and desire to act decisively at "the psychological moment" in a love affair. An ironical touch is Anson Hunter's interference in the love affair of his uncle's wife—for the sake of his pride in the name he bears—in the face of his own loose code of living. *Winter Dreams,* the story of a boy who made his way and who loves a capricious rich girl but cannot dominate her, opens in the conventional manner, but the ending is anything but conventional, for F. Scott makes no concessions to the expected. The picture of Judy Jones grown careworn and commonplace under a bullying husband shatters his dream of her perpetual youth, a dream that every man holds in his heart until the last. *Baby Party* is not so successful, but it shows the author writing a sketch of suburban family life much in the manner of George Ade's stories in *In Babel.* I do not mean his *Fables in Slang; In Babel* is made up of light, understanding sketches of everyday people which were adequate for their day—the turn of the century; Fitzgerald sees a bit farther, just as he sees farther than Tarkington, and not quite so far as Ernest Hemingway. In his best jazz manner, reminding you of *Head and Shoulders* and *The Camel's Back,* is *Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of Wales,* a story built around one of those satiated girls who are fed up

on men and jewels. The girl who flings pearls about, who calls for her bath—"ice cold and half full of almond cream"—who calls to her lover: "Orchids; for the love of heaven! Four dozen, so I can choose four!" Nobody else can do these glad young women and these sad young men so well as F. Scott Fitzgerald.

In her new novel, *Three Kingdoms,* Storm Jameson deals with the three kingdoms in which a woman rules, or tries to rule—that of wifehood, motherhood and business. Her story revolves around a strong-willed woman who has a husband and a little son, but who must do something apart from her home life, and for that reason goes into the advertising business. She is what the English call a "careerist."

An understanding of the English point of view is necessary to a proper valuation of this book. We must remember that to the average British male woman has no place in business; that he regards her daily associations with men of a coarser grain as vulgar; that he believes she adopts an indefensible position when she steps outside the home. Storm Jameson, although a woman, knows what the British male thinks. And she has endeavored to picture the effect of just such business relations on a sensitive but capable woman whose day was not entirely filled by her home duties. Laurence Ford is the woman. Her husband, Dysart Ford, has never been adequate entertainment for her, and when he goes to war she plunges into work. As an advertising woman Laurence plays the man's game without any squeamishness and combats vulgarity with vulgarity. But as a woman she is still the guardian of ethical conduct. When the firm determines to continue an advertising campaign for certain food products that are known to be poisoned she is shown as

fighting valiantly for honesty, despite loss, and going down in defeat before the hardened directors. This shares the reader's interest with a trial for divorce brought by a woman who is able to prove that Laurence has been with her husband at late hours and in unconventional situations. Although Laurence was at the time preparing an advertising campaign for this man, she was not wholly free from blame, for she had actually permitted him to make advances. Thus the author tries to show that woman cannot help being sullied and in the end pictures Laurence as wholly content in a new burst of love for her husband and a renewed preoccupation with her son and her home.

It is idle to contend that there is no exaggeration in advertising, but it is most improbable that a reputable agency would stand behind a campaign in which the goods were likely to poison a whole community. Although excusing this as a device to further the author's plot, we in America can hardly admit that the woman in business will be more ethical than the man. Woman has been in business so long that she knows all the tricks and is quite well versed in whatever field she chooses. What Storm Jameson saw was a lone woman fighting against a group of burly directors, most of them Scotch, and that proved her point.

It seems to me that Storm Jameson improves with each novel she writes, although I was very partial to *The Pitiful Wife,* and rather prefer that book to this. It had several dramatic scenes that linger in the memory, notably that of the young wife leaning over the balustrade and watching the drunken lord of the manor amuse himself with gypsy women in the great hall below. There was gorgeous coloring in the book, whereas *Three Kingdoms* tries rather for sophisticated pleasant-

ries. But the author has a feeling for people. In fact, *Three Kingdoms* is not without its insight into human frailties. Thus when one of the characters, Caroline, has been humiliated on the witness stand and forced to make admissions damaging to her case, in fact insuring its complete collapse, the author closes the situation thus:

Poor Caroline went that night to bed sure that she never could get up or face the world again. But in the morning she found herself pushed aside to make way for a scandal of international proportions. She remembered an appointment with her hairdresser, and having attended it, recalled one with her masseur, and another and another, and so got through the day and made plans for the next.

Which, despite all, is the way most people take the morning after.

BARREN GROUND

By ELLEN GLASGOW

Reviewed by Archibald Henderson

The Saturday Review of Literature, July 18, 1925

Twenty-one years ago, when I first reviewed one of Miss Glasgow's novels, the characteristic word employed for *The Deliverance* was "epic." So gripped was I by the stark power and epic sweep of that work that it took more than three columns to say what I wanted to say. A quotation from that review may perhaps be permitted here:

This new novel grips you with the masculinity of its treatment. It betrays the strong, sure grasp of genuine literary craftsmanship, the keen power of clear visualization, the reach and mastery of tremendous ethical interest. There is much of the primitive, the elemental, in the surging passion of the book; and on every page we are taught something of man's place in nature. Beneath our feet is the virgin soil, around us rustle the green tobacco plants, and across the farm, set in the peace and quietness of nature, surge in slow-working deliberation the malignant and destructive passions of class hatred. Slowly, surely, inevitably, these passions work toward a climax, the fulfilling of the law of ungovernable hatred. But at the heart of this hatred has been the regenerative force of a pure, unselfish love. In the deliverance of an essentially noble soul from the obsession of an ingrained hatred, through the instrumentality of a lofty emotion, lies the moral import of this epic recital of human frailty and human struggle.

When I encounter reviews of *Barren Ground* entitled "Realism Crosses the Potomac" or some such nonsense, I am staggered anew with the fortuity of fame. For more than a quarter of a century, Miss Glasgow has been writing novels informed with high seriousness, close and sincere studies of regional environment, "realistic" in the only true sense of the word, namely, the close reflection of the forms and nuances of real life in a specific geographic setting, heightened and illuminated through the selective processes of art. Almost at the outset of her career, Miss Glasgow had a sense of epic mass and realistic background. As the waving hemp fields of Kentucky in James Lane Allen's *The Reign of Law* soothe and humanize the spirit of the young free-lance of modern thought; as the great staple, Wheat, in Frank Norris's *The Pit,* looms ever larger until it takes on the lineaments of Fate; so the dark-green background of the Virginia tobacco fields supplies the resolving mood in the general harmony of Ellen Glasgow's *The Deliverance.*

Realism crossed the Potomac twenty-five years ago, when Miss Glasgow wrote *The Voice of the People.* Her very first novel, *The Descendant,* carried the *indicia* of rugged power—although that penetrating critic, the late Walter Page, insisted that she re-write the first fourth of the book. The expectations raised by this promising first novel were in no small measure realized in *The Voice of the People,* strongly sustaining, as it did, the predictions of her admirers. Her wonderful treatment of Nature as an influence upon, an ally of, the human soul; the subtlety with which she portrayed the contrasts, distinctions, and incongruities between the old and the new *régime* in the South; her frank, racy, and broad handling of the plantation

"darky"; these were qualities of sustained and deliberate realism. The oratorical romanticism of the old South was discarded in favor of the quiet realism of a post-bellum honesty, rooted in sincere recognition of the hardship and struggle imposed by defeat. Austere realism has marked the work of Miss Glasgow virtually from the very outset of her career. But it has not readily become the pliant instrument of her genius. In *The Voice of the People,* she paid to realism the heavy price of an unmotived *dénouement*—the realism which pictures life's surfaces accurately, but leaves its dominant cadences unresolved.

By birth and social antecedents, Miss Glasgow is closely linked with the Old South of wealth, leisure, and blue blood. Yet she is uninfluenced by any sense of false allegiance or untutored loyalty to ante-bellum traditions and ideals. On the contrary, she is essentially modern, wholly post-bellum in her outlook. While her associations cluster about the aristocratic and spacious social phases of the Old South, her intellectual detachment and tolerant sanity peculiarly fit her for writing social documents unwarped by sectional passion or local prejudice. To me *The Wheel of Life* is Ellen Glasgow's one thoroughly disappointing story—marking a desertion of her own special, regional field. In the more sophisticated cosmopolitan atmosphere of that novel she lacks that certainty of footing which marked her gait in traversing the familiar paths of the Southern plantation.

For long, Miss Glasgow has found the dramatic conflict of her stories in the clash between two strata of civilization in the South. The tragedy of *The Deliverance,* for example, is inevitable, since the high-strung, delicately nurtured daughter of the Old South cannot

condescend to the rudeness and low ancestry of the son of the New South, redeemed as these qualities are by sincerity, devotion, and steadfast strength. In *The Voice of the People* the stage is set for the clash between the upper and lower strata of society; they impinge upon each other and fall apart, rudely shaken, shattered. In many of her stories we are circumspectly led up to that crucial episode in the life of individuals and of the race when "blood" and "soil" come nobly to the grapple.

Hitherto, Miss Glasgow has been animated by a worthy but somewhat restricted ideal for the writing of fiction. Dwelling in Richmond, that whispering chamber of sectional failure and a lost cause, she has turned her face, with resolute courage, toward the new day of economic and industrial rehabilitation for the South. Her novels have been less biographies of individual destiny than documents of sociological change. They are regional, as is the Sussex fiction of Thomas Hardy; local as are the novelistic studies of the Five Towns of Arnold Bennett. But, till now, they have not been universal. With *Barren Ground* Miss Glasgow at *La Terre,* the Hamsun of *Growth of the Soil.*

It is true that Miss Glasgow still finds sustenance for her fiction in the contrast between the social classes —between the Dorinda Oakley of plain origin and the Jason Greylock of aristocratic lineage. But this contrast is immaterial and essentially factitious. *Barren Ground* is a superb study of the evolution of an individual, the growth of character under the grinding stress of individual folly and economic pressure. At the head of this review are the words: Soil and Soul. In conquest of the soil, this glorious heroine saves her

own soul alive. Besides the glamorous seductions of Morand, Margueritte, Arlen, the treatment by Miss Glasgow is artistically satisfying in its austerity and virginal restraint. Beside that sugary slave, Leora, in *Arrowsmith,* Dorinda is Spartan in courage, heroic in energy and will. She triumphs over Nature and Self with ruthless and iron determination, but in the end Life itself defeats her. She is Napoleonic in ironic consciousness and selfless force: "Could I be what I am, little one, cared I only for happiness?"

To few of us it is vouchsafed to realize our dreams. Love for Dorinda was a beautiful vision—having but slight relation with a human object. Jason was the youthful stimulant to confession, surrender, fall. As the years pass and Dorinda lives in turn the revolving cycles of Broomsedge, Pine, and Life-Everlasting, she finds no satisfaction in revenge, no exaltation in her seducer's ruin. To her is vouchsafed only the triumph of the stoic—who gave to the soil the soul predestined (save for some ghastly twist of Fate) to another soul. The marriage to Nathan Pedlar is a meaningless interlude in the larger symphony of Life and Destiny. "Behold! I show you a mystery." God works in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

In her own life she (Dorinda) could trace no logical connection between being and behavior, between the thing she was in herself and the things she had done. She thought of herself as a good woman (there were few better ones, she would have said honestly) yet in her girlhood she had been betrayed by love and saved by the simplest accident from murder. Surely these were both flagrant transgressions according to every code of morality! They were acts, she knew, which

she would have condemned in another, but in her memory they appeared as inevitable as the rest of her conduct, and she could not unravel them from the frayed warp-and-woof of the past. And she saw now that the strong impulses which had once wrecked her happiness were the forces that had enabled her to rebuild her life out of the ruins. The reckless courage that started her on the dubious enterprise of her life had hardened at last into the fortitude with which she had triumphed over the unprofitable end of her adventure. Good and bad, right and wrong, they were all tangled together.

Surely *Barren Ground* is a great novel—great in austerity, great in art, great in humanity.

AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

By THEODORE DREISER

Reviewed by Llewellyn Jones

Chicago Evening Post, January 22, 1926

In this, his "first novel since 1916," Mr. Dreiser runs true to type—which is minion—and there are two volumes of it. Of course, it is the accepted thing to say of Mr. Dreiser that by his piling of detail on detail he achieves an effect of mass, of portentousness, of epic significance as well as of epic dimensions. In his earlier books that was true—not of his two earliest, for in them he told a story within the ordinary limits of a novel. But in the present work it is not true. Clyde Griffiths is not a big enough figure to lend himself to the process—nor is he even a complex enough figure.

Clyde is the son of Asa and Elvirah Griffiths, unordained street missionaries, and poor and unpractical. They have moved from city to city, so that he and his sister Esta have never had any continuous schooling. The family is in Kansas City when the story opens and Clyde, past adolescence, self-conscious and unhappy when he has to sing with them in the street, rebels and insists on getting a job. After some weeks in a drug store he becomes a bellboy in a fashionable hotel, and his education in the ways of the world begins. Although diffident, he is attracted to women, and soon he is paying attention to a little shop-girl who regards him only as a source of revenue. Clyde is a weak type—affec-

tionate, impulsive, living for the moment, incapable of long-range views. And he is handsome, with large and appealing eyes. The good opinion of his companions is his moral law, and he always does make himself popular. And the text of Mr. Dreiser's novel is that to such people as Clyde the wages not only of sin, but even of too great a tendency to desire what one can't get, may be death.

Clyde is taken on an automobile party—in a stolen car—and the boy driving it runs over a girl. Clyde in a panic, leaves Kansas City, and after some wanderings gets a job as a bellboy in the Union League club. There he meets his father's brother, a rich collar manufacturer from Lycurgus, New York, and introduces himself. Samuel Griffiths is a practical, unsentimental business man, but he does feel that Asa's poverty is in part the result of their father's injustice to him, and it hurts his family pride to see a nephew of his a bellboy. So he tells Clyde to come on to Lycurgus and he will give him a job.

Samuel's son, Gilbert, does not like this at all, especially as Clyde looks like him, but is a little handsomer. He tries his best to keep Clyde in a menial position. But after some months he is made head of the department in which collars are stamped. His cousin Gilbert warns him that there must be no personal intimacy between him and the girls in his department, and Clyde, hoping that the family will do something for him, his head filled with visions of the lovely girls that visit in his uncle's house—he had met Sondra Finchley, the daughter of a rich manufacturer there on one occasion, and had admired her at a distance—tries to keep aloof from the working girls.

And then Roberta Alden, the daughter of a poor

farmer, comes in search of a job and is put under Clyde. Unlike the other girls, she is refined, quiet, very good-looking, a girl, too, of character. She and Clyde fall in love. They meet clandestinely. They become lovers.

And then, one evening Sondra Finchley in her car sees Clyde passing, and thinking he is his cousin Gilbert—whom she dislikes, although she is always polite to him—she offers to give him a lift. Clyde explains the mistake. Sondra, who thinks he is better-looking than Gilbert, is pleased by his evident awe of her, takes him to his boarding-house, and although she has heard he is very poor, she begins to feel interested in him. Soon after the idea occurs to her of spiting Gilbert by getting Clyde accepted in local society. Her plan succeeds better than she had intended, for she herself falls in love with him. And Clyde not only falls in love with Sondra, but with the idea of marrying such a rich girl. And so he begins to cast about how to rid himself of Roberta. But just then Roberta makes a most unwelcome announcement to him—and Clyde being much more innocent of the ways of the world than he had led Roberta to suppose, is unable to help her out of her trouble.

And so Roberta insists that he marry her. Clyde, who is getting on famously with Sondra, who, indeed had secretly pledged herself to him, is in a terrible dilemma. His efforts to help Roberta by illegal means nearly bankrupt him; her letters—for she has gone home for a holiday—drive him crazy; and he has the problem, too, of keeping in touch with Sondra in her summer home on a near-by lake, and of course, of keeping every one ignorant of his dilemma.

And then a newspaper paragraph about a double

drowning puts the idea of murder into his head—only to be indignantly repudiated.

Actually, Mr. Dreiser does not make Clyde turn out a murderer. When Roberta's death does occur it is an accident. Clyde simply fails to rescue her from drowning. But he had taken her to the lake where she is drowned. He had, even while he still thought he would not do it, plotted her death. And the jury convicts.

The title, *An American Tragedy,* suggests the typical. But the story of Clyde is not a typical story. And it is tragedy only in the sentimental, not in the classical sense of the term. Whether Clyde's deed is consistent with his character—even granted the workings of suggestion which Mr. Dreiser relies upon—is debatable. The strength of the tale is not in its portrayal of souls or of characters, but in its realism. Mr. Dreiser is a good reporter. His account of the outer circumstances of Clyde's life is colorful and dramatic. The reader of this book will really know what it is like to be a bellboy, how an automobile can get itself wrecked; and how a murder trial is conducted. Mr. Dreiser has a quick feeling for this sort of significant detail, the scene being the deathhouse in the New York penitentiary just before an execution in the adjacent room.

"And then, although Clyde did not know or notice at the moment—a sudden dimming of the lights in this room—as well as over the prison—an idiotic or thoughtless result of having one electric system to supply the death voltage and the incandescence of this and all other rooms. And instantly a voice calling:

" 'There she goes. That's one. Well, it's all over with him.' "

But apart from that sort of thing, Mr. Dreiser is de-

plorably weak. A novelist or dramatist should present human nature as human nature sees it. The instrument with which he works is insight. Mr. Dreiser lets what native insight he may have be colored, diverted, limited, by a priori theories as to what human nature is. Shakespeare was able to give us Hamlet in spite of the handicap of his not having read Freud. But Mr. Dreiser cannot give us human nature as it is because he has had the advantage of reading Haeckel. He is an extreme mechanist, and it ruins him as a novelist. Indeed he carries the matter to such an extreme that the reader is prevented from believing him even where he might well be believable. Let me give two examples of it. The first is merely stylistic but very irritating. When Esta reaches adolescence and begins to be attracted by the men, Mr. Dreiser is not content to take this as a basic thing in human nature—as something which we, his readers, having all done the same thing, will accept as perfectly natural. He has got to state it in pseudoscientific terminology as well: "Within her was a chemism of dreams . . ." And as Esta saw other people in search of love: "There was a stirring, a nerve plasm palpitation . . ." And her moods at this time are described as "rearranging chemisms."

Now what advantage does Mr. Dreiser think he gains by dragging in that awful word (which I suspect is his own coinage) "chemism"? Does it make for reality, for verisimilitude? It does not.

And the vice is not one of style only but of fundamental thought. After describing Clyde's family—an interesting enough family, but one which any competent novelist could "put over" without difficulty, Mr. Dreiser makes, regarding them, one of the most

absurd, unreal, untrue, infra-sophomoric (a word suggested by the model of his own "ultra-successful") statements that I have ever seen in print:

"That such a family, thus cursorily presented, might have a different and somewhat peculiar history could well be anticipated, and it would be true. Indeed, this one presented one of those anomalies of psychic and social reflex and motivation such as would tax the skill of not only the psychologist, but the chemist and physicist as well, to unravel."

I am not now referring to the English style of that. I shall speak later of Mr. Dreiser's style in the narrow sense. But of the thought—if one can call it that. Cannot you just picture the psychologist baffled by the Griffiths, calling in a man with a test tube and a solution of litmus to see what he can find out?

The wonder is how a man who takes the mechanistic theory of life so seriously as that can write a novel at all.

CONTINUATION OF PRECEDING REVIEW UNDER THE HEADING, *Mr. Dreiser's English,* IN THE ISSUE OF THE *Post* OF JANUARY 29.

In his *Straws and Prayer Books* Mr. Cabell humorously indicated that he was writing for future generations by giving footnote explanations of certain words, now current slang or colloquialisms, which may be assumed to need explanation a century hence. Mr. Dreiser not humorously, perhaps not even consciously, does something similar. When Clyde dances with Sondra and her society friends the dances, we are told, "were all of the eager foxtrotting types of the period." And when Clyde is on trial, his lawyers discuss a de-

fense "based on the customary legal proceedings of the time." It is evident from these two quotations that Mr. Dreiser is writing from a point of view which, if not *sub specie æternitate,* at any rate has posterity in view as well as his contemporaries.

But will his books be read so far in the future that legal defenses as well as ballroom dances will be markedly different from what they are to-day? If so, he will be an exception to the dictum that style is the sole preservative of literature. Not that that dictum must be taken absolutely. In lyric poetry it is perhaps the absolute truth. In prose a bad style, or at least a gothic or rococo style, may express a writer of a certain individuality—take Carlyle—and in so far as it does that it keeps the writer alive even if his thought becomes dead. Surely most of Carlyle's readers to-day read him not for his ideas but for himself: they enjoy contact with the personality, a contact made possible by the self-expression in every Carlylean sentence.

Of style in that sense Mr. Dreiser has not a trace. And his books will hardly be read in the future for their insight into the human spirit—unless *Sister Carrie, Jennie Gerhardt* and the autobiographical works, which do reveal their characters and Mr. Dreiser's personality.

But in *An American Tragedy,* apart from the pseudo-science of which we have spoken, there is a sheer ugliness of style exactly comparable to the ugliness of dress which would be achieved by a woman who covered herself with picked-up remnants. And where Mr. Dreiser does not pick up a soiled remnant of language he distorts our ordinary language. He uses such a word, for instance, as "anticipatorily," which is an unpleasant mouthful, and he invents—at least, I think

he must have invented it—a perfectly horrible word to describe a remark uttered staccato, "staccatically." The chances are ten to one that the reader will not be able to pronounce the word without tripping the first time he meets it.

Perhaps there is even less excuse for Mr. Dreiser's borrowed remnants of phrasing. Here are a few picked at random: "Each and every one"—borrowed from a circus poster, surely; "per contra," "ad interim," "via" and other Latin phrases borrowed from legal forms and railway time tables. "Major portion" of a journey, when "greater part" would do better. "Essential necessity"—a phrase which raises the philosophical question of what a non-essential necessity would be. Nor is Mr. Dreiser's sentence structure any better than his phraseology. "There were nothing but young girls there," for instance. And how, for arrangement of clauses, is this: "They returned in the direction of Taylor street without, apart from the proposed trip to Fonda, either having hit upon any definite solution." And here is the sentence beginning Chapter XX:

"However, as both Roberta and Clyde soon found, after several weeks in which they met here and there, such spots as could be conveniently reached by interurban lines, there were still drawbacks and the principal of these related to the attitude of Roberta and Clyde in regard to this room, and what, if any, use of it was to be made by them jointly."

And Mr. Dreiser can commit these stylistic horrors not only by the way and in the pedestrian stretches of his tale, but right in the midst of what should be his best effects. Indeed, the very peroration, so to call it, of his book is so marred. We see Clyde's mother, now very

old, still a missionary, thinking of Clyde, as her little grandson—who, as Clyde did years before, sings in the family's street services—returns from such a service. She gives Russell, the little grandson, permission to run to the corner to buy roasted chestnuts (thinking as she does so that she must not be too strict with him, as she might have been with Clyde). And that permission having been given:

"The small company, minus Russell, entered the yellow, unprepossessing door, and disappeared."

A beautiful ending ruined by that algebraic intrusion! How can any author do such things?

Only, one would suppose, if he is deaf to the sound of words, to the overtones of meaning in words; only if words are his medium because his themes are too complex to paint or put over by way of the moving picture. And yet, if a man's style is always expressive of the man, this very lack of any style shows that Mr. Dreiser's mind is disorganized, that he does not synthesize his impressions, that even his emotional reactions are facile, sentimental, not clear-cut. And his naïve idea that human reactions are to be explained in chemical terms is simply one more piece of evidence that he does not think clearly. For that idea would not be true even if a monistic philosophy of life were provably true.

And so, in estimating Mr. Dreiser's chances for immortality we must recognize two great handicaps: an inadequate, nay, an entirely fallacious, psychology; a total lack of discrimination in the use of his medium. The question then is, how much of Mr. Dreiser's real force, fine personality, is going to get past those non-

conducting lines and over to his readers? To-day we get over the handicap to some extent because we have the author himself alive amongst us. We read him in terms of what we know about his fine integrity, his refusal to be commercialized, his hatred of shams. But in future years, when the living personality is no longer here, when the picture of the man no longer is present in the reader's imagination as he reads, he will be judged by his style alone—not in spite of it. And we fear that that judgment will be predominantly against the claimant.

PIG IRON

By CHARLES G. NORRIS

Reviewed by Joseph Wood Krutch

The Saturday Review of Literature, March 6, 1926

The idea of turning the Alger books wrong side out seems to have occurred to Mr. Dreiser and Mr. Norris at about the same time with the result that the former has just produced the story of the idle apprentice while the latter has just published the companion story of his industrious brother. Mr. Dreiser offered us something in the nature of an apology for one of those youths who happened to possess neither the pluck nor the luck characteristic of his fictional prototypes, but Mr. Norris accepts completely the pattern of the *Work and Win* series, reserving his iconoclasm for their premises alone. His hero is one of those who came up from the country to make their way in the world and who made it because, unlike Mr. Dreiser's hero, they heeded the good advice and accepted the ideals of those who had traveled the road before him. In a brief episode he learns, what all are ready to tell him, that the primrose path leads, if not to the eternal bonfire, at least to financial ruin and from then on he accepts without demur the promise held out in the American beatitude: "Blessed are the clean-livers for they shall attain Success." From Mr. Wright, the Sunday School teacher, he does not imbibe much enthusiasm for abstract enthusiasm about Jesus, but he catches completely the practical morality behind it: The God of Success

is a jealous God and thou shalt worship no other God but him: Pleasure or debauchery, love or dalliance, are fatal enemies to singleness of purpose, but to those who are willing to sacrifice all else to him he will bring his reward. Sam Smith, for such is the undistinguished name of the hero, accepts the promise and he ends possessor of the magic million several times over.

Such is Mr. Norris's fable and it is one which might have served without much change save in its coloring as the basis of one of those little books which we used to borrow from the Sunday School library. Mr. Norris is no satirist and no cynic; he scoffs at nothing, not even the rather barren piety of his hero's patrons, but he manages, nevertheless, in his own serious fashion to point out the spiritual barrenness of the period which ended with the Great War. Ponderously and meticulously he recreates the New York which the generation just passed created, and by implication he passes his judgment upon it. Here are the great dark houses, costly but not beautiful, in which people lived; here are the people themselves, moral without elevation, powerful without achievement, worshiping success without ever having stopped to ask how success may be defined. To them can come no suspicion of failure; America presented a definite opportunity and they seized it; but now that the strength of the great national wave which carried them forward has passed it has occurred to Mr. Norris, as it has occurred to so many others, to put the Socratic question: America is a land of opportunity, but "Opportunity for What?" It is a question which one generation would not have comprehended, a question which the hero of the present book, come in the end to take stock of his achievements, finds half formulated in his mind, and it is the question

which half the American novels of the last five years have asked in one form or another.

Denied as he is either humor or brilliance, Mr. Norris is nevertheless able to demand the respect and hold the interest of his readers by virtue of a certain dogged seriousness of mind. His stories begin at the beginning and they end at the end; they rest upon solid foundations and they are constructed solidly brick by brick. No tremendous passion carries them on, no trace of eloquence sends them soaring, but they stand honestly and foursquarely fulfilling the purpose for which they were written. Compared with Mr. Dreiser, and under the circumstances the comparison is inevitable, he lacks the latter's glowing if smothered intensity and he lacks his muscular vigor. A discouraged idealist still hoping to find in life a possible good, Mr. Norris cannot describe a tragedy with Dreiser's exultant ferocity. The spectacle of his hero's failure fills him with a mood of almost elegiac regret and it is discouragement, not defiance, which seems to animate his writing. Yet he has withal the gift of sustained narrative and the gift of creating a solid and convincing background. Granted an intenser conviction or a more glowing passion his writings would be great; as it is they are no more than honestly good.

MANHATTAN TRANSFER

By JOHN DOS PASSOS

Reviewed by Sinclair Lewis

*The Saturday Review of Literature,** December 5, 1925.

I didn't want to review the book; I was off for a vacation in Bermuda. Now that I've read it, still less do I want to review it.

But it is not because I am writing at the amiable Hotel Frascati, with a turquoise channel inviting me to swim, a road among cedars and cocoanut palms calling me to tramp. My disinclination is because I am afraid that Mr. Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* may veritably be a great book. And I have come to hate all the superlatives of book-boosting; such daily hysteria as "This colorful and delectable tale by Mr. Zuglitz is the greatest adventure story since *Treasure Island*," or "With this grim and striking chronicle of pelican farming in Arkansas, Miss Mudd establishes herself as an authentic genius and for the first time gives to American literature the stark and earthy strength of Hamsun, Dostoevsky, and Flaubert."

Yet I must make quite as incautious a confession of faith in Mr. Dos Passos.

It is gloomy enough for a novelist to have to do murder on a contemporary. The professional executioners, like Mr. Canby, Mr. Sherman, Mr. Mencken—it is their official duty to jerk all the esthetic criminals off into eternity. But we occasional guardians of spiritual peace

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are typical militiamen; we hate to quell literary strikes and arrest chronic offenders; we like only to parade with roses on our muskets, cheered by the flappers along the way. Yet violent strike duty is really less risky than being benevolent. All respectable persons nod with delight when you suggest that So-and-so is a swine; but when you maintain that So-and-so is a gentleman and an authority on raising before the draw, then you are in danger of calling out that snicker which is the most destructive of human weapons.

Yet I am going to take the risk.

I wonder whether it may not be true that *Manhattan Transfer* is a novel of the very first importance; a book which the idle reader can devour yet which the literary analyst must take as possibly inaugurating, at long last, the vast and blazing dawn we have awaited. It *may* be the foundation of a whole new school of novel-writing. Dos Passos *may* be, more than Dreiser, Cather, Hergesheimer, Cabell, or Anderson the father of humanized and living fiction . . . not merely for America but for the world!

This really is dangerous. I shall have to remain in Bermuda. Oh well, it's not a bad fate. Two of the Boer prisoners who were sent here have refused ever to be coaxed back home to Africa.

Just to rub it in, I regard *Manhattan Transfer* as more important in every way than anything by Gertrude Stein or Marcel Proust or even the great white boar, Mr. Joyce's *Ulysses*. For Mr. Dos Passos can use, and deftly does use, all their experimental psychology and style, all their revolt against the molds of classic fiction, all their inferiority, their complexes of thought. But the difference is—Dos Passos is *interesting!* Their novels are treatises on harmony, very scholarly and

confoundedly dull; *Manhattan Transfer* is the moving symphony itself.

True, no doubt, that without Joyce et Cie., Dreiser and Gesellschaft, Dos Passos might never have been able to devise this channel for the river of life. Perhaps without a Belasco, even a Charley Hoyt, O'Neill might never have written as he does. But there is no "perhaps" in the question as to whether one prefers *Desire Under the Elms* to the glib falsities of *The Girl of the Golden West.* And for one reader there is no question as to whether he prefers the breathless reality of *Manhattan Transfer* to the laboratory-reports of *Ulysses.*

In *Manhattan Transfer,* Mr. Dos Passos does, really does, what all of us have frequently proved could not be done: he has given the panorama, the sense, the smell, the sound, the soul, of New York. It is a long book—nearly two hundred thousand words, no doubt—but almost any other novelist would have had to take a million words to convey all the personalities and moods which here are quite completely expressed. The book covers some twenty-five years of the growth and decay not only of the hundred or more characters, but of the whole mass of the city—the millions of characters whom you feel hauntingly behind the persons named and chronicled.

There are two central characters, a young newspaperman and his sometime wife, an actress. But with them are hinted or portrayed the millionaire exporter with a hand in politics and banking, and the hobo who gets a hand-out by dish-washing; the king of bootleggers, and the Jewish sweat-shop girl; the youngster who talks psycho-analysis,. and the less worthy but considerably more likeable youngster who kills himself by booze cum

gasoline—they and a thousand others, the very symbols and revelations of the new Babylon.

Mr. Dos Passos manages it by omitting the tedious transitions from which most of us can never escape. He flings the heart of a scene before you, ruthlessly casting away the "And so the months and seasons went by and Gertrudine realized that Augustus did not love her" sort of plodding whereby most journeyman novelists fatigue the soul. It is, indeed, the technique of the movie, in its flashes, its cut-backs, its speed.

Large numbers of persons are going to say that it is the technique of the movie. But it differs from the movie in two somewhat important details: It does not deal only with the outsides of human beings; and Dos Passos does not use the technique to acquire a jazzed-up hecticness, but because, when he has given the complete inwardness of a situation, he will not, to make a tale easy to tell, go on with the inessentials.

Then again there is Dickens. . . .

Dickens, too, expressed the vast London of his day; Dickens, too, leapt from one set of characters to another; and I can hear (with all the classroom tedium returning, after these twenty years) some varnished pedagogue explaining, to the four select young literary gentlemen and the hen-medic whom he always has for tea on Sunday afternoon, that after all, one Mr. Dickens, did in his untutored way, have everything that Mr. Dos Passos is alleged to have discovered.

And he will have this much reason: Only those of the young generation who have created one-hundredth of the characters born of Dickens have a right to sneer at him, and that does brutally away with 100% of the young generation. Certainly Dos Passos himself has not and probably will not create any one so endur-

ing as Pickwick, Micawber, Oliver, Nancy, David and his aunt, Nicholas, Smike, and at least forty others.

Yet Dickens, like Mark Twain and O. Henry, doubted his own genius and, straightway after building immortal reality, apologized for such presumption by dragging in page on page of respectable and lying hypocrisy. That Dos Passos does not do, probably could not do, not for one phrase. There is nothing here which is not real, instinct with life as we all know it and all veil it; there is not one character without corpuscles; not one moment when Dos Passos is willing to emblazon his characters by the tricks of caricature which, though they are considerably harder to achieve than is believed by the layman, are yet pathetically easier than authentic revelation of genuine personality.

Another difference is that the transition from one group of characters to another (in contrast to the more typical present method of centering all the tale about one person and regarding all others only in relation to him)—this manner which Dos Passos might seem to have borrowed from Dickens, Thackeray, Scott, and the other tale-tellers of their epoch, is actually quite another method.

Their chronicle is a patchwork quilt, a sharply demarked pattern of linoleum. In Dos Passos it is a skein of many-colored threads, each thread distinct yet all of them proceeding together.

And the classic method was—oh, it was rigged! By dismal coincidence, Mr. Jones had to be produced in the stage-coach at the same time with Mr. Smith, so that something very nasty and entertaining might happen. In *Manhattan Transfer,* the characters either do not impinge at all or do so only naturally. The world, I seem to have heard, is very small. Aunt Tessie McCabe of

Benner's Falls may seem far from Crocce of Naples but Aunt Tessie's nephew Winthrop, who is a lawyer in Omaha, has for client a spaghetti importer whose best friend is the nephew of Crocce. And to just that natural degree does Dos Passos intertwine his stories.

But the thing that really distinguishes Dos Passos is not the mechanics of technique. It is his passion for the beauty and stir of life—of people, of rivers and little hills and tall towers by dawn and furnace-kindled dusk. Many wise persons will indicate that he is "sordid." He is not! Scarce Keats himself had a more passionate and sensitive reaction to beauty in her every guise. He does not always express it in breakfast-food, easy for the moron to digest; no suave couplets are here, nor descriptions of sky-scrapers so neat that the Real Estate Sections of the Sunday newspapers will beg to reprint them. He deals not in photography but in broken color (though never, thank Heaven, in Picasso impressionism). But here is the City, smell of it, sound of it, harsh and stirring sight of it; the churn and crunch of littered water between ferry-bow and slip; the midnight of skyscrapers where a dot of yellow betrays an illicit love or a weary accountant; insane clamor of subways in the dark; taste of spring in the law-haunted park; shriek of cabarets and howl of loneliness in hall-bedrooms—a thousand divinations of beauty without one slobber of arty Beauty-mongering.

As might be expected of a man who could devise so pleasant a title as "Rosinante to the Road Again," Mr. Dos Passos is free of that sickly complex whereby one hates the lyrical, the charming, the demure aspect of beauty, and perversely proclaims ugliness as alone noble; that natural yet also puerile revolution against the prettifying of the machine-made manufacturers of commer-

cial tales. But contrariwise he does not, like most of us, behold merely such obvious aspects of city splendor as Fifth Avenue at dusk, when the great limousines slip by as suavely as silk drawn through the fingers. These he relishes, but he sees too the speckled walls of a hall-bedroom, he smells the pale fragrance of pine slabs in the dark lumber yard by the unknown river of night.

I am wondering again—I am wondering if this may not perhaps be the first book to catch Manhattan. What have we had before, what have we had? Whitman? That is not our Manhattan; it is a provincial city, near the frontier. Howells, Wharton, James? A provincial city near to Bath and the vicar's tea-cups. Hughes, Fitzgerald, Johnson, all the reporters of the Jazz Age? Their characters are, mostly, but foam on the beer! O. Henry? Change Broadway to Market Street or State Street in his stories, and see whether any one perceives the change.

But, to return, the real discussion will be as to whether Mr. Dos Passos is Sordid and perhaps even Indecent.

Of course, there will be such a discussion. Have we not, all the 110,000,000 of us, told ourselves that we are Interested in Culture? Do we not point out to the besotted European peasants that we have ten or twelve magazines each with two million or more circulation? Therefore, inevitably, the publication of *Manhattan Transfer* will be taken as of more importance than the election of Jimmy Walker or the results of the Yale-Princeton game.

(Dear Lord, and is this to be but joking? Who was the mayor of Florence when Dante looked at Beatrice? Who was the master of the college which kicked out Shelley? What was the result of the cricket game on

that day when Pater died? And here in Bermuda, when Tom Moore lived hard by, there was a Governor then, no doubt, and an Admiral who was, it may be, a Sir to boot. And did he once see Tom Moore plain, and did he stop and talk to him? I doubt it like the devil!)

Yes, Mr. Dos Passos will be slated as sordid. He alleges that the male persons, properly married, owning Buicks and bungalows, sometimes betray an interest in wenches not allied to them by matrimony. He hints that physiological processes continue much as they did in the days of Voltaire and M. le Père Rabelais. He maintains that bums on the Bowery often use expletives stronger than "By golly." He has the nerve to imply that college-bred journalists sometimes split infinitives and bottles of synthetic gin.

A low fellow! He does not see life as necessarily approaching the ideals of a Hartford insurance agent. He sees it as a roaring, thundering, incalculable, obscene, magnificent glory.

For whatever John Dos Passos does in this book, he finds life, our American life, our Manhattan life, not a pallid and improving affair, but the blood and meat of eternal humanity!

I do not maintain that it is a *duty* to be brutal. I quite understand why Mr. John Sumner should pinch *My Life and Loves,* by Frank Harris.

My Life and Loves really is a nasty book. It is foul. It is moldy. It is the senile and lip-wetting giggle of an old man about his far-distant filthiness. If the Puritans really meant what they say, they would make *My Life and Loves* compulsory reading in all public schools, because it would so disgust all sane children with the problems of Sex that they would become celibates and human naughtiness would end in one generation—along

with the human race. Nevertheless, it is a gruesome, post-morten, morgue job to read Mr. Harris.

But in *Manhattan Transfer,* when Mr. Dos Passos indicates that people are not quite always so chaste as they might be, it is not with a titter but with the proud high wisdom of the great ones. He recognizes the Sir John Falstaffs, the mad Hamlets, the yearning Ophelias.

* * * * *

I hope the editor will keep in the five asterisks I have inserted. In this case they have nothing to do with improper transitions. They are merely a cowardly way of skipping from one aspect of *Manhattan Transfer* to another.

Probably Mr. Dos Passos' greatest feat is to have escaped from the autobiographical ego-mongering which afflicts most of the young novelists above the grade of the Bernarr Macfadden publications.

In America and in England alike, these young aspirants write, again and again, the same story in the same way, and this is the chart of that tale:

A young man is (*a*) on a farm, (*b*) in the household of a father zealously given to finance and to scorn for Art, (*c*) on a newspaper with a cruel city editor, or (*d*) in a university, preferably Yale or Harvard, Oxford or Cambridge. Wherever he is, he discovers with bleating dismay that many rough rude persons do not perceive that he is a genius. And there is conversation about socialism and sex. Well, never mind. There is a girl—And so at last he writes a poem or novel, and immediately it is a great poem or novel, and sanctified critics with goat whiskers proclaim him the real right thing, and he gets divorced from the Girl, and marries the other one, and is equally unappreciated by her and, as the novel ends in the gray-blue twilight by the North

River, the Thames, or the Chicago drainage canal, he is preparing to marry the third.

This valuable novel, with its fascinating descriptions of the Life Literary, has been accomplished by the English fictioneers some 85,463 times in the past twenty years. It's so much more poetic to write about proof-reading than about auditing the accounts of a grocery-house! And now our American originals are managing to grasp the same intriguing plot, with the hero or heroine ending in the wide free spaces of Greenwich Village where he, or she, sits with the nicest newspapermen and amateur biologists, discussing the inner secrets of economics and esthetics; where he or she finds it possible to have the ultimate joy of fried eggs at midnight.

Of this mode Dos Passos is almost free. He is not entirely free. He does make his most important, or second most important, character a would-be free lance who yearns to get away from New York, to dash out into the Mysterious East and that sort of thing, but who for no particular reason never does dash till after four hundred pages. Between yearnings he writes little pieces. And he never can manage to stay married to the right woman. Yet even he does not sound like the type literary novel, because he is real.

They are real throughout, Dos Passos' characters. With every flare of beauty and perceptive imagination, quite without the laborious anatomical charts whereby the school of tedious naturalism tries to give conviction, he makes his people race across the page, alive. So right are their phrases that you hear their voices. And their motives are from life, not from the traditions of fiction. Where in proper tale-telling, all sinners are either flamboyantly defiant or crushed by shame, here is Elaine in *Manhattan Transfer* very fond of sinning,

but completely casual about it, and really a very nice girl.

I have, fortunately, one complaint. I see no advantage in Mr. Dos Passos' trick of running words together as in a paralyzing German substantive; in using such barbarisms as "millionwindowed buildings," or "cabbageleaves." "Grimydark" does certainly give a closer knit impression than "grimy, dark"; but "pepperyfragrance," "tobaccosmoke," and "steamboatwhistles" are against God, who invented spacing and hyphenation to save the eyes. Mr. Dos Passos does not need to call attention to himself by thus wearing a red tie with his dinner clothes. That may be left to the vaudeville intellectuals who, having nothing to say and a genius for saying it badly, try to attract bourgeois notice—which they so much despise and so much desire—by omitting capitals, runningwordstogether, and using figures in place of letters.

Another complaint is debatable. Possibly Mr. Dos Passos returns too often to certain matters—the processes and the results of promiscuous armor, fires and fire-engines and, for a curious addition, ferry boats. (I would ask my psychoanalyst about this ferry-boat complex, but he has turned bootlegger.) However this repetition does give a sense of the repetitiousness of life, and of the kinship of all the swirling city-crowd.

It is necessary to collate *Manhattan Transfer* with the book which introduced Mr. Dos Passos: *Three Soldiers.* To me it seemed lively and authentic; to many it was arty and whining—whine, whine, whine—the naughty brutal sergeant, oh, the nasty fellow! I challenge those who felt so to read *Manhattan Transfer.* There is no whining here! There is strength. There is the strong savor of very life.

But—most of all, the book is *interesting!* I did not read it laboriously, for analysis, but eagerly. I was sorry to see the pages before me diminishing; and I kept myself as long as possible from coming to the end.

Now if the lay public know anything about authors, they know that they are all log-rollers, and they will perceive, if I have given a general idea that I seem to like *Manhattan Transfer,* that I must be a friend of Dos Passos, whooping for him out of gang-loyalty. I have never seen the man but once. I met him at a party and talked to him for about one minute. I have a recollection of lanky vitality and owlish spectacles. That was years ago, and it was not till now that I found the feather, the eagle's feather—well, I forget the rest.

THE PERENNIAL BACHELOR

By ANNA PARRISH

Reviewed by William McFee

The New York Sun, August 29, 1925

If every novel were like *The Perennial Bachelor*, what a marvelously romantic and delightful life a reviewer would live! He would become bland and benevolent toward all. He would regard the world of books, publishers and authors with a mild and innocent eye, and in time he would doubt the very existence of Mr. James Joyce, Mr. Michael Arlen and Mr. Sherwood Anderson. These three gentlemen, together with Theodore Dreiser and Carl Van Vechten, should be induced to review this novel. It would do them good, and afford the public a fascinating spectacle.

There are many angles from which *The Perennial Bachelor* may be profitably considered. Two notable books of recent years may be used in comparison—*Main Street* and *The Old Wives' Tale*. Mr. Sinclair Lewis's novel comes to mind because it is the most famous and most widely read story of American life and *The Perennial Bachelor* is above all a story of American life. Arnold Bennett's great tale of English middle class existence is recalled because of its unforgettable picture of Constance and Sophia in childhood, in youth and beauty, and in age. *The Perennial Bachelor* is one of the most beautiful and most poignant novels ever written. The sacrifice of the three sisters and their mother to the supposed interests of a more or less worth-

less brother is told with rare art. Here, indeed, lies the peculiar quality of the book. It is the sort of book thousands of clever educated women feel they could write but lack the talent.

Any manuscript reader will recognize in *The Perennial Bachelor* the finished perfection toward which scores of manuscripts under his eyes have so bravely striven, only to fail woefully in power. On the other hand, while *Main Street* and *Old Wives' Tale* may be greater works in conception and in vigor, this new novel transcends them in technical skill. In very little over a hundred thousand words Anne Parrish has presented the history of a family in Delaware during the last seventy years. It seems, by reason of the freshness of the treatment and the extraordinary amount of minute details of life and emotion, to be far longer than that. One has the feeling on closing the book at page 334 to be leaving not a book but the abode of ghosts of the departed. The characters have the delicate veracity of old engravings and the brilliance of modern illustrations. It is one of those books so astonishingly well done as to be entirely independent of plot or, for that matter, of locality.

It is claimed to be a novel of American life. It is better than that. It is a novel of life. The Campions might have lived their lives of beautiful, brainless and amiable futility in England or France, in Louisiana or in California. Anne Parrish happens to know Delaware life very well indeed, and she has woven the threads with the ease of a supreme mastery of her materials and sure knowledge of her design. This latter quality is amazingly satisfying to a fellow worker in the craft. Anne Parrish never discovers any overpowering desire to break the rules of the novel writers' code.

If there were such a thing as a school of ethics for novelists one would be tempted to say Miss Parrish is naturally well bred as an artist. She never becomes familiar with her reader. She never divagates into criticism of the society she describes. Astonishing to report, she has nothing to reveal about sex from beginning to end, in the sense that modern writers use the word.

It is all about sex, of course, and a very tragic side of the problem indeed. But, to quote the brief announcement on the jacket, to which we must return presently, "The deep emotion that gives the book its power lies hidden beneath a gayety and a ripple of humor that mark it as a thing of tears and laughter."

This is a most accurate description. Our author never deteriorates into sloppiness, nor does she exasperate us with the pseudo-feminine flapdoodle of the woman's page type of writing. But she scores her signal success by combining a profound affection for the Campion family with a penetrating perception of their ridiculous peculiarities. It bubbles over, this faculty for striking and droll comparison, as when she gives in tender detail the amazing Victorian garnishings of the Campions' parlor, to do honor to the wonderful Mr. Lacey, who aspired to the Widow Campion's hand—

"Bowls of roses on little tables of papier-mâché, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, perfumed the darkened parlor in honor of Mr. Lacey. Other roses, artificial, adorned the ornament like the skirt of a lady's ball gown that filled the empty fireplace, looking as if the lady's head were stuck up the chimney, looking for swallows, perhaps, or stars. . . . The chilly marble mantelpiece had been put into a red flannel petticoat embroidered in yellow chain stitch . . . the chairs

were dressed decently in tatted tidies. Everything in the room was well covered, except the Venus de Milo in the darkest corner. . . ."

But never does this sense of humor become bitter. Even when she describes with clever mocking humor the exquisite lady killer, Mr. Lacey, in his suit of silver gray, she remembers he is really in love. There are real stars shining in his blue eyes as he comes to his beloved, though she is thirty-nine and he is past forty. "They were the hidden heart of the world, the pulse of life, the creators, through which life flows in its endless circle."

It is possible, of course, that people exist in these United States who will dislike this novel. They will regret that our author has given us no more of the modern boyish, bobbed generation than a couple of flashing pages. In our opinion this economy of line in the last chapter is simply masterly. The temptation must have been great to carry on and spoil the whole thing with a satirical revelation of the jazz age children roystering in the old Campion mansion, while the Perennial Bachelor and his adoring old maid sister decline into an unlovely senility. This we are spared. But some may object. Mr. Mencken will probably turn it over to his favorite minion, the common hangman, to be burnt. And this will be a pity, because *The Perennial Bachelor* not only reveals qualities which make it a delight to every unprejudiced critic, but it will probably be a huge popular success.

Mention must be made of the jacket, which is an unusually beautiful affair for a fine book. The "blurb" has already been quoted, and this reviewer desires to congratulate the publishers on recognizing the true scope of this modern aid to the book buyer. He has

had occasion in the past to protest with considerable vigor against the preposterous twaddle foisted upon us by illiterate and unscrupulous jacket writers. Any reviewer who has no time to do his own review could quite safely accept the jacket announcement on this book as a judicious and well written appraisal.

The Perennial Bachelor is the winner of Harper's $2000 prize for 1925. This is quite by the way. It would win any prize, in our opinion. It would win its way to popularity and critical approval without any such artificial aid. One envies the judges of such a competition, after many days of drudgery, coming upon this exquisite story, so tender, so shrewd, so skillful, and above all so faithful to all that is best in life and in literature. One wonders if they went any further. They would be only human to cry "We shall never find anything better than this." And we doubt if they would.

THE DRIFTING COWBOY

By WILL JAMES

Reviewed by Blair Niles

New York Herald Tribune Books, February 21, 1926

"I figgered it kind of queer that it didn't bother me to leave the movie game, and the good folks I'd met there, but I layed it to the fact that I wasn't cut out to be a actor anyway. I'd found it easier living there in a way and more fun than we'd have on the range, but I didn't get no satisfaction out of that and got to hankering for something more real, and what I was raised to doing.

"I wanted to stand night guard again with the snow or sleet flying by, and hear the range critter's beller, without the camera being near,—I wanted the real thing."

So does Bill, in *The Drifting Cowboy,* explain his desertion of Los Angeles, for what he was "raised at doing and knowed how to take"; returning, as he put it, to his "own breed of folks."

In taking the "foot rope off this book," Will James "turns loose" his second volume of cowboy life.

With vivid memories of the earlier work I opened the new book. Such phrases as "progress wanted his freedom" have persisted through the twelve crowded months since I first met Will James on the pages of his *Cowboys, North and South.* That book had been as freshly invigorating as wind which has blown across the pine forests of some high hilltop. But I began *The*

Drifting Cowboy with no pessimistic apprehensions. I was confident that Will James would not let his readers down.

And I found that from the preface straight through to the end there is the same exhilarating originality of expression, the same pictorial prose, the same exciting illustrations. It is impossible—and useless to attempt to decide whether Mr. James's sketches are more vivid than his prose, or the other way round. In both, there is the sense of suddenly arrested action; of life pausing for an instant before going on. The book is alive; which, when the mists of pedantic criticism have cleared away, is seen to be after all the one essential thing. If a piece of writing lives, then there is no more to be said.

It is thus evident that Mr. James has done that most difficult thing—he has repeated a success.

But there is more than that in *The Drifting Cowboy*. There is something of which the author himself is perhaps hardly aware.

In a recent Sunday supplement of a great daily newspaper there appeared these headlines, "THE BEST AMERICAN TRAITS—AND THE WORST."

Fifteen citizens of distinction had been interviewed and their opinions registered under Credit and Debit columns on the pages of an open book, which bore as title, *The Ledger of American Civilization.*

On the Debit side Hendrik Van Loon had cited "Failure to understand and appreciate the true nature of the substance called Bunk." Here one might page W. E. Woodward, that stimulating author who is guaranteed painlessly to remove Bunk in all its forms. But the suspicion is strong that the patient does not desire a cure. After all, why is it that we are Bunk-blind?

And was not Barnum right about the public's loving to be fooled?

Taking, as one of the best American traits, that passion for achievement which is a natural corollary of our nearness in time to pioneer days, and conceding that out of such ambition there may grow a worship of the recognition of achievement, rather than of the thing itself, until at last the glitter of success becomes a national fetich, then it is quite in the Euclid formula that we should have come to regard success as an end so necessary that any means to its attainment must be justified.

It is at this point that Bunk is laid on with a shovel. Bunk veneers the means, and, when necessary, even achieves a semblance of the goal itself. It is all very simple because the victims want so greatly to be duped. And in the dazzling presence of the fetich only the strongest eyes may escape Bunk-blindness.

But what has *The Drifting Cowboy* to offer as an antidote to this particular "Worst American Trait"?

In the chapter which Mr. James calls *Filling in the Cracks,* the Cowboy Bill has "run into the place where all the movie producers get their men when they want real cowboys for Western pictures." And Bill becomes one of the extras at five dollars a day for a month steady. He is later selected to wear the leading man's clothes, in which he is to ride a bucking bronco; he will be paid five additional dollars, and twenty more if, at the signal, he gets the horse in front of the camera and pulls him over backward, always being careful not to let the camera see his face any more than he can help.

"I begin," says Bill, "to see the light."

He accepts the terms and all goes well. Bill "sets

down on the reins and pulls that horse over backwards as pretty as you please . . . the director acts mighty pleased . . . and the leading man steps up, does a heap of congratulating, and wants to give an extra twenty-dollar bill."

But here is the comment of the Drifting Cowboy:

Some way I'm disappointed in him, and I tells my feelings to Sam. "From seeing him in the picture," I says, "I thought this hombre was a top ranahan, a he-wolf on a horse, and it sure gets me deep to learn that he couldn't ride in a box car with both doors shut, and couldn't throw a rope in the ocean if he was in the middle of it in a rowboat. He admits that himself, and still they keep on fooling people."

Sam offers worldly wisdom of the usual sort. He explains that the leading man is getting a thousand to Bill's thirty dollars a week. "People," he argues, "are not worried much whether he's a real cowboy or not, so long as he can roll his eyes right and at the right time."

I walks off (says Bill), rolls me a cigarette and thinks it all over. No doubt Sam was right, but to me it didn't strike me right, that one man should do all the dangerous work and have the other feller get all the credit for it, when all he did was congratulate after all was over—of course nobody cares about the credit much, but there was something about it that hit the wrong spot with me.

And Bill wasn't the only man to wear the leading man's clothes and be congratulated. Two other boys were called upon to double for him; "one to rescue a dummy supposed to be the heroine and come down on

the outside of a twenty-story building, and the other to do a high dive about fifty feet into the ocean to rescue that very same heroine."

Bill himself often doubled again for the leading man, once jumping his horse over a twenty-foot cliff.

It had to be done twice, being we didn't fall good enough the first time, but I got twice my price, and outside a sprained ankle and a skinned elbow, felt pretty good.

But always there was something about the game that didn't strike Bill right. And so he goes back to the real thing, to standing night-guard with the snow and sleet flying by, to listening to the range critter's beller, without the camera being near.

Months later in the "cow city," Bill saw featured in electric lights the movie in which he'd taken part. He read all about the daring horsemanship of the leading man and the idea came to him that he'd treat the other boys to the picture. He wanted to hear them say, "By God, that's Bill!"

But everywhere he had been cut out, except in the dangerous stunts in which he'd doubled for the leading man.

Then he remembered what Sam had said about their leaving nothing in the picture which would draw attention from the hero.

When the show was over the boys were all talking about the good stuff the leading man had pulled off. "He's sure a wampus-cat on a horse," said one. "I'll bet that boy is a real cowhand off the hills, ain't I right?"

And Bill answered, "Yes . . . some."

So *The Drifting Cowboy* becomes, unconsciously, a gorgeous plea for honest-to-God achievement.

RACHEL MARR

By MORLEY ROBERTS

Reviewed by Fred Lewis Pattee

New York Herald Tribune Books, March 7, 1926

Unquestionably in the avalanche of books that has swept over us during the past two or three decades there are many better products than can be found upon the book stands of any current year, some of them indeed mute and inglorious classics for the simple reason that they passed by so quickly in the rush that they were not seen. It is well, therefore, now and then to sift the great dump of the decades: many a diamond has been found among the tin cans and the ashes of last year's fires. The Blue Jade Library of hitherto unrecognized classics will be richly worth while if it can find even now and then an old book as well worth republishing as Roberts's *Rachel Marr.*

A "sex novel" of a generation ago, the book is a pioneer in its field; "a monstrous epic of the flesh," its author called it. It has therefore a double interest: what of its permanent value as a book, not of a time but of all time? and what of the light it sheds upon conditions a generation ago when it was first issued? First of all, as compared with the fiction of the present moment, it is a bow of Ulysses: no writer who began his work during the past two decades could have produced it. Its style has a Victorian quality which smacks of familiarity with the old university classics, with the Bible—its multitude of Biblical allusions di-

vorces it instantly from our modern period,—and it dares to take time to etch in backgrounds, pages long, of ocean scenes, of sunsets, of Cornish coast settings and quiet farm picturings. Night scenes inspire its author even to the creation of poetry: "the embracing, overarching clasp of the night. Night came to her like a lover, it kissed her even as the warm tides did," and so on to the end of the description with its "strange calm and absorbed peace and strength from the earth and the stars." Nature lies behind the tense tragedy like a soothing and healing presence. God made Nature, seems to be the thesis of the book; man made civilization: and "damn civilization," to quote Dr. Greer, perhaps the best character in all the cast.

Yet in an almost startling way the book is in the modern manner: it is an epic of disillusion, anti-puritanic, anti-clerical, pessimistic in its general atmosphere even to nihilism. It has fire in it—hell-fire in lurid abundance; the dazzling heroine is illegitimate of birth, and all save the hero himself are "of easy morals," and yet the book was written for the generation that was horrified by *Tess* and *Jude the Obscure:* it dared not go to the limits allowed to-day. There is in it neither adultery nor divorce: it ends on the high plane of sacrifice with deliberate renunciation before the dictates of "duty." But the author dared not complete utterly his circle of tragedy: there is the mere hint of a happy ending. The monstrous dog, "his hackles rising," lies at the bridge the termagant wife is to cross at midnight in pursuit of her husband, who is with Rachel in final renunciation, and we have been prepared to know that the dog is ready to kill her at sight whenever he can.

That the hero's name is Anthony was a deliberate

choice—the novel is the temptation of Saint Anthony with running cynical comment. The heroine, supremely beautiful, an exotic, a veritable swan among the Cornish village geese, is a Catholic; the hero, Anthony Perran, "stiff with the grace of the elect of God," a Puritan, "the vice of whose religion grew in him like a cancer," is smugly righteous, "set," inflexible, intolerant, hugging his "heavenly safety to himself, because he had as yet not known the might of the flesh, which he feared." Suddenly he finds himself in love with Rachel, who has the hell-fire of her dead mother in her veins, who, when once love has laid hold upon her, brings to bear upon him all her lures until both are in the grasp of a veritable grand passion. To marry her, a Catholic, was to him a deadly sin. To avoid it he rushed into a precipitate marriage with his cousin, a weak, vain, utterly selfish, fleshly creature, "as a duty, as a method of denial, as a safeguard." Then in a moment of illumination he discovers that Rachel would have given herself utterly, would have changed her religion even to idol worship at his word, and gone cheerfully with him to hell had he desired to go. Too late! he was married and nothing on earth could break the iron grip of his religion. Though his wife was foul as hell—and literally he found her so—it was for him patiently to endure.

And at every point, like a Greek chorus, old Steve Penrose, the ex-preacher town drunkard, Dr. Greer and old Silenus Perran comment on the action and the actors with diabolic wisdom: "we're all chained and go clanking, talking seriously of free will and grace and such things"; "the text of all fools is, 'it's very wrong, for it's natural'"; "do good, do the right thing and make everybody damned unhappy"; "the Fifth Gos-

pel: 'do what your heart says . . . do what pleases you . . . it is folly, incredible folly, to fight against Nature.'" At every step of his progress they lambaste with scorpions the Puritan Anthony: "What's your wife and your God if Rachel suffers? Oh, if I loved any woman I'd go to hell for her. But you leave her in hell and lay your bloodless heart before your God. You are not a man: you're a priest-like thing, a mere image, a cold abstraction."

The novel is tragedy from cover to cover; it is "Ethan Frome" lengthened to 423 pages and supplied with side tragedies, equally grim. In technique, in culminating interest, compelling power that grows to the end, it is a masterpiece. In its moment of highest tension, its night scenes, when death is abroad and murder, there is an intensity and a chill that have been created in like compass by few of the English novelists. The characters, especially Winifred, the devil-wife, the great dog Sigurd, old Dr. Greer, the disillusioned damner of civilization, and the old Puritan blacksmith who committed murder loudly "mouthing the psalms of David, who himself had burnt his enemies and sawn them asunder," are alive and convincing; for each of the cast the flesh is Fate and there is no resisting it. One finishes the book as one awakes from a nightmare; it takes one by the throat.

The novel deserves resurrection, but, judging from my own experience, it is the only one of Roberts's that does. It is the author's masterpiece; it is more: it is one of the dozen really great novels of the new century.

THE PEASANTS

By LADISLAS REYMONT

Reviewed by Vida D. Scudder

The Atlantic Monthly, March, 1925

Why Reymont rather than Hardy? Every one is asking this question concerning the last winner of the Nobel Prize. And naturally: the pictures of peasant life given by the two have many points in common. But even the most ardent enthusiast for the revealer of Wessex must concede certain advantages to the revealer of rustic Poland; not so much from the point of view of art as from that of the life depicted. Reymont shows an existence richer and broader; the call from ancient race-life is equally profound in both authors, but to the Pole the background of the Catholic Church supplies a poetic and decorative quality; ceremonies and customs abound more in romantic appeal; the interwoven folklore is more fascinating, and the delightful proverbs, always natural to the folk, are more numerous if not more racy. On the other hand, it may be claimed that Hardy, who has certainly more humor, has better caught the authentic peasant-accent. But this is hard to say; for a translation, even so flowing as Professor Dziewicki's, cannot have the full flavor of the original.

A truce to comparisons. Here is a noble book, a panorama of whole aspects of civilization. One can imagine readers hundreds of years hence, grateful to the author for a work which enables them to re-create

forgotten phases of social life better than Homer enables us to re-create Greece. The book is less noteworthy for individual portraiture than for catching great communal rhythms. The drama of the village is brought into unison with surrounding nature, and Reymont's people tend to be lost in his landscape. Two tendencies mark modern fiction, one toward a vast leisure, the other toward a nervous compression; it is in the mood of leisure, which is Nature's mood, that Reymont writes. The protagonist is the community; the impressive thing is the movement of the mass, conforming harmoniously, like a solemn pageant, with the slow cycle of the year. Throughout, the labor of man is felt, a part of earth's very breathing. One rarely meets a book which has so much weather in it. To real people, who have escaped the abnormal life of cities, nothing is more important than weather; and the story here is all involved with the silent changes of the seasons. It shares the qualities of the great days—the weird sadness of All Souls', the tender festivity of Yule; it is entwined with the events of the village—the spinning party, the great Fair, the stripping of the cabbage leaves.

To say that the individuals are part of a larger life is not to be unmoved by them. They live before us, these peasants, with their piety, their shrewdness, their liking for litigation. The minor figures of the book are admirable and fresh: Kuba, the honest and devout servant, with his shooting, his tenderness for boys and beasts, and with the horror of hospitals which leads him to hack off his own leg; Roch, the good old teacher; Yagustynka, the old woman with the evil tongue; the bombastic Voyt; the lovable priest; and not the least the animals—the poor cow that died, the pet stork, the

dog, Lapa. There is a double drama, which emerges more clearly and gains in intensity as the book proceeds. First, the feud between the old peasant Boryna and his children, especially the son whose sweetheart he has married and whose inheritance in land he has thereby cut off; then the broader story, constantly in the background, arising from the land situation—the conflict of the peasants and the manor folk concerning forest rights. The two strands come together effectively at the end. The suppressed tragedy breaks in a really magnificent scene, with an unexpected turn of emotion, most touching and most human. We are left eager for the sequel: *Spring* and *Summer* are yet to come.

TEEFTALLOW

By T. S. Stribling

Reviewed by Henry Longan Stuart

The New York Times Book Review, March 14, 1926

A rather recent phenomenon in American literature is the very different conception of the "solid South" which is beginning to be entertained by Northern readers and by the writers who interpret the South for them. Up to twenty years ago, or less, it would be no exaggeration to say that the vision which lay in the general mind when the South was mentioned was one of picturesque decay, upon which rested the pathetic glamour of defeat. Pillared and porticoed mansions tumbling to ruin, in which graces denied to the hustling North and West had once been cultivated; empty stables and waste plantations; proud cavaliers in shabby broadcloth, their grizzled heads held erect in the face of penury; gentlewomen in homespun, whose courtly manners somehow made the silk and jewels of wealth either an offense or an absurdity. It was a mise en scène with rich pickings for the sentimentalist.

The root of the matter, of course, was in the great civil conflict of sixty years ago, and if the indulgence amounting to affection with which the people of the defeated States have been regarded is turning in many quarters to a concern mingled with alarm and distaste, the change may very reasonably be ascribed to a realization that the settlement was by no means as final nor

as simple as it appeared. The feudal and aristocratic façade of the party that sought to disrupt the Union, and which has even led historians of the romantic sort to picture the struggle as a repetition of the age-long conflict between Roundhead and Cavalier, does not apparently survive contact with the actual South. The spiritual and mental heritage bequeathed to their children by the stolid and ragged levies who tramped behind Lee and Jackson is receiving a belated attention not unmingled with disquiet. The homogeneity and primitiveness of the vanquished is already beginning to press hard upon the more complex and disparate victor. How far that pressure will be exerted in the future and to what extent the balance of American social life, till now exerted toward progress and emancipation, will be adversely affected, is becoming the concern of many thinkers, of whom Mr. Mencken happens to be only the most boisterous and cynical. It is this peculiar appositeness in its publication that makes T. S. Stribling's *Teeftallow* important and timely.

Ever since Juvenal wrote the terrible *Facit Indignatio Versus* on the title page of his Satires, hatred and distaste have been strong factors in the production of powerful prose. In Mr. Stribling's case they lift a rather trite and familiar text to the dignity of an arraignment. The State in which Irontown is situated is not positively identified, but there is evidence that the story passes in a hill section of one of the more central Southern States, among a primitive community awakened to bustle and activity by the construction of a light railroad. Its theme is a simple one. Abner Teeftallow, the son of a decayed family, whose father has died in prison and whose mother was a pauper lunatic, is brought to the county seat by the warden of

the poor farm and employed upon the new line from its first day. No pains are taken to endow Abner with any nobility of character or fine thinking that mark him out from his mates. Hence it is less in the reactions of the community upon him than in his association with them in every phase of their lives that the inwardness of the novel is to be sought. He is brave where they are brave, crafty where they are crafty, inhibited by their superstitions, erotic, self-righteous and ready to cast his stone in the forefront of the Pharisees. He can seduce a young girl whom accident and helplessness cast in his way at the very time his lips are busy with lofty phrases upon the purity and sacredness of womanhood. Yet somehow or other, perhaps by reason of the very fact that his mentality is so helpless a host for any kind of popular prejudice that chooses to lodge and breed upon it, he emerges at the end comparatively honest and with his possibilities for better things still intact.

The community of Irontown, united enough when its business is the cheating of a "Yankee" or some such outburst of mob-righteousness as a lynching or "white-cap" party, is rather sharply divided so far as social practices are concerned. The hill folk are a lawless tribe, grudge-bearing and gun-toting folk who achieve personal liberty through the simple process of daring the law to bridle them. Their amenities are primitive. There was

a custom in Lane County of the young men of the neighborhood waylaying a suitor and chasing him away from his sweetheart's home with stones. The customary retort to this demonstration was for the swain to draw a pistol and fire it into the darkness. The assailants then ran away. If the suitor had no pistol, all he

could do was to run and trust to Providence to protect him from the stones.

A Sabbath diversion is to descend upon the village and

fire pistols around the church till the congregation ran away. . . . Inside the church the young hill women would be shrieking, not in terror, for they knew they would not be hurt, but to let the young men outside know they were impressed by their firing and courage. . . . It was a sort of tumultuous courtship: a roaring antiphony of sex.

If the hills are lawless, Irontown itself is no model of social justice. It is under the economic sway of "Railroad Jones," a forceful promoter, whose method with labor trouble is of the simplest.

"He reminds me [it is his adoring daughter speaking] of those old barons you read about in the Middle Ages. It seems to me that Lanesburg is his city and the jail his donjon. Lots of times he has niggers put there if they try to run away from his places. That's exactly the way the old barons did for the peasants."

Its moral hygiene is safe in the hands of a dynasty of Northcutts. One of them is a swindling banker who backs his refusal to cash laborers' checks in full with pious exhortations: "Boys, God wants you to save. It's your Christian duty." Another is a virago married to a laudanum addict, who carries the fiery cross when lynching-bees and whipping parties are in the air.

"If us folks in Lane County don't use more jestice and less law, this county ain't goin' to be fitten for decent God-fearin' folks to live in! I'm not against the courts.

I think they air fine in their places, but their place certainly ain't where they is a real crime and wickedness committed. 'Vengeance is mine' saith the Lord. . . . He can use the hands of the God-fearin' people of this town to serve His purpose!"

When Abner went closer [it is night, and Mrs. Biggers has had her way] he saw that one of the ears, two fingers and a thumb had been cut cleanly off by souvenir hunters. . . . Abner stared and stared in a kind of mental syncope. It seemed to him as if he were peering into another and a horrible world of which he had never even dreamed.

For religion Irontown, at intervals, has the Rev. Blackman, "the Big Bertha of Heaven," who "blasted hell out of Goodletsville."

Appended was a list of the topics on which the Rev. Blackman would preach:

"The Dance Evil, or Foxtrotting to Hell."

"Evolution, or From College to Damnation."

"Novel Reading, or From Print to Perdition."

"Scarlet Women and Dingy Men" (for men only).

"Bobbed Hair and Bobbed Morals" (for women only).

"There Is a City Not Built With Hands" (farewell sermon).

Two men stand out from this nightmare of spite, cruelty and tyranny that Mr. Stribling has drawn for us with a vitriolic pen that seems never to tire in its indictment. One is Belshue, a wealthy and middle-aged jeweler, with a wistful regard for girlhood, whom Irontown respects grudgingly, because he has managed to amass money, and prays for publicly because he does not conceal his scorn for its fetiches.

"Belshue would be such a good man, Lord, if he would only come to you as a little child comes to his father! He's a money-making man, Lord, a moral man, but no man can be saved through his own works, but only through the blood of Christ!" ["Amen! Amen!"] It is Belshue, who when the white-cap party are upon the trail of Abner's hapless sweetheart, piles the girl into his car, takes her to his country home and gives her and her unborn child the protection of his name.

The men of Lanesburg sympathized with Abner in a semi-humorous way. The man who came in for their contempt was Nessie's husband, A. M. Belshue. The jeweler had broken that unworded law forbidding any easement or comfort to the enemies of society. In marrying a social outcast, Belshue weakened the village discipline and imperiled its whole structure. His sin was, in reality, subtler and more insidious than was Abner's in deflowering the girl.

The other is Ditmas, a "Yankee" engineer and Y. M. C. A. worker, who tries to give the hobbledehoys of Irontown something to do on Sundays besides loafing, crap shooting, secret drinking and obscene talk, and whose baseball nines are driven off the field by Northcutt. "You must remember Ditmas is a Yankee, and Northern people don't look at these things as we do. I don't think they live quite as close to God as we do."

Belshue, in despair, takes his own life. Ditmas, tricked out of $17,000 of his partners' money by Railroad Jones, and having well drunken to drown his chagrin, puts the case with the spectral lucidity of intoxication.

". . . I want to—to impress this on you, Abner, 'press this great fack on you. This—dis—this—dis-ingenuous method of law and business here in South been a long gradual development, Abner—ver' long and ver' gradual. I see it all before me, Abner—hist'ry of the South." Mr. Ditmas made a weaving gesture. "Look at slavery. Slavery committed the South to stress the ex-exact words of a contrack above the ax-actual human rights it contained, Abner. Declaration of Independence did-didn' 'clude niggers. Constitution Newnited States didn' 'clude niggers. Property rights in a human bein', Abner, p-prevailed over natural right of man to his own life. You—you see, in the ver' beginnin' the South obtained unfair advantages through con-contrack. What result? She made a great point of ad-adhering to the letter of the law, not the spirit. What result? Her laws are a maze of technicalities that won't convict anybody for anything—technicality—get out on technicality. What result? White-caps, mobs, posses, lynchin's, burnin's, beatin's. You've seen 'em; you know, Abner. . . ."

He lay staring with uncoördinated eyes past the boys at his sinister vision: then he went on thickly: "An' it's spreadin' in all over our nation, Abner—ever'-where—technicalities—precedent—losin' the spirit of the law in the letter—an'—whitecaps. But—but nobody's to blame. Since there's no law of right, there must be one of might. Mobs and whitecaps, all over our nation. North and South, East and West, anywhere, ever'where—but there's nothin' to do. That's what I want to 'press on you, Abner; nothin' to do. You're a citizen of the South, and of the United States, Abner, and don't you do nothin' a-tall about it, Abner—f' th' ain't nothin' to do. . . ."

His hands dropped and his eyes closed. His message was delivered. Sweat stood out on his white face. The two hillmen stood looking at the figure.

"He shore is drunk," said Zed slowly.

"Shore is," agreed Abner in a gray voice.

So this alcoholic candor passed away with the words that formed it, and no one was the wiser or the better or the worse.

Whether any one is the wiser or better for reading Mr. Stribling's powerful and sombre novel depends a good deal on the sense of proportion he brings to its perusal. It is almost safe to prophesy that it will provoke violent discussion and dissent. On the face of them, arraignments of an entire community are always suspect. Sporadic facts, when marshaled into a consecutive narrative, may well leave a partial and false impression. Burke has told us that we cannot indict a nation successfully, and the dictum may well be applied to a section of a nation. When the satiric spirit is abroad, the exact locale chosen becomes of secondary importance. Human nature is a pretty fair constant and may be trusted not to let the satirist down too hard. Just as George Douglas, in his terrible *House with the Green Shutters* showed us, with much resultant scandal, the "Scot malignant," so Mr. Stribling, in *Teeftallow*, shows us the seamy side of the Southern hill-folk, who have been upon the front pages of the great press so frequently of late. Only an ignorant reader will stretch his charge against a parish to cover a State, and only those who have an exacerbated sense of sectional loyalty will believe such was his intention.

GARGOYLES

By Ben Hecht

Reviewed by Mark Van Doren

New York Evening Post Literary Review, October 28, 1922

In spite of the fact that Mr. Hecht is an incurably vulgar writer—and by vulgarity is meant not courage, not frankness, not strength, not animal spirits, but mere vulgarity—his novels would be better if he put himself wholly into them. We should get more vulgarity then, but at the same time we should get more frequent flashes of that observation which in *Erik Dorn* and *Gargoyles* has all too fitfully lit the pages.

Mr. Hecht is kept from being himself by an unpardonable pedantry. The theme of *Gargoyles* is the inward corruption of conventionally virtuous people. That is modern and good. No sensible person ever did deny that appalling discrepancies may exist between the ideas men cherish about their souls and the actual truth about them. Since Freud not only sensible persons know it; all persons of sophistication say it. And Mr. Hecht, who probably knew it on his account, merely says it with sophistication.

The result is not good art. At the expense of clarity and humor and interesting truth Mr. Hecht has become obsessed with a science. In the first place—and this might not have been fatal—he has neglected to unlearn the jargon with whose aid, no doubt, he originally won his awareness of human fact. *Gargoyles* is littered with temporary terms already tiresome: repression, suppression, expression, complex, rationalization, release, im-

pulse, outlet, sublimation, inferiority. In the second place—and this is fatal—he has neglected to relegate his science to the function it should have within his art. He has made it his end and not his means. The researches of psychoanalysts into human behavior are capable of both broadening and deepening the scope of fiction. Mr. Hecht, for instance, could have used these researches and made his hypocrites—George Basine, Aubrey Gilchrist, Fanny Gilchrist, Tom Ramsey, Judge Smith—more convincing than hypocrites ever have been. But he would have had to convince us first that he knew the outside as well as the inside of his five, that they lived for him before he laid them out, covered their faces, and began operating. The pleasure we take in a hypocrite artistically done arises from our clearly perceiving the difference between his real and his pretended motives. Mr. Hecht does not convince us that he ever heard, or saw, or felt, or believed his people as they appeared to other people. At the most they are bundles of behavior, problems in the various complexes. He takes us straight inside of them, and insides, when outsides are unknown, become distressingly monotonous. The fascinating thing about hidden springs of action is that they are hidden. Good writers make us feel that we know them, but they are too wise—not too nice—to expose the naked coil.

Gargoyles is vulgar, pedantic, humorless, and monotonous. Yet there are moments when the author looks at life. On page 13 certain analogies between good and bad women are brilliantly pointed out—not from textbooks:

. . . As the night waned he had grown philosophical and thought how with good women one began with per-

sonal talk, with an exchange of confidence. One began with emotions, with gentle lacerations, wistfulness, sadness. And one progressed from these towards the intimacy of physical contact. But with bad women one began with the intimacy of physical contact. Only the abrupt matter-of-fact tone of the thing robbed the contact of all intimacy. And one progressed from this contact towards a wistfulness, a gentle shyness, and finally an exchange of confidence and personal talk. This last contained in it the thrill of intimacy. A good woman surrendered her body and inspired thereby a sense of possession. A bad woman surrendered the secret of her birthplace and of her real name and inspired a similar sense. There was also obvious the fact that the same sense of dramatic coquetry, idealism, or whatever it was that induced the good woman to withhold her body induced the bad woman to withhold her confidence.

Tom Ramsey here and there becomes really Tom Ramsey and not Mr. Inferiority Complex. Lindstrum and Doris promise, though they do not finally manage, to be born. There are phrases, epigrams, paragraphs, that any one would be glad to have written. Will Mr. Hecht stop being inferior to himself?

THE WORLD'S ILLUSION

By JACOB WASSERMANN

Reviewed by Stark Young

The New Republic, March 23, 1921

The World's Illusion is essentially a Continental book. It could not be imagined as coming out of England or America. The violent heights and depths of living that are portrayed in the characters; the complexity of the substance that makes up their lives; and the range and freedom of the book to use what the writer wills to include in it; the abandon; the unconcern about being possibly ridiculous; the intensity of the idleness, adoration, risk, debauchery, ecstasy and ruin; and the kind of spiritual romanticism in which the matter is so persistently seen by the creator; all these qualities are anything but American.

And you have only to remember the sum of these things to realize how simple for the most part our American life still is. America has hints of these things here and there and her newer writers venture now and then on hints of them. But compared to this world of Wassermann's we are still a frontier, elemental world, not very sure of ourselves and seeing our lives very simply and uniformly. We have standards by which *The World's Illusion* is violent and licensed and shocking; other standards by which it is formless and unrestrained; by other standards it is decadent; by others an immoral book, Slavic, socially destructive;

by others a ridiculous book without any sense of humor at all; just as we have Boston, New York, Texas, Chicago. But we have no standards by which this book is our own. Which is a very good reason, I think, for our reading it.

The author of *The World's Illusion* needs for his idea a multitude of characters. To make them carry out their parts he uses a sort of moving-picture method of cut-ins; they appear, go with their lives, are cut off suddenly, sometimes at the very top of an exciting incident, and other characters come on. The scene itself is shot about with the same suddenness. The scenes cut from Vienna to Paris, Spain, Italy, Russia, England and South America.

In the midst of all this profusion, the story itself winds in and out and turns more and more on the development of Christian Wahnschaffe, the son of a great German steel baron. He is a youth of incredible beauty and fascination, strangely quiet, far-off, self-contained. From the first his power over the people around him makes him a kind of cult with them. With Christian goes Eva Sorel, a dancer, whose body is described as a flame, inseparable from her soul and her dauntless mind. She meets her death at last at the hands of the Russian mob, in the golden palace that the Grand Duke has built her. Crammon, a man about town, Viennese Epicurean and philosopher, an economist and exquisite in living, in pleasure, in social steering, is Christian's mentor for the first half of the account; and Christian's growth is measured by its distance from him. There is Karen, the prostitute, rotten with disease, whom Christian protects; Ivan Becker, the Russian leader; Amadeus Voss, religious voluptuary, living on Christian; Neils Heinrich, the

epileptic criminal; the great actor Lorm, slowly decaying; Lætitia, who marries a green-skinned fanatic from the Argentine; and counts and princes and countesses, the lion-tamer, English lords, and scores of other figures.

But as the book progresses Christian becomes the center of it, and the essential point to Christian is that he lives more and more with the necessity of getting down to the bottom of human nature. He believes that there is no justice among men that is true, nor any universal justice. No man is to judge another. Before Neils Heinrich, who has murdered the woman Christian loves, he kneels, and Heinrich kneels down before Christian and confesses his crime; his guilt is cast on Christian and he is free, but at the same time Christian is free; and Heinrich goes away to confess to the law and so release an innocent man already accused. "One must kneel and gather up one's soul," Christian says to his mother. In the end he disappears from all who knew him, to become the saint, not of the underworld exactly, but of all human life.

The World's Illusion is about two-thirds as long as *Jean Christophe* and has been compared to it. But to compare this novel with Rolland's or with Tolstoi's, is to miss whatever point there may be to it. *Jean Christophe* and *War and Peace* are realistic books, deeply observant, steady, sophisticated, profoundly true in their details and in their knowledge, romantic perhaps because they are true.

The World's Illusion is essentially a visionary book. It is true only because it is romantic. It is a romance based on cosmopolitan information and reality. The resources of Freudian thought and experiment and suggestion are profoundly drawn upon, with profit and

with enlargement of scope. The shaken and revealing states of mind that followed the upheaval of the war are made to contribute to the novel's material and philosophy and prophetic insight.

But all this detail of science, knowledge, wit, poetry and horror and worldly wisdom are never quite actual; they are always seen through a mental lens; the whole thing is enlarged, gets a mystical halo about it; it is always gigantesque, as the French say of Balzac. By this type of mind much of the precise actuality set down is invented. In spite of its prose naturalism the main current in *The World's Illusion* is poetic. It suggests a sort of half Slavic, Franciscan romance.

REVIEWS OF POETRY, DRAMA AND CRITICISM

For some ten or fifteen years critical theory with relation to poetry has been in a condition of sharp controversy. Many versifiers have reacted against lyricism in poetry and have attempted to reach a wider public by means of a less exacting technique. Magazines of verse have multiplied and have extended hospitality to productions that would have had no chance of seeing the light a quarter of a century ago. The dispute has revolved about the question of the importance of form. Some have maintained that rhyme and metrical arrangement of words, whether in the rhythm of accent or in that of line, were negligible and perhaps to be definitely disregarded. Reviewers have hardly been able to approach the discussion of poetry without grounding their critical judgments upon some established opinion touching this phase of the subject.

In considering their literary pronouncements we shall wish to know of our reviewers whether they do or do not care greatly for some singing quality in poetry. Does the particular reviewer value organic structure in a poem? Does he put emphasis upon the significance of emotion or of thought? Does he care for nicety in phrasing, for the illuminating power of words? How far is he ready to admit the raw, the rude, or the common into the poetic fellowship? How far is sentiment or idea in poetry the more important for him? Such questions have some relation to the drama, to literary criticism in itself, and indeed to fiction, but they more directly touch upon problems that have come up to fresh attention in recent discussion about poetry.

BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS

By D. H. LAWRENCE

Reviewed by Conrad Aiken

The Dial, June, 1924

One cannot be indifferent to a book by Mr. Lawrence. He is very much alive in his own peculiar way. If he is recklessly unequal, uncontrolled, one must add that even at his worst he is interesting; and at his best, in prose, he is decidedly the most living and "possible" of contemporary writers of English fiction. One does not guess where he will go. His novels are never wholly satisfactory—they are not good works of art. Almost uniformly they show a tendency to break in two, their construction is faulty, incredibilities are indulged in, and at some vital point in each the credulity of the reader is forever lost. It has long been apparent that Mr. Lawrence is a man obsessed, unable to conceal his obsession; sex-crucifixion is his iterated theme; and he displays in all his work, verse and prose, the sensitive fierceness, the sadistic awareness, which almost invariably accompanies this type of obsession. He is an Erisichthon: tears wolfishly not only at his own flesh, but also at the world which, inevitably, he has created in his own image. In his novels, at the dictation of this fever, he sublimates his characters into types; and one watches him, over and over, luxuriating in the last pang of ecstasy at his subjugation, so richly arranged and so intensely pitched, of the cold tall blond "Arctic" type (which has a predilection for Alps) by the swart furry

animal "Mediterranean" type (which has a predilection for underworlds and darkness). Latterly, also, one observes a somewhat disquietingly increased effort towards a rationalization of this obsessive "world"—a rationalization irrational and clumsy, a muddy psychoanalytic mysticism, full of meaningless jargon and highly "affective" logic. One sympathizes with Mr. Lawrence, and hopes that he will find his way out, solve his problem, discover peace; but one is bored and incredulous; and one prefers his solution when it is in narrative form, a parable.

One sums up one's feeling, in all this, by simply saying that Mr. Lawrence is a man of genius, but of that sort which lacks sufficient self-control and self-awareness. This fact has been as manifest in his verse as in his prose, perhaps more so; and his latest excursion into verse, in which one sees him quite perceptibly deflected by Whitman, is no exception. *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* is not a wholly successful book. Taken simply as description, some of Mr. Lawrence's birds, beasts, flowers, and prophets are, as one would expect, intensely vivid. The baby tortoise, seen as a "Tiny, fragile, half-animate bean," "Rather like a baby working its limbs"; the mother tortoise "Taking bread in her curved, gaping, toothless mouth"; the father tortoise, "tupping like a jerking leap, and oh! opening its clenched face from his (*sic*) outstretched neck and giving that fragile yell, that scream, super-audible from his pink, cleft, old-man's mouth, giving up the ghost, or screaming in Pentecost, receiving the ghost"; the mountain lioness with her "bright striped frost-face"; the snake who "sipped with his straight mouth, softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body, silently"; the cyclamens, "Like delicate very

young greyhound bitches, half-yawning . . . folding back their soundless petalled ears"; and the "weird fig-trees, made of thick smooth silver, made of sweet untarnished silver in the sea-southern air—I say untarnished, but I mean opaque"; all these are excellent bits of descriptive prose, sharp and exact, and one could cite a good many others. But their excellence, it must be insisted, is a prose excellence, level, cumulative, explanatory; only infrequently in his book does Mr. Lawrence substitute for this method the method of poetry, with its sharp brief suggestion, its *"vox et praeterea nihil,"* and its total elimination of the personal presence—everywhere else so manifest—of Mr. Lawrence; Mr. Lawrence in an old suit of clothes, affable, informative, speculative, a little inclined to be facetious, now and then somewhat cheap, and often dull.

And it is of this relaxed personal presence that one is, after all, most tiresomely aware in Mr. Lawrence's book. In general these poems are verbose; a piling up of descriptive epithets, a stringing together, in opposition, of words curiously strained and forced, images strained and conscious. This prolixity, now and then brindled with vividness or mere idiosyncrasy (verbal or affective) finally makes one wonder whether it is the display of a kind of literary vanity. Mr. Lawrence appears to believe that all that is necessary for him is to "spill" his consciousness. If there is any selection or arrangement at work at all, it is not enough in any poem here printed to make of it a work of art. It remains simply a kind of amusing chatty comment, under which one perceives that Mr. Lawrence's aim is simply the assertion of his personality. Perhaps he caught this from Whitman? At all events it is a common form of esthetic error at present, and worth examination.

It is customary, in discussions of art, to use the terms objective and subjective. Strictly speaking the distinction is indefensible, for no work of art, however "objective" in appearance, can be anything but the artist's self-portrait. But the distinction can have a clear validity if we define it; and we must define it as meaning that the ideal "objective" artist is one who, in the production of his self-portrait, employs affective terms —symbolisms of theme and form—which are universally significant and intelligible; whereas the ideal "subjective" artist is one who in the production of his self-portrait employs affective terms (of theme and form) significant and intelligible only to himself. Of course the ideal objective artist is an impossibility—the ideal subjective artist a lunatic. Or one may put it another way: that the objective artist's psychosis corresponds at a maximum number of points with the "average" psychosis of mankind, whereas the subjective artist's psychosis is peculiar to himself. Again: the objective artist, in whom a sense of reality is relatively mature, is aware of and understands the psychotic needs of mankind, and endeavors to be as useful to his audience as to himself; but the subjective artist, in whom the sense of reality remains infantile, disregards and scorns his audience, and considers himself a god, the only source of true wisdom, the only true center of awareness. With these relative distinctions in mind, it is easy to see that in what we are accustomed to call the "disintegration" of the arts during the last decade we witness a very marked movement away from the objective (in our sense) and towards the subjective. In Cubism, Vorticism, Expressionism, and Dadaism, the emphatic common factor is the marked increase in the solipsism of the artist, accompanied, as we should expect, by a more

or less complete breaking up of established forms and symbols, and a conscious contempt for manifest intelligibility. We are assured by psychologists that this breaking up, accompanied as it curiously is by a distinct historical regression, or return to the primitive, is a good thing, and is necessary periodically if art is to remain "healthy" and to "develop." But we are also assured that the actual work produced at the moment of regression—poetry, for example, in which the holophrastic method is reverted to; sculpture which is precultural or negroid; or, in general, the reversion to a primitive ritualism—is, naturally, infantile; and is only of use as the starting-point for a renewal of growth, which would perhaps take the form of a gradual selection and refinement of *valid* symbols from amid the mass of the *in*valid. At its lowest, there can be no distinction between this art and the art of the definitely insane. It is hardly a step from the compulsive iterations of religious mania to the stammerings of Miss Gertrude Stein, or Mr. Pound's "Spring . . . Too long . . . Gongula"; and even so fine a poem as Mr. Eliot's *Waste Land* is not untainted. That the "latent" meaning may be, for the artist, tremendously rich, dazzlingly illuminating, and highly organized, makes no difference, if this meaning is not successfully conveyed. Dr. Pfister, in his *Expressionism in Art,* observes:

". . . there is no doubt that the expressionist often chooses his colors not on account of their character as felt by men in general . . . but on the strength of repressed experiences and fancies of which other men cannot have any idea."

He also cites the analogous case of a youth, suffering from cryptolalia, who

"felt himself compelled . . . to fill up . . . whole volumes with written characters that resembled shorthand, the Morse code, or exotic scripts. An incredible number of perfectly elaborated systems were at his disposal, but not one was intelligible. Only on closer investigation it became evident that there really existed a *system full of meaning* . . . a regular artificial language, *but inexplicable to consciousness.*

If now we keep some such reflections or speculations as these in mind; and if we keep in mind also the fact that we have no right to attribute any "absolute" badness to the ideal subjective work of art, or absolute goodness to the objective; if we reflect further that the practical test of "successful communication" compels us to accept Hall Caine, Mr. Harold Bell Wright, and Mr. Robert Service as the greatest living artists; and if we add to this the often demonstrated fact that (representing subjective as *a* and objective as *b*) a work of art may be in its own generation *a*-2, but, five or ten generations later, *b*-2; then we are in a position to contemplate with some freedom any such peculiar specimens of the contemporary disintegration, or reintegration, of poetry as these poems by Mr. Lawrence. It is clear that we must put Mr. Lawrence pretty far toward the subjective end of the scale. We have already seen, and taken as our point of departure for speculation, the fact that the "relaxed personal presence" is one of the most striking features of these poems; a fact which clearly corresponds with the common expressionist view that unexplained confession, direct or in symbolism, is sufficient. But we can now object to this that if the mere presentation of his own personality is to satisfy us, we must insist that the personality should (1) be one of genius; (2) with a decided gift for communication; and (3)

unconscious partly or wholly of the extent to which it merely communicates *itself*. The latter point is important. We enjoy, in a work of art, the overtone or aroma of personality; but the deliberate exploitation of personality, as Whitman exploited it, is apt to be otiose, if not repellent. The real "ghost" is lost in the process of elaborate dishevelment, and all that remains is a parade of irritating superficialities, and perhaps a considerable vanity. In Mr. Lawrence's case, we find this result conspicuous. And, in addition, we find him a little tiresomely idiosyncratic in a way we suggested earlier: i.e., sex crucifixion. In this regard, too, he is well along toward the subjective maximum. He sees the world exclusively in terms of a personality which is an obsessed one, and which has in some respects remained infantile. Figs, tortoises, goats, dogs, flowers—all, to Mr. Lawrence, writhe in sex-martyrdom. Even the harmless, necessary moon is adjured in rising to burst the membrane of the stars, and

> "Maculate
> The red macula."

Finally, as regards form, it remains to be observed that Mr. Lawrence has carried disintegration a long way back, and has only in a few instances taken a new step forward from the point of rest. For the most part his structure is casual, slipshod, and rhythmless, or, as said earlier, a prose structure. In this, too, it is to be feared that he speaks too idiosyncratic a language—his "formal" symbols are not likely to be found either widely or intensely valid, now or later. Or so, at any rate, one dares to guess.

THE THEORY OF POETRY

By LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

Reviewed by Newton Arvin

New York Herald Tribune Books, February 28, 1926

In more guises than one, of which Signor Croce's purple is the most splendid and the Abbé Bremond's dialectics the most tenuous, the heresy has gained ground latterly that poetry is a subtle and special essence, to be recognized as "purest" when its references are most restricted and its boundaries least inclusive. *Poésie pure* is not easy to distinguish from the unheard melodies that Keats found sweetest, but that as a true poet he did not content himself with singing, or from that "highest poetry" which, according to Samuel Butler, is "ineffable." Its critical expounders are open to the charge of confusing purity with emptiness, and that offense is perhaps as reprehensible in esthetics as in morals.

Against such errors, at any rate, Mr. Abercrombie, himself a poet of enviable "purity" and distinction, has set his face in this thoughtful and cogent book. The title, *The Theory of Poetry*, is, properly speaking, applicable only to the first half of the volume, the second half being occupied by another series of lectures on "The Idea of Great Poetry." From the two parts emerges a rounded and weightily enforced definition of the nature of poetry itself and of its true greatness that it is difficult not to accept as final. Briefly Mr. Abercrombie holds that what lies at the bottom of the poetic

impulse is the desire for "perfection of experience"—the desire to create a world in which all the imperfections of the real world as well as its unambiguous satisfactions are given a meaning acceptable to the whole mind of man.

This is the height of the understanding of poetry which its theory should give us—a reasoned sense of its constant invigoration of our minds by creating for us a world in which our ownership is at last complete; so complete that, in its largest revelation, evil ceases to be a meaningless incoherence and falls in with what we most profoundly desire—some assurance that everything we can experience must somehow be significant to us.

No doubt this, or something very like it, has been said more than once before. Surely it has rarely been said with greater clarity than here, or with more buttressing from analysis and illustration. In the light of this definition Mr. Abercrombie approaches the vexed questions of inspiration, form, technique, the meaning of words in poetry and the like in chapters which are made luminous by the operations of a mind singularly free from cant, metaphysics and pedantry. There is not room here to discuss his exposition of syntax as the technique of unifying "meaning" and of rhyme as the technique of unifying "sound," but its authenticity may at least be recorded.

The second part of the volume might easily be accepted with more reserve than the first. In it Mr. Abercrombie undertakes to give an answer to the question, "How may we recognize the quality of greatness in poetry?" He comes to the conclusion that, since not only the *range* of its matter must be considered, but also

the complete and satisfying *organization* of that matter, poetry becomes most unmistakably great when a large and significant world of human experience is embodied in the form of a personal figure. It follows that great poetry is always epic or dramatic poetry, since only on those levels is the experience utilized sufficiently complex for greatness and sufficiently centralized in a "hero." Mr. Abercrombie's illustrations of his thesis are drawn from Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and Goethe, and in most cases these illustrations are persuasive.

Whether it does not involve somewhat too dexterous a dialectic to prove that the *Divine Comedy,* for example, owes its greatness to the heroic force of Dante's own personality as a unifying element, and not to the central conception itself, with its execution—this is the kind of question that remains in one's mind even after Mr. Abercrombie has concluded. Perhaps he has only proved that greatness in poetry is contingent upon its human "significance" and may be as undeniable in a lyric as in Homer, if the lyric is comparably rich in relevance. Certainly he has proved this much, and to have done so is to have demonstrated (what apparently needed demonstration!) that poetry is something more than an incantation; something less than an Eleusinian mystery.

SAINTE-BEUVE'S THEORY AND PRACTICE AFTER 1849

By LANDOR MACCLINTOCK

Reviewed by Irving Babbitt

The Weekly Review, September 17, 1921

In his treatment of Sainte-Beuve's critical activity during his most mature period, Mr. MacClintock has the advantage of an attractive subject. He has applied to Sainte-Beuve his own method, that of significant quotation. The copious extracts (marred, unfortunately, by more than the permissible number of misprints) on the various qualifications of the critic according to Sainte-Beuve should be of service to those who wish to get their bearings in the present confusion of critical standards. Certain writers of late in both Paris and London have been expressing dissatisfaction with Sainte-Beuve. They are very far from agreeing with Matthew Arnold, who grants to Sainte-Beuve a prëminence in literary criticism of the same order as that of Homer in poetry. They are renewing the charge brought against Sainte-Beuve by Othenin d'Haussonville that he is getting too far away from Quintilian; that he is sacrificing, in other words, what is specifically literary in criticism—namely, the study of the work of art in itself and in its relation to the laws of its genre—to mere biographical irrelevances and at times to mere gossip. Sainte-Beuve himself said in reply to this charge: "I do not renounce Quintilian, I circumscribe him." The result of Mr. MacClintock's investigation is to vindicate him from

the charge of insensitiveness to the formal or stylistic virtues. In general Sainte-Beuve managed to combine the new "open-mindedness," the great expansion of knowledge and sympathy that marked the nineteenth century, with fairly definite standards of judgment. After establishing that Sainte-Beuve was an esthetic and judicial as well as a scientific and historical critic, Mr. MacClintock concludes that he based his final appraisement of a work on certain abiding principles. "These major criteria, or abiding principles, are four: taste, reality, tradition, and logic and consistency; to which we add morality as a fifth, though minor, one."

The passages that bear on Sainte-Beuve's conception of taste are especially interesting. According to the extreme modernist, genius is merely a process of self-expression, a spontaneous unfolding of a native impulse. The critic, for his part, is to receive so fresh and sympathetic an impression from the self-expression of the genius that when passed through his temperament the work of art issues forth a fresh creation. What is eliminated is the discriminating and selective element, the standard that is set above the temperament of both critic and creator. With the elimination of this disciplinary element genius and taste not only run together, but both acquire a fine facility. As Mr. Spingarn says: "We are all geniuses, we are all possessed of taste." Sainte-Beuve recognizes the modicum of truth in the modernist position. "There is," he says, "in the critic a poet." "Criticism, as I should like to practice it, is a perpetual invention and creation." But in general Sainte-Beuve gets beyond mere gusto; he sees the need of mediation between the keen and vivid impression and permanent standards of judgment—a mediation that seems to him so difficult that he is about as much filled

as the older neo-classical critic with the sense of the small number of the elect in matters of taste. He defines taste as *le choix net et parfait.* Nothing is rarer than good taste thus understood. Whole epochs have been without it. "Complete good sense and true good taste among us have never existed together save at a very brief moment in our literature and language."

The truth is that there is a central incoherency in Sainte-Beuve, an unreconciled opposition, as one may say, between the head and the heart. His heart is humanistic, his head is naturalistic. The standards that his heart requires are not only too purely traditional, they are also too passive, too much a matter of his sensibility and not sufficiently a matter of his character and will. Here if anywhere are the grounds for a legitimate dissatisfaction with Sainte-Beuve. The true driving power in his work is behind his naturalistic head; it leads straight to the universal relativism of his day, "the great confusion" that he himself foresaw, the impressionism that is now sapping the foundations not merely of literature, but of civilization itself. Sainte-Beuve cannot supply the principles of an active and militant humanism. His very conception of literature seems at times to favor the dilettante. Because pure literature is useless in the vulgar sense and does not serve "any immediate and positive end," it does not follow, as he says, that it is "only the ornament, the flower, the immortal and delicate superfluity of life."

Sainte-Beuve's failure to recognize that literature may have a masculine purpose of its own quite distinct from the "immediate and positive end" of the utilitarian is related to his lack of interest in the drama, as such, to which Mr. MacClintock calls attention. It is apropos of the drama, in fact, that Aristotle utters his fa-

mous dictum: The end is the chief thing of all. In the absence of deliberate moral choices with reference to a definite standard one may have melodrama or problem plays; one will not have great drama. Sainte-Beuve's failure here is due to his lack of ethical elevation, and this can be traced in turn to his naturalistic philosophy. It was Taine and not Sainte-Beuve who said that "virtue and vice are products, like sugar and vitriol," but the trend towards this type of determinism is already so marked in Sainte-Beuve that Taine, in thus suppressing moral responsibility, could look upon himself as Sainte-Beuve's disciple.

Any one who feels the need of standards, but at the same time wishes to hold them in a thoroughly modern way and not merely as a traditional survival, will plainly have to depart widely from Sainte-Beuve. If a soundly humanistic critic should appear to-day he would probably remind us less of the Sainte-Beuve of the *Lundis* than of the youthful Boileau. His application of standards would be felt as something keen, crisp and dangerous, as an element of constructive satire—satire "purified," as Boileau says of his own, "by a ray of good sense." But, having granted all this, we must recognize in Sainte-Beuve's criticism such a rare mingling of virtues as to make it in its own way definitive and delectable. After all, Sainte-Beuve merits, up to a certain point at least, the praise that Mr. MacClintock gives him—that of being "deeply and unfailingly human"; and this is perhaps more than can be said of some of his recent detractors.

GRUACH AND BRITAIN'S DAUGHTER: TWO PLAYS

By Gordon Bottomley

Reviewed by William Rose Benet

New York Evening Post Literary Review, February 3, 1923

In 1921 I had the pleasure of writing an appreciation of Mr. Bottomley's *King Lear's Wife, and Other Plays.* Mr. Bottomley is distinctly our favorite among modern writers of poetic drama. Now in a single volume with an unusually artistic binding, designed by Charles Ricketts, come two more plays, *Gruach* and *Britain's Daughter.* Mr. Bottomley has been writing for some eighteen years. This we gather is his latest work, at all events the latest work of his to be published in America.

Interesting, first of all, are the two poems that precede the two respective plays. In our former review of Mr. Bottomley we quoted from a similar dedicatory poem which gave the reader a glimpse at the artist in his environment. The present poems are no less personal, and we find the artist's preference to be as follows:

I would not know what is to come
Down the far slope of the withdrawing wave;
I would remain at this conspiring height,
Whose upward motion seemed my own, and keep,
Keep mine the swift discoveries of life,

The passionate, the unexpected moments
That now, as I look back, are all I have,
All I have longed for, all I have to lose,
All, all I shall regret when I must leave them.

Such moments have, to Mr. Bottomley, been those of the peculiar rapture known only to the true poet, of (as he calls it) "the passionate vitality of art more rich than life, more real than the day's reality."

The dedicatory poems are well turned, but not otherwise remarkable. But the moment we enter the hall of the first scene of *Gruach,* "the hall of a small black stone castle in the North of Scotland," as it is described, we are aware of greater power. Here we have the Thane of Fortingall's mother, Fern her daughter, and Conan her son, the Thane. Gruach, her niece, is about to marry Conan. An envoy of the King of Scotland soon enters, riding late. He speaks of his kinsman, Duncan, the King of Scotland. He is on his way to Caithness to tell the Jarl that the Queen has borne a son and "to require of him an oath of loyalty to the child Malcolm." He adds later:

I am nephew and next of kin to the Thane of Glamis.
Old Sinel, the King's cousin: Macbeth is my name.

To the reader, recalling at once the knocking on the gate at Inverness, this mere statement is immediately full of portent. The remainder of the play's action is simply that the then youthful Macbeth wins the love of Gruach and bears her away from the Thane's threatening prison in the harsh, cold mountains. In the morning, after the flight, a kitchen girl declares that, through the possession of second sight:

I tell you I see the Lady Gruach every night.
She is covered from shoulder to foot with a trailing, spreading cloak
That is not red like blood, nor blue like the deep lake,
Yet gleams of both in the folds; it is covered with green, bright eyes.
There are large green lights in her hair over both her ears,
She wears a golden crown as if she is a queen.
Her pitiless face alarms, yet I must look and look:
Her gaze is hard to me, yet when we meet by day
She holds no memory of me in those cold eyes.
Nightly she bears a dagger. . . .

The verse is vigorous and imaginative. I still hold *The Riding to Lithend* Bottomley's best drama, and there are certain passages in *King Lear's Wife* more memorable to me than anything in *Gruach,* but the new drama is of indubitable distinction; and it is interesting to note in this connection that (as was recently mentioned in *The Literary Review*) the three English works to be selected for submission to the French committee that awards the yearly *Femina-Vie Heureuse* prize were headed by *Gruach,* in company with *Memoirs of a Midget,* and Katherine Mansfield's *The Garden Party.* Whether or not the award goes to *Gruach,* it must be quite evident that Mr. Bottomley's art has already met with appreciation in his own land.

A second intimation of such appreciation was the recent production in England of the other play in this volume, *Britain's Daughter.* It was given together with a play of Massinger's. An English critic of both performances remarked upon the superior acting qualities of the Elizabethan drama. He also called attention to the part that the very stage directions, as writ-

ten by Bottomley, play in the general effectiveness of his own work to the reader. This portion of their general effectiveness the eye-witness must necessarily lose. The critic's comment expresses a feeling I myself have had for some time: Bottomley's work will probably never be most effective upon the stage. The requirements for a poetic drama that can be produced with the same appeal to audiences that the written work has for the eye are strangely stringent, but so they remain. To read, however, *Britain's Daughter* is exciting in action as well as moving in theme. It is closely wrought and the characterization is sharp and distinct. Of the two dramas in this book I prefer it, judged merely by its appeal to the emotions. Nest and Birgit's daughter Megg confront and answer each other with fine dramatic effect. Ellin, the mad girl, is one of the weird figures Bottomley often loves to introduce. The final incident of Ennid, her baby, and Cadvan is well handled. Nest I found rather too oratorical on the whole, but the hatred of her by her own countrywomen is strongly and truly imagined. Bottomley has imbued a very ancient tale, a legend, with life and poetic grandeur. His verse is flexible and susceptible of transmitting many shades of feeling. His book as a whole is notable.

THE WRITINGS OF ANATOLE FRANCE

Reviewed by Ernest Boyd

The New York Times Book Review, February 10, 1924

Reprinted, with additions, in *Studies from Ten Literatures*. (New York: Scribner, 1925)

France is the country above all others where the publication of limited and luxurious editions flourishes to the delight and the distraction of bibliophiles. It has long been a practice to issue a few copies on vellum and on large paper of almost every book in the field of belles-lettres, and the issue of editions de luxe, both of classical and modern writers, proceeds at a pace which would surprise those who complain of the relatively moderate efforts in this direction of American and English publishers. Yet it is a curious fact that there is not even a definitive collected edition of the works of Anatole France in French. Many beautiful limited editions of particular books have been published, but no effort has been made to present the whole canon of his writings in a form worthy of this greatest living master of French prose and pleasing to the race of bibliomaniacs of which he himself is an illustrious member.

It has been left to the enterprise of Mr. Gabriel Wells to bring out the only comprehensive limited edition of Anatole France, signed by the author, of which the first ten volumes are now ready: *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard, Thaïs, Crainquebille and Other Stories, At the Sign of the Reine Pédauque, The Opinions of Jérome Coignard and the Garden of Epicurus, The Red Lily, A Mummer's Tale and the Elm Tree on*

the Mall, The Wicker-Work Woman, The Amethyst Ring, Monsieur Bergeret in Paris and *The Aspirations of Jean Servien.* Two further installments of ten volumes each are promised, to appear in March and May. The translations are those copyrighted by Messrs. John Lane and Dodd, Mead & Co., although, for some reason, the version of *Sylvestre Bonnard* is attributed to A. W. Evans in this edition, but it appears to be Lafcadio Hearn's text, which has long since been accepted as the standard translation by all publishers.

It was that book and that translation which first introduced Anatole France to the English-speaking world in 1891, just ten years after its publication in France, where it also established him for the first time with the general reading public. He was then 37 years old, but was practically unknown when the French Academy crowned *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard,* which was to become the most renowned and universally popular of all his works. France did not easily or quickly achieve the fame which has now been his so long that one is inclined to think of him as having never known the drudgery and obscurity of literary apprenticeship. He is now in his eightieth year, and his career extends over a period dating back to 1868, when his first book, a critical study of Alfred de Vigny, was published, but he actually made his début, at the precocious age of 15 or thereabouts, with *The Legend of Sainte Radegonde,* a schoolboy theme published by his father, the bookseller of the Quai Voltaire, whose shop was the appropriate cradle of Anatole France's genius. We next hear of him as a contributor to an obscure periodical, *La Gazette Rimée,* for which he wrote two savage political satires in verse on the régime of the Third Empire, thereby hastening the early death of the review in

question and almost delivering himself into the none too gentle hands of the imperial authorities. He then edited a bibliographical journal, which lasted but a few numbers, and an *Encyclopedia of the French Revolution,* finally finding a place with the famous publisher Lemerre, who entrusted him with the task of editing and writing prefaces for various classics and reading manuscripts. In 1873 Lemerre published his *Poèmes Dorés,* and in 1876 his *Noces Corinthiennes,* which were until recently, when those scattered prefaces were collected, the only works of this youthful period which their author acknowledged. In 1874 he became the assistant of Leconte de Lisle in the Senate Library, and from 1886 to 1891 he wrote those book reviews for *Le Temps* which have been preserved under the title of *On Life and Letters.* He was elected to the French Academy in 1896, and in 1921 he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. Such are the few dates in this peaceful life, so harmonious and so glorious, and so uneventful in the ordinary sense of the word.

Neither that volume of collected poems nor that dramatic epic, written under the benign and orthodox impulse of the Parnassian movement, created any stir, and *Jocasta and the Famished Cat,* two now familiar novelettes which appeared in 1879, added little or nothing to his fame. In 1881 he was as obscure as it is possible for an author to be after some fifteen years of regular literary practice. The award of the Academy changed all that, and *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard* and its author became suddenly famous. Then began a forty-year period of rich creative activity which has seen the emergence of a genius so exquisite and so national that the whole world recognizes a peculiar ap-

propriateness in the adoption of the pseudonym "France" by the once unknown Anatole François Thibault. His work sums up the whole intellectual tradition of his country, and the essential strains of the French genius are found in his books, from the fabliaux, Rabelais and Molière, to Voltaire, Diderot and the Encyclopedists, from Balzac and Stendhal to Renan. The spirit of his race lives in him, the urbane and thoroughly civilized tradition of Montaigne, which is, in the last analysis, the distinctive contribution of France to European literature.

No greater contrast could be found than that which is furnished by a comparison of Anatole France with that other great veteran from the same age of literary giants, the Danish critic Georg Brandes. France, characteristically, knows no language—no modern language—other than his own. He has, therefore, the national self-sufficiency, that suggestion of provincialism which the French betray the moment one escapes from the superficial cosmopolitanism of Paris. Brandes is "the good European" in the fullest meaning of Nietzsche's term; he is the interpreter of international values, the creator of a national literature which had achieved his purpose by the very catholicity of his interests, by his instinctive disregard for the parochial and narrowly national. One cannot imagine Anatole France discovering an obscure and erratic German professor and proclaiming the advent of Nietzsche, as Brandes did. In the four volumes of the Frenchman's critical writings there is hardly an allusion to any of the writers who were struggling in the early 90s for recognition. He denounced Zola and the Naturalists with all the fervor of his bitterest enemy, Brunetière. Yet Brandes, the internationalist, the fighter for free-

dom of ideas, and France, the classicist, the smiling skeptic, are at one in their fundamental philosophy, which is that of intellectual liberty, the belief that the mind alone can be free and that all other forms of liberation are illusion.

The imposing series of Anatole France's work is conditioned by an even more imposing list of works, Latin and Greek and the French classics, which he has tirelessly read and annotated, and upon which he has meditated until their very essence has become part of himself. He was born in an atmosphere of books and his own creative impulse is rooted in books, through which he approaches life, life reflected and refracted, but never deflected, through literature, for he has frequented only the best company, as the professors who delight in tracing his borrowings have incidentally demonstrated. When the Dreyfus affair dragged him out of his study into the public arena he took his political refuge in the obvious shelter of radical libertarianism, with a complete absence of all that subtlety which normally distinguishes his ideas. But the case was not one where subtlety was demanded; it stirred that deep-seated belief in liberty which lay at the bottom of his skepticism as it lay beneath that of Voltaire and Montaigne. The pretty esthetes just fresh from the classroom and the anti-Semitic politicians of French literature have made great play with Anatole France's socialism, as if he were some soap-box revolutionary and not the author of thirty volumes such as these under review, not one of which contains his few contributions to the literature of French radicalism. They are, however, just a little embarrassed by the necessity of explaining away that piece of sardonic humor, *The Gods Are Athirst,* and the terrible satire at the end of *Penguin Island,* in order to

preserve the fiction of Anatole France, the naïve Socialist.

France's socialism, like his endless pursuit of ideas, has not escaped the scrutiny of that alert and scintillating intelligence of his, whose play is an enchantment never to be forgotten, the lure which draws one unfailingly to his books. He has none of the ingenuous rationalist's faith in reason. "I hate science," cries the Abbé Coignard, "because I have loved her too much, like the voluptuaries who reproach women with not having realized the dreams which they cherished of them." As an intelligent skeptic, France has explored the extreme limits of doubt and despair, and he regards mankind with a mixture of tenderness and contempt; there is pity in his skepticism and his irony is friendly. That irony runs through all his work like a golden thread, and whether the scene be ancient or modern, real or imaginary, one always finds in some disguise the interlocutor whose hand may be what it will, but the voice is the voice of France. In *Thaïs* the Epicurean Nikias warns Paphnutius of the fearful vengeance of Eros, the unconquerable, whose victory comes just when the lovely Byzantine sinner's conversion is accomplished. *The Sign of the Reine Pédauque* and its sequel, *The Opinions of Jérome Coignard,* expound the irresistible philosophy of the famous Abbé, who is, next to M. Bergeret, the most delightful creation of the author's and his most authentic mouthpiece.

The Abbé Coignard, it will be remembered, restrained his skepticism only where "the truths of religion" are concerned; M Bergeret supplies that omission. In *The Gods Are Athirst* France is the sage Brotteaux who is condemned to death because of his irreverence toward the great revolutionists, for, as he says else-

where: "Robespierre believed in virtue and he inaugurated the Terror; Marat believed in justice and demanded 200,000 heads." In *The Red Lily* his views are doubly represented by the writer Paul Vence, who declares that "irony and pity must be the judges and witnesses of mankind," and by the sculptor Dechartre. He is the theater doctor, Trublet, in *A Mummer's Tale,* that diverting excursion into the world of the comedians. The very titles of his stories, *Balthasar, Clio, Mother of Pearl, The Well of St. Clare, The Merrie Tales of Jacques Tournebroche, The Seven Wives of Bluebeard,* indicate the range of Anatole France's deft skill in exploring the various scenes of the great human comedy. Here are holy legends and Bible stories in the manner of Renan, Renaissance tales and Rococo anecdotes, and even adventures in the supernatural world. "I am not credulous," says France in the *Reine Pédauque.* "I have rather a remarkable tendency to doubt, which makes me mistrust reason. To everything that is strange I say: Why not, and this 'why not' tempts me to believe."

It was the Dreyfus affair which aroused Anatole France from that state of detached irony which is fascinating, but which might, in the long run, have become sterile. Between 1897 and 1901 he wrote the four volumes of contemporary history, *The Elm Tree on the Mall, The Wicker-Work Woman, The Amethyst Ring* and *M. Bergeret in Paris,* and revealed himself as a satirist of incomparable skill, whose nearest antecedent was the Voltaire of *Candide.* Like all great satire it transcended the immediate aim of the author. This analyst of private and political intrigue, of royalist plots, of anti-Semitic fanaticism and clerical wire-pulling, this picture of a republic suppressing republican

demonstrations by force, is something more than a topical skit. The mere title, *Contemporary History,* with which the four books are bracketed, seems in retrospect to have been an ironical thrust at the future. With *Penguin Island* he returns to the charge, tracing, this time, the whole history of France with that sharp pen; the Dreyfus scandal in the "case of the 80,000 bundles of hay"; the growth of civilization from that point when woman first discovered the effectiveness of clothing, and concluding with the disillusioned vision of the future, with its eternal recurrence of tyranny and revolution, or war and catastrophe. *The White Stone* is more utopian, but in *The Revolt of the Angels* he makes his final and disconcerting comment on the history of man. It is a history of human folly, related by the gardener Nectaire, an old comrade in arms of Lucifer, and is an admirable satire on anarchy.

This book appeared just before the war and has a strangely prophetic flavor now. It was Anatole France's last glance at contemporary events, for since then he has been living in the memories of his childhood, adding to the three earlier fragments of autobiography, *My Friend's Book, Pierre Nozière* and *The Aspirations of Jean Servien,* two supremely charming books, *Little Pierre* and *The Bloom of Life.* There is a grace and ease in the writing of these pages from an almost mythical past which must surprise even the most ardent of France's admirers, for it seems that age cannot dim the magic of that style nor alter the sureness of every touch. In this patriarchal figure is surely a mortal beloved of the gods, who have endowed him with an intelligence Hellenic in its subtlety, a Latin sense of realism and a pity that is Christian. As a French critic has said:

Give Montaigne more sympathy for the world which he judges, take the essence of Voltaire and the general attitude of Renan. Then combine Renan, Voltaire and Montaigne, and cap them with the literary art of Racine and Bossuet. Transfer all these qualities to a personality that is original and profound. There is a man alive who answers to this astonishing definition, Anatole France. He is the glittering summit dominating a plain of mediocrity that grows flatter and flatter.

In the presence of genius of this order criticism hesitates, for its task is superfluous.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Edited by Sir Edmund Gosse *and* Thomas J. Wise

Reviewed by Samuel C. Chew

The New York Sun, January 30, 1926

No complete edition of the entire body of Swinburne's writings in prose and verse has as yet been produced. The edition of 1904, which the poet himself supervised, included the poems and tragedies; but of the enormous body of his prose no collection has been made. Six years ago in his privately printed *Bibliography of Swinburne* Mr. Wise stated that "the void would before long be filled," a definitive edition being then in preparation by himself and Sir Edmund Gosse. What was then promised is at length being performed; four volumes of the handsome and dignified Bonchurch Edition have appeared and others are to follow presently.

The editors of Swinburne's writings are not faced with the necessity, exacted by modern scholarship, of recording the "variant readings" of successive editions, for with few exceptions, and those not important, Swinburne suffered the text of every poem to remain untampered with when once it was published. The fact must not be interpreted, as some critics have suggested, as evidence of complacent self-satisfaction or of a low esthetic standard on the poet's part. No one who has seen his manuscripts—often almost undecipherable mazes of corrections, deletions and additions—can hold that opinion. But Swinburne's alterations and improvements were expended upon his poems while in manu-

script or in proof. The formidable task of recording the variants in the manuscripts has wisely been renounced by the present editors, and it is unlikely that it will ever become necessary; for Swinburne, great poet though he was, was not a Shelley or a Keats or a Blake, not one "drop" of whom we can afford to lose.

The secure judgment of most competent critics, indeed, is that we can afford to lose a good deal of the published writings of Swinburne. Well within the poet's own lifetime time was doing its proverbial winnowing in his granaries, and the process did not cease with his death. It may be admitted ungrudgingly that there is need for a definitive edition of his complete works, and the admission is no contradiction of the opinion that much within the twenty volumes that are promised us the world would willingly let die—has, indeed, let die.

The impression of the phenomenal and almost pathological fecundity of Swinburne is increased by the fact that he left in manuscript an enormous quantity of prose and verse. The rumor current years ago that he had destroyed all his juvenilia and other unprinted verse and prose was contradicted when there was discovered at his Putney home an amazing litter of odds and ends: bundles and batches of manuscripts, unsorted, dust-covered, bewildering. This treasure trove had come by testamentary bequest into the possession of Theodore Watts-Dunton, who disposed of it to Mr. Thomas J. Wise, the famous bibliophile and bibliographer of London.

In order to preserve this material for posterity and to give it the protection of copyright Mr. Wise issued a long series of tiny pamphlets and booklets in exceedingly limited editions. A few pieces had already been

printed in similar fashion by Watts-Dunton. Some scraps and odds and ends which have thus been preserved are, to speak frankly, of no importance whatever save to the collectors of the rare and costly "first editions" thus manufactured. Others are of a character which makes their inclusion in a definitive published edition impossible or at least unseemly. But a great deal remains that is of some sort of interest and quite unobjectionable on grounds of taste or morals.

The problem confronting Swinburne's editors has thus been one of selection and arrangement. From the large quantity of juvenilia written while the poet was at Oxford they have selected for publication those things which seemed to them "to possess the greatest intrinsic value and to exemplify in the most interesting way the development of the young poet's talent." Some of these pieces already have been published in the *Posthumous Poems* of 1917. The fine poem on *The Death of Sir John Franklin,* with which the new edition now opens, is the most interesting. Written in competition for the Newdigate Prize, it was rejected apparently because its metrical form—*terza rima*—did not conform to the stupid old requirement (now no longer in force) that the prize poem must be written in heroic couplets. The very fine series of *Border Ballads* is reprinted from the volumes of 1917.

Most of the early poems are now given to the world (to that part of the world that cannot afford to purchase Mr. Wise's pamphlets) for the first time. Among them one notes with interest five new cantos of *Queen Yseult,* of which the first canto was published in an undergraduate magazine while Swinburne was at Oxford. This was the poet's first effort to grapple with a theme which was to fascinate him for many years.

Joyeuse Garde is another and somewhat later experiment with the same subject. These and other pieces, such as *Lancelot* and the canzone called *The Dream by the River,* show markedly the influence of William Morris, and in general the strain of pre-Raphaelitism is strong. Of Browning's influence, too, there is some evidence, but of Tennyson's practically none. One poem, *The Death of Rudel,* is of special attractiveness not only because of its debt to a beautiful Provençal theme and its connection with Browning, but because it faintly foreshadows the two famous and magnificent stanzas in *The Triumph of Time,* in which Swinburne compared Rudel's story with his own case.

Speaking from a knowledge of the entire series of pamphlets printed by Mr. Wise and Watts-Dunton and of the two collections of insignificant fragments issued privately by Mr. C. K. Shorter, I may say that the selection now made from this mass of material is on the whole satisfactory. One regrets the omission of some things. *The Triumph of Gloriana,* for example, might have been given to the world as a literary curiosity. It was written in 1851, when Swinburne was but 14 years of age, and celebrates in stiff, pompous Popeian couplets a visit of Queen Victoria to Eton. Its cold, correct tediousness gives no promise of genius save for its evidence of the lad's power of sustained imitation.

This power was soon to be turned to various uses. The *Undergraduate Sonnets* now published are amazingly clever Shakespearean *pastiche.* There exist in manuscript (not in pamphlet form) three plays written in imitation of John Fletcher. The editors have, perhaps wisely, decided to leave these unpublished.

Two poems of the Oxford period are, I think, badly misplaced. *The Ride from Milan* and *The Italian*

Mother are early indications of Swinburne's ardent interest in the cause of Italian freedom. They belong to the same period as the *Ode to Mazzini* and should have been printed alongside of that piece. But the editors, conscious of their anticipation of the themes in the *Songs Before Sunrise*, have relegated them to that series of poems, where *The Ride* awkwardly interrupts the strict connection between *The Eve of Revolution* and *The Watch in the Night*, and *The Italian Mother* immediately and inappropriately precedes the *Epilogue*. Another early poem on the *Risorgimento*, *In the Twilight*, is omitted altogether. I miss also the quite charming little mystery play, *A Pilgrimage of Pleasure* (1864 or thereabouts) and the fragment of a translation of Bernard's hymn, *Hora novissima*, which would have been an interesting pendant to the not very successful version of the *Dies Iræ*.

From one or two remarks above it will be apparent that the arrangement of the Bonchurch Edition leaves something to be desired. A little more must be said on that point. The inclusion of the juvenilia in Volume I has necessitated the violent wrenching apart of the first series of *Poems and Ballads*, the latter pieces being shunted into the second volume. This is deplorable mismanagement, for no collection of modern English poetry was ever more carefully fitted together into an artistic sequence. That Swinburne prided himself upon his own arrangement is a fact on record. The dedicatory poem, which two generations of the poet's lovers have always associated with the close of the book, is shifted to the beginning, quite unwarrantably.

And worse is to follow. Volume III includes besides the *Border Ballads*, first published in 1917, the *Songs of the Springtides* and the second and third

series of *Poems and Ballads.* The second—in my opinion the most beautiful of all Swinburne's collections of miscellaneous verse—was dedicated to Sir Richard Burton. The dedication is now removed from its proper place and made to embrace the whole volume. Moreover, the dedication of the third series to William Bell Scott is totally suppressed, thus doing wrong to the memory of a man whom Swinburne ferociously attacked after his death and also obliterating the meaning of the *Epilogue.*

This *Epilogue,* by the way, is also misplaced, following the *Songs of the Springtides* instead of the *Poems and Ballads, Third Series.* The confusion is rendered worse by omitting from the table of contents the titles of these three collections, though the first series is duly marked in the contents of Volume I and the *Songs Before Sunrise* in Volume II.

These strictures may appear merely the complaints of pedantry. But they have their justification, for the sequence and titles of Swinburne's various volumes should have been preserved. And it must not be inferred from these adverse comments that the gathering together of all Swinburne's writings is not a long desired task for which the scholars will be duly grateful to the editors. The value of the set is increased by the plan to include in it not only Swinburne's letters but also a revised edition of Sir Edmund Gosse's biography of the poet. And the final volume is to be the *Bibliography of Swinburne,* by Mr. Wise, at present available only in the two privately printed volumes.

The chaste and stately format of the Bonchurch Edition is suggestive of nothing so much as a pillar of society. It invites comment upon the change that has come over the poet's reputation. It cannot be said that

there is "nothing in him that doth fade" or that the change has been "into something rich and rare." It is a far cry from these uniform tomes, made to adorn the library shelves of the wealthy and respectable, to the delectable little green-and-gold volumes which were once denounced officially and openly and read furtively and with delight. The day is long past when university undergraduates marched round their quadrangles chanting *Dolores* in defiance of the authorities, and when ladies badly in need of the attentions of the as yet non-existent psychoanalyst fell on their knees before the flame-haired poet who declaimed the same dangerous verses.

Swinburne in latter years wrote too much and was guilty of too much of what may be called *auto-pastiche*. After the period covered by these four volumes of lyric poetry he had still twenty years to live and write; and meditating upon this tremendous inexhaustible spate of poetry, we murmur:

> That wild music burdens every bough,
> And sweets grown common lose their dear delight.

His wonderful metrical gift is now seen to be not a revolutionary new beginning in poetry but the last flamboyant expression of a style that was passing. A subtler technique has come into fashion. He has entered upon his immortality, but at the end of a long line of romantic poets, not as the leader of a new company.

The attempt to estimate in more detail the present status of Swinburne's reputation may, however, be fittingly postponed till the completion of the Bonchurch Edition. It has seemed best to the reviewer to limit himself at present to some indication of the general scope of this important undertaking.

EUROPEAN LITERATURE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

By BENEDETTO CROCE

Reviewed by Arthur W. Colton

The Saturday Review of Literature, May 2, 1925

Poetry and Non-Poetry was the Italian title—with an intelligent bearing on the thread of continuity running through them—of these miscellaneous essays on nineteenth century literature, which, Signor Croce says in his preface, he had hoped "to complete and continue in such a way as to furnish a fairly adequate picture of the poetry of that period—poetry in what should properly be the task of literary criticism and history, although a good many writers who pretend to be professional critics are too apt to forget this fact." The translator, however, has not only seen fit to alter the title to something the author did not pretend to, but to emphasize the unauthorized claim in his introduction.

The quotation from Croce's preface points to three interesting things about him, his combativeness, his positive and unqualified generalizations, and his meaning by the word "poetry."

After all, he is not so pugnacious as Papini, and is a better balanced, as well as equally suggestive, critic. Moreover, a point made in opposition does seem to have more edge to it than a point made in non-contestant meditation. Combativeness is a method of approach. But when one has noted the amount and kind of literature which he decides is not "poetry," the assertion that

"poetry" (poetry only being more or less implied) "should properly be the subject of literary criticism and history" is not a generalization for a philosopher to be proud of. Finally, the Crocean definition of poetry is essentially the one associated with Coleridge, though doubtless not original even with him! The antithesis of prose is not poetry but verse. Prose and verse are forms. Poetry is the spirit within, a something pulsing beneath the form and creating beauty. Whatever may happen to *poesia,* the word poetry in usage will never stay within that enclosure. It will always have more meanings than one, and one of those meanings will always have something to do with recurring rhythm. But for the purpose of literary criticism the Coleridge-Croce definition is probably more useful than any other.

To question Croce's competency to make "an adequate picture of European literature of the nineteenth century," and decide values over that vast expanse on the basis of any esthetic principles which he may have formulated, is not to question that his knowledge is unusual and his acumen very great. His "cult" no doubt has grossly exaggerated his critical preëminence. These essays are vigorous and sensible rather than brilliant or profound. The question is first, whether any one is so competent. The excursions of nearly all criticism outside of the literature of the critic's own language are relatively amateurish or conventional, and the values most fatally missed are those intangible, illusive things which are blended in the glow and fragrance of the language. Bold and clangorous things—flaunting, sturdy, unmistakable things—large design and salient features—may leap the barriers of the alien tongue! But the shy flowers, and all things most lovely

and most secret, stay in their own meadow, and no one whose mind is not by birth and growth and long association compact of its intimacies has the clew to their secrets. It may safely be assumed that the native critics are right about the relative values of their own literatures within their own borders, and the foreign critics wrong where they differ. I can feel the skill of Molière, and a Frenchman the power of Shakespeare; and if I quote him "absent thee from felicity awhile," and he responds with a line from Racine, I can see that he is affected in a somewhat similar way; but neither of us feels directly what the other feels from the line he has quoted, and it is no use pretending that we do. Signor Croce writes of Shakespeare, in his book called *Ariosto, Shakespeare and Corneille,* with learning and intelligence; he sees characters, plots, and problems posed by critics; but he does not see the glint and shadow of the language, and feel the subtle intonation of the Shakespearian phrase, as we see and feel them. And that is vital. It is more vital to Shakespeare than to Corneille, or even to Ariosto.

Second, it is questionable whether a critic, who approaches any work of art with a preconceived doctrine of esthetics, is not more handicapped than helped by the possession.

A generation ago there was a lively controversy between Brunetière, who was a disciple of Taine, and Anatole France, who was an extreme individualist and thought criticism no other than personal reactions: "I propose to discuss myself apropos of La Fontaine and Pascal." We need not go so far as that in order to see that the "scientific" Brunetière was no sounder critic than the whimsical France, and far less entertaining. There is illumination in Taine's theory of

literature as a social product, but it led him to write the most wrong-headed book ever produced by an able man on the history of English literature. And, returning to Signor Croce, it is discernible enough that his good sense and suggestiveness are qualities of his mind rather than the product of his *Esthetics*. He says that if Brunetière had not lacked both esthetic culture and philosophical training it would not have been difficult for him to discover that the "social novel is not at all a form of art, but simply a didactic scheme." It needs neither esthetic culture nor philosophical training to discover that. It only needs good sense. Brunetière did not lack culture or training, so far as effort and erudition may acquire them, but he was rigid and doctrinaire, and lacked the saving corrective of that good sense, which saves Signor Croce himself from many a pit into which faith in an infallible doctrine of esthetics is apt to betray its devotee. So far as esthetic culture and philosophical training produce a fresher and wider vision, every critic needs all he can obtain; but so far as they only furnish him with skeleton forms and definitions which he calls principles, he were better off in experimental innocence. The best critic is not the man of doctrine and deduction, but the man of penetration and judgment.

Signor Croce, then, is happier in his perceptions than in his generalizations. He makes judicious comments, and then refers them to principles more judicial than judicious, too emphatic as well as too sweeping for the exceptions and qualifications which crowd around them. The principles of the *Esthetics* seem most discernible here in making him certain of doubtful things, dogmatic on questions which only smile and remain questions. "Literary criticism," he announces, "should be

truly scientific." Literary criticism never will be anything of the kind, and those who claim the method and certainty of science will still be as unauthoritative and individual as their less positive brethren. They will put over a personal face the artifice of a mask, which is apt to be a blinder when it comes to specific acts of seeing. Literary criticism may be philosophical if that happens to mean anything. But poetry is as the wind which bloweth where it listeth. The measure wherewith you measure it only measures itself. You build a cage for it, and find only yourself in the cage, with the wind blowing through the bars. Put not your trust in syllogisms. Poetry has more aspects than the Old Man of the Sea. Its roots are buried in the earth and its head hidden in clouds. It is as complex and inconsistent as humanity. A literary theory may classify by classification, but when it begins to dictate, its usefulness is over.

There is no International Court of Apollo, sitting in equity and delivering even-handed justice, and only in the long regard of time is there anything approaching it. There is nothing for surprise or complaint that Croce champions the Italian poets, nor any necessary question of his indignant claim to be "free from national feelings," at least any intentional or conscious. There is only a demurral to the apparent claim that his *Esthetics* contains the code of law for the Court of Apollo, that the only counsel properly qualified to practice before it are such "as understand art philosophically," and are "truly scientific" in literary criticism, and hence have "theoretical certainty." The claim is unnecessary for our recognition of Signor Croce as one of the sanest and most vigorous and suggestive of modern critics.

AMERICAN POETRY SINCE 1900

By Louis Untermeyer

Reviewed by John Erskine

The Outlook, February 20, 1924

This handsome volume of some four hundred pages is a revision and a reconsideration of Mr. Untermeyer's *New Era in American Poetry*, published some six years ago. About that time, to the regret of those admirers who, like the present reviewer, think Mr. Untermeyer's unusual gifts are for creating poetry rather than for criticizing it, he made himself one of the most vigorous and generous champions of what has been called the New Poetry, saying always the best possible word for it, and trying, as it seemed, to give even the eccentric voices their fair chance to be heard. This kind of propaganda has its place in art; we have been familiar in other days with the critic as advocate—with Ruskin, for instance. We could quarrel with Mr. Untermeyer only when his desire to make the New Poets seem important led him to run down their predecessors; it was as though he suspected in his heart that the new things could not compete with the old in an open and unprejudiced field.

This revised volume, however, is offered to us as more than propaganda; it attempts to be real criticism, an estimate of accomplishment after deliberate second thought. I cannot see how we are to accept such a book with the same indulgence with which we listened to the

earlier advocacies. It is one thing to plead that every poet should have a sympathetic hearing, and quite another thing to say, after he has had the hearing, what is the significance of his work. Hospitality needs no standards; but criticism without standards is unintelligible. The ideal critic would find his standards in the nature of art and in the conditions of fame; he would seek a guide to his personal taste in the experience of the race. Mr. Untermeyer thinks this kind of criticism too ideal to attain, and perhaps it is; he would rather accept as the basis of criticism what will always be a large part of it—the temperament of the critic. But even the frankly temperamental critic, if he would be intelligible, must have his personal standards, must state his likes and dislikes, with some consistency, must keep, that is, a kind of unity within his temperament, if he would speak to us as one critic rather than as several. I must confess that Mr. Untermeyer seems to me, in this book, any number of critics, or no critic at all. I find no central point of view from which to orient myself in this series of appreciations. And I resent the imposition of critical manner upon this confusion of unreasoned judgments.

In the Introduction, for example, we read "The New England poets had withdrawn into their libraries; Longfellow, Bryant, Taylor turned their tired eyes from the troubled domestic scene to a rose-tinted Europe, transported themselves to a prettified past, abandoned original writing for translation and other methods of evasion. . . . It was a more vigorous Muse, lovelier as well as livelier, that Whitman invoked when he cried out in protest against those who were seeking glamour not in man's life but in other men's books." This is a little staggering when we consider to what an

extent translation, parody, and "other methods of evasion" have occupied the New Poets, Mr. Untermeyer included; but the reader adjusts himself and concludes that theoretically at least Mr. Untermeyer likes the poetry that is inspired by life rather than by books. The reader is confirmed in this conclusion by what is said in general of Robert Frost's poems. Yet when we get to the chapter on Miss Lowell and to the discussion of *Can Grande's Castle,* which Mr. Untermeyer likes, the reader must adjust himself once more, for this book, like most of Miss Lowell's work, is as far from America to-day as ever a New England poet transported himself, and the agile critic manages to praise her for that fact. "Possibly the strangest thing about this energetic book is that it is actually taken from other books. . . . By using Aldington's phrase as her title, Miss Lowell lets us understand that the contents of the new volume are the result of what she has read. But in the writing her reading becomes real; her creative excitement makes what she has got from history books far livelier than her life. It is obvious that she could not possibly have experienced these things. Their vividness is due to the fact that, thrown back into the past, either by the war (as Miss Lowell claims), or, as is more probable, by a subconscious search for fresh material, an artist has taken a list of dates, battles, proper names, together with Rand McNally's Geography, and vitalized them. It is this objective and dramatic sense that makes her audience feel the reality of her historical revaluations just as it makes Miss Lowell declare, 'Living now in the midst of events greater than these, the stories I have dug out of dusty volumes seem as actual as my own existence.'" Mr. Untermeyer's point of view now seems to be that any material, ancient or modern, is proper

for poetry; the question is only whether it is made into good poetry. This is the traditional point of view, and the use of it earlier in his book would have saved us from the unnecessary slights on the men who wrote *Hiawatha, Evangeline,* and *Thanatopsis.* But we are staggered again at the explanation of the recourse to old material; just think how Mr. Untermeyer would comment on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra:* "It is obvious that the poet could not have experienced these things. The vividness of the play is due to the fact that, thrown back into the past, either by the recent Armada, or, as is more probable, by a subconscious search for fresh material, an artist has read Plutarch (North's Translation) and has vitalized the dusty book." The same explanation would be given for the *Iliad.* Yet perhaps, as some of us have thought, the poets write of what they are interested in, of the world they live in, and they usually live in a world of imagination, where Cleopatra and Helen are not of the past. Miss Lowell needs no defense or explanation for living in a world larger than Brookline, Massachusetts; the explanation should be devoted to those of the New Poets who limit their art to a locality and to the present moment. And the implication that poets come on their world of beauty by reacting from something, by backing away from something they don't like, is highly debatable; most of us believe that love rather than hate is the creating principle, and that his love of the world he lives in, of his imaginative world, rather than his dislike of actual existence, inspires the poet to create admirable things.

What Mr. Untermeyer says about poetic language is equally baffling, and, it seems to me, equally inconsistent. From the early pages of his book one gathers

that poetry ought to be written in colloquial language rather than in any diction that might be thought literary or antique. Naturally, then, he will praise Mr. Frost's language for being "colloquial and colorful." Naturally, then, he will arrive at the conclusion (page 25) that Mr. Frost uses sounds the right way, whereas misguided people like Swinburne used them the wrong way. We may not agree, but at least we understand the yardstick Mr. Untermeyer is measuring with, and the results therefore do not surprise us. But we are surprised to hear that Walt Whitman owed his power to his use of this same colloquial material: "It was Whitman's use of the rich verbal material that flowered in the street rather than in libraries that gave him such potency." Surely there is some confusion here. If Mr. Frost's diction is to be called colloquial, some other term should be used for the hodgepodge of bookish, foreign, and native words that Whitman invented for himself, a composite vocabulary never used by any one else, but often effective, as he used it, in its violent contrasts. Whitman, great poet and great American though he was, had a weakness for foreign words; his "evangel-poem," as he called it, is shot through with "Americanos," "libertad," "en-masse," "camerado," "melange," "poemets," "Salut au monde," "Omnes, omnes," "Feuillage," "Allons," "mon enfant." The list is too long to give complete, and, besides, Mr. Untermeyer might think I was poking fun at him, for he himself follows Whitman's taste in this matter, and gives us "clichés," "amours," "lieder," "genre," "dénouement," "confrères, "sotto voce," "raison d'être," "minutiæ," "literati," "finale," "flair," "élan," "vide," "et al."—all the old friends that were supplied to our fathers for social purposes in a separate list at the back of the dictionary.

Frankly, then, we can grasp the idea that Mr. Untermeyer likes colloquial language in poetry, but we do not know what he means by colloquial language. The confusion is complete when we come to the pages devoted to Miss Millay and those on Ezra Pound. Mr. Pound is a word-fancier, but Mr. Untermeyer does not like him. We watch with interest while Mr. Untermeyer attacks the bookishness of Mr. Pound—hoping all the time to discover from his practice what Mr. Untermeyer means by colloquial speech. "The reckless poet develops into the querulous *prosateur,* he becomes the scholiast gone to seed." "Picking his way through literatures, amassing technicalities, and dreaming of himself in his favorite *rôle:* the *aristogogue* in power, the *précieux* regnant." As the colloquial Walt would say, *Allons!*

The work of Miss Millay has of course Mr. Untermeyer's admiration, but Miss Millay commits the sin which in anybody else would be unpardonable; she avoids the colloquial, and she does not use the foreign tags from the back of the dictionary, but she does very frankly draw on the speech of old poets—she even employs obsolete words. What will Mr. Untermeyer say of her? Why, he simply says that in her case it doesn't matter. "She is one of the few living poets who can employ inversions, who can use the antiquated *forsooth, alack! prithee,* and *la,* and not seem an absurd anachronism. Possibly it is because Miss Millay is at heart a belated Elizabethan that she can use locutions which in the work of any other American would be affected and false." Perhaps Mr. Untermeyer means to say only that Miss Millay is one of the best of living poets, but he appears to be laying down the critical principle that you can't employ inversions or use *forsooth, alack,*

prithee, or *la* unless you are at heart a belated Elizabethan.

If it is hard to find out what Mr. Untermeyer's critical standards really are, it is just as hard to find out what he thinks the new poetry has accomplished, as a matter of history. In his Introduction he seems to be telling us: "This double return to the material of everyday life and to direct speech has been simultaneous. . . . And what has the modern poet been set free for? To look candidly at the world he lives in; to study and synthesize the startling fusion of races and ideas, the limitless miracles of science and its limitless curiosity, the growth of liberal thought, the groping and stumbling toward a social ideal—the welter and struggle and beauty of modern life. He has been set free to face these." Does Mr. Untermeyer mean that the new poets have so written about the modern world? Or is this propaganda—does he mean they ought to write about it? I don't know where to look in Miss Millay's work for the fusion of races, the social ideal, the miracles of science and the curiosity of science—nor in Mr. Frost's work, nor in Miss Lowell's. I suspect that this is Mr. Untermeyer's program for the other poets. Meanwhile he may have overlooked the fact that in being true to the world they live in each has been true to a different world.

I find it so hard to understand Mr. Untermeyer, now that he has turned critic, that he may take his revenge in wondering if there is not something wrong with my brain. I defend myself in advance by reminding him that some things in this world it is a kindness not to understand. And if he asks for an illustration, I will quote what he says of Miss Lowell on page 40—the unpardonable blot in an already disappointing book:

"What is most striking in the volume [*Sword Blades and Poppy Seeds*] is the uncommon sense of hearing a sensitive, esthetic femininity unbosom itself in a decidedly masculine utterance. Throughout the volume one observes this queer mixture. Miss Lowell's objectivity is so great that she finds one sex insufficient to express herself. Not that she assumes the male attitude too anxiously or too often; the intellectual form of her work is hermaphroditic rather than sapphic"

DIONYSUS IN DOUBT

A Book of Poems

By Edwin Arlington Robinson

Reviewed by Percy A. Hutchison

The New York Times Book Review, March 29, 1925

Neither Dionysus—"the wasteful god"—nor Edwin Arlington Robinson requires introduction. To be sure, Dionysus, with his penchant for fermented grape juice, for maidens dancing and for song, is somewhat frowned on in certain quarters to-day; Mr. Robinson is only frowned on by those who prefer bad poetry to good. Should conflict arise here, should any one feel because of the appearance of Dionysus in Mr. Robinson's latest title, *Dionysus in Doubt,* that he must eschew the book, it would be a great pity, for some of the poet's best work is included between the covers.

In addition to the title-poem, a meditative and satirical piece running to some thirty pages, there are three other long pieces in the volume. One of these is a dialogue entitled *Genevieve and Alexandra;* one, *Mortmain,* which might be called a narrative dialogue, with the story (or the drama) between rather than in the lines; and a satirical dialogue, *Demon and Dionysus.* A dozen and a half of sonnets make up the remainder. The sonnets will be taken up first.

The place occupied by Edwin Arlington Robinson in American poetry is too well known to require amplification, and sufficiently secure to admit of cavil. Perhaps not a strong voice—certainly never a blustering voice—

Mr. Robinson has won his way upward over a series of years by the quietly thoughtful value of his utterance and the studied finish of his verse. Those who like lawlessness in art have hurled at his poetry the accusation that it "smells of the lamp"; but for those who in art qrefer flawlessness to lawlessness the rounded perfectness of his numbers is a delight indeed. Needless to say, Mr. Robinson is by nature and training the type of poet to whom the sonnet form makes a powerful appeal—the type of poet under whose watchful genius the sonnet is brought very close to its perfection.

The sonnet might roughly be defined as a reflective lyric with something either of the pictorial or the dramatic in the circumscribed presentation of the theme. And fulfilling these requirements to a memorable degree is Robinson's sonnet, *The Sheaves:*

Where long the shadows of the wind had rolled,
Green wheat was yielding to the change assigned;
And as by some vast magic undivined
The world was turning slowly into gold.
Like nothing that was ever bought or sold
It waited there, the body and the mind;
And with a mighty meaning of a kind
That tells the more the more that is not told.

So in a land where all days are not fair,
Fair days went on till on another day
A thousand golden sheaves were lying there,
Shining and still, but not for long to stay—
As if a thousand girls with golden hair
Might rise from where they slept and go away.

This would seem to come as near as it is possible to come to the ever-teasing sonnet-ideal—that will-o'-the-wisp of poetry, that crock of gold at the foot of the poet's rain-

bow. And *The Sheaves* possesses to a remarkable degree something which is common in freer lyric expression, but unusual in the more rigid sonnet—the power to haunt the reader with sheer liquid, lyric beauty. Not only are the two closing lines,

> As if a thousand girls with golden hair
> Might rise from where they slept and go away,

supreme in their felicity, but it is safe to say that American poetry can boast nothing to surpass them. There are lines in Poe which torment memory with the baffling weirdness of their mood; lines from Emerson ever ringing with the burden of their message; lines of Sidney Lanier's, especially in *The Marshes of Glynn,* which act as a never-failing balm because of the pure mellifluence of their progress. But here is a figure of marvelous beauty in itself, extreme delicacy of delineation, flowing but not overflowing of movement. The sonnet is humane and urbane; and the touch it lays by the entire poem on the deeper chords of human emotion is both soothing and inspiring. *The Sheaves* answers to the test of all great art, consciously or unconsciously laid down by the poet himself in the last line of the octave; it is a sonnet "That tells the more the more it is not told."

Edwin Robinson has never been one to be led away (or astray) by a poetic thought or fancy. There is a practical substratum to his mind. He must, when his thoughts start to rove too far, bring them always back again. This ultimate basis in the practical and the sane results often in odd little twists which, to use one of his own phrases, bring "the salvage of a smile." This is Robinson's own peculiar and subtle form of wit;

and most engaging, as in the sonnet *Silver Street,* with its return from Parnassus in the last line.

Here, if you will, your fancy may destroy
This house before you and see flaming down
To ashes and to mysteries the old town
Where Shakespeare was a lodger for Mountjoy;
Here played the mighty child who for his toy
Must have the world—king, wizard, sage and clown,
Queen, fiend and trollop—and with no more renown,
May be, than friends and envy might annoy.

And in this little graveyard, if you will,
He stands again, as often long ago
He stood considering what it signified.
We may have doubted, or be doubting still—
But whether it be all so, or all not so,
One has to walk up Wood Street from Cheapside.

One would like to quote the two sonnets with the title, *Not Always,* if for nothing else, because of the firmness of touch so reminding of Meredith; the sonnet *En Passant* for the tragedy enacted within the fourteen lines; and *New England* for—well, solely because it is New England. And, indeed, the sextain must be quoted:

Passion is here a soilure of the wits,
  We're told, and Love a cross for them to bear;
Joy shivers in the corner where she knits,
  And Conscience always has the rocking-chair,
Cheerful as when she tortured into fits
  The first cat that was ever killed by Care.

Should this give offense to any of the good folk of the Northeastern Atlantic States, let it be remembered that *New England* is not a geographically placed locality, but a state of mind, to be met with everywhere.

The title-poem is a satirical questioning of the much-vaunted democracy of these, our United States; and Robinson's darts are the more likely to pierce through the skin in that they are finely sharpened to a point. If there is also a barb, that is also by design. "The wasteful god" is represented as in conversation with the poet. "There are," says the god:

> There are too many who stand
> Erect and always amiable in error,
> And always in accommodating terror
> Before the glimmering imminence
> Of too insistent a sincerity;
> Too many are recommended not to see,
> Or loudly to suggest,
> That opulence, compromise and lethargy
> Together are not the bravest or the best
> Among the imaginable remedies
> For a young world's unrest;
> Too many are not at all distressed
> Or noticeably ill at ease
> With nature's inner counsel when it means
> That if a drowsy wisdom blinks and leans
> Too much on legioned innocence
> Armed only with a large mistake,
> Something is due to shake.

Robinson does not suggest a way out of the bog of mistakes into which the precocity of this

> —unransomed kidnapped juvenile
> Miscalled Democracy

has led, except the sovereign remedy of abolishing cant and smugness, and of looking facts in the face. There is much to ponder over in *Dionysus in Doubt*, as there

is also in *Demon and Dionysus,* in which much the same theme is returned to and argued anew, and, if anything, still more cogently.

In the dialogue *Genevieve and Alexandra,* and in the narrative-dialogue *Mortmain,* there is something reminiscent of Browning's method. But Robinson's (if the indebtedness is real and not fancied) is a refinement on the method of the Victorian. It is as if Browning had gone to school to Henry James for lessons in the art of telling a story. Where Browning states, Robinson suggests; and where Browning suggests, Robinson faintly whispers. In neither of Robinson's poems is the story told; yet it is there, behind the words and between the lines. The tragedy—in each case is the poem a drama of the soul—the tragedy stabs through, although not a single detail is distinct, and the story itself is too fragmentary to be pieced together and remolded into prose. In form the first is nearer drama form than is the second, and Robinson rises to a poignant climax. The "he" of Genevieve's speech is, of course, her husband.

Six years have been enough
To make what little mind I've ever had
A weariness too large for his endurance.
He knows that in his measure I'm a fool.
And you say there's a—kindness in his eyes!
. . . . . .

I'd rather live in hovels and eat scraps,
And feed the pigs and all the wretched babies;
I'd rather steal my food from a blind man,
And give it back to him and starve to death;
I'd rather cut my feet off and eat poison;
I'd rather sit and skin myself alive
Than be a fool! I'd rather be a toad
Than live to see that—kindness in his eyes!

Edwin Robinson has the true dramatic instinct, as he has also the true narrative instinct; and for this reason his work carries conviction. If it is shadowy, fragile, it is because he wishes so. That is his art; and being his art it becomes a strength and not a weakness.

Mr. Robinson, doubtless, has many shortcomings. His is not a prophetic voice; and the greater part of his work—with such an exception as his sonnet *The Sheaves*—lacks what Pater called so happily "mystic perfume." But there is ever a finely repressed anguish of thought; and if he permits no luster to his lines, no accessory beauties, his style is not open to the accusation of hardness. He is not a poet who takes one by storm; he may, indeed, be something of an acquired taste. But the liking for his poetry grows on one. To use a homely, backwoodsman's expression, Robinson's poetry is, even when it fails of its highest, "good leather." He is one of the few writing to-day who may truthfully—and not merely as a convenience or a compliment—be called "a poet."

WILD CHERRY

By Lizette Woodworth Reese

Reviewed by David Morton

The Outlook, March 12, 1924

Of late our ears have been filled with the noise of new names—to the extent of drowning out altogether the thin sound of names that are not noisy and that are no longer new. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that a new book of poems by Lizette Woodworth Reese should issue from the press and take its place upon the shelves with no loud heralding or hoarse huzzas. Miss Reese and her readers would not have it otherwise; yet from such a disparity in the degree of attention a confusion of values is apt to result.

Masters with his revealing epitaphs, Frost with his distinctive New England folk, and Amy Lowell with her gorgeous tapestries and delicate images—to mention only three who live in the mouth of publicity—each brought a new and peculiar contribution to poetry in English. Miss Reese—not just to-day nor yesterday, but even the day before yesterday—with her exquisite refinement of thought and feeling, her delicate and perfect phrasing, and her sensitive and lyrical response to the frail and beautiful things of earth and of the spirit, also brought and brings a distinctive contribution. If it is less startling than these others, and no longer new as theirs, these are considerations which impair at all its genuine and lasting worth.

Some years ago, I remember, Padraic Colum had some sober and sound things to say on the subject of publicity and fame. The difference in origin, constituencies and destiny between the two are so obvious that it would seem needless to dwell upon them. But it is serviceable to note, by way of preserving a responsible sense of values, that the two are seldom coextensive in proportions, and that the growth of the latter is quiet and gradual; that it is based upon human need adequately served; that it proceeds without noise at a time when the blare of the day's trumpets is all of other things.

Something of this sort has gone on in the case of Miss Reese and her poetry. She has ceased to be of any great use to the heralds of publicity. Her accent was never a startling or revolutionary thing. And now even the delicate and sweet distinction that it had is no longer a novelty. How should one call the populace together to shout to them, for example, *A Girl's Mood:*

I love a prayer-book;
  I love a thorn-tree
That blows in the grass
  As white as can be.

I love an old house
  Set down in the sun,
And the windy old roads
  That thereabout run.

I love blue, thin frocks;
  Green stone, one and all;
A sky full of stars,
  A rose at the fall.

A lover I love;
Oh, had I but one,
I would give him all these,
Myself, and the sun!

This is scarcely the right pitch or proper matter for ear-splitting. But I suspect that it represents an old, old verity with fidelity—certainly with a delicate and trembling vividness, and a virginal music no less authentic for being thin.

Something of this same fresh and unspoiled quality inhabits most of the poetry in this latest book of a writer who began publishing when most of her better-known and wearily sophisticated colleagues in the art were yet in knee-breeches or pinafores. This virginal freshness —the innocent and ingenuous pleasure in the immediate joys and melancholies of existence—is the same delicate bloom in this volume that it was in *A Handful of Lavender,* published as long ago as 1892.

Above I have said something of Miss Reese's exquisite refinement of feeling and of her sensitive and lyrical response to things frail and lovely. Both of these qualities might be enlarged upon to the profit and delight of those surfeited with disordered and self-conscious poetry, merging over into pathology as its proper field. But it were more serviceable and delightful to reprint, as an instance and a characteristic sonnet, *Triumph:*

Heart's measure gave I. Is it all forgot?
Winds cannot blow or beat it into dust,
Or waters cover it, or moth or rust
Corrupt it into aught that it was not.

For what is more remembered than the spring?
The scarlet tulips running through the grass
By a wet wall, and gone with but Alas?
(I know not how I know this old, old thing.)
How now, poor one, that loved me for a space?
Mine is the triumph of the tulip flower;
My ruined April will not let you by;
To east my laughter, and to west my face,
Housed with you ever down some poignant hour,
There drifts the scrap of music that was I.

The poem is worth citing as an instance of certain outstanding qualities in Miss Reese's work as a whole—faultless technique, sensitive and delicate phrasing, and of passion restrained, yet glowing, and the element of repose which we associate with the finest art when it has fused jagged experience into a perfect and significant entity.

ROBERT FROST *

By GORMAN B. MUNSON

The Saturday Review of Literature, March 28, 1925

How about being a good Greek, for instance?
That course, they tell me, isn't offered this year.
—ROBERT FROST.

For once American criticism has said true things about a poet and practically nothing but true things. It has been established and reiterated that Robert Frost's poetic craftsmanship is not only serviceable in conveying the significant points of his experience, but that it is actually good in itself to look at. His simplicity and economy are always noticed, and his ability to project a dramatic narrative by means of dialogue often praised. Sometimes, too, it has been mentioned that it is the clear thought which Frost leaves unuttered that gives depth and spinal strength to his poems. But most of all he has been hailed as the poet of New England. Edwin Arlington Robinson takes for his materials the death that is creeping over old New England: Frost takes for his the life that still persists in that little section of our rampant country.

Critics, therefore, have made much of Frost as a lyrical perceiver of the beauties of the New England landscape, an intimate knower of the stable and delicate laws of necessity which govern its inhabitants, a quiet

* A chapter from a forthcoming study of American literature from Whitman to the present.

master of the simplified, sturdy, and settled lives of a part of its people. They have not neglected to make due praise of Frost's integrity and indigenous character. In brief, he is, as they suggest, the fine articulation of an important part of our experience. For we are, most of us, but one or two generations from the New England soil and community, and have we not at least kept up an acquaintance with them in vacation time? And if not, there has been at least the former hegemony of New England in our national letters to furnish some sort of ground in us to receive Frost. In Frost's poetry we find our impressions clarified into experience.

But though these things have been verified as true, the fact is that they are all secondary. The essence of Frost lies beyond them, for they are merely characteristics of a substance which has not been defined. We must push farther to reach the heart of his work.

At first we were surprised when the poet told us in his last book, *New Hampshire:*

> I may as well confess myself the author
> Of several books against the world in general.

We had noticed no protest, no satire, no revolt in his poetry. On the contrary, there was quietude, good humor, and a certain manly acceptance therein. What, this author who never whines, who never seems to resent savagely the present state of affairs, this author considers himself to be writing against the world in general! The surprise was salutary, for our recovery from it brought to light the implications of Frost's confession, the implications of his poetry *in toto,* and we realized quite suddenly that the purest classical poet of America was Robert Frost.

With Frost in the field as a classicist, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound began to look like something else. Eliot's poetry, for example, has romantic elements: his sentimental melancholy and wistfulness, the dandyism and obfuscation that cut him off from a more general appeal. Pound likewise seemed to be hewing no closer to a norm of thought, feeling, and conduct: he did not appear to be making a bridge from the special to the general experience, to be achieving the "grandeur of generality": he was given up to the irritations and discomforts of a sensitive being. Yet a romanticist tinge does not make a romanticist and *au fond* Eliot and Pound are nearer to classicism than they are to romanticism. Still there is an important difference in kind between them and Robert Frost.

It is this: Pound and Eliot are loyal to the principle of authority, whereas Frost depends entirely upon personal discovery. Pound and Eliot give allegiance to literary tradition as a governing body, seeking only to produce work that, while molded by tradition, still has sufficient novelty of conception and style to alter somewhat the existing body of letters. Frost is unconcerned with such a theory of dictatorship, adjustment, and modification: he does not set up a literary authority to serve. Like the intelligent Greek, he is simply by nature a positive, critical, and experimental spirit. If he manifests the classical virtues, if he achieves a nature, an imitation of it, a probability and a decorum which can match with those cultivated by the classical world, it is because he has discovered them in, through, and by his own direct experience. In comparison with him, Eliot and Pound appear formalists, and the distinction between them and Frost is the distinction between neo-classicism and classicism.

It is important to see that the classicism of Robert Frost has been evolved in a simplified world, the world of the New England farmer. Such a farmer has a settled routine of living dependent upon the regular processions of the seasons. He leads a village life in which most of the human factors at work are tangible and measurable. The intricacies of commerce and industry, the distress wrought by machines, the flow of vast crowds, the diversity of appeals of a great city, do not reach him. Churches are what they were, intellectual currents do not disturb, and science, arch-upsetter of former values, finds no opening to intrude. Frost tells of a hugger-mugger farmer who burnt his house in order to buy a telescope with the insurance money. He gazed with the ancient wonder at the heavens. But for science at large the attitude is indifference.

"You hear those hound-dogs sing on Moosilauke?
Well, they remind me of the hue and cry
We've heard against the mid-Victorians
And never rightly understood till Bryan
Retired from politics and joined the chorus.
The matter with the mid-Victorians
Seems to have been a man named John L. Darwin."
"Go 'long," I said to him, he to his horse.

In Frost's New England then many of the complex tormenting questions which have arisen since the small city and agrarian communities of old Greece have been lopped away from the problem of living.

"Me for the hills where I don't have to choose."

With this simplified world given, Frost has built his art upon the foundation of observation, so much so that

he is very sparing in the use of the image or even of the simile and metaphor.

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter, darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
Ice storms do that. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.

This is the poetry of observation and the reader will follow a hundred lines of observation to every five or six that break out into comparison or imagery. Now observation as distinguished from apprehension of relations (metaphor, image, intuition, religious insight), is the principal method of the classicist, and it is by positive and critical observations of things conceived as separate that Frost has discovered his Nature.

The end reached by observation as a method, whether it is a poet or a scientist who employs it, is dualism,—that is, a set of axioms and laws founded on distinctions. The distinctions are based on appearances and both they and appearances are treated as reasonably final data. Of course, something inscrutable remains beyond, "something must be left to God," as Frost says, but the fundamental truth or error of dualism is not plumbed. Whether or not the real world is dualistic, certainly the apparent world is. We all begin as dualists, and this dualism the classicist accepts, whereas the religious writer renounces it in order to probe beneath appearances for unifying principles.

So in Frost's poetry we are consistently struck by

his acceptance of the dualistic world and his real contentment with his lot of joy and love "dashed with pain and weariness and fault." Nature we feel as a sort of friendly antagonist, dangerously strong sometimes, but on the whole a fair opponent. In combat with her one cannot laze or cheat: but honest struggle brings fair returns. Especially is the line between Nature and Man always present in Frost's mind, though never insisted upon. For example, he spends no time dilating on the aloofness or indifference of nature to the fate of man. Such a poem as *The Need for Being Versed in Country Things* illustrates very well the sense of demarcation between man and nature which Frost preserves, his acceptance of nature as lovely and fair, and his awareness of her unconcern for man's disasters. In this poem we hear of the burning of a farmhouse and the decay of its barn. The birds nest in the latter.

> Yet for them the lilac renewed its leaf,
> And the aged elm, though touched with fire;
> And the dry pump flung up an awkward arm;
> And the fence post carried a strand of wire.
>
> For them there was really nothing sad.
> But though they rejoiced in the nest they kept,
> One had to be versed in country things
> Not to believe the phœbes wept.

Frost's poetry contains no trace of the "pathetic fallacy" of the romanticist which is surely a good ground for calling Frost a pure classicist.

The man that Frost treats is situated in a tamed wilderness and is disciplined by it. In New Hampshire the mountains are not high enough, there is nothing extravagant or unduly wild about nature, nor are

the people of Frost's poems grandiose or expansive. Their bodies have been contracted and hardened by sweating toil, their emotions have the solidity of rocks, and their minds achieve a good dogged common sense.

> For art's sake one could wish them worse
> Rather than better. How are we to write
> The Russian novel in America
> As long as life goes so unterribly?
> There is the pinch from which our only outcry
> In literature to date is heard to come.
> We get what little misery we can
> Out of not having cause for misery.
> It makes the guild of novel writers sick
> To be expected to be Dostoievskis
> On nothing worse than too much luck and comfort.
> . . . . . .
>
> It's Pollyanna now or death.
> This, then, is the new freedom we hear tell of;
> And very sensible. No state can build
> A literature that shall at once be sound
> And sad on a foundation of well-being.

Out of a settled social framework, an honest necessary struggle for existence, and a fair amount of well-being, something like a representative man can emerge. There are balances and checks to trim down his uniqueness while at the same time there is permitted a reasonable scope for his emotional and reflective life. In such a state the acquisitive impulse gets no favoring head start and instead of haste we find reticence and deliberation characteristic.

Thus Frost discovers what Professor Irving Babbitt would call a sound model for imitation. Professor Babbitt has labored to show that imitation as the ancients understood it was a fresh and imaginative process. It

is just so with Robert Frost. His choice of words, his rhymes, always escape the commonplace; we are awakened by the exact perceptions of a new discoverer. But the more important point is that this stirring-up is followed by a conviction of the naturalness of Mr. Frost's statements. Why, we murmur, has this not been said before? The question, by the way, that Poe proposed as a test question for the workings of the imagination.

One cannot be certain just what content the term, the imagination, contains to-day. Modern psychology has cleared away some of the rank underbrush which cluttered our view of the imagination: at least we habitually distinguish it from fancy. Perhaps by imagination we mean something not far from the total harmonized consciousness of the human unit. At any rate, Frost's imagination is the consciousness of a man who is using *more* of his equipment than most of the moderns do. I mean simply that Frost does not seem to work almost exclusively from one of three centers,—from the intellect or the emotions or the body or sense-center,—but from a sort of rude coöperation of all three. The conditions of his livelihood (farming) bring into at least partially coördinated play his body and his emotions, and in addition he is capable of thought. In this development he is again a parallel to the ancient writers, and gives a start to the speculation as to how far the conditions of modern mechanized life throw into disuse portions of the necessary equipment of a fully conscious being. Certainly, Frost's lines give one more of an impression that a whole man is writing them than do the sharply intellectualized or thumpingly emotional lines of most of his contemporaries.

The moot interpretation in the doctrine of imitation has always been the meaning to be attached to univer-

sals. One may rightly be skeptical as to the coincidence of the views of the idealists with the original meaning of Aristotle. But whether Aristotle is interpreted idealistically or not, Frost's use of universals arising from a welter of particulars is covered in the minimum definition that could be offered. His poems, *Mending Wall* and *The Grindstone* are prime examples. In these poems the particulars are vividly and concretely seen and they can stand the most rigid literal interpretation. Yet no less present and vivid in them is a wider significance or rather there are wider significances. Thus, among other things in *The Grindstone* we are deeply aware that a sense of the inertia of nature has been conveyed. We are aware of the aching strain of making nature malleable and the tear and wear made on the straining human spirit by time. For readers of Frost it is not necessary to add that this creation of universal significance is accomplished directly without an atom of didacticism.

Although I have deemed it necessary to dwell on the doctrines of nature and imitation as exemplified in the books of Robert Frost and have said perhaps too much for some readers and assuredly too little for others, it does not seem requisite to develop the contiguous statement that Frost is an observer of the law of probability and the law of measure or proportion or decorum. It is simply stating an easily recognizable fact which any reader may verify by going through Frost's writings that it is the probable sequence and not the improbable but possible sequence that he develops. He is a poet of the normal in man and nature, not the exploiter of the remarkably arresting and wonderful. Nor does his feeling for decorous proportion require argument beyond saying that he does not commit the mistake of the neo-

classicists who have been properly accused by Professor Babbitt of confusing the language of the nobility with the nobility of language. Frost's people are humble, but they speak a language and utter feelings appropriate to them: they are restrained by conventions which are inherently noble, and the result is decorum in the best sense.

The study of these considerations will explain why Frost declares that he has written several books against the world in general. For since Rousseau romanticism has been in the ascendancy. A new conception of nature as impulse and temperament has supplanted the old nature as a strict model, a "return to nature" has come to mean "letting one's self go." For imitation has been substituted the self-expression of the spontaneous original genius, for the law of probabilities has been exchanged the law of wonderful possibilities, and for decorum we have the doctrine of expansiveness. Science has abetted in the growth of naturalistic emotionalism, and neither humanism nor religion has been able to stop the tide of writing designed for the expression of uniqueness rather than generality.

Against this efflorescence of the interior world, the neo-classicists have striven in vain, for their position does not rest solidly enough upon experience and personal discovery. They have been debilitated by the blight of Scaliger's rhetorical question, why imitate nature when Virgil is a second nature?

Frost, however, miraculously takes his place beside the antique Greeks and against the modern world. He proves that a classicism resting on personal discovery is still possible.

EARTH MOODS

By HERVEY ALLEN

Reviewed by Lizette Woodworth Reese

The Saturday Review of Literature, **December 26, 1925**

To say that a book is important is to say many things. It may mean that it is modern, vigorous, fearless. To call Hervey Allen's *Earth Moods,* his latest volume of poems, important, is to mean all this. It is also artistic. His major subject is a vast one, and he has not only handled it with certainty and skill, but with a sharp sense for the definite and fitting word. Neither in the long first poems nor in the briefer ones which follow, is there any slackness of workmanship. The book will not appeal to those who write or read the petty and pretty inanities choking the public press of late, or to those whose cultivation of literature extends only to fifteen minutes each day, as advised in connection with Dr. Eliot's Book Shelf; but it should be a boon to thinkers.

Sixty-seven pages of *Earth Moods* are given up to telling the story of the mystery of life, to the rhythmical expression of the theory of evolution, to the struggle between matter and man; they are full of the winds that blow "between the worlds" and of high and lonely adventurings. This poem is divided into five parts, and each deals in an epic fashion with its particular time and place. The first section has two divisions, entitled respectively *Saga of the North* and *Saga of Leif the Lucky.* The poem opens with the sun, moon, and stars

shining down upon a vacant seething world. Ages after, come the Carthaginians cracking their whips "upon the backs of frozen elephants," and the Romans throwing out "white veins of roads to bleed the world." In the latter we have the tale of Lief Erikson sailing into a "land as lonesome as a star."

Leif Erikson came rowing up the Charles,
In the sea-battered dragon ships,
Stroked by the strong, blond carls,
The rattle of whose oars
Had wakened sea-lions on the glacial shores
Of Greenland, where the White Christ newly ruled.

The whole of these two divisions of the poem is packed with pictures, small, vivid things bitten into the sea and sky. This making of pictures is an especial gift of Mr. Allen. Phrase after phrase starts up to arrest you. You have a world in half-a-dozen words.

Funeral at High Tide continues the theme of the major part of the volume. We have here the inexorable sea and inexorable death. There is an exceptionally alive description of a negro funeral procession crawling along a road toward a white-washed country church, and the lately dug grave yawning beyond it.

Children of the Earth is distinctly different. It is the study of two temperaments, one of the north, one of the south. The stony fields, the gnarled orchard trees, the house set down in the midst, and the two tall tragic pines standing beside John Kenyon's gate belong to the man's heritage; the sandy roads, the sea-smells, the

. . . evening pools,
Enameled by the sunset, turgid scents,
And long, white, wraithy herons gliding home,

to the woman's. The characterization is as real as life. The husband, the wife, is each an individual, a creation. A few lines, and you have them both.

The Nest of Mist treats of the mystery of nature in contrast to its lack in the towns, and *The Fire Thief*, with the legend of Prometheus, "of one who lost himself among the stars." This ends the most significant portion of the book, but there are other poems, sixteen in all, which help, perhaps in a homelier fashion, to uphold its high reputation.

Shadow to Shadow is a ghost poem, of six grisly stanzas, well-done, with not a superfluous word. *Spider, Spider* takes for its subject the on-coming of madness. The woman, the tower, the wind over the moor, the squatting spider make a horror that has something about it of the black vast void of primeval night.

Earth Moods is a strong book. It makes its author a significant figure in American poetry. And for those of us who feel, as well as think, there is here in these poems a deep sense of beauty, and a sound spirituality.

COLLECTED POEMS

By VACHEL LINDSAY

Reviewed by Louis Untermeyer *

The Saturday Review of Literature, October 24, 1925

The new edition of Vachel Lindsay's *Collected Poems* is a complete and often cruel exhibition of the various elements which provoke Lindsay to be one of the most exciting as well as one of the dullest of living poets. His friends, hoping to find, with each new volume, a composite of his gifts, have ceased expecting the desired synthesis; instead of a fusion, Lindsay presents not only a confusion but a disintegration. How could it be otherwise? Lindsay's aims, like his gifts, have always been not merely scattered and uncertain but flatly irreconcilable. As a crusader his work shows him to have been a Socialist, a Missionary, a Campbellite, a Pacifist, a Jingo, a Prohibitionist, a Buddhist anxious to make his Springfield into a city of golden cathedrals. As a political prophet, he has celebrated Bryan, Roosevelt, Lincoln, and Kerensky with equal fervor. His *Litany of the Heroes* chants of Amenophis Fourth, St. Paul, Dante, Darwin, Woodrow Wilson, and Socrates in the order given. He has written tributes to Edwin Booth, Mae Marsh, motion picture actress; John L. Sullivan, Jane Addams, Lucifer and the Salvation Army. At present his twin gods are

* Part of the article on Vachel Lindsay in the new edition of Mr. Untermeyer's *Modern American Poetry* (Harcourt, Brace and Company).

Johnny Appleseed and Prince Siddartha. While he has not repudiated *The Congo,* he is no longer interested in the spirit which prompted it, being at present a metaphysical Egyptologist *via* the art museum. "My business is not jazzing, but Springfield and hieroglyphic and vision-seeing adventure."

The result, as might be imagined, is a mass of writing which is anything but a successful mixture. Lindsay, it is evident, grows less and less self-critical. *Collected Poems,* originally published in 1923, contained 390 pages with a twenty-four-page preface amazing in its naïveté. The present enlarged and illustrated volume contains over 500 pages, three added groups of doubtful value, and several exquisite full-page drawings. Lindsay, one might imagine, has seized the opportunity to delete his much too protesting preface. On the contrary, it stands, with a few corrections, exactly as it was first printed—plus a second and even more astonishing expostulation which rambles through forty-eight more preliminary pages.

There can be no doubt that Lindsay is in serious danger as a creator. He has become garrulous and, worse, badly repetitious. For example, his identification with Johnny Appleseed leads him to end his new preface (*Adventures While Preaching Hieroglyphic Sermons*) with a dozen poems arbitrarily entitled *Johnny Appleseed's Ship Comes In, Johnny Appleseed's Hymn to the Sun,* etc. One's displeasure is not allayed by finding one of Lindsay's old poems (*How I Walked Alone in the Jungle of Heaven*) on page 350, and the very same set of verses with a change of title (*How Johnny Appleseed Walked Alone in the Jungle of Heaven*) on page lxi of the same volume. The preface betrays the lamentable fact that Lindsay is no

longer willing or able to let his poetry speak for itself. He is continually conscious of his audience; he pleads with it ("These and similar questions I want to talk over with you in your town. I do not want to recite *The Congo*. You can recite it yourself as well as I can."); he scolds it for labeling him a ragtime poet ("In consequence of my having recited for a million people in their Sunday clothes, most of my friends have insisted on 'jazzing' the motive of my life."); he instructs it in a tone close to asperity ("This book should be opened to those same drawings and held on the knees of those who welcome me, and want to know precisely my message. Dear reader, either bring the book or stay away!"). Even in the north star chamber of his soul he seems to be aware of an auditorium full of high school girls giggling and applauding at the wrong moment.

Lindsay's other danger, and one not unrelated to his recent distrust of vaudeville levels, is his unremitting desire to be profound or prophetic. What mars much of his later work is an attempt to give every wisp of fantasy a cosmic or at least a national significance. In Leonora Speyer's collection of American poets, handsomely printed by Kurt Wolff in Munich, Lindsay's intoxicating chant *The Ghosts of the Buffaloes* was printed with an incredibly irrelevant fragment from another poem tacked on to it—a hortatory "Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all!" This very curious postscript reappears in the 1923 *Collected Poems* concluding the chant with a bewilderingly incongruous effect. Never has there been so treacherous a mixture of patriotism and poetry; never has a creator of sonorous stanzas written so many lifeless and fatuous lines. The very tone of voice frequently rasps with its pre-

determined overemphasis; passage upon passage proceeds without evoking a fresh thought or a vivid image; here, too often, is mere physical energy whipping up some trivial idea. Lindsay's heart may be in the right place; his words—at least half of them—are not. Instead of being master of his syllables, he is their intoxicated dupe.

But the reader must be warned that this indictment does not begin to cover the case for or against Lindsay. All that has been said represents the debit or discredit side of the ledger. To Lindsay's credit even his most grudging detractors would have to give evidence. The very undiscriminating vitality which has been guilty of the ineptitudes of *Niagara, The Blacksmith's Serenade,* the tawdry platitudes of *A Doll's Arabian Nights* and most of the pseudo-mystical verses —this same raucous vigor has produced some of the most insinuating and most recognizably American poetry of the period. The animal spirits which rise out of *The Congo* are not only contagious but indigenous; the almost incredible exuberance which leaps from *The Santa Fé Trail, The Booker Washington Trilogy,* and *The Kallyope Yell* could only, as any European would acknowledge at once, have come out of a country as vibrant, as responsive, and as esthetically immature as Lindsay's. Nor is this true of the revivalist only when he is shouting. *The Chinese Nightingale* and the delicate moon poems are as autochthonous in accent as any of the more stentorian ballads. There is, as has been stated, a crisis evidenced in this cumulative volume. Lindsay stands at the juncture of two roads, uncertain which to take and venturing tentative steps down both. He yearns back to the romantically religious strain sounded in the early pamphlets—but the raw tones and

rude rhythms of his tympanic pieces prevent him from recapturing the dulcet line. In a fret of uncertainty, he attempts the dynamic effects with which he played so skillfully—and a piece like the fumbling *Billboards and Galleons* is the result.

Each day is Biloxi's birthday party,
Splendid with many a sun-kissed wonder,
Splendid with many a swimming girl.
Oh, there is melted the heart of stone,
Fantasy, rhyme, and rhapsody ring.
From street car and Ford and yellow taxi,
Argosies crowded to shrieking capacity—
With moon-struck boy and sun-struck girl.
Tourists, residents, what you please—
From the whirling south, from the whirling north,
Bees near the hive,
Or far from home,
Dreaming of love like honeycomb.

It seems unbelievable that the author of such blatant doggerel is also the author of a dozen ringing chants, of an entirely new poetic *genre*, of a spiritual syncopation which made its creator appear as a combination Galahad and St. Francis touring the country with a jazz-band. The very opening lines of his percussive compositions were stirring in their immediate vivacity. For example:

Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room,
Barrel-house kings, with feet unstable,
Sagged and reeled and pounded on the table,
Pounded on the table,
Beat an empty barrel with the handle of a broom,
Loud as they were able.
Boom, *boom*, BOOM!

—From *The Congo.*

It is a perplexing problem, this wavering between brassy declamations and pianissimo confidences. The indecision is everywhere. There is scarcely a page which does not contradict another. At one moment Lindsay lifts his voice in a rousing appeal for peace, *Sew the Flags Together*; in another mood he becomes a rabid, fire-breathing Security Leaguer shouting:

> And now old Andrew Jackson fights
> To set the sad big world to rights.
> He joins the British and the French.
> He cheers up the Italian trench.
> He's making Democrats of these,
> And freedom's sons of Japanese.
> His hobby horse will gallop on
> Till all the infernal Huns are gone.

It is not unnatural that, under pressure of the patriotic moment, Lindsay should have been willing to allow the instant to dictate such unworthy banalities; what is incredible (and significant) is that he allows such lines to reappear in print in 1925. What, one wonders, is to save him from himself? If there is hope, it is in his dominant characteristic—his gusto. Even the weakest of his echolalia-propelled verses reveal the side-spring, the untamed fancy, the whimsical "child-wedded" heart sworn to a dozen contemporary crusades. Lindsay's wildness of imagination, outliving his muddled theories, will remain to charm those who delight neither in the preacher nor the propagandist but in one of the most original rhapsodists who is at the same time the most daring verbal musician of our day. His admirers should be grateful that, though Lindsay the missionary has often converted Lindsay the minstrel, something in the rhymer remains unpersuaded and puckishly non-conforming.

REVIEWS OF CRITICAL AND SOCIAL DISCUSSION

PREJUDICES, THIRD SERIES

By H. L. MENCKEN

Reviewed by Leonard Bacon

New York Evening Post Literary Review, December 2, 1922

Two hundred and twenty-two years ago a writer named Congreve had a prophetic moment, witness the following passage:

Mirabell: Maybe you think him too positive?
Witwoud: No, no, his being positive is an incentive to argument, and keeps up conversation.
Fainall: Too illiterate?
Witwoud: That! That's his happiness: his want of learning gives the more opportunity to show his natural parts.

Every essay in Mr. Mencken's new book lends point to the passage quoted above. The Mr. Petulant of the play was never more positive. And Mr. Mencken's widely read illiteracy enables him to display his natural parts in a way that will prove a delight to the brainless intellectuals and a source of innocent merriment to others. The art (better craft) of being an American, James Huneker, the function of a critic, capitalism, religion, military millinery, poets, Abraham Lincoln, Paul Elmer More, Havelock Ellis, Liberty, novels, education, political economy, politics, drama, are a few of the subjects prejudged. There isn't a dull page nor is there a particularly striking one. Nevertheless there is enough to hold his admirers to their allegiance.

And why not? After all, it would be foolish not to admit that Mr. Mencken is often brightly right. When he castigates the American Legion he is only shouting what most people are afraid to whisper. And yet the howl leaves something to be desired. For between the lines it is apparent that this particular prejudice is based as much on 1917 as on 1922. He may hate the stupid and selfish organization, but he hates the individual members quite as much for their part in the humiliation of a violated empire now being rapidly drawn to the dregs of a democracy.

Such blame is equivocal. So is his praise. In particular he celebrated the late James Huneker. Huneker was an extraordinary creature—head and shoulders above the ruck of that profession which is reserved for them who have talent without genius. Competent as he undoubtedly was, and charming as he seems to have been, no roaring at academicians will ever make him more than he was—an encyclopedia of piquant gossip and an entertaining companion in and out of print.

So much for that. Two of the essays, *Das Kapital* and *The Dismal Science,* give Mr. Mencken a chance to probe the wounds of the time—in army surgeon style. In *Das Kapital* his thesis is that if the democracy ceased persecuting the capitalist and treated him kindly, then his native good qualities would have scope to assert themselves and things would be better. In treating of political economists he says that though what they teach is probably true the fact that they dare not give the lie to their teaching, should they feel so inclined, vitiates their doctrine. As you read you are entertained, you even half assent, and yet it doesn't matter, though it was meant to. Why?

The answer is not hard to give. The words of real

thinkers are correlated with things. Mr. Mencken's words are not correlated with things—but with what he calls ideas. An idea to Mr. Mencken is a position to which Mr. George Jean Nathan might assent when in a yielding mood—*apercus* on existence generally rather fuzzy round the edges, suggestions, predications that don't really predicate, apparent clarities that are actual nebulosities—in short, the sort of thing that appeals to all that ineffectiveness and dilettantism which is a part of the strongest and clearest nature and which makes up the whole of most natures.

And there is further reason for distrust. The violence with which half-truths or complete misstatements are presented ruins the case before we have had time to see just how bad it is. Mr. Mencken, in analyzing Kipling, has plucked out his own mystery. The latter appeals, he says, to those innumerable sufferers from that queer form of self-depreciation which makes us boast and swank when most conscious of our deficiencies—which makes the shy man bumptious and the timid man ferocious. Deep in his heart I believe Mr. Mencken distrusts himself and his ideas. Deep in his heart he fears something vague which may be called the Puritan. He shudders and shrieks "Ass" and "Knave" at the fierce creature in order to assert and reassure himself against the terror. A true hedonist would laugh at the Puritan. Mr. Mencken is in no spiritual condition to laugh—a privilege reserved for the unterrified. It is to escape that sense of inferiority thence arising that he plunges into violent criticism, which, he naïvely says in a note on that occupation, is for him the art of asserting the personality of H. L. Mencken.

I may have overemphasized the point. But it does seem to explain him. It explains the sore irritability

and the almost agonizing eagerness which is not enthusiasm. It explains the bad temper and the worst taste. It explains the gesture of the style and the direction of the thought—why, to parody Sir Thomas Browne, he loves to lose himself in an O Attitudo. And, strangest of all, it explains why in every university in the land—those institutions most dear to the booboisie—the booboisie with religious intensity devour Mr. Mencken's lucubrations on the booboisie, nothing doubting—nothing doubting.

THE MELTING-POT MISTAKE

By HENRY PRATT FAIRCHILD

Reviewed by Henry H. Curran

The Bookman, April, 1926

The Melting-Pot Mistake is the best book on immigration that I have read.

To begin with, there is a delightful absence of the charts, graphs and curves that usually besprinkle a book on this subject. Gone, too, are the good old platoons and battalions of marshaled figures, standing at attention within their lined rectangles like so many tin soldiers on parade, and equally reticent of real information. Nor is there even a table to tell us of the tilt of the nose of a Croat, or the shape of the foot of a Finn. All, all are gone—the old familiar junk!

For this alone Professor Fairchild is to be thanked, and wreathed, and even crowned, by all who read books on immigration. I have seen and known many thousands of immigrants; but I never found a graph among them, nor other of the fuss and folderol that usually afflict their commentators.

There are positive virtues about the book, however, that speak for themselves to those who have to do with immigration. They should speak equally interestingly to those who approach the subject from the outside. The history of the affair, for instance, with which the book begins, is treated in such small compass, but with

such thoughtful comprehension, that it includes both the accuracy and the area of a real bird's-eye view. That is all we need. There is nothing abstruse about the story of immigration. A simple human annal of simple human beings, with cause and effect always obvious, it is better shown by broad strokes than by fine etching. That is the way of the author's picture of it, with an added *sine qua non* of his own definite opinion, free from prejudice or sentimentality.

There is no question about the opinion put forth. It runs straight as a string, through the general and historical reflections and then on into the livelier and timelier chapters, and through them to the very end. It is more than a string. It is as visible and unmistakable as a life line, or even a hawser. And it holds taut and firm throughout for an American policy that will allow immigrants to filter in among us in small numbers only, and of a kind only that may be considered more like unto us than unlike. That the "Melting Pot" long ago ceased to melt, is set forth so surely that we know it now for a cracked pot and no more. We may take comfort accordingly in the assurance that—now, at last—our country's settled policy forbids, for the future, any such indiscriminate immigration as that which nearly swamped us in the past. That day's done forever. No more!

But the best part of the book, to my mind, is that which has to do with "Americanization." Here is the problem of the present, and the future. We have so decreased the quantity of our immigration, and have so improved its quality, that the problem of the future concerns the immigrants already here much more than it does those still to come. How may they become Americans? That is the rub to-day. For our country

is no more a melting pot now than it was last week or last year or even a long generation ago.

There are some seven or eight million aliens in America who are permanently part of the very warp and woof of our national life. Can they ever be real Americans? Should they be? And just what is a real American anyhow?

Professor Fairchild handles these pressing questions in a fashion that reflects not only an excellent power of analysis but also a very masterly and practical acquaintance with the subject in all its aspects. He is unsparing in his exposure of some of the "Americanization" claptrap that has been rammed down the throats of our alien resident immigrants. If he had written no more than that, his book would be worth reading and its circulation would be a service. But he has gone further. He has laid down practical conclusions and directions that are refreshing in their sane truth. So much buzzfuzz, in fact, has been uttered on this business of "Americanization" that one book like this, in contrast, rings a bell that carries over the countryside a clear note of its own.

If you want statistics, don't read this book. If you want anti alien bigotry or pro alien "sob stuff," don't read it. But if you want a reasoned, readable, and informed study of immigration, up to the minute and into the future, then do read it. Some of its minor conclusions may not find you in agreement. For my part, I differ with several. But the broad main stream is sound, and also entertaining. It is the best book on immigration that I have read.

THE WRITING OF FICTION

By Edith Wharton

Reviewed by Zona Gale

New York Herald Tribune Books, January 31, 1926

To writers Mrs. Wharton has in *The Writing of Fiction* given that service which she would most willingly give: she has both evoked and heightened an awareness. No one who writes for love of writing can close the book without the sense of a temple visited, whether or not one has paused at all the shrines.

And if this attitude extends to critics, the service will have been multiplied. There are in America critics who are alive to the implications of her goals, who do detect the bloom on the fruit which she brings, but these are not all the critics that there are.

Analysis of short story and novel construction, and of character and situation in the novel, are preceded by a compact chapter, *In General,* and followed by an exposition of Marcel Proust. Certainly nowhere in English is there a treatment of the art of writing which can at all approach its presentation in this book. Herbert Spencer and Robert Louis Stevenson, on Style, the former with his plea to economize the interpreting power of the reader and the latter with his directions for stimulating observation seem, useful as they are, like courses in freshman composition before the practiced preoccupations of Mrs. Wharton. However one may react to a range of instance limited to the Victorians

and the French, however one may react to her predilection for the founded, the built, the measured, or to her reverence for narrative, yet the pages are of glass, laid on the writing of fiction, magnifying yesterday and exposing fine phases of the possible.

The secret of the novelist's success "lies in his instinct for selection." But by selection Mrs. Wharton does not mean an impulse occupying a point in time; she means, of course, a process, a duration, a result to be achieved "only through something like the slow ripening processes of nature." This instinct includes not only that for selection of character or situation, or both, but also such choices as those "illuminating instances" in which her own work abounds, wherein prophecy or irony or parallel is held up, as clear as a brazen serpent, and includes, too, such choices as the moment for the sweep of narrative and the moment for its dispersal—that which we knew as tempo, though usually she avoids this word as rigorously as she avoids the word technique—for its dispersal in dialogue.

Dialogue she regards as a precious thing, a condiment, to be used sparingly. For its use as maid-of-all-work, to heighten characterization, further action, reveal situation, lift a dull moment, she has no tolerance. "Dialogue, that precious adjunct, should never be more than an adjunct . . . reserved for culminating moments, regarded as the spray into which the great wave of narrative breaks in curving toward the watcher on the shore." Thus narrative preoccupies her. Her dictum is that "narrative, with all its suppleness and variety, its range from great orchestral effects to the frail vibration of a sixth string," should furnish the substance of a novel. This arrangement of material she accepts as inevitable, or at any rate as most highly de-

sirable, with the "inconspicuous transitional pages . . . that lead from climax to climax."

Making an end of a novel or short story "in accordance with its own deepest sense"; making a vivid attack—but not unless, like Cellini's father when he boxed his son's ears to make him remember a salamander, you have a salamander to show; cutting away the superfluous, ordering the essentials; escaping from "the dense and the prolix" to "the tenuous and the tight," but not to the two dimensional, which cannot "suggest illimitable air within a narrow space"; economizing in the use of accidental happenings; letting subject "grow slowly instead of hunting about for arbitrary combinations of circumstance"; creating in the reader's mind the sense of passing time—these are but a few of the exhaustless treasures of Mrs. Wharton's explication. The chapter on "Telling a Short Story" is work as perfect as would be a short story which used all this chapter's illumination.

A most vital matter which she handles is that of the point of view from which the story is to be told. This choice is one of the major agonies of the novelist and in its involved experimentation lies one of his greatest delights. She instances the old methods of solution from the "slovenly habit of some novelists of tumbling in and out of their characters' minds and then suddenly drawing back to scrutinize them from the outside as the avowed Showman," to Henry James's tenuous or rigid effects secured by confining the picture to "the range and also to the capacity of the eye fixed on it," and, when the transition became imperative, his ingenuity in effecting it. And Conrad's sleight, that use of "a series of reflecting consciousnesses," just outside the picture. In recalling as she does the failure of

James in his device of Colonel and Mrs. Assingham and their daily exchange of reports of their eavesdropping; and Meredith's incredible inexpedient in setting after each speech of "the inarticulate Rhoda Fleming and her tongue-tied suitor," a parenthesis to show what each was actually thinking, she gives a kind of divining rod for finding the solution of this vital problem.

One of the few modern experiments in form which Mrs. Wharton notes is the use of the "stream of consciousness," in which she finds a recrudescence of the old French slices of life, differing from these chiefly "in noting mental as well as visual reactions"; and she dismisses them more or less cursorily, as lying outside the magic of form, save only when their method can be employed for a reason; Balzac and Thackeray and "all the greatest of them" have made use of "the stammerings and murmurings of the half-conscious mind whenever, but only when, such a state of mental flux fitted into the whole picture." So integrated, they are useful in the play of crucial moments. No other moments, are, Mrs. Wharton holds, food for fiction. "But there must be something that *makes* them crucial." It is in this connection that she stresses the necessity for a writer to know his background, know the history of his art, lest he make a discovery of something long discarded. The urbanity of her manner covers even her passing comment on that which, she says, some one else has wittily called the "now-it-can-be-told school," with its books "mistaken for works of genius by a public ignorant of Rabelais and unaware of Apuleius." She adds: "The balance will right itself with the habit of freedom. The new novelist will learn that it is even more necessary to see life steadily than to recount it

whole; and by that time a more thoughtful public may be ripe for the enjoyment of a riper art."

It is with this history as setting forth the principles which she is clarifying that Mrs. Wharton's book is chiefly concerned. The writing of fiction here means the writing of fiction as it has been written in its best examples in the past; the writing of fiction, moreover, in France and in England, or by Tolstoi, Dostoievsky or Goethe.

Naturally, therefore, as one reads, alive to her scrupulous taste in mentioning nobody now living save, fleetly, Hardy and Mr. Kipling; and nobody in America, save Hawthorne, Poe and Henry James (and once *The Emperor Jones*); one's desire for more is yet frankly avid. For little modern victories, English and American, crowd our thought, instances of late triumphant excursions and even of leisurely sojourns in the very courts which she opens. So that when we are by her bidden to the old loved tables of Jane Austen, Thackeray, Dickens, Meredith, George Eliot, Balzac and Flaubert, we, with our passion for to-day, might think in silence of modern incantations, less crystallized, set and certain, but perhaps not the less illustrative, not the less apposite. Not that one may ask for more when Mrs. Wharton gives so much. But if her instances might have been drawn—and they might—from to-day as well as from yesterday, we should have had a document which would be not only a precious stone but a seed. And yet the book is a seed. Perhaps one merely means another seed.

One wonders whether her citations of *nuances* were indeed divinable a half century earlier, and whether it may not be to some extent to-day's compulsions and measures which have unsealed our eyes to those old

patterns. And then one is lured to speculate on her reactions to certain matters not treated in her book.

For example, concerning narrative and the tendency of some novels to delete altogether the "slow effaced gliding," a deletion which seems not always to have been unsuccessful. Mrs. Wharton's own word that "the art of rendering life in fiction can never be anything, or need to be anything, but the disengaging of crucial moments from the welter of existence," might very well have been the basis for a dawning disregard of connective tissue in favor of a sure choice of episodes, of crucial moments, themselves capable of orchestration and even of arias. Since it is effect which one snares, not process, in art or in life; and "He weeps" is more poignant than "He is aging."

And concerning dialogue: what is her thought on the possibility that it may be integrated in narrative, possibly enriching both, thus dispensing with the old habit of giving paragraphs to quoted speeches, on both the important and the unimportant alike, but using these only for the very apex of a moment?

And concerning, too, a modern impatience of "anticipatory flashes"—unless indeed these are as luminous as Mrs. Wharton's own. Here, surely, Thackeray, Balzac and Proust cannot excel Mrs. Wharton herself; or, for illuminating instance, that other moment in *Glimpses of the Moon* when the bracelet is offered to defray the expenses of the second honeymoon. These are of the stuff of universal pity and irony.

Or, again, holding as she does, that "the shock of forces is latent in every attempt to detach a fragment of human experience and transpose it in terms of art; that is, of completion," one longs for her judgment on some recent intimations that the art of the

novel, like other arts, may well even now neglect the shock of contending forces, and still hold a reader, precisely as sculpture, architecture, certain painting, certain music and certain human beings hold us now. That behavior, without shock, is material for fiction. (Is it toward this eventuation that the stream of consciousness method, however irritatingly it trickle, may be tending?)

It is another way of wishing that Mrs. Wharton would go on forever, when one wishes that the book might include a discussion of these things and more in the light of the accomplishment of the last two decades. For such considerations have to do with the writing of fiction here and now. And it is possible that a critic of fiction here and now might modify somewhat an occasional paragraph of this exquisite treatment of the fiction of the past. As when in speaking of some of the conversations between Marcel Proust's maiden aunts, Mrs. Wharton says that one must turn to Cranford for such studies of provincial life as that of the bedridden aunt, commenting on one passing in her new gown without an umbrella—scenes which "Jane Austen never surpassed in irony." One divines her amused appreciation of Sheila Kay-Smith's provincials, and those of Sinclair Lewis. And when she says that "the distrust of technique and the fear of being unoriginal . . . are in truth leading to pure anarchy in fiction, and one is almost tempted to say that in certain schools formlessness is now regarded as the first condition of form," one would have liked to hear her analyze this further to see whether it may not be that fiction, that manifestation which—as she says of fiction character—is a child again at every new era of its being, is in truth trying to stumble across new thresholds. And

that beyond there may lie chambers wherein new forms seem to us now like formlessness.

One wishes above all that Mrs. Wharton had included some comment on the only heresy which one may feel on closing the book. It is that, as a matter of fact, every one may not work this way in securing his effects. And that, though, after a time, the worker at any art arrives at a certain self-consciousness and becomes at least potentially articulate as to how he works; yet this does not mean that he believes in the invariable use of charts. One wishes for her comment on the fact that on certain mornings the writer will begin to write, will set down a first paragraph without an idea of what is to follow; will write with growing delight, will see his parts take their places, will note prophecies and "throw-backs" which he did not plan, will finally arrive at a conclusion which had never previously been isolated in his thought. Similarly with a character; quite suddenly there he will be—in the room, in the action, uninvited, not to be turned out. One may try to escape him, may reason with him, but reason is at the moment so clearly transcended that if the strange guest is disregarded one feels the discomfort of some failure. And then he makes and takes his place. Now the days of uncharted voyages, of these arrivals of uninvited characters, the excitement of seeing beings walk in wearing their characteristics like a cloak, are to many among the deep delights of the way.

But Mrs. Wharton says: "Characters whose tasks have not been provided for them in advance are likely to present as embarrassing problems as other types of the unemployed." Here is noted merely a difference in method—and yet perhaps the cool and detached simile chosen intimates that this, after all, may be more than

a difference in method—"as embarrassing problems as other types of the unemployed." She says: "The short-story writer must not only know from what angle to present his anecdote if it is to give out all its fires, but must understand just *why* that particular angle and no other is the right one. He must, therefore, have turned his subject over and over, walked around it, so to speak; applied to it those laws of perspective . . . before it can be offered to the reader as a natural unembellished fragment of experience." One wonders if Mrs. Wharton would say that this is the *sine qua non* of fiction writing? That a piece of fiction may not have, from its beginning, the unpremeditated flow of a poem, to chart which would be unthinkable? To charting and building, is the alternative a groping?

It is an ancient debate, but one wishes intensely that *The Writing of Fiction* included some word of this. And perhaps it does when she says: "It all comes back to a question of expense; expense of time, of patience, of study, of thought, of letting hundreds of stray experiences accumulate and group themselves in the memory, till suddenly one of the number emerges and throws its sharp light on the subject which solicits you. It has been often, and inaccurately, said that the mind of the creative artist is a mirror, and the work of art the reflection of life in it. The mirror, indeed, is the artist's mind, with all his experiences reflected in it; but the work of art, from the smallest to the greatest, should be something projected, not reflected, something on which his mirrored experiences, at the right conjunction of the stars, are to be turned for full illumination."

The book is inestimably precious. When has there been another, a master of any art, who is so aware and so able to make others aware of the processes by which

power has been and is to be trained to flow in given channels? And when has there been of any art a handbook so powerfully and beautifully witnessing to the sovereign artistry of its maker?

INDIANS OF THE ENCHANTED DESERT

By Leo Crane

Reviewed by H. L. Mencken

The Atlantic Monthly, November, 1925

This excellent book belongs to a species that is too seldom met in American literature. The English produce almost innumerable examples, and many good ones. There is no place in the Empire so remote that it hasn't its illuminating volume, soberly documented and bemapped, and with all in it that is worth knowing about the politics, sorceries, and table manners of the local brown brothers. Our own agents of the enlightenment seem to be far less literate than their British colleagues, most of them, I dare say, can read and write after a fashion, but what they write is buried in government files. Thus we know less about the Indians within our own borders than the average curious Englishman knows about the Tibetans, the Marquesas Islanders, and the Swahili. The cheap magazines and the movies simply caricature them; what one hears about them in the newspapers is only to the effect that they have sold more oil-lands and are drinking again.

Mr. Crane, when he became an Indian agent, brought a novel equipment to his office. He was by occupation an attaché of the Indian Bureau in Washington, but he was by vocation a literary gentleman, and one of considerable skill. His short stories were in all the magazines; he was a rising young man. It was ill

health that took him into the field, and when he got there it combined with a burden of harsh and unaccustomed duties to paralyze his pen. For a decade he wrote scarcely anything. But then, restored to health and with an immense stock of fresh and vivid impressions, he took to writing again, and here are the first fruits of his new activity. They take the form of a book that is at once a valuable record and a sort of poem. It describes one Indian people, the Hopis, at length, realistically and without sentimentalizing, but it throws about them a glow that reflects the author's delight in them, and in the gorgeous desert that is their home.

No better picture of that desert is to be found in American literature. Tourists whirl through it on express trains; the plain people see it only in the monotone of the movies. Mr. Crane, for years on years, battled for life with its eternal rocks and sands. He makes it brilliantly real, and he somehow makes it romantic. Its blinding colors are in his narrative, and its immense silences, and its baking heats and bitter colds. Here, for the first time, Thither Arizona begins to exist. The book is charmingly written. It avoids laborious details. It is a panorama of beautiful things, and a narrative of hard and useful work done in a lonely place, without thanks and against depressing difficulties.

PROGRESS AND SCIENCE: ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

By ROBERT SHAFER

Reviewed by Julius W. Pratt

The South Atlantic Quarterly, October, 1923

Many years have passed since Matthew Arnold voiced his famous criticism of the modern reliance on "machinery," whether that term was taken in its literal sense or as a name for the organizations and institutions of church, state, and society in general. Mr. Shafer's books of essays is in part a restatement of the position that was briefly set forth in Arnold's *Sweetness and Light*. It shows clearly the fallacies in the belief that applied science has contributed definitely to human betterment. Although the stupendous development of machinery has effected an improvement of "the material well-being of a large minority of the population of about half the globe," the author holds that "the power to secure material advantages breeds simply the desire for more." True human betterment "can come only through the development of our spiritual capacities"; the "progress" that comes from science "is nothing more than a competition for riches or other power—a competition which must continue so long as its reward is limited in extent."

The first essay in the volume thus deals with the claims advanced by writers like Mr. F. S. Marvin for

science as the great agent of human progress. The next two essays discuss the proposals for "progress" through machinery in the less literal sense of the word—schemes for the political, social, and economic reform of society, or for the alteration of human motives and ideals through sweeping changes in education. Most of these proposals—Mr. G. D. H. Cole, Miss M. P. Follett, Mr. H. G. Wells, and Mr. John Dewey are among the authors treated—Mr. Shafer finds to be either tainted with that romantic and unsound conception of human nature which, since the French Revolution, has flourished in the face of daily disproof, or else predicated upon such a rigid and minute organization of society as would destroy all freedom in the individual life.

Having disposed rather effectively of a good deal of loose popular optimism about social progress,—an optimism in which, as he points out, a false understanding of the implications of the evolution theory has played a part—Mr. Shafer turns to a group of writers who, far from being deceived by these easy notions of progress, went to the opposite extreme of a hopeless pessimism in regard to the nature and destiny of the human race. Among these are the brothers Brooks and Henry Adams, whose efforts to formulate a science of history resulted, in the one case, in a belief in fear and greed as the alternate swayers of the destiny of nations, and in the other, in the application of the law of the degradation of energy to man and society, which are therefore upon, not an upward, but a downward course. In this group also is Walter Pater, who, like the Adamses, accepted without question the dogmas of physical science, and for whom man became a being whose religion and ideals were but illusions, his only reality the sensation of the moment, his highest good

"to burn always with his hard gem-like flame"—that is, to live continually in a state of vivid sensation.

The real object of the author's criticism is thus our modern materialistic philosophy, whether it displays itself in a fatuous enthusiasm for purely material progress, resigns itself to a gloomy pessimism, or seeks a brief comfort in sensationalism. The author, be it said, is no fanatic opponent of natural science, no "Fundamentalist" or "Bryanite." The book gives ample proof not only that he has approached both natural science and sociology with an open mind, but that he has thoroughly mastered their current philosophy. His complaint against natural science is that it has overstepped its limits, arrogating the whole nature of man to its own province. That there is a spiritual reality beyond the reach of science is his earnest belief—a belief, however, which he will leave each individual to arrive at by searching himself. Henry Adams "knew no tragedy so heart-rending as introspection." Mr. Shafer, on the other hand, is of the opinion that every man, through his own self-consciousness, may come to learn "that there is that within him, most truly himself, which his fellows can never fully know, which is his sole and incommunicable possession and is most precious, because it gives its own life—whatever it be in the eyes of others—an inherent and unique value." It is through such study of himself that the individual must reach his conclusion relative to a spiritual reality beyond the view of natural science. It is here, if anywhere, that he will find truth more satisfying and hopeful than the facts and laws of physical nature. It is here, perhaps, that he will find the key to an individual progress to replace his lost belief in an impossible progress of society.

SILHOUETTES

By Sir Edmund Gosse, C. B.

EXPERIMENTS

By Norman Douglas

Reviewed by Ben Ray Redman

New York Herald Tribune Books, February 7, 1926

Among living men of letters Edmund Gosse and Norman Douglas are distinguished figures; the labors of the one in the cause of literature have been persistent and vast, while the contributions of the other have been spasmodic and at no time prolific, but each in his own way has accomplished work of the first order. Critics and literary historians of Gosse's stature will never form a numerous company, and no generation can claim more than a handful of men capable of writing prose so variously beautiful as that of *Siren Land*, *South Wind* and *Old Calabria*. But because readers who are also critics are often an ungrateful and ungracious lot, it is inevitable that one of these writers should be charged with having attempted too much, while the other is chided for having attempted too little.

The first charge comes from the professorial camp, for your thorough-going pedant greets the name of Gosse, like that of Saintsbury, with a shake of the head and various dour remarks regarding unsound scholarship and critical inaccuracy. Pressed for chapter and

verse, the poor creature presents his microscopic evidence, and you discover that Gosse, or Saintsbury, as the case may be, has occasionally misread some topographic detail of an obscure literary byway wherein some industrious scholar-mole has spent a lifetime charting every mound and pebble. Whereupon you decide that pygmies are not the best judges of giants, and express an immediate, imperative desire for fresh air.

If Gosse had erred a hundred times more frequently than he has, our debt to him would not be lessened by one jot, for he has served the cause of literature as the whole country of moles can never serve it. From those far-off days when Froude discovered in him a promising young writer for *Fraser's Magazine* down to this present very different day, he has devoted to his chosen work industry, integrity, wisdom, enterprise and unwaning affection. Selecting his texts from many lands and many ages, he has steadfastly expounded the gospel of good literature, and as he is possessed of that precious quality called charm his words have not fallen upon deaf ears. Because, like all great critics, he recognizes the continuity of time and erects no artificial barrier between the present and the past, he has been able to move with his generation, and at the same time live at ease amid an abundance which that generation is all too prone to ignore. For him there is no old and new in literature; there are the quick and the dead; the living are ageless and the still-born writings of the twentieth century are as irrefragably lifeless as those of the meanest Alexandrian scribbler.

No more in space than in time has Gosse suffered from insularity. He first won wide public notice by his *Life of Thomas Gray,* most English of English

poets, which he contributed to Morley's famous series; but he had written in praise of Ibsen as early as 1871, when the Norwegian's name was no more than a pair of unfamiliar sounds to English ears; he published his *Northern Studies* in 1879, and from the beginning of his career he acted as literary liaison officer between France and England, extolling the virtues of French verse forms and giving practical proof, along with Austin Dobson, that they might happily be made to serve the genius of the English tongue. So it is only characteristic of this critic's range that the first paper in his latest volume should be devoted to Claudian, of whom he ingratiatingly writes as *The Last of the Pagans,* while the last paper is a review of Mr. George Moore's *Conversations in Ebury Street.*

Between these two we find nearly twoscore brief essays, dealing with a wide variety of subjects. Originally, I believe, they were all published as book reviews, or were at least evoked by the issue of some particular volume; but they are self-sufficient critical papers which need be referred to no external stimuli. Their author speaks of them as, "Another selection from the little sermons which I preach every week out of the pulpit of the *Sunday Times*"; but this description suggests a rather more dogmatic, hortatory tone than that which characterizes them. Their arguments are genial, their erudition unobtrusive, and their style urbane. In his "swallow-flights" the critic covers wide tracts of various territory; here he circles above the figure of manly Wycherly, and there above the gracious presence of Austin Dobson; from the mystic Camoëns he wings his way to the most earthly Choderlos de Laclos; from Horace Walpole and his jerry-built Castle of Otranto he skims lightly on to the Dutch doctor

Mandeville and Kaye's recent sturdy edition of his uncompromising satire. Of Howells, of Lang, of Ovid, of Herman Melville and their works he writes with unflagging appreciation and good sense. At the rich variety of *Silhouettes* I have only hinted; surveying the table of contents, our pedant will surely echo his old refrain, "Too much, too much. . . ." But the man who loves literature will stop his ears.

And now we return to that other antithetical charge leveled against Douglas, "Too little, too little . . ." Justice in this case, according to certain standards at least, rests with the accusers. Certainly Douglas did not attempt too little when he wrote *Siren Land, Old Calabria, South Wind,* and *Fountains in the Sand;* but of late his literary efforts seem to have been at best half-hearted. The ramblings in *Alone* were almost satisfactory to those who knew his earlier work; the pages of *Together* were considerably less satisfying; and the potpourri of *Experiments* is, in the main, definitely unworthy of its author. In his dedication Douglas does, to be sure, refer to "these moldering remains," but his critical sense did not prevent him acquiescing in their exhumation. Here we are treading on delicate ground; an author may be moved to publication by conditions of which his critics know nothing, and in those conditions he may not be truly censurable. But the critic can and should judge printed products only on their intrinsic merits, and such judgment must set down *Experiments* as an uneven jumble of fairly good, bad, and indifferent writing. Here are book reviews that are merely book reviews—how different from Gosse's!—and here are a few brief tales that might have been written by a man possessing one-tenth of Douglas's rare gifts. The spirited

attack upon D. H. Lawrence, in connection with Maurice Magnus's *Memoirs of the Foreign Legion* is worth preserving in a form more durable than the pamphlet that originally contained it; but the interest and merits of this polemic are apart from literature, and it scarcely serves to enhance the literary value of the book in which it is reprinted. Disagreeable as such judgment is, to one who holds Norman Douglas high among the prose writers of his own day and other days besides, it cannot be evaded. *Experiments* is no fit title for this book; the author himself, in his dedication, has admitted knowledge of a proper title.

BARNUM

By M. R. Werner

Reviewed by Carl Van Doren

The Nation, April 11, 1923

Give the Puritan his due. He had an eye for the main chance as sharp as the other eye with which he saw how to split a hair in a moral cause. Connecticut, home of theologians, bred peddlers too, who in the old days, as a poet pointed out, went

. . . wandering through the Southern countries teaching
The A B C from Webster's spelling-book;
Gallant and godly, making love and preaching,
And gaining by what they call "hook and crook,"
And what the moralists call over-reaching,
A decent living. The Virginians look
Upon them with as favorable eyes
As Gabriel on the devil in Paradise.

Not by mere accident did Mark Twain choose a Connecticut Yankee to carry the blessings of propriety and cunning to the uninstructed knights of the Round Table. The satirist knew P. T. Barnum, delighted in the showman's deeds and books, and found in him a kind of epitome of the race. Here was a boy who learned how to bargain in the cradle, in Connecticut, and who when he had picked up all the rustic tricks of his native village was ready for New York, the United

States, and the world at large. The public, Barnum understood, loves to be fooled; he fooled it, adding to his fun, and its, a handsome fee for his pains. Yet he remained one of the straitest of his sect. He leaned upon patriotism when he gave his countrymen a chance to see Washington's old nurse. He leaned upon respectability when he showed his generation that Jenny Lind was a good girl in a white dress as well as a great singer. He was an aggressive teetotaler and an argumentative Universalist. He made his museums and menageries and circuses satisfactory to the most evangelical fireside. Of course he had observed that honesty and decency are sound policy, but he enthusiastically believed in the virtues which he clung to with so much profit.

Barnum's career ought to be evidence that the charge of hypocrisy often brought against the Puritan often means nothing. This particular Puritan did not practice one thing and preach another. He was simply a comic dramatist, working within limits which he accepted gladly. If fifty million Americans, not to mention Europeans, were eager to be tickled, Barnum was no less eager to tickle them with all the devices that his art permitted. What he did was to discover new dimensions for the practical joke. Smaller men might amuse a few companions with their pranks, but Barnum took a continent or two for his stage. All the steps in his development were in the direction of bigger and better jokes. They were bigger, in the sense that he began with a dried mermaid and ended with a mammoth circus; they were better, in the sense that he left behind his trivial early hoaxes—in which at the time he more or less believed himself—and showed genuine wonders which he exaggerated but did not misrepresent exces-

sively. And he gave a great deal of pleasure with very little pain. There was nothing of the craft of mean rogues in his constitution. He had huge energy and huge gusto. Living in an easy world, a thriving credulous world, he rolled through it jovially, gathering mountains of the loose moss which lay on every hand. Whereas another man might have been cynical over the gullible tribe of men, and have sat down to laugh at the spectacle, Barnum proceeded to turn it into cash. That is, he was more an artist than a philosopher. He prospered because he had the will to create and because, unhampered by any such dualism as might have been awakened in him by superior culture or fastidious scruples, he was made of the same stuff as his universe.

Barnum is so typical of his age that he abundantly deserves to be dug up from the limbo into which he has fallen since his various autobiographical works went out of print. He deserves, indeed, a gayer and racier volume than has just been written about him. But his biographer has at least cut away the excrescences which disfigure the numerous editions of the *Life of P. T. Barnum, Written by Himself*, has harmonized the gospels as there originally delivered, and has tested and enlarged the narrative with research in many quarters. The result is almost a history of American popular taste for a century. The republic came of age the year Barnum was born. When he set out to entertain it he could still manage with his ancient Negress and his dried mermaid and his tiny model of Niagara Falls and his moral dramas and his baby contests; but the country grew steadily more sophisticated, with Barnum always at least one stride ahead of it. He unearthed Tom Thumb and took him to see the crowned heads. He dared a larger venture and brought, with Jenny Lind,

music to the American millions. He raised Jumbo to international eminence by buying him in England and, in spite of protesting Britons, shipping that most famous of elephants to the United States. He gradually made the circus what it is to-day. When Barnum died the Columbian Exposition was in sight. During his lifetime his country had come to take its equal station among the Powers of the earth as regards public entertainment. In all this he had played the most conspicuous rôle. At the same time he had won for himself a personal reputation hardly to be matched in sheer extent by that of any contemporary. He was the Yankee par excellence.

As much as to anything else this was due to Barnum's amazing flair for publicity—an art in which he is at once the pioneer and master among his people. His flair was attended by no hesitations. Rumor could say what it liked about him, if only it would say something. He thrived upon the charge of being a humbug—a charge which he accepted and raised to a kind of honor by candidly revealing what a prince of humbugs he was. When he had plowed a patch of land fifty times with an elephant, in full sight of passing railroad trains, he was willing to have it known that he had done it for the sake of advertising the American Museum. He built a house of a pretentious, preposterous type—though he probably admired it—largely in order to call attention to his success in his profession. He had as little sense of personal dignity as a clown. Barnum was something besides a comic dramatist concocting amusement for the largest possible audience. He was also the barker and the megaphone for his comedy. He played on the public as on a crowd gaping before his platform. How loud his voice was,

and how long his megaphone! They carried as far as the newspapers went; after that they set going reverberations of gossip and went on beyond the reach of print. His ingenuity in hitting upon ways to get into the newspapers and then through them to the public was inexhaustible. With his ingenuity went a comic heartiness which had even more to do with his success. He kept his public laughing, loosened their purse-strings by his mirth, and then collected from them only the more or less superfluous quarters and francs and shillings which they had meant to spend for entertainment anyway. He really made no enemies.

Is it a merely American trait to admire the cheerful creature who astutely hoodwinks his follows? Barnum thought not. He was a Yankee unabashed, but he found his tricks as taking in Europe as in America. Ulysses had been before him, and Autolycus, and Paracelsus, and Cagliostro, and any number of less dexterous charlatans. Barnum's peculiar triumph sprang from the circumstances that newspapers had multiplied, railroads had grown like grass, telegrams and cables spread a net over the universe; men and nations had been drawn together as never before by mechanical appliances. Thus newly orchestrated, mankind must begin to throb and sound in unison if there were any able conductor to lead it. Barnum was the new Amphion. He began where he doubtless had to begin first: with folly.

WHITE SHADOWS IN THE SOUTH SEAS

By Frederick O'Brien

Reviewed by Raymond M. Weaver

The Nation, June 22, 1921

The truth about the South Seas is, there is no such place. They are no more a geographical locality than is Valhalla or the land of Cockaigne. As the early Christians devised a Heaven, better to slander the world, and soul, more bitterly to shame the flesh, so, in more secular times, man has given local habitation, in some remote corner of this planet, to a variety of earthly paradises. Most people hope in their hearts that there is no place quite so bad as home. In an age that knows so little of leisure, simplicity, security, or harmony, we have turned, in our frustration, to sentimentalize over coral islands in tropic seas, where a race of noble savages "whose bodies were as beautiful as the models for the statues the Greeks made," to quote Frederick O'Brien, the leading evangelist of the new myth, "whose hearts were generous and whose minds were eager to learn all good things," is being exterminated by the choicest fruits of our civilization: missionaries, syphilis, and gin. We are avid for accounts of Edenic perfection of these Mystic Isles, for descriptions of what Mr. O'Brien has called "the unrivaled beauty of the verdure, of reefs and palms, of the majestic stature of the men and the passionate

charm of the women, the boundless health and simple happiness in which they dwelt, the climate, the limpid streams, the diving, swimming, games, the rarest food." It is significant that the civilization which has recognized its biography in *Main Street* should at the same time acclaim so eagerly *White Shadows in the South Seas* and *Mystic Isles of the South Seas.* Sinclair Lewis and Frederick O'Brien complement each other, and together have pictured, to a large and admiring public, one the realistic, the other the romantic, side of barbarism. From the foot of Main Street, on Sundays and after office hours, run the excursion boats, piloted by Mr. O'Brien, to the South Seas. "I would offer," writes Mr. O'Brien in his official announcement, "an anodyne for a few hours of transport to the other side of our sphere, where are the loveliest scenes the eye may find upon the round of the globe, the gentlest climate of all the latitudes, the most whimsical whites, and the dearest savages I have known."

When Herman Melville and his friend Toby, on a blinding day in 1842, revolted at the hideousness of life on shipboard, and, tempted by the new and startling beauty of the Marquesas, ran away and fell into the hands of the amiable cannibals of the valley of Typee, the South Seas were first discovered by a competent literary artist. Melville's *Typee* and *Omoo* were the first, and still remain the finest, fruits of this discovery, though Melville has had a long line of literary descendants. Mr. O'Brien writes with a full knowledge of his forerunners in the South Sea manner. "What the great captains and Loti, Melville, Beck, and Stoddard had written," he confesses, as his boat streams to the South Seas, "had been my intense delight." On his way to the Marquesas he recalls "the

boyish thrill that filled me when I pored over the pages of Melville long ago."

In his two books on the South Seas Mr. O'Brien has trod, geographically, closely in the steps of Melville. In literary manner he is more showy, more theatrical than Melville, and is characterized by a sentimentality less delicate than that of Charles Warren Stoddard. Both Melville and Mr. O'Brien wrote their first book on the Marquesas Islands, and the second on Tahiti, and in each case the first book is better than the second. Mr. O'Brien's second book, however, unlike Melville's, precedes in experience his first. We are promised a third volume, *Atolls of the Sun,* which will be the account of a visit to, and a dwelling on, "the blazing coral wreaths of the Dangerous Archipelago." There, so Mr. O'Brien remarks with typical romantic exuberance, "The strange is commonplace, and the marvel is the probability of the hour."

Between Melville and O'Brien lies a span of nearly seventy years. This interim has, of course, in no degree modified the great natural beauty of the South Seas; but enormous are the changes in the human drama enacted in this changeless natural setting. When Melville discovered the Marquesas they were inhabited by tribes of practicing cannibals that throve in virulent savagery. Mr. O'Brien expresses his regret at the change of state he discovered in a rhetorical query: "Why could not this idyllic, fierce, laughter-loving people have stayed savage and strong, wicked and clean?" These astonishingly noble savages of the Marquesas, when known by Melville in their uncorrupted glory, inspired him with less intemperate enthusiasm than Mr. O'Brien's is when he studies them in their decline and sentimentalizes over the high virtues

from which they are fallen. For the Marquesas, the Tahiti, the South Seas which Mr. O'Brien celebrates, have attracted to themselves the vices of both East and West. Thither have gravitated the evangelist, the derelict, the merchant, and the romantic adventurer, who have variously exploited the natives in the names of Wesley, Priapus, Trade, and the Muses, to the threatened extinction of the natives.

There is a drama in this extinction of a picturesque savage civilization by the forces of a no less picturesque and far more virulent barbarism of a variety of imported brands. Mr. O'Brien is at his best in his accounts of the bizarre freaks of destiny in this island of decaying savages: in *White Shadows,* the story of McHenry and his native boy; the story of Mademoiselle N——; the incident of the Lady Titihuti's tatooed legs —legs to singe Sir Willowby with blushes of envy and shame; the account of the venerable Père Simeon's celebration of the anniversary of the Maid of Orleans, when the Marquesans had the same difficulty in finding virgins that the Romans had at the height of the Empire when they wanted to worship Vesta; in *Mystic Isles,* the outing with the native princess to the falls of Fautaua; the accounts of the incomparable Lavaina, hostess of the Tiare Hotel—these are among the passages in which Mr. O'Brien achieves a considerable degree of distinction.

In *Mystic Isles of the South Seas* he attempts to do for Tahiti what in his first book he did for the Marquesas. The result is not so interesting, because the material is far less picturesque. It does not attain to the freshness, the verve, the rich variety of its predecessor. Fully half of the book concerns itself with an account of the town of Papeete and the neighborhood,

and the life of the foreigners there—a life to be duplicated, in all essentials, nearly anywhere around the rim of civilization where life is down at the heel. And when Mr. O'Brien leaves Papeete to explore the island he rarely, if ever, succeeds in making any discovery untouched by the commonplace, the garish, or the tawdry. Tahiti, judging from his report, is at its backbone a dilapidated and degenerate Main Street. Never is there far removed from the picture the singing of American Methodist hymns and American ragtime; the honking of automobiles over bad roads; the smell of absinthe, flat beer, and cigarette butts. There are motion-pictures, boot-blacks, peanut-men, prize-fights, natives dressed in pink lace and mother-hubbards, and foreigners garbed to heights of hideousness. And there is a strike of native fishermen led by an American agent of the I. W. W.—a trio of sounds which the natives transform into "I dobblebelly, dobblebelly." In this sordid environment, headed to a certain doom, live the last remnants of "a manly people, once magnificently perfect in body, masters of their seas, unexcelled in the record of humanity in beauty, vigor, and valor."

APPENDIX A

In the Introduction there are some questions that students may be asked to consider in dealing with the reviews that they are studying, but other questions may very properly receive attention. Such questions are suggested here, and it is the hope of the editor that they will be found so widely various as to be useful in classes in which the instructors are approaching the subject with different purposes. It will be apparent that the individual reviews hardly offer material enough for the analytical application of all of the questions. The review of a biography will not call for the same treatment as the review of a novel. It does not offer the same problems to the student who is canvassing the author's method or point of view. In any assignment of class work the instructor will naturally indicate what in it is properly matter for consideration, and that should be easily done by reference to the questions by number.

1. Of what in the book does the reviewer approve, and what is the basis of his approval?

2. Of what does he disapprove and for what reasons?

3. Does the reviewer report upon the book as matter of fact—its story or gathering of information—(scientific criticism)? does he chiefly give his own reactions to it (impressionistic criticism)? does he attempt sympathetically to interpret the author's mind as revealed in the book (appreciative criticism)? or

does he assume to pass judgment, favorable or unfavorable, on the book (judicial criticism)?

4. Does the review address itself to any particular class of readers, and, if so, to what class?

5. With regard to what qualities in the book does the reviewer give his readers information?

6. How far does the reviewer seem to think of his readers as possible purchasers of the book whom he is trying to enlighten with regard to its probable interest or value for them?

7. What reasons have you for thinking that the reviewer and the author of the book reviewed have or do not have the same literary standards, that is, standards of the same critical school?

8. Do you find in the reviewer any degree of insistence upon any of the following qualities?

As demanded by classical canons.

a. Rigorous clarity of expression.
b. Agreement with universal human experience.
c. Conformity with a logical structural order.
d. Subordination of the specific and individual to the typical and general.
e. Restraint and emotional control.

As demanded by romantic canons.

a. Selective emphasis upon what to the reviewer seems of moment for human happiness.
b. Emotional abandon.
c. Escape from the conventional, except as finding its sanctions in voluntary individual assent.
d. Some degree of suggestive or imaginative heightening beyond the logical conclusiveness of a fixed idea.

e. A feeling for warmth, color, variety, and accentuation of individual characteristics as contributing differentiating interests to the stream of the universal.
f. Concern for the inner energizing of human experience as against the subjection of the internal to the external.

As demanded by realistic canons.

a. A substantial degree of detachment and objectivity in the writer as an observer of life.
b. Fidelity in reporting the fact as seen.
c. Disregard for the selective process as being necessarily founded in the observer's likes and dislikes and in the degree of warmth in his emotional responses.
d. Attention to minor details as being an integral part of reality.
e. Some approach to documentary validation of the setting of life, as, for instance, in the accentuation of local color.
f. Rejection in general of constructive idealism as a literary motive.

As demanded by naturalistic canons.

a. Emphasis upon realistic canons as embodying principles of literary method.
b. Denial of the importance of logical form, because of its disagreement with an assumed formlessness in the order of nature.
c. Acceptance of the subjection of the human to the natural, and, consequently;
d. The importance of objective reality in com-

parison with subjective ideality, or, contrarily;

e. Assertion of independent subjective reality as in accord with the formlessness of the natural order, in a sequential mood of assertive expressionism.

9. Is the subject matter of the book reviewed (biography, science, history) of wide interest, and what has the reviewer found in it as material for appeal to the general reader?

10. Do you see in the review any turns of phrase or of idea serving to enhance its appeal to the ordinary reader?

11. Does it appear that there is anything new, as a matter of recent discovery or research, that the reviewer reports from the book or in comment on it?

12. How has the reviewer made interesting what he reports of the contents of the book, and how far is the review informative with relation to the subject matter of the book itself?

13. How far has the reviewer seemingly tried to carry over to his readers the tone and flavor of the work reviewed?

14. How much of the review is given up to exposition of the contents of the book, and how much to interpretation and evaluation?

APPENDIX B

The study of book reviews is an almost necessary preparation for the writing of them. They are a specialized form of the essay, and certain specialized details of form and approach are properly to be considered. In itself the essay varies from more or less impersonal exposition to such intimate and gossipy self-revelation as we may see in, say, Charles Lamb's *Essays of Elia.* The writer of a book review should decide first what aspects of the book under consideration shall be given special attention. There are two extremes to which the young reviewer may be carried when he has not sufficiently canvassed either his material or his own purpose. He may satisfy himself with a mere recapitulation of the content of the book. That may be at times a useful thing to do, but it will seldom be interesting or stimulating. Further, it is a rather empty and mechanical proceeding, and no one interested in writing should often be satisfied with doing so little. On the other hand, he may merely make a record of his own personal sympathies or antipathies as called forth, perhaps, by the characters in a novel. How far it is justifiable to condemn a book because we do not like the people who move through it is in some ways, no doubt, a moot question. It is but fair to say, however, that that is a problem to be met on the basis of some larger considerations. Let us ask ourselves how far the fictional figures with whom we have made acquaintance are either important or negligible in the evaluation of the ongoing life of humanity. They may

be interesting, and yet ephemeral. They may displease us, and yet represent human factors certain to be influential in determining what the life of man in his world shall be. In that case we cannot quite think of them as negligible.

One thing that every writer has to learn, either by his own experience or by way of the communicated experience of others, is that the written word comes into being more easily when the thing to be written has been somewhat clearly shaped in the writer's mind. As a help in that direction a few suggestions are given here. They are somewhat arbitrarily stated, but they are subject to adaptation. All writing, as indeed all art, is a matter of adaptation. Sometimes it is pleasant to climb a fence and go across lots, but that is impossible where there are no fences. A fence at least indicates that the road lies beyond the corner. Occasionally going across lots is inadvisable because the owner of the lot has a gun or is the owner of a dog. Always it is a pedestrian mode of locomotion, and the automobile has intensified competition in speed so seriously that the diagonal will generally be found not an economy, but a luxury.

Ask yourself how much space should be given to mere exposition of the contents of the book.
Begin at once.
Try to be interesting at once.
While trying to be interesting, do not forget to be accurate and truthful.
Determine what established critical opinions of your own you may apply as touchstones.
Decide upon the style and tone of treatment to be employed.
Determine whether condemnation or approval shall

be direct or implied. Will you take the tone of the book, or perhaps discredit it simply by dealing with it casually?

Consider honestly whether your readers should be encouraged to buy the book.

Consider honestly whether the publishers who have sent you the book for review are justified in expecting to sell it.

Maintain some continuity of idea and point of view. Do not scatter,—unless the book scatters, perhaps not even then.

Decide what is the chief appeal of the book, the writer's prime purpose, and at least meet the author part way. Judge it in some degree with relation to what he has tried to do, as well as with relation to what you think he should have done.

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